

Urban Secondary Education: Poverty, Power, Class:

A Pathway to Change

LEONARD CAMBRA

Virginia Theological Seminary, Doctor of Ministry

Author Note:

Leonard Cambra is Foreign Language Department Chair, Woonsocket High School, Woonsocket RI. He has taught 18 years at the high school and 26 years in secondary education. He holds Master degrees in Spanish, Theology, and Educational Leadership. This thesis is submitted for his Doctor of Ministry in Educational Leadership.

Correspondence concerning this thesis should be addressed to Leonard Cambra, Foreign Language Chair, Woonsocket High School, 777 Cass Ave, RI 02895

Contact: LCambra@WoonsocketSchools.com

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

For VTS Library:

Faculty Advisor: Larry Golemon, Ph.D.

Reader: Donyelle McCray, J.D., and Th.D.

Reader: Lynne Bedard, Ph.D.

Abstract

There is an economic divide between educators and students. It is reflective of deeply rooted ideological principles that perpetuate educational inequities. Culture is rooted in socio-economic class. Schools mirror the societies that have created them. The culture of testing directly relates to these ideological principles and injustices. Only a process of co-subjectivity rooted in a shared, human, historic experience could provide a proper fulcrum for conscientization to occur. The poverty simulation was selected to provide faculty this window into a shared experience with the urban poor. Its purpose, to begin the process of 'conscientization' in order to begin a process of structural reform which will improve teaching and learning at the school and raise the percent of students who graduate. Without further professional development and in tandem with other attempted reforms tied to the dominant culture, the immediate results were encouraging, subsequent ones were not. These latter results highlight the need for ongoing professional development to provide a different language expressive of a different reality. To be human is to be relational and exist within a spontaneous dynamic of love fostered in deep respect and understanding but also rooted in challenge and promise. To the fostering of these ends the Poverty Simulation was undertaken as a necessary preamble to comprehensive reforms and adjustments in what we do as urban educators.

Key words: class, culture, *conscientization*, dialectic, education, poverty simulation, urban.

Table of Contents

FOR VTS LIBRARY:	2
ABSTRACT	3
1. UNCOVERING THE TRUTH	5
<i>THE CONTEXT OF THIS PROJECT</i>	5
THE BACKGROUND OF AUTHOR AND EDUCATORS	12
<i>THE RESEARCH QUESTION</i>	16
<i>PHILOSOPHICAL VIEW OF HUMAN NATURE AND EXISTENCE</i>	17
2. THOUGHT, CULTURE AND EDUCATION	23
<i>THE PROBLEM OF ONE-SIZE-FITS ALL STANDARDIZED TESTING</i>	23
<i>A CONTEXTUAL, HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THOUGHT</i>	25
<i>THE IMPORTANCE OF FREEDOM, SELF-TRANSCENDENCE, AND ACTION</i>	29
<i>THE DYNAMIC NATURE OF CULTURE</i>	35
<i>SCHOOLS AND THE SURROUNDING CULTURE</i>	38
CULTURES OF POWER AND STANDARDIZED TESTING	39
3. CULTURE, EDUCATION, POVERTY, AND POWER	49
<i>CULTURE, CONFLICT, AND DOMINANT WORLDVIEWS</i>	49
<i>A CRITIQUE OF EDUCATION AS FINDING ONE’S PLACE</i>	51
<i>TEACHERS OF STATUS QUO OR TRANSFORMATION</i>	60
4. POVERTY SIMULATION AND ITS IMPACT	66
<i>THE JOURNEY OF A SEED</i>	66
<i>PHOTOSYNTHESIS BEGINS</i>	75
5. VALUE, RELATIONSHIP AND PUBLIC URBAN EDUCATION	93
<i>THOUGHT, LANGUAGE, TIME AND TRANSFORMATION</i>	93
<i>LANGUAGE, BIAS, RELATIONSHIP, AND THE WORLD</i>	95
<i>A LANGUAGE ROOTED IN CO-SUBJECTIVITY TO EXPRESS A DIFFERENT PARADIGM</i>	97
<i>METAPHOR IMAGINATION AND TRANSFORMATION</i>	103
<i>A PATH FORWARD</i>	105
<i>RESEARCH ON RELATIONSHIPS IN TEACHING</i>	112
<i>THE CHALLENGE AHEAD</i>	114
APPENDICES	118
WUFOO FACULTY SURVEY AND RESULTS CONCERNING THE POVERTY SIMULATION	118
INTERVIEW WITH SUCCESS 101 TEACHERS	122
WORKS CITED	123

1. Uncovering the truth

An examination of poverty as it pertains to an urban high school and its municipality. The author discloses his own socio-economic background and presents the dissertation question.

The Context of this Project

When one carefully reviews the institutional study of Woonsocket High School (WHS), there is one consistently glaring reality that presents itself. That reality is first world poverty. At the conclusion of the 2013-2014 school year, 68% of students who attended the high school qualified for subsidized lunch¹. A household of two would qualify for reduced lunch earning \$28,694 annually. The same family would qualify for a free lunch earning 14,937. To maintain eligibility for the former, for each additional member to the household- income could only increase by a maximum of \$7,437.00 per each new household member. In order to maintain eligibility for the latter, that income could only increase \$5,226.00 per additional member of the household². It is a system that does not enable one to escape poverty, but rather destroys incentive by almost punishing efforts of self-betterment by a draconian reduction in benefits. The system as currently engendered works not to solely aid individuals in need, but to trap them in a vicious cycle of dependency. These monetary figures must be received with the knowledge that the per capita income in terms of 2013 dollars was \$21,086 for the city of Woonsocket; that of the State of Rhode Island was \$30,469 or 31% over and above that of the city.³

WHS is a solitary, public secondary school that mirrors the municipality that it serves.

The 2010 total population for the city was recorded at 41,186, down from the 2000 census of

¹ InfoWorks: RI Education Data Reporting, <http://infoworks.ride.ri.gov/school/woonsocket-high-school> accessed 7-2-15

² http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/IEG_Table-032913.pdf accessed 7-2-15

² http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/IEG_Table-032913.pdf accessed 7-2-15

³ US Census Bureau, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/44/4480780.html> VII-8-15

43,244. It is a city of well under 50,000 inhabitants and diminishing. It is comprised solely of 7.7 square miles with a population density of 5,321.9⁴ per square mile. The city of Woonsocket used to be one of the largest textile producers in the North East⁵ and has never found the means to sufficiently recover from the loss of this industry. With regards to housing in the city itself, 71% of all housing in Woonsocket is multifamily - an echo back to the booming textile mills and the necessity for quick, affordable residences for migrant workers and their families.

The reality is, however, that neither the municipality nor its one public high school exist in a vacuum; nor are they entities solely responsible to themselves. “Public schools have become places that disproportionately serve the children of the poor and powerless people who lack access to better educational options” (Noguera 2003: 38). High stakes state testing, the residual of No Child Left Behind, the Race to the Top initiatives and the demands for an educated work force as expressed by the 21st Century Learning Skills/Expectations⁶ have all combined to throw into dramatic relief the inability of many of our students to effectively compete in comparison to the rest of their peers on state testing, in academic placement, in job preparedness and often mirror “broader patterns of inequality” (Noguera 2003: 85).

Job readiness begins by actually showing up for the work. At WHS 86% of the students showed up regularly for school. This is 6% less than the state average, which was 92% and

⁴ <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/44/4480780.html> 4/30/13

⁵ NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges) Self-Study Report, *School Community Profile*, 2004.

⁶ The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) has forged alliances with key national organizations that represent the core academic subjects, including Social Studies, English, Math, Science, Geography, World Languages and the Arts. These collaborations have resulted in the development of 21st Century Skills Maps that illustrate the intersection between core subjects and 21st Century Skills. Downloaded from ACTFL (American Council on Teaching Foreign Languages) https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/21stCenturySkillsMap/p21_worldlanguagesmap.pdf accessed VII/3/15

according to a Providence Journal article, still constitutes the highest rate of absenteeism amongst the public middle and high schools statewide.⁷ However, showing up for a position one has been selected to fill is only the first step; more important is the necessity to actually show up regularly and consistently on time for that position. Here the WHS numbers are completely dismal. A full 47% or nearly ½ of the entire school demonstrated what the Rhode Island Department of Education categorizes as “Chronic Absenteeism”⁸. The unrecorded “tardy” rate is significantly higher. This reality is even sadder when one considers that the school has been rolling back the hands of the clock – since 1998 when the start time was 7am, to now when it is 8 am for classes. The school has also experimented with a number of different period schedules which attempted to draw significance away from the importance of the first period of the day, and all that these differently formatted schedules succeeded in doing was having students show up later to school.

While the afore mentioned factors serve to demonstrate a lack of professional job readiness overall and certainly in comparison with state averages, there are also academic lags which exist between WHS students and other students in the state. For instance, on the 11th grade state tests WHS students scored an average of 13.5%⁹ lower than their state peers in Math, Reading, Writing, and Science. For the same school year they scored an average of almost 50 points lower on the SAT’s as compared nationally for the categories of Math (52 point difference), reading (43 point difference), and writing (52 point difference). However, the greatest academic disparity clearly exists in the area whereby perhaps teachers exert the greatest influence and the most direct impact on test score results, AP testing. Here, only 27% of WHS students who took

⁷ Providencejournal.com: RI Chronic absence and attendance rates, paper issue: September 27, 2015

⁸ InfoWorks: RI Education Data Reporting, <http://infoworks.ride.ri.gov/school/woonsocket-high-school> accessed VII-7-2015.

⁹ InfoWorks: RI Education Data Reporting, <http://infoworks.ride.ri.gov/school/woonsocket-high-school> accessed VII-7-2015. (All statistics for this paragraph were taken from this website).

an *Advance Placement* test scored at a college level proficiency, just over 1 out of every 4 students taking the test; a statistic which closely parallels the percent of students who do not receive free or reduced lunch. The state average, on the other hand, was 57% of those who tested scored at the college level; more than 1 out of every 2 students statewide received college credit for *Advanced Placement* courses taken in high school. These statistics readily lend credence to the often silent but long held belief that “academic failure for large numbers of poor and working class children is inevitable” (Noguera 2004: 13).

When these self-evident truths are held in comparison to the rest of the state, a new reality presents itself: disparity. This disparity is prevalent in housing; as stated earlier, 71% of all housing in the city is multifamily, whereby for the state as a whole only 40.6% are multifamily units¹⁰. In Woonsocket, home ownership, or a vested interest in the community is only 42%, which means that less than half the homes owned are owner occupied, while statewide it is just over 62%. While reasons such as “apathy”, (Putnam, 1995) a “lack of time” a “lack of interest” (Gold, 2001), a “lack of information” and general “feelings of powerlessness” (Lareau, 1989; all cited in Noguera 2003: 85) have been associated with lack of community involvement with urban poor schools, the information listed above raises the possibility that home ownership and a sense of pride in one’s community may contribute as a factor for overall disinterest.

It would almost follow that if more people rent than own their own homes, incomes would also be disproportionate and this indeed plays itself out as suspected. While the per capita income of the last 12 months in 2011 for the state was \$29,685, for Woonsocket it was only \$21,316- which represents a difference of over \$8,000 or almost a 1/3 difference. Between the years 2007-2011 the median state household income was \$55,975, while that for the city of

¹⁰ These statistics and the ones which follow are from:
<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/44/4480780.html> 4/30/13

Woonsocket was \$39,329, a net difference of \$16,646 or a disparity of approximately 30%. It would then make sense that the number of households living at or below the poverty level in Woonsocket is more than ¼ of the total population--26%, up a full 4% from 2011 and double that of the state as a whole.¹¹

These disparities are clearly reflected in educational statistics as well. Statewide 84% of the population is holding at least a high school diploma, but in Woonsocket, it is only 75%. The total number of citizens, twenty-five or older who are holding at least a bachelor's degree for the state is 31% while that of Woonsocket is not quite 14%, or less than half of the state average. In addition, for the 2012-2013 school year Woonsocket only had 62% of its students graduate in four years. On average, 40% of the incoming freshman class is retained and sadly, during the 2012-2013 school year, 148 students or roughly 10% officially dropped out.¹² This official state statistic does not include the dozens of students who for whatever reason simply stopped attending but were never officially removed from the class rosters.

Discipline is the final piece of the fragmented economic puzzle. With an average school population that fluctuated around 1750, for the 2013-14 school year there were a total of 208 out of school suspensions, or nearly 12% of the school population. Incidents of in-school suspension were 2732 or an outstanding rate of 156% of the total school population¹³. There were 58 out-of-school suspensions for insubordination/disrespect and 2564 in school suspensions for the same infraction, amounting to 147% of the school's population. The second highest infraction was disorderly conduct with a combination of 72 in and out of school suspensions amounting to 4% of the student body, followed by fighting/physical altercation with a total of 51 in and out of

¹¹ US Census Bureau, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/44/4480780.html> VII-8-15

¹² <http://www.eride.ri.gov/reports/reports.asp>

¹³ InfoWorks! RI educational data reporting, <http://infoworks.ride.ri.gov/school/woonsocket-high-school/suspension/number-of-incidents-high/2013/1> accessed VII-3-15

school suspensions assigned representing 3% of students. As a summary the primary point of reference should simply be that at WHS 191 students per 100 (yes, that is correct 191/100) were suspended. The state median was 37 students per 100.¹⁴ At WHS, the vast majority of disciplinary actions were not related to violence, weapons or illegal substances, but “insubordination” and “disrespect” which speak directly to effective or ineffective teacher classroom management skills and begs the question of how well do faculty really know and understand the population with which they are dealing on a daily basis?

The following are excerpts from the school’s 2014-2015 self-study in preparation for the reaccreditation process under the regional accreditation body: New England Association of Schools and Colleges. The self-study is an official document and this particular section as well as the document as a whole has received overwhelming faculty approval with just over 93% approving it with no editing and an additional 3% suggesting minor alterations or clarifications. It will be presented in bullet form as a summation of the faculty’s experience within the school.

- The community and the district’s governing body provide inconsistent and inadequate funding for a wide range of school programs and services.
- There are insufficient professional and support staff with long delays in the hiring process.
- The economic recession has had a prolonged and negative impact upon funding for the district; since the last report [2004] the school’s financial situation has worsened.
- The [faculty] pay scale is well below state average; this is one factor in why positions are so hard to fill.
- Due to the fact that there are no reliable department budgets, each department has deficiencies in equipment.
- The burden falls upon individual classroom teachers to find a way to provide [sufficient] teaching material to align with the common core.

¹⁴ Ibid, 7-8-15

These faculty approved statements of truth regarding their experiences in urban education, along with the multiple statistics already presented, allow one to focus clearly on the alarming and poignant reality of not only how WHS mirrors the city which cradles it, but also how the school itself is the spitting image of so many similar schools. These schools have been well documented and chronicled in Jonathan Kozol's *Savage Inequalities* (1991) in terms of the inequity of opportunity afforded children of low socio-economic-backgrounds to even begin to compete in any way with more affluent public schools in the suburbs. While Kozol found many of the conditions under which children attempted to learn, to be totally abhorrent, the underlying theme of his work went deeper.

To its readers, Kozol's work successfully raised the specter of the dichotomy between what we purport our beliefs and founding principles to be as a democratic capitalist society against the squalor of abject first world poverty we have created and allowed to flourish in the name of indecency, inhumanity, and special interests in both rural and urban America. The author did so with a simple reflective-question, which by being left completely unanswered on the last page of the book, intuitively places the ominous challenge on the readers themselves to respond: "one wonders what might happen to the spirits of these children if they had the chance to breathe. Might they feel the power or the longing to become inheritors of some of this remarkable vast nation?" (Kozol, 282). The fine line he draws between patriotic promise and hope against the real and stark educational conditions of squalor raises the specter that the educational system of inequality has disenfranchised large segments of our population through a lack of public will and inattentiveness. It is not the final statement of the author, however, for if as citizens and patriots, the nation had conducted itself differently, then public schools would have truly served the democratic purposes and principles as the "great equalizer" envisioned by Horace Mann. And

yet, “[t]he fact that the United States tolerates the failure of so many of its urban schools suggests that there is either a personal belief that poor children are not entitled to anything better, or an active conspiracy to ensure that the majority of children who are born poor will remain poor” (Noguera 2003: 15-16).

There are two interrelated quintessential truths of urban education which daily juxtapose one another but which share no natural connection nor relationship but which directly impact teaching and learning within the classroom. These truths are: 1) the poverty of the majority of the students who attend the urban public high school WHS, and 2) the comparative wealth of the teaching staff over and above the population that they serve. In other words, while a full 68% of students qualify for subsidized lunch, 75% of faculty who teach at WHS are on the highest pay step (step 10). This means that a single faculty member earned more than the median state per capita income by nearly 58% while earning 67% more than the city’s own per capita median income. A single faculty member’s income on step 10 also earned 20% more than the median state household income while earning a whopping 44% more than the city’s median household income. These two realities are verily summed up in the expression “wealth inequality.”

The Background of Author and Educators

Could it be that the above factors play a definitive role “whereby patterns of privilege and inequality are maintained and reproduced” (Noguera 2003: 42) at WHS? The current principal, armed with state data and privy to some of the statistics present in this work is determined not to let this be the case. He has the full backing of the new superintendent. The building principal’s leadership team consists of two assistant principals, two deans of students, four core class department heads: English, math, science, social studies, and one department facilitator, that would be me, who acts as foreign language department head but is paid differently due to

budgetary constraints. They are all firmly committed to turning the ship around; however, how one goes about doing that can prove quite contentious, especially when deep seated and long held beliefs and practices are called into question or scrutinized in the light of a deeper understanding of reality.

The superintendent, the principal, one assistant principal, one dean, and one department head are all alumnae of the high school. Those who are on the leadership team as faculty- deans, department chairs and facilitator are all on the highest salary scale. They all receive additional money for education beyond the bachelor's degree and the department leaders receive a stipend for their leadership role. No faculty member will receive a pay increase until the 2017-2018 school year and that will have constituted ten years of no salary increase, but there has been no step freeze. Faculty not on step ten continue to move up each year with a commensurate pay increase, but the salary scale itself will have remained the same for the last ten years, or since the financial debacle of the city, precipitated by a national banking crisis and the state's withdrawing funds from financing education. The concessions by the union totaling over 3million dollars were all voluntary.

I am the product of middle-class suburban America. My parents were employees of the US Postal Service. As children, my two siblings and I all attended private and religious schools. For high school we attended single gender Catholic schools. We communed as a family in a middle class parish that had no active community ministry beyond the bounds of the parishioners themselves; but which did include a parish school that was heavily subsidized by the parish at the time. My father took advantage of the GI-bill and his service in Vietnam to obtain a college degree. While college was an option to all three children, I was the only one to have taken advantage of it. I attended a private four-year college, but at the time, my father said to me: "you

pay half and I'll pay half"; it was a very doable proposition back then, allowing me to graduate college debt free. My first two jobs in education were both at private and semi-prestigious Catholic schools where I taught consecutively for eight years. It was not until 1998 that I entered a public school, Woonsocket High School, for the very first time in my life and I have remained there ever since. The 2015-2016 school year marks my 26th year teaching at the secondary level and my 18th year teaching at Woonsocket. I've taught both in Rhode Island and Massachusetts and have also taught adult ESL for three literacy organizations all located in the capitol city of Providence.

For familial and sentimental reasons my partner and I restored and lived five years in the three-tenement family home I was raised in until my sixth grade year. It was in a deteriorating section of the city of Providence when my family and I first lived there growing up and it really had become a ghetto-slum when my partner and I returned years later, but it was a gem amongst the houses that surrounded it; however it provided an excellent observatory window to see how the other half lived and to engage in social dialogue with them in the local supermarkets, as they returned from work or shopping, or while watching some of the local police and fire action together. The house of worship I attended back then was local to the community and attempted to organize watch groups and gain greater municipal attention, and though not very successful, the organizational meetings did provide yet another vantage point to understand the plight of working poor. The truth is I chose to live there and knew it would not always be my reality. In 2011 my partner and I moved to a much more affluent and peaceful section of the city, where with but one phone call to my local city counsel person we get two emails and a snowplow within 40 minutes on our street, a dead end, off a dead end. In many ways this demonstrates in a personal and perceptible way that "reciprocity derived from participation in social networks and

political influence generated by money and organization can produce better service from public institutions (Sampson, 1998; Woolcock, 1998)” but whereby on the other hand, in the sections of the city much more dependent upon public services of all types, these communities seem to “generate negative rather than positive social capital” and the social agencies which service them “often exhibit indifference and even hostility towards those they serve” (All cited in Noguera 2003: 34).

While poverty exists throughout the United States my personal and primary experience has been with urban poverty. Most of my professional career has been in urban education and the inequities and challenges my students face have become palpable but also transformative. This project thesis is not only about attempting to turn the ship around, nor is it solely about trying to make a positive difference in the lives of my students. While it certainly encompasses these things, it is also a journey to seek a deeper understanding of the concrete situation in which my colleagues and I currently find ourselves. It attempts to first articulate how and why our professional experience as educators is as it is through a deeper understanding of the current adverse reality. I will offer a deep analysis rooted in observation, practice, and philosophical exegesis toward a structural framework for understanding the immediate world in which educators and citizens willingly participate. However, this intellectual framework also serves as the basis of what Paulo Freire has called “Conscientization”; that is, “the development of authentic critical awareness” (Freire 1973:19) grounded in hope. It is in the tension of “anxiety and hope [that] we go beyond existing reality and anticipate the future so as to make a correct decision about the present” (Moltmann 1993: 52).

The Research Question

Simply stated, this project thesis revolves around the premise that “students learn through relationships”. When “educators experience difficulty [in] establishing respectful, caring, and mutually beneficial relationships with the students”, as the disciplinary data clearly indicate for WHS, then, as the educational data on standardized tests for WHS also indicate: “it is often difficult to create an atmosphere that is supportive of teaching and learning” (Boyken & Noguera 2011: 28-29). Therefore the simple research question is: can a poverty simulation with all secondary teachers and administrators of WHS provide the missing foundation for deep personal relationships to occur, which are rooted in a profound respect for those encompassed by poverty? In other words, can experiencing the poverty simulation first hand produce greater understanding of whom the students are? Might such a beginning not only establish greater mutual respect and appreciation so important for positive teaching and learning, but also play an essential role in the transformation of attitudes and prejudices that effect policy, procedure, and above all, daily student-teacher interaction? With such transformation, can educators turn the high school in a different, more positive direction? To successfully undertake such an agenda requires both understanding and self-analysis. The intricate self-study performed by the entire faculty in preparation for the NEASC visit had provided a natural pathway to such an arduous task; however, every “perception requires distance, and self-perception requires a degree of alienation as well” (Moltmann, 2004:8).

Understanding and self-understanding, then, become the first steps in a truly dialogically transformative process that seeks to effect and alter the current status quo. What is needed is a profound appreciation of the dignity and worth of every human being--especially of those born into poverty and for whom the system as a whole and the educational system in particular give

little opportunity for change. The old ways of touting the ideals of hard work and merit, by which we teach that the “United States is a democracy based on genuine meritocratic principles”, are ways of “deluding ourselves.” How we manage to “hold on to this fantasy even as a quarter of the nation’s children are denied adequate educational opportunity” only goes to show how deeply embedded the dominant ideology has become within our society and how falsely we as educators have believed it. (Noguera 2003: 15). The process of conscientization therefore involves not only a calling out of the incongruence between proclamation and reality, but also an understanding of what purpose incongruity serves and why it came to be and continues to be promulgated. That is, the “[c]oncern for humanization leads at once to the recognition of dehumanization, not only as an ontological possibility but as an historical reality” (Freire 2012: 43), and with such recognition comes the necessity of change grounded in a broader understanding of what it means to be a human being and have historical existence.

Philosophical View of Human Nature and Existence

To be human is to exist in a real, concrete, material world; but it is also the capacity to have a direct impact, positive or negative upon that world. Every human act that engages the world “is necessarily the product of alternatives and presupposes a choice or a decision in relation to these” (Lukacs 1978, 1982: 46). However, meaningful human agency begins as an intellectual process which first recognizes and considers the physical world as it is currently given or as it currently exists (ibid. 46-47). In this context, transformative human interaction with the world reflects upon and understands the context in which that world is given as an objective existence outside of the human agent, but not apart or separate from whom that agent is because the human is a direct product of that world upon which s/he will have an impact. It

therefore becomes essential to recognize the “natural presuppositions” which are a part of that world and to develop an intellectual capacity to negate or critique those suppositions in order to develop an alternative vision which does not do injustice to the natural-world and its capacity to coexist with humanity.

The Human Being encompasses so much more than an intellectual recognition of reality as it is presented and lived; it also requires developing and implementing an alternative but shared vision that does justice to nature. The Human Being involves “more than the sum of their works, and more than the sum of their suffering” (Moltmann 1996/2004: 116). Being in and of itself requires two things simultaneously: “being itself and being in relation,” since to exist only has significance if it is in relation to something else and therefore, “to be and to be in relation becomes identical” (Zizioulas 1985: 88). The word being, itself, is an ontological act grounded in dynamic relationships and because “it is a way of relationship with the world [and] with other people...it is an event of communion” (Zizioulas 1985: 15) and ideally characterizes itself by harmony over discord. The simple fact of the matter is, to exist, to have being means that one must exist in relationship to some one or something else, it is the only way being or existence has merit or meaning (Zizioulas 1985: 88). It is because Human Beings are relational creatures that “they are beings in community, and they live with one another, in the community of the generations, and within the community of creation” (Moltmann 2004: 114).

So while the individual person may be characterized as a “conscious personal existence in time” or as an “indissoluble psychosomatic unity with unfathomable psychic depth” or even as a “free, sovereign, creative, rational, scientific” (Nellas 1987: 27) creature, s/he is above all else, historic. That is, given the ontological communal reality of the Human Being, and that “one affirms his or her existence only in the context of relationship” (Zizioulas 2011: 24), then people

are historical because one does not become aware of oneself primarily through antithesis to the world, but by relationship with it, and it is from this that the necessity of historicity arises which makes the human person, grounded in their past aware of their present and moving toward their future. According to Zizioulas, the “superiority of the human being as compared with the rest of creation consists not in the reason it possesses, but in its ability to relate in such a way as to create events” or to make their own history by relating to the world and others within that world (Zizioulas 2011: 145).

The term Human Being, in its ontological reality, encompasses relationship, history and community or communion. Being, or being human as experienced by people means that change is an inherent quality of humanness; that is, being is not a static, immutable constant, but a dynamic force of interaction, change, transformation and mutability because no human relationship remains static, no human community is permanent. Change is almost a molecular construct of human DNA, i.e. it’s a part of who we are as individuals in community, living a history.

Human history is dependent upon the ontological nature of human being as communal relationship. It is the place where truth about one’s own existence is formed because only through relationship and dialogue one discovers one’s own identity (Moltmann 1994: 108). Yet there is more to the human dynamic, as it is through history that people, human beings, are capable of experiencing both hope and freedom. While humans are made aware of their past, it is not a static awareness; rather, one of the characteristics of the transcendental nature of the human person is the capacity to encompass the past, while being in the present and yet moving toward a future. It is this “openness towards reality” as possible from which hope arises (Moltmann 1993:190-191). Transcend means to go beyond and therefore, transcendence is an

essential characteristic of our human capacity to exist as relational beings in the past, the present, and the future. While relational ontology defines us, transcendence is what characterizes us as human and historic.

However, there is a dialectical tension whereby “past happening and present understanding is always motivated by anticipation of the future” (Moltmann 1993: 269). It is this existential tension of the human person that first allows him to actually recognize history as ontological crisis (Moltmann 1993: 230-231) because he not only makes history but also is subject to it and in this experiences his own self-alienation (Moltmann 1993: 240). However, it is also within this tension that freedom and hope may be experienced. Freedom then is the capacity to be in the future and hope is the designing of that future toward which one moves. That is, the human being’s “possibilities and thus his true freedom are achieved only by the hope which leads him to expand himself and at the same time makes him grasp continually new possibilities for the expected future” (Moltmann 1993: 337). Tension and conflict arise in human history because the “person who possesses power...understands future as prolongation of his own present” whereas “those who are dominated, hope for an alternative future, for liberation from present misery and deliverance from helplessness” (Moltmann 1996/2004: 135). To be human then is not to be incomplete, but rather “always on the way to something” through which one actualizes or fails to actualize “some expected future”. It is through this journey toward an undetermined future that human beings have the opportunity to experience life, hope and freedom; yet because of their ontological nature, they do not necessarily experience or live them in the same way. All too frequently, as the course of human events and civilization has demonstrated, human beings are forced to deny freedom and hope, and in so doing, deny their very selves. They are denied their being and their transcendence and are forced to live inhumanly.

The history of humanity demonstrates that individuals of faith, who trust in something greater than themselves, can be committed to a cause that seeks to better the world in which they live. They do so by allowing for hope and freedom to flourish even in what may appear as the most dire of circumstances. They are capacitated to do so because they have “cast away the soul’s protective cloak in which the wounded heart had wrapped itself” (Moltmann 1996/2004: 66). By such action they fulfill their ontological nature, live out their transcendence and exercise their freedom. In public, secondary urban education, hope becomes the principle of success, both for students and faculty. However, it is not a groundless hope of fantastic aspirations, nor is it a dreamy escape from current circumstances; rather, hope surrounds both experience and judgment. In this manner, “experience and judgment are always bound up with a horizon of openness toward reality, in which a thing comes into view and can be experienced” (Moltmann 1993: 190-191), but experienced in the light of hope according to as yet an unfulfilled promise.

That ‘promise’ is the education of our young. It requires an understanding of the context in which it occurs and the reality in which it is fulfilled or carried out, but is based on principles which transcend the present and look toward a time of fulfillment: when equity of opportunity is paired with equal possibility for achievement, grounded in the true merit of individuals living and working in community. In this context, “learning is not the acquisition of knowledge by which we shut ourselves off from the world, but the self-emptying” necessary to build community and establish relationships from which individuals are able to “define themselves authentically and spontaneously in relation to the world” and their community (Delio 2013: 141 & 137 respectively).

In the real first world poverty of urban secondary education, lasting knowledge, authentic to the context of the individual, is born from the disparity between what is lived and experienced

as opposed to what is hoped for and dreamed, in other words, between what education delivers and what it promises. It is only in this authentic crucible where real learning, not out of despondency, but out of hope and promise, takes place. It is forged in mutual respect, cognizant of the reality being lived and ambitious enough to defeat stereotype, prejudice and lethargy of individuals and systems. Yet it begins in the truth of human reality, by a recognition of who one is and the world in which one lives. Because it is learning forged in hope, it does not allow that “rejected people take the judgment of others on board themselves, and begin to despise and hate themselves” (Moltmann 2004: 68); on the contrary, its starting principle is the uncovering of the truth while valuing the relational being of the other manifested in the ontological nature of the human person revealed in freedom and promise exercised in community, and lived in transcendence.

2. Thought, Culture and Education

The testing culture is the result of misguided thought attached to strong cultural convictions rooted in class dynamics.

The Problem of One-Size-Fits All Standardized Testing

There are many things that occur within the confines of urban secondary classrooms, and in many ways these occurrences are echoed and imitated throughout all of the United States. To a large extent it is almost a manufactured and pre-packaged educational process that has become the universally sterile experience of secondary education as a whole. This process is guided not by creativity, ingenuity, or the passion of the combined efforts of all present in the classroom, but by the externally imposed necessity of measured student performance as achieved through the standardized benchmarks of regional and national tests. At first these tests represented isolated, capsulized, content standards and particular student benchmarks. Later they evolved in to the Common Core and are now claimed to fully represent national college and workforce preparedness (Brown¹⁵, 1992; Brighton, et al 2007, Johnson & Johnson, 2005). While each of these alignments may perhaps be meritorious in their own right, we have erroneously been lead to believe that because students from upper middle class America consistently score well on these tests (Belz & Geary, 1984; Marchant & Paulson, 2001; Zwick, 2002; Green & Zwick, 2007; Himelfarb & Zwick, 2011), that they should thus be marketed to the rest of the United States as a national benchmark of achievement. In fact, as late as 2012 “NCLB did not yet evidence sustainable and

¹⁵ Brown presented his paper to the annual meeting of the American Educational (Zwick & Himelfarb, The Effect of High School Socioeconomic Status on the Predictive Validity of SAT Scores and High School Grade Point Average, 2011)(Zwick & Jennifer, New Perspectives on the correlation of SAT scores, High School Grades, and Socioeconomic Factors, 2007)(Zwick, 2002)(Marchant & Paulson, 2001)(Belz & Geary, 1984)Association April 20-24, 21992)

generalized high-stakes accountability effects,” because “improving average achievement as well as narrowing achievement gaps was associated with long-term statewide instructional capacity and teacher resources rather than short-term NCLB implementation fidelity, rigor of standards, and state agency’s capacity for data tracking and intervention” (Lee & Reeves, 2012).

Since its inception¹⁶ mandatory public education has been deeply rooted in a process and experience model of learning¹⁷; however, today, both educators and the university programs that prepare them have been besieged by a relentless campaign. This attack is orchestrated by the extremely profitable testing industry¹⁸, which has successfully enticed politicians and policy makers¹⁹ into believing that the tests they create and market to upper-middle-class America should now become the paradigm and benchmark of success throughout the nation. By this allure from sirens, together, they have shifted teaching and learning from excitement about discovery, moments of deep and life altering reflection, and sheer academic intrigue into a mere factory product model which focuses primarily on end results in an almost Darwinian survival of the fittest, with the promise of stunning personal financial success as the ultimate reward and goal.

¹⁶By 1918 all states had passed compulsory educational laws; however, they were not effectively implemented until the 1930’s. (eric Government abstract, <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED119389.pdf> accessed 7/20/15).

¹⁷The educational Theorist, John Dewey published *Experience & Education* in 1938, just when an enforceable system of public education was taking hold across the nation and the work has been instrumental ever since.

¹⁸ Harvard political review: <http://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/case-standardized-testing/>
Washington Post: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2014/05/05/pearson-of-course-wins-huge-common-core-testing-contract/> Both accessed 8/15/2015

¹⁹ Moyers and Company, Bill Moyers news blog: <http://billmoyers.com/2014/03/28/public-education-who-are-the-corporate-reformers/> accessed 8-15-2015

These activities, common to secondary classrooms throughout the United States, force teachers to comply with policy shifts and monitor student performance. Allegedly, they provide an unbiased and impartial rating system for students, teachers, schools and districts; but they are intrinsically linked to a misconception born of scientific inquiry and research that mystically equates more testing with better, more accurate, not results, but performance. Citing Darling-Harmond, 2004, Nichols affirms, “The biggest problem with the current trend of more rigorous standards ... is that it mistakes measuring schools for fixing them” (2011:94). That is: students, teachers, schools and districts will perform better if tested under the upper-middle-class paradigm model that has been established. To ensure this end, intrinsic rewards in conjunction with state rating systems have been established. By the same token, there also exists a process of penalization and ostracism for those individuals and institutions that fail to achieve within the parameters of the benchmarks already pre-established as normative. In Rhode Island and so many other states, student performance has been linked to renewal of teacher licensing or certification by the state.

A Contextual, Historical Understanding of Thought

However, all these activities, supposedly rooted in a truly ‘scientific’ and ‘objective’ fashion of students, teachers and system are, in fact, grounded in something that has little to do with education itself. Not only do they seem to rest in a conception of the current teaching profession as inadequate, but also they produce often rigid repercussions for failure as well as stringent expectations of state-wide teacher education programs that are grounded on assumptions that precede any possible learning and yet which guide not only educator’s actions, but also their beliefs. This means that their dogmatic and stringent interpretation of what must

be and what needs to be in education are reminiscent of the “ethical society”(Gilbert 2013:81). An ethical society is one rooted in predetermined or preexisting laws and is not self-determining. Such a society “will typically create cultural images that reinforce this belief and that warn of dire punishments for those that transgress” (ibid, 81).

Human belief has a guiding force. That guiding force is THOUGHT, itself. THOUGHT is not the same as thinking. I firmly believe that thinking is that which is used to resolve a problem. Thought precedes thinking and is the conjoining of the rational or intellectual capacity with the irrational or emotive aspect of the individual. It is grounded in a uniquely personal experience as well as a shared history and common cultural expectations. Thought is the precondition, which in Heidegger’s terminology is the “tracing out of the measure and manner of the realm of unconcealment in which it already moves” (Clark 2011:88).

Thought of this kind, then, does not have its own inherent nature, but rather it is conditioned by very intimate personal experiences, cultural expectations, nationality, race, and socio-economic-class. These help constitute a shared history or historical myth that encompasses the mutually forged concept of a nation-state, or a national/ethnic/religious identity and which in some extreme instances of enlightenment, truly encompasses the concept of a global society and the implications of an ecological global citizenship. To be conscious is to simply have awareness of our environment. Thought, as it is being defined here, is a volitional aspect of the human person that constitutes a shaping of their identity or personhood. It is crafted by environment, culture and class and acts as the underlying precursor to belief, but also to freedom. It is the ontological grounding of our personhood beyond simple existence. The challenge, divergence and dichotomy lies not in THOUGHT itself, but where the development of it has taken those in the testing industry and their

ideological co-sharers as opposed to educators and students, particularly urban educators and their constituency.

Thought in its formational stage is conditioned by lived experiences and shared lived experiences within a society's social framework; but in the formational stage it is also highly influenced by environmental factors. However, "the geographical givens (or any other kind) can act only within the compass of a given society, in conformity with its structures, its economic regime, [and] the institutions which it has given itself" (Sartre 1963: 164). Just as the thought and thought processes of one raised in the desert will de-facto be different from a person raised where water was always plentiful, the thought and the following processes of one raised in poverty will differ extensively from one raised in abundance. One raised in an oppressive totalitarian regime will "think" differently than one raised in a socially liberal environment because the foundational thought will be different. The societal institutions, language and cultural norms and myths will heavily influence all these factors in order to legitimize a perpetuation of the status quo, and deeply influence the formation of thought.

Sadly, however, the current practices in education, whereby what has always worked in upper-middle-class America – as judged by performance on national tests-- is being exported to the rest of the nation, reducing, if you will, the understanding of what education should be to a one-size-fits-all mentality. That the well-to-do model should continually be marketed as an ultimate educational paradigm has one fundamental and fatal flaw- THOUGHT- is NOT universal but is highly determined in its formation by historical, social, and cultural factors external to it. That which they consider to be universal by their test design, is really very particular and quite individualistic, the only real commonality of humanity is the

fundamental precursor of the necessity of thought, which precedes any intellectual contingency.

In every instance from the foundation of thought emerges the edifice of theory. Theory seeks the meaning of existence of both material and metaphysical concepts or realities; it is that by which one begins to determine meaning and purpose. Because it rises from thought, it too is highly dependent upon the historical and social factors that helped to determine the formation of thought. Theory then becomes the guiding principle of belief. Theory is the method used by individuals with whomever and whatever surrounds them. Theory, however, is not the interaction itself, but the precondition guiding both behavioral and expectational outcomes via the interplay and interchange with one's personal and impersonal environment, i.e. with people and things and the mutual exchanges that occur between them. To relate and interact is both to effect and be effected.

Praxis is theory in action. Every action rooted in theory and determined by thought, which in some way engages the world, is praxis. It is through this very engagement that "man must become conscious of himself as a social being, as simultaneously the subject and object of the socio-historic process" (Lukacs 1971: 19). Sartre believes that "praxis is inconceivable without need, transcendence, and the project" or the goal to which it moves (Sartre 1963: 171). Insofar as theory is contingent upon thought, and praxis contingent upon theory, then the 'need' is an ontological necessity for human individuals in their capacity to understand and give meaning to the world around them. Insofar as praxis is direct engagement with the world exterior to the individual, it affords the opportunity for the individual to express their subjectivity, i.e. the opportunity to determine one's future. Yet, at the same time, insofar as one experiences themselves as object, then to that extent, that self-

directed future is determined to a large degree by forces alien to the individual and often times, depending upon one's economic standing, contrary to one's own nature. As the poverty simulation so clearly demonstrated to all of us who participated in it, freedom and the positive capacity to exercise it in a real and objective fashion are frequently determined by socio-economic-standing. While money does not necessarily buy 'freedom' it does to a large extent effect one's capacity to determine one's destiny, overcome material challenge and chart one's course through life. By contrast, those of lower socio-economic-standing are frequently buffeted by a series of events, circumstances and domino-like processes which inhibit choice, mandate mere survival actions and determine both the parameters and confines of ones human existence within society. The possibility of real choice is eliminated because simple survival precludes such choices, leaving the human person an incomplete, hollow shell-of their own lack of humanity.

The Importance of Freedom, Self-transcendence, and Action

Before addressing transcendence, subjectivity, and objectivity, we must address how intelligence enters and shapes the epistemological framework being established. Intelligence is the capacity through praxis to modify theory and thus alter thought resulting in the creation of a confirmed belief. What this means is two-fold: first, while Thought is the underlying principle of being beyond simple existence, it is malleable and capable of change; secondly, for us as people, Thought is also grounded in our human experience. When Thought engages in the process of actual thinking it engages with something other than and beyond itself. This process of human interaction we have labeled praxis. Praxis is a way to modify or completely alter theories we have created or that societies have generated for us in Thought. These

theories produced by Thought or generative from Thought are eventually tested in praxis. The role of intelligence is to create a match or symmetry between theory and experience. Intelligence cannot alter existence or the existential reality that exists beyond us; it can only alter the perception or understanding of that reality.

When intelligence is capable of aligning theory with experience so that a real congruence is achieved, then a confirmed belief is created. However, if intelligence “must freeze, kill or hold being at rest in order to ‘know’ it, then this supposed knowledge is a violation of truth” (Gilbert 2013: 6) because all being is being in motion. Logically, intelligence can only offer three possibilities to thought: 1) a complete denial or rejection of the theory because it has not proved true in praxis; 2) a denial of experience because it did not meet the expectations of the theory; or 3) a clear recognition of the environment in its multiple facets of change while also creatively adapting theory. It is only in this third way whereby the two, together, provide the individual or society the capacity to work and function both authentically and meaningfully in a constructive process of humanizing engagement with others and the world. Such an engagement grounds our thought in ontological freedom and human transcendence as historical beings by establishing a truly proper belief.

A belief is what one holds to be true because it is grounded in thought, praxis and intelligence: the lived experience of the individual conditioned by the framework of a given society is formulated in theory and intelligently confirmed in praxis. Thus, it becomes the real, the true—a belief that has meaning confirmed by experience conjoined with intellect and emotion. Belief becomes that which “is” for the individual above and beyond themselves and their world of physical entities.

What characterizes belief is its transcendental nature. The transcendental aspect of praxis determined by Sartre only has relevance insofar as praxis gives rise to belief. However, this transcendence is not defined traditionally as immutability or the sense of a permanent essence; but rather as that to which the individual naturally moves as something beyond themselves. Thus belief “is defined by intentionality [and] by intentionality [it] transcends itself” (Sartre 1991: 38). The impermanence of belief rests partially in the fact that it should be a constant synthesis of present and past (ibid. 39) that guides belief toward that which it intends, i.e. the real and the good. Because intelligence offers three possibilities, only one of which is genuine, belief may be representative of reality and experience or unrepresentative of it. Because beliefs are rooted in thought and thought is highly conditioned by experience and social class, incorrect beliefs are common. Thus “rivers flow to the sea” is a common belief but so too is the belief that one race is superior or inferior to another, one religion is better than or worse than another, or one class exists solely to serve another etc.... are all beliefs that have been held in common by many people at one historic moment or another.

Beliefs may be shared by groups of individuals because they are grounded in shared human experiences rooted in history and social class. Also, they extend beyond a single human individual due to their transcendental nature. That is, because beliefs move toward particular and frequently common ends, they extend beyond individuals toward particular goals. Thus, beliefs may be shared or held in common by people who have lived and experienced life similarly or under similar conditions. Beliefs are shared by individuals who seek the same goal or end. Common goal or purpose is a direct effect of a belief that transcends the single individual as the result of intelligence rightly or wrongly evaluating their praxis. Waves of historic human genocide can be explained by hatred, but hatred and

even fear are rooted in an historical human experience that shape thought, guide the interpretive choices of intelligence and formulate devastating beliefs.

It is because of the transcendent nature of belief, marked by individuals going beyond themselves, a flowing synthesis of present and past, and the direction toward a future that the semi-alternating experiences of subjectivity and objectivity are experienced. That is, the transcendent nature of belief, determined by an intentionality that confirms meaning allows for the inter-subjectivity of individuals, resulting in the formation of a culture. It is solely within a culture that one experiences authentic subjectivity or objectivity. The subject-object relation becomes authentic because it is a human creation as opposed to the natural forces that humans seek to overcome. Both the subjectivity and objectivity here referred to are possible only due to human endeavors to enhance or impede their own fulfillment as well as that of others. It is the march of the historical human element to enhance or hinder the ends of one-self or others that gives rise to both human society and culture, as they have hitherto been experienced since the dawn of the most primitive civilizations.

To be subject, and experience subjectivity in its most primitive linguistic form is to exist in the nominative case. That is, to be subject is to name, and in naming one acquires power over that which is named (Genesis 1:28, 2:19). But cultural-linguistically, to name is more than to designate, it also means to be transformed or changed. Hence, biblical tradition in which Western society has been permanently immersed is filled with examples of name changes to denote transformation, a change of purpose: Genesis 17:5, 17:15, 32:29, 2 Samuel 12:27 are some simple examples. Lastly, within the biblical tradition, to be re-named as a subject signifies to stand in a new relationship with others as is evidenced in the

transformation of the disciple's name from Simon to Cephas/Peter ((John 1:42), who becomes "this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18).

Ontologically, the derivative understanding of subjectivity thus means the ability to exert power over the present and future. Subjectivity in human beings is expressed in absolute freedom to explore and create one's own destiny, write one's own history. To be free is to determine one's own future, and by doing so to stand in a different relationship with others. "Freedom is not an ideal located outside of man; nor is it an idea which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition of the quest for human completion" (Freire 2012: 47). Subjectivity is at the core of what it means to be human: "Human freedom precedes essence in man and makes it possible; the essence of the human being is suspended in his freedom" (Sartre 1992: 60). The ultimate subjectivity then is the determining of one's own essence. It is the ability to name oneself as subject and thus create one's own essence via choices and actions. Becoming an authentic subject, then, involves the entire process: through thought one develops theory, which is tested in praxis, becomes adjusted by intelligence, and is formulated in belief, which in turn is exercised in freedom. It is through a combination of thought, beliefs and actions, a careful interplay of praxis with the world that "there is no difference between the being of man, and his being free" (ibid, 60). Thought is the underlying reality of the human; subjectivity is its principle expression. The essence of thought is its freedom of self-determination, self-naming, self-creating. It is thought which makes being possible and is exercised in freedom that results in the exercise of human and humanizing subjectivity.

For the purpose of clarity, when freedom is examined through the lens of conceptual dialectic, a challenge or real dialectic emerges. That is, within the freedom of this absolute

subjectivity as realized in the individual person, there lies a deep paradox, which is, one's own objectivity. In the philosophical framework of a purely conceptual dialectic, to be object is to be in direct opposition to being subject. For a human individual, the impediment of their subjectivity through its opposite, objectivity, is to impede their process of self-actualization, self-realization; it is to deny their humanity in so far as objectivity impedes its completion. Hence, this type of objectivity is not a positive thing. While it is real and really exists, it is not that of making something real as in the sense the permanent 'object' of analysis or the 'object' of study. The way it is used here means to turn that which should be the subject-human, into an object, and in so doing, denying one's true identity. It is to take the active ingredient of any transitive verb and make it the recipient; it is to turn that which acts into that which solely receives; it is to make that which controls the destiny, controlled. To be object and forced to exercise objectivity is not the hypothetical exercise of reason devoid of influencing content. It is, however, the impediment of freedom to act freely through thought in the exercising of one's own subjectivity via the process of theory, praxis, and belief. It is by such means that one should arrive at a definition of self via a certain coherency of belief and action guided by intelligence.

The absolute freedom of thought, "cannot transcend its own historicity" (Clark 2011, 12) that is, the infinite possibility is captive to a finite, historically conditioned reality and often holds people captive to environment and "makes us experience the fact of belonging to our environment *as a unique event*" (Sartre 1963, 60). The human reality as experienced in daily living is the dialectic of subject and object. "It is true that the individual is conditioned by the social environment and that he turns back upon it to condition it in turn; it is this and nothing else which makes his [human] reality" human (ibid, 71). Therefore, "[m]en themselves make their history, but in a given environment which conditions them"; that is, the individual is "both the

product of his own product and a historical agent who [should] under no circumstances be taken as a product” because “men make their history on the basis of real, prior conditions, but it is the *men* who make it and not the prior conditions” (ibid, 84 & 85). Within the nexus of subjectivity lies ever-present objectivity. As individuals create history, they at once become both the subjects of their own creation, and its objects. That is, “man makes History; this means that he objectifies himself in it and is alienated in it. In this sense History, which is the proper work of all [subjects] appears to men as a foreign force exactly in so far as they do not recognize the meaning of their enterprise” (ibid. 89).

The Dynamic Nature of Culture

The basic principle of the human person is thought. By nature this thought is grounded in freedom; however, the circumspect reality of the human individual as historical existent aptly expresses the crux of a truly Hegelian dialectic of subjectivity-objectivity. In the process of human history, it is through their continual interplay that culture is formed. Culture as we know and experience it is the historical expression of the dialectic between human subjectivity and human objectivity. It is in the dynamic interplay of subject-object where culture itself is created through the expression, acceptance or rejection of shared beliefs. The culture here of which we are speaking, “we give a name to it, we teach it we adopt it or we fight against it” but “it has a history” shaped by the dialogical interplay of human subjects and human objects whereby “it does not cease to evolve.” At one point it existed as a particular way of life and system of beliefs: absolute monarchy, constitutional monarchy, representative democracy, the totalitarian state, the crown, the empire, the nation, free trade, capitalism. Marxism, etc.... what was “once a living philosophy” an ideology for which people fought and died, created art, music and

monuments toward and dedicated their whole way of being to, “is now a dead philosophy”, and yet each “testified to a certain relation among men” (ibid. 55).

Culture thus conceived becomes the dynamic stage of the human interplay for both belief and intention. In a word, it is Heidegger’s *Dasein* of “essentially historical” human beings (Clark 2011: 29). Culture is the format in which the bittersweet human drama of life occurs and unfolds. It is where people find a voice or are made speechless. It is where they encounter their own subjectivity or are forced to become objects, alienated from their truly authentic subjectivity. Culture in and of itself does not have a predetermined end because it is a human creation established in the context of belief and the manifest unfolding of individuals to find meaning and value. Culture is the interpretation of life set to frequently fallible human standards, which in practice are rarely questioned and thus act as the norm. This normative framework or “nexus of practices, assumptions, prejudices, habits and traditions” act as the guiding principles and universal laws “that make up the everyday experiences and actions in which we find ourselves”. They become the dominant culture of a family, a group, an organization, a society, a nation, an empire, or a world (ibid, 29). When someone pertains to a group characterized as “ethical”, not only does this framework go unchallenged, but also there is some form of punishment or ostracism involved when they are challenged.

The very real human vocation to authenticity, referred to by Freire as the human being’s “ontological vocation to be a subject” is deeply enmeshed in the dialogical unfolding of culture, because it is here that the person “acts upon and transforms his world, and in so doing moves toward ever new possibilities of fuller and richer life individually and collectively” (Freire 2012: 32)²⁰. However, unlike the dialectic of Hegel which plays itself out on the drama of the human stage with the eventual outcome predetermined, the dialectic of culture is deeply rooted in the

²⁰ Forward provided by Richard Shaull

struggle for domination, that is, in the struggle for economic power, political power, and social recognition. It has no predetermined, inevitable end because it is the creation of humans and is changed, altered and transformed by them. History itself is a clear documentation of the struggle to rise to power, maintain power, extend power, and the revolutionary upheavals to provide an alternative form of leadership and create new forms and sources of power whereby the religious and cultural norms either represent and sustain the current dominant ideologies, or become the subversive counter-ideological forces which are either crushed or inspire change and transformation by calling out and re-naming not just new people, but different ways of thinking, acting and being, a new culture.

Culture does not exist in a void because it is rooted in thought, formulated in belief, and played out in economic systems such as mercantilism, feudalism, capitalism, socialism, etc..... Culture acts as the full expression or counter-expression to the forces and people in power. That is why Heidegger felt “that the drive to know is often comprised by elements of domination and control” (Clark 2011: 1). Culture in this dynamic aspect of the human person and his history is very much in line with Nietzsche’s understanding of morality in its most general application because for him “a person’s theoretical beliefs are best explained in terms of his moral beliefs” (Leiter 2003: 9). That is why in *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche affirms that morality is “prudence, prudence, prudence [*Klugheit*] mixed with stupidity, stupidity, stupidity” (198)²¹ and by this we are given to understand that “[t]he ‘prudence’ consists in getting others to adhere to a morality that is advantageous to oneself, while the stupidity Nietzsche refers to is that involved when others, for whom such a morality is disadvantageous, adhere to it nonetheless” (Leiter 2003: 105).

²¹ Quoted in Leiter 2003: 105.

Schools and the Surrounding Culture

Culture is one of the most fundamental, all-encompassing aspects of the human person and the societies that surround him. Culture, however is not neutral, it is the expression of power or its subversion. To be human is to exist in culture and to be a part of the struggle for self-definition in freedom. Culture then lies at the core of all political, social, economic and religious realities because it is the historical expression of human persons to validate their beliefs and positions.

It is only in this context that culture can be understood within the confines of a reality in flux; but it is also only in this way that culture can truly be understood as the integral aspect of schools and societal education. Schools are created by humans to serve a utilitarian purpose beyond simple education; every school or school system since the dawn of history has served, explicitly or implicitly, the ulterior purposes to perpetuate the dominant culture and, to serve the needs of that culture. To attempt to imply that schools exist devoid of the powers that created them or as insulated entities separate and apart from political, social, economic and religious struggle is not only a misnomer but also a fallacy. Schools not only exist within a cultural context, but more importantly were created to serve that particular cultural context through a continuity of its beliefs and also to meet its very practical needs via training, learning and most frequently, indoctrination.

To be in a school is to be firmly planted within a particular culture and to be an intimate part of its designs and purposes. By simple definition, it is to be a part of the attempt at self-definition, of finding a voice or of being silenced. A cursory purview of the current status of the

public system of education in the United States blatantly reveals that it has become a “culture of testing” and by the word culture is clearly understood all that has hitherto been said about culture. As the educational historian Lawrence Cremin aptly points out, public schools are a “part of a configuration of education that has usually included families, churches, Sunday schools, all committed to similar or complimentary values” (1976:58). That is, public schools are intimately connected to the societies and cultures that produced them; they do not exist apart from community, nor do they exist apart from culture. They are not a miniature relief of the world, but the world itself examined in miniature relief. That is, a school re-creates the cultural world that produced it; it is that world in miniature, a complete microcosm of it.

Cultures of Power and Standardized Testing

Let us now return to what had been said earlier about testing. First, educational policy makers, politicians and the testing industry who seriously believe in the necessary sterile, one size-fits-all, marketable educational practices rooted in testing, can share the same beliefs because they must also share the same CULTURE, guided by the same intentionality. That is, theoretically they were guided by thought, which interacted with theory, found more precise articulation in praxis balanced by intelligence thus resulting in the articulation and pursuit of this shared belief – the necessity of testing. From what has been annunciated, however, it should be quite clear that it is testing rooted in their own cultural and class experiences and can only be a perpetuation of their own understanding and perceptions. This would clearly and easily explain why students of the same ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds score better than those of diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

Testing then becomes a clever tool. It becomes a means to enhance and enforce the status quo. It reflects the “ethical society”, not in that there is a morality or ethical nature to the testing, but rather, this “testing culture” or culture of continual testing has social, emotional and professional reprisals. Conscientization, awakening to one’s true sense of freedom leads one to recognize that testing of this nature is not that which has to be, but is something that was made to be. That is, like all culture, it intensifies the acute human struggle for dominance and validation of one segment of society over another through the arbitrary standard of proficiency to a particular set of questions and intellectual tasks. It achieves a “seamless” indoctrination by creating ‘benchmarks’ which individuals must attain in order to advance within the system. However, it is the product of human design, and like so many unexamined cultural givens of its era, it is deeply flawed.

If mandatory state testing has truly been the new coin of the educational realm since the implementation of NCLB in 2002-2003, then it has since come to be a very devalued coin.²² The first facial devaluation came from the insurmountable number of poor, urban, local education authorities (LEA from this point forward) that had sought waivers from the stringent demands of NCLB (Ujifusa, 2012; Klein, 2015) due to the now countless number of poor urban LEA’s that are falling behind or are categorized as failing under Race-to-the-Top (Barnes 2011; Weiss, 2014). These are deemed “problems” which currently require state intervention, instead of challenges to the testing system itself to solve externally imposed problems (McGuinn, 2012; Camera, 2014). Since nationwide, across districts and time zones, students of low SES consistently fail to achieve proficiency, any person with proper reasoning capabilities must seriously call into question the test’s validity. As individuals

²² New York Times article: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/25/us/obama-administration-calls-for-limits-on-testing-in-schools.html?_r=0 10/26/15

grow in their capacity to know and question, as they grow in self-worth and freedom, they begin to reject the coin of the realm because “everything given to us by our [beliefs]...is always given as being capable of being contradicted by subsequent” interactions of praxis with theory grounded in thought (Sartre 1960/1991: 75).

By our earlier definition, intelligence predicates modification of theory by means of praxis rooted in thought. More than a decade and a half after the initial implementation of NCLB, those setting policy, those in politics, and those supported by the financial interests of testing have yet to reexamine their fundamental belief grounded in an erroneous thought born of class and economic-cultural paradigms of power and stereotypes. These beliefs also rely on a false or stagnant sense of praxis where thought, praxis, i.e. student performance and belief demonstrate lack congruency with their theories and fail to help reframe them. At present, congruency has only been consistently achieved overall –as demonstrated on standardized test results and tier 1 college acceptances-in upper to upper-middle-class students. The same tests show overall dismally poor results in those public secondary schools primarily composed of the poor (Noguera: 2003). Their two-sided belief-coin has lost its face value in the ill-fated attempt to take very particular truths and unsuccessfully universalize them in the educational paradigm model they’ve established.

This constant incongruity of urban poor LEAs to conform to the established belief norms of the educational experts has failed to afford the latter the opportunity to review praxis, alter thought, and reformulate beliefs more congruent with urban lower-class LEA data results representative of actual achievement among the poor. Instead, the power brokers of education have re-doubled their efforts to bring a starkly different reality inline with their ill-conceived beliefs, and in the process they have accused teachers, and systems of

incompetence (Boaler 2003). In the process they have also simultaneously lowered both the academic competency (Shriberg & Shriberg, 2006; O'Malley, et. al 2007; Baker & Johnston, 2010) and esteem (Dutro & Selland 2012; Barterian, et.al 2013) of many poor urban students. This has not only resulted in incongruence, between belief and anticipated ends, but also with results diametrically opposed to their ultimate purpose (Perna & Thomas 2009). The powerbrokers of education have surmised their continued failure amongst urban poor secondary schools not to be the result of their own faulty thought, erroneous belief, and unintelligible praxis but rather have chosen to lay the full weight of their lack of intelligence- against the secondary, urban, poor, public schools: their teachers, students, administrators and LEA policy makers.

Sadly, what is really needed is an examination of the thought process behind standardized testing, i.e. an intelligent recognition of its literal breakdown when attempting to disseminate their particular cultural, economic paradigm of value to the universal. In other words if there truly is a necessity for testing, it should be rooted in a need to monitor and gauge academic progress. It should not be rooted in the unrealistic expectation that the test results of economically well-to-do students can successfully be duplicated in the entire country despite the fact that now 51%²³ of public school students are currently living in poverty. It also draws poignant attention to the necessity of creating tests that are consistent with a system of beliefs that recognize socio-economic injustice and seek a true measurement of academic progress and rigor. Such tests could be designed to emphasize paradigms that are true and relevant to the poor, but which accurately assess achievement and advances on a truly even

²³ Southern Education Foundation: <http://www.southerneducation.org/Our-Strategies/Research-and-Publications/New-Majority-Diverse-Majority-Report-Series/A-New-Majority-2015-Update-Low-Income-Students-Now> accessed 9/6/2015.

field of play. Tests cannot be oblivious to the current conditions of reality and truth nor should they be a tool or means of enforcement of the current structures of power.

The reformulation of their thought should include among other things, the fact that: “family-level variables have an important influence on student achievement as measured by large scale standardized tests”. It should also be aware “that about half of the test score is accounted for by variables outside of the control of teachers and school administrators” (Tienken, 2014)²⁴. Their new perspective should also be cognizant that personality plays a large influence on life achievement, but that these traits “have notable associations with educational attainment, hourly wages, and self-direction at work” in reference to the parent/s guardian/s. The children of lower socio-economic status (SES from this point forward) parents are “less likely to possess such characteristics” (Bauldry, et. al. 2014). Lastly, a deeper understanding of the cultural, social and historic paradigms of power recognizes that not only does SES continue to play a major factor in “determining a Child’s performance” (Baker & Johnston, 2010), but “also predicts academic achievement” (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Sirin 2005)²⁵ as currently established because all of these things are supportive of a culture of power which excludes the poor themselves, what they value and the counter-culture in which they exist.

The counter-culture is one that exists outside of the dominant culture. Even in this context, a counter-cultural existence is grounded in some sense of moral worth or evaluative judgment of those in power. According to Nietzsche, the linguistic expression of morality- the very words, “good” and “evil” exist only in relation to power and have already been determined by the noble, not of moral dignity, but of power and prestige. According to him,

²⁴ Taken from Abstract

²⁵ Quoted in Baker & Johnston, 2010: *Journal of Instructional Psychology*; September 2010, Vol.37 Issue 3, p.198).

“the real breeding ground for the concept ‘good’ ...has been the ‘good’ themselves, meaning the noble, the mighty, the high-placed...who saw and judged themselves and their actions good” (Nietzsche 2013:11).

The tension of these truths that give rise to presuppositions of testing are deeply rooted in the culture which created them; but they also allow for the intelligent realization that any successful program which attempts to create academic parity must, of necessity, reach beyond the school, enter the home and adequately address continued social inequalities, if it is to achieve any level of real and sustained success (Noguera 2003). Systems should not be created to measure and judge individuals based on standardized test scores. In the end these are really completely meaningless as a gage toward success or even self-definition. Under the present method they only serve to deprecate those who score poorly (Dweck, 1986; cited in Nichols 2011: 45ff). Tests of actual measurement must be examined in light of the ability of individuals to attain certain ends; i.e.: graduation from high school, achieve a career in a skilled profession, attend trade school, military, 2 or 4 year college. They must first agree upon culturally relevant and significant goals in the further development of self and human freedom, decide upon life hallmarks indicative of such growth, and constantly re-adjust. Life’s greatest challenges are seldom faced solely with pencil and paper.

The life-goals of students must also be viewed in the context of both particular culturally distinct paradigms as well as that of the individual him or herself--who she is and where he is coming from. Are they the first in their family to graduate high school? Are they the first in their family to attain and sustain a particular career? Are they the first to successfully complete a 2, 4-year college or obtain a graduate degree? To operate in a fashion oblivious to these realities is to deny the research indicative of current reality; it is to be an ostrich or the

fabled academician in the ivory tower, far removed from realities in the world and surrounded only by self-invented truths. Lastly, the intellectual success of individuals must encompass the reality of a plurality of cultures representative of a shared, democratic paradigm of power, instead of the intellectual and economic oligarchy that we have created under the pseudonym of a free-trade-capitalist-democracy. This paradigm and the testing oligarchy have created multiple impediments to high school graduation. By doing this they shut down any meaningful possibility of success, and perpetuate a cycle of low self-esteem, invigorating an economic divide of haves, and have-nots.

This is but the first side of the counterfeit coin carefully guarded in the purse destined for urban poor secondary schools. The second egregious face of the coin is the counter-intuitive belief that the currently established testing process continually flies in the face of purported ends. The fundamental belief that guides their actions fails to substantially achieve its goal, and in the process leads to the disinterest or disenfranchisement of many students of poverty or low-socio-economic means (O'Malley et al, 2007).

While the educational bank of misconceptions continues to house this bogus coin, the reality of its face is as old as human history itself: blame the victims for their failure to achieve. In this case, the victims are measured not by their own thought, theory, praxis and intelligent belief, but by those of others. By the culture of high-stakes-testing, those who hold sway, those having power, have successfully established their universal belief system as the norm and have imposed it upon others, whose thought and reality are vastly different, and presumed to be unequal in its capacity to know. On the contrary, the latter may prove quite the opposite if allowed to follow its own beliefs established through the very same process of thought. They may indeed prove contrary to the 'wisdom' of the power brokers, quite

intelligent. Such a challenge could eventually also turn the tables of prosperity and established measurable achievement. In *On the Genealogy of Morality* III: 7 Nietzsche says, “Every animal...instinctively strives for an optimum of favorable conditions in which fully to release his power and achieve.” Particular beliefs “are adopted because they contribute to the power of certain animals” but that cleverness “consists in getting others to adhere to a [belief] that is advantageous to oneself”, but “disadvantageous” to [the] others (Leiter 2002 105).

The beliefs of the dominant, while demonstrating “cleverness” or perhaps even treachery, do not demonstrate intelligence. It is when the transcendent and culturally shared beliefs of the urban poor come into conflict with those of the dominant belief model latent with their educational outcomes and retributive punishments that students as human subjects resulting from their own fulcrum of praxis are left with only two relevant choices: submit or resist the new belief foreign to their own thought. That is, as students grow in age and maturity, they begin to develop their own subjectivity and become cognizant of the reality. That is, through their own life history and cultural situation, they slowly awaken to the game and how it is being played, they either chose not to play and this can take a myriad of forms, or they can try and play as best they can given the inequities of the field itself and the rules that were set for them. In many ways the individualistic and competitive nature of education as it is carried out prevent the development of ‘class consciousness’.

I’d simply hypothesize that those among the poor who willingly abandon their own beliefs for a total integration of the educational belief of rich, upper-middle-class America and seek to achieve congruence with it in their own lives may indeed achieve academic success but at the price of their own authenticity, because they lack the life experiences and

cultural background associated with these beliefs. This group would constitute the honors program in an urban poor secondary school; those who aspire in every fashion to be like the upper-middle class. They are by nature not more intelligent than their peers, not more gifted or talented, but have been able to integrate the dominant belief paradigm into their own lives.

If this hypothesis (well beyond the scope of this work) is correct, then academic success or failure truly becomes a measurement of successful or unsuccessful integration of the belief of another group of people. This does NOT represent the freedom of thought generally associated with learning, but rather a rigid imposition that distorts the ontological and epistemological nature of these students, thus thwarting their own subjectivity in the urban poor secondary public schools. Had these same students been from middle to upper-middle-class America, they would have found instead a system that would have nurtured their belief and expanded their own subjectivity. But the price of total authenticity for these urban poor students results in total failure, hence a sustained dropout rate hovering at 40%.²⁶

It is such a dramatic statistic that has lead Nichols to conclude “standardized exams and state mandates are not about curriculum and helping students to become better learners; they are about bureaucracy, group-think, and controlling other people” (2011:50). They are about the dialectic of competing cultures. They are about the ability to find a voice or to be made voiceless. They are the historical expression in socio-educational terms of a capitalistic world-view that seeks to maintain the current paradigms and systems of power while doing little to actually improve the educational opportunities for those in public schools who live in poverty. All of this has been successfully implemented and carried out under the guise of improving educational opportunity and establishing clear standards for college and work force readiness, but in actuality it has done nothing to bring students of low SES any closer to

²⁶ RI Department of Education Database, <http://infoworks.ride.ri.gov/state/ri> accessed 8/17/15

that goal. In fact, it has done the opposite: the number of low SES students attending college is only ½ of 1 percent higher than in 1993, down 8% since 2007²⁷.

²⁷ Pew Research Center, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/01/15/college-enrollment-among-low-income-students-still-trails-richer-groups/> Accessed 9/13/14.

3. Culture, Education, Poverty, and Power

Schools and culture are human creations. They are evolutions of thought and praxis and serve as the interpretive lens of our human experience. Schools and educators espouse and perpetuate the dominant culture.

Culture, Conflict, and Dominant Worldviews

Because being is being in relationship and being itself is movement, when we speak of culture it is always in relation to a series of semi-coherent beliefs around a similar topic existing in dialectical relationship with each other and competing systems of power. This is because culture itself is reflective of the transient nature of both being and human existence in history. While thought should always be a dynamic interplay of theory with practice, those who have locked themselves to a set of particular beliefs, can only choose to ignore other realities or contraries within the same spectrum in order for the cultural belief to be fully substantiated. This is true on two levels, the first is simple negative reinforcement because “every question [or challenge to the belief] in essence points to the possibility of a negative reply” or its ‘negation’ (Sartre 1992, 58). By this means, each time the belief is challenged, its most ardent adherents draw closer together to protect it and vehemently defend it. With what they eventually deem as a victory over another belief results in further entrenchment of their belief as fundamentally inseparable from their personhood or survival. Secondly, the reality of the world is contradiction that “is at the root of all movement and life” (Hegel 1812-1816, v.2, p.67; quoted in Callinicas 1999: 41).

Each reality contains within itself the seeds of its own disintegration and while negation enters via man's ability to distinguish opposites, the higher tendency should move beyond simple negation, to synthesis "as the clue to all experience" (Mure 1948: 119). But those who have locked themselves within a set belief system are unwilling to allow the process of synthesis to occur. They only accept the recognition of the challenge the negation itself imposes, but fail to see within it the naturally inherent dialectical possibility of transformation and synthesis; and yet, "[i]t is only when the contradictions are perceived, when they are recognized as incompatible, in their unreconciled form with truth, and when the synthesis which can reconcile them has been discovered, that the true dialectic process is before us" (McTaggart & McTaggart 1964: 6). An authentic dialectic is the pre-stage and pre-condition for change, as it recognizes things are not right and their continued pursuit only causes unnecessary suffering so that others may prosper. However, with each cultural 'triumph' focused solely on the negation and excluding the full dialectic process of synthesis, it creates what Bourdieu and Passeron (1971) have termed "symbolic violence" or "the imposition of the meaning system of one group onto another" (Feinberg and Soltis 2009: 62). Today in education this has been identified as the 'culture of testing' and its continued vigor, a cleverly disguised form of symbolic violence.

When a particular belief attains a level of sustainability or continued plausibility over an extended period of time by a substantial number of individuals, it achieves the status of a cultural 'world-view'. It is this particular yet shared, though not universally, cultural-global stance that "reveals the intelligibility of a world that is progressively in the making, culturally and socially" (Freire 1998:109). That is, historically, while cultural-world-views may endure centuries, millennia or barely a single generation, as in the case of Hitler's National

Socialism, they are progressive in nature, shift and change. They are not, nor should they be a permanent locus: even religious messages must be ‘interpreted anew for each subsequent generation’ and the interpretation or meaning of their significance can be substantially altered or completely changed into something quite different.

‘Intelligibility’ is determined by the possessors of the world-view, but not all possess it equally. World-views, like the cultures from which they emerge, are used to substantiate systems of relationships and structures of power, domination and frequently exploitation. A particular world-view becomes the lens through which said group of individuals come to interpret, understand and envision who they are and how they act in conjunction with others as a result of a shared culturally forged identity shaped in praxis. “It also reveals the efforts of each individual subject in regard to his or her process of assimilation of the intelligibility of that world” (Ibid.). While culture is the stage of human drama, the world-view is that which makes the drama intelligible. It is the worldview which interprets and translates actions to make them understandable and acquiesce to a given understanding or perspective.

A Critique of Education as Finding One’s Place

It is, then, by such means that the world-view becomes intimately connected with the process of education, because education as it exists assigns roles and determines place within a band of possibilities prescribed by the world-view of the educational system. That is, the worldview determines not only an outlook or perspective but also the means of dynamic or passive interaction and the continued sustainability of such actions and knowledge. It is a world-view which enables one to understand their role in the world, their relation to the world, and what significance others play or don’t play in that perspective.

As noted earlier, schools fully embody the cultural process of indoctrination. Feinberg and Soltis believe that “schools communicate implicit as well as explicit messages to their students” (2004:3). Freire worthily notes “all communication is the communication of something either implicitly or explicitly for or against something or someone, even when there is no clear reference to them” (Freire 1998:124). Schools then not only embody the process of communally communicable indoctrination, but also exist as the primary means of such indoctrination in lieu of the instability of family units, now trending between a 40-50% divorce rate as of 2012.²⁸ In our secular, multi-informational, Internet, social-media age, schools have become the fulcrum of constancy in the lives of youth, but especially children of low SES.

How one properly understands the functionality of the school, that is its primary purpose within society, is expressive of one’s world-view. What specific role education plays and the extent to which it serves as the platform of cultural indoctrination depends upon one’s own cultural perspective, but does not deny the integral role of education in perpetuating the hegemony of beliefs in society. Feinberg and Soltis (2004) elaborate two possible world-view interpretations of the overarching purpose of the school in society. The first is the “functionalist theory” whereby schools are seen “as serving to socialize students to adapt to the economic, political and social institutions of that society” (6). The prevalent role of the school in this model is to “mold individuals to fit *existing* social practices and requirements” (6, emphasis mine). In this framework it is believed that schools are essential in “facilitating the movement toward technological development, material well-being, and democracy” (Feinberg and Soltis 2009: 79).

²⁸ National Vital Statistics: http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/marriage_divorce_tables.htm accessed 9-6-15.

In this first view, there is no novelty, students are bred and nurtured to fill “existing” roles and often these are pre-determined by existing socio-economic status. In this model, those attending elite and prestigious schools become the nation’s leaders, leading capitalists and heads of corporations; those attending private non-elite schools are groomed for middle management, education, and medicine. Those in public schools are the labor force, military, and expendable population. While there may be considerable movement within each of these bands, to completely break free of one’s own circle and enter the other, is quite rare. Rather than promote such occurrences, education in this model is to prevent such things from happening while ensuring continued balance and equilibrium in society and a perpetuation of the status quo. According to this model, “school children learn to function according to the norms that are appropriate to economic and political life in the modern world” as interpreted by the established world-view of those in positions of power (ibid, 2004:18).

The second interpretation for the role of schools in society, offered by Feinberg and Soltis, is determined by a world-view and is labeled “conflict theory.” In this understanding, the school is seen as a “social practice supported and utilized by those in power to maintain their dominance in the social order” (Feinberg and Soltis 2004: 6-7). The only significant difference between this view and the functionalist interpretation is that the conflict theorists recognize the inherent inequality of the system and are discontent with it. From this world-view, all societal institutions are seen as “functioning to preserve inequitable class relations in society,” and schools become the major “instrument of class domination serving to reproduce the workforce and maintain class relationships” (ibid, 7).

From this perspective, the problem with the functionalist understanding “is that consciously or not, it takes the interests and perspectives [i.e. culture] of the dominant social

groups in society and elevates them to the status of universal norms” (ibid, 46). Historically within education, almost all “educational reform has been built on the functionalist view that schools serve to help people adapt to changing life”. Therefore, when “problems and dysfunction” arise in society, for whatever reason, “it is quite reasonable ...to think of schools as a way to correct it” (ibid, 22). This holds true even if it is the entire paradigmatic world-view that perpetuates economic inequality, social injustice, and ecological imbalances. In this way public schools have always been seen as the place not to address, but reaffirm the paradigm while seeking scapegoats.

The “culture of testing” prevalent within the public schools adheres well to these understandings. First, it has elevated the principles, theories and beliefs of the dominant culture to universal norms by determining what they believed was necessary as indicative for future success: PARCC, an acronym which means “Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers.”²⁹ Once their habitus³⁰ was established, the creators mathematically determined at which grade level of education certain preparedness must be instilled and then tested for it. Through the successful mandating of these tests as requirements tied to teacher licensing, grade promotion, high school graduation and school credibility, they successfully “use these norms to measure the contribution of members of all other groups. In this way the interests of a particular class are misrepresented as belonging to the society as a whole” (Feinberg and Soltis 2004: 46).

Secondly, those who fail: students of low SES, those who teach them, and the schools where they receive instruction, de facto become the scapegoats for that culture from that

²⁹ Pearson Testing: parcc.pearson.com accessed 9-7-2015.

³⁰ Bourdieu sees power as culturally and symbolically created, and constantly re-legitimized through interplay of agency and structure. From <http://www.powercube.net/other-forms-of-power/bourdieu-and-habitus/>. Accessed 2/7/2016.

world-view perspective. Because this is carried out in the school using what appear to be objective and equitable criteria, those with power and control successfully maintain the perpetuation of their hegemony by creating scapegoats of the losers, who they claim account for the capitalistic society's dysfunctionality and inequality of wealth and justice. While society's dysfunction is blamed on so many who are unable to pass the PARCC (not due to lack of understanding or desire), a much deeper issue is the veil of so-called "equity". This means that not only do "schools serve the dominant privileged class by providing for the reproduction of the economic and political status quo" but also they do it "in a way that gives the illusion of objectivity, neutrality, and opportunity" (Feinberg and Soltis 2004:43).

However, the reality is quite different. An "ethnographic study" in England of "12 working-class, secondary school boys called 'the lads'" conducted by Willis in 1981 (Feinberg & Soltis 2009:63) "reminds us that schools are as much involved in developing labor power for the lower end of the industrial hierarchy as developing the brain power for the upper end" (Feinberg & Soltis 2004:70). This reproduction of distinct classes worked well in an industrialist, capitalist society with a burgeoning factory economy. However, once the majority of the factory, labor-intensive, physically repetitive jobs were exported overseas, a real crisis in the socio-educational system erupted, which has had multiple societal ramifications and has laid bare the incongruence of education itself.

Edward Banfield has determined that "motivation is the primary factor in achievement" and he has linked levels of motivation to one's understanding of "space and time." Motivation is increased by the ability of individuals to realistically project themselves "into a distant future and wider community" while also mustering the "discipline" and "resources" to attain future goals (Feinberg and Soltis 2004:33). He determines that "variations in such

ability are defining characteristics of ...class culture”(Feinberg and Soltis 2004:33). The truth seems apparent, but two unanswered questions remain: 1) motivation to what if public education is a process of disenfranchisement as testified by Kozol? And 2) what future goals, when the educational system only allows movement within a certain bandwidth of possibility, already determined by class? The nature of poverty is such that often it excludes “resources” and thus locks people in their particular situations. What then happens to “motivation” and “achievement” according to this understanding?

Returning then to the 1980’s ethnographic study of Willis, he observed that the culture of the lads and that of the school “stood in [apparent] opposition”. He also observed that the school lacked sufficient punitive means to refocus or redirect all of its students to the embodied culture and therefore relied upon its “moral authority” to instill the dominant culture’s values. Yet these boys refused to submit, and so suffered the consequences. However, when he followed them from school into the work force, he discovered that “it is their rejection and reinterpretation of the school message that allows them to function in the work world at a level of comfort not available to” their peers who had bought into the dominant culture’s view (Feinberg and Soltis 2009:64).

Edward Banfield’s observations make sense only if afforded the opportunity to fully participate: socially, economically, and legally in the dominant cultural system. Very similar to a program adopted by the school for the freshmen class of 2019—*Success 101*-- it implies that one has the resources or can attain the resources necessary to achieve these goals. When any or all of these are denied, then there exist sub-cultures or oppositional cultures. These cultures in opposition not only seek new paradigms for power, justice and wealth distribution, but also they provide meaningful life-survival skills and give meaning to

peoples' lives. Whereas the school saw the lads' behavior, grounded in their rejection of the dominant ideologies as a threat and danger, it afforded the lads themselves the opportunity to understand the world they were given, find a place in it, and make meaning of their lives, whereas those who 'drank the kool-aide' were awakened to the truth when society failed to keep its 'promise'. "True consciousness of your own class is impeded by your acceptance of the values of the dominant class" (ibid, 50) as so clearly demonstrated by the lads' classmates.

The ideological identification of work as a provision of "identity" or "separate status" (ibid, 64) or as a way of providing meaning to one's life and a sense of self-fulfillment are ideological truths / dominant cultural beliefs with which most educators would wholeheartedly concur because as Hughes (1999) indicated, "the teaching profession is actually transforming into an increasingly mono-racial, mono-cultural and monolingual population, becoming composed of mainly Caucasians with middle-to upper-middle-class backgrounds" (quoted in Nichols 2011:83). As such, the profession participates in the dominant culture and the transition of its ideological principles and beliefs. Consequently, w-o-r-k for low SES is truly a four-letter word, meant not to provide meaning or fulfillment, but simply to help in survival, as in the case of many low SES students who must work to contribute to the survival of the family unit. Frequently, this dichotomy of interpretation, the result of two very different world-views, presents two challenges. First, "without understanding the realities of their students' lives" i.e., not only their socio-economic conditions, but also their cultural-world-view which provides a window of their understanding the world, how they function in it, and what meanings and hierarchical values it contains, the best intended educators "can make a bad situation worse". The second challenge is frequently the

underlying root of the problem and gives rise to the first as well as so many others. Simply said, the educators who embody and promote the dominant culture “simply misunderstand or misinterpret what we are witnessing” because we “look at them through our own ways of understanding life and relationships,” (Templeton 2011: x and 9) which are deeply tied to class and class relations rooted in historical experiences.

If one were to review the last decade from the historical perspective of time in the distant future, perhaps the most noticeable phenomenon would be the recurring theme of instability. The recent banking crisis, huge and repeated fluctuations in the stock markets, massive influxes of refugees, illegal immigrants, civil wars with global repercussions, terror attacks on innocent people, insecurity in work, a disjointed and polarized political system, the waning stability and disappearance of once permanent fixtures such as gender and sexuality testify to how much is in flux, and society scrambles yet again. Instability appears to be the hallmark of our lives in the 21st century. While we live in this era, the founding principles that guide it like the: free market system, and the belief that market conditions will regulate themselves and individuals are the cultural world-view of burgeoning economists of the 18th century like Adam Smith. The recent recession of 2008 has demonstrated how outdated such a worldview is. The instability, great market fluctuations and terrorists fears that have gripped nations and people certainly help make evident that “the first and deepest cause of the dialectic movement is ... instability” and the “immediate result of this instability is the production of contradictions” (McTaggart & McTaggart 1964:4).

Unlike his British counterpart Smith, upon whom much of liberal capitalism has been founded, Hegel felt that what is unrestricted would generate “a series of systemic dysfunctions-growing divisions between rich and poor” and a “destabilizing” of the human

condition (Callincos 1999:46). Such economic destabilization is the precondition for the development of class, as it currently exists in society. For Hegel class is the extension of culture by human individuals active in society and cognizant of their history, but only insofar as “exploitation provides the link between minority control and class antagonism”.

Therefore, “[C]lass is essentially the way in which exploitation is reflected in a social structure” (ibid. 86) and becomes embedded in culture as part of the dialectical process of becoming.

Theories of becoming, illustrated by the original theory of evolution as espoused by Lemark (1774-1829) as well as the Hegelian dialectic were teleological in nature, whereby “the process of gradual modification is governed by the goal of perfection, even if its nature is no longer conceived as the creation of a divine artificer” (ibid, 102). When the teleological aspect is completely removed, one is left with what Spencer coined “survival of the fittest” in his *The Principles of Biology*, published in 1898 (ibid, 92). This concept conjoined with “Darwin’s theory of evolution – by natural selection in late nineteenth Century Europe and America was used to justify both Western domination of the rest of the world and the prevalence of laissez-faire capitalism of Western societies themselves” (ibid, 105). They serve as the philosophical pillars of modern society and a reflection of it at home in the United States, where this ideology is still deeply entrenched as a cultural truth in the dominant culture of oppression.

Insofar as schools are a microcosm of the world, then what was said heretofore of society is also true of the educational structures and policies of schools. Like Western society, the pillars of education sink deep into the past, particularly the 18th and 19th centuries which have come to embody the 21st century ideologies practiced in schools: hard work and

resourcefulness create capital or at least breed intelligence and ingenuity; a valedictorian system which promotes and promulgates stiff competition instead of team work and cooperation; Carnegie units that divide space, time and learning into assembly-line units but do not enhance, promote or ensure learning, and yet are the cornerstone of every public high school education; and lastly the onslaught of state testing which controls curriculum and establishes a covert system of rewards and punishments determined by student performance on test scores. All of these and so much more represent the bulwark and stalwart of survival of the ominous creature known as public secondary education in the 21st century, even though they are rooted in old world-views and do little to promote good teaching and learning.

Teachers of Status Quo or Transformation

Ilia Delio claims that in antiquity the “purpose of education was to show individuals how to define themselves authentically and spontaneously in relation to the world- NOT impose a prefabricated definition of the world” (Delio 2013: 137, emphasis mine). By contrast, contemporary education does precisely the latter, and then proceeds to determine one’s place in that world-view. The dominant educational paradigm today remains that of “cultural competence” whereby teachers are “emissaries of the dominant culture” (Boykin & Noguera 2011: 29). Despite decades of multicultural education in teacher preparation programs, no significant headway has documented a change from the “cultural competence” perspective of education (Boykin & Noguera 2011: 32). In fact multicultural courses often fail to provide “teachers with the social and emotional skills required to relate and establish rapport with students” from different socio-economic backgrounds (Boykin & Noguera 2011: 32).

In 2000 Sleeter had shown that even if teachers had refused to recognize that their teaching bias of the dominant cultural world view affected their students' learning, it still "invariably influenced it nonetheless" (ibid, 31). For this reason it has been clearly articulated by Lareau that "education is not a neutral process; it occurs in social settings that are necessarily influenced by the hierarchical arrangements that exist in society (ibid, 30). It thus ceases to be a wonder that schools reinforce the dominant cultural world-view and its ideological stereotypes (ibid, 27). Moltmann believed that crisis was constitutive of change (1993: 230-231). He also felt that the human person was "an erotic being moved by suffering and passions" (2004:154). The crisis in educational inequity, power structures of social injustice that schools maintain, and the simple suffering of our students should stir our human passion for change. Yet "if educators are no longer disturbed by low student achievement, it can be extremely difficult for student outcomes or schools to change" (Boykin & Noguera 2011: 33), especially given how they are the gatekeepers of the dominant worldview.

Truth is not a single concept but a point perceived on a continuum of mystery. It is a point perceived from a particular vantage point, at a particular time in history, thus one's limited recognition never manages to encompass the totality. Knowledge, then "is wisdom deepened by love" (Delio 2013: 139) wherein wisdom is viewed as the lived and palpable experience necessary to perceive a moment of truth joined with the intelligence to recognize that it is a perception, not the totality, and joined with the will and stamina to change how one understands oneself in relation to the world and others based on this knowledge. It is from this glimmer that "experience and judgment are always bound up with a horizon of

openness toward reality, in which a thing comes to view and can be experienced and in which judgment becomes meaningful” (Moltmann 1993: 190-191).

Knowledge gleaned from this perspective creates a meaningful judgment that inevitably leads to action. Ideally, it should ignite human passions, because any metaphysical or philosophical “division between reason and passion, or cognition and emotion is, from a neurological point of view, a fallacy” (Delio 2013: 178). Consequently, basic human learning experiences should identify the most powerful learning with human emotion and human passion. But what is the judgment rendered, the necessity to change in light of what has been perceived. That is, real knowledge is an invitation to change perspective, understanding, previously learned patterns of behavior, or outlooks. It challenges individuals, groups, and communities to understand, perceive, live and act differently and to take what has been learned to the rest of the world. So whether it is a Copernican view of the solar system, Newtonian physics, quantum physics, the civil rights movement or the gay rights movement, each has transformed thinking, behavior and understanding, and none all too readily. As a result, who we are as individuals and a community--how we think, act, perceive and understand ourselves and our relationships with others--has been changed from that of our ancestors and transformed within our own life cycle. Even though it remains partial and incomplete, knowledge has played a transformative role in society as the life journey of human history continues.

Educators are human beings who are products of the communities they grew up in, not necessarily the communities they serve. In 1998, in *Paradigm Lost*, William Spady argued that the educational system we have is perhaps the most backward institution in existence, because it continues to follow an agrarian calendar long after farming ceased to be a means

of living for the vast majority of the United States. Schools ferociously cling to their agrarian calendar and a factory assembly line mentality, instituted at the beginning of the industrial revolution. While one may argue the necessity of educational reform and question the lethargy of the educational system, in this study it is important to note the overall intransigence present in the system as a whole. One might deduce that as a whole, educators are not overly creative people and prefer to follow habits and tradition, feeling quite comfortable in feeding to others what they themselves received in a very similar manner. However, the point of reference crucial to this study is the students they have in front of them and the world they live in is most often not the ones they went to school with or hung around with after school. The vast majority of educators in the United States come from white, middle to upper middle class America and, and if they are working in an urban district, they simply do not know or understand the children who are in front of them.

In the fall of 2015, at an interview of the NEASC visiting committee, our district's director of grants and funding said that the high school was headed in the direction of being designated a Title 1 school. When asked what that meant, she said it is only one or two percentage points away and that to be designated a Title 1 school, 75% or more of the students need to qualify for free or reduced lunch. That would mean that most, if not all educators at the high school do not understand who their students are or the settings of poverty from which they come. Outside of the forced relationship of student-teacher they would have no basis of understanding to form a relationship beyond the subject matter itself. While the subject of learning should be at the center of the room, Parker Palmer (1998, 2007) claims this only works if people have a shared and common understanding of what the

subject is and how it relates to their lives. This confirms that all learning is relational and real learning is connected with passion and transformation.

How people learn is embedded in who they are, shaped especially by the two greatest societal pillars of self-identification: socio-economic class and race. They also conveniently or coincidentally serve as the most reliable predictors of academic success in the educational matrix of public education. While these pillars stand firmly as the most determinate factors of success in education, they often fail to highlight the deeper truth that those who are overall most successful in educational settings are those who most embody the same life experiences of the teachers who teach them, and these are most determined by economic class.

Under NCLB, a consternating and embarrassing moment even for the most prestigious of schools became the performance of ‘sub-groups’ within any given school’s population. It was this public reporting which denoted the underachievement or ‘achievement gaps’ of low SES and minority students in some of the best schools in the best districts of the nation. It caused much stress amongst educators and public embarrassment for their communities. Now, NCLB is being re-written. To date there are three major pieces to the new law: 1) “Schools would still have to test 95 percent of their students and report the results by race, income and special need” 2) “The U.S. education secretary could no longer push for academic standards like the Common Core or mandate that teachers be evaluated based on things like student test scores”. And 3) “Each state would come up with its own plan to help schools improve, its own deadlines and its own metrics to measure that improvement. If schools don't improve, states would have to figure out what to do”³¹. However, as Boykin

³¹ NPR: *Goodbye No Child Left Behind* 11/24/2015
<http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2015/11/24/456795140/goodbye-no-child-left-behind> accessed 11/28/2015

and Noguera point out, “unless there is a strategy for countering the normalization of failure” due to socio-economic differences in perceptions and understanding “it is unlikely that disparities in achievement will be reduced or that schools will change (2011:33).

4. Poverty Simulation and Its Impact

The poverty simulation took time to mature as an idea and to implement. In the process the dynamics of power and culture were still present. While the initial results combined with other initiatives were quite good, subsequent data was neither as encouraging nor promising.

The Journey of a Seed

During the 2014-2015 school year a number of things had fallen into place that were precipitated by the retirement of the school's principal. While a search committee had been formed and the applicants whittled down, two whom had each been offered the job turned it down, one after the other. As the beginning of the new school year was quickly approaching, both the retiring principal as well as the then acting superintendent turned to a long serving assistant principal, football coach and WHS alumnus who was black and who by self-admission grew up in the world many of our kids belong to, poverty. Education and athletics were his ticket out. Given the enhanced bargaining power created by the two prior rejections he was able to successfully negotiate the positions of two deans of students who would work solely as disciplinarians, freeing his assistants for classroom observations, teacher evaluations and other duties outside of routine discipline. He was also able to negotiate the return of department chairs in the four core areas of: math, science, social studies and English, and department leaders in guidance, non-academic electives, and foreign language; all positions that the school had done without for four years. While all of these moves had been previously recommended by the prior principal and fully supported by the acting superintendent, they had been denied by the state appointed budget commission which had absolute authority over all financial aspects of the city.

The Budget Commission was appointed in 2012 when the municipality of Woonsocket teetered on bankruptcy and was disbanded in March of 2015.

As the maturation of these fruits continue to provide nourishing sustenance to the school, two pressing issues had not been adequately addressed and threatened the plant before it could ripen to maturity. Those two things were the inordinate number of disciplinary referrals the new deans of students were receiving and the incredibly appalling academic performance of our students as witnessed not only by state test score results, but also by retentions, the number of students failing one or two academic classes and the drop out rate. While the new principal began the school year with an old battle standard and mantra of one of his mentors and former principals of WHS: “Give respect, get respect”, the new principal actually put some teeth into the motto. His rationale was the motto is useless if it doesn’t have a particular and recognizable incarnation that can also be used to demonstrate a level of trust and maturity. So, the 2014-2015 school year began with some immediate adjustments in order to demonstrate mutual respect, trust and maturity amongst faculty, administration and students.

Prior to 2014 the school committee required strict adherence to a uniform/dress code policy that forbade the use of caps in the building. The overall enforcement of the policy at the secondary level became challenging and in response a committee had been formed to study the issue. In June of 2014 the superintendent was abruptly fired by the budget commission, the committee’s recommendations were embraced by the interim superintendent, supported by the new principal and approved by the school committee. This policy was the first to recognize that caps were an essential part of a male student’s wardrobe (and frequently that of female transgendered students who wanted to appear more male/masculine): their caps matched their very expensive sneakers. The new principal said that caps could now be worn in school and, at

the classroom teacher's discretion, may also be worn in class. However, if an individual teacher had an issue with caps and wrote a referral, the administration would not intervene. It would remain a classroom student-teacher issue. Also, from the start of that school year, students would be allowed to enter the building with a beverage and bring it to the first period class; however, the beverage must be finished by the end of first period and in order to have that "privilege" the student needed to arrive at school on time. For the first few weeks of school students were reminded over the public announcement system, by the principal and individual classroom teachers that we were treating kids with respect by changing the rules in a very down-to-earth and tangible fashion, but that in return we would like students to show maturity: arrive at school on time and comport themselves in an adult fashion while in school, and dispose of whatever wasn't finished of their beverage by the end of first period. This concept of "adult fashion" for faculty was understood as students taking their own education seriously and trying in earnest to succeed; for students it did not play out this way. None of the ground rules or demands for their academic success had changed. In fact, by faculty vote and school committee approval, the passing grade for the start of the 2014-2015 school year had been raised from a 60 to a 70.

Imperfect though it was, the simple gestures on the part of administration signaled to me this new gentleman at the helm wanted to do things differently and that he really had the best interests of the students at heart. This initial observation on my part has to date been substantiated through numerous personal conversations and heated discussions amongst the leadership team, i.e. principal, assistants, deans, department chairs and department leaders. But this simple gesture meant to begin the process of transformation of the school was insufficient in and of itself, and it failed to address the pressing issue of student-teacher relationships, marred

by ongoing teacher referrals for infractions and poor student academic performance. It also failed to allow for greater student academic performance; but it was enough to ignite a flame of trust in me that this man was someone with whom I could both work and trust, because our passion and interests on a professional level were the same: the ultimate success of our students.

I had begun to postulate a cultural breach between our faculty and the students that resulted in a continual disconnect between how we perceived and understood ourselves and how we thought we understood and perceived our students. In my careful observation, this breach was not grounded in race, but in socio-economic-class and manifested itself in many of our discipline problems as well as our academic challenges. As adults and as educators working in a high poverty school in a high poverty district in a very poor city, we failed to understand who our children are, what they already bring to each classroom experience. Most importantly, we failed to recognize our failure as educators, because we continued to do the same thing over and over, expecting that our results would be different and blaming others for what should have been our own adaptability. The challenge has always been to impart a rigorous but meaningful curriculum in a way that students get and want to understand, and while sometimes this is difficult, it is not impossible if the focus becomes not the content but the person.

These thoughts and theory began to take concrete shape in my head through the reading of Paolo Freire and his notion of “conscientization”, which took shape first in relation to my obligation to the students and later as a more omnipresent reality embedded in how one comes to perceive the world and others. To this end, G.W. Hegel’s concept of the dialectic became invaluable as reflected in his own works and as nuanced through interpretations by other philosophers. Georg Lukacs proved an invaluable resource to understanding class and class relationships in society, and Feinberg and Soltis brilliantly fit class in the context of education.

While Noguera primarily focused on race, his work with Boykin highlighted socio-economic difference and the primordial center of student-teacher-relationships for any meaningful learning to take place. This central focus raised the question of who are we that have relationships with one another, or more fundamentally who is the human person that both teaches and learns? In response to this question, Sartre, de Beauvoir and the later existentialist movement provided an excellent foundation, but more was needed. I examined the human person in light of deconstructionist thinkers, and their talented precursor, Nietzsche, but each of these in their own right seemed to fail to capture the human person in all their complexity and complex relationships, especially as these apply to society and to teacher-student learning through relationships. Therefore, other sources were needed to magnify the complexity of the human person. Heidegger, Moltmann, and Delio all attempted to represent the transcendental aspect of the human person, and to some extent their relational character. This relational character of the human person as a seed of transcendence in community with other human beings was a recurring theme in authors such as Zizioulas and Nellas. Lastly, it was the Buddhist observation that it is only through suffering that we can truly come to understand one another as human beings. To understand or know suffering had become the philosophical lynchpin to connect students and teachers. The soil had become quite fertile; all that was needed was a new seed.

That miraculous seed presented itself in casual conversation with the school's coordinator of *Extended Learning Opportunities* (ELO), which has become a state model for other schools and districts and is a testimony to the caliber and dedication she has brought to the office. It was in that friendly conversation that she mentioned that she had recently participated in a Poverty Simulation as part of a regular meeting of a statewide network of non-profit agencies. I politely listened and asked a few pertinent questions. The seed lay dormant over several days, resting in

theoretically fertile soil. Her enthusiasm and insights from participating in the simulation were notable throughout our conversation, and they became a contagious watering process, but I did not realize immediately to what end. One day a week or so after our initial conversation the practicality of the poverty simulation experience and my theoretical research combined and the seed was germinated.

She felt my socio-economic-class-divide theory made sense in the context of WHS. It also fit with her personal experience working individually with students to recover credits through individualized study plans crafted by the students themselves and helping them to partner with a willing faculty mentor and a mentor-expert from the community. She felt the chasm lent credence to her own professional experience as ELO coordinator, including her arguments with other faculty while advocating for students. She also felt that a Poverty Simulation would be just the thing to bring both faculty and administration to a greater conscientization of what it means to grow up in poverty, to live in poverty in the United States.

The two of us agreed to meet with the principal to share our ideas and see if he'd be willing to host a poverty simulation at the school as part of the teachers' mandated professional development. When the three of us met in late November, early December of 2014, the holiday season was upon us. The principal completely agreed that class difference provides many misconceptions and inappropriate assumptions by teachers that in and of themselves do not allow for either good relationships or good teaching and learning. He also agreed that a fair number of teachers do not know or understand their students, and they frequently place inappropriate demands on them which, given the students' life circumstances, they are unable to reasonably fulfill. When the ELO coordinator finished her piece on the poverty simulation, the principal immediately grasped how it dovetailed with my hypothesis and his own reckoning and

exclaimed: “How and when can we make this happen?”. The seed was planted, germinated and now attempting to break through the soil to absorb its first rays of sunlight.

The challenges were immediate and numerous. Since the ELO coordinator did not know who actually presented the event nor who specifically had organized it, we began a long and arduous game of phone tag, which was only hampered by the holidays and the stress they place on those who deal with the poor and fundraisers. I reached out by telephone and the internet to every agency and institute that we thought might be able to shed some light and give us more information on the simulation itself, including the Progress Institute housed at Rhode Island College, which provides excellent data on poverty, and Amos House. While each institute was enthusiastic about the program, not all were aware of the Poverty Simulation we were looking for, and those who were had never done it with an entire high school faculty and administrative team. While keen on the concept, even those who had done one were hesitant regarding the practicality and feasibility of doing it with all faculty. Finally, the Director of Development at Amos House³² stepped forward and was willing to provide both the training and direct the simulation itself. The simulation requires dozens of volunteers to serve as the social network of community organizations and institutes: bank, police, school, church, welfare office, social security office, pawn shop, local non-profit, hospital emergency room, prison, child welfare agency of the state, etc.... The training was only done in the early summer of 2015.

Then there was central office, while they agreed that a poverty simulation would be beneficial in the context that we presented it, and while they had over 1 million dollars available for professional development, not any of those funds could be used for a poverty simulation. It had to be used for Common Core State Standards, 21st Century Skills development and

³² <http://www.amoshouse.com>

integration into the curriculum, literacy, or the Next Generation Science Standards. These restrictions again demonstrated the reach of the power structures and their manipulative control of the purse strings. I had several conversations with the director of grants for the district and tried presenting the simulation in different lights that might appeal to the earmarks, but to no avail. She told me if the principal wanted to take the funds from his limited discretionary budget that would be the only way it could get funded. The principal had several conversations with the superintendent and the director of grants and the money was finally allocated from somewhere. Amos House sought a donation for their efforts; the usual amount was \$500.00.

The simple irony of a 1 million dollar budget that could not utilize \$500 for what all deemed a worthwhile endeavor to this day is truly astounding. It stands as a stark but powerful reminder of how at times the local educational authority is left powerless to undertake reform and curative action measures rooted in what itself deems a beneficial professional development. It is not a question of simple bureaucracy but bureaucracy with a purpose and tied to punitive consequences. It is not that the director of grants was opposed to paying for the poverty simulation, but that she did not want to break the law, i.e. the strict stipulations dictating how and where the funds could be spent for fear of repercussions, particularly, punitively financial ones.

The second concern from central office was the timing; we had wanted it to be within the first two days of the start of school for teachers and staff, which are normally orientation and professional development, as well as classroom preparation time. For some unknown reason, central office did not see the feasibility of this plan. We worked with them and split the 6 hour school day in half so that ½ of faculty and staff would attend the poverty simulation while the other ½ attended the informational meeting on the new *Success 101* program being rolled out for freshmen. After lunch the groups would switch. The school principal again had to back and fully

endorse the plan, because central office felt the PD day should have been devoted to a different agenda. Eventually, they conceded and the green light was given. This was late July or early August.

The last hurdle to be overcome as the nascent plant strove toward the sun, dirt still clinging to its yet still fragile verdant stem and blossoming bud-leaves, was the plethora of volunteers necessary to be trained and to carry out the simulation for the faculty. The director of ELO went diligently to work utilizing her multiple community connections as well as her network of non-profit organizations. She also drew upon people who had worked as community resources in prior ELO student-led projects and successfully gathered enough participants who were willing to sacrifice two hours for training along with almost an entire professional workday to carry out the simulation.

Finally, our simulation would take place according to our initial designs. Our combined group effort and persistence at the building level are demonstrative of our firm belief in the value and capacity of students and staff to grow in understanding, knowledge, experience and professional relationships. Our very persistence shows a deep level of honesty and trust with central office. The group effort and coordination are testament to a shared leadership power structure. Lastly, the financial obstacles reminded us not only how tight the district's discretionary spending was, but also how the dominant culture stealthily implements its own agenda and denies leadership at the local level the funding to take on initiatives it deems essential to educational transformation and better student performance.

Photosynthesis begins

On Friday, August 28 2015 the entire faculty, staff and administration gathered at 7:15 am in the high school auditorium. Those teachers reviewing the *Success 101* would not participate in the poverty simulation; instead, they would meet as a group and prepare a mini- presentation to deliver to faculty later in the day. After attendance had been taken the people present were told whether they were participating in the morning or afternoon session of the Missouri Association for Community Action Poverty Simulation or CAPS-Community Action Poverty Simulation, for short. Its function and how it works follows below:

CAPS is a unique tool that helps people begin to understand what life is like with a shortage of money and an abundance of stress. During a simulation, participants role-play the lives of low-income families, including single parents, people with disabilities, and senior citizens on Social Security. The task of each family is to provide for food, shelter and other basic necessities during four 15-minute "weeks." Families interact with community resources. Although it uses "play" money, fictional scenarios and time limits, CAPS is not a game. It's a simulation that enables participants to view poverty from different angles... It's designed to sensitize those who frequently deal with low-income families and to create a broader awareness...³³

The approximate one hour and twenty minute simulation was set up to take place in the gym with the first beginning at 8 am; the second would begin at 11:30. Each simulation was to be followed by a 1 hour debriefing in lecture room B. With the exception of the 15 teachers who were working on the *Success 101* program for freshmen, the entire faculty, staff and administration participated, 139 participants in total. Of those who participated, 69 partook in the follow up survey that I conducted via the school's email server. It was a voluntary survey and 50% of participants chose to respond.

While unaccustomed to professional development occurring in the gymnasium, faculty

³³ Community Action Agency of St. Louis County, Inc. <http://www.caastlc.org/programs/poverty-simulation.html> Accessed 11/30/2015

was quickly impressed by the organization and number of volunteers assisting. In no time, staff not only assumed the roles they had been designated, but became them and the professional development was no longer a game, but a real and dramatic simulation. Survival of the family unit became the prime objective of many and stealing was common. During the simulation seeds were planted that would lead to deep emotional learning and sharp realizations about themselves, their students and what it actually means to live in poverty. These seeds would begin to bear fruit through reflection and debriefing as a group, directly following the simulation.

After having experienced this simulation the question becomes, were faculty, staff and administration affected enough that they could alter their perception and understanding of the student body as a whole, and more importantly, as individuals? That is, were they able to move across the chasm of class, even if for a brief instant, and in that instant to have their understanding enhanced, their perspective altered, their way of being transformed? Were they so affected by it that it altered how they value their students and recognize the multiple survival skills they already bring with them to school? Through a humble recognition of their situation or struggle, could they form more effective personal relationships that give rise to better classroom management and enhanced teaching and learning that improve overall student performance? In the end, could improved student learning be measured in the amount of students who pass the first quarter over and above last year?

Of the 69 people who participated in the survey over 2/3 were female representing 46 respondents; just under 1/3 were male representing 22 respondents and 1 individual self-identified as gender neutral. Those with 0-5 years of employment, 11-15 years of employment, and those with 16-20 years of employment in the Woonsocket Education Department each represented about 22% of respondents (15 in each category). The second lowest category

represented were teachers with over 21 years of employment at 18.8% of respondents (13 people). The smallest group of respondents was those with 6-10 years of employment and they represented 15.94% (11 people). The overall spread was representative of all these groups, divided in terms of length of employment by the education department.

The financial earnings of the groups represented were as follows: those 0-5 years employment are earning at a minimum \$39,914 for their first year; those in their fifth are earning no less than \$47,231; those with 6-10 years of employment are earning a rock bottom minimum \$50, 557 for 6 years of employment, and those with 10 years earn \$70,042. Anyone with over 10 years in the system as a teacher is making a minimum of \$70,042³⁴. The difference is quite startling when these salaries are compared to those of the city of Woonsocket as a whole, where the estimated median household income (not per person) was \$35,216 in 2015, and the mean income was estimated at \$49,955. Of the estimated 16,979 households in the municipality, well over 1/3 (37%) earn less than \$25k per year, and just under a quarter of them (23.4%) earns under \$15k per year in household, not individual income. Nearly 1/3 of the households in the city are on public assistance for food³⁵; over ¼ of the city's population lives in poverty as defined by federal guidelines.³⁶

When participants in the poverty simulation were asked how they would rate the simulation overall, over 1/3, or 36% gave it the highest rating possible and 78% of those participating in the survey rated the experience very well, giving it an 8 out of 10 or higher. The lowest rating was a 4 out of 10, by one person, followed by a 5 out of 10 by two people, while 3 taking the survey gave it a 6. Nine people rated their experience in the simulation at a 7, still a

³⁴ Contract between the School Committee of the City of Woonsocket, RI and the Woonsocket Teacher's Guild Local # 951 American Federation of Teachers AFL-CIO July 1, 2013-June 30, 2018.

³⁵ <http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk> -12/13/2015

³⁶ <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/44/4480780.html> 12/13/2015

passing grade by WHS standards. A total of 91% of participants, then rated their experience in the poverty simulation favorably and just under 9%, or six respondents rated it unfavorably. As organizers of the event, we were extremely pleased to have received such overwhelming approval.

When survey participants were asked what percent of WHS students qualify for free and reduced lunch, in relation to the Title I benchmark of 75%, 56.52% or 39 respondents knew that less than 75% of students received free or reduced lunch; however, a full 40% of participants in the survey itself erroneously believed that over 76% of our students received free/reduced lunch. With just about ½ of educators responding to the survey, it still remains evident that while so many respondents are definitely aware of the poverty that exists among the students we serve, as of yet, the school itself has been unable to translate that knowledge into concrete action which better supports student needs and learning within the classroom environment. Naturally in every school there exist excellent teachers who truly understand not only their students, but also the world; but in the case of Woonsocket, even with these teachers, the school suffers from an inordinate amount of discipline problems, particularly with regards to in and out of school suspension. Also, despite these pockets of excellent teaching and learning, the school has been unable to augment the graduation rate, which has flat lined since 2009. The collected surveys in comparison with the data show that the staff and administration intellectually know, but they had yet to see and understand with the eyes of the heart. They have been unable or unwilling to make substantive and systemic change happen.

To one of the most important questions on the survey, an overwhelming 83% (53 in number) responded that their understanding of poverty had been enhanced during the simulation. One person was amazed at “the number of students that need to work”. Another person said: “I

saw why basic survival overshadowed the need to give children the attention they needed and the encouragement to do well in school”. One very telling response: “I have dealt with some of these issues myself, but the simulation made me see how bad and hopeless life can become for a student living in this type of household. It makes me see just how much students are dealing with at home before even tackling the stress at school. They are so strong and resilient.” For a number of people it was “incredibly eye opening” or “overwhelming”... “I was amazed how quickly the situation deteriorated” and as some pointed out, “Transportation is a fundamental need of everything” and as another stated, is “a key to any success that you could earn!”, but by the same token, someone else realized that “how even the smallest things, like transportation hurt the family’s overall finances”. It would seem apparent as one had stated, “Poverty influences every member of a family in every aspect of life”.

The best and most detailed response of positive impact, hopefully reflecting the sentiment of the vast majority of participants, was expressed in the words of one respondent: “The simulation made me really think about how many of my students feel day to day and their parents. I was the parent in the demo and I felt so helpless with no one to turn to for help. I think this was one of the best PDs we have had to date. The experience will forever be in my head and my heart”. Lastly, from another respondent, that ‘aha’ moment we had hoped everyone would walk away with: “You think you understand what some of our students go through but until you really see what some of these students deal with you have no clue”. Had we begun to breach the chasm of economic divide with an understanding that goes deeper than pure intellectual data? Had we successfully begun to cross the divide by connecting human hearts? If we had, would it last for the school year?

After having only experienced the simulation for about an hour and a half, 61% of survey

participants responded that their perceptions about poverty had been altered as a direct result of participating in the simulation. Had we begun to alter cultural misconceptions rooted in historical class stereotypes? Perhaps. When asked what they would most remember, responses were frequently tied to deep emotional realizations, few of which were positive, but all of which were enlightening: “The moment I resorted to stealing”, which was a very common response in the debriefing session. Also, “how little people in poverty have and how similar their bills are to my own” as well as “The pressure to provide for my family”, “The harsh decisions I had to make” and “having to pawn belongings for food” all attest to the level of emotional connection the simulation created, which persisted, as the survey was sent five days after the experience and participants were given a week to respond. They still remembered these particular things about the simulation itself.

The comments: “how real it was” and “how serious everyone took their roles” are testimony to the seriousness with which the simulation was undertaken and when combined with the comments: “It brought back memories of my life as a kid” as well as “the disorganization of my adult daughter” (there were no adult daughter roles in the simulation) demonstrate how real and true to life it was or at least felt while participating in it. Was it real enough and authentic enough to alter behavior? When asked how they felt throughout the simulation, there were NO immediate positive emotional feelings. The top emotions expressed were feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, anxious, stressed, and helpless. In the debriefing, participants were reminded by the moderator that this was a simulation of 1 month that lasted approximately an hour and a half. When she said, “Imagine if it were your life”, there was a gasp in the room. When the moderator said, “We gave you the middle of the road poverty, that is, people in Woonsocket are for the most part worse off than what we gave in your scenarios.” there was immediate protest and

incredulity mixed with disbelief and for some reason a bit of anger from the participants sitting in the audience. But the presenter went on to explain some data and what poverty means for many in Woonsocket and you could see the faces of the audience turn sullen and sad. Rather than stifle conversation it enhanced it.

All the participants in that room were searching to discover something positive to take away from an emotionally stressful experience that left them drained and questioning many things about themselves and the system in which they participate. That note of positivity and sense of renewed purpose and meaning came totally unrehearsed and unplanned, when the volunteer participant who acted as banker stood up and said: “My name is...and I graduated from WHS. This was my life, this still is the life and struggle of my family, it is not my life anymore nor that of my own family, but every time I come home, this is what my parents and siblings are still living” she broke down into tears and the audience was silent. After a long pause, a teacher in the audience, addressing her by her first name said, “Can I ask what made the difference for you?”, She said, “My education and a caring teacher here at the high school who believed in me and helped me see college as part of my future. Now I am a social worker and I try and help other people like my family”. Were we each there reminded in our core of why we’d become teachers? Would we carry that reminder moving forward?

The survey results say indeed we would. When asked if what they experienced would in any way affect how they relate to their students on a personal level, an overwhelming 88% said yes, it would. When asked if what they’d experienced in the poverty simulation would affect their professional interactions with students, again, an overwhelming majority, 86% responded that it would. Do the numbers bear weight against the statements of intention?

Insofar as we are able to weigh personal interaction with students in relation to the

infraction rates, then it appears that the initial or preliminary results would indicate that indeed the poverty simulation positively impacted how teachers relate and interact with students on a personal level. At the half way mark of the first quarter detentions for the 2014-2015 school year as of 10/14/2014 were a total of 382 detentions given for infractions; however, during the same time period for the 2015-2016, at the halfway mark of the first quarter, the school registered only 229 infractions resulting in detention, representing a 40% decrease in detentions during the same period over the last school year. These results tend to replicate themselves when we examine in school suspension, now referred to as “intervention support service” (or the acronym ISS). During the 2014 – 2015 school year, as of 10/14 we had 196 infractions resulting in ISS being assigned. During the same time of the 2015-2016 school year, we have only had 132 infractions resulting in ISS. These numbers represent a 33% decrease in the number of students being assigned ISS as opposed to the same time frame last year.

It would thus appear that the poverty simulation did have an effect on student-teacher interpersonal relationships; however, how much of a direct impact is difficult to discern, because it was not the only intervention undertaken at the commencement of the 2015-2016 school year. Another initiative, briefly mentioned earlier, that may have also directly impacted student behavior via the strengthening of student teacher relationships and advocacy was the institution of the *Success 101* program mandated for the freshmen class. However, in my personal one on one survey interviews this past March with 11 of the 15 teachers, they personally doubted that they had established such deep behavior altering relationships that early on in the school year. Each of these teachers had volunteered to teach one section of the course in addition to four courses in their content areas. More than half of the 11 spoke about how difficult it was to gain the trust of the students. If one recognizes that the disciplinary statistics are school-wide and that

only freshmen participate in the *Success 101 program*, and that all other faculty had participated in the Poverty simulation, then what is undeniable are the reductions of student disciplinary actions, and it would be more than reasonable to accredit a substantial portion of the beginnings of a cultural shift to the power of the poverty simulation to impact the thought patterns and behaviors of administrators and teachers alike. This shift was supported by comments in the survey and the debriefing session. The impact was so great that 99% of respondents in the survey said they would highly recommend the simulation to other educators. To my limited knowledge, such a full and whole-hearted endorsement has never been the case for a school-wide PD session involving teachers and administrators as active participants during the 18 years I've been at the school.

The preliminary results on teaching and learning are also pretty dramatic: 86% said that the poverty simulation would impact their professional interaction with students; i.e. affect daily teaching and learning. The immediate results that will be presented below demonstrate a substantial academic difference from one school year to the next and while the overall numbers for classes in the high school speak substantially for themselves, especially if we factor in the poverty simulation, as the only school-wide professional development offered to all faculty and administrators to successfully alter understanding and conceptions and dramatically affect what we do and how we relate; however, it was not the only new initiative.

The 2015-2016 school year began with two initiatives directed solely at the incoming freshmen class. They were peer mentors in all-freshmen advisory periods and the *Success 101* program—a prepackaged, ready made curriculum aimed at helping freshmen establish a 10 year plan for themselves, and then determine the steps necessary to achieve the goal they'd set at the end of the plan. In March of 2016, at a school faculty gathering the school's own teacher

volunteer who leads the other 14 teachers in this program plugged for more teachers to volunteer. She said the goal of the program “is not to increase their academic performance but to create relationships with teachers and give all [the students] the same information so that the message is “consistent and uniform”. That is, according to the interpretation we were given and the words she spoke, the “goal” of the program is to provide for the freshmen “a safe place to go and a safe person to talk to”. This interpretation; however, is not universal amongst those who teach the program, nor is it that which had been specifically highlighted in the promotional videos faculty had been shown concerning the program. As a simple side note, the principal was not present at the meeting, but all of his assistant principals were.

This program in conjunction with peer mentors could possibly help explain why the most startling number dances around the rate of failure of freshmen, a number that has been exorbitantly high since the junior high concept was replaced with the middle school model in education. Last school year 72% of our ninth graders had failed 1 class at the end of the first quarter. At the end of the first quarter of the 2015-2016 school year that number had been changed to 45%, a reduction of 27%. Astounding even more when the traditional first time freshman rate of failure had hovered around 60%. For the 2014-2015 school year, only 28% of the freshmen class had passed all of their courses by the end of the first quarter. This school year, that number was raised to 47%, and that number becomes even more impressive when only first time ninth graders are considered, for whom the number jumps to 55%. The improvement rate was 19% for all freshmen, including repeaters, and 27% for first time freshmen over and above last year’s data.

These percentages are similar when examining specific courses year over next in terms of just the first quarter; thus the number of students who had failed algebra 1 in quarter 1 of 2014-

2015 was 45% while the following year it was 31% a 14% difference. Those who had failed geometry by the end of quarter 1 of the previous year was 40% and this year, only 27% a 13% decline. The most dramatic difference was the percent of those failing ninth grade English. By the end of quarter 1 in 2014-2015 36%, over 1/3 failed the first quarter of English, this year, only 18% had failed in the first quarter, a difference of 18% but a 50% decrease. The group with the least amount of fluctuation was the 10th grade English classes. In 2014-2015 while 38% had failed the first quarter, in 2015-2016 that number had only changed to 34%, a reduction of only 4%; yet even here a difference of 4% is one of improvement, still a change in a positive direction.

Sadly, as much as some, and perhaps even many would like to put their trust and confidence in a particular silver bullet, or the institution of the *Success* program, to do so would be wrong, especially given the subsequent evidence with regards to that particular program. While dramatic changes year over last did indeed occur with the freshman class in the first quarter results, they continue to loose ground steadily. Despite the fact that the vast majority of freshmen are still attending the 101 program daily, the number of freshmen failing one or more courses since first quarter had risen 17% and consequently, by second quarter 62% of all freshmen were failing one or more courses at the half year. If that number increase another 17% over the course of quarters 3 & 4 the number of freshmen failing one or more courses by school's end will have exceeded the number who did likewise last school year.

These diminishing gains make sense when considered in light of the fact that as of yet there has been no follow up professional development to further enhance and build upon what had been initiated in the poverty simulation. If the truth is really but a single point along a continuum of change, then the initial sentiments, knowledge and understanding gained from the

poverty simulation need to be reinterpreted anew to find a greater context and meaning in the lives of faculty. Moreover, if it is to be real knowledge, then by what has been said previously, it must be transformative and those transformations must exhibit themselves in concrete actions. That is, real knowledge and understanding change the world in which we live. The most immediate realities to the teaching profession are students and consequentially, teacher-student relations; but schools are laden with cultural purposes and frequently stand impervious or openly hostile to sub-cultures of resistance; and yet, as the Willis study cited in Feinberg and Soltis (2009:64) had demonstrated, it is these cultures of resistance that not only allow for survival, but which also provide meaning, purpose and a sense of hope to those who partake in them. Moreover, this hope is their contextual framework for understanding themselves and the world in which they live; but it is also the starting point for learning, because without hope, learning serves no purpose and life is riddled solely by crisis. Insofar as the post-poverty simulation faculty fails to recognize and tap into these underlying truths, then it was only an emotional experience that had failed to play a permanently substantial role in altering practice by first changing belief. If there is no pathway of professional development to first uncover what is, but which has been obscured by class and ideology, then the poverty simulation itself will have become an archaic artifact in the memory of some long serving faculty members, and nothing else. But, it could also become the catalyst of dynamic, transformative and lasting change if it becomes a deep true knowledge that permeates the consciousness of administration, faculty and students. The surveys of those who participated in the simulation are a testimony to its initial impact. They help to provide a solid foundation from which to begin a process of greater self-discovery, awareness, and conscientization.

Although there are diverging opinions upon the overall purpose of the *Success 101*

program, it was self-promoted as a means of improving freshmen academic performance; in that arena it has thus far failed quite terribly. At the quarter three progress reports –issued mid point in the third and next to last quarter of the school year—of the 445 freshmen, 316 or 71% are failing one or more courses. While there is no way to know how many actually do fail until the end of the final marking period, the difference between last year and this for the freshman class stands only at 1%. We have 1% more of the freshman class currently passing this year than we did last year, despite the inauguration of the *success 101 program*. This has happened despite the incredible efforts and dedication of the teachers of the program who met regularly to plan curriculum, discuss ideas and bring their full knowledge and experience of education to bear on the program in a concerted effort to create change.

It would thus appear that there is something inauthentic occurring. Inauthenticity can be examined in multiple ways. First, there are the implicit objectives of the program centered upon the three fundamental questions that it seeks to examine: “Who am I?” “What do I want?” and “How do I get it”? Who am I is not fundamentally a Cartesian question asked in strict isolation; on the contrary, given everything that has been presented—particularly the relational nature of humanity and the society it has created for itself. That question can neither be asked nor answered outside of class. It implies not only the freedom necessary to choose, but also the capacity to achieve. Its interpretive relevance does not extend beyond a particular cultural context. The more appropriate question for our particular students and which should be one of the three integral questions for faculty and students is: *Where do I stand in relation to the dominant culture?* However, given that the current teachers of the success 101 program never participated in the poverty simulation and that there has been no follow-up professional development for the faculty, to come to that question and even more so, find honest answers

would be challenging.

If that question can be successfully asked and accurately answered, then the second question is no longer: *What do I want*, but rather: *From where I am standing in society, what options are legitimately open to me?* This means that the last question in the program for student and teacher is no longer—*How do I get it*, but *At what cost am I willing to get it?* That is, how much am I willing to sacrifice to attain that goal, and are those things worth sacrificing? For these alternative questions to have been the central focus of the program would have meant that it had been developed not by the dominant culture, but by a sub culture that deeply understands the rules of the game pre-established by the dominant culture as well as the students for whom it was created as members of the oppositional or subculture. Just by the very fact that the program asks the questions it does, indicates that it was developed by individuals who have failed to live or experience life on the margins. This observation can be further verified by the fact that the program has made absolutely no impact whatsoever on improving or motivating freshmen students to perform better academically, especially that we are now over $\frac{3}{4}$ into the school year and our current results are as bad as they were at the conclusion of the 2014-2015 school year.

Another level of inauthenticity exists in the programs overdependence on Banfield's interpretations. As stated previously, Banfield had surmised that motivation accounts for achievement and that both are tied to an imaginary but realistic projection of oneself into the future, but with the necessary resources to get there. What the poverty simulation made poignantly clear to everyone who participated was that life was about survival. Under those daily circumstances, futuristic projections are mere dreams and fantasies, and even more so without the financial resources to achieve them. At times during the simulation one didn't even have enough for transportation or food, let alone develop a futuristic plan that takes one out of

poverty. How often is this the actual lived experience of our students, that towards the end of the month, food runs out or is low? This is not to say that one cannot escape poverty or leave it behind them, what it is saying is that the *success 101* program as it exists is not a realistic approach to solving the issues we have with the population we possess. Perhaps this is why in my personal interview conducted in early March with 11 of the 15 teachers who have been teaching the course, none of them rated the course materials very highly. On a 1-10 scale with one as the highest and ten as the lowest, the materials we had purchased as part of the program averaged a 4.

In conclusion of the project thesis portion of this work, it is clear that the poverty simulation and the *Success 101* program initially both had major impacts on the personal interaction of students and teachers. While it is impossible to determine exactly how much influence each played on lowering the amount of disciplinary referrals, in and out of school suspensions and overall academic performance school wide, there definitely had been some significant initial gains. These initial improvements bare even more significance when examined against the poverty simulation surveys already mentioned as well as the personal interviews conducted with the *Success 101* teachers. There 77% felt that for their *success* students in particular, what they are doing has had a positive impact on those students' grades. They rated the impact a 3.5 on a scale of 1-5. As one teacher candidly said, "I keep telling myself, if it weren't for me, those grades would probably be a lot worse". In the same mid-third quarter interview, 70% of the *success* teachers felt that what they are doing has positively impacted their own students' behavior. They rated the impact as a 3.86 on a scale of 1-5.

While the professional interaction between student and teacher had been positively impacted, as evidenced by the result of an overwhelming number of participants in both surveys,

and, more importantly by the initial demographic shifts in failures from one year to the next in the areas tested by the common core: ELA and Mathematics, it would appear that as a faculty and as an educational institution, as we move further and further away in time from the poverty simulation its impact lessens, as witnessed by the increase in the number of freshmen failures. The latest data also demonstrates there are no silver bullets that adequately address social inequality and student achievement. But there is more to an unfinished story that enables the story to go on. That more is the willingness of the faculty to participate in a poverty simulation; it is the willingness to engage in greater professional development and dialogue to explore urban education and find solutions; it is the willingness of the district to actively seek out partnerships with Harvard Graduate School of Education and their Education Redesign Lab; but perhaps most importantly it is the dedication of such professionals who knowing that the program they had been given would not necessarily meet the needs of the students before them and to diligently and tirelessly create a program that they thought did indeed meet their students needs. As a group they met tirelessly to work collaboratively for the good of their students, something in which they truly seem to believe. It is people and beliefs such as these that enable the story to go on, even after moments of pause and disappointment. Just imagine how powerful what they are doing could be, if coupled with the right knowledge, experience and understanding of both their students and themselves! The adage is, one benefit from being at the bottom of the barrel is that you only have one possible direction to move—up. So how does that upward journey begin?

I am a firm believer that hope is one of the constituent elements of a struggling humanity. Given this belief and the unraveling of hopes founded in initially positive and encouraging results, the only meaningful question is: where do we turn, next? The principal has agreed to read the three most crucial works to the development of this project thesis with perhaps the

greatest potential impact on the day to day of the school itself: Freire's seminal work: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Feinberg and Soltis' *School and Society*, and finally, Boykin and Noguera's *Creating the Opportunity to Learn*. The purpose of this is to create an informed dialogue with the entire leadership team using social justice and professionally caring inter-personal relationships as the way forward. Also, the leadership team is in the process of developing a detailed grading policy that is equitable and just for the students. The beginning of this process has been painful for many, but the dialogue remains both open and real, that is, pertinent to the goals at hand while trying to be respectful of legitimate academic concerns. Such a policy, if done correctly, would move toward ensuring a uniformly challenging curriculum, while being mindful of individual differences. That is to say, the policy must not confuse uniformity with equity because providing everyone with the same is not justice. Lastly, just over 2/3 of respondents to the survey said they would seriously consider further professional development on the subject. One person's response may go a long way in summing up most individuals' thoughts: "I would like more information on how to teach to a person that is living such a life. I felt the simulation made me feel defeated as a teacher because if they have so much going on at home how can they do their best in school? It made me want to go easier on them instead of expect more from them".

Upon the successful completion of this doctoral thesis and its defense, the hope is that professional development will be offered in the future. It will utilize the poverty simulation as a back drop, the data in this thesis as a starting point, and intellectual probing of various departmental study groups to develop both an understanding of poverty and culture as well as appropriate measures to address student learning and achievement grounded in the value, worth and knowledge of the individual students themselves. Key to this process may well be a

realignment of the *success 101* guiding questions so that the new questions become those of the school body as a whole and the responses a new truth for consideration and action.

Future professional development will also highlight the ‘resiliency’ factor that has been intimately connected with the capacity of youth to succeed and do well under very challenging circumstances. , But hope must also be a theme of the transcendent aspect of educators as human beings who believe and help create better future for their students and themselves as well. This should naturally occur as book studies evolve and professional dialogue occurs, creating a process of ‘conscientization’ that should begin to envelope the faculty. This process should not only increase their professional advocacy on behalf of their students, but also their political advocacy against structures of power that seek to maintain the status quo of inequity.

The eternal challenge of the prophet is justice in an unjust world where “certain views of utility established for the purpose of maintaining and increasing the dominion of certain communities [are] falsely projected into the nature of things” (Nietzsche, 2006, 1906: 9). Prophets must challenge such a reality that really is not, if one sees clearly. Vision is intimately connected with knowledge and knowledge deeply tied to a proper education steeped in justice. Such education is born of a recognition and acknowledgment of injustice in all its forms, even those present in the schoolhouse and in a democratically self-proclaimed society.

While some may shun the prophetic role of public education, good teachers have always been stalwart advocates for students and have often provided for them at sacrifice. Yet if teaching and prophetic vision for an equitable future are not cornerstones of the profession, then certainly “witnessing to a truth” (Moore 2004: 21) has always been a quintessential premise of schools. Now, however, instead of witnessing to an ideological façade of equitable opportunity, educators might bear witness to the truth and begin empowering students of low SES.

5. Value, Relationship and Public Urban Education

Education is primarily about relationship. Relationships are built upon commonalities and trust. At the heart of the expression and understanding of reality is language. It shapes thought and thus being.

Thought, Language, Time and Transformation

The world in which we operate as human beings is a reality to be perceived and thus communicated primarily through language; but it is also an entity that we actively and continually shape by our thoughts via “concepts” or “opinions”. A great deal of education has worked primarily in the world of opinions. “Opinion speaks as though the world were easily translatable into a common [class] experience that we all share” (Colebrook, 2002: 24). This has been the challenge or dilemma present at WHS on the part of the educators. Deleuze believes that it is through opinion and the ideology of capitalism that we are able to reduce “all possible beings” to capital, and reduce all life to “homogeneous matter there to be exchanged” (ibid, 64). The educational equivalent is to reduce individuals to a test score and reduce all experience to middle/upper middle class experience that invalidates or ignores poverty. Opinion in its most depraved form is identifiable as ideological partisanship, a “predominantly emotional and uncritical” stance that is “arrogant, anti-dialogical and thus anti-communicative” (Freire, 1973: 11).

A concept, on the other hand, “provokes us, dislodges us from our ways of thinking and opens experience up to new ‘intensities’: a way of seeing differently” (Colebrook, 2002: 20). The “radicalization [of a concept] involves increased commitment to the position one has chosen” however, this chosen perspective is “predominantly critical, loving, humble, and

communicative and therefore is a positive stance (Freire 1973: 10). The poverty simulation opened educators up to a new concept, dislodging many of them from their opinions. It has provided a new and revelatory basis for thinking, but still leaves them living in a world dominated by capitalistic ideology and with that all its images and words. The simulation left its participants searching for a proper mode of communication to adequately express the new experience. Yet, insofar as the simulation was truly a radical conceptual experience, then it played to the key elements of successful teaching and learning as well as transformation.

Thought is the cornerstone of all human reality. It is the underlying ontological principal of being; but both thinking and being as experienced through history are subject to time and hence are transitory, that is they function in the process of becoming. Thinking then, cannot be defined “once and for all” because it simply happens and “lies beyond the autonomy of choice” (ibid, 38). However, given the active nature of the human species, and their relational integrity, thought produces language and actions that are expressed in and through time. By its very nature, thought is “the power of life to move and become” and “the force of movement...becoming in different ways” (ibid, 40 & 44).

Time allows for the developmental reality of difference to take form. It is the expression of evolution in concrete philosophical terms. However, it is nuanced in a context of freedom which neither Darwin nor Spencer truly allowed for in their hypothesis, but which also expresses itself beyond the physical plain of being and mere environmental adaptability. Time therefore is not only the ultimate stage of the human drama, but a significant force within that drama standing on the side of change and the expression of difference. By this means, time is not just the passage from one moment to the next, but rather an orchestrated movement integral to the reality of being, which creates not just physical “movement” but more importantly

‘transformation’ and ‘becoming’ (ibid, 44). Time necessitates both change and transformation and with its passage nothing can nor will remain the same. Sameness, permanence are physical, social, economic, political, linguistic, and ontological impossibilities. This would lead to the belief that greater equity, justice and balance, or their opposites are ontologically possible with the passage of time. Such a reality can ground sad human experience in meaningful hope for a better future. The language, concepts, and actions that can create that future are grounded in different experiences, in the world or the schoolhouse as the new microcosm for a different world.

Language, Bias, Relationship, and the World

Lukacs reminds us that “action” is always “governed by interest” and it “forms an essential ontological component of social being that cannot be eliminated”. He refers to this as the “biasing effect”(Lukacs 1978: 16). Who we are as relational beings and what we do, according to him, is always rooted in a particular bias or adopted “attitudes” that do not have the effect of changing who we are ontologically, but do have a dynamic effect on all “elements of the intrinsically existing reality” (ibid, 16) because of what we think or do as a result of these attitudes. Simply stated, we build the world around us according to the biases we possess. These “biases” are nothing different from opinions which move “from my specific likes and desires and homogenizes desire, producing a general subject” (Colebrook, 2002: 16) or reality communicated via a common language. These biases are rooted in values, the values themselves revert directly back to the culture which created them thus producing in the United States an inequitable cycle of capitalism and an unjust educational platform to promote its continual survival. Yet change is the inevitable reality of everyone’s existence, and in change a person

finds either hope or desperation depending on where one stands in history. The poverty simulation began to move participants from the dominant cultural opinion to a more radical conceptual understanding of the complications involved in poverty. Thus it not only shattered previous held middle class sectarian beliefs, but also left open the possibility of more critical analysis fostered in humble but loving dialogue.

It could be rationalized that most people are just or that they favor justice and historically this is true only in so far as 'justice' does not intrude on opinion and interest as explained prior. One supports justice until it involves bussing, desegregation, interracial marriage, gay marriage, my retirement, my 401, my middle class suburban neighborhood, my tax breaks, my tax credits my corporate subsidies, my exuberant benefits package or my exorbitant annual CEO bonuses. Language serves as the fulcrum for bias, but also for constructing reality, perhaps making it the cornerstone for change. A relevantly modern and prime example of this is the Roman Catholic Pontiff, Pope Francis. He has spoken a lot about homosexuality and divorced Catholics. He has not changed a single doctrinal teaching of the church, but by his choice of words and the language he has spoken, he has successfully begun to reframe the entire dialogue within the church. To some extent he has challenged the conservatives, "those who are served by the present limit situation [and who] regard the untested [emerging language] as a threatening" situation (Freire 2012:102), and put them on the defensive. But time itself is literally their enemy.

In concrete time and space, language serves as the "virtual dimension of sense" and as such not only "responds to our way of approaching the world" (Colebrook 2002:20) but also serves to help create that world. Each individual teacher and administrator have had a particular "bias" or "opinion" of poverty and individuals who live in poverty. The poverty simulation

positively impacted that worldview. It provided a temporary virtual window of emotional experience and hardship that served to reframe our capacity to know and understand the truth as we each experienced it in that simulation and as we've come to see it reflected in the constituency that we serve. Through that experience our universally shared experience has provided for a new concept of poverty, not rooted in middle to upper middle class opinion and not grounded in capitalist ideology, but rather in a mutually shared experience of difference that still lacks a proper language for expression. We know what we felt and we know what we experienced, and now we need to build a language that not only expresses those unjust experiences, but also --and more importantly-- constructs a new reality in line with and attuned to the reality of our students. That language must also stand in opposition to the language of the dominant culture. It is a language that begins to change the educational dialogue from "achievement gap" to a justice gap, or a lack of equitable opportunity. Let us be very clear, this is not slang, jargon, or ghetto-English of which we are speaking. Rather, it is the construct of a new and different reality, grounded in a new and different experience that values the life-worth of our students and their families and begins to give recognition and voice to their lived experiences and truths. It is the complete opposite of what we as educators have done all too frequently in the past with regards to the students and the lives which they and their families lead: "underestimate such knowledge" that has been brought to our classrooms each day, or "what is worse, [to have] ridiculed it" (Freire 1998: 62).

A Language Rooted in Co-Subjectivity to Express a Different Paradigm

Our capacity as educators to grasp and understand what it means to be urbanely poor was not forged through the mere intellectual activity of coursework, reading or professional

development, as offered through national educational associations. Our brief experience of urban poverty was not an epiphany of the educational and historical contexts with which we supposedly regularly engaged as educators and of which many of us had been a part for years. By the same token it was nothing akin to the years of preparation we had undertaken to become licensed educators in the State of Rhode Island. Rather, the poverty simulation itself was a purely experiential activity engaging every aspect of our being that enabled our stable, known-world to be temporarily altered. In the debriefing, our historic experience and lived realities lacked the language to contextualize our new experiences. The few descriptive words we were capable of mustering in that debriefing and that were expressed were not simply the result of a negative and humanly frustrating experience. As well educated adults, we genuinely felt limited by the inability to positively express what we had experienced, and while we quickly recognized the plethora of negative words within our pantheon of vocabulary, it was much more challenging to go beyond the negative feelings in words, because our thoughts could not find accurate communicative expression. We lacked the capacity to both process and communicate because we lacked the language of mutual intelligibility.

Language is rooted in experience and gives voice to reality. As educators living in middle to upper-middle class America, our poverty experience was one of a kind and quite limited and should not mask or usurp the reality of our students or their families. That is, in developing a language that demonstrates a counter-cultural point of reference expressive both of the inequity of opportunity as well as a call to grater justice, we need to be guided by the authenticity of the community. As educators we do this by listening carefully and not putting words or structures into their mouths based upon our own sentiments and resurgence of our own upbringings. Instead, we empower them to help us build that language together and by so doing

we are also empowering our students to be active subjects in the learning process. In order to do this, we as faculty need a new and different structural framework of truth from the one we have used. This is where the experts enter in and professional development plays a crucial role. A slow process of deconstruction of the old, beginning with a critical theory approach to how the world has worked and the role education has played in its development, is an essential component to the work ahead. It has already begun by the principal receiving and beginning to read the books instrumental to the educational framework of this thesis. It will continue with those books being shared with the leadership team and will expand into professional development offered to faculty as part of their required hours for annual professional development.

But educators cannot usurp the experience of their educational constituency; to do so “is to treat them as objects” (Freire, 2012:65). Instead, a dual process of “co-intentional” education along with “critical thinking” must begin to take place. That is, in this process educators remain the professionals guided by their knowledge, skill and training in their content subject matter and proper pedagogy. However, with their students and their community they begin to develop co-subjectivity, whereby teacher, student and community work in tandem to uncover and develop the new paradigm that acknowledges inequity, injustice and systems of power rooted in cultural ideological truths. At the same time they begin to experience the humanly freeing process involved in identifying the experience that points to injustice. This leads to the development of that new and more just reality in the context of both language and culture that serves to greatly enhance each individual’s own subjectivity. When educators begin to practice co-intentionality with their urban poor constituency they and their students participate as “Subjects, ...in the task of unveiling that reality, and coming to know it critically” (ibid, 69). “They become jointly

responsible for a process in which all grow” (ibid, 80) as each teaches the other in the quest for a deeper sense of historic reality and the tools and language necessary to change it.

Education is alive with 21st Century Skills and perhaps amongst the most touted is “Critical Thinking”. For so long we have felt that we have imparted critical analytical skills to our students; however, the lens through which we have ‘forced’ analytical inquiry has too often been from our own paradigm as educators: from our own personal cultural and historic milieu, from our own bias and opinion as educators. Real critical thinking, however, is quite different. It “discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and the people...which perceives reality as process, as transformation...[and] which does not separate itself from action” (ibid, 92). That is, critical thinking is an uncovering of reality as it is, while recognizing that people in the world have made it so. The current reality is not an immutable given; it is not always so, this is the “indivisible solidarity”. There is still more, critical thinking uncovers reality as an impermanent and constructed truth of our existence. Like all real knowledge, uncovering reality leads to change, as it begins a process of transformation for both student and educator and their relationship

That the majority of students at WHS are poor, that their families struggle and often suffer insurmountable hardship, is not new news. What is new and enlightening for many is the recognition and acknowledgment of how the educational system as a whole, including faculty as participants, has promulgated the perpetuation of an inequitable system aimed at continued injustice. This true realization stands in stark contrast to the world as previously understood by us and the way we envisioned our work, Yet critical thinking begins to encompass a dialectical process that moves beyond the current paradigm and elicits new examples, different actions--, new realities and new language that lead to a slow and painful process of recognition and

change. Critical thinking equips students and educators to know and exercise their true freedom, and in the process rediscover themselves as human beings in the process of becoming.

There are two historical examples of this occurring that immediately come to recollection. The first is the founding of the United States as a representative democracy. In that historical epoch, monarchs ruled all of the then ‘civilized’ known world, and their rule had been divinely instituted: a clear example of religion working to legitimate the status quo. Therefore, when the founding fathers sought to establish a different form of government, they turned to a new language with new and radical ideas, new paradigms and new beliefs. They found these concepts in what we now call enlightenment philosophy and adopted them according to their needs. They found a voice in the new philosophical language being created that adequately expressed the injustices of monarchy and their democratic beliefs. Historically, they lacked a model or precedent, and so needed to return to Greece, but there they only discovered mass democracy, a concept totally repugnant to their elitist principles. Afraid of the “mob” and the eloquence of tyranny in unstable circumstances, they created a representative democracy with a system of checks and balances, which history has shown to be enduring as modern states go.

The second example is the theology of the liberation movement. Roman Catholic priests working in Latin America, particularly in the Favelas of Brazil, began to realize that what they traditionally preached concerning God, scripture and the sacraments had little to do with the lives of their constituents. In many instances it was aligned with the powers of oppression, so they began a process of self-reflection. Their professional training as clergy had given them a more than adequate training in both philosophy and Theology, to which they returned to discover ‘new’ philosophies so markedly different from the scholastic and classical ones that had been the cornerstone of their educational formation. In these new philosophies they began to find a new

language to reframe their theology, and a new lens of personal experience by working in “solidarity with the poor,” which helped translate their theology into new meaning. From this lifetime work--which involved persecution, ex-communication and even death / martyrdom for many-- there arose a new discourse with which to engage and challenge the world. This new language includes such expressions as “the fundamental option for the poor”, “Christian based communities” and “God stands with the poor against their injustice.” These new terms and others fostered a monumental shift in theology and role of the Christian religion in society, including the meaning of Christ and his martyrdom within that religion.

For those deeply affected by the theology of liberation created at the hands of oppression, the exodus experience of the Jews and the voice of the prophets no longer represented a hallowed distant past. Like the Eucharist itself for many Christians, they became present and real moments in the life history of a pilgrim people on the road to becoming a different people without fundamentally altering who they already were. The new language rooted in their own historical experience empowered them to see differently, to speak differently and finally to make history their own and fully participate in it. They were no longer objects of the belief system of others, but became their own subjects of a history that they themselves were writing, by new perceptions and roles in the world. That is, they were no longer living as slaves, but as a free and self-determining people.

Their combined experience and their newfound language created a new paradigm for the world. This paradigm gave voice to those who had been silenced through oppression, a long history of injustice, violence and torture. It turned the hierarchical pyramid structure of the church upside down and it gave a new lens for the interpretation of scripture, theology, and human reality. Ideas of the Church as God’s unalterable, immutable, reality were radically

altered by being placed in time and space within human history. As a direct result of this transformative process, the mainline Protestant denominations have altered how they interact with the exchange of ideas and ideologies, and they have come to better understand their own purpose or vocation in the world. The Christian Church was transformed as a direct result of what came about through the process of its priests and ministers working alongside the poor and feeling their reality, experiencing it, listening, being changed by it. This work created a new language that gave rise to dialectic within the church of Christianity itself and all the traditional mainline denominations therein. .

Metaphor Imagination and Transformation

While there are two concrete historical precedents for how language creates, they are both each deeply rooted in a careful analysis and undivided attentiveness to oppression and drawn to the spoken or written word. Ricoeur states, “it is *language* that is the primary condition of all human experience” (Ricoeur 1997:16; emphasis in the original)³⁷. There is, then, a deeper sense of language beyond writing and beyond speaking tied to the imagination which of itself serves as a powerful force in constructing new realities because “[i]magination puts us closer to engaging our capacities for moving in the direction we seek” (Abascal-Hildebrand 2003: 97).. Intelligence serves imagination and produces metaphor. It is metaphor that acts as the bridge between what we know and is familiar and that which we have not yet encountered or experienced but to which we are moving. According to Abascal-Hildebrand’s interpretation of Ricoeur, “[m]etaphor is an operation of thought and a mode of language that references two sets of ideas[lived reality and the reality we hope for] so that together they expand the meaning of

³⁷ Quoted in *Counter Points* v.218, the future of Educational Studies (2003) Mary Abascal-Hildebrand

each” (Abacsal-Hildebrand 2003, 100). True imagination and imaginative metaphor is to send the writer or hearer into exile. It is to create a separation from what is to what could be. It is to lay the intellectual groundwork of what could be through imagination.

Proper metaphor can really only be expressed in symbol and often this is connected with language, but not all language must be connected with words. Metaphor, thus serves as the best communicative channel of the creative spirit of newness, change, and life-giving transformation. Metaphor thus stands as one of the greatest remaining symbols and as a symbol, historically, culturally and linguistically, in the most ancient of traditions, “the symbol does not so much ‘resemble’ the reality that it symbolizes as it participates in it, and therefore it is capable of communicating it in reality” Schmemmann, 1987, 38). That is, while today symbol has come to mean only a representation of what is symbolized, but in its original use and cultural recognition, symbol represented and it made what it was supposed to represent real and present in the here and now. Thus, “in the original understanding it is the manifestation and presence of the *other* reality- but precisely as *other*, which, under given circumstances, cannot be manifested and made present in any other way than as symbol” (ibid, 38).

A historical manifestation of such a symbol, which is deeply rooted in injustice and has had a transformative power exerted on the entire society of which it was a part, were the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, or Mothers of the May Square. In 1976 the military took over the government of Argentina and began massive arrests, torture, and murdering of people it had labeled subversive to the country, religion, and Western ideology. In 1977 the mothers of these “disappeared” people organized. It is the first silent but public protest against a military rule during which over 300,000 citizens had mysteriously disappeared during its reign. Every Thursday the mothers gathered in the central government square. The courageous mothers

paraded in silent protest only carrying a symbol of the person who had vanished; often times it was a picture, an article of clothing or just their name. The mothers themselves became symbolic of the injustice occurring throughout the nation and became a symbol and call for radical change. In 1983 the military government collapses, a democratic election is held and the newly elected civilian president, “Raul Alfonsin appoints a distinguished panel of citizens to investigate the disappearances, the National Commission on the Disappeared”. In 1985 “the First-ever trial of a military regime by an elected civilian government [takes place in Argentina and] five of the nine members of the first three military juntas are sent to prison”.³⁸ The mothers themselves proved to be a powerful and creative symbol of transformation and change beyond any possible words.

A Path Forward

In each historical example cited, there are definite corollaries that can be applied to education. In each case the participants, to a greater or lesser degree depending upon their rank and status in society, felt the weight of oppression. They each also felt alienated, ostracized or as in the case of so many Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, incomplete. As one mother had expressed it: "It's very difficult to explain how you feel when they take a child from you and you don't know what's happened to the child. It's like a terrible emptiness, like something's been wrenched away from inside of you".³⁹ In the case of the founding fathers they turned philosophically to the ideas of the enlightenment movement to find the conceptual framework and give voice to their political and social views. The theologians also turned to more contemporary philosophies of their era and returned to re-examine the light of their sacred texts armed with new hermeneutical

³⁸ Southern Poverty Law Center, <http://www.tolerance.org/activity/madres-de-plaza-de-mayo>, accessed 1/9/2016

³⁹ *ibid*, as above.

tools crafted in solidarity with the poor. Las Madres also expressed tremendous solidarity and used that solidarity quite craftily in a time when labor unions, the Church, business leaders and their own families distanced themselves from them. They promoted the simple and enduring symbol of both their presence and the white headscarf they each wore, symbol of the diaper of their lost child and also of the dove of peace.

While urban public education does not involve the creation of a new nation, the role of God and religion in dealing with the poor, or totalitarian military regimes, it definitely has the modes of poverty, oppression, and alienation deep within its veins. But until the poverty simulation, our high school and district opted not to listen to the pulse of its own heart. The results of the simulation, like one's first heart attack, provided a definite wake-up call and directed each of us to the inadequacy of language more than that of resources or intellect. Like our national forebears or the theologians of liberation, we are beginning to build our own language utilizing the tools and experience that are at our disposal and most suited to who we are as an educational community. Then, in conjunction with our students, we can together begin the process of liberation. While theologians returned to scripture and our founding fathers turned to ideals of the enlightenment current in their day, we as an educational community can also return to the sources of our founding truths and purposes: state and national constitutions, and the laws which guarantee a fair and equitable education for all.

Like the Mothers of the square, each day we journey from our comfortable homes to the plaza, that is, the school, not only as educators, but more significantly as symbols of hope for what we believe education can and should be. That is, while we do not deal with attack dogs or tear gas, or brutal police tactics, we do deal with the brutality of a warped system of economics that leaves us as educators shuffling to move outdated electronic equipment away from leaky

ceilings, fumbling with useless and outdated software, computer programs, and Internet search engines, always in a position of want. These conditions prevent faculty from creating equitable educational opportunities for our students so that they may no longer suffer the injustices that have been present throughout their entire lives. We march quietly to our respective classrooms, not with white headscarves but with a deeper sense of appreciation of who our students are and what we hope one day they shall attain and become. Through our combined efforts of a new solidarity with them, this is beginning to develop.

Perhaps what we value most is our own sense of humanity. Yet the poverty simulation has reminded us of our common humanity, that is we share brokenness, a sense of incompleteness with others and the rest of the world. We came to see how difficult others have it, but were also reminded of our own personal challenges and shortcomings. Through the effects of the poverty simulation, we have been empowered as educators to work closely with our students and attentively listen to them, based upon our own inadequacies. As a direct result of these we can develop a sense of true solidarity whereby we recognize their injustice is also our own. From this newfound authentic realization of solidarity rooted in our own insufficiency, together we can begin to develop a language and concepts that are not the traditional binary dichotomies prevalent in capitalistic and oversimplified religious fundamentalist thinking, but ones that participate in a shared responsibility of a co-educational process, rooted in real critical thinking and socio-historical examination of education and its role in history. Together, we begin to uncover, or rather re-discover the fundamental purpose of school in the light of our now critical 21st century understanding of the world, grounded not in capitalistic ideologies, but in philosophies that lay bear the human reality as it is lived and experienced by various social classes. In particular, solidarity can be created by critical understandings of the plight of the

urban poor, who are very much like those in the church who had been voiceless, marginalized, and cast into a meaningless existence of servitude and submission.

While public education cannot necessarily turn to the Bible as a direct source for a new paradigm of this reality, educators of faith can find their own wealth of inspiration from their particular philosophical and faith beliefs. But education, itself, can turn to the history of established laws and Supreme Court decisions that were transformative in education and which worked to make it more equitable in order to build a history with new purpose. Educators can find historical precedent in the purpose of education and then point to a direct lack of sufficient funding and a society's blindness to the fundamental changes needed to accomplish the desired ends. In other words, educators, in conjunction with their constituents, can begin to take on a prophetic voice. Like theologians of liberation, teachers, by their training and profession can join with their constituents in a dialectical process intended to reframe and restructure inherited philosophies of education by engaging them with less traditional philosophies, in order to interpret educational practice in light of the new experience of the urban poor and by the language which they bring to the forefront.

As theologians developed what has come to be known as 'Liberation Theology', educators who work daily with the poor can begin to construct a new language of education that gives rise to a new "Liberation Philosophy of Education," if you will. They can only do so by listening attentively to the truth of the poor and by dispelling their own opinions to form a new concept of education. But this paradigmatic shift must be intentional and must be the result of a new experience and different linguistic dialogue which are rooted in an unprecedented commitment to justice.

The monumental complexity of the task at hand begins with simple human relationships,

particularly student with teacher. It is here, at the most basic human level that the process actually begins. It is where the first steps of the mutually transformative critical dialogue occur and it is where real change at WHS begins to take shape with tangible results for our students. In *How It's Being Done*, author Karin Chenoweth borrows Molly Bensinger-Lacey's 5 elements of the wheel of school reform and while she has "personal relationship-building" as one of the 5 spokes in the wheel⁴⁰, it is not the central one. She says that she would make "leadership the gravitational force that keeps the wheel from falling apart" (Chenoweth 2009, 206).

While the book is fairly well written and done with sincere intent, it is obvious that the author has the perspective of an outsider looking in, and she has couched the work in all the essential educational jargon of the day. According to her own misguided beliefs, she uses all the rhetoric in vogue to offer educators "not a blueprint" but rather a way "to think about the right issues" (ibid, 3) in order that they may better serve "the vast number of chronically failing urban and rural schools that serve America's neediest children" (ibid, vii; Foreword by Noguera). In reading her book, one would correctly surmise she has no direct experience in education or even working directly with poor children. The spokes of her wheel do nothing to transform existing reality, and they fail to create a new language or paradigm of success. It is the same language, the same context and the same message--only drawn differently. The wheel of 'progress' stands as yet still another meaningless metaphor in educational jargon that fails to create substantive change, because it completely accepts the existing paradigm of inequity as a given and unalterable reality. The central force to that pinwheel dartboard should not be leadership, that's the outsider's rational perspective. It is the viewpoint of one who not only fails to understand education, but also people. While the work does not overlook the reality of poverty,

⁴⁰ The wheel is evenly divided in 5 separate pie slices including: teacher collaboration, a laser-like focus on what students need to learn, formative assessments, data-driven instruction, and personal relationship building

both the book and the wheel metaphor fail to appreciate it in its complexity as a structural system. The center of her misaligned wheel and for transformative change of the educational system and schools themselves should not be leadership, as she and so many educational gurus have come to believe, but relationship. Human relationships are the centrifugal force in education that holds any semblance of meaning to what is done on a daily basis. It is also the force of change and transformation. If leadership does not exhibit the capacity to enter into meaningful relationship, if teachers and students fail to interact in ways that enhance and promote dialogue rooted in mutual trust and respect, then nothing is really accomplished. Without relationship, no real learning takes place and no one is transformed. In some ways, Chenoweth admits this when she says: “I have been in schools that on the surface are highly functional-that is, they have high test scores and people spend outsized amounts of money to buy houses in their catchment areas- but where sarcasm, condescension, and outright hostility permeate the atmosphere.” (ibid, 202). It would readily appear that in such instances, whether in sub-urban or urban schools, “the inauthenticity of superimposed solutions, [Molly Bensinger-Lacey’s pinwheel], dooms them to failure” (Freire, 1973: 28), because leadership has replaced relationship.

If language shapes reality and in conjunction with time works to transform it, then relationship is the structural key to creating the basis to what provides for a “self-transformation producing a stance of intervention in one’s context” (Freire, 1973: 48). Simply think of how one is transformed through a positive and meaningful relationship, whether it be through love, deep friendship or shared passionate and professional interests. This change within heightens one’s own interaction with the environment. It builds a greater sense of solidarity, of oneness, but not possession. It allows for the meaningful dialogue to occur. It fosters a new and more profound

language of respect and change, rooted in a deepened examination of society, injustice and the symbols and language used to create hegemony of the status quo.

The reality is 65% of the students who attend WHS, and their families, are poor, yet the vast majority of those who teach them are not. Nevertheless, real education begins to take place “when there are two learners who occupy somewhat different spaces in an ongoing dialogue” (Freire, 1998: 8). Until the poverty simulation, it had not been a dialogue but a long, monotonous soliloquy that we as educators had mistaken for genuine dialogue. It fostered no real engagement, no sense of real listening, and it led us to miss the challenge it presented to us. The only real voices permitted were those from power and authority who served to reinforce our monotone. Yet in the poverty simulation we began to hear a new voice, not one which spoke from power and authority, but one which spoke from the brokenness and silence of our own hearts, which stretched beyond the economic chasm and made us aware of our own frailty and our own broken humanity, even in the context of plenty. We heard, perhaps for the very first time, our own students speaking to us in ourselves, and it was a voice we could not quell nor abate. If we could not silence it, if we could not contain it, then we had to listen to and heed it.

There in that simple simulation, we were each reminded that a world full of data, knowledge, curriculum and assessment that are disconnected from people and their human struggle is useless. To pretend that any one of them carries significant meaning is utterly disingenuous. How then does one build a language of education that moves beyond the monotone of power and that is not silenced by it? That language begins as a primordial thought, the foundation of our being. It arises by listening to one’s heart, the voice of the student within and the meaningful relationships that help foster and nurture a new solidarity. Such listening, relationship, and solidarity give rise to a new interpretation of the world and the formation of a

new language to expand that interpretation. In this process Thought itself appears to be changed, but in reality it simply has returned to what it always was—relationship beyond measure, an unconditioned solidarity with humanity.

Research on Relationships in Teaching

In antiquity the heart was viewed as the seat of wisdom. The poverty simulation helped to nuance and highlight “asset-focused factors” that students already bring to the class room as a result of their lived experiences. Teachers need to recognize these assets that revolve around three principles and interrelated categories: “Interpersonal relationships, intersubjectivity, and information-processing quality” (Boykin & Noguera, 2011:69). However, each of these only operates successfully based upon the level of good “teacher-student relationship quality (TSRQ)” (ibid, 70). In fact, it is only TSRQ that has demonstrated sufficient evidence to “support” its ability to close the educational divide between haves and have-nots (ibid, 70).

In 2006, “Stevens, Olivarez and Hammon” found that “the two strongest” indicators of student success in mathematics in grades 4-10 were positive teacher feedback and attempts by the teacher to reduce student anxiety (ibid, 71). By the same token and in the same year a “qualitative study by Brand, Glasson and Green” demonstrated that advanced academic success beyond high school was very dependent upon the fostering of good student-teacher relationships in high school (ibid, 71).

What the poverty simulation showed and what the preliminary data tend to bear out is that real educational reform is a matter of the heart. This is not some sentimental, emotionally imbalanced aspect of a tired and weary faculty. Rather, it is where all meaningful life journeys begin, in a shared life experience that creates a mutual trust and understanding over time. This

understanding arises from deep dialogue and new metaphors of interpretation that eventually alter perceptions and transform life and language to reflect the new, mutually forged reality. Lastly in this regard, in 2006 Stewart's work with 8th and 12th grade minority students of low SES showed that "the perception that students get along well with teachers, have caring teachers, and receive praise for good efforts- is a significant predictor of math standardized achievement scores" (ibid, 72). Good teaching and learning begins not with good leadership, but with good student-teacher relationships shaped by authenticity.

While positive TSRQ is essential for all students to succeed, it has been shown to be more crucial and essential for minority students of low SES. That is, while good student-teacher rapport influences student learning and performance in middle to upper middle class students in the United States, its role is absolutely essential amongst the urban poor. In a comparison of first grade classrooms back in 2005, "Hamre and Pianta" found that "putting high at risk students in classrooms with low levels of emotional support" (i.e. with poor student teacher relations), then these very same students "display less engagement, more conflicts, and lower levels of achievement" (ibid, 72). In 2003 Ferguson discovered that students of greater economic means would respond favorably and seek to achieve in a classroom where the teacher is academically demanding. However, for students of low SES, the academic demands of the teacher by themselves are not enough to elicit a strong effort on the part of students. For students of low SES, not only must the teacher be academically demanding, but must also display a genuine concern for the students' well being in order for the students to work hard (ibid, 77). Lastly, Mckown and Weinstein demonstrated in 2002 that teacher expectations of students in heterogeneous classrooms "are substantially more negative" for racial minority students, i.e. Blacks and Latinos, than they are for Whites and Asians (ibid, 79).

The Challenge Ahead

Each of these studies highlights the essential component of building quality teacher student relationships that encompass the whole person, not just the student aspect of the individual and to do this, one must both know and appreciate their students as individuals. However, as an educator one must also possess a profound understanding of what it actually means to be human and what humanity entails as a process of incompleteness and becoming in a particular history at a particular time. One must also understand the ontological nature of freedom as it applies to human beings as relational and historical beings. In order to properly achieve this, one must examine society and the role that culture plays within it as a dialectical process that involves the continual human struggle for power. Finally one must recognize the transcendent aspect of each individual in relation to hope and its power toward the future.

Each of these things adds a depth to education that no teacher preparation program could ever instill. Instead of being born from pure academic inquiry, they arise out of meaningful interpersonal relationships that seek equity and justice for all children in the public education system. They are the result of relentless inquiry spurred by a constant gnawing at systems of blatant inequities that often reflect social injustice. These systems include the educational system and the economic structures and ideologies that allow for the proliferation of one injustice after another. Neither truth nor justice is a universal category, but each paradigm encompasses particular aspects of a limited notion of each of these. If language both expresses and creates reality, then education must turn to a new language which aptly expresses that 65% of the students we teach at WHS are currently living in poverty, and are being served by poorly funded public schools. It must build a new paradigm of solidarity with the poor, a “fundamental option for the poor” which challenges the models that heretofore have been forced upon us.

Infused with unparalleled hope, the new paradigm can create something different, something more equitable and just, something that truly demonstrates what we as educators and students are capable of as free individuals. Through it we can claim our own subjectivity in the process of change and becoming.

The poverty simulation has provided a window to a new and different vista unexperienced before. While the preliminary results had demonstrated that our sights had been opened to the possibility of a different path, whether through the simulation or other initiatives aimed specifically at freshmen, the subsequent data would most likely indicate that we as a faculty and as a school institution have not yet fully embarked on that journey—that still remains a choice. But what cannot be chosen is change itself; as it is inevitable. As free individuals and with a change of leadership, WHS has willingly embarked on a journey of the heart along a path that has no clear demarcations. Yet it does so in great hope amidst a sea of change, not quite sure what the destination will be, but trusting it will be much more authentic than other odysseys on which it has been forced to embark. So many, prior, had been filled with false and empty promises of better student achievement, greater student-teacher relationships, and higher test scores.

Authenticity was perhaps the hallmark effect of the poverty simulation because it afforded each participant to see poverty and the students we teach in poverty in an authentic light from our own short experience. Momentarily it allowed us to seriously question the beliefs and assumptions we had built around poverty, our students and their parents and begin to see things in a new light. It was authentic because it was professional development that directly addressed the pressing need of the school to understand where it is, what surrounds it and how the clientele we service actually is.

It is authentic because it was not mandated by the state, but grew out of our own quest and need for a deeper understanding of our setting. While it did not address either the common core state standards, or student achievement or the next generation science standards, it did directly address the education of the urban poor and the world that makes it what it is. It is this same authenticity that has spurred some of the early achievements. But these need to be followed by a greater journey, which in solidarity provides a more permanent vista to change what we and our students have experienced for far to long.

While instability is the hallmark of the first decades of the 21st century, the bulwark of education has failed to provide a sense of modern calm because it has only added to the social injustice that has been so much a part of the destabilization in the first place. But time creates change and change is definitely in the air. The student created motto for the school is: “Every great journey begins with a step, make today your first”. With the poverty simulation and the *Success 101* program, the school has begun that journey in a time of unprecedented change in education. At the school we have new leadership and department leaders for the first time in years. At the state level we have a brand new commissioner of education who has in his vernacular replaced “achievement gap” with “equity gap.” Yet to date, this new language has done little to promote the fair funding formula for schools, which take into account factors beyond “seat time”. This funding formula is sought by all the urban districts in the state. Lastly, the well intended but poorly orchestrated: No Child Left Behind Act has recently been replaced by: Every Child Can Succeed Law.

Change is absolutely ripe in the air, but whether or not it will amount to anything significant depends not upon one’s commitment to the ideals one espouses, but whether or not one is able to forge a bond of solidarity with the poor and from that bond adopt a different

perspective which enables one to see differently, choose differently, and “be” differently by coming to exercise one’s humanity in a transformational light that changes who we are and how we do education. It is to let the dialogical journey of thought come full circle.

Appendices

WUFOO Faculty Survey and Results Concerning the Poverty Simulation

Poverty Simulation Data

Please select your gender:

- Female: 46
- Male: 22
- Gender neutral: 1

I have been employed at WED for:

Choices	Percentage	Count
0-5 years	21.74%	15
11-15 years;	21.74%	15
16-20 years;	21.74%	15
21 plus years	18.84%	13
6-10 years;	15.94%	11

On a scale from 1 - 10, how would you rate the simulation overall:

Choices	Percentage	Count
10	36.23%	25
8	26.09%	18
9	15.94%	11
7	13.04%	9
6	4.35%	3
5	2.90%	2
4	1.45%	1

What percentage of students do you think receive free or reduced lunch?

Choices	Percentage	Count
less than 75%	56.52%	39
more than 76%	39.13%	27
less than 25%	2.90%	2
less than 50%	1.45%	1

Was your understanding of poverty enhanced during this simulation::

Choices	Percentage	Count
Yes	82.61%	57
No	17.39%	12

If yes, please comment:

#	Content	Date
72	The simulation gave me a better understanding of just what some of my students go through on a daily basis. I was unaware of everything that was involved and how difficult it can be.	7:50am · 2015-09-09
70	Helped me understand the struggle for families and not just single people (like myself)	9:01am · 2015-09-04
69	Transportation became a key to any success that you could earn! It was very hard to find information to help your conditions.	6:44am · 2015-09-04
67	Stress level of juggling bills and lack of knowledge and time to obtain help.	5:30pm · 2015-09-02
66	I hadn't taken into account how the senior citizens were also being affected by poverty.	3:14pm · 2015-09-02
64	the difficulties of managing all the services	11:23am · 2015-09-02
62	I was able to understand how even the smallest things like transportation hurt the family's overall finances.	11:00am · 2015-09-02
61	I thought that the income would be higher before you are considered poverty level.	10:38am · 2015-09-02
60	It was clear that we were looking to see how outside influences our students behavior in the classroom.	10:31am · 2015-09-02
58	It was beneficial to be aware of the different types of poverty experiences many of WHS students live on a daily basis. Hopefully more staff will be more sensitive to our student needs.	7:30pm · 2015-08-31

Were any of your perceptions about poverty altered as a result of this simulation?

Choices	Percentage	Count
Yes	60.87%	42
No	39.13%	27

Throughout the simulation, I felt:

Choices	Percentage	Count
Overwhelmed	8.70%	6
Frustrated	7.25%	5
Anxious	7.25%	5
Stressed	5.80%	4
Helpless	4.35%	3
Sad	2.90%	2
Confused	2.90%	2
[View] Other	60.87%	42

What I will remember most about this simulation is:

Choices	Percentage	Count
Difficulty in getting the simplest task done.	1.45%	1
The frustration	1.45%	1
Being reminded that this is a reality for many of my students.	1.45%	1
People stealing	1.45%	1

Rudeness	1.45%	1
Scrambling to make ends meet	1.45%	1
Understanding students needs	1.45%	1
[View]		
Other	89.86%	62

Will what you experienced in any way affect how you relate to students on a personal level:

- Yes: 61
- No: 8

Will what you experienced in any way affect your professional interactions with students:

- Yes: 59
- No: 10

Would you seriously consider PD related to poverty and teaching offered after school one afternoon p

- Yes: 46
- No: 23

Was there anything you thought could be improved on:

#	Content	Date
70	Maybe a more robust discussion in smaller groups then in larger groups?	9:01am · 2015-09-04
67	Transportation tickets should not multiply with members moved. More time at the beginning to plan strategy would be more realistic. Not enough discussion afterward problem solving. Too much emphasis on feelings. I know people who earn good money but manage it horribly. This was not discussed.	5:30pm · 2015-09-02
65	I didn't feel we had enough time at the beginning to know what was involved. The ability to hear the introduction was difficult. The amount of time to understand the situation we were placed in was not enough.	1:58pm · 2015-09-02
64	I would like more information on how to teach to a person that is living such a life. I felt the simulation made me feel defeated as a teacher because if they have so much going on at home how can they do their best in school. It made me want to go easier on them instead of expect more from them.	11:23am · 2015-09-02
63	It was interesting, I think there should be more focus on what teachers could do to help support students in these stressful and difficult situations.	11:17am · 2015-09-02
60	no	10:31am · 2015-09-02
56	no, it really was an eye opener	7:48am · 2015-08-31
55	additional resources for teachers	6:52am · 2015-08-31
54	No I thought it was very well done.	6:11am · 2015-08-31
53	No	7:36pm · 2015-08-30

Do you have any additional comments you would like to share:

#	Content	Date
70	I thought it was very good.	9:01am · 2015-09-04
67	While I was critical of some details I thought it was worthwhile. Many of us who know the city well and the kids are already aware of how difficult their lives are and have made adjustments years ago. I usually hear of at least one student having a breakdown each year. We are 3 days into this year and I have already heard of one.	5:30pm · 2015-09-02
65	I think this experience is useful for people who come from middle/upper class background. It is an eye opener. That wasn't the case for me, since I grew up in a family that struggled financially and often didn't have money to pay the bills.	1:58pm · 2015-09-02
60	great job!	10:31am · 2015-09-02
58	I would require this experience to any staff member who especially does not come from poverty or has lived in community with little diversity. Sometimes Woonsocket residents and schools get a bad rap from people who honestly have spent little time in our city or communicating with the communities within our borders.	7:30pm · 2015-08-31
57	They should have mentioned what happens to 18 year old students who are not able to be in Forster homes anymore because of their age.	11:21am · 2015-08-31
56	no	7:48am · 2015-08-31

55	this should be done at least every other year.	6:52am · 2015-08-31
54	No	6:11am · 2015-08-31
53	No	7:36pm · 2015-08-30

Would you recommend this experience to other educators:

- Yes: 68
- No: 1

Interview with Success 101 Teachers

Teacher	If given the opportunity would you choose to teach or not to teach the course again Y/N	Based upon your knowledge, experience and professional observation for the students you work with, would you say the <i>Success 101</i> program has had a P (positive) N (negative) or I (an Indifferent) impact on their academic performance	On a scale of 1-5 1 being low and 5 high, how would you qualify that overall impact?	Based upon your knowledge, experience and professional observation for the students you work with, would you say the <i>Success 101</i> program has had a P (positive) N (negative) or I (an Indifferent) impact on their behavior in the classroom	On a scale of 1-5 1 being low and 5 high, how would you qualify that overall impact?	On a scale of 1-10, one being low and 10 high, how would you rate the materials that we purchased for this program?
Teacher a	N	N		I		2
Teacher b	N	I	2	P	4	5
Teacher c	N/STRUGGLE	P	3	P	5	5
Teacher d	Y	P	3	P	3	4
Teacher e	N	P	4	P	3	3
Teacher f	Y	P	5	P	5	2
Teacher g	Y	P	3	I		5
Teacher h	Y	I		P	3/4	2
Teacher i	Y	P	4	P	4	3
Teacher j	Y	P	4	P	5	7
Teacher k	N/PULLED IN MANY DIECTIONS	P	3	P	3	7
Teacher l						

Additional comments: “If it weren’t for teachers X,Y, and Z, I’d stop teaching it”.

“I keep telling myself if it weren’t for me, they’d be doing a lot worse”

“I can’t see any difference whatsoever and so much of the material is beyond them”.

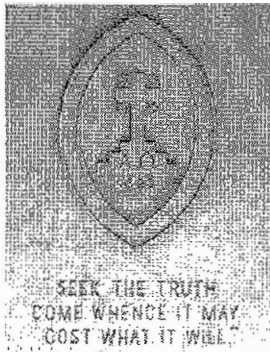
Works Cited

- Abascal-Hildebrand, M. (2003). Community as Text: Applying Ricoeurian Conceptions of Metaphor in Understanding Cultural relations. *Counterpoints* , 218, 91-111.
- Baker, M., & Johnston, P. (2010). The Impact of Socioeconomic Status on High Stakes Testing Rexamined. *Journal of Instructional Psychology* , 37 (3), 7.
- Barnes, C. (2011). "Raceto the Top" Only Benefits Big Government. *Journal of Law and Education* , 40 (2), 10.
- Belz, H. F., & Geary, D. C. (1984). Father's Occupational and Social Background: Relation to SAT Scores. *American Educational Research Journal* , 21 (2), 5.
- Boaler, J. (2003). When Learning No Longer Matters: Standardized Testing and the creation of Inequality. *phi Delta Kappan* , 84 (7), 5.
- Brighton, C., Jarvis, J. M., Hall, C. J., & Moon, T. R. (2009). State Standardized Testing Programs: their effects on Students and Teachers. *National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented* , 260.
- Brown, D. F. (1992). Altering Curricula through State Testing: Perceptions of Teachers and Principals. *Speech delivered at the Annual Meeting of teh American Education Research Association*, (p. 31). San Francisco.
- Camera, L. (2014). Race to the Top: What's Left in the Bank. *Education Week* , 33 (37), 1.
- Clark, T. (2011). *Martin Heidegger*. New York, NY: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Delio, I. (2013). *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being: God, Evolution, and the Power of Love*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Dutro, E., & Selland, M. (2012). 'I Like to Read, but I Know I'm Not Good at It': Children's Perspective on High Stakes Testing in a High-Poverty School. *Curriculum Inquiry* , 42 (3), 28.
- Feinberg, W. &. (2004). *School and Society* (Fourth ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Freire, P. (2013). *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Freire, P. (2014). *Pedagogy of Hope*. (R. Barr, Trans.) New York, New York: Bloomsbury.
- Freire, P. (1970, 2000). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (M. B. Ramos, Trans.) New York, NY: Continuum.

- Freire, P. (1985). *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power, and Liberation*. (D. Macedo, Trans.) South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc.
- Johnson, B. &. (2005). *High Stakes: Poverty, Testing, and Failure in American Schools* (second ed.). Lanham, MD, USA: Rowan & Littlefield.
- Klein, K. (2015). NCLB-Waiver Renewal Gears Up; Duncan Holds Weakened Hand. *Education week* , 34 (21), 3.
- Kozul, J. (1991). *Savage Inequalities*. New York, NY: Broadway Books.
- Lee, J., & Reeves, T. (2012). Revisiting the Impact of NCLB High Stakes School Accountability, Capacity, and Resources. *Educational evaluation & Policy Analysis* , 34 (2), 23.
- Leiter, B. (2002). *Nietzsche on Morality, A Routledge Philosophy Guide Book*. London: Routledge.
- Lukacs, G. (1971). *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. (Rodney Livingstone, Trans.) Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Lukacs, G. (1978, 1982). *The Ontology of Social Being: Hegel*. (D. Fernbach, Trans.) London: Merlin Press.
- Lukacs, G. (1978). *The Ontology of Social Being: Marx*. (D. Fernbach, Trans.) London: Merlin Press.
- Marchant, G. J., & Paulson, S. E. (2001). State Comparison of SAT scores: who's your test taker? *NASP Bulletin* , 85 (627), 13.
- McGuinn, P. (2012). Stimulating Reform: Race to the top, Competitive Grants and the Obama Education Agenda. *Educational Policy* , 26 (1), 24.
- McTaggart, J. &. (1964). *Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic*. New York, NY: Russell & Russell, Inc.
- Moltman, J. (2004). *In the End-The Beginning: the Life of Hope*. (M. Kohl, Trans.) Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Moltmann, J. (1994). *Jesus Christ for Today's World*. (M. Kohl, Trans.) Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Moltmann, J. (2006). *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*. (M. Kohl, Trans.) Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Moltmann, J. (1993). *Theology of Hope: ON the Ground and Implication of a Christian Eschatology*. (J. W. Leitch, Trans.) Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

- Mure, G. (1948). *An Introduction to Hegel*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Mure, G. (1965). *The Philosophy of Hegel*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Nellas, P. (1987). *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspectives on the Nature of the Human Person*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.
- Nietzsche, F. *Beyond Good and Evil*. (J. N. Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Ed., & J. Norman, Trans.) Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Nietzsche, F. (1997). *On the Genealogy of Morality*. (K. Ansell-Pearson, Ed., & C. Diethe, Trans.) Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Nietzsche, F. (2006, 1906). *The Will to Power*. (A. M. Ludovici, Trans.) New York, NY: Barnes & Noble.
- Noguera, P. &. (2011). *Creating the Opportunity to Learn: Moving from research to Practice to Close the Achievement Gap*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Noguera, P. (2003). *City Schools and the American Dream*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- O'Malley, M., Plumlee, P., & Stranaham, H. (2007). Plenty of Children Left Behind: High-Stakes Testing and Graduation Rates in Duval County, Florida . *Educational Policy* , 21 (5), 22.
- Palmer, P. (2007). *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass.
- Perna, L., & Scott, T. (2009). Barriers to College Opportunity: The Unintended Consequences of State Mandated Testing. *Educational Policy* , 23 (3), 29.
- Sartre, J.-P. (1956). *Being and Nothingness*. (H. E. Barnes, Trans.) New York, NY: Washington Square Press.
- Sartre, J.-P. (1957, 1985). *Existentialism and Human Emotions*. New York, NY: Citadel Press.
- Sartre, J.-P. (2007). *Existentialism is Humanism*. (C. Macomber, Trans.) New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Sartre, J.-P. (1963). *Search for a Method*. (H. E. Barnes, Trans.) New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Sartre, J.-P. (1991). *The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness*. (F. W. Kirkpatrick, Trans.) New York, NY: Hill and Wang.
- Schmemmann, A. (1987). *The Eucharist*. (P. Kachur, Trans.) Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.

- Shriberg, D., & Shriberg, A. (2006). High-Stakes Testin and Dropout Rates. *Dissent* , 53 (4), 5.
- Spady, W. (1998). *Paradigm Lost*. Lanham, MD: R&L Education: Rowan & Littlefield.
- Templeton, B. L. (2011). *Understanding Poverty in the Classroom*. New York, NY: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. .
- Tienken, C. H. (2014). State Test Results Are Predictable. *Kappa Delta Pi Record* , 50 (4), 3.
- Ujifusa, A. (2012). Latest NCLB Waiver States Face 'To Do' Lists. *Education Week* , 31 (33), 2.
- Weiss, E. (2014). Mismatches in Race to the Top Limit Education Improvement: lack of Time, Resources, and Tools Puts lofty state Goals Out of Reach. *Education Digest* , 79 (5), 6.
- Zizioulas, J. D. (1985). *Being as Communion*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.
- Zizioulas, J. D. (2011). *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*. New York, NY: T&T Clark International.
- Zwick, R. (2002). IS the SAT a "Wealth Test"? *Phi Delta Kappan* , 84 (4), 5.
- Zwick, R., & Himelfarb, I. (2011). The Effect of High School Socioeconomic Status on the Predictive Validity of SAT Scores and High School Grade Point Average. *Journal of Educatinal Measurement* , 48 (2), 21.
- Zwick, R., & Jennifer, G. (2007). New Perspectives on the correlation of SAT scores, High School Grades, and Socioeconomic Factors. *Journal of Educational Measurement* , 44 (1), 23.



NON-EXCLUSIVE THESIS DISTRIBUTION LICENSE

By signing and submitting this license you, "the author", grant to Virginia Theological Seminary (VTS) the non-exclusive right to reproduce and distribute your submission in electronic format via the World Wide Web, as well as the right to migrate or convert your submission, without alteration of the content, to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation and/or continued distribution.

VTS acknowledges that this is a non-exclusive license; any copyrights in the submission remain with the author or other copyright holder and subsequent uses of the submitted material by that person(s) are not restricted by this license.

The author agrees that VTS may keep more than one copy of this submission for purposes of security, backup and preservation.

The author represents that the submission covered by this license is his/her original work and that he/she has the right to grant this license to VTS. The author further represents that the submission does not, to the best of his/her knowledge, infringe upon any third-party's copyright. If the submission contains material for which the author does not hold copyright, the author represents that he/she has obtained the unrestricted permission of the copyright holder to grant this license to VTS, and that such third-party material is clearly identified and acknowledged within the text or content of the submission. In the event of a subsequent dispute over the copyrights to material contained in this submission, the author agrees to indemnify and hold harmless VTS and its employees or agents for any uses of the material authorized by this license.

If this submission is based upon work that has been sponsored or supported by any agency or organization other than VTS, the author represents that he/she has fulfilled any right of review or other obligation required by contract or agreement with the supporting entity.

The author specifically acknowledges that the content may constitute an educational record under FERPA (20 U.S.C. § 1232g) and expressly consents to the use of the content as contemplated under this agreement.

VTS will make the submission available to the public using a Creative Commons Attribution / Non-commercial / No derivative works license accompanied by a copyright statement indicating the author's continuing rights. VTS will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the author's name remains clearly associated with the submission and that no alterations of the content are made.

Author Information:

Name: Leonard Cambra

Signature: Bishop Payne Library Date: 4/11/2016

_____ e _____

State: RI Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Attachment A
Identification of Content

Title of Content: Urban Secondary Education: Poverty, Power, Class: A Pathway to Change

Author(s): Leonard Cambrg

Date Content was Created: 04/2/2016

Description of Content: D Min. Thesis

For more information contact:

Mitzi Budde
Head Librarian
Bishop Payne Library
Virginia Theological
Seminary
Alexandria, VA 22304
paynebib@vtis.edu
703-461-1733