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Listening to Student Voices: A Critical Study of Homework

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LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Listening to Student Voices: A Critical Study of Homework

by

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A Critical Study of Homework

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Nightly across America, students take the work of school home. As a student, teacher, and now as a parent, I have lived the costs of the stresses of homework–and, I am not alone. I have been a successful student, not because of grades or homework, but because of my parents, teachers, moments, literature, and films which have caused me to look beyond traditional models of school. Because of a nagging cognitive dissonance, I have tried to understand what might be my homework for critical consciousness. To do so, I needed to venture past the isolation of homework in dialogue with wisdom of family and fellow learners. I gratefully acknowledge the support, help, and care that have shaped my thoughts and the culmination of this study:

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ABSTRACT

Listening to Student Voices: A Critical Study of Homework

by

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In a culture of meritocracy and an increasing emphasis on global competition, student learning has become more fully aligned with a belief in the value and effectiveness of homework. Amidst the incessant drive toward competition and an unrelenting push toward an increasing use of homework as commonplace educational practice, there also exist clarion calls to question, reform, and abolish this practice. From student stress to overarching challenges to the nature of education, there exist unexamined discourses that critically challenge current beliefs in the significance of homework practice in the United States. Through employing discussions of student voice and theoretical lenses of intrinsic motivation, social reproduction, and critical pedagogy, this study examined how homework practices impact high school students, by engaging directly with their perceptions. The purpose of this mixed methods study is to better understand how homework affects high school students, beyond measures of student achievement within the current context of education in the United States. The study was

conducted in an all-female, Catholic, college preparatory high school, utilizing student survey and focus groups. Findings of the study are explored and discussed with respect to public policy implications related to the future development, assignment, and role of homework practices in the academic formation of high school students in this setting and beyond.

Keywords: homework, high school, student voice, education, stress, intrinsic motivation, social reproduction theory, critical pedagogy, critical consciousness

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

> In 1887, in DeWitt County, Texas, a 13-year-old pupil challenged the authority of his public school teacher to assign him homework (*Bolding v. State*, 1887). On two consecutive days, the boy refused to do his homework assignments, despite his teacher's warning that he would be whipped if he continued to disobey. After the second refusal, the teacher decided to carry out the threatened punishment. But after 'one blow with a switch', the unrepentant pupil 'drew a butcher knife, and stabbed the teacher under the shoulder blade, and in the thigh.' While considering the validity of the pupil's conviction for aggravated assault, the Texas appellate court discussed the teacher's authority to require homework. The court concluded that the teacher's authority extends…to the prescribing and enforcement of reasonable rules and requirements, even while the pupils are at their homes. (as cited in Gill & Schlossman, 2003b, p. 849)

This case is a disturbing reminder of the ways in which the practice of homework historically silences student voice and confirms the power of teachers and schools over student lives. In a very graphic way, the story above describes the reality of a frustrated student who was silenced in his protest to homework. When his voice was ignored, he resorted to physical violence, not unlike the physical violence of his reprimanding teacher. Though the violence exhibited could have many causes, what can be gleaned from this story for the purpose of this study is the importance of valuing the perspective of student voices. It is a concrete, albeit graphic, reminder of why it is important that we, as teachers, listen to students and take seriously their concerns about school, and specifically about homework.

Today, students continue to have little voice to challenge the practice of homework (Buell, 2004; Kohn, 2006a; Kralovec & Buell, 2000; Warton, 2001; Xu, 2004). Where the story above emphasizes the physical power of the teacher and force of law behind the promotion of homework, today it is by consensual practice that parents and students allow schools and teachers to prescribe work to be completed at home (McLaren, 2009). Where the story above is about brute violence, today the reality of homework is about a more subtle, complex violence. This violence is manifested in the ways students cheat, copy assignments, stress out, lose sleep, procrastinate, scream at their parents, and succeed or fail with grades by how they complete their homework. As Antonia Darder (1991) posits, "there is an ever-present consciousness of resistance that engages, consciously or unconsciously, in an ongoing struggle with the external social forces of domination and the internal human forces that seek humanization" (p. 42). If education is to effectively prepare an active, productive, critically conscious citizenry, then it is imperative that educators examine the role of homework in the academic formation of students. This study seeks to critically interrogate the practice of homework through examining the lived experiences of high school students.

Alfie Kohn (2006a) contends, "after spending most of the day in school, children are typically given additional assignments to be completed at home. This is a rather curious fact when you stop to think about it, but not as curious as the fact that few people ever stop to think about it" (p. 3). Beyond research that examines the relationship of time spent on homework to student achievement as measured by standardized tests (Cooper, 2007), there is a need to challenge conventional thinking about homework practice (Buell, 2004; Kohn, 2006a; Kravolec & Buell, 2000), by engaging the missing discourse—namely the voices of those most affected by

this practice. Moreover, the stress that high school students experience in the process of completing homework assignments, in pursuit of grades and college admission, is worthy of examination, so that we might better understand what purpose this practice serves, the cost it extols, and the impact it has on their everyday lives, as well as on their intrinsic motivation to learn (Abeles & Congdon, 2009; Kohn, 2006a; Pink, 2011; Warton, 2001). Through examining student voice and engaging critically the theoretical lenses of intrinsic motivation, social reproduction, and critical pedagogy, this study examines how homework practices affect the lives of high school students.

Personal Background

As the Assistant Principal for Student Life at an all-female college preparatory high school, I was part of the school administration that worked to address the needs of all three of our principle constituent groups—students, teachers, and parents. My particular role in the administration was to coordinate the extra-curricular school schedules and events for students. I wrote the academic and daily schedule calendars, coordinated the gymnasium schedule between athletics and performing arts, moderated student government, organized clubs, ordered buses for retreats and community service, and led our community service program.

In an effort to raise consciousness and to advance awareness among our students and faculty about the larger world, I organized an annual speakers' series. Each year, I invited five to seven speakers to campus to address the entire student body about a variety of issues, including social justice and Catholic social teaching (Massaro, 2008), poverty (Straub, 2007), war (Brown, 2007), environmental degradation, cyberbullying, death penalty (Prejean, 1993, 2005), and racism (Boyle, 2010). In 2011, at one of our assemblies we screened the documentary *Race to*

Nowhere (Abeles & Congdon, 2009), a film about the high cost of stress and academic pressure on students and families. The film made a strong impression on students and parents. Many identified with the student voices in the film that spoke to a reality they knew only too well. Most of our faculty, however, did not identify with the film and begrudged that the film was shown, which seem to signal a strong disconnect between how students and parents experience homework and how teachers view this practice. It is unclear why teachers largely disliked the film, and this may be of interest for further study. This study, however, will focus on student perspective.

In my role, I was privy to student perspectives, especially through their participation in student government. I heard repeated complaints from students, parents, and teachers about homework. Specifically, students and parents were concerned that there is too much homework assigned, too much busy work that camouflages as homework, and that there is little coordination between teachers and the school regarding homework policy and procedures. It is not unusual to hear from parents and students that students are only able to sleep four or five hours each night. The homework load (along with extra-curricular involvements) keeps students up late at night completing assignments. In the corridors before school, at break, and at lunch, I often see students furiously trying to complete homework or copying assignments to achieve a grade. Almost all of this effort, it seems, is in the pursuit of grades for college admission. On a recent alumnae survey for accreditation, 96% of respondents indicated that after graduating from our school they attended a four-year college.

Teachers, however, express a very different story. Teachers at my school often complain that students are not completing homework because they procrastinate and waste their time on

the internet and social media sites. Unfortunately, it seems that when students attempt to share their own concerns about homework with their teachers, it is rare that teachers listen. Instead, teachers tend to be dismissive about students' perceptions. They easily diminish or block efforts by students to make their concerns heard. When, however, there is a health or family problem that arises, faculty typically are supportive of students with respect to homework completion; yet, even then there remain faculty unsympathetic and unyielding to student concerns.

In the two years concurrent with the study, I coordinated our accreditation process for the Western Catholic Education Association (WCEA) and the Western Association for Schools and Colleges (WASC). In this work, I gathered data by surveys of students, faculty, parents, and alumnae. I led focus groups of students, parents, and faculty. Though much was learned from these efforts in the aim to improve our school, what was most relevant to this dissertation was that the current homework policy and practice appeared to cause a great deal of stress for our students. Because of this and the fact that action was not taking place, I was charged with conducting a review of the school's homework policy with our students, faculty, and parents. Hence, the work for this dissertation directly helped to inform the practice of homework at my school site.

Moreover, this review at my site was part of an evolving trend nationally by schools to examine the practices and policies of homework, after years of neglect (Abeles & Congdon, 2009; Anderson, 2011; Blume, 2011a, 2011b; Hu, 2011; Paul, 2011). This trend was fueled by surveys which indicate that the amount of homework assigned to students has been rising "over the last three decades" (Paul, 2011), while test scores for students in the U.S. are not rising within the context of international assessments.

Statement of the Problem

In a culture of meritocracy (Kohn, 1999; Kohn, 2006a; Kohn, 2006b) and in a time of global competition (The White House, 2011; Zhao, 2009), student learning in the United States has become a commonsensical educational practice, in which requiring increasing amounts of homework has become widely utilized as the norm, supposedly to improve academic achievement (Abeles & Congdon, 2009; Baines, 2008; Bennett & Kalish, 2006; Kohn, 2006a; Kralovec & Buell, 2000; Pope, 2001; Vatterrott, 2009). A University of Michigan national study shows student self-reported homework has increased by 51% from 1981 to 2004 (Bennett & Kalish, 2006). Though often cited for lagging behind other countries in math and science, "America also leads the world in assigning homework – a whopping 140 minutes per week in mathematics for secondary students" (Baines, 2008, p. 24). Imposed requirements of standardized testing and imposed curriculum by federal policies such as *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top* are part of a longer history of meritocratic-based education, beginning with the launch of *Sputnik* by the Soviet Union (Kralovec & Buell, 2000; Zhao, 2009). This focus on competition in education materialized in the *National Defense Education Act* in 1958, emphasizing increased school work for students focused on math and science, including a greater focus on homework assignments. When this focus waned in the 1970s, the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 recommitted the national dialogue in education to performance and competition in education, resulting in significant increases in the practice of homework (Buell, 2004; Kralovec & Buell, 2000).

Since that time, education reform in the United States has focused on revving up global competition first with Japan, then the European Union, then China, and now all countries whose

students outperform American students on standardized tests (Buell, 2004). This competitive focus drives the pace of work for students and workers, which yields little time for rest and regeneration, at the expense of health, creativity, and productivity (Bauerlein & Jeffery, 2011; Elkind, 2001; McEwen, 2011; Weiner, 2011). Those who favor homework, as does Corno (2011), proclaim confidently students simply need to develop habits of managing homework because U.S. schools will continue assigning homework. On the other hand, those who oppose homework, as does Baines (2008), argue that "over the past 50 years, the initiatives of an extended school day, more homework, increased technology, and vigorous standardized testing have done little to enhance achievement, promote positive attitudes, or foster good citizenship" (p. 26). His point about attitude and citizenship is relevant to this study, given its focus on better understanding the broader effects on students with respect to their future participation in society and in the workplace.

Amidst the competitive drive that fuels increased homework, there are educational researchers who insist that the field must critically question, reform, or abolish the practice of homework (Abeles & Congdon, 2009; Bennett & Kalish, 2006; Hu, 2011; Kohn, 2006a; Kralovec & Buell, 2000; Pope, 2001; Vatterott, 2009; Warton, 2001). From student stress (Abeles & Congdon, 2009; Bennett & Kalish, 2006; Kralovec & Buell, 2000; Levine, 2008; Pope, 2001; Vatterott, 2009) to overarching challenges to the very nature of education (Darder, 1991, 2002, 2011, 2012; Freire, 1970/2010, 1974; hooks, 2003, 2010; Kohn, 1999, 2006a, 2006b; Mustakova-Possardt, 2004), there exist critical discourses that challenge current homework practices.

Most homework studies focus on the correlation of homework to student achievement, as measured by grades and performance on standardized tests (Cooper, 2007). However, what remains to be studied is the effect of homework on students' lives (Kohn, 2006a; Warton, 2001); and, as such, the voices and "concerns of students, the principal [*sic*] participants, remain largely unheard" (Warton, 2001, p. 155).

There is reason to believe that since student motivation to complete homework is often extrinsically motivated by teachers and grades, the practice of homework may be undermining educational efforts to engage students (Kohn, 1999; Pink, 2011). McCarthy (2007) contends that homework does not teach children responsibility, time management skills, self-discipline or more of what they should be learning during the day. What it teaches them is how to put up with a job they dislike.

Hence, what needs to be interrogated more fully is 1) how homework practices affect the intrinsic motivation of students, with an eye toward how school trains children to become adult workers (Anyon, 1980; Luke, 2010; McCarthy, 2007) and adult citizens (Buell, 2004) in a globalized economy; and 2) the possible consequences of homework on the social agency and (dis)empowerment of students.

Research Questions

The two overarching research questions of the study are:

1) What are the perceptions of high school students on how homework affects their stress and their intrinsic motivation to learn?

2) When students have the opportunity to enter into dialogue about the practice of homework, how does it impact the development of critical consciousness?

Subsequent Questions:

Based on the two overarching research questions related to intrinsic motivation and development of critical consciousness driving this study, two other subsequent research questions include:

a) What are the major concerns expressed by students about the impact of homework on their everyday lives at school and at home?
b) What kinds of impressions, suggestions, or recommendations do high school students offer about the practice of homework and its effectiveness (or non-effectiveness) to their learning process?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed methods study is to better understand how homework affects high school students, beyond measures of student achievement in the current context of education in the United States. Specifically, the focus of this study is to give voice to high school student perspectives about stress, motivation to learn, and engagement within their world beyond school, in an effort to understand the implications of their perceptions with respect to future homework policies and practices.

Significance of the Study

School reform is a topic in the daily news (see Anderson, 2011; Blume, 2011; Hu, 2011) and is being discussed and promoted worldwide (Robinson, 2009; Zhao, 2009). Ken Robinson (2009) posits that,

> Nearly every system of public education on earth is in the process of being reformed – in Asia, the Americas, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. There are two main reasons. The first is economic. Every region in the world is facing the same economic challenge – how to educate their people to find work and create wealth in a world that is changing faster than ever. The second reason is cultural. Communities throughout the world want to take advantage of globalization, but they don't want to lose their own identities in the process (Robinson, 2009, p. 235).

In this context, the systematic examination of homework has become the focus of more current debate, controversy, and study (Buell, 2004; Cooper, 2007; Kohn, 2006b; Kravolec & Buell, 2001). Most typically, research about homework focuses on increasing student achievement as measured quantitatively by grades and performance on standardized tests (as cited in Cooper, 2007). In contrast, this study sought to understand how homework affects student stress and motivation to learn, in order to better articulate the relationship between school, homework, and critical consciousness. More important, the study is significant in that it focuses on student voice as a means of understanding the impact of homework and as a contribution to future policy and debates about practice (Warton, 2001), thus legitimating the power of student voice.

The study was also significant in that it engaged homework from an economic perspective through social reproduction theory. In 2011, the Occupy Wall Street movement aroused a consciousness where citizens worldwide were protesting essentialized economic practices that promote capitalism, greed, and income inequality (Lopez, 2011). Though this movement has been largely criticized for its lack of organization and focus, it has evidenced a

growing discontent with an economic system that favors a small wealthy minority over the majority of the population. Similarly, there is reason to believe that the practice of homework favors students of affluence (Anderson, 2011; Kravolec & Buell, 2000; Kohn, 2006) and promotes the training of a docile workforce (Buell, 2004; de Carvalho, 2001). Kravolec & Buell (2000) argue that,

> The class divides that plague our country are widened and deepened by the practice of homework. Children who lack academic resources at home are at a distinct disadvantage when schoolwork comes home. In this regard, school practices serve to further intensify the already massive class division. (p. 101)

Conceptual Framework

This study examined homework from a conceptual framework that employs three prominent theories in the field: intrinsic motivation (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990; Pink, 2011; Robinson, 2009; Stipek & Seal, 2001), social reproduction (Bowles & Gintis, 1976/2011; Willis, 1977), and critical pedagogy (Darder, 1991, 2002, 2011, 2012; Freire, 1970/2010; Giroux, 2009; hooks, 2003, 2010; McLaren, 2009). As previously stated, this study examines how homework impacts students' lives, particularly with respect to intrinsic motivation and the development of critical consciousness.

A challenge of using a lens of intrinsic motivation with critical pedagogy is that these two approaches may seem diametrically opposed; intrinsic motivation is typically concerned with the individual (Kohn, 1999), whereas critical pedagogy emphasizes the pursuit of community over the pursuit of the individual (Apple, 2010; Goodman, 1992; Van Heertum, 2010). Nevertheless, an intersection of the two theoretical frameworks can be noted in the work of Samuel Bowles

and Herbert Gintis (1976/2011) on social reproduction, where they argue that "a proper organization of educational and economic life, we believe, can unleash a people's creative powers without recreating the oppressive poles of domination and subordinacy, self-esteem and self-hatred, affluence and deprivation" (p. 17). Schools can be transformed and designed to honor the individual needs of students (Rose & Meyer, 2000) by identifying their individual capabilities (Robinson, 2009), fostering their intrinsic motivation (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990), and encouraging them to pursue work as an interesting, worthwhile vocation (Pink, 2011). By engaging students in dialogue and respecting their voice on issues that impact their lives, democracy in school and in society may be more possible. The conceptual framework will be explored further in Chapter Two.

Intrinsic motivation. This study utilizes the lens of intrinsic motivation in an effort to consider more closely what motivates student learning and how homework impacts the intrinsic motivation of students.

> The fact is that given the challenges we face, education doesn't need to be reformed – it needs to be transformed. The key to this transformation is not to standardize education but to personalize it, to build achievement on discovering the individual talents of each child, to put students in an environment where they want to learn and where they can naturally discover their true passions. (Robinson, 2009, p. 238)

Through the work of Ken Robinson (2009), Mihalyi Csíkszentmihályi (1990), Daniel Pink (2011), and Deborah Stipek and Kathy Seal (2001), there emerges an understanding of the importance of intrinsic motivation in schools and in promoting an effective, contributing workforce and citizenry. When people are motivated from an inner drive, rather than an external

drive, such as seeking reward or fear of punishment, they are more consistently productive (Pink, 2011). This may be true with grades in school and with issues of bonuses at work. When individuals have a sense that they are determining their own destinies, they develop a greater drive to flourish in their work and endeavors as they are more intrinsically motivated to do so (Pink, 2011; Robinson, 2009). Stipek and Seal (2001) report that students who are motivated "learn more, understand it better, and remember it longer than other students" (p. 9).

Social reproduction. When schools do not promote practices which nurture the intrinsic motivation of students, what happens? Engaging this question in his work, Paul Willis (1977) found that schools are complicit "in the reproduction of a class society" (p. 147) in training a future workforce. Samuel Bowles & Herbert Gintis (1976/2011), Willis (1977), and Jean Anyon (1980) posit that schools serve a role in the reproduction of a class system; those who are poor are trained by the culture of school to continue to be poor. Despite the prevailing rhetoric of achievement, the current system of schooling appears to reinforce the disparity of wealth and poverty in the world. This research utilizes reproduction theory to understand where and how homework practices train students to primarily meet the needs of a segmented future workforce.

> Our critique of the capitalist economy is simple enough: the people production process – in the workplace and in schools – is dominated by the imperatives of profit and domination rather than by human need. The unavoidable necessity of growing up and getting a job in the United States forces us all to become less than we could be: less free, less secure, and in short, less happy. (Bowles & Gintis, 2011, p. 54)

For this study, the lens of social reproduction sheds light on the practice of homework as to why students do homework and how this process affects their thinking about their future.

Their abilities to think critically about the world in the present and in the future can be undermined by their perpetual adherence to the practice of homework (Buell, 2004). Of concern here is that in most schools "students are rewarded for exhibiting discipline, subordinacy, intellectually as opposed to emotionally oriented behavior, and hard work independent from intrinsic task motivation" (Bowles & Gintis, 2011, p. 40). In this subordinacy, and specifically in the practice of homework, students may be prevented from reaching their potential. Examining societal patterns of dominance in society that reproduce themselves in schools and work is a focus of social reproduction.

Critical pedagogy. How do students develop critical consciousness? To access and to understand the purpose of homework, this study also employs the lens of critical pedagogy (Darder, 1991; 2002, 2011, 2012; Freire, 1970/2010; hooks, 2003, 2010; McLaren, 2009). With the current drive by federal policy of *Race to the Top* and the Common Core Standards movement to reform schools through the standardization of education, there exists an opportunity to question the direction of such efforts and to examine the efficacy of homework practice (Zhao, 2009).

Beyond the emphasis of student achievement, also helpful to a discussion of education reform is engagement with what Paulo Freire (1970/2010) terms "problem-posing" (p. 85) curriculum. Through dialogue, student and teacher engage one another. Darder (2002) describes an educational dialogue in which "students are expected to reflect on that which they know, their lived experiences, and on how these impact the way they read their world" (p. 103). Through dialogue, this study addresses the larger social conditions that impact the lives of students, and critiques unexamined practices of homework. Although, I may have possessed a "naïvete"

(Apple, 2010, p. 7) that engaging several students in one school in one moment about homework may actually change practice and lives, I, nevertheless, believed that students in my setting did seek to be heard about their experience. A major problem for them in this setting was homework, and their experience may not be dissimilar from the experiences of other students across the country (Abeles & Congdon, 2009; Pope, 2001; Warton, 2001). In so doing, this study may lead to what Michael Apple (2010) refers to as a "non-reformist reform…such as building and defending schools that can be jointly controlled by all of the people involved and that may partly interrupt dominance" (p. 20). Dominance, here, refers to the ways in which society, schools, and institutions can oppress individuals, people, and cultures.

Intrinsic motivation, social reproduction, and critical pedagogy.

> Gallup's extensive research…shows that in the United States, more than 50 percent of employees are not engaged at work – and nearly 20 percent are actively disengaged. The cost of all this disengagement: about $300 billion a year in lost productivity. (as cited in Pink, 2011, p. 109)

President Barack Obama (The White House, 2011) and other educational leaders nationwide champion education as the means to remain competitive amidst the globalization of capital. Central to education is an emphasis on homework as a disciplining strategy. If the Gallup polls cited above are to be taken seriously, however, we must note that the United States has a large percentage of workers not engaged within the workforce. Why is this? Might this reality have some roots in the dynamics of schooling that support homework as a commonplace practice? Hence, this study explores homework through the triangulation of intrinsic motivation, social reproduction, and critical pedagogy.

Research Design and Methodology

To address issues of intrinsic motivation and critical consciousness, this mixed methods study of homework in high school used student surveys and focus groups at one school site. I conducted the study in my work setting, an all-female, Catholic college preparatory high school during the Spring semester of 2012. Though there exists a "wide range of studies on adolescent behavior in schools, studies that addressed academic achievement, study habits, classroom discipline, peer culture, and youth dropout rates" (Pope, 2001, p. xiii), there is less research that looks at the lived experience of adolescents, schooling, and homework (Warton, 2001). When reporting about time on homework, Cooper (2007) found that student reports were more reliable than were parent reports, in correlation with achievement data. Though parents bear an important perspective in the discussion of homework, this study focuses specifically on student voice.

Student voice. To understand the broader context of homework at this site, I conducted surveys of students, utilizing the online survey software Qualtrics™ . Efforts were made to ensure confidentiality of responses on the surveys, when the survey was created in Qualtrics™. This survey software was helpful to our school during its accreditation process, in effectively assessing perceptions of our students, faculty, alumnae, and parents. Regarding students, the response rate was most effective when surveys were given during class time. Because all students have access to laptops and wireless internet on campus and all students take classes in English, the student online survey was conducted at school over two days in English classes, in early Spring 2012. All students were invited to participate in the survey. Only students who handed in informed consent/assent forms for the study, prior to the survey distribution, were able

to take the survey. Students who did not take the survey had study time or an alternative, optional writing assignment provided by their teachers. There was no compensation for completing the surveys.

To validate the survey data, three student focus groups of 6-8 students each were formed to so that students could discuss together their experiences with homework. In addition, I worked with the Assistant Principal for Academics at the site to conduct focus groups that were representative of different abilities, ages, involvement, and ethnicities. Each focus group met twice for 75 minutes at a time after school in the school conference room. The focus groups were audio recorded with an audio recorder provided by the school. The audio recordings were transcribed and verified for accuracy. Students in the focus groups were also encouraged to verify data in follow-up, informal discussions.

Limitations

Because the school is all-female and not particularly ethnically or socio-economically diverse, this study of homework may not be generalizable to a larger audience. As the researcher of this study, I must also disclose that I was on the administration of the school and served in an influential role in the execution of school policy. Though not intentional, my role may have unduly influenced student responses, particularly in focus groups. The study relied on self-report data "which is ideal for studying students' subjective experiences but vulnerable to errors including problems with memory, hasty completion, exaggeration, and deliberate falsification" (Shernoff, Csíkszentmihályi, Schneider, & Shernoff, 2003, p. 173). However, weeks and months after the study, students continued to echo similar thoughts and perceptions mentioned in the

survey and focus group data, suggesting the study data was an accurate reflection of their views on the subject.

Delimitations

This study focused on the perceptions, experiences, and insights of high school students. It took place over a four week period of time, and was, therefore, a snapshot of student experiences, at this particular school and in this particular time. Though this study occurred in an all-female and Catholic high school, it was not by design a study of homework with respect to gender or faith. Where relevant, it was a study of how homework affected students in a college preparatory, middle to upper middle class setting.

However, three insights were of interest to this study with respect to gender and homework. First, Cooper, Robinson, & Patall (2006) found that girls are slightly more positive about homework than are boys. Similarly, Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) found that Catholic school "students in single-sex schools spend significantly more time on homework, and this is especially true for girls" (p. 232). Second, Lee and Bryk (1986) found that "the results are particularly strong for girls' schools, where students were generally more interested in academics and showed significantly greater gains in reading, science, and educational ambition over the course of their high school years. These girls' schools also showed some positive effects on students' locus of control" (p. 394). This finding is of particular interest because it suggests that students in all-female high schools have great motivation and, possibly, greater intrinsic motivation for learning. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, there is a strong link between intrinsic motivation and one's ability to be autonomous (Pink, 2011). Third, Xu (2005) found that girls are better able to manage emotions concerning homework than are boys.

Definitions of Terms

Critical consciousness: "a deepening awareness of the sociopolitical and economic realities that shape [students'] lives and their capacity to recreate them" (Darder, 1991, p. 95).

Critical pedagogy: approach to education that challenges conventional approaches to learning, history, class, society, through critical engagement with schooling practices and their relationship to the larger structures of social oppression and injustice (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009).

*Homewor*k: "Homework can be defined as tasks assigned to students by school teachers that are intended to be carried out during non-school (non-instructional) hours" (Bembenutty, 2011, p. 340)

Intrinsic motivation: the desire within a person to accomplish a task that is neither motivated by survival or by external forces of reward or punishment (Kohn, 1999).

Social reproduction: theory that education and the economy are structured in such ways as to perpetuate class distinctions and roles associated with the perpetuation of inequalities (Bowles & Gintis, 1976/2011).

Social justice: ideology that promotes equity, human rights, and democratic life for all (Massaro, 2008).

Stress: physical, emotional, psychological burden when accomplishing a task such as homework (Medina, 2009).

Organization of the Study

Chapter One began by questioning homework practice in schools and by introducing a competition focused approach to education that began with the launch of *Sputnik* in 1957. This chapter continued with a discussion of the study, its purpose, and the method and theoretical framework by which the study would be conducted. The problem stated that students are stressed out by the practice of homework for a number of reasons. What is missing in the discussion and politics of homework is student voice. This dissertation brings their voices to the debate.

Chapter Two will discuss the politics and history of homework by synthesizing the books, major studies, and historical trends on the topic of homework. The research literature surrounding homework and its role with respect to motivation, social reproduction, and critical pedagogy will be reviewed, discussed and critiqued. Chapter Two will also briefly discuss gender and Catholic school because of the site choice of this study.

Chapter Three presents the overarching conceptual framework that drives the analytical processes for this study. The theoretical lenses of intrinsic motivation, social reproduction, and critical pedagogy are carefully examined in a manner that highlights their significance with respect to a study of homework that engages student voice as a guiding force in understanding the phenomenon and its impact on high school students.

Chapter Four will provide the rationale for the methodology and a discussion of the research design used for the development and execution of the student survey and focus groups for this study. An explanation of the process for coding and analyzing the data generated by

students on this topic will be provided. The survey design sample, protocols for the focus groups, and consent/assent letter samples are included in Appendices A, B, and G.

Chapter Five will provide a systematic organization and discussion of the data and a summary of the results of the study, beginning with the quantitative survey results and concluding with student voice as reflected in the qualitative survey results and focus group dialogue transcripts.

Chapter Six will present an analysis of the findings and implications of the study with respect to future policy debates utilizing the three theoretical lenses: critical pedagogy, social reproduction, and intrinsic motivation.

Chapter Seven will present a succinct summary of the study, recommendations related to schooling and homework as an educational practice, and suggestions for future studies.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW ON HOMEWORK

This chapter begins with a definition of homework and then explores the history of homework practice in the United States. The current literature supporting, exploring, and challenging homework practice, in light of student stress, intrinsic motivation, and critical consciousness, will be reviewed. Moreover, this review of the literature seeks to provide a grounded understanding of the purpose and practice of homework and its costs in a capitalist, competitive society. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the importance of student voice in the study of homework and schooling.

Definition of *Homework*

From the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), the first citations of *homework* stem from the 17th century and have total reference to actual work (and not study). "Homework" was first meant as a term for piece rate work done at home in textile work (Homework, n.d.). It is not until the mid-19th century that *homework* also refers to academic study. Throughout the 19th century until the first half of the 20th century, "homework" is used in both instances (for piece rate work and for study).

The current definition of homework most commonly cited is by Harris Cooper (Bembenutty, 2011): "Homework can be defined as tasks assigned to students by school teachers that are intended to be carried out during non-school (non-instructional) hours" (p. 340). These tasks do not include extra-curricular activities, such as clubs, sports, or other after-school programs.

History of Homework in the United States

Since the late nineteenth century, homework has been an educational practice at all levels of implementation, from elementary to university, in the United States (Gill and Schossman, 2004). Although homework is considered a common practice in education, the application and enforcement of homework, however, has never been uniform (Buell, 2004; Cooper, 2007; Gill and Schossman, 2004). This section will discuss the history of homework in the United States, in light of concurrent legal trends regarding this educational practice.

Homework has been one of the most controversial issues in the history of U.S. educational debates, dating back to the 19th century (Cooper, 2007; Gill & Schlossman, 2003b; Gill & Schlossman, 2004). The issue of homework typically stirs debate among parents, teachers, communities, policy makers, and educational theorists alike. Debates about homework tend to center on two main issues: 1) whether homework improves learning and achievement and 2) at what cost is the improvement (Cooper, 2007; Kohn, 2006a).

Interestingly, where there is agreement about the history of homework among researchers is that 1) during the progressive era of the first half of the 20th century, there was little to no homework assigned (Bennett & Kalish, 2006; Buell, 2004; de Carvalho, 2001; Kravolec & Buell, 2000; Kohn, 2006a; Vatterott, 2009); and 2) both of the following events spurred national emphases on more homework: the launch of *Sputnik* in 1957 and the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 (Cooper, 2007; Gill & Schlossman, 2003b, 2004; Kohn, 2006a; Kravolec & Buell, 2000; Vatterott, 2009).

It is worth noting here that student debate on homework, however, is not typically documented or even carried out in most schools. What is documented about student perceptions

of homework is by survey and it is typically unfavorable. For instance, one study cited 88% of high school students who "reported that homework was the lesser or least favorite activity" of all after school activities (Xu, 2004, p. 1795).

Early History of Homework

The history of homework in the United States begins in the late 19th century. Since the start of this the educational practice , there have been legal challenges associated with its implementation, including local and state laws banning, promoting, and delineating homework, since the early 1900s (Gill & Schlossman, 1996; Kohn, 2006). Concurrent with those changes have been the emergence of the *Fair Labor Standards Act* (1938), IDEA, and most recently, *New Hampshire House Bill 542* (*HB 542,* 2012), which have all had implications for the practice of academic homework. Interwoven in this history are also several major court cases that have challenged the foundations of homework and the right of schools to prescribe work and study outside of school hours.

***Bolding v. State* (1887).** As mentioned in Chapter One, in *Bolding v. State*, a 13-year old stabbed his teacher after receiving corporal punishment for not completing his homework. The Texas Appellate Court convicted the boy as guilty of attempted murder, siding with the teacher. More importantly, the court ruled that schools have the reasonable authority to assign homework. This case was cited mostly in excessive corporal punishment cases by Texas courts and by State Supreme Courts in Georgia, Idaho, Nebraska, Vermont, and Wyoming, in the decades following the 1887 decision. Hence, *Bolding v. State* (1887) provided legal precedent for schools to administer, prescribe, and enforce homework. "In making its ruling, the court applied the *in loco parentis* principle with regard to the teacher's authority to spank the child and also noted that the

teacher's control over the student indeed extended to the right to require homework" (Gibson, 2011, p. 5).

***Gilliland v. Board of Education* (1977).** The issue of corporal punishment and homework has continued to re-emerge through the 20th century. In *Gilliland v. Board of Education* (1977), a teacher in a rural school district in Illinois was fired for incompetency, cruelty, and negligence. Details of the case reveal that a teacher of second and third grade students was abusive, punitive, and was assigning up to three and a half to five hours of homework per night. Ultimately, the Supreme Court of Illinois ruled that her dismissal was justified due to parent complaints and documentation by supervisors of her abuses.

***Darden v. Watkins* (1988):** In 1988, the Sixth Circuit ruled in *Darden v. Watkins* that "the testimony was virtually undisputed that the teacher had a clearly established policy of paddling students who did not turn in their homework assignments, and therefore procedural due process was satisfied" (p. 1). In this case, a student's parents brought suit over a perceived due process violation in Kentucky of a student who was paddled for not completing his homework. His bruises from the paddling were discovered when the child's mother was bathing him. The child was taken to the emergency room of a local hospital to have the bruises examined. The court ruled in favor of the teacher and the school district, principally, because students were informed of the consequence of paddling for not having homework on the daily chalkboard since the start of the school year.

***Hobbs v. Germany* (1909)**. Contrary to *Bolding v. State*, the Mississippi Supreme Court ruled in *Hobbs v. Germany* (1909) that parents could determine what students do after school, rather than school authorities. In this case, a local district policy mandated that students be at

home doing homework for two hours each night between 7-9pm or face punishment corporally or by another means. When a father chose to take his son to religious services on one night during those hours, the school found the student in violation of the rule. The boy refused to submit to the punishment and was forced to withdraw from school. The Mississippi Supreme court nullified the law, which mandated both time and place for the completion of homework and ordered the school district to reinstate the student.

The Progressive Era

In the first half of the 20th century, parallel to a national movement for progressive political reforms, labor reforms, and women's suffrage, there was also a progressive education movement.

> In the 1880s, the president of the Boston school board, Francis A. Walker, a widely respected Civil War hero, strongly criticized the practice (of homework): 'Over and over again have I had to send my own children, in spite of their tears and remonstrances, to bed, long after the assigned tasks had ceased to have any educational value and had become the means of nervous exhaustion and agitation, highly prejudicial to body and to mind; and I have no reason to doubt that such has been the experience of a large proportion of the parents whose children are habitually assigned home lessons in arithmetic.' (as cited in Buell, 2004, p. 36)

Beginning with Joseph Mayer Rice, in 1897, there was a continuous movement by educators, local, and state governments, PTAs, and some parents to question, challenge, and even abolish homework through most of the first half of the twentieth century (Gill & Schlossman, 2003b). "The turn-of-the-century anti-homework crusade became a centerpiece in

the agenda of the progressive education movement of the twentieth century" (Buell, 2004, p. 37). Cities and states actually outlawed homework for a time. Largely, the movement to abolish homework was part of the larger progressive movement on behalf of children, which also worked to end child labor, build parks in cities, and promote "outdoor play" and the "healthy development" of children (Gill & Schlossman, 2004, p. 176).

California ban on homework. In 1901, California became the first state to institute a ban against homework (see Appendix H). This was the largest ban of many local bans against homework nationally. The law read "no more than twenty recitations per week shall be required of pupils in the secondary schools, and no pupil under the age of fifteen years in any grammar or primary school shall be required to do any home study" (*Political Code of the State of California*, 1901, p. 797). Recitations were typical homework assignments for this period nationwide, which forced students to memorize material to be presented in class the following day (Gill & Schlossman, 1996, 2000).

The homework ban in California was part of a national effort by Progressives, doctors, parents, and educators to address concerns about homework. One of the chief proponents of the abolition of homework was Edward Bok, the editor of the *Ladies Home Journal.* His editorials and articles, which decried homework, garnered support from middle class mothers nationally. In Los Angeles and San Francisco, particularly, the efforts by these mothers led to local homework bans and, eventually, the 1901 California code (Gill & Schlossman, 1996). This homework ban lasted until 1929. Gill and Schlossman (2000) claim that the urgency to ban homework in law began to wane by mid-century. However, homework bans remained in place

in some locales by practice and by district or school policy, through the 1960s (Gill & Schlossman, 1996).

Progressive Homework. Efforts by Progressives in the early 20th century to ban homework were part of a movement to align the practice of homework with "the spirit of laws prescribing a 40-hour work week for wage-earning adults" (Gill & Schlossman, 2000, p. 44). The drive to individualize homework was also part of the Progressive movement to promote the "education of the whole child" (p. 37). In this effort, homework reform promoted policies such as weekend-free homework, optional homework, and homework student directed time in music, play, and leisure. This effort, however, was short lived, as will be discussed later.

Etta Kralovec and John Buell (2000) describe schools during the Progressive movement as, "the workplace of the young, and in the best progressive tradition, these workplaces were often seen as being in need of reforms that would guarantee humane conditions for workers" (p. 44). In the 19th century, student brains were perceived as muscles needing the exercise of rote memorization or as "blank slates" (p. 46) needing to be filled by education; thus, recitation homework was the norm. In the Progressive view, student brains were considered "the great evolutionary achievement of humans" (p. 46) and learning was not about rote memorization, but an "active process of problem solving" (p. 46). From this view, educators made efforts to improve the practice of homework by individualizing assignments for students, beginning in the 1930s and 1940s (Gill & Schlossman, 2000).

> Just as some psychologists and labor advocates in the 1920s and '30s began to cite the role of recreation in human development during their campaigns to shorten the workweek, education reformers argued that play was an integral part of the development

of the child. Homework was seen as limiting the child's ability to develop the skills and attitudes that can be learned only when the child is free to play. (Buell, 2004, p. 41)

***Fair Labor Standards Act* (1938)**. Concurrent with the reforms and bans in homework, there emerged legislation, such as the *Fair Labor Standards Act* (1938), which proscribed limits to the workday and week for working adults and which instituted a minimum wage requirement. This was part of a larger Progressive effort to address the working, living, and study conditions of people in the United States. Citing the *Fair Labor Standards Act*, the Supreme Court ruled in *Gemsco v. Walling* (1945) that labor law could prohibit the piece rate *homework* done at home so as not to undermine the minimum wage. Subsequent State, Appellate, and Circuit Court decisions reaffirmed this position.

In *Goldberg v. Whitaker House Cooperative, Inc.* (1961), the Supreme Court affirmed that cooperatives are also subject to the *homework* accords of the *Fair Labor Standards Act* (1938). Yet, no national legislation was ever passed to regulate academic homework policy. Perhaps, this is because education is provided by the state and not the federal government, "since the United States Constitution does not authorize Congress to provide for education, the legal control of public education resides with the state as one of its sovereign powers" (Thomas, Cambron-McCabe, & McCarthy, 2009, p. 2). What Congress has done, with respect to education, is to enact funding laws to promote national educational goals.

In 1941, the *Encyclopedia of Educational Research* "concluded that homework in the pre-high school grades had no beneficial effect on school achievement" (Gill & Schlossman, 2004, p. 176). This belief was fostered by research in the 1930s and held sway with educators and policy makers through the 1950s. Though most of the historical discussion on homework

during the Progressive Era emphasized a move away from homework, there were also some homework advocates (Gill & Schlossman, 2003b).

The Cold War to Present

Beginning with World War II and continuing through the Cold War, educational attitudes about homework began to shift. The effort by the United States to rally citizens to the cause of World War II "led to the cultural valorization of work and effort in the struggles first against the Nazis, and then in the incipient Cold War" (Buell, 2004, p. 43). Later, with the launch of *Sputnik* in 1957, Congress enacted the *National Defense Education Act* (1958), a national funding law which emphasized increased school work for students that focused on math and science, including a greater focus on homework assignments. The United States "became obsessed with competing with the Soviet Union" (Buell, 2004, p. 43). Attitudes changed about work and so too homework; thus "the fifty-year trend toward less homework came to an end" (pp. 43-44). Attitudes continued to support homework in the 1960s, "as a means for increasing academic achievement" (Buell, 2004, p. 48). Nevertheless, "some school districts still had anti-homework regulations on the books in the early 1960s" (Gill & Schlossman, 1996).

The call to end or limit homework, however, did not stop with the launch of *Sputnik*. In the late 1960s, the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Educational Research Association (AERA) issued calls to limit homework for older students and prevent homework for elementary students, such as attested in the following excerpt from an AERA document:

> Whenever homework crowds out social experience, outdoor recreation, and creative activities, and whenever it usurps time that should be devoted to sleep, it is not meeting the basic needs of children and adolescents. (as cited in Kravolec & Buell, 2000, p. 49)

Hence, the homework debate was once again reinvigorated during the broader political movements, occurring between 1968 and 1972, which protested the war and rallied for civil rights (Gill & Schlossman, 2004).

When the focus on achievement spurred by *Sputnik* waned in the 1970s, the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 recommitted the national dialogue to performance and competition in education, resulting in significant increases in the practice of homework (Buell, 2004; Kralovec & Buell, 2000). It is interesting to note that since 1983, the students with the largest increase in homework have been "the youngest schoolchildren, aged 6-8" (Gill & Schlossman, 2004, p. 180). With the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, the U.S. Department of Education re-established an aggressive pro-homework policy that reinforced the national emphasis on homework to the present. Similarly, proponents of *No Child Left Behind* (2002), a federal funding law directed at raising performance by students in schools, also heavily favor the use of homework (Kohn, 2006a).

Modern Legal Trends of Homework

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). In recent years, the highest frequency of legal cases related homework to have to do with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and students with special needs (e.g. Is the homework too demanding? Who gets to decide?). A typical case is one where a parent of a student with a perceived or diagnosed disability is suing a school or district about accommodation of needs. As part of an IEP for a student, homework is

included because it is relevant to *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act* (1973) and *the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Education Act* (2004), where public education is to ensure a "least restrictive environment" for learning and a "free appropriate public education" (Thomas, Cambron-McCabe, & McCarthy, 2009).

In *Powers v. Woodstock Board of Education* (2010), a parent sued the board of education believing that the school created IEP was insufficient to address the child's learning needs. The school district prevailed demonstrating with overwhelming evidence that it had constructed an IEP to accommodate the child's needs (e.g. the teacher personally packed the student's bag each day to ensure homework was not forgotten). In a similar case, *Richard S. v. Wissahickon School District* (2009), a student was poorly motivated, failed to do homework, and was frequently absent. In this case, the court again sided with the school and found that the IEPs by the school sufficiently demonstrated its effort to accommodate the student's learning needs.

When IEP cases proceed to an Appellate level or beyond, there is disagreement about the effort by the Individual Hearing Officer (IHO) or by the State Review Officer (SRO) at the different court levels. A case concerning homework that demonstrates this action is *Bougades v. Pine Plains Central School District* (2010), where a lower court sided with the parents who believed that the IEP did not adequately address the student's learning needs and that homework assignments were not appropriately shortened, modified, or explained to the student. The Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit reversed the lower court and sided with the school district, finding the IEP work of the IHO and SRO to be more than adequate in providing a FAPE.

A case that went to the Supreme Court regarding homework and a student's IEP was *Forest Grove School District v. T.A. Revisited* (2009), where a student had a difficult time

completing homework and keeping pace in class. The student was not diagnosed by the school as having a learning disability. After unsatisfactory responses from the school, the parent moved the child to a private school. The student was tested by a private psychologist as having a learning disability. The parent then sued the school district for tuition reimbursement. The Supreme Court reversed a lower court decision, remanding the case to the district level. The district court found that the school district did appropriately address the student's needs and did not award the parents. Further, it was believed that the private school the student attended was chosen to address an addiction to drugs, rather than the student's learning challenges or poor performance in school.

Privacy, Divorce, Termination, and Prison. Beyond IEPs and homework, the second area of frequency regarding homework in recent case law nationally concerns instances of homework practice as compelling reasons to determine privacy violation, grant custody, terminate teachers for excessive homework, or grant parole.

With respect to privacy violations, in *Falvo v. Owasso Independent School District No. I-011, et al*. (2002), a school which had students grade student homework prevailed in their practice. They had been sued by a parent for violation of privacy rights afforded by the Fourteenth Amendment and by the *Family Education Rights Privacy Act* (FERPA) (1974). In a criminal case, the issue of homework and privacy was raised in *Commonwealth v. Domenic Buccella* (2001). Here, the Supreme Court of Massachusetts ruled that a student's homework was not part of his protected student record and, therefore, his handwriting on homework samples could be used to identify him in his prosecution for graffiti.

With respect to divorce, the issue of homework is raised concerning custody in terms of which parent provides a home with a better environment and routine for completing homework. In *Terry Moak v. Dixie Lou Williams Moak* (1994), the court found the mother best able to care for her children in this and other areas, she was awarded custody of the children over the father. In another custody case, *In re the Marriage of Charles Anthony Whyte and Leanah Louise Couvillion* (2012), the parent plan was amended in favor of allowing the child to continue to live with the mother, because the mother provided a better home conducive to the quiet the child needed for homework.

With respect to termination, in *Sharon Kay Schulz v. Board of Education of the School District of Fremont* (1982) a teacher was initially fired for poor performance. Of the evidence cited, there were parent and student testimonies about too much homework assigned and the stress it caused the students. However, the Supreme Court of Nebraska ruled to reinstate the teacher because evidence of just cause was lacking. In *Stephen P. Harjo v. Varnum Public Schools, et. al.* (1998) a teacher was fired for a series of inappropriate incidents. One of these incidents involved crude, sexual remarks he made to students about doing their homework. The Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit ruled in favor of the school district, affirming that the due process rights of the teacher were afforded in his dismissal.

With respect to prison and homework, there have been cases where a defendant's probation or parole was violated because court-ordered homework was not completed or not completed on time. In *State of Maine v. Timothy Labbe* (1992), the defendant violated his probation by attending, but not fully participating in his court mandated homework of abuse counseling. In *United States of America v. Christopher Musso* (2011), the defendant was

released from prison for possession of child pornography. His homework was to participate in a sexual offender treatment program. Because he did not participate fully and because he had contact with a minor, the court ordered further restrictions on the defendant. Similarly, in *State of Vermont v. Todd Masse* (1995), the defendant violated his conditions of probation because he did not "actively participate in mental health and sex offender counseling to the satisfaction of the probation officer." He violated his probation because he was absent from his treatment sessions and he failed to do his homework assignments.

***Larson v. Burmaster* (2006).** *Larson v. Burmaster (2006)* refers to a recent case that dealt with academic homework most directly. A Wisconsin state appeals court ruled that parents cannot sue schools over summer homework. In this case, an honors high school student and his father filed suit against the state school superintendent, district superintendent, school principal, math department chair, and math teacher, so that the son would not be required to do summer homework. The assignments were given to the student in the last week of the spring semester and due immediately upon his return in the fall. Citing Wisconsin educational statutes (Wis. Stat. § 118.045), the parent argued that the start and end dates of the academic calendar for compulsory student attendance were finite and did not allow for Summer homework. The Appellate Court, however, dismissed the case as "frivolous" and affirmed a school district's right to assign summer homework, particularly because the complaint was not based upon law but, rather, pursuing personal gain. Because their case was deemed frivolous, the Larson family had to reimburse court costs and attorney fees.

What *Larson v. Burmaster* points to is an effort by parents to direct the time of their children outside of school. Similar cases not involving homework have emerged from a similar

spirit and with a similar fate. That is, parents' objections to curricular choices and educational practices have had little success in court, as courts have found that "then schools would be inundated with requests to cater their curricula to each individual child" (Emerson, 2011, p. 3).

Relevant here are the Supreme Court decisions in *Meyer v. Nebraska* (1923) and *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925) which established a notion of substantive due process for parents, stemming from the Fourteenth Amendment (Ross, 2000). In *Meyer v. Nebraska*, the case concerned a statute forbidding the teaching of German in schools. The court ruled in favor of the teacher and the parents who wanted German taught in schools, on the grounds of the liberties provided by the Fourteenth Amendment that "include, but are not necessarily limited to 'the right to marry, establish a home, and bring up children'" (Ross, 2000, p. 2). In *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, the Supreme Court struck down an Oregon law which mandated that "all children attend public elementary school" (p. 2) on the grounds that "the child is not the mere creature of the State; those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right, coupled with the high duty, to recognize and prepare him for additional obligations" (p. 3).

The ramifications of *Meyer v. Nebraska* (1923) and *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925) are still unfolding (Emerson, 2011). Whereas the Ninth Circuit has affirmed the school's right to curricula once parents choose public school, the Third Circuit has ruled in favor of parents' rights to direct the moral and religious education of their children.

In *Troxel v. Granville* (2000), the Supreme Court struck down a Washington law which empowered courts to override parental objections to third party curricula (assemblies, etc.). "Citing *Meyer* and *Pierce*, Justice O'Connor's plurality opinion declared that '[t]he liberty interest at issue in this case – the interest of parents in the care, custody, and control of their

children – is perhaps the oldest of the fundamental liberty interests recognized by this Court'" (Ross, 2000, p. 9). This decision sits in context with decades of efforts by parents who have sought ways to legislate and to "codify *Pierce*" (p. 15), in order to negotiate their rights to educate their children as they see fit.

Moreover, Ross (2000) suggests that the increases in the home school and charter school movements evidence ways in which parents are trying to have a greater say in the education of their children. Beyond these two approaches, other reformers are encouraging a "community engagement dialogic model, analogous to the process of alternative dispute resolution, in which a mediator would attempt to engage parents in a deliberative process that would work out compromises that would be broadly acceptable to various competing factions of parents, administrators, teachers, and students" (p. 21).

Calgary Contract. Though this happened outside of the United States, the relevance of this Calgary parental case regarding homework is clear: parents are seeking the legal right to determine the mode of homework for their children. In 2009, a Calgary, Alberta couple negotiated a contract with their children's school to establish a differentiated learning plan for their children that eliminated homework (Pidd, 2009). The contract was the result of a failed attempt by the parents to negotiate a change in homework policy through a school parent committee. The parents were both attorneys who were frustrated with the amount of homework their oldest child had received throughout his schooling. Through two years of negotiation, the couple was able to secure a "differentiated homework plan" for their two younger children, which will not allow homework to be used as a means of evaluation. "In return, the pupils promise to get their work done in class, to come to school prepared, and to revise for tests. They

must also read daily and practice their musical instruments at home" (Pidd, 2009). The plan was signed by all parties, including the students.

HB 542. On a much larger scale, parents' rights advocates won a victory in New Hampshire. In 2012, the New Hampshire legislature (House 255-112, Senate 17-5) overrode the governor's veto to pass *HB 542* (Appendix I), which allows parents to override curricular decisions for their children and to have alternative assignments made available. This law also allows parents, in theory, to object to the practice and to the assignment of homework.

In the view of Todd DeMitchell and Joseph Onosko (2012), this law promotes the "shredding" of the curriculum of public schools. In their review of the new law, they cite part of the concurring opinion issued by the Supreme Court in *Illinois Ex. Rel. McCollum* v. *Board of Education* (1948), a case about religious instruction in public schools:

> If we are to eliminate everything that is objectionable to any [person] or is inconsistent with any of their doctrines, we will leave the public schools in shreds. Nothing but educational confusion and a discrediting of the public school system can result from subjecting it to constant law suits.

The most problematic of concerns raised by DeMitchell and Onosko (2012) is how to resolve conflicts between parents and schools as directed by *HB 542*. How does *HB 542* coexist with current New Hampshire educational law, which ascribes curricular decision-making power to the elected school boards? Does the promotion of this resolution stop instruction to students by protesting parents? At what cost is this law, with respect to funding and teacher resource that could otherwise be directed to all students? How to proceed? DeMitchell and Onosko (2012) advocate that citizens challenge the legality of *HB 542* in court, citing numerous precedents,

which delineates the roles of the parents and schools in curricular decisions. Citing the opinion of a Federal District case, *Derry v. Marion Community Schools* (2008), they quote:

> While parents may have a fundamental right to decide whether to send their child to a public school, they do not have a fundamental right generally to direct how a public school teaches their child.

Similarly, K.J. Dell'Antonia (2012) regards *HB 542* as a threat to education, noting, "we, as a nation, have an interest in a well-educated citizenry, and we should have the ability to define that education on a local, state and sometimes national level." She acknowledges that states allow parents the choice of opting out of particular activities, which they may find objectionable such as sex education (e.g. New York, Texas, etc.).

Current legal trends in homework. *HB 542* is one state's approach to homework and curricular reform. In England, mandatory home-school contracts were to be instituted in 1999, to ensure that students were completing required homework and attending school to "raise standards and tackle social ills" (Sweetman, 1998). Local governments and school boards (e.g. Menlo Park, CA; Ridgewood, NJ; Gaithersburg, MD) have instituted homework bans across the country (see Ebbels, K., 2011; Matthews, J., 2011; Mehta, S., 2009; Melendez, 2007; Muchanic, N., 2011; Nelson, J., 2007). In Los Angeles, a new homework policy has been proposed by the LAUSD for how much homework can count (20%) and can be assigned in terms of minutes/night ("LAUSD Does," 2012). In this proposal, amounts of homework can vary by school sites to encourage autonomy and flexibility by educational leaders at local sites. What remains in most states and in local districts are decades old codes, which promote the timely completion of homework (e.g. Cal. Ed. Code § 51101).

What the history of homework in the United States reveals is a pendulum of thinking exhibited in educational and legal practices. Currently, the debate about homework in school largely focuses upon issues of achievement. The current debate about homework in courts ranges between education, prison, divorce, and access to education. Going forward, the issue of student and parent rights to discuss and negotiate amounts, topics, and scope of homework with schools will continue.

Homework Research

Homework has been studied with varying intensity for decades (Gill & Schlossman, 1996, 2000, 2003a, 2003b, 2004). Since 1983, more studies of homework have focused on the links of homework to academic achievement (de Carvalho, 2001; Cooper, 2007; Vatterott, 2009) and to the circumstances that promote achievement. When studies have focused on student perspective, they have largely been conducted through survey and have not investigated homework from the lived experience of students (Pope, 2001; Warton, 2001). The following provides an analysis of major studies in the field.

Pro-Homework Research

Harris Cooper (1989, 2007) is considered one of the most prominent researchers of homework. For decades, he and his colleagues have conducted meta-analyses on the question of homework (see Cooper, 1989, 2007; Cooper, Robinson, & Patall, 2006). There is much that Cooper has discovered about homework that is pertinent to this study. He acknowledges the debate over homework and seeks to prevent an adversarial tone in the homework debate. For example, he contends that "homework is a source of complaint and friction between home and

school more often than any other teaching activity" (Cooper, 2007, p. ix) and that there is plenty of research to support both sides of the homework debate.

His work, however, emphasizes the correlation between homework and achievement. He believes that there is a causal relationship between homework and achievement, particularly for high school students. Cooper (2007) found that such "correlational studies suggest the homework-achievement link for young children on broader measures of achievement appears to be weak; in fact it borders on trivial" (p. 37). Interestingly, Kohn (2006a) challenges why homework would be assigned to young children at all, if the research does not support a homework-achievement link.

The ten minute rule. Cooper is credited for his recommendation of 10 minutes per night of homework multiplied by each year a student is in school (Kohn, 2006a) (e.g. a first grader should have 10 minutes per night and a 12th grader should have 120 minutes per night). In this recommendation, he cautions "do not overload students with homework. It can ruin motivation" (Cooper, 2007, p. 102). This recommendation of time is promoted (Vatterott, 2009) by the National Education Association (NEA) and the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and is adhered to by schools and school districts throughout the country (Kohn, 2006a). He suggests "1.5 to 2.5 hours per night" as an "optimal amount of homework for 12th graders" (Cooper, 2007, p. 34). From his meta-analyses, he postulates that "it is still possible that students spending more than 20 hours on homework a week do so, even in part, because they are poor achievers and homework is harder for them – that is, low achievement causes more time on homework" (p. 34). Gill and Schlossman (2003a) believe that the amount of homework that students do is overstated. "Most teenagers do very little homework, and most 17-year-olds do no more than most 13-year

olds" (Gill & Schlossman, 2004, p. 180). Regarding time spent on homework historically, Gill and Schlossman (2003a) found that 1) "even at homework's peak during the mid-1960s, less than one quarter of high school students studied more than two hours daily" and 2) "the increases that took place in the post-Sputnik period were anomalous. The main historical trend over the past half-century is that of continuity. American high school students in the late 1940s and early 1950s studied no more than their counterparts did in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s" (p. 332).

Types of homework. Cooper provides numerous other conclusions that favor homework that which will be woven into a broader discussion of research.

"Homework assignments can be classified according to their (a) amount, (b) purpose, (c) skill area, (d) choice for the student, (e) completion deadline, (f) degree of individualization, and (g) social context" (Cooper, 2007, p. 4). Numerous studies have been conducted to document the role of each of these categories with respect to achievement (Cooper, 2007; Kohn, 2006a; Marzano & Pickering, 2007; Vatterott, 2009; Voorhees, 2011). Of note to this study is the area of choice for the student, because choice is tied to autonomy, with respect to intrinsic motivation (Pink, 2011). Some researchers contend that when students have choice with homework, they have a "higher intrinsic motivation to do homework, felt more competent regarding the homework, and performed better on a unit test compared with when they did not have a choice (Patal, Cooper, & Wynn, 2010, p. 896). Moreover, students in these studies also completed more assignments and earned higher grades on choice driven homework assignments.

Homework utility. Cooper (2007) believes the "factors affecting the utility of homework" (p. 12) include issues ranging from student ability (Levine, 2008, Vatterott, 2009) to quality of assignment (Trautwein, Niggli, Schnyder, & Lüdtke, 2009, p. 184) to factors in- and

outside the classroom. For numerous researchers, there is agreement that homework quality is the issue (Bembenutty, 2011; Cooper, 2007; Coutts, 2004; Dettmers, Trautwein, Lüdtke, Kunter, & Baumert, 2010; Marzano & Pickering, 2007; Trautwein & Lüdtke, 2007; Van Voorhis, 2011; Vatterott, 2009). To this point, Dettmers, Trautwein, Lüdtke, Kunter, & Baumert (2010) conducted a national study in Germany of a representative student sample (*N*= 3483) and found that regarding the quality of math homework, "students in classes given well-chosen and challenging homework assignments learn more than their peers in other classes" (p. 478). Yet surprisingly, programs involving teacher training about best homework practices and improving homework quality are rarely mentioned in the research literature.

Homework quality. Frances Landis Van Voorhis (2011) has led a homework program, Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS), at Johns Hopkins University, to train teachers to work with parents for better, less stressful homework practice. She notes that the three studies of this program have yielded important findings about 1) improving the experience for students and families regarding homework, 2) increased achievement, and 3) increased time necessary for teachers to engage students and families. She affirms the need for teachers to improve the quality of homework assignments so that they are "interactive" (p. 243) assignments between students and family members. Also, she recommends that teachers should "develop assignments [they] would enjoy completing" (p. 246).

Homework and achievement. Cooper (2007) frames the positive research about homework and achievement as "(a) immediate academic effects, (b) long-term academic effects, (c) nonacademic effects, (d) parental involvement effects" (Cooper, 2007, p. 8). Of particular interest to this study is the finding that:

> The strongest relationship between homework and achievement was found among twelfth-grade students who reported doing 7 to 12 hours of homework per week, followed by students reporting doing 13 to 20 hours per week. Students who reported doing more than 20 hours of homework per week revealed a relationship with achievement test scores nearly equal to those reporting between 1 and 6 hours of homework per week. (Cooper, 2007, p. 34)

Two of the most salient findings in Cooper's meta-analytic research include: 1) "In experimental studies, the average student doing homework had a higher unit test score than 73% of students not doing homework" (Cooper, 2007, p. 19), and 2) there is a correlation between homework and achievement in "35 samples" which accounts for "5.7% of the difference" in their achievement scores (Cooper, 2007, p. 27). For the first finding, does this mean that nearly one-fourth of the students who did not do homework did as well as those who did do homework? In the second finding, what could 5.7% possibly mean? What are the other reasons which account for the 94.3% of the difference?

Homework and an increased emphasis on achievement "remain popular throughout the United States, while student dispositions are systematically ignored" (Baines & Slutsky, 2009, p. 98). Contrary to Cooper's (2007) conclusions, Baines and Slutsky (2009) point out that "the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) conducted an exhaustive study of achievement in the K-12 schools of thirty countries and found no correlation between the amount of homework and student achievement levels (p. 98).

Dettmers, Trautwein, & Lüdtke (2009) conducted a multi-level analysis of homework time and achievement in 40 countries and found that although time at the school level of analysis

positively links homework time with achievement, at the student level of analysis the results are mixed. Noted in their study are countries with the highest achievement scores such as Finland and China, yet they report very different average amounts of math homework (Finland, *M*=1.4 hours, Macao (China), *M*=4.3 hours; p. 383).

Institutional studies. The Brookings Institution (2003) concluded from their U.S. study that "there are children with too much homework. There are also parents who believe, correctly, that their kids are overworked. Anecdotes can be woven together to create dramatic stories, but if they apply only to a small minority of people, they should not be construed to depict the experience of the average person" (p. 17). Their report, thus, refutes the notion that students are overworked and affirms the goodness of homework, cautioning educators not to change policy because of anecdote and exceptional testimony about excessive homework.

Gender and Catholic schools. From the nationwide, annual "Freshman Survey" administered by UCLA (Sax, Arms, Woodruff, Riggers, & Eagan, 2009), "the study compares the backgrounds, behaviors, attitudes, and aspirations of 6,552 women graduates of 225 private single-sex schools with 14,684 women who graduated from 1,169 private coeducational high schools" (p. 6). The range in homework reported shows roughly half of Catholic students in either single-sex or coeducational environments are spending three to 10 hours per week on homework. However, females in single-sex Catholic high schools report that 34.5% spend 11 or more hours per week on homework, compared to 23.9% in coed Catholic high schools, or 17.2% in public schools spending a similar quantity of time on homework per week. In independent schools, single-sex environments report that 62% of students spend 11 or more hours on homework per week, versus 42% in coeducational schools (Sax, et al., 2009, p. 80). Of note,

"women who attend single-sex schools scored significantly higher than their coeducational counterparts on the SAT…within Catholic schools, SAT composite scores also favor single-sex graduates, with an average difference of 28 points" (Sax, et al., 2009, p. 32).

Bempechat, Boulay, Piergross, & Wenk, (2007) explain the phenomenon of student achievement in Catholic schools as follows:

> These students understood that their teachers would not tolerate performance that did not meet their definition of an acceptable standard. These students knew that they could not rest on previous laurels without being taken to task, should the quality of their work deteriorate. According to these students, their teachers appeared to be relentless in their pursuit of high quality work from their pupils. (p. 175)

This quote is taken from a study of a Catholic high school in an urban setting. The high standards approach articulated above is similar to the approach at the school in this study. In question, though, is to what degree do students from this study agree with this assertion from Bempechat et al. (2007) about school, relentless teachers, and the demands for high quality work.

In terms of advice for Catholic parents regarding homework, Ellen Javernick (2003) emphasizes that though students do not readily eat vegetables or do homework, parents must trick them into doing so. Writing for a Catholic audience in the popular press, she states: "Homework, like broccoli, is good for children. When we're trying to get our children to eat vegetables, we serve them in different ways or disguise them in different dishes" (p. 12). Writing a year earlier in the same magazine, Mary O'Brien (2002) encourages balance for parents and not over-scheduling children, believing "there's almost always time for homework

and some of the extracurricular things kids want to do" including a "prayer before homework" (p. 47).

Homework as work. Discussions of homework and achievement are closely tied to debates about school and work: "Homework cannot be dissociated from our larger cultural dreams and anxieties about work itself. An exploration of the history of homework must place that history in the large context of work itself" (Buell, 2004, p. 7). That is to say that advocates of homework often attempt to link homework to the formation of discipline and good work habits in children (Kohn, 2006a), particularly children from disenfranchised communities, which supposedly prepare these students to be more responsible adults. Janine Bempechat (2004), for example, contends that to say homework is a punishment for the poor is "disingenuous" (p. 193) and begets pity unnecessarily for children of poverty, because these children and their families actually want homework. She believes that parents who advocate against homework "will pay the price in the long run" (p. 194) for the deficits their children face in learning. Notice the emphasis on children needing to take the initiative in the following quote:

> If our goal is to prepare children for the demands of secondary schooling and beyond, we need to pay as much attention to the development of skills that help children take initiative in their learning and maintain or regain their motivation when it wanes. (Bempechat, 2004, p. 190)

Similarly, Lyn Corno and Jianzhong Xu (2004) argue that homework "can prepare children for jobs they will have one day; it may develop an aptitude for gainful employment" (p. 227). In their study about third grade homework, they conclude that students who can adjust their attention to different types of assignments and can self-instruct are better able to prepare for

the demands of future work. Furthermore, Corno and Xu insist that "Homework is work, not play" (Corno & Xu, 2004, p. 228). It is in this study, that the social reproduction of homework and school to work is most evident. "Through homework, the idea of a performance exchange becomes appropriated by and cultivated in children at a young age; in doing homework, children begin to practice working for external rewards" (Corno & Xu, 2004, p. 228). Kohn (2006a), however, counters, arguing that the problem with this view is that grades are subjective and artificially scarce in determining students' capacities.

Costs of homework. Cooper (2007) also suggests "homework may have positive effects on home life" (p. 10). From five studies he asserts, "more time on homework was associated with better attitudes" (p. 35). Yet, in the same text, Cooper (2007) identifies the costs of homework as 1) the "loss of interest in academic material"; 2) "physical and emotional fatigue"; 3) "denial of access to leisure time and community activities"; 4) "parental interference" manifesting itself in the "pressure to complete and perform well [and] the "confusion of instructional techniques"; and 5) "cheating" by "copying from other students" or gaining "help beyond tutoring", as when parents complete the assignment (Cooper, 2007, p. 9). In his recommendations about homework, he mentions the costs of homework to family time and student well-being, sleep, and participation in other activities.

Warton (2001) points to the increase in cheating and the decreasing motivation of students as two of the principal costs of homework on students and their intrinsic motivation. "According to the Center for Academic Integrity (2007), up to 85% of students report that they engage in acts of academic dishonesty one or more times each year" (Geddes, 2011, p. 51). In one study, the top reasons for cheating among gifted and high achieving students were "school

workload too heavy," "too many tests on one day," "teachers did not adequately explain material," and "driven by GPA" (as cited in Geddes, 2011, p. 54). Similarly, Baines & Slutsky (2009) argue that "the relentless emphasis on test scores in K-12 schools has resulted in an erosion of play and an active skepticism about fun, even among our youngest children" (p. 99).

Kohn (2007b) affirms the idea that cheating is a symptom of an educational process focused on grades, rather than learning. Similarly, Ohio State University (2009) concluded that teachers and schools which focus on grades, do so at the cost of learning. In these environments, students are more likely to cheat.

More emphatically, Pamela M. Coutts (2004) cites a parent and former elementary teacher as saying "I hate homework. I hate giving homework, I hate marking homework, I hate supervising homework. But parents who are not teachers put a lot of importance on homework, and they judge teachers on how much homework the give" (p. 183). Similarly, "when children enter school, they may appear excited by the idea of homework, but it takes a remarkably short period of time before many are disillusioned" (Coutts, 2004, p. 185). Susan Voorhees (2011) argues that "what is not prudent is assigning out-of-school tasks that lead to failure" (p. 366) because failure begets failure, causing further distress for students.

"Viewing homework as the job of childhood has implications for children's level of stress and burnout" (Corno & Xu, 2004, p. 232). Although, in their study of third graders, Corno & Xu (2004) sought to make the case for homework as work, they too recognize that homework can become "an emotionally charged event" in the home (p. 232). They cite distractions such as computers, phone calls, TV, noise, and family as adversely affecting homework practice.

Homework completion is also adversely affected by student desire to participate in activities other than homework (e.g. job, sports (Warton, 2001; Coutts, 2004).

Motivation and homework. Leone and Richards (1989), in one of the seminal and most quoted studies of homework in the literature, employed the Experience Sampling Method (ESM) of Mihaly Csíkszentmihályi to assess student experience. Students carried an electronic pager for one week. Every two hours, the pager signaled to remind them to complete a log in a journal about what they were doing, how they were feeling, and how well they were motivated in their current activity. Students reported the "highest affect" when completing homework with others, and the "lowest affect" when completing homework alone (p. 543). Consequently, doing homework alone is "less intrinsically rewarding" (p. 545). Homework was judged very negatively "as students reported feeling more unhappy, lethargic, and disinterested during homework than during other activities" (p. 545). Also, relevant to this study is the finding that "[h]igh achievers appear to spend more time on homework as they get older despite the accompanying negative effect, while the remaining students do even less in the higher grades, perhaps to avoid the negative experience" (p. 544).

A similar study was conducted with ESM in high school classrooms (Shernoff, Csíkszentmihályi, Schneider, & Shernoff, 2003), which found that most of student time in the classroom was spent on activities, such as lectures and note taking, in which students were not actively engaged. The researchers concluded, "The abundance of lectures, taking notes, and watching videos makes for a narrow range of classroom activities that leaves little room for active engagement. An interesting question becomes how students can be expected to reach

adult goals of participation…when active and meaningful participation is not consistently invited in classrooms" (p. 171).

David Jordan Shernoff and Deborah Lowe Vandell (2007) studied engagement of students in an after school program through the ESM. In this study, 165 students wore digital wristwatches and received beep signals five times a day. At the signal, they recorded their experiences in a journal. Participants responded, on average, to 33 of the 35 signals (94% response rate) (p. 895). Of all activities, they found that students showed "the lowest intrinsic motivation, positive affect, and overall engagement during homework completion compared to other selected activities. Apathy was also highest when completing homework" (p. 898) and adolescents' "most negative mood states are frequently reported when alone" (p. 893).

Gap in the homework literature. There are several gaps in the study of homework that this study seeks to partially address. First, Pamela Warton (2001) emphasizes that homework research on the lived experience of students is weak. Particularly, student voice is largely missing in homework research. Moreover, she contends that:

> Educators have even less insight into the student perceptions of task value of homework than of other aspects of homework understandings. Almost no research has asked students about their perceptions of the current task (its intrinsic value), how it is likely to help them achieve some goal (utility value) or what are the perceived costs. (p. 163)

Second, to better understand the experience of homework in the home setting, research is needed (McDermott, Goldman, & Varenne, 1984; Otis, Grouzet, & Pelletier, 2005). The study by McDermott, et al. (1984) remains seemingly unique in its ability to document by video the interactions of students in the midst of homework, while at home with their parents. Because of

the salience of their findings, they pointedly ask: "What kind of homework, if any, should teachers be sending home?" (McDermott, et al., 1984, p. 392). Cooper, Robinson, and Patall (2006) recommend that future studies of homework should examine the "non-achievement-related effects of homework" (p. 54).

Lastly, there remains a need to understand better the relationship of homework and motivation (Trautwein & Lüdtke, 2007). This may relate to ways in which "the decision to spend time on homework may carry high opportunity costs as other more desirable activities are foregone" (Warton, 2001, p. 163).

Pro-Homework Books

In the review of homework literature, there is a declaratively pro-homework set of books. Lee Canter and Lee Hausner (1987) wrote a guide to coach parents on how to have *Homework without Tears*. With cartoon illustrations and checklists, the book directs parents to be assertive with their children about homework by motivating them, creating a positive homework environment in the home, and by supporting the teacher.

Sharon Marshall Lockett (2007) also wrote a book for parents guiding them in assisting their children with homework. However, she approaches the topic from a pragmatic place, explaining different assignment types to parents and coaching them on how to work with children so that work is completed successfully. The book is divided into such areas as note-taking, test-taking, and problem-solving. The book concludes with several chapters focusing on addressing student complaints and failure with regard to school and homework.

Trevor Romain (1997) wrote and illustrated an intentionally silly guide about homework for young children, entitled *How to Do Homework without Throwing Up*. A sample of the

book's advice is "avoid picking your nose or pulling out your eyebrow hairs while doing homework. This will only distract you" (p. 33). With a caricature drawn on each page, this book offers advice for such things as a diet that helps students complete homework and the "A+ homework schedule" (p. 19).

John Rosemond (1990) contends that homework is now commonly cited as a problem with parents and students, because parents are now more involved in their children's lives than ever before. He advises parents to have their children complete homework in isolation. Yet, he also advises parents to be more like a "consultant" (p. 24) to their child's learning, rather than an active or a controlling manager. The book concludes with question and answer style advice for when to hold students back from progressing to the next grade level, when to address learning difficulties, and when to medicate overactive children.

Neil McNerney (2011) approaches homework as a licensed therapist offering advice to parents on how to stay calm amidst homework stress. He advocates a "four step C.A.L.M. method" which includes "stay[ing] calm", "assessing your child", choosing a "leadership style", and "measuring effectiveness" (pp. 83-85). To be successful at this method, he offers ways to "decod[e] our kids" (p. 35). From this decoding, he advises parents parent to take a particular approach depending on the child's behavior or personality. The book concludes with strategies for solving problems in various homework scenarios.

Research Challenging Homework Practice

Researchers who have challenged the practice of homework (Bennett & Kalish, 2006; Buell, 2004; Kohn, 2006a; Kralovec & Buell, 2000; Pope, 2001) support their positions by utilizing research and testimonies of students, parents, and educators. Largely, their books

communicate that homework is boring for students, causes stress for students, and is counter-productive to learning. Homework is *boring* because 1) it does not interest students intrinsically, 2) it is assigned in a time that they would rather have to themselves, 3) the work of homework is largely not self-satisfying, and 3) homework in its assignment and assessment is out of student control. Homework is *stressful* because 1) students may not understand the assignments, 2) home environments are not conducive to study, 3) students perceive homework as busywork (homework was poorly designed, not graded, or not graded with the seriousness with which the assignment was completed), and 4) students cannot relax from the pressures of grades at school, especially at home. Homework is *counter-productive to learning* because 1) it is based on rewards of grades to motivate students, 2) it prevents students from rest and sleep where learning can take place, 3) students are mostly alone when they do homework, and learning is done better in the company of others.

Doing School. Denise Pope (2001) posits that children are simply "doing school" (p. 149); they are going through the motions to achieve grades, but not necessarily to learn. She asserts that "Instead of thinking deeply about the content of their courses and delving into projects and assignments, the students focus on managing the workload and honing strategies that will help them to achieve high grades" (Pope, 2001, p. 4). Pope (2001)'s conclusions were derived from a qualitative study focusing on five high school teens driven to success in a Northern California high school. The five students she studied were from diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. In that school culture, she found that the student drive to succeed resulted in ulcers, cheating, lack of sleep, and ultimately, a lack of motivation to engage in learning beyond high school. The students were simply "doing school" (p. 149). From this

study, she questioned the purpose of education where students "are not challenged or excited by their education" (Pope, 2001, p. 171). The motivation for performance in school rests on what she terms "grade traps" (Pope, 2001, p. 175), where students are primarily working for grades for college acceptance and parental approval. Though she asserts that schools could engage student learning beyond their motivation for grades, she concedes that schools generally fail to do so.

The Case Against Homework. Sara Bennett and Nancy Kalish (2006) are two parents who began their work against the practice of homework when they met with other parents to discuss the academic pressures affecting their children. As parents, they are interested in the effects of homework on children in the home. They view homework through the lens of the progressive educators of the early 20th century.

> Homework was once decried as child labor. In the early 1900s, doctors led a movement to abolish it, insisting that children needed at least five hours of fresh air and sunshine each day. At that time, those kids who today would be diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) were told to go outside and play more – not take medication so that they could sit still. For the first half of the last century, homework was minimal. Just as workers were winning rights to a forty-hour work week, children were winning the right to a childhood, secured in part through stricter child labor laws and a school day that ended at the schoolhouse door. (p. 35)

From this lens, they documented their findings from their "national online survey and interviews of more than 1,300 parents, educators, and kids" (p. 2). It is unclear from the book how the study was conducted. From their research, Bennett and Kalish (2006) conclude that students are overscheduled, with little time to rest or time to spend with family. Parents are

caught in the middle, wanting to help their children but not knowing how to negotiate the school or how to help with homework. Parents frequently report that homework is a cause of stress and friction in the home. There is little time for parents who want to connect with their children in the evening because there is so much homework. Of the parents they surveyed, "more than one-third" (p. 3) believe that their children are assigned too much homework, and those who support the amount of homework also decried the "negative effects their kids suffer – from nightly crying fits to stomach-aches to facial tics" (p.3). Believing that "nobody wants their kids to remember their childhoods as one long battle over homework" (p. 35), Bennett and Kalish conclude their book by encouraging parents to "be their child's best advocate" (p. 183) with respect to homework. They provide an appendix with materials and a summary of information for parents seeking to reform homework practice in their schools and districts. Their book is cited and countered often in popular and academic press (for instance, see Marzano & Pickering, 2007; Mathews, 2007; Suskind, 2012).

Punished by Rewards. Alfie Kohn (1999, 2006a, 2006b), a critic of traditional schooling, has called into question the basic structures of discipline, homework, and grades. Where education remains simply a place of following rules or of pursuing grades, Kohn (1999, 2006a, 2006b) maintains that students are poorly served.

> I would suggest that parents stop asking what a child got on a paper and stop making a fuss over report cards. This doesn't mean we don't care: it means we care enough about learning to stop doing what gets in its way. It means we care enough about our children to think about the subtler implications of what we are doing to them. (Kohn, 1999, p. 207)

Kohn (2006b) emphasizes the need to support agency and voice for the learner in the learning process. He contends that "students learn how to make good choices making choices, not by following directions…(for they)…will have little opportunity to do that kind of learning if teachers and administrators try to control or manage their behavior" (p. 78). Moreover, Kohn (2006a) challenges long held beliefs about the efficacy of homework by anecdote, conjecture, and analyses of previous research about homework. Principally, he asks: 1) Why do students need to continue the school day beyond the classroom? and 2) Does homework really improve learning? "Homework is the modern cod liver oil, and we are invited to take grim satisfaction from the fact that children are made to do something unpleasant – and are benefiting from it, by definition" (p. 147).

Moreover, Kohn (2006a) makes the case that "The Homework Myth" is a deeply engrained belief that remains unquestioned and unchanged in American schools. He points to the problems of excessive assignments (quantity) and the lack of quality assignments given. He quotes a math teacher who did not support homework saying:

> Those students who already know how to do the stuff were bored with more of it at home. Those students who didn't understand it made up their own ways to do things which were often wrong and repeated the practice, making it that much harder to get them to see it another way in class. (Kohn, 2006a, p. 113)

Kohn insists adamantly that homework research promoting the relationship between homework and achievement is at best associational and not "causal" (Kohn, 2006a, p. 28). He articulates that student success in school has more to do with a student's affluence, the resources available to her, and the quality of teaching she is afforded, than with working harder on

homework. Although Kohn (2006a) and many of those he interviews agree that "exceptional teachers not only tended to give less homework, but also were likely to give students more choices about their assignments" (p. 44), he also recognizes the reasons why this data is largely ignored. The drive for competition with the standards movement may encourage researchers and practitioners to disregard the findings listed above.

Kohn also states that the practice of homework continues because of "the belief that any practices students will encounter later, however unproductive, should be introduced earlier by way of preparation" (p. 72) and essentially because the perspectives of children are distrusted. By analogy, he argues that schools and teachers who continue to assign homework to children in order to prepare them for homework later in life makes as much sense "as saying that because there are lots of carcinogens in the environment, we should feed kids as many cancer-causing agents as possible while they're small in order to get them ready" (p. 146).

Student health. Brain researcher John Medina (2009) synthesizes current brain research in 12 principles. Relevant to this study are at least three principles: 1) sleep, 2) exercise, and 3) stress. He asserts that brains without sleep or exercise, are not only less functional, they can become dysfunctional. He verifies commonsense notions that students are better learners if given the chance for a full eight hours of sleep and chances to relax and to exercise. Student memory, adaptability to new situations, and learning are all improved by sleep, rest, and exercise.

Regarding stress, Medina (2009) cites studies that demonstrate that stressed babies, stressed students, and stressed adults all struggle. Stress impacts the immune system, the

development of the nervous system and neural functioning (Medina, 2009; Sapolsky, 1994). Furthermore, Medina (2009) explains that:

> Stress hormones seem to have a particular liking for cells in the hippocampus, and that's a problem, because the hippocampus is deeply involved in many aspects of human learning. Stress hormones can make cells in the hippocampus more vulnerable to other stresses. Stress hormones can disconnect neural networks, the webbing of brain cells that act like a safety deposit vault, storing your most precious memories. They can stop the hippocampus from giving birth to brand-new baby neurons. Under extreme conditions, stress hormones can even kill hippocampal cells. Quite literally, severe stress can cause brain damage in the very tissues most likely to help your children pass their SATs. (p. 179)

Chronic stress can affect language process, math learning, and concentration. In worst case scenarios, chronic stress can prevent students from seeing clearly through a problem that Martin Seligman terms "learned helplessness" (Medina, 2009, p. 172). They become stuck in the difficult circumstance, which is out of their control and that prompts their reaction. It goes without saying, stress may be caused by school, but also by a whole host of factors in the home and in the student's life (Elkind, 2001) that are beyond the scope or vision of school personnel.

Bronson (2007) reports that brain researchers know that "tired children can't remember what they just learned…because neurons lose their plasticity, becoming incapable of forming the synaptic connections necessary to encode a memory". Further, "a tired brain perseverates – it gets stuck on a wrong answer and can't come up with a more creative solution, repeatedly returning to the same answer it already knows is erroneous." But rather than acknowledge that

one needs sleep, Bronson suggests "we see sleep not as a physical need but a statement of character. It's considered a sign of weakness to admit fatigue, and it's a sign of strength to refuse to succumb to slumber." The consequences though are severe. Cited in this online article is a study from the University of Pennsylvania which studied the effects on adults when their nightly sleep was shortened to six hours. Though the adults self-reported as doing well, "they proved to be just as impaired as someone who has stayed awake for 24 hours straight."

School stress. School remains stressful for students, and the stress of school is exacerbated by the practice of homework (Bennett & Kalish, 2006; Kohn, 2006a; Kralovec & Buell, 2000; Levine, 2008; Pope, 2001). This reality prevails in a context where the current President and other educational leaders continue to emphasize hard work and homework. In his *State of the Union Address* in January 2011, President Obama stated:

> The question is whether all of us -- as citizens, and as parents--are willing to do what's necessary to give every child a chance to succeed. That responsibility begins not in our classrooms, but in our homes and communities. It's family that first instills the love of learning in a child. Only parents can make sure the TV is turned off and homework gets done…We need to teach them that success is not a function of fame or PR, but of hard work and discipline.

Central to the discussions that challenge homework practice is the effect of stress that school and homework have on students (Bennett & Kalish, 2006; Kohn, 1999, 2006a, 2006b; Kravolec & Buell, 2000; Levine, 2008; Pope, 2001). Whether at home or in place of recess as punishment for incomplete work (Bennett & Kalish, 2006), homework is presumed as a necessary and relatively unquestioned practice nationally (Bennett & Kalish, 2006; Kohn, 1999,

2006a, 2006b; Kravolec & Buell, 2000; Levine, 2008; Pope, 2001). Students are expected to work harder and to do so at home. When students have to balance the rest of their lives after school (e.g. family, sports, work, sleep, etc.), inherently unhealthy stress is produced (Levine, 2008). Stress inhibits the motivation to learn (Levine, 2008) as well as learning (Medina, 2009). Students struggle when the stress of school is exacerbated by the practice of homework (Bennett & Kalish, 2006; Kravolec & Buell, 2000; Pope, 2001). This struggle may be reflected in their lack of academic achievement, their health, and their overall well-being (Levine, 2008; Stipek & Seal, 2001).

In a culture driven toward success, parents are often those most responsible for creating stress in their children (Levine, 2008; Pope, 2001). Luthar and Becker (2002) suggest that "in upwardly mobile suburban communities, there is often a ubiquitous emphasis on ensuring children secure admission to stellar colleges. As a result, many youngsters feel highly driven to excel not only at academics but also at multiple extracurricular activities" (p. 1594). What they discovered is that in this setting, "incidence of clinically significant depressive symptoms can be unusually high among suburban adolescent girls" (p. 1603). Revisiting this study, Luthar, Shoum, & Brown (2006) sought to understand the phenomenon of overscheduling in affluent communities. Chief among their findings were that "far more powerful than the number of hours spent in activities were children's perceptions their parents attitudes toward achievements" (p. 592).

Levine (2008) writes, from her experience as a clinical psychologist, that parent pressure contributes to anxiety and a drive to perfectionism by their children. She describes the children she counseled as "maladaptive perfectionists" (p. 29), unhealthy students who make themselves

physically sick because of the stress. Most drastically, Levine (2008) cites that school stress and perfectionism are "highly correlated with depression and suicide" (p. 29). Peculiar to this discussion of stress is Levine's (2008) emphasis on children and teens of affluence. She describes them as the new "at-risk group" who "in spite of their economic and social advantages…experience among the highest rates of depression, substance abuse, anxiety disorders, somatic complaints, and unhappiness of any group of children in the country" (p. 17).

Catching Up or Leading the Way. At the heart of discussions of educational reform is a drive to compete nationally and internationally (Zhao, 2009). This may be our "*Sputnik* moment" as President Obama suggests (The White House, 2011). Or, "the mistake that many policymakers make is to believe that in education the best way to face the future is by improving what they did in the past" (Robinson, 2009, p. 235). What is at stake is a fundamental concern about the nature and purpose of schooling. In this debate, homework plays an important role, because it is a practice occurring nationally that claims the time and rest of children, at the cost of pursuing other interests and developing their innate talents. Yong Zhao (2009) addresses this issue in the following way.

> We all know that we are not really certain about what we want to do to or what we are good at until we have experienced it; this is especially true when we are young…Schools thus should be the place for us to experience and experiment with different options in life and decide what we want to pursue later….Being able to work on things that we truly love not only makes it more enjoyable for us but also increases our productivity. When we are passionate about what we do, we are more likely to put in more effort and be more creative. (p. 57)

Zhao's (2009) work upends traditional deficit thinking regarding American education. He believes that what makes American schools great is our emphasis on creativity and each individual. He contends that what is currently being advocated in education reform would make American schools more like schools in China by implementing more testing, with a more narrowly defined standardized curriculum. Moreover, he argues that making American schools more like Chinese schools is a step backward, not forward. Zhao believes that schools in the United States should be the place for students to "discover their true passion and fully develop their strengths" (Zhao, 2009, p. 57).

> A World Values Survey (1999-2004) found that when asked to select the important aspects in a job, about 82 percent of Americans mentioned 'a job that is interesting.' In stark contrast, only 18 percent of Chinese mentioned this. More than 42 percent of Americans selected 'Doing an important job' as their first choice when looking for a job, while only 23 percent of Chinese made the same choice. (Zhao, 2009, p. 57)

Zhao (2009) further contends that the future of education is in acknowledging the individual needs of students, in order to best promote the development of each individual's talents. Doing so addresses the aspirations of the 82% mentioned above, and is in line with the views of Ken Robinson (2009) who writes:

> Most students never get to explore the full range of their abilities and interests. Those students whose minds work differently – and we're talking about many students here; perhaps even the majority of them – can feel alienated from the whole culture of education. This is exactly why some of the most successful people you'll ever meet didn't do well at school. Education is the system that's supposed to develop our natural

> abilities and enable us to make our way in the world. Instead, it is stifling the individual talents and abilities of too many students and killing their motivation to learn. There's a huge irony in all of this. The reason many school systems are going in this direction is that politicians seem to think that it's essential for economic growth and competitiveness and to help students get jobs. But the fact is that in the twenty-first century, jobs and competitiveness depend absolutely on the very qualities that school systems are being forced to tamp down…Businesses everywhere say they need people who are creative and can think independently. But the argument is not just about business. It's about having lives with purpose and meaning in and beyond whatever work we do. (Robinson, 2009, p. 16)

By several indicators, the time is now to address the purpose of school in light of what is known about homework, competition, motivation, and society, particularly when the push for high school completion is driven toward the pursuit of college. A *New York Times* study confirms that the "drive to achieve" and the lack of job opportunities is driving record stress levels among college students in the Class of 2014 (Scobas, 2011). In a study of undergraduates (*N*=2300), Gorski (2011) reports that "45% of students show no significant improvement in the key measures of critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing by the end of their sophomore years" (p. 19). Meanwhile, Lyons (2004) reported a Gallup poll which found that the most frequent words teenagers used to describe school are "bored" (50%) and "tired" (42%). And, "older teens (aged 16 and 17) are more likely than younger teens to express the negative feelings of boredom, tiredness, pressure, and confusion at school." The time is now to think critically about this issue and the impact it is having on our children.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study utilizes a conceptual framework that incorporates intrinsic motivation (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990; Pink, 2011; Robinson, 2009; Stipek, 2001), social reproduction (Bowles & Gintis, 1976/2011; Willis, 1977), and critical pedagogy (Darder, 1991, 2002, 2011, 2012; Freire, 1970/2010; hooks, 2003, 2010; McLaren, 2009). Despite their inherent differences, what these three theories have in common is an interest in promoting a more fully realized humanity for each person, and therefore society.

The tension which pushes the theories apart concerns a difference in the unit of analysis. Intrinsic motivation largely focuses upon the individual; social reproduction and critical pedagogy focus on society. This study attempted to bridge the divide between the theories, with a focus to understanding homework in light of the individual student and the ubiquity of homework practice and its effect on society. Etta Kralovec and John Buell (2000) state:

> We seem to have lost sight of the importance of family and community life. If parents were no longer held captive by the demands of their children's schools, they could develop their own priorities for family life. If students were permitted more freedom to structure their own time and to explore their own interests, they would find it much easier to develop both an authentic self and a meaningful social life." (p. xi)

The statement above expresses a hope that community life could be structured (social reproduction) so that students and families have the freedom to pursue their goals (intrinsic motivation), resulting in a more just society (critical pedagogy). If we design systems (e.g. schools) to encourage intrinsic motivation, we are taking steps to address why so many

individuals (and collectively, society at large) are left behind and are voiceless. Are the intrinsically motivated pursuits of the individual and the communal needs of society mutually exclusive or are these reconcilable in a just society? Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan (2000) contend from their study of motivation that:

> …humans are active, growth-oriented organisms who are naturally inclined toward integration of their psychic elements into a unified sense of self and integration of themselves into larger social structures….it is part of the adaptive design of the human organism to engage interesting activities, to exercise capacities, to pursue connectedness in social groups, and to integrate intrapsychic and interpersonal experiences into a relative unity. (p. 229)

Where these theories find greatest connection is in the possibility for relatedness. Through the practice of *dialogue* (to be discussed later), critical consciousness can be raised about the structure of society in how it promotes unfairness and works against a student's own particular and collective interests (Freire, 1970/2010).

Deci & Ryan (2000) discuss this tension and opportunity to understand the dynamic nature of autonomy and relatedness:

> The need for relatedness can at times compete or conflict with self-organizational tendencies, that is, with the need for autonomy. Thus, much of the rich fabric of the human psyche is founded upon the interplay of the deep adaptive tendencies toward autonomy (individual integration) and relatedness (integration of the individual into a larger social whole) that are part of our archaic heritage and will, under optimal

circumstances, be complementary but can, under less optimal circumstances, become antagonistic. (p. 253)

Intrinsic motivation (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990; Pink, 2011; Robinson, 2009; Stipek & Seal, 2001) recognizes that humanity is at its best when individuals are pursuing work, careers, studies, and ways of living that are most in tune with what gives them joy and satisfaction. In this pursuit, individuals find themselves in a state of "flow" (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990), where the various faculties of the human being seem to integrate and express themselves fully in the course of an activity or experience. In this state, individuals are more productive because they find their work and their lives emotionally satisfying. This is an important concept, in that the workforce of the future will depend on individuals who are creative and motivated to innovate and produce in new ways (Pink, 2011; Robinson, 2009; Zhao, 2009).

Social reproduction (Bowles & Gintis, 1976/2011; Willis, 1977) asks to what extent are schools training a future workforce in ways that preserve structures of class inequality? What are the ways in which schools are, intentionally or unintentionally, reproducing social inequalities, by the structural nature in which schools operate? Social reproduction theorists, such as Bowles and Gintis (1976/2011), contend that schools can produce a docile, unquestioning, conformist workforce, well suited to the demands of the modern economy.

Critical pedagogy (Darder, 1991, 2002, 2011, 2012; Freire, 1970/2010; Giroux, 2011; hooks, 2003; McLaren, 2009) looks critically at questions of power and domination at play in society. As such, critical pedagogy seeks to unveil the hidden curriculum behind essentialized practices of schooling, government, social interaction, and the economy. Within a democracy such as the United States, critical pedagogues asks to what degree do citizens have voice and

power in society? To what extent can individuals develop critical consciousness in the interplay of social and material conditions at work in schools and communities?

If homework is the "job of childhood," as Corno & Xu (2004) discussed, then it is important to understand homework in light of motivation and consciousness, with respect to work, the economy, and participation in a global context. The conceptual framework described above provides this study the opportunity to understand how the practice of homework affects intrinsic motivation and the development of critical consciousness in high school students. A more developed discussion of each theory follows.

Intrinsic Motivation

This study employs intrinsic motivation as a means for understanding how the practice of homework affects the intrinsic motivation of students. Within this particular theoretical school of thought, there exist a number of major concepts that give shape to this analytical perspective.

Self-determination theory. "Intrinsic motivation" refers to the drive within a person to accomplish a task that is neither motivated by survival or by external forces of reward or punishment (Pink, 2011, p. 3). The term was first coined in 1949 by a primate researcher, Harry F. Harlow, whose experimental research puzzles and behaviorist rewards yielded surprising findings. He discovered that if left alone, the monkeys he studied solved puzzles without reward or guidance. This led him to question what drives or motivates individuals. Since that time, his work has inspired research in business, psychology, and education (Pink, 2011).

Chief among the researchers in this field are Deci and Ryan (2000), who have developed Self-Determination Theory (SDT). SDT identifies that "we have three innate psychological needs – competence, autonomy, and relatedness. When those needs are satisfied, we're

motivated, productive, and happy. When these needs are thwarted, our motivation, productivity, and happiness plummet" (Pink, 2011, pp. 69-70). Moreover, this understanding is particularly relevant to the study of homework; in that Deci and Ryan (2000) understand the achievement and well-being of individuals as tied to the limitations and opportunities available to them by their social contexts.

> Our primary concern throughout this program of research has been the well-being of individuals, whether they are students in classrooms, patients in clinics, athletes on the playing field, or employees in the workplace. As formulated by SDT, if the social contexts in which such individuals are embedded are responsive to basic psychological needs, they provide the appropriate developmental lattice upon which an active, assimilative, and integrated nature can ascend. Excessive control, nonoptimal challenges, and lack of connectedness, on the other hand, disrupt the inherent actualizing and organizational tendencies endowed by nature, and thus such factors result not only in the lack of initiative and responsibility but also in distress and psychopathology. …by attending to the relative presence or deprivation of supports for basic psychological needs, practitioners are better able to diagnose sources of alienation versus engagement, and facilitate both enhanced human achievements and well-being. (p. 76)

Homework is often cited as being prescribed by teachers without student input and to be completed alone by students (Kohn, 2006a). These two circumstances disallow students the opportunity to satisfy two of the three innate needs prescribed by the theory. Namely, students will lose motivation because homework practice does not necessarily provide them opportunity for either autonomy or for relatedness. If students also struggle with competence on a homework

assignment, there is a particular lack of motivation and "energization" according to SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 184). The aspect of relatedness is most important to this study as it intersects with the importance placed on community within critical pedagogical perspectives (Darder, 2011, 2012; Freire, 1970/2010; hooks, 2003).

Locus of control

Continuing the discussion of the individual and community, two further important distinctions emerge in the history of psychology regarding motivation and educational practice. First, in the 1930s, a large school of thought promoted "that in order for learning to occur, there must be response reinforcements and drive reduction. That is, a response must be followed by an incentive for there to be a change in habit strength and as subsequent increase in strength of motivation" (Weiner, 1990, p. 18). The emphasis on external rewards (i.e. grades, college acceptance, honor rolls, etc.) which currently exists in education traces its roots to the field of educational psychology 90 years ago. Second, "it was gradually learned that if reward is perceived as controlling, then it undermines future effort…reward for successful completion of an easy task is cue to the receiver of this feedback that she is low in ability, a belief that inhibits activity" (Weiner, 1990, p. 18). When the practices of school, particularly regarding grades and homework, are 1) a disguised effort to control students or 2) a poor match with aptitude of students, motivation and effort wane.

Bernard Weiner (1983) contributes a most important distinction to understanding motivation, explaining that the locus of control, where control is centered, is either "internal or external to the person" (p. 530). In large part, the students' perceptions regarding their success or failure can be described by whether they perceive that the locus of control rests within them

individually or outside their control. Related to locus of control are two other notions, stability and controllability. Stability refers to the predictability of an event. Controllability, similar to the notion of locus of control, describes how much control someone has over a situation.

Thus, the frustration students identify with respect to homework can be described by these three ideas: locus of control, stability, and controllability. The field of research regarding locus of control, however, is much larger, and beyond the scope of this study. This discussion is most pertinent with regard to how students perceive their own control and autonomy in light of homework. Specifically, "the locus of a cause is linked to esteem-related affect: We feel less shame or humiliation when failure is attributed to external rather than internal causes" (Graham & Long, 1986, p. 4). To what degree is homework satisfaction mitigated by student perceptions of how much control they have over homework in their lives? Pertinent to this topic is the discussion of joy, particularly when attributed to internal rather than external causes.

Flow. Throughout the literature discussing intrinsic motivation, references to the work of Mihaly Csíkszentmihályi (1990) abound (Pink, 2011; Robinson, 2009; Stipek & Seal, 2001). His pioneering work in the study of joy, work, and motivation led to many important discoveries about the "positive aspects" of human engagement with life. Csíkszentmihályi explains:

> We have all experienced times when, instead of being buffeted by anonymous forces, we do feel in control of our actions, masters of our own fate. On the rare occasions that it happens, we feel a sense of exhilaration, a deep sense of enjoyment that is long cherished and that becomes a landmark in memory for what life should be like. (p. 3)

Notable to this study is a discussion of what Csíkszentmihályi (1990) calls "flow," which he defines as "joy, creativity, (and) the process of total involvement with life" (p. xi). In a state

of flow, a person loses track of time because the engagement in an activity is so enjoyable and the task so equally matched to the aptitude and interest of the person, that she finds herself absorbed blissfully in this activity. In his research, Csíkszentmihályi found that people were more likely to find themselves in flow when at work, than when in leisure. Reaching flow, though, is difficult and can be rare. He notes that many obstacles prevent people from reaching flow:

> To overcome the anxieties and depressions of contemporary life, individuals must become independent of the social environment to the degree that they no longer respond exclusively in terms of its rewards and punishments. To achieve such autonomy, a person has to learn to provide rewards to herself. She has to develop the ability to find enjoyment and purpose regardless of external circumstances. (p. 16)

In a study that seeks to understand how the practice of homework affects intrinsic motivation, the theory of flow seems highly relevant. "One of the most difficult tasks for educators of adolescents is to encourage the development of self-directed learning. In order for this development to occur, adolescents must become motivated at least in part by their feelings of enjoyment while doing learning activities" (Hektner & Csíkszentmihályi , p. 4). In a state of flow, one's mind and whole self are engaged; thus, opportunity for learning is optimal in a state of flow.

Stipek and Seal (2001) posit that "research has shown again and again that the more competent kids feel academically, the more interested they are in their schoolwork, and the harder they study. In other words, competence breeds self-motivation" (p. 43). Out of flow, one is either "anxious" or "bored" (p. 74), because the skills and challenges necessary to complete a

task are either too difficult or too easy, respectively. Flow is particular to each individual, especially regarding her aptitudes and interests. When homework is assigned, it is often assigned to groups (Cooper, 2007), rather than to individuals. In this circumstance, it would be by chance that homework provides a student an opportunity to enter a state of flow. That is, there must be appropriate challenge in the assignment that can draw the individual's attention and motivation (Csíkszentmihályi & Schneider, 2000). An optimal state of flow can be in play, in work, in learning, and through challenging endeavors (Csíkszentmihályi & Larson, 1984).

In a five year longitudinal study of an ethnically and socio-economically diverse national sample of 1215 junior high and high school students, Jeremy Hunter and Mihaly Csíkszentmihályi (2003) report definitive results from the first year of the study. They found strong correlations between students who demonstrated interest with self-esteem, locus of control, and optimism. "Interested youth present a picture of vitality and well-being that stands in sharp contrast to their bored counterparts. Interested students believe in their basic worth, are confident and effective agents in the world, and are optimistic and hopeful about their future" (p. 34).

Autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Intrinsic motivation is what Daniel Pink (2011) terms "Motivation 3.0" (p. 75), and it involves one's ability to experience autonomy, develop mastery, and know the purpose of a task. "Motivation 1.0" (Pink, 2011, p.16) refers to the basic motivation of health and survival that all humans possess. This motivation guided the most primitive forms of the human species and guides the most primal of human instincts. "Motivation 2.0" (Pink, 2011, pp. 16-17) refers to extrinsic motivation by the incentives of rewards or the disincentives of punishments.

> The Motivation 2.0 approach encountered some resistance. In the 1950s, Abraham Maslow, a former student of Harry Harlow's at the University of Wisconsin, developed the field of humanistic psychology, which questioned the belief that human behavior was purely the ratlike seeking of positive stimuli and avoidance of negative stimuli. (Pink, 2011, p. 18)

Pink argues that though Motivation 2.0 has guided much of business and government thought and practice for hundreds of years, research has shown that reward and punishments may actually inhibit or kill motivation. This has far reaching implications for school, business, government, and the way society organizes itself.

> In 1999 Deci and two colleagues reanalyzed nearly three decades of studies on the subject to confirm the findings. 'Careful consideration of reward effects reported in 128 experiments lead to the conclusion that tangible rewards tend to have a substantially negative effect on intrinsic motivation,' they determined. 'When institutions –families, schools, businesses, and athletic teams, for example – focus on the short-term and opt for controlling people's behavior,' they do considerable long-term damage. (Pink, 2011, p. 37)

Pink (2009) states in his TED talk "The Puzzle of Motivation" that "traditional notions of management are great if you want compliance, but if you want engagement, self-directions works better." He makes this statement based upon analysis of experimental studies from the past 40 years which continue to show how rewards and punishments are effective at motivating individuals for small tasks, but are ineffective at motivating individuals at solving more complex problems.

This is similar to the discussion of educational theorist Alfie Kohn (1993). Namely, educational practices which seek to motivate by grades and incentives actually harm longer-term goals of education, such as instilling in students a love of learning. "People enjoy learning more when they feel they're studying of their own volition rather than because they're pressured to do so" (Stipek & Seal, 2001, p. 85). Pink (2011) claims that punishments and rewards can 1) kill motivation, 2) reduce "performance", 3) "crush creativity", 4) "crowd out good behavior", 5) "encourage cheating, shortcuts, and unethical behavior", 6) "become addictive", and 7) "foster short-term thinking" (p. 57). For this study, each of the consequences mentioned above are of concern regarding how the practice of homework affects intrinsic motivation.

What has emerged in business and research, Pink (2011) argues, is a shift in thinking and practice. Regarding social reproduction, businesses are seeking to create work cultures which promote the pursuit of the intrinsic motivation of individuals. Doing so contributes to an effective and satisfied workforce. Companies such as Google and research institutions such as MIT have demonstrated that better work and research are accomplished when people have the autonomy (personal control of time, task, and scope), the chance for mastery (ability to continue to pursue excellence on one's terms), and the purpose (knowing one's work has value and meaning to serve a greater cause). These factors of autonomy, mastery, and purpose are what shape Motivation 3.0.

Passion and aptitude. Ken Robinson (2009) describes the optimal state of living as being in one's "Element", that is "the Element is the meeting point between natural aptitude and personal passion (p. 21). A discussion of the Element is relevant to how homework affects intrinsic motivation, particularly in terms of one's vocation (Levoy, 1997) to career and path of

study. Robinson, for example, "believe[s] passionately that we are all born with tremendous natural capacities, and that we lose touch with many of them as we spend more time in the world. Ironically, one of the main reasons this happens is education. The result is that too many people never connect with their true talents and therefore don't know what they're really capable of achieving" (Robinson, 2009, p. xi).

Robinson (2009) speaks to the potential of every individual to find her Element, but acknowledges that life, society, circumstance, and disposition can affect a great deal. "All children start their school careers with sparkling imaginations, fertile minds, and a willingness to take risks with what they think" (p. 15). His TED talk (Robinson, 2006), "Changing Education Paradigms", animated by the Royal Society of Animation, famously makes this point. Robinson suggests that education is largely to blame for people's inability to connect to their life's purpose and calling to work. The limited choices of subjects, the droning lectures of teachers, and the task of homework dull the interests of students and reduce their sense of imagination to what is possible for their lives. He posits:

> Most systems of mass education came into being relatively recently – in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These systems were designed to meet the economic interests of those times – times that were dominated by the Industrial Revolution in Europe and America. Math, science, and language were essential for jobs in the industrial economies. The other big influence on education has been the academic culture of universities, which has tended to push aside any sort of activity that involves the heart, the body, the senses, and a good portion of our actual brains. The result is that school

> systems everywhere inculcate us with a very narrow view of intelligence and capacity and overvalue particular sorts of talent and ability. (Robinson, 2009, p. 13)

When education fails to value and to develop the possibility of the talent, imagination, and creativity of each individual, education reproduces a less capable workforce. "Corporate America, obsessed with short-term profits, fails to use the full talents of its employees" (Buell, 2004, p. 74). This relates to critical pedagogy because it challenges a system of education that emphasizes a very narrow curriculum of the dominant culture, which alienates and silences students and future citizen workers. Along this line, Buell reminds us that:

> We pay for the growing loss of economic opportunity in more ways than merely our hypocritical celebration of a vanquished ideal. The talents of many are neither stimulated nor challenged, at great cost not only to our economy but to the future of our democracy. (p. 89)

Environmental factors. In *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell (2008) points to numerous patterns of individual and collective successes and the specific conditions in which the successes were achieved. Namely, he believes that people succeed and thrive because of environmental factors beyond their control and direction, whether it is because they were born in a certain time, place, or family, or because their school, community, or culture has certain opportunities that others do not. Gladwell argues convincingly that those who achieve the greatest wealth, stature, and fame all have many people and circumstances in their lives to explain their successes.

> The people who stand before kings may look like they did it all by themselves. But in fact they are invariably the beneficiaries of hidden advantages and extraordinary

opportunities and cultural legacies that allow them to learn and work hard and make sense of the world in ways others cannot. (p. 19)

Discussing the work of Gladwell (2008) is meant to raise the question of school culture and how it promotes intrinsic motivation. He acknowledges that those who have achieved success in life have done so because of tremendous advantage. One of the most principle advantages that he articulates for success is time. He found that among the most successful athletes, musicians, computer programmers, lawyers, merchants, and individuals he studied, the common denominator for all of them was that they honed their respective excellence through 10,000 hours (Gladwell, 2008, p.47) of disciplined practice. For most of them, this practice involved doing what they loved. This included the Beatles playing music on stage for 10,000 hours in Hamburg, Germany before their debut in the U.S. This included Bill Gates being granted access to 10,000 hours of computer lab time as a junior high student through his school computer club. Bill Joy, cofounder of Sun Microsystems was granted access to 10,000 hours of programming time to one of the only computer time-share buildings in the world in 1971 at the University of Michigan. With the practice of homework, students may be studying hundreds of hours per year in high school, and thousands of hours through elementary, middle, and high school. Yet, this begs the question: To what effect and for what purpose is the time spent? And to what extent is their precious time, which could be utilized toward their 10,000 hours of mastery, being wasted on frivolous and mind-numbing activity?

Social Reproduction

This study employs the theoretical lens of social reproduction, as a means for understanding how the practice of homework affects the intrinsic motivation and development of

critical consciousness of students. Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (2011), in their *Schooling in Capitalist America: Education Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life* argue:

> The structure of the educational experience is admirably suited to nurturing attitudes and behavior consonant with participation in the labor force. Particularly dramatic is the statistically verifiable congruence between the personality traits conducive to proper work performance on the job and those which are rewarded with high grades in the classroom…As long as one does not question the structure of the economy itself, the current structure of schools seems eminently rational. (p. 9)

In the world and specifically in this country, there is great concern that the richer keep getting richer, while the poor keep getting poorer (see Hill, 2010; Lee & Levey, 2011; Semuels & Helfand, 2011). Jay MacLeod (1987) makes the case that "reproduction theory attempts to show how and why the United States can be depicted more accurately as the place where 'the rich get richer and the poor stay poor' than as 'the land of opportunity" (p. 7).

How reproduction theory is tied to the study of homework in a private school is not necessarily linked to questions of wealth and poverty, as it may be to questions of power (yet, it is worth noting here that within the context of critical pedagogy, wealth and power are inextricably linked). To better understand the economic dimension, Buell (2004) explains that:

> Most young Americans will not enjoy jobs with adequate salaries and benefits – let alone the opportunity to deploy skills and creativity on the job – unless some of us are willing to take bold action. We need to study less and raise a little more hell. Monitoring our kids' long hours over homework is a zero-sum strategy that will work for fewer and fewer Americans. And paradoxically, emphasizing individual homework as the key to

economic security helps reinforce the notion that individuals are at fault for their own poverty and keeps them from having the time or the inclination to participate in political action that might alleviate their poverty." (p. 78)

Bowles and Gintis (1976/2011) contend that there are striking similarities between the organization of power in schools and in society. Where students lack power to determine their curriculum and homework, workers often have little say about what type of work they do. Schools are set up to reward obedience with grades; the workplace is often set up to reward compliance with pay. Inherent in both is a system of meritocracy fueled by competition, which pits student against student for a perceived limited resource of grades (Kohn, 1999), or workers for differentiated roles, bonuses, and promotions.

The "correspondence principle" (Bowles & Gintis, 2011, p. 136) refers to corresponding ways in which schools and the capitalist economy meritocratically reward behavior. In a high school study, they correlated grade point average (GPA) with behavioral traits. They found that behavior traits of students, who conform to school rules and to teachers expectations of behavior such as "submission to authority," "temperament," and "internalized control," are rewarded in school with grades, and in work with employment. Non-conformist behavior traits of "creativity," "independence," and "aggression" are not rewarded. That is, students who exhibit independence and creativity received poorer grades than students who conform to rules. As Van Heertum (2010) states, "education clearly plays a critical role in spreading cynicism, reinforcing hegemonic ideas, reproducing current power relations, and cutting off the channels for resistance and dissent" (p. 215).

Resistance. Paul Willis (1977), in his groundbreaking critical ethnography *Learning to Labor,* found that despite the efforts of liberal English educators in the 1970s, English students were rebelling against school. He found that the lads (students) he studied never believed that school really listened to them, nor served them. Though school systems were intended and designed by well-meaning progressives to help students rise from their economic and social status, there exists a complex interplay between the students' "resistance" of the school system and the students' "reproduction" of their own learned "subordinate roles" (Willis, 1977, p. 151). In concert with this view of resistance, Darder (2002) argues:

> Given a long history of conflicts and contradictions at work in the ideological formation of institutions, seldom is domination deterministically reproduced. In other words, domination does not arise as a matter of predestination or as a fixed or immutable set of conditions. Where oppression exists are also to be found the seeds of resistance at different stages of expression. (p. 61)

In the school settings Willis studied, the students were resisting the modes of assessment and control that the school provided. What Willis (1977) found with the students in his study may be key to this study of homework, as well. The students in Willis' *Learning to Labor* thought they were resisting the dominance of the schooling culture by rebelling and breaking school rules. But, in so doing, they unconsciously chose the lives of factory work that schools were supposedly designed to overcome. Regarding homework, resistance could be evidenced when students copy assignments, plagiarize papers, and cheat on tests. Though a school may emphasize that cheating violates principles of integrity, from a student's point of view, she may be surviving the workload by resisting its pressure and dominance in her life.

For this study, most students are from middle to upper middle class backgrounds. Almost all of them will continue their education through a four-year college program. Willis (1977) notes that participation in and resistance to the school culture "most certainly smoothes their transition into work and produces appetites which manual work satisfies quite well" (p. 108). As mentioned previously, I have heard students and parents at my site complain about the incessant nature of homework over holidays, weekends, and most nights of the week. Students complain that they do not sleep and that they are perpetually stressed. How do these patterns of homework practice "smooth the transition into work" for these students? In so doing, how does homework affect the development of critical consciousness? In response, Willis insists,

> Crudely put, an employer might like a more disciplined and frightened 'lad' rather than the bright-eyed, enthusiastic conformist trying to expand the full range of his human talent. This is especially true in that sector where impermanence is part of the wage bargain: seasonal, sporadic, or casual work is likely to increase with the growth of the 'service economy.' (Willis, 1977, p. 212)

Role of education in capitalist society. "Schools prepare people for adult work roles, by socializing people to function well (and without complaint) in the hierarchical structure of the modern corporation or public office" (Bowles & Gintis, 2011, p. ix). Social reproduction theory posits that schools reproduce the conditions of society: poverty, class division, sexism, and a docile workforce that lacks creativity, initiative, and independence. This seems to be contradictory to the spirit of the American Dream, the myth of Horatio Alger, and to what Robinson (2009), Pink (2011), and Zhao (2009) claim 21st century workers will need in order

to survive and thrive. However, according to Willis (1977), the "central question to be answered in any future work is the degree to which the reproduction of labour power off the shop floor matches, changes, or throws into contradiction the cultural forms which are already there, and adequately meets, over-runs or is irrelevant to the objective physical, mental, and emotional requirements of the productive process" (p. 106).

Citing the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Buell (2004) states, "of the 51 million new jobs created by 2006, 22 million will be in the lowest-skilled category, requiring only short-term on-the-job training" (p. 75). With technology and innovation, this may change. But these statistic sounds a great deal like those Willis (1977) engaged in his context, more than three decades ago, when he wrote, "more than ever today the concrete forms of most jobs are converging into standard forms. They require very little skill or training from their incumbents, and cannot offer realistic opportunities for intrinsic satisfaction" (p. 127). In agreement with this view, the renowned linguist and social critic, Noam Chomsky (2011), asserts:

> Well, that's pretty much what the schools are like, I think: they reward discipline and obedience, and they punish independence of mind. If you happen to be a little innovative, or maybe you forgot to come to school one day because you were reading a book or something, that's a tragedy, that's a crime – because you're not supposed to think, you're supposed to obey, and just proceed through the material in whatever way they require. (Chomsky, 2011, p. 29)

What social reproduction theory affords this study is a perspective from which to better understand how schooling, and specifically homework, is contextualized in the economy. When

school reform and homework are consistently linked to competition in the global economy (The White House, 2011; Zhao, 2009), there must also be a counter to this emphasis. This is particularly so, according to Buell (2004), given that "emphasizing individual homework as the key to economic security helps reinforce the notion that individuals are at fault for their own poverty and keeps them from having the time or the inclination to participate in political action that might alleviate their poverty" (p. 78).

Education for future citizenry. In schools where the drumbeat of achievement keeps students and teachers constantly busy in the pursuit of grades and homework completion rather than learning, students and teachers miss the opportunity for a more fruitful and meaningful dialogue. Henry David Thoreau remarked "it is not enough to be busy; so are the ants. The question is: what are we busy about?" (as cited in Bennett & Kalish, 2006, p. viiii). Though school is built on a meritocratic foundation, Kravolec and Buell (2000) promote an alternative ideal:

> Genuine education is about more than producing skilled workers; it is about democratic citizenship. Democratic citizenship, for its part, goes far beyond curricular development. Education democratic citizenship involves preparing citizens to participate in active debates on urgent matters both as students and as young adults. Such participation is less likely when students have spent too many of their waking hours dominated by the demands of school, and too few trying to forge a stronger sense of their social selves, with all the possibilities and limits those selves contain." (p. 101)

Beyond the busyness of the pace of grades and homework, critical pedagogy also pushes education to focus on community building. "Progressive education, education as the practice of

freedom, enables us to confront feelings of loss and restore our sense of connection" (hooks, 2003, p. 15), which is essential to the formation of critical consciousness.

Critical Pedagogy

This study employs critical pedagogy as a theoretical lens for understanding how the practice of homework affects the development of critical consciousness in students. "A major concern of critical pedagogy is that students develop the critical capacities to reflect, critique and act to transform the conditions under which they live" (Darder, 1991, p. xvii). In this country, in this time, the question posed by Henry Giroux (2011) needs to be taken seriously: "how can a democracy survive when the school becomes one of the most anti-democratic institutions in society?" (p. xv). Students have little voice in the practice of homework (Warton, 2001), discipline (Kohn, 2006b), and grades (Pope, 2001). Students are not readily provided the opportunity to engage in school life democratically. As school time is cut and future cuts to the education budget loom, there may be greater emphasis placed on homework, at the further expense of students being able to consider a larger world. This expense is already too high when the State of California annually spends three times as much on prisons as it does on education (Robinson, 2009). In this study, there is a need to question how the practice of homework affects the development of critical consciousness. For,

> Clearly, if one wants to change the world, one should know as much as possible about how it works, how power is accumulated and challenged, and how social structures can be realigned to serve the cause of justice rather than injustice. (Brown, 1993, p. 45)

Banking concept of education. Paulo Freire (1970/2010), in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, challenges the "banking concept" of education (p. 73),that treats students as merely

empty vessels needing the deposit of knowledge from the school. In this model, "the teacher teaches and the students are taught" (p. 73). Students lose interest when they find few opportunities to develop and express their social agency and voice.

> The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable…His task is to 'fill' the students with the contents of his narration – contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance. Words are emptied of their concreteness and become a hollow, alienated, and alienating verbosity. (Freire, 1970/2010, p. 71)

In the banking concept of education, the curriculum values the perspective of those in power or the "oppressor" (p.47) that reinforces a reality of poor and rich in society. Instead, Freire offers a different model for education through a "problem-posing" (p. 85) curriculum. In this, student voice is valued and dialogue between teacher and student is both the starting point and central component to on-going educational practice. From this dialogue, students begin an intrinsically motivated pursuit of knowing and learning in relationship and partnership with their teacher, classmates, community, and school. From such partnership, teachers and students are the "subject(s)" of the learning (p. 73).

Hegemony. Antonia Darder (1991), in *Culture and Power in the Classroom,* asserts that "critical pedagogy incorporates Gramsci's (1971) view that educators need to understand how the dominant worldview and its social practices are produced in order to shatter the mystification of the existing power relationships and social arrangements that sustain them" (p. 87). Further, she argues that Gramsci's notion of "commonsense" can assist educators to critically rethink

commonplace practices within education—such as homework—and unveil the hidden curriculum that, wittingly or unwittingly, perpetuates asymmetrical relations of power.

Peter McLaren (2009) describes the reality of this asymmetrical culture of power as "hegemony" that is maintained "not by the sheer exercise of force but primarily through consensual social practices, social forms, and social structures produced in specific sites" (p. 67). These "sites" could be formal and informal places of education such as schools and media, respectively. The hegemonic process that is of particular concern to this study is the commonsensical practice of homework in schools today. Teachers have inordinate control over students' lives outside of the school day, in a variety of ways. This occurs, for, example, when 1) parents support the practice of homework, and 2) students pursue grades and college admissions. Teachers also have control over students' lives in the practice of homework when 1) parents support school disciplinary policies of homework such as detention, forced study hall, and grade deflation for homework not handed in and 2) students accede to these consequences. In schools that wield so much control over students, Jackson (2001) admonishes an education system that "exert[s] power and control over our children, and has abdicated its responsibility to guide, nurture, and protect" (p. vii).

Similarly, bell hooks (2003) challenges the "conventional dominator classroom… where students are simply given material to learn by rote and regurgitate" (p. 8). She hopes for schools that promote critical thinking, challenge "ideologies of domination," and help students to "expand their critical consciousness" (hooks, 2003, p. 8). When students are not valued or are "perceived as having no rights," they perceive that "their success depends upon their capacity to obey" (hooks, 2003, p. 86). In this setting, hooks (2003) maintains that students do not question

authority in schools. They have little power as they are controlled "personally, bureaucratically, and technically" (Goodman, 1992, p. 77) by teacher and parent supervisors, school rules, and school social practices, respectively.

Moreover, Maria Eulina P. de Carvalho (2001) argues that when schools promote homework, they are actually extending the reach of the dominant culture into the lives, homes, and families of the students. "Homework, academic learning, family, and school cannot be considered apart from the power relations that shape social life" (p. 132).

Agency. Paulo Freire (1970/2010) insists that critical pedagogy is "a pedagogy which must be forged with, not for, the oppressed in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity" (p. 48). Approaching the topic of homework, critical pedagogy necessitates that the voices of students (arguably, the oppressed in this context) be a part of the educational debate. I say "arguably" oppressed because there may be a host of educators who would argue that there is either 1) no one who is oppressed by the practice of homework or that 2) the term "oppressed" is too strong a term. Nevertheless, many researchers (see Buell, 2004; Kohn, 2006a; Kralovec & Buell, 2000; Pope, 2001; Warton, 2001) would readily contend that those who are suffering most from the practice of homework are the students. Concerning agency, Van Heertum (2010) asserts that "what Freire recognized and struggled for his whole life was the belief that knowledge and hope could be brought together in a project of individual and collective emancipation from the sources of oppression and exploitation and toward a more just and equitable world" (p. 211).

Critical consciousness. The educational goal for critical pedagogues is the development of critical consciousness, and particularly of students from oppressed communities (Darder,

1991, 2002, 2012; Freire, 1970/2010). Darder (1991) describes this development of critical consciousness (or conscientization) in education as "the process by which students – not as recipients of knowledge, but as knowing subjects – achieve a deepening awareness of the sociopolitical and economic realities that shape their lives and their capacity to recreate them" (p. 95). Critical consciousness is important for understanding the degree students are aware of the effects homework has on their lives, their worldview, and their ability to engage the world.

Valerie Miller (2002) discusses four levels of critical consciousness: 1) passive (subordinate), 2) questioning, 3) analytical, 4) active-critical consciousness (action).
At odds with the development of critical consciousness is the dominant discourse, which Peter McLaren (2009) describes, borrowing heavily from Michel Foucault, as "'regimes of truth,' as general economies of power/knowledge, or as multiple forms of constraint. In a classroom setting, dominant educational discourses determine what books we may use, what classroom approaches we should employ,…and what values and beliefs we should transmit to our students" (p. 73). In this context, the dominant discourse refers to prevailing assumptions, accepted as commonsense, that homework is essential to learning, akin to academic excellence, and a precursor to a fully productive life.

Particular to adolescent development, Elena Mustakova-Possardt (2004) identifies a developmental model of an education for critical consciousness, composed of three distinct stages of development: pre-critical consciousness, transitional critical consciousness, and critical consciousness (p. 258). Throughout these three stages, a person can develop from a self-focused approach in life to an "historical and global vision" (p. 258). Her research offers an understanding of a period typical to adolescent development, namely transitional critical

consciousness. This period is "marked by a growing critical discernment and the growing ability to problematize various aspects of human reality" (p. 257). Mustakova-Possardt (2004) characterizes this important stage of development as follows:

> The central educationally relevant tensions of this period derive from the need to facilitate the dominance of a moral sense of responsibility and agency over fear, helplessness and skepticism; empathy, relatedness and permeability to meaningful social relationships over self-protective compartmentalization, closedness and prejudice; larger frames of reference, critical discernment, self-reflection and a larger life purpose over compartmentalizing contradiction, negative criticism and short-term, pragmatic and self-referential goals. (p. 258)

Homework practice establishes the prevalence of the "short-term, pragmatic and self-referential goals" to the exclusion of establishing "larger frames of reference" (p. 258). Students become so focused on the task of homework in pursuit of points and grades that they become unable to see a larger world, let alone their particular purpose and vocation within that world. Because of the "fear, helplessness, and skepticism" students endure with homework, they suffer from stress, panic, and frustration (p. 258). They pursue grades with the promise of college, rather than learning for the sake of learning, their life vocation, and "developing (their) human potential" (p. 260).

Isolation and disengagement. Homework is largely done in isolation, not in an atmosphere of dialogue. This isolation and disengagement of students is fundamentally anti-thetical to the dialogical underpinnings of critical pedagogy. Rather, in an emancipatory classroom "the student is an active agent in his or her own learning and uses newly and

collaboratively constructed knowledge to identify and act to solve problems and injustice in the world" (Kumagai & Lypson, 2009, p. 784). Giroux (2009) argues that disengagement is the product of consumer culture.

> Ardent consumers and disengaged citizens provide fodder for a growing cynicism and depoliticization of public life at a time when there is an increasing awareness not just of corporate corruption, financial mismanagement, and systemic greed, but also of the recognition that a democracy of critical citizens is being replaced quickly by a democracy of consumers. (Giroux, 2009, p. 12)

Moreover, Kumagai and Lypson (2009) contend that the effort to promote social justice:

> involves not the fulfillment of a competency as some sort of educational nirvana, but the development of an orientation – a critical consciousness….The development of critical consciousness involves a reflective awareness of the differences in power and privilege and the inequities that are embedded in social relationships…and leads to engaged discourse, collaborative problem-solving, and a 'rehumanization' [Freire, 1970/2010] of human relationships. (pp. 782-783)

Contributing to the isolation is what is known as "horizontal violence- blaming peers for the social reality of their lives" (Carlson, Engebretson, & Chamberlain, 2006, p. 837). When persons act out against others like them who are oppressed, they pursue a horizontal violence toward their peers as a means of a perceived justified vengeance. This is similar to when student pressure rises around times of tests and end-of-term exams, so do the incidences of cheating, and especially, the instances of students "ratting out" other students for cheating. This behavior is

perpetuated by a dichotomous, "fixed mindset" (Dweck, 2006) which Yeager, Trzesniewski, Tirri, Nokelainen, & Dweck (2011) explain in the following way:

> …adolescents who construe their social world in terms of good people and bad people can, after conflict or victimization, enter a cycle of hatred and shame that leads to a desire for vengeance, particularly when they believe that thoughts of revenge will make them feel better about themselves. However…a more positive cycle of thoughts, feelings, and desires can be fostered by teaching adolescents to view themselves and peers as works in progress rather than as finished products. (p. 1104)

Dialogue. The key to the development of critical consciousness in critical pedagogy is dialogue, where student voices are heard and their actions are taken seriously in the process of their education (Darder, 1991, 2002, 2011, 2012). Dialogue is an essential cornerstone of Paulo Freire's (1970/2010) pedagogy, where he describes dialogue as:

> the encounter between [people], mediated by the world, in order to name the world. Hence, dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those do not wish this naming – between those who deny others the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them…If it is in speaking their word that people, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human beings. (p. 88)

Dialogue is not a cursory or paternalistic endeavor in which students are merely solicited for conversation only to have their views dismissed. It is neither an endeavor where teachers or administrators remain fixed, unchanged, and unmoved by a process of dialogue with students. All parties involved in a dialogue are moved, shaped, and transformed by the process. As Darder

(1991) emphasizes "for critical educators, dialogue is never perceived as a mere technique to be utilized for appropriating students' affections or obedience. Instead, it is perceived as an educational strategy committed to the development of their critical consciousness" (p. 94). Darder, Baltodano, and Torres (2009) emphasize that "dialogue…speaks to an emancipatory educational process that is above all committed to the empowerment of students through challenging the dominant educational discourse and illuminating the right and freedom of students to become subjects of their world" (p. 13).

Why dialogue is important to critical pedagogy is that it is not only about reflection and conscientization, but also about social action and creating community (Darder, 2002; hooks, 2003). Darder (2002) makes this point by saying "through dialogical relationships, students learn to build learning communities in which they freely give voice to their thoughts, ideas, and perceptions about what they know and what they are attempting to understand, always within the larger political project of emancipation" (p. 103).

Where this notion is important to this study is that student voice will be engaged earnestly from a power-sharing and policy-shaping perspective. That is, the school recognizes that homework is a major concern for the reasons noted earlier. In this study, the perceptions and discussions with students is not merely to gain insight to their experiences, but to forge new understandings and homework policy with them. It is important to note that although dialogue is a most necessary aspect of a problem-posing curriculum, challenges within students may exist as well. Darder (2002) cautions, "students are products of an educational system that promotes conformity to the values of the dominant group and restricts the voices of subordinate groups" (p. 221).

Although in the preceding quote, Darder is referring to the ways in which students of color are subordinated and silenced, the caution is also appropriate to understanding how students may approach the topic of homework from a commonsensical acceptance of an institutional perspective, which may result in their resistance to change. Hence, it is of foremost concern that educators who wish to truly incorporate the perspectives of students make an earnest effort, through the process of dialogue, to be attentive to student voice in all aspects of their practice, including the use of homework in their classroom. Along these lines Darder (2011) asserts:

> A student's ability to participate and enter into dialogue within the classroom and, as a result, participate in a social democratic process in the world is also critically connected to the development of voice – that is, voice as it relates to the variety of ways by which students actively participate in dialogue and attempt to make themselves heard and understood, as well as the manner in which they define themselves as social beings. (p. 34)

Student Voice in the Research of Homework

Student voice has re-emerged as a powerful and appropriate data-gathering tool for shaping policy by educators (Cook-Sather, 2009, 2010a, 2010b; Mitra, 2004; Noguera, 2007; Osberg, Pope, & Galloway, 2006). Hence, the methodology of this study incorporates student voice (Cook-Sather, 2009, 2010a, 2010b; Mitra, 2004; Noguera, 2007; Osberg, Pope, & Galloway, 2006), through using focus groups and student surveys to access their views on homework. As previously stated, although homework is a practice emphasized in most schools throughout the United States, seldom are the views of students in maintaining, promoting, and

enforcing homework incorporated (Pope, 2001; Warton, 2001). Despite the fact that students are the people most affected by the stress and duty of nightly homework, they have had little input in shaping homework policy.

Significance of Student Voice

At Stanford University, Stressed-Out Students (SOS) is a project which gathers representatives from selected schools to participate in an annual workshop where students and teachers co-design their "blueprint for change" (Osberg, Pope, & Galloway, 2006, p. 330). A commitment to listening to students is a requirement for participation in the program. In a study of the project conducted by Osberg, Pope, & Galloway (2006), students from three different schools were individually selected to be part of a school site reform team with teachers and parents. They note that "Regardless of the motivation behind the selection process, it did seem to matter to each of the student stakeholders we interviewed that she was individually invited to be a member of the team" (p. 338). All three schools in the study surveyed the entire student body and then had students participate with faculty and parent representatives to design change about schedules for classes and exams and in designing homework policy. The students who were better prepared by training and who were more involved in the process found the work more satisfying. As recommendation to future research, this study suggests that important consideration be given to factors of the age, number, training, and messages of support sent to student participants.

> Rather than asking what would happen if students were treated as serious members of the school community, we wonder: How can schools involve students in the introduction

and implementation of school reform in ways that best serve them as learner and potential leaders?" (p. 343)

Alison Cook-Sather (2010b) argues that "only students can tell educators what it feels like to experience [the] conditions" (p. 43) of school. In soliciting student voice, she recommends that educators take students seriously in how they solicit student feedback and in how they respond. Student voice is best solicited when students are well-prepared to trust, to dialogue, and to expect realistic feedback from the adults listening. Student voice, for Cook-Sather, is not simply indulging students to corroborate a position of the researcher or the school, but to engage a student perspective earnestly and with hope toward a "goal of equalizing access" (p. 44) to power for students and educators. "No matter what students feel, and whether the adults agree, it is a real feeling for students, and educators must work with them as all participants in the conversation move beyond their limited perspectives" (p. 45).

Cook-Sather (2010a) has founded programs at Bryn Mawr College to engage student voice in teacher training of secondary students and to improve college classes. These programs are efforts to engage students more readily in the teaching and learning process. They are in response to other educational settings where "student responsibility is constructed as students doing what adults tell them to do and absorbing what adults have to offer. Student accountability here means compliance and acceptance: adherence to what is prescribed, asked, or offered by the adults in charge" (p. 555).

Of particular interest is a program she developed called "Teaching and Learning Together (TLT)" (p. 557), where preservice teachers trained at Bryn Mawr consult with high school students via weekly emails and conversations about improving their teaching. Though Cook-

Sather acknowledges that "there is a prevalent assumption that young people are neither able to offer nor interested in offering insights about teaching and learning" (p. 557), what TLT has evidenced is that students are more than willing to contribute insight; and preservice teachers develop as better teachers because of this interaction. Key to this effort is recruiting a "diverse group" (p. 557) of students representative of different gender, track assignment, and background to best inform teachers. To this point, one of her TLT students remarked "we don't often get the chance to give the constructive criticism that so many of us have thoughts on" (p. 568).

Discussing the TLT program, Cook-Sather (2009) believes that by including student voice, schools improve. For best practice in the incorporation of student voice, she suggests making classroom and school-wide efforts in scheduling, soliciting many voices, and providing frequent opportunities for students to share their insights. Encouraging engagement with student voice through these programs "has the potential to mitigate structures and practices that generate resistance, cynicism, isolation, mistrust, and confusion and replace them with learning communities" (p. 571).

Student Perspectives, If Ignored

The resistance, cynicism, isolation, mistrust, and confusion to which she refers might stem from educators and educational policies that disregard student perspective. Though the journal article is titled "Student perspectives on homework", Jan Wilson and John Rhodes (2010), re-emphasize prevailing thinking that homework is necessary and that homework is not well-received by students when it is "busy work" (p. 356). In a survey study of homework among 136 freshman high school students, the study showed that 69% of students find homework "meaningful and that it reinforces concepts learned in class" (p. 354). Yet, "only

39% reported completing their homework frequently" (p.351). Also, 84% of the students find homework boring and 87% of students believe teachers assign too much homework. The study concludes by stating, "students need to realize that homework can help them succeed academically and intellectually" (p. 356). The conclusion includes recommendations for teachers on how to make the practice of homework work better, but does little to address the survey results about boring homework, which is assigned too frequently and completed too infrequently.

In an interview conducted by Ken Robinson (2009), Mick Fleetwood of the band *Fleetwood Mac* tells him:

> I had great friends, but I just wasn't happy. I was aware of being squeezed out. I was suffering. I had no sense of what I was supposed to be because everything academic was a total failure, and I had no other reference points. (p. 27)

Yet, these words could have been the voice of a child from SOS, TLT, or from the Wilson & Rhodes (2010) study mentioned above. I say this because Fleetwood expresses what may be a prevalent sentiment amongst high school students. Namely, schools alienate students because schools do not adequately provide the nurturing environment necessary to address effectively each student's individual needs.

Robinson (2009) discusses the importance of an educational system that addresses the uniqueness of each individual. In this, schools help students best when they can help students foster a passion, talent, and aptitude for a particular area of interest. What is of concern to him is that he believes "young children are wonderfully confident in their own imaginations. Most of us lose this confidence as we grow up" (p. xi). He argues schooling silences students' voices,

confidence, and creativity, by demanding performance through a narrow set of skills, subjects, and tests.

Student Voice and School Reform

Dana L. Mitra (2004) situates the re-emergence of the "student voice" (p. 651) movement in a school reform effort, rather than a student "rights and empowerment" (p. 652) movement as it was framed in the 1960s and 1970s. She states that "in its present form, student voice activities range from schools gathering information from students through focus groups and surveys to students working alongside teachers to develop and implement strategies for school improvement" (p. 652). For Mitra, the re-emergence of a focus on student voice in education concerns "youth development" (p. 651), in light of the ability of schools and educators to promote the "agency, belonging, and competence" (p. 651) of their students. Though belonging and competence are worthy goals, for the purpose of this study, Mitra's discussion of agency is most salient . "Agency in a youth development context indicates the ability to exert influence and power in a given situation" (p. 662). This involves not only providing opportunity for student voice to be heard, but a focus on "growing leadership" (p. 667) and helping students develop "new identities as change makers" (p. 664). Along the same vein, Denise Pope (2001) affirms, "attempting to hear the youths' perspectives seems vital if we are to achieve a sense of community in our schools and if we aspire to create conditions conducive to student growth" (p. xiii). To hear student voices and perspectives and to help promote student agency, the size of a school or district provide different challenges for how best to engage students.

Quantitative Student Voice

In larger contexts such as districts, states, and countries, how to listen to student voice is a more complex process. Surveying 3,300 Dutch secondary students, Meijer (2007) measured stress in students by the dependent variables of 1) workload they experienced and 2) how they perceived a lack of teacher guidance. Independent variables for students in the study included 1) "fear of failure" (p. 29); 2) cognitive ability, as measured by a Dutch cross-curricular test known as the CCST; 3) amount of effort made; and 4) number of tests given to students in a period of time. In the study, Meijer also received over 300 responses to a teacher survey which self-identified teaching styles and demographic information such as age and amount of teacher experience. What he found was that "high anxiety levels of students are associated with high levels of workload and high levels of lack of teacher guidance" (p. 30). Interestingly, he found that students with higher cognitive ability experienced less stress and perceived less lack of teacher support. Students with lower cognitive ability experienced stress, but did not perceive that they had less support from teachers. Most curious in this study is the report that "the only variable on the teacher level which showed an association with student stress was teacher age" (p. 32). His analysis of this suggested that older teachers may be more coercive and, therefore, less appealing to students. Effort by students in this study also correlated positively with workload, but negatively if students perceived "a lack of teacher guidance" (p. 33). From this study, Meijer concludes that student stress is best addressed by educators who are able to understand individual student needs regarding their fear of failure and teacher guidance, in light of each student's cognitive ability.

Though Meijer (2007) sought to understand stress for secondary students throughout an entire country, his conclusion is reminiscent of Robinson (2009). That is, schools must address individual student needs. Whether the sample is one or 3,300, what remains is a pattern that listening to student voice is necessary and yields an important common finding: school culture must not ignore individuals.

Advocate for Students

As an advocate for students, especially students in difficult circumstances, Pedro Noguera (2007) states "students do put forward practical, common sense insights into why certain practices are ineffective, and why others should be considered" (p. 206). He believes that students should be listened to primarily because students "bear the brunt of our schools' failures" (p. 206). From a study of 10 high schools and 150 students in the Boston area, he concluded "students had a clear sense of how teaching could be improved" (p. 207). The students believed teaching could be improved by the teacher's 1) organization, 2) patience, 3) command of the material, 4) respect for students, and 5) promotion of a learning environment free from disruption. Noguera contends that listening to students should be a regular practice in education, particularly if listening by the adults is sincere. He encourages adults to listen to all types of students, and not just the student leaders "hand-picked by the adults because they occupy a leadership role in the school" (p. 220). Noguera concedes that listening to student voice has little chance of success in school reform in schools where "top-down" administrators prevail. Pope (2001) echoes Noguera's view on the importance of listening to the needs of students.

> Only by working closely with the high school students and by listening to their needs, frustrations, and desires may we begin to pursue answers to the important questions

> raised here. Without their voices, we are missing a key component of any conversation on school success. (p. 175).

In a time when the topics of school reform and homework reform are in the news (see Anderson, 2011; Mathews, 2011; Paul, 2011), schools have the challenge to listen to student voices and develop policies with students, mindful of each student's needs (Darder, 1991, 2002, 2011, 2012; Noguera, 2007; Pope, 2001; Warton, 2001; Xu, 2004). As Darder (2002) contends, "this is particularly so when students who experience tremendous tensions owing to conflicting values and beliefs between the classroom curriculum and their daily lives are silenced by the traditional values and expectations of…schooling" (p. 67).

Conclusion

Chapter Three explored the significant literature related to the study's conceptual framework, including major writers in the fields of intrinsic motivation, critical pedagogy, and social reproduction. Important to this study is the perspective of students, and so the chapter ends with a discussion of student voice. The latter discussion helps to lay the ground for Chapter Four, where the specific methodology and research design for the study will be discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR:

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter will discuss how the study was conducted utilizing a mixed methods approach in an all-female, Catholic, college preparatory high school. To address issues of intrinsic motivation and critical consciousness, I conducted a study of homework with high school students using student surveys and focus groups at the school site. The procedures for the survey and focus groups will be described and rationale for the design will be provided. Analysis of survey data will be discussed to provide a better sense of the student demographic, from which the focus group participants emerged.

Research Questions

The two overarching research questions of the study are:

1) What are the perceptions of high school students on how homework affects their stress and their intrinsic motivation to learn?
2) When students have the opportunity to enter into dialogue about the practice of homework, how does it impact the development of their critical consciousness?

Subsequent Questions. Based on the two overarching research questions related to intrinsic motivation and development of critical consciousness driving this study, as mentioned earlier, more specific research questions for this study include:

a) What are the major concerns expressed by students about the impact of homework on their everyday lives at school and at home?

b) What kinds of impressions, suggestions, or recommendations do high school students offer about the practice of homework and its effectiveness (or non-effectiveness) to their learning process?

Rationale for the Methodology

> The most debilitating and effective mythology about educational research is a binary distinction: between qualitative 'critical work' which has been portrayed as scientifically 'soft,' politically correct and ideological by the press, politicians, and educational bureaucrats – and empirical, quantitative scientific research, which is presented as unbiased, truthful and the sole grounds for rational policy formation. (Luke, 2010, p. 178)

Student perspectives about homework are largely absent from research on homework (Warton, 2001), despite the fact that students are most affected by the practice of homework. In response to this dearth in the research and, thus, to engage student voice about the impact of homework on their lives and learning, this study employed a mixed methods approach. A mixed methods approach includes both quantitative and qualitative data in order to "understand a phenomenon more fully than is possible using either quantitative or qualitative methods alone" (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 462). As such, a voluntary school-wide survey of students about homework was conducted, followed by three sets of two focus groups to triangulate the data. As L. R. Gay, Geoffrey E. Mills, and Peter Airasian (2009) explain, "triangulation is the process of using multiple methods, data collection strategies, and data sources to obtain a more complete picture of what is being studied and to cross-check information" (p. 377).

At this school site and at the time of the study, there were 418 students. There were between 79 and 125 students in each of the four grade levels. Each grade level was distinct by age, coursework, and life experiences of students that have shaped them. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009) emphasize "for smaller populations, say, *N*=100 or fewer, there is little point in sampling; survey the entire population. If the population size is around 500 (give or take 100), 50% should be sampled" (p. 133). In this case, I decided to sample the entire school in the survey (*N*=418) because of the sizes of the grade level subsets.

Quantitative. To understand the broader context of homework at the site, I conducted surveys of students using an online survey software, Qualtrics™, which the school had license to operate. This survey software helped our school during its accreditation process to assess perceptions of our students, faculty, parents, and alumnae. The response rate was most effective for students when they were given class time to complete the survey. All students had access to laptops and wireless internet on campus, and all students took classes in English. The survey, then, was conducted as a voluntary student online survey at school, over two days, during English classes in early Spring 2012. Because the study was conducted through Loyola Marymount University, the Qualtrics™ account of the university was utilized. The survey responses provided 1) a collective portrait of student perception about homework, both quantitatively and qualitatively, and 2) a basis for validating and discussing the responses with student focus groups as a segue for dialogue about homework.

Qualitative. After the survey, I engaged students in critical dialogue (Darder, 2002; Freire, 1970/2010). In three sets of focus groups of 6-8 students each, I posed the problem (Freire, 1970/2010) of homework. Through a discussion driven by students, I sought to "talk

little, [and] listen a lot" (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 377) to student voice. Each of the three focus groups met twice. In an effort to build trust in the first meeting, students discussed the perspectives demonstrated by the school wide survey results. As J. Amos Hatch (2002) posits, "in the interpretive analysis model, meanings are negotiated with participants in an effort to involve them as co-constructors of research findings" (p. 198). In the second focus group meeting, students were asked to share more of their perspective and experience regarding homework, as well as their impressions, suggestions, and recommendations regarding homework. The second focus group was intended to provide students opportunity to engage more critically and deeply with issues of homework and its impact to their lives, in ways that might reveal some understanding about the development of critical consciousness among the participants.

Students who participated in the focus groups were comprised of volunteers and students who were specifically invited to participate. I chose a purposive sampling because it is believed "to be representative of a given sample" (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p.134). The students in the focus groups were also a qualitative sample wherein "a small number of individuals for a study…chosen will be good key informants…who will contribute to the researcher's understanding of a given phenomenon" (p. 135). Lastly, as Mildred L. Patten (2002) notes, "trying to understand participants from their perspective requires the researcher to bring an open mind to the research setting. Thus, hypotheses are usually an inappropriate basis for qualitative research" (p. 29). And although I brought an understanding and perspective based on my past experiences and the research about homework, I also had a deeper interest in being open to what the process of student survey, and particularly student dialogue, yielded about homework with

respect to intrinsic motivation and critical consciousness at the school site and in research in general.

Duration of study. The survey and focus groups were conducted over 27 days in March 2012. The time was chosen because 1) there was a consistent set of four weeks without interruption of holiday, AP exams, or end of term exams, 2) four weeks allowed time for six focus group meetings to occur on shortened school days at 1:15pm for students with athletic and extra-curricular commitments, and 3) the spacing between the student survey and the first and second focus group could be minimized, allowing students in the focus groups to remain committed to the study. The range of time between the first and second focus group for each of the three groups was between nine and 13 days.

Setting. This study was approved by the Loyola Marymount University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and my dissertation committee. The study was conducted at an all-female Catholic college preparatory high school for grades 9-12. The principal of the school approved access to the site for this study. I chose the site because I served on the administration at this school, in a capacity to address concerns of students, parents, and faculty in the structure and pace of learning in the school. The students at this school are similar to the students that Pope (2001) and Levine (2008) describe. Namely, students here are highly motivated students from affluent and well-educated families, with parents pressuring success and with resonant stress in this pursuit. This school serves students from middle to middle-high socioeconomic backgrounds. Though local public high schools rank as some of the best in the district, parents choose to send their students to this school and pay the $12,000 per year tuition. Most (68%) of the students classify themselves as White, with the rest of the students classifying themselves as

Hispanic, Asian, African-American, Filipina, or Native American. Each graduate is expected to "persevere in the face of adversity or failure" and to "achieve and maintain physical well-being through a healthy lifestyle" (Parent/Student Handbook, 2010-2011, p.4). Though the school was an all-female, Catholic high school, gender and faith were not aspects interrogated in this study. The focus of this study was to engage high school student perception about homework, through survey and focus group dialogues.

Role of Researcher. I have worked at this school for ten years. For the last six, I have served as the Assistant Principal for Student Life. In my capacity as teacher and administrator, I have also built trust with students, faculty, and parents. I approach my job understanding that "instructors are expected to facilitate exchanges rather than lecture, to stimulate critical reflection and critical analysis of personal assumptions, biases, values, and perspectives" (Kumagai & Lypson, 2009, p. 784).

In 2011, when I screened the film *Race to Nowhere* at our school, I spent the next days listening to students in formal student council meetings and informally at lunch recess. Also, I was on the phone repeatedly, taking calls from parents concerned about their children, the stresses their children faced, and the amounts of homework their children struggle to complete. In the year since the film was shown, student stress over the quantity of homework they receive has continued to be a main topic in student government meetings, faculty meetings, and parent guild meetings, all of which I attend and in which I participate. From our recent accreditation work, homework emerged as a topic of considerable concern for students, parents, and faculty, yet there seems little clarity among faculty about how to proceed with this concern. This study helped inform this discussion and future policy decisions regarding homework practice.

Procedures

Student survey. All students in the school were contacted through a letter in homeroom (see Appendix F) inviting them to participate in the study. If they were able to participate, they had to return a completed Informed Consent/Assent Form from Loyola Marymount University (see Appendix G). As Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009) note, "the cover letter should explain the purpose of the study, emphasizing its importance and significance" (p. 181). After students signed up, I modified a comma separated value (CSV) file generated by the school to include only the students with permission to participate in the study.

Students accessed the survey in their English classes through an anonymous link sent to their school email. Emails were sent through Qualtrics™ through the CSV file. The survey results remained anonymous through construction of the survey, wherein identifying name and email were deleted once the survey was completed by each student. At the beginning of the survey, directions were given encouraging students to answer honestly and not to answer questions with which they were uncomfortable. Students who did not participate in the survey had study time or an alternative, optional writing assignment provided by their teachers. There was no compensation for completing the surveys.

The 40 question student survey (see Appendix A) was a set of Likert scale and free response questions focused on homework, homework experience, and intrinsic motivation. The survey included eight demographic questions for grade level, homework time (day and week), sleep (weekday and weekend night), exercise, GPA, and percentage of homework graded. The survey included 28 Likert style questions, including an amalgam of questions from three student homework surveys previously administered to adolescent and elementary students (Katz, Kaplan,

& Buzukashvily, 2011; Xu, 2005, 2010), with responses ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

A Likert scale is an "attitude scale…that measures what an individual believes, perceives, or feels about self, others, activities, institutions, or situations" (Gay, et al, p. 151). A Likert scale was chosen to measure student perception because 1) a Likert scale shows directionality, not simply polarity of attitudes, and 2) the survey was constructed with 21 previously administered Likert scale survey questions concerning homework from three previous studies (Katz, et al., 2011; Xu, 2005, 2010). Thirty-six of the 40 survey questions measured quantitative response, and four questions were open response. The four open response questions which concluded the survey were: 1) The best thing about Homework is…, 2) The problem with Homework is… 3) If I didn't have homework, I…, 4) If I could tell my teachers one thing about homework I would want them to know…

The responses to all the questions were tallied by Qualtrics™ and reports were generated. Tests for Cronbach's Alpha for "internal consistency reliability" (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 161) are discussed below.

Teacher Utilization. Four questions (Appendix A, Survey Questions 8-11) were asked to assess student perception of teacher utilization of homework, taken from a previous study (Xu, 2010). When one question was removed, Q8 "How much of your homework is discussed in class?", these questions had high reliability ($\alpha = .642$). From these remaining three questions (homework is checked, collected, graded), a composite of Teacher Utilization was run in order to complete a Pearson's Correlation.

Motivation. Five questions (Appendix A, Survey Questions 22-26) were asked to assess student perception of their motivation to do homework, taken from a previous study (Katz et al., 2011). These questions had high reliability (α= .831). From these questions, a composite of Motivation was run in order to complete a Pearson's Correlation.

Homework Purpose. Eight questions (Appendix A, Survey Questions 13-17 and 27-29) were asked to assess student perception of the purpose of homework, and were taken from a previous study (Xu, 2010). These questions had high reliability (α= .867). From these questions, a composite of Homework Purpose was run to complete a Pearson's Correlation.

Coding. The four-point Likert scale questions (Appendix A, Questions 8-11) about teacher utilization were scored on a zero through three scale (e.g. None = 0, Some = 1, Most = 2, All = 3). The five-point Likert scale questions (Appendix A, Questions 13-36) were scored on a one through five scale (e.g. Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Disagree and Agree = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly Agree = 5). For a range in a free response answer, the average score of the range was recorded. For responses that were blank (e.g. GPA), answers were coded as blank, not zero. GPA was coded to two decimal places (e.g. 3.66).

Focus groups. At the end of the student survey, the instructions for the English teacher (see Appendix C) administering the survey informed students that there would be after school meetings (focus groups) to discuss the survey and the practice of homework at school. Interested students were directed to sign up in the front office. In the past, when the school needed student help, announcements coupled with signups in the front administrative office proved to be successful. A week after the survey was completed by all English classes, I posted announcements (see Appendix D) in the daily homeroom bulletin and via email reminding

students of the signups for the meetings being held to discuss homework. Signups listed three groups with two dates each (see Appendix E). Instructions above the signups described the time commitment and focus of the meetings. Once 15 students (five for each of the three groups) had signed up to be involved, I worked with the Assistant Principal for Academics at the site to ensure that the focus groups were representative of different abilities, ages, involvement, and ethnicities. Where groups were weighted too heavily to one demographic, I purposively invited three additional students to participate in each particular group. As Mildred L. Patten (2002) states, "the use of purposively selected participants requires the researcher to have access to particular types of participants who are especially likely to help in gaining an understanding of a phenomenon" (p. 29). In this study, I sought a representative sample of student voice by age, ethnicity, and academic achievement, who were interested and comfortable to dialogue about homework.

The focus groups were designed for students to dialogue about homework and to verify the survey data. I formed three student focus groups of 6-8 students each. Each focus group (A, B, C) met twice for 75 minutes at a time after school in the school conference room. The first focus groups (A1, B1, C1) discussed the quantitative survey results (Q1-36) in light of homework and intrinsic motivation. The second focus groups (A2, B2, C2) discussed the qualitative survey results (Q37-Q40) to critically evaluate the purpose and value of homework, in light of the development of critical consciousness. Approximately the first 15 minutes of each focus group was dedicated to a quiet reading of the student survey results before discussion began.

I asked students to keep the focus group discussions confidential, to allow students to feel safe to disclose their ideas, beliefs, and experiences. In this setting, confidentiality is frequently asked and honored by students, when they attend retreats or within classroom discussions. Confidentiality may also have allowed the other focus groups to develop their own discussions. The focus groups were scheduled on days where the school day ends at 1:15pm, so that the focus groups would not overburden busy or tired students, who may also have had sports and extra-curricular involvement. I provided light snacks and beverages, and adhered to student requests for snacks in the second set of focus groups (e.g. more chocolate, please). Each focus group began with the same prompt of rationale and was guided by the same three questions (see Appendix B). However, my approach to focus group dialogues was guided organically, similar to the manner in which Darder (2002) encourages purposeful openness in her dialogue with students:

> How do we engage young students in critical dialogue? I do plan activities purposely, but I have found that the most interesting dialogues have emerged from learning experiences initiated by my students. Practicing critical pedagogy with young students is a difficult task because I must try to facilitate authentic dialogue based on issues that are relevant to my students. This way of teaching is almost always more rewarding, although more demanding, than following a prescribed curriculum. I have discovered that I must be on the lookout for golden opportunities, instances when a student might say or do something that reflects a belief or value related to questions of social justice. (p. 169)

The focus groups were audio recorded with a digital voice recorder provided by the school. In each focus group, I also had a backup recorder and extra batteries in case one recorder

or battery failed. Immediately following each focus group, I downloaded the audio recording to my personal laptop which was password protected. The audio recordings were transcribed in Microsoft Word and verified for accuracy. Transcripts were also stored on my password protected personal laptop computer. I made one CD copy of each recording and transcript, labeled by date and group, which were stored in my locked file cabinet in my garage at home. Students in the focus groups were available to verify data in follow-up, informal discussions.

Students were not compensated monetarily for participation in the focus groups. However, they were told that their input would help to shape recommendations made to faculty for future homework policies and practice.

Participants. Of the 225 high school student participants in the survey, all participants had access to a computer and to the internet. The participants had a fairly even distribution among grade level, acknowledging that the 12th grade had fewer students per grade (see Table 1).

Table 1
Grade Level of Survey Respondents (n=225)

Grade	n	%
9	55	24
10	57	25
11	71	32
12	42	19

Of the 225 participants, 210 reported grade point average (GPA). The average GPA was 3.88 (*M* = 3.88, *SD* = .55). Of the self-reported GPA (Table 2), 43.8% of the students (*n*=92) reported a GPA above 4.0 (M = 4.40, *SD* = .23). Regarding the actual GPA for the entire school (*N*=418, *M*=3.78, SD=.58), 24.4% had a GPA higher than 4.0 (*n*=133).

Table 2

Grade Point Average (GPA)

	Reported GPA of Students in Survey (*n*=210)*		Actual GPA of All Students in School (*n*=418)**	
GPA	n	%	n	%
0-2.5	3	1.3	13	4
2.51-3.0	16	7.1	60	14.2
3.01-3.5	40	17.8	91	21.6
3.51-4.0	74	32.9	121	28.3
4.01-4.5	58	25.8	85	20.1
4.51-4.83	34	15.1	48	11.4

**M* = 3.88, *SD* = .55

***M*=3.78; *SD*=.58

Of the students in the survey (*N*=225), the majority, 92%, reported spending two or more hours per day on homework (Table 4). Sixty-six percent of the students reported spending between 15 to 35 hours per week on homework (Table 5).

Table 3

Reported Hours of Homework

Hours per Day (*n*=225)*	n	%
0-2	32	14.2
2.5-3.5	104	46.2
≥4.0	89	39.6
Hours per Week (*n*=221)**	**n**	**%**
0-10	20	9.0
15-25	109	49.3
30-40	69	31.2
≥45	23	10.4

**M*=3.47; *SD*=1.17

***M*=24.75; *SD*=10.38

On weeknights, almost 80% reported sleeping 5-7 hours per night, with just 11% reporting sleep of 8+ hours per night (Table 4). On weekend nights, 70% reported sleeping 8-10 hours per night.

Table 4

Reported Hours of Sleep per Night

	Per School Night (*n*=219)*		Per Weekend Night (*n*=223)**	
Hours	n	%	n	%
2-4	21	9.6	3	1.3
5-7	174	79.4	32	14.3
8-10	24	11.0	156	70.0
11-12	0	0.0	32	14.3

**M*=6.08, *SD*=1.25

***M*=8.93*; SD*=1.63

Eighty-three percent reported that homework counted between 20%-50% of their grade at the end of the semester (Table 5).

Table 5

Reported Percentage of End of Semester Grade Based on Homework (n=215)

Percentage of Grade	n	%
0-10	8	3.7
20-30	109	50.7
40-50	70	32.6
60-70	25	11.6
80-100	3	31.4

M=35.62

Nearly half of the students reported spending one hour or more per day exercising (Table 6).

Table 6

Reported Minutes of Exercise per Day (n=215)

Minutes	n	%
0	27	12.1
10-20	31	13.9
30-50	54	24.2
60-70+	111	49.8

M=44.35, median=55, Mode=70; *SD*=25.58

Of the 225 survey respondents, 22 students volunteered to participate in the focus groups. Each of the three focus groups met two separate times. The focus groups were named A, B, and

C for coding purposes; each meeting with the group was coded as 1 or 2 (e.g. A1, B1, C1, A2, B2, C2). The average GPA of the focus group participants (Table 7) was 4.02.

Table 7
GPA of Focus Group Participants (n=22)

Actual GPA	n	%
3.01-3.5	4	18.2
3.51-4.0	5	22.7
4.01-4.5	8	36.4
4.51-4.83	5	22.7

M=4.02, *SD*=.52

Each focus group consisted of participants from various grade levels, GPA, and was ethnically representative of the student body (Table 8).

Table 8
Characteristics of Each Focus Group (n=22)

	A	B	C	Total
N	8	6	8	22
Mean GPA	3.86	4.07	4.13	4.02
9th	0	3	2	5
10th	5	0	1	6
11th	2	3	3	8
12th	1	0	2	3
African-American	1	0	0	1
Anglo	4	3	5	12
Asian-American	0	1	1	2
Latina	3	2	1	6
Middle Eastern	0	0	1	1

Data analysis. The analysis of the survey results focuses on how homework impacts intrinsic motivation. Likert scale questions were scored on a one through five scale (e.g. Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Disagree and Agree = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly Agree = 5). To compute a correlation coefficient (e.g. homework and motivation), the Pearson *r* was used "because the Pearson r results in the most precise estimate of correlation, its use is preferred even

when other methods may be applied" (p. 201). T tests were used to "compare the actual difference between the means of the groups with the difference expected by chance" (p. 335). This helped to identify patterns regarding homework with respect to the questions concerning demographic information.

Regarding the focus group transcripts, I conducted an inductive analysis of the focus group transcriptions to generate themes and patterns, in light of research literature and the research questions (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). I "[broke] [the]data into analyzable parts" (Hatch, 2002, p. 163). Major ideas and themes were literally highlighted in many colors for use in mapping the concepts. At the conclusion of the study, I reported the most salient findings to the student participants, the faculty, and the school principal, ensuring anonymity. I will report a more detailed set of findings to these same constituents after the dissertation is completed. As J. Amos Hatch (2002) emphasizes, "data analysis is a systematic search for meaning. It is a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others" (p. 148).

Limitations. Because the school was all-female and not significantly ethnically or socio-economically diverse, this study of homework may not be generalizable to a larger audience. As the researcher of this study, I must also disclose that I am on the administration of the school and serve in an influential role in the execution of school policy. Though not intentional, my role may also have unduly influenced student responses, particularly in focus groups. The study relied on self-reported data "which is ideal for studying students' subjective experiences but vulnerable to errors including problems with memory, hasty completion, exaggeration, and deliberate falsification" (Shernoff, Csíkszentmihályi. Schneider, Shernoff, 2003, p. 173). To address these concerns, the study was constructed with a large survey sample (N=225), with

three sets of focus groups meeting twice to validate the survey data and to increase perspective about homework in depth and scope.

Validity. As "validity refers to the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure and, consequently, permits appropriate interpretation of scores" (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, p 154), the survey demonstrated that it had content validity both in its ability 1) to document student perspective about homework and 2) to spur discussion in focus groups. Certain survey questions had greater item validity as discussed above. To measure validity, four types are typically discussed. Certain questions such as those dealing with stress (Q30) and homework as "busy work"(Q20) had predictive validity, with respect to polarized focus group responses. To a degree, the survey measured stress and motivation. There was greater construct validity, however, with respect to these variables as evidenced by students in the focus group dialogues. By all accounts, from the teachers administering the survey to the students who took the survey and those who participated in the focus groups, survey directions and questions were clear and administration of the survey was uniform.

Two possible threats to internal validity are with respect to history and consequential validity. History may be a concern as all students in grades 10-12 at the school had participated in a documentary assembly for *Race to Nowhere*, a film which strongly critiques schools for their focus on achievement, at the expense of student stress and motivation. This film was shown 14 months prior to the study. The survey by all indications was not consequentially valid; there were no measurable harmful effects observed. However, one student in one of the focus groups was not allowed to participate in the second session because her teacher mandated that she attend

a different after-school session. I followed up with this student, who was disappointed that she could not participate and frustrated by her teacher's behavior.

There are four possible threats to external validity in this study, yet they are not severe threats. They are multiple treatment interference, mortality, selection-treatment interaction, and the Hawthorne effect. Regarding multiple treatment interference, the students in grades 10-12 at this site had also participated in a pilot study survey about Facebook and extra-curricular activities in the Fall of 2010 at the school. All students in the school grades 9-12, had been asked to complete a student survey for the school's accreditation in the Fall of 2011. This survey asked two questions about homework, namely "homework improves my learning" and "homework reinforces what I learn in class". Regarding mortality, four students dropped out of the focus groups due to illness and busy schedules with extra-curricular activities, including performing arts and athletic practices. One student (mentioned above) was pressured by her teacher to not participate in the second group. Selection-treatment interaction may be a concern in this study because students volunteered to be a part of this study. Also, when not enough students participated, three students were purposively invited to join the Focus Group C. Though there were focus groups meeting concurrently over the three weeks of the study, I do not believe that treatment diffusion occurred. I have no reason to believe that the different focus group members communicated outside the time of the focus group because 1) when asked if they had been confidential, they replied yes repeatedly, and 2) responses seemed fresh and spontaneously derived in all groups. As "the term 'Hawthorne effect' is used to describe any situation in which participants' behavior is affected not by the treatment per se but by their awareness of participating in a study" (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 249), I must consider that students

may have acted differently in focus groups because of the attention they received. Perhaps, students in the focus groups spoke with a clarity or with a purpose not seen by their teachers, because they believed their input in this study was being recorded, studied, and valued.

Reliability. Regarding the survey, Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to be used "if items can have more than two scores" (p. 161). As mentioned above, questions regarding Motivation (α= .831), Purpose (α= .867), and Teacher Utilization (α= .642) had high internal reliability.

The study had interjudge reliability, through the participation of 22 students in focus groups, who as "two or more independent scorers, raters, or observers" consistently evaluated the practice of homework at the site (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 161). Regarding intrajudge reliability, as the sole researcher in this study, I sought ways to verify data with students and colleagues (keeping student perspective anonymous). With respect to the coding of focus group transcriptions, I was consistent in approach to reading for emergent themes, allowing student voices to speak on issues most important to them. I looked for frequency of words, patterns of dialogue, and moments which exemplified and evidenced the theoretical framework of critical consciousness, social reproduction, and intrinsic motivation.

Conclusion

This study sought to understand through student voice and dialogue the impact of homework on the intrinsic motivation and the development of critical consciousness of adolescent students. In the process, it also sought to bring the voice of students, who are most affected by this practice, to the center of the discourse. Chapter Five will present the findings derived from the survey and the focus groups, particularly regarding the central research questions concerning how homework affects the lives of students. Chapter Six will present an

analysis of the findings, with focus on the study through the three lenses of critical pedagogy, social reproduction, and intrinsic motivation. Chapter Seven will conclude with a succinct summary of the study and recommendations for future practice and study with respect to homework and student life.

CHAPTER FIVE:

FINDINGS

In this moment, there is both a national and international dialogue concerning the nature of schooling, its efficacy, and its value (Robinson, 2009). This dialogue is situated in an economically competitive global context, which drives pressures on educators to produce students who are competitive on national and international standardized tests. Rhetoric from government leaders in the United States continues to link homework with the drive to compete globally for scarce jobs and resources, encouraging both workers and students to work harder (The White House, 2011).

In the context of this study, students (N=225) were asked to share their perspectives about homework through a voluntary online survey of 40 questions, including four open-ended questions. After the survey, 22 students from this group contributed to focus group dialogues about the survey results and about their lived experience with the practice of homework.

This chapter will present the findings of this study responding primarily to the two major research questions and the two subsequent questions that drive the study. The two major research questions are: 1) What are the perceptions of high school students on how homework affects their stress and their intrinsic motivation to learn? 2) When students have the opportunity to enter into dialogue about the practice of homework, how does it impact the development of their critical consciousness? The two subsequent questions are: a) What are the major concerns expressed by students about the impact of homework on their everyday lives at school and at home? b) What kinds of impressions, suggestions, or recommendations do high school students

offer about the practice of homework and its effectiveness (or non-effectiveness) to their learning process?

Findings of Research Questions

Emergent themes from the study include findings from both the survey and focus groups conducted in the study. These themes are presented, summarized in narrative form, and highlighted with key quotes and quantitative results. A final summary of data is presented at the conclusion of the chapter. Findings will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

In both the survey and frequently in the six different focus group sessions, students described the experience of homework as a "vicious cycle." By a large margin, they had more negative things to say about the experience of homework, than anything positive. What they described by anecdotes of their lived experience was a cycle of perpetual pressure to achieve high grades. This pressure was exacerbated by their lack of sleep and isolation. Completing their homework constituted a major preoccupation in their lives. The lack of sleep exacerbated the stress students experience about homework. This vicious cycle resulted in diminished health (Medina, 2009; Sapolsky, 1994), frayed relationships with family and friends (Levine, 2008), and a loss of purpose (Robinson, 2009) beyond achieving grades for college acceptance. Lost in the pursuit of the grade game was the student's ability to self-direct her time, and feeling free to pursue other avocational and vocational interests.

These trends first appeared in the quantitative results from the survey and were confirmed by the focus groups. The demographics of the survey were presented in Chapter Four. The most salient survey results by response and by correlative tests are presented below, followed by a more detailed discussion of the prevalent themes from the focus groups.

Survey Findings

Quantitative Survey Results. The survey sought to understand student perception of homework regarding motivation, purpose, and stress measured with student experience (e.g. amount of homework, sleep, exercise, GPA, teacher utilization of homework) so as to provide a starting point for discussion with students about their experiences with homework. A hypothesis was not proposed.

The strongest, most polarizing responses (by indication of "strongly agree" or "strongly disagree") to survey questions concerned the following six questions (Table 9):

Table 9

Student Responses to Questions about Homework

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree and Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	*M*	*SD*
I do homework, but I would rather do something else.	3	4	25	37	156	4.51	0.74
I do homework, because I have always done homework.	5	9	31	88	91	4.12	0.95
I do homework to get a better grade.	0	2	9	81	133	4.53	0.62
Homework is fun.	105	70	48	2	0	1.76	0.81
Homework is boring.	0	6	44	80	95	4.17	0.84
Homework is busy work.	1	5	65	73	80	4.01	0.99

Pearson's *r* correlations were run between all survey questions. Analysis showed little correlation and great significance between the survey questions, except for relationships between the composites Teacher Utilization, Motivation, Homework Purpose, and the questions Stress/Question (Q) 30 "Doing homework stresses me out" (M=4.59, *SD*=.56), and Fun/Q21 "Homework is fun"(M=1.76, *SD*=.81). Correlations are presented below (Table 10):

Table 10

Pearson's Correlations of Composites, Stress, and Fun

Composites/Questions	Teacher Utilization	Motivation	Homework Purpose	Stress	Fun
Teacher Utilization	-	-	-	-	-
Motivation	.314*	-	-	-	-
Homework Purpose	.236*	.690*	-	-	-
Stress	-.056	-.231*	-.331*	-	-
Fun	.119	.495*	.428*	.238*	-

*p<.001

The relationship between Homework Purpose and Motivation showed a strong correlation with great significance, r=.690; p=.000. The relationships between Motivation and Fun showed a moderate correlation with great significance, r=.495; p=.000. Similarly, Homework Purpose and Fun showed a moderate correlation with great significance, r=.428; p=.000. The relationship between Homework Purpose and Motivation and Teacher Utilization had a weak correlation with great significance, r=.314; p=.000. The same conclusion was found for Homework Purpose and Teacher Utilization, r=.236; p=.000.

The relationship between Homework Purpose and Stress had a weak negative correlation with great significance, r=-.331; p=.000. A similar conclusion was found for Motivation and Stress, r=-.231; p=.000. The relationship between Teacher Utilization and Stress showed a negatively weak correlation and there was no significance, r=-.231; p=.400. Regarding relationships with Q19 "Homework is boring.", a moderately strong negative correlation was found between Q19 and Fun (Q21), r=-.550; p=.000. Similarly, a moderately strong negative correlation was found between Q19 and Q25 "I do homework because I love to learn" (M=2.55, SD=1.19), r=-.458; p=.000. A moderate correlation was found between Q19 and Q20 "Homework is busy work" (M=4.01, SD=.88), r=.442; p=.000. Lastly, a weak negative

correlation with great significance was found between Homework/Q2 "How many hours (on average) do you spend per day on homework?" (*M*=3.47; *SD*=1.17) and Sleep/Q4 "How many hours (on average) do you sleep per school night?" (*M*=6.08, *SD*=1.25), *r*=-.291; *p*=.000.

As the focus of this study was to understand student perspective of homework, it was important to further explore the data to examine other relationships that might emerge. Because many students reported a GPA above 4.00, analysis was expanded to examine whether students with GPA above 4.00 answered differently than students with 4.00 or below. A t-test was used (see Table 11) to determine if these two groups differed in response to questions in the composites of Motivation and Purpose, and the question of Stress (Q30). From the output, there was a significant mean difference regarding Motivation between those with GPA above 4.00 (*M*=3.33, *SD*=.79) and those with GPA less than or equal to 4.00 (*M*=2.99, *SD*=.76), such that students with GPA higher than 4.00 ascribed motivation more positively (*t*(223)=3.31; *p*=.001) to homework than the others. Regarding Purpose, there was a significant mean difference between those with GPA above 4.00 (*M*=3.01, *SD*=.72) and those with GPA less than or equal to 4.00 (*M*=2.78, *SD*=.63), such that students with GPA higher than 4.00 ascribed purpose more positively (*t*(223)=2.56, *p*=.011) to homework than the others. There is not a significant difference between groups with respect to Stress, *t*(175)=2.873, *p*=NS.

Table 11

Response to Questions by GPA Group

	GPA≤4.0		GPA>4.0			
Subscale	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	df
Motivation	2.99	0.76	3.33	0.79	3.31**	223
Purpose	2.78	0.63	3.01	0.72	2.56*	223
Stress (Q30)	4.63	0.7	4.53	0.82	0.95	175

*p=.011, p<.05

**p=.001

Qualitative Survey Results. The survey results also revealed a pattern that students had far more negative things to say about homework. Because the second session of the focus groups began with a quiet reading of the student responses to the four open response questions, it is important to present the chief results, as they may have affected the focus group responses. The qualitative survey results are distinct from the focus group transcripts because of their directness. Students responded with exclamation points and frequently used capital letters to communicate emphases. When survey are anonymous and online, people feel a greater freedom to be honest in ways they may not be comfortable to do face to face; this phenomenon is known as "online disinhibition" (Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2008; Suler, 2004).

Below, each of the four open-response questions is presented highlighting the word count, most frequently used words, and the most prevalent student responses to each. As this study is an effort to listen to student voice, it is important to list and not simply describe the student perspectives.

When asked to complete the phrase in Q37 "The best thing about homework is…", students cited "nothing" 21 times. The total word count of 4,567 words for 218 responses to this question was the lowest of the four open response questions asked. The following student responses (typed exactly as entered by the students) reflect the chief emphases among the student responses to this question:

- Nothing!!! Its [*sic*] is very time consuming it is stressful and overbearing. I do on average 5 hours of homework a night. I don't do homework to learn, it's all busy work. I try to find short cuts to finish my homework faster because its [*sic*] not like the teachers actually check to see if we did it right. Homework causes me to be stressed and lack

sleep. When I lack sleep I can't concentrate in class. Freshman year I used to get 7-8 hours of sleep now on a good night I get 5 because of the unnecessary [*sic*] amount of homework.

- There is nothing good about homework. It is ultimately useless.
- Getting points added to your grade.
- Nothing. It is a complete waste of time. I am not just saying that so that it can be woohoo [*sic*] no homework; homework honestly does not help me personally grasp the subject matter anymore than I did in class. Most teachers assign homework as busywork such as coloring, timelines, online "fun" stuff and it doesn't do anything. We are in high school now, not 5th grade. I was embarrassed when I had to ask my 8 year old sister if I could use her crayons to complete a homework assignment.

By comparison, in response to Q38 "The problem with homework is…" the most frequently used words were: time (190), too (86), busywork (83), much (72), stress (60), don't (47), and learn (44). The total word count for 223 responses to this question was 8,651, the highest total of the four questions. The following ten responses (typed as entered by the students, except where shortened) reflect the chief emphases among the student responses:

- its [*sic*] boring, its busy work, and most of the time i [*sic*] don't even further understand the lesson. I just do it to get it done.
- The problem with homework at [school] is that it is non-conducive towards becoming a thinking woman that fulfills the graduation outcomes. This problem is caused by two main factors. First, the majority of homework we are given is "brainless" and requires close to know actual intelligence. The homework we are given is mindless and tedious

work that is completely not did to enrich or support what is done in class. Moreover, going over the mindless homework in class hinders the learning environment because THIS HOMEWORK IS NOT REALLY LEARNING! Secondly, we are given so much homework that I truly feel I can not [*sic*] do my best on everything and actually learn what I should be learning if anything. I believe it is irresponsible for a teacher to feel the need to reinforce what he or she taught with two to four hours of homework for one subject. If a teacher cannot properly teach in an 85 minute class and give us an hour of homework to reinforce the material perhaps the problem is the teacher. Homework should be a brief reinforcement to make sure we understand the material if I cannot do ten problems I know for a fact I cannot do 60 the same conclusion is reached in a lot less time. Homework should not be a core teaching tool it should be a helpful reminder.

- It's boring, as humans we have the desire to learn, because that is what our brains are wired for. Many kids today claim they hate school because it's just not fun. What's desirable about sitting in a chair for an hour and twenty minutes listening to a teacher lecture but not actually understanding anything? Nothing.
- The problem with homework is that it consumes all my time and adds unnecessary stress to my life…I do the homework because I need the credit in order to pass the class. However, this homework causes me to lose sleep and time with my family. Because of the lack of sleep I cannot pay attention the next day in any of my classes. And the worst feeling is hearing your family laughing and having great family time in the room next to me; and I am stuck in my room doing homework (busy work) for hours. I constantly find myself awake in the middle of the night on the verge of a nervous breakdown due to all

the homework I had to do, and still have to complete. And to know I must wake up very early in the morning and go to school and be assigned more homework to do the next night; it is an unending circle of torture and anxiety. It makes me dread going to school and resent my teachers. I think of all the time I can spend relaxing and enjoying myself rather than doing pointless work that I spend hours working on for just a brief glance from a teacher and a check in the grade book that I did it. After that brief glance, it is put away, never to be looked at again, as it is not, and never was, relevant to anything that could truly help me succeed in that class.

- It is often much too much and therefore you complete it half heartedly
- it is a never ending cycle. You can never get ahead
- There is TOO MUCH of it.
- So many assignments seem unnecessary and pointless. I get assignments and honestly ask myself what the point is
- that [*sic*] IT IS NOT NEEDED! I am so stressed out already and homework makes me hate school. I don't like my life because I am always stressed out and do not like learning anymore. Homework does not help me learn what the teacher taught in large quantities. This weekend alone, I had five assignments in ONE class. We are destroying our nation of future leaders and intellectuals by creating a society in which we are unhappy, full of memorization but not understanding, and not able to be able to adapt to the "real world." We are missing out on a whole chunk of our lives by being home all night studying and getting less than the suggested amount of sleep. It is DESTROYING OUR FUTURE! I

used to love school and learning, yet, now I struggle to be happy each day and take for granted the real simple joys of my life that is blind to me most of each day.

- I wish teachers would understand this that we don't want to do homework 24/7, but that's what I've been doing lately

Surprisingly, the most frequently words used in response to Q39 "If I didn't have homework I…" were: would (374), time (196), have (167), study (80), spend (64), sleep (59), family (57), less stress (43), learn (25), happy (19), and exercise (18). The responses were often stated in a subjunctive tense emphasizing hopefulness. The following fifteen responses (typed exactly as entered by the students) capture and exemplify this spirit.

- would start dancing again.
- would rejoice!
- would be happy. I would have more time to do studying.
- I would be able to have more time to put in more effort for tests and projects. I would also start to read more books because i know right now i don't have time because i have outside school activities and too much homework.
- would spend time with my family! I would exercise and go out and have fun every once in awhile.
- I would enjoy school, study more, enjoy the only life I am blessed to live.
- would be not as smart but also not as stressed
- I would sleep! I'd also have more family time, and I'd be able to exercise and actually be able to see other family, like my Grandmother or my aunts. I could also take

extracurricular classes, such as singing lessons or dance classes. Maybe I could even join a sport.

- my grades probably would drop.
- Would be less stressed and would sleep enough every night. I would be more alert in class, and be more ready to participate.
- Would spend more time drawing, writing, reading, and exercising rather than procrastinating online.
- Would hang out with my dad more, maybe eat dinner with my family, go to the gym. I've become such a shut in I rarely leave my house.
- i would play guitar, paint, go for a run, walk my dogs, read a book, get a job, hang out with my friends, learn how to knit, and just watch tv
- I would read every night, I would draw more, I would learn more songs on the ukulele, I would learn to paint, I would finally get to spend some time with my friends, I wouldn't spend all night in my room--I would talk to my parents about their day, I would help cook dinner, I would help clean the house, I would try my best to help out my parents in any ways possible so they do not have to continue working immediately after returning from their jobs. I would spend more time with my elderly grandparents. I would visit my sisters who I rarely see. I would get a part time job and earn money to pay for my own clothes, my own books, my own food. I would learn to become independent. I would get more than 2 or 3 hours of sleep every night. My depression would likely ease up. I would be HAPPY.

- would make a DIFFERENCE in this world! By understanding more about societal issues and what we can do to actively participate in our world to "be the change we wish to see in the world," we could be happier, healthier, and more well rounded [*sic*] students. I could have time to do community service for the benefit of MYSELF, not for colleges. I would be able to actually have a social life and read books outside of school. I could help my mom out more and possibly get a job. I would be better prepared for my life ahead of me.

Lastly, the survey question Q40 "If I could tell my teachers one thing about homework, I would want them to know…" had the second highest word count of 8,271 words. The most frequently words used were: time (102), help (74), teacher (64), much (59), less (53), and busywork (47). The following seven student responses (typed exactly as entered by the students) reflect the chief emphases among the student responses:

- To NOT assign homework on things that we haven't even read the introduction for, and to not stop and start different lessons because we get confused. Homework should be helping a student, not just busy work.
- more is worse. The more you give us the less time I'll spend actually doing it right.
- its [*sic*] the reason we don't sleep. not [*sic*] because of facebook or too much tv. when i [*sic*] was up until four am last night i was doing my homework, not spending time on the internet.
- I stay up until 3 am doing this homework..... HOW IMPORTANT IS THIS?
- It does not help me learn.

- I would want them to know that every teacher gives out homework. When a teacher assigns homework they assign huge amounts, like we do not have any other work. Also, I want them to know we have sports, family time, and we need a resting period because its [*sic*] hard to go to school then to my sport then to home just to do schoolwork again. I NEED a break in-between so I don't explode.
- that it consumes my life, I never have time for anything else, and I feel as almost all of the homework I get is busy work.

Focus Group Findings

The transcripts of the six focus group sessions are lengthy and compelling. Each focus group session lasted 75 minutes. The first sessions discussed the quantitative survey results. The second sessions discussed the qualitative survey results. In all sessions, discussions were predicated upon a philosophy of listening and mutual engagement known as dialogue (Darder, 2002). Though there were prompts and questions available for discussion, I tried to speak less and listen more.

One major distinction between the qualitative survey results and the focus group dialogues had to do with mitigated speech. In the focus group dialogues, students frequently couched their responses in a deferential politeness to one another. In the cumulative transcript of the focus groups (n=22, word count 69,575), two of the most frequently used words throughout the discussions were “like” (2,412) and “um” (593). Perhaps, focus group responses were mitigated by a face-to-face inhibition not evidenced in the online survey responses (Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2008; Suler, 2004). However, as the groups discussed their distinct and

similar experiences of homework, they often found commonality in laughter. In the transcripts, "(Group laughs)" was typed 81 times.

In this section, the quotes and dialogue are organized by emergent prevalent themes. These themes will be discussed in more depth in Chapter Six through the theoretical frameworks of intrinsic motivation, social reproduction, and critical pedagogy.

Big Picture. Students in the focus groups repeatedly described school and homework as a process which prevented them from seeing the "big picture" of life. They completed tasks day to day without a vision toward a greater goal. The following focus group quotes of dialogue indicate an awakening by the focus groups to the ways in which they are situated within school and society. Spontaneously occurring, yet motivated by an insight by a thoughtful student or a question from the interviewer, what is revealed is an emergent critical consciousness from dialogue.

L: I've grown so much at this school but I get lost in the minute details of assignment and things that the bigger picture is lost… It can be too much… You just lose track of what's important.

A: …when the teacher's like, "Oh you need to memorize this formula," I'm just like, "Why?" … Like when I'm outside of school, I can just Google that formula…like I just don't see the point.

L: …we're smart and we're going on to good colleges, but we don't have lives

EM: …My fear right now is like losing sight of what … I was so passionate about … I think it's pretty impossible [to], keep the big picture in mind when you're just doing that everyday.

…….

CL: …in our world, if we could just all just evolve past this superficial idea that we have to get the homework….

…….

K: …I want to balance. I definitely want school to be a priority but I also want to balance it with my family

…….

EM: …this day off…I felt the first breeze and I was just like, (gasp) "This is so weird! I haven't felt this way since like 5th grade!" …I decided I wasn't going to think about homework and it was just so interesting …it was just the weirdest thing and it was really sad too cause like I realized how little I've lived. (Group laughs)

…….

W: I just thought of an idea, and I think that there's so much more to life than homework like what about being a good person? Helping others? Like volunteering outside of school and being good morally, I think it's so much more important …in the end, like you're not going to be remembered by the homework you did in high school …

Conditioned to do homework. The following focus group quotes and dialogues demonstrate that students perceive school as competition, in which homework is a component aspect. They regard competition as the work and the game they must endure to move forward. Yet, they debate the value of this pursuit, particularly with respect to their experience of their parents' lives.

CH: …I do homework because it's what I've always done.

EA: … I can't imagine myself not doing my homework …I do homework to I think, I guess to please other people? But also, to raise my grade. But, to also, because other people expect me to do it.

EM: …this sounds so weird, but like we're robots and … we've been programmed a certain way and then you just kind of go through the motions of every day and like you put on your uniform…it's just like every day is kind of a blur …

…….

W: I've always done homework…I know there's people who just don't do their homework instead I look at them and I actually like cannot believe that people would just not do it, like it just doesn't make sense in my brain.

SB: For that whole thing, I think it's because we've just been conditioned to do homework since we were little kids…

…….

BE: … it's kind of addicting when you're doing your homework …it's become like a habit to do your homework all the time and all the time going asleep 10, 12 at night.

……..

LS: You have to live with what you get I guess. In the end…if there's no job…you're going to have to settle for what you can get. So in the end, "why?" is my question. … I feel like sometimes we're running in circles all the time, trying to figure out what to do. What can we do next? What comes after this? Cause everyone says,

you know, after high school you go to college and after college you live your life and…then you look back in your life and you think of what you could have done differently …I don't know.

…….

BL: my dad has a very demanding job…He goes to sleep at 3 and then wakes up at 6 to keep working and that's not healthy and I kind of see that like as my future …

H: …My mother used to have a very demanding job where she was one the only woman in her line of work and she was really, really successful and it ended… She would stay up really late doing work and it resulted in her having depression and having to quit her job and resigning from society and life….Now that she's working again, and she's doing it on her own terms…she burns the midnight oil when she's inspired and when she's working hard and she's really in that state…of being fully happy and aware and still providing for us…but…I feel like if we keep creating the society that's ok with staying up and not caring about your health and not caring about yourself you're going to have a really messed up older generation.

Cost of Homework. The cost of homework is not revealed as a simple trade off of experience where homework is completed in lieu of another experience. Rather, students felt diminished, unaware of a larger world, physically and mentally ill. Students articulated many ways in which they felt the practice of homework prevented them from engaging their lives fully and authentically. They named homework as the cause of the loss of joy in school. They described the need for psychiatric counseling due to stress and the way that homework

contributed to their sense of their loss of wonder, and the loss of their childhood as ways of describing the burdens of homework. The cost of homework as described by students in this study is revealed in the focus group quotes below.

L: …But the homework, the excessive amount of it, just made us feel so… it makes you feel stupid. …

CA: I feel so inferior in my class.

……..

EA: …I think we're losing sight of how everything works together and just narrowing our minds to let's work on this assignment to go to the next assignment and the next assignment it sucks.

CC: We had a pep rally today at school and I don't think I saw half our class smile at the pep rally because everybody was so worried about the tests coming up. …Nobody got to fully enjoy themselves because they were studying for the tests they had next period because they had so much homework that they didn't feel prepared.

……..

H: …I have to go to the psychologist every week…because I can't handle it. I could not handle it last year and I fell apart and it got to the point where I couldn't get out of bed…And I think what's the cost? The cost was my happiness …

CC: …the sum cost is…essentially your childhood…when I learn something new in class it's not, "Oh my God! That was so great! I want to do that again!" It's how much homework am I going to have to do on this?…when the joy of learning that

something new has been overshadowed by, "I have to do homework on this later"…

CL: It's the loss, not just kind of your childhood, but the traditional teenage experiences…you're missing out on something when you have your mind and your life so much revolved around school…

……..

LS: …I feel like we're losing what the meaning is to live. And for me, to live is to enjoy life and have a good time …But right now in media and everything to live is to succeed, to be successful to have the most money, to have the biggest house, to have the best grades, to be the best at everything…

…….

EA: I love coming to school but the amount of work that I get when I leave school just makes me want to not come back to school the next day even though I love going.

…….

CH: …We're not retaining information anymore. A lot of it's like I need to learn this for this test and then… this next chapter, and then this next chapter, and then this next chapter. But it's like we don't remember it …we don't get to explore …If something was really interesting to us in a certain chapter, we …don't spend time on it because we always have to keep moving on.

Grade Game. Students aptly explained that for them, homework and grades are a game. The process of school for them is a game they play by completing homework to raise their grades, rather than to increase their learning or to engage a topic more fully. Their descriptions

of the grade game are matter-of-fact, pragmatic, and also cynical. They play the grade game to have a better chance at college admission. They believe this grade game will continue beyond college as well.

H: …the only reason people do this busy work is for the points because… the teachers don't correct it. They don't stay up until 3 o clock in the morning, reading it.…It's pointless.

…….

CA: …I do feel that the amount of homework that's given has taken the love out of learning. And like I know that sounds like, like gooshy, smooshy or whatever but like, like before high school I loved to learn. I went to school because like I liked learning new things and now I feel I learn things but I'm not retaining anything. I just learn it for the next day, like for that quiz or for that test.

…….

RL: …I'd love to say…get rid of homework because it's stressful. But honestly, I think that as long as you have grades you have to have homework …

…….

LS: There goes your grade, and then goes your GPA…

W: There goes your college.

LS: There goes the college that you wanted to go into…

RL: …I had this moment right now where I just kind of feel school, not to the extent of, but I almost feel like it's a *1984* sort of thing. Like cause I just had my first SAT lesson here last night and basically you're trying to cheat the system to have

a good test. You have to read the question, you have to translate it into something else and then if you can at least get rid of two answers, answer the question. …you don't have to know which one's right, you can guess the whole test and still get a good grade…with the grades you kind of have to cheat the system…fake this to get a good grade on this and then you have to temporarily memorize this so you can get a good grade on the test. I think it's just like constantly having to pretend and it's just, I think it's really weird.

Hope vs. homework. In this study, there was one student who chose the pseudonym "Hope". She articulated a thoughtfulness about life and homework that energized the other students. At times, her thoughts countered the prevailing notions of other students in the discussions. When this happened, she caused other students to rethink their positions about homework and school. The quotes of Hope below suggest that critical consciousness has not been squelched by the practice of homework.

H: …I think there's a false idea of what your future is. Is this the type of homework we're doing, really going to ensure me an incredible future? I don't think so…

…….

H: …I go and I go and I go and when I finally finish my homework, I am exhausted and to the point of not being able to function, and having to go to therapy now for my stress management problems (Group laughs)…I don't think that if my future is just based on money and how well I can perform for other people…If I can't enjoy my family and my friends and have a social life, then that's not necessarily a future I want.

……..

H: …the end doesn't justify the means. If I'm going to be successful and get into a great college and have the great grades, at what costs of being unhappy and not really learning and not really enjoying myself and not smelling the roses so to speak, then what's the point of being successful?

……..

H: …when I'm staying up late doing homework I kind of wonder what my teachers are doing at that hour….

K: That's actually a really good point… well if I could do the homework, why couldn't you grade the test?…

CC: …what on earth are you doing at home?

H: Living, perhaps?

……..

H: …something that bothers me in life…is that people say, "oh this is preparing you for life." Well if I check my birth certificate, I've been alive for 18 years… did that not count? Why can't I live and be living now? Why is everything so in the future?…

……..

H: I think there's a difference between creativity and coloring in the lines….We're in high school and I didn't go through 11 years of schooling to color things like I did in first grade. Also, in a year and a half I'll be in college and I highly doubt I'm going to do a coloring packet. And if we're supposed to be prepared for college, I

want to be using my mind and actually learning….The type of homework we're given should not be something that even has the possibility to be copied. It should be my own thoughts and my own understanding.

……..

H: …it made you more aware of like, this doesn't have to be like this. I don't have to conform…and feel guilty when I feel like it's too much. Like I know other people feel the same way and it's not something's wrong with me.

CC: I also think…it really makes you think about your feelings towards homework.

Int: What could make this better?

H: … teachers being here and listening…

Intrinsic motivation. The following focus group quote by Emily is not about homework, but about teaching herself how to play the piano. In all of the focus group dialogue, this is the one moment where any student discussed the notions of flow (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990) or intrinsic motivation (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990; Pink, 2011; Robinson, 2009; Stipek & Seal, 2001). Students in the survey and the in the focus group could certainly name what they would prefer to do instead of homework, but the following quote is the sole instance where a student described any aspect of her life as being in "flow" or being "intrinsically motivated" to pursue learning. Much of her description also refers to her locus of control (Weiner, 1990) and the increase of motivation her power and control encourage. Homework, per se, was never described as such by any student in this study.

EM: I think the whole thing about having control over what you're doing has a lot to do with it…And if, it doesn't work out like I learn for it myself…I, I pick up on

things quickly … doing it myself and like making my own mistakes … I really just made a big improvement and it made me feel good about myself and it made me way more passionate…and I just did it on my own.

Isolation. Students complete their homework and study for tests by themselves, in their rooms at home, or alone at recess at school. This isolation is debilitating for students. It is lonely. It is frustrating. It is stress-inducing. The isolation comes at the cost of participating in family events, in social settings with friends, and at the cost of happiness. This is not an isolation chosen by students as a preferred way of being, but as a necessary and frequent state to maintain high grades by completing homework. The following focus group quotes point to a reality that homework is an isolating experience.

PR: …I just really miss being a little kid sometimes. Cause I look at my little siblings and they just have so much fun and they're so stress free and I'm always in my room doing homework and it kind of sucks cause I can't play with them like I want to.

……..

BL: …I'll be sitting at break and doing my homework…eating alone cause I'm busy doing my homework so I'm not really interacting with my friends a lot.

……..

BE: …One weekend my brother had to go to the Decathlon and then the next day I had confirmation from 3 o'clock until like 6pm at night and during that time I wasn't able to do my homework. And on Sunday night, I was freaking out. I had to do all my homework and I didn't even get finished with it and I came to school

and I was like freaking out cause I didn't finish my homework and I was thankful because that…was my last period. So the whole entire school day, I was in the library or in the hall doing my homework and not interacting with my friends and that's happening a lot now and they're like, "What's going on? Why can't you hang out with us?" And I'm like, "I have to do homework, I want to do good in school and that means I have to do my homework." And they're like, "Oh I do understand what you're going through"…

……..

CA: …we are going to go visit some family…I couldn't go and I had to stay home alone all day and it was a Sunday to do my homework. …It sounds bad coming from a full-grown girl, but I literally just sat there and cried for like 30 minutes. Because it was just such a bummer that all the other [family members]…would have a few hours to spare to spend time with each other and like it just kind of bummed me out…Those are still memories I didn't get to have with my family because I had to sit at home alone. Which I hate, I hate being home alone to like do homework.

A: …My family went to Disneyland and I couldn't go cause I had to do homework …We had to make a timeline of every chapter…draw it out and color it and it took me forever and it's like… that didn't teach me anything. She just marked it down and like, "OK you did it," and it's like, that took me 3 hours!...

……..

MI: …It's a teenage years where you need that time to figure who you are, to figure out what you want to do in life, to explore all the possibilities. I just feel like we're limited. I just feel like we don't have enough time to look around, to think, to relax, or to learn about life or about people around us or to get a better view of what we want to do um and I just, I feel like it's just very narrow minded that we only have a couple things that we set our mind to and it's just really hard to go beyond that.…there's too much on your mind where you can't go beyond what you learned in the classroom and that's most important because in the end you're not going to be in the classroom all day or in a sport. You're going to be alone, um doing your job…

Parents. Surprisingly, students described their parents as frustrated by the constancy of homework, and by the tenacity with which they (their children) completed homework. Students described their parents as virtually powerless; and although they desperately wanted to spend time with their children, their children "had to" finish homework. As a consequence, students spoke in the focus groups about having to miss family events and experiencing relational tension and conflicts with parents over homework.

L: … she'll [my mother] ask me, "Let's go get dinner." And I was like, "I have to do this assignment." Like do you really need to do it? Can you keep your grade, like is this something that you've got to get done?...Can you just drop this one and get away with it? And can we spend time together?"

……..

H: …I get into huge arguments with my mother ….We had such a bad relationship because she was upset I put homework before her and I think that's a valid argument….She hates my homework….She's told me at times "just don't do it" because it's, "it's not worth losing sleep and losing enjoyment of life over" in her opinion and I agree with her.

……..

A: My dad…always asks… "Oh do you have a lot of homework tonight?" And I've never been like, "No like I don't." It's always like, "Yeah I have a lot of homework"… never said no once.

……..

L: …And my parents and I are constantly fighting because it's just so important, like this is my future education we're dealing with, but then I'm sitting there thinking how I have to write a poem for English and it's just so, it's so miniscule compared to the fact that I'm figuring out if I can afford my future and my future education.

Piece of Paper. Students described themselves as inanimate objects of paper, in perpetual competition with one another. They perceived their efforts in homework and in the pursuit of grades as the effort to improve the look of their piece of paper, rather than to improve themselves. This perception is driven by their pursuit of college admission and intensified by their perception of the pursuit of attaining gainful employment. School is not for learning, but for improving their status on paper. In the process, the issue of competition and a loss for the love of learning is highlighted in their comments.

CC: …I really feel like school is just preparing my college application resume…I really enjoy learning. I really, really do but…I'm…taking classes so that I can apply to good colleges and once I apply to good colleges I'll be taking even harder classes and work even harder so that I can get a good job. It just seems like it's never ending. You're not really being taught to learn, you're being taught to get you to the next level so that you can start all over again.

……..

CC: Like I've met girls who have come pretty darn close to having… everything …but it is my experience that it does not come without a price and they are so stressed out… by the end of their senior year…They are so stressed out, they really, really don't like high school anymore. They like what their college resumes look like but by the end of senior year they were so tired of the experience they really just wanted to get out.

……..

RL: …we've become a piece of paper so you have to look like the best piece of paper and you have to have the best grades and the best extra-curriculars…I know I always compare myself. When we're in a really competitive environment here, but I mean I think you can't really get away from the competitives…

Powerlessness. Students described their effort in homework as a "have-to" rather than a "get-to." In this, there was frustration and exhaustion, though they recognized in their pursuit of the grade game (described above) that they were not forced to play the game. To play the grade game, however, students surrender some autonomy to parents and teachers. There was a

moment in one of the focus group sessions, where powerlessness was clearly exhibited. In this session, Sirius Black was late. Her teacher had held her after class school for an impromptu and mandatory Advanced Placement test review with other students. When Sirius came to the session, she was terribly disappointed and at a loss. She was powerless to tell her teacher that she wanted to participate in the focus group. Though I am an administrator, I was also without power to help this student. When I asked Sirius "How can I support you?", she responded "I don't know….Can't do anything about it." Students tried to engage her and console her. The moment was tense. Resigned she left the focus group to return to the extra class. After she left, two students commented as follows:

RL: I feel this is a perfect example of how school is stressful on our lives. (Group laughs).

PR: And how they don't understand that we have other commitments.

Purpose of School. In two-and-a-half hours of focus group, inevitably the question of the purpose of homework and of school arose. It was an intended question, and students in each of the three groups were surprised that I asked the question. Not surprising was their candor in evaluating homework, grades, and school purpose. Nor was it surprising, given the results from the survey which tied student motivation for completing homework with understanding its purpose. The following quote reflects clearly the group consensus in response to this question, a further clarification of the grade game mentioned above.

Int: So what's the purpose of school?

EM: I'll be fast but I used to think the purpose of school was to learn (Group laughs). … Like all of a sudden, it just dawned on me, "Like what is school!?"… "What

are we doing? Like why do I need to know the things I know?" … I will not know that in 2 months like if you come up to me like the day we get out for Spring Break, it will just *(sound of air exiting a balloon)*. Like you can ask me like anything, like what books did you read in English class? And I will not know; I will not be able to tell you.…

Quality of homework. The following focus group quotes speak to student frustration about the poor quality of homework in terms of what is assigned, how assignments are graded, and how doing homework comes at the cost of studying for tests. These perspectives validate the quantitative correlation between homework purpose and motivation mentioned earlier.

H: …The type of homework, is not learning. If this is something that someone can scribble down on, in front of the classroom as they're walking into class and getting the same amount of credit…it's a problem of the type of homework …

……..

CC: …it'd be almost midnight, my mom would be like, "Why aren't you in bed?" and I'd be like, "I have to color." She's like, "What? You have to color? You're in 10th grade. You have to color?!" (Group agrees).

……..

BL: The uh religion class, they had to um draw [what] we thought of grace and sin. And that was a good thing to…But there are other points where it's just like, "Color the cross"…it's pointless.

……..

IR: Yeah, most of it's busy work.

LS: …Busy work, busy work, busy work.

W: Yes. Like think about jobs sometimes you're going to be secretaries doing things that seem like busy work but you have to like the things. I mean not that that's fun but…

……..

K: …the busy work just makes you overwhelmed…

Quantity of homework. Similar to the findings of Wilson & Rhodes (2010), the following focus group quotes were both indicative and representative of the student perpective that homework at the school is excessive, both at the class level and the cumulative level.

EA: …the amount of homework that we get… makes us not want to do it

……..

W: …so I don't really understand why we have to have so much homework.… I spent 10 hours on homework on Sunday and I never stopped and it was crazy.

P: That I find really funny about homework, because I have no homework on weekends!

Everyone: What?!!! *(group shouts in astonishment)*

W: I have so much!

S: I have so much, too.

W: I just have so much on the weekends!

S: …my mom thinks it's unrealistic. She's like, "…I don't believe you're doing homework the whole day." And I'm like, "I'm doing homework the whole day mom!"

……..

L: ….When it's skill based and you're just doing problem, after problem, after problem, there's a point where it's just overkill and it makes me lose my confidence, I don't feel like I'm learning anymore….Like I just got a 3 page packet with 85 questions that I'm supposed to do for class tomorrow morning. I'm not really supposed to know how to do that when it's on a topic we haven't even been taught yet. Like so I'm going to spend all night researching it just to even figure out what the topics on. It's just it doesn't make sense and it does absolutely nothing for me.

Int: …just to clarify tonight is what?

L: It's a Friday night and then I have a Saturday morning class.

Int: Got it.

Teachers. Pivotal to the discussion of homework was student perception of their teachers. Most of the students held their teachers in contempt, viewing them as pseudo-sadistic adults in their lives who assigned homework by default and routine, rather than by thoughtfulness of a student's particular learning or personal needs. What was perceived as missing was trust, and what was wanted by students was more dialogue with teachers and engagement of their lives (and assignments) on an individual basis.

EM: …If a teacher cannot properly teach in an 85 minute class and give us an hour of homework to reinforce the material perhaps the problem is the teacher. That's kind of harsh but like, it's true…

……..

Int: Do you think it's possible for homework to be tailored to you personally?

EM: …I think that if there was more trust between the teacher [and] student…

CH: I think teachers feel like 100 students, it's much easier just to give like 1 assignment to the entire class and then that way it's also probably easier to grade.

……..

EM: ...teachers see weekends as, "Oh I can assign more homework!"…Do we not have weekends anymore? …like make sure that we have enough homework to do to get through all of the free time we have. (Group laughs)

……..

CC: …I think that the teachers could explain … why they give homework in the way that they do.…because none of the teachers really talk about why they give the homework.…It would not only enlighten the students on why they do homework but it would make the teachers really think about why they're giving that homework.

……..

CL: I don't know if the teachers understand how much effort we put into certain assignments, even simple things…about crossword puzzles or whatever the assignment is.…But people want to put the effort in as you can tell. That's why we stay up so late.

……..

A: When you go back to class after you're doing like the 60 problems that they assign you and then you go in to class and they're like, "Oh well we'll just do 1 or

2. We don't have enough time to do them all." Well, what makes you think I have enough time to do them all? If you don't have enough time to go over them, that I spent time on, then don't assign them. And it's just so frustrating not being able to do it…

Time management. One of the principal arguments promoting homework concerns a secondary effect of time management (Cooper, 2007). From the perspectives of the students in this study, this is a false notion. They do not believe that homework helps them to manage their time more effectively, let alone to balance their lives.

H: …How is this really teaching you how to manage your time? Because honestly you're just managing your time with homework, you're not really managing your life.

……..

CH: …I literally only know how to manage my time with my work. I don't know how to manage both sides of my life …

……..

EM: … imagine, a life where you get off of work and then do nothing (Group laughs). Like you work, and then you go home and it's like (Group laughs) … OK if someone came up to me now and said, "OK you're done with high school go live." …it's not even about time management cause like there's no management, there's no time to manage like it's just like you go home and if you're doing your homework from when you get home to when you go to sleep, what are you

managing? …I don't think I'm learning how to manage my time at all. I think quite the opposite. I forgot how to have time.

Trapped. Couched in discussions of meltdowns, breakdowns, tears, and fits of rage, students described having to do homework as being trapped, often in a late night circumstance of stress, panic, and inevitability. Homework is not regarded as an opportunity but as a necessary and unwanted obligation.

CA: …Friends all the time are like, "Oh I had a breakdown last night." Like I think it's become a term that is way too nonchalant, cause like you get crying fits all the time. Like people like, "I can't do this!" And like the thought of like thinking that you can't do something that you're not able to do something is like the worst feeling in the world. Like when you feel trapped in that moment you're just like, "Oh my gosh! It's 12:30 and like my brain is shutting down but I have a whole class I'm meant to do." It's the worst feeling cause you feel stuck.

L: …there were so many times when I had to say no to things, or when I did say yes, I felt guilty, and the whole time when I was at that event, I was thinking about all the things I was going to have to do as soon as I got home and I think that that's a really unfair burden that school carries over into everything. …I don't think school has the right to carry over that time of [our] lives.

……..

BE: I think like on weekends it's like you're time to just kind of relax, and it's a time to kind of forget about school and have fun and like go through to like your personal life and have fun and do stuff…

BL: And catch up on sleep.

BE: Exactly!

H: See your family.

BE: Exactly. There's like so much stuff that you want to do during the week but you can't do it cause you have the amount of homework, the amount of school…the school work I understand but the amount of homework is what, what's kind of causing us to kind of not doing the things that we want to do for our personal life and then we go to the weekend and we're like, "Ok! We can do whatever we want!" We can focus on our personal life and then but, like but, then you realize that you have homework and you go to Sunday and on Sunday you're freaking out cause you have this whole entire like, like a lot of homework to be done due Monday and Tuesday.

K: …the teacher will be like, "Ok on Friday or Thursday, if you do all the homework tonight, you won't have any on the weekend." Well, who actually does the homework, that night? On Thursday?

H: By Junior year, you have to.

Unthinking, Auto Pilot Zombies. Students described school and the practice of homework as an unthinking, exhausting, debilitating adherence to school rigor. This discussion was not isolated to a few of the participants. Rather, the quotes below are the most clearly stated versions of what students described in each of the three focus groups. Namely, they acknowledge that they do not believe that they are in control of their lives and they lament it.

BL: …I don't want to think about what I learned…if I look back at my entire freshmen year, I won't remember what I did in class…It's kind of weird because school's such a high priority for me and it becomes invisible. It's just there…on auto pilot you know?

H: Auto pilot, yeah.

……..

CA: …everyone's just burnt out and it's just exhausting and it's tiring to talk to anyone…Like it's quiet and everyone has these dark circles. Like every single person here has these huge circles under their eyes. They literally, they look like zombies … the love of learning has left my body. …I don't want to ask questions anymore.

Vicious Cycle. The following focus group quotes reveal the interplay between homework and stress, both named directly and indirectly. Two of the component aspects of stress are the lack of sleep and the perception of the incessant nature of schoolwork, and homework per se. This vicious cycle, as the students describe, leaves them unable to look forward to rest or to enjoy their learning. Rather, they perceive that they are surviving school.

CL: …the last couple of nights, I've fallen asleep doing homework so you know it'll be like midnight, 12:30 and I won't have finished my homework and I'll just be so exhausted, I can't keep my eyes open so I just fall asleep. So it's gotten to the point, where I set my alarm for like 4:30, 4 o'clock in the morning so I can wake up and still have time to finish my homework.

H: At that point when you're awake at 4 o'clock in the morning, trying to just finish, you don't care what you're doing honestly…

……..

A: …I think that it's so sad… this whole high school experience…it's just been an endless circle of stress and like break downs and hearing people like want to just give up….

……..

EM: …when I'm doing my homework before I go to sleep, I'm not giving it like the sit down attention it needs so when I'm doing it if I don't understand a problem in algebra, let's say, I'll just kind of like mess around with numbers…I'm not learning what I should be because I'm just trying to do it quickly so that I can sleep. And then, even then the next day at school,…like my performance isn't up to par and I'm not absorbing that information so then I fall further behind on my homework the next night. And it's just kind of a vicious cycle ….

……..

A: …I've gotten like four hours of sleep before and like trying to finish all my homework and it's like really, really stressful and at school the next day you're really, really tired and you can't focus on what's going on in class because the classes are so long and you're really, really tired so that night you also don't understand the homework so you're trying to like figure it out so it just becomes more stressful and it just keeps building on top of itself…

MI: …trying to catch up the stuff like the homework that you're supposed to do and then trying to understand it so you're just kind of behind in the classroom cause you're doing all this homework but not really grasping the material while you're trying to just get through the homework as fast as possible.

EM: And another thing, is like when I don't get sleep and I know this is true for me and a lot of my friends.…[It's] not even just school related factors, just dealing with family, or dealing with things,…things are happening in people's lives and I don't, I feel like I [ever] have the proper time to deal with that outside of school and then when I am deprived of sleep or just, I just everything I like, will just have a break down…I just can't, I feel like I can't deal with that.…It affects me with my family but like, I never see my family,…that's like a last priority….My time I spend with my parents, is like when they drive me places and like when I get my license…

……..

K: I think seven hours at school, if you can't learn that subject, then you shouldn't be doing 7 hours of homework when you get out of school…

CC: …I've been so tired lately, staying up late to do my homework that I haven't like, I've been having trouble paying attention in class so then I don't really understand the lesson and I go home to do 7 more hours of homework that I don't understand and have to reteach myself so then I spend 8 hours doing the homework trying to learn it. Go to bed even later and wake up the next day and still not understanding the lesson. So it's just kind of a vicious cycle and I think that if we could

somehow break that then that would be, that would be wonderful and I would actually enjoy learning again.

……..

L: …I'm like constantly in this crazy cycle where I stay up…like last night I got 5 hours of sleep cause I was doing my homework and I got up in the morning and had to study and it's not like I'm not studying I just don't have the time. Like if I stayed up all the way through, I wouldn't be able to function and so my sleep cycle is so…

……..

CH: …Waking up really early, going to school, and then [go] to work until 7, and then [she] does her homework. I think like her Mom said to her once…"Remember your high school and your college years. These are the best years of your life," and she responded, "It gets worse after this?" (Group laughs).

MO: …It's sad to know that we're joking around about going to bed … There is something wrong that's going on here.

……..

BE: …I'm racing through dinner, through lunch, through whatever …and I'm like, "Dad I'm sorry, I have to go do my homework." Or my mom would say …"could we just go out and just kind of discuss what you're doing" and like, "I don't have time Mom, I have to do homework."

Weekends Minus Homework Is Our Life. Students possessed a clarity of insight with respect to the status of homework and work in their lives. In a mathematical formula, what they

perceived as their free time was minimal. The realization that life would continue to be even more work after high school and college left students demoralized, though because of the nature of the focus groups, their shared a solidarity with one another in this insight.

Int: So help me understand. Do your parents work like this?

Group: No…

EA: My parents go to bed at 9 o'clock at night. I'm up until like midnight or 1 o'clock in the night doing homework. And me and my sisters are the only ones awake trying to get everything done and my parents are upstairs sleeping…

L: My dad is an attorney, like in a really big firm and when he's in a case, they'll be nights where we'll joke whose going to stay up later…He jokes that our bonding time isn't until night time to 3 o'clock in the morning when we're like both the only ones up doing homework (Group laughs).

MO: …the fact that Emilia's mom goes to bed at 9… like that was a joke. 9 o'clock is an amazing number. Like 9 o'clock is so cool.

L: …I work 2 days a week after school, and I get out usually around 7 o clock and then I still have all of my homework to do ….I work at a tutoring center where there's a bunch of businesses around it and I was walking and I realized that like I was an 18 year old who was leaving at the same time as all these business people, and I saw all their briefcases and I was thinking about my backpack of homework and I was just thinking, like I've been so excited to graduate cause I'm like, "Oh it's over! A couple of months!" and then I'm like, oh my God this never ends. (Group laughs). Like I was looking at these people and I was like, this is the rest

of my life, I'm going to be working until 7 o'clock going home and just doing more work and like, I was looking at these people and I was like, this is so frightening! And I was just like, I don't want to work anymore, I was thinking, I'm going; it was just the worst thing when I had that thought. I was going to start crying when I was driving home. It was awful (Group continues laughing).

MO: …Our life isn't supposed to be like that. Our life isn't supposed to go home, do 5 hours of homework, go to sleep. And weekends minus the homework is our life. It's not supposed to be like that. You know, high school is supposed to be the fun time and like, oh I remember high school it was so much fun. Hahaha, it's not really fun. (Group laughs)…

Final Summary of Data

The nature of this study took students seriously. Because of this, all three groups concluded their second focus group session with the same focus: they wanted action. They wanted teachers to listen and to reform the practice of homework at this school site. They were empowered by the experience of being listened to by their peers and by me.

Int: I'm curious was this a good process?

Group: Yes!

Int: What would make it better?

Student: Doing something. (Group laughs)

The purpose of this study was to investigate student perspective about homework through a voluntary online survey and through focus group dialogues with students concerning the surveys and their lived experience of homework. This study was exploratory in nature; there was

not a hypothesis proposed. The chief finding between survey and focus group data concerned purpose and motivation. That is, quantitative survey data revealed a strong correlation between the student's motivation to complete homework with her understanding of the purpose of the homework. This finding was validated emphatically in each focus group session. Also confirmed by survey and focus groups, the major findings regarding student perception about homework at this site were: 1) there is too much cumulative homework; 2) too much of homework is busy work; 3) students complete homework to raise their grades, not to learn; 4) the practice of homework (by schedule, quantity, and quality) causes unhealthy, unnecessary stress; 5) teachers do not collaborate on the calendaring of homework; 6) homework interferes with development of student extra-curricular interests (and if given the choice, students would rather do something else than homework if given the choice); 7) doing homework comes at the cost of sleep, focused learning and the joy of learning; 8) homework is an isolating practice, as students choose homework completion over social life with family and friends; and 9) students believe that teachers do not understand the burden of stress that homework creates. Going forward, students want a) teachers to assign less overall work, b) discontinue assigning busy work, c) to grade homework that is assigned (not simply check it), and d) to collaborate with other teachers and with students to make homework practice better.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of study conducted through survey and focus groups. Discussion of these findings will be presented in Chapter Six through the theoretical frameworks of critical pedagogy, social reproduction, and intrinsic motivation. Chapter Seven will

summarize the study and make recommendations for educators concerning the practice of homework and future study.

CHAPTER SIX:

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Introduction

This study revealed that students are largely frustrated, exhausted, overwhelmed, stressed, and dismayed by the practice of homework. The school where the study was held has programs and some teachers, in particular, who foster high-intensity, grade-driven, and stressful homework practices. As evidenced in the focus group dialogues, students are mastering the art of jumping through hoops and data dumping on tests, at the cost of sleep, joy of learning, wellness, mastery of personal interests, family, friendship, and other socializing.

When students were given an opportunity to consider what would life be like without homework, students exhibited a liberating exuberance, energy, and volition to engage many and varied pursuits. This chapter will discuss and analyze the major findings, in light of the three theoretical frameworks of the study: intrinsic motivation, social reproduction, and critical pedagogy. This discussion is presented with respect to the key emergent themes of the study.

Vicious Cycle

The students clearly conveyed in the qualitative survey and in focus groups that they are "always doing something," never having the time to "catch up" on work or sleep, and because of this, they are "drowning" amidst piles of homework and compounded stress. They are keenly aware that their efforts do not yield the grades they want or the grades they feel they deserve. Yet, they acknowledge that their efforts come at the cost of time with family, friends, fun, and faith. The survey evidenced that students would choose to pursue exuberant avocational pursuits

such as music, exercise, dance, and hobbies if they did not have homework. The survey also evidenced that many would study for tests if they did not have homework.

In focus groups, students revealed that they do homework at the expense of studying for tests, even though tests count for a larger percentage of their grade. Few teachers help students to manage their time on homework, and this is an area of growth at this site going forward. When a student explains "I can't not try" she is comforted knowing that she is not alone; there is a perceived solidarity knowing that many (if not hundreds of her fellow students) feel and act the same way.

Yet the students who "can't not try" are in a vicious cycle, perpetually tired, and chronically stressed. The lack of sleep and the ensuing stress compound like interest on a credit card debt. The student scrambles to pay that debt isolated in her room or frantically completing work before class which was intended to be completed at home. She feels that she is constantly being watched, supervised, and directed to do work by her teachers, her parents, and herself. This is similar to the notion of the "panopticon" originally proposed by the philosopher Jeremy Bentham as a way of promoting fear in the structuring of jails, schools, and society (Foucault, 1995). Order is kept in this system because the prisoner (or the student) is driven by a fear that her non-compliance with expected behaviors or tasks could be grounds for her punishment.

However, every indicator for the future workforce and for economic growth speaks to the need for people who are independent, creative, adaptive, innovative, and collaborative (Pink, 2011; Robinson, 2009; Zhao, 2009). Yet, much of the anticipated need is also for low-wage, routine jobs with the need for people who can perform repetitive, boring tasks without complaint (Buell, 2004). In this dichotomy sits this study of homework.

Isolation and disengagement. I anticipated from my lived experience as a student, as a teacher grading papers, and a student of the homework literature, that I would re-discover the reality of isolation and disengagement in this study. I profoundly heard from the students that they believe themselves to be singular and disempowered when it comes to homework. In the isolated practice of homework, they tend to procrastinate. Literally, they long for tomorrow, hoping to be past the lived moment they face with stress and perpetual homework. They procrastinate and put off for tomorrow, because they have already worked enough today; because their days are already too full. Staying up later will not help them catch up or grasp what they have missed, though late at night they still struggle to realize this hope.

In their homes, but away from their families, and at lunch near friends at school, but alone frantically completing or copying an assignment or cramming for a quiz, students are isolated by the practice of homework. The older students in the focus groups revealed mixed levels of disengagement by articulating burnout that was unmatched by the perspectives of the dismayed younger students. Yet, when one student in the focus group described the impact of stress on her schoolmates as if the air at school were different, the rest of the group understood her. As she spoke, the image of zombies limping through school to their next classes came to the focused minds of the group.

Grade Game. Their school experience is not a problem-solving curriculum (Freire, 1970/2010); it is a grade game. Students in focus groups in this study described their experience with homework and learning as a grade game (Abeles & Congdon, 2009; Pope, 2001). They have played this grade game for their whole lives, looking for external rewards and affirmation that they are doing the right thing. The reality of cumulative homework at this site has stalled

their efforts, disengaged them from their zeal and love of life (Kohn, 1999), tethering them to a future of isolated work they do not want.

The grade game concerns notions of power, meritocracy, and compliance (Kohn, 2006b). Student power is an unrealized hope at this school site. The school culture reproduces students (Bowles & Gintis, 1976/2011; Willis, 1977) who stress privately and who acquiesce publicly (Chomsky, 2011). The high GPAs of students in this school demonstrate that students buy-in to the pursuit of grades. When teachers and the school bestow these grades to the satisfaction of students, students are placated. When students are dissatisfied with the grades they receive, they lose interest in learning (Kohn, 1999) and the drive to continue to play the grade game. Students manifest little evident choice in whether to swim with the current of the other students in the game, or face an upstream torrent of parent, school counselor, teacher, and peer pressure to re-focus, do the homework, and play the game.

Obedience in this game is rewarded with grades, just as worker compliance is rewarded with pay. Those with the highest grades win the game, earn the school awards, and command the attention of teachers. The school is a meritocracy, but those who work for merit possess little power; they placate the truly powerful by their allegiance and obedience. Students who are out of dress code, are late to class, have hair that is too short are singled out, put in detention, or on disciplinary contract. Individualism is punished, conformity rewarded.

The consequences of the grade game culture are clear. When schools emphasize grades and points, they inadvertently train students to pursue grades, rather than learning (Kohn, 1999). In this system, students learn to achieve the best grade through shortcuts. Examples of these shortcuts are cheating, copying worksheets, and studying for the test (but not for long-term

memory). Examples of these shortcuts continue as students become workers. For example, in Memphis, an assistant principal was arrested in November 2012 for organizing a 15-year effort to have teachers cheat on tests to prove their qualification to teach (Sainz, 2012). The school, by its emphasis on a meritocratic system, finds both students and teachers complicit in efforts to cheat the system in order to advance.

Punished by rewards, doing school, and the job of childhood. Kohn's (1999) critique of U.S. culture and education as one which socializes youth "punished by rewards" is an apt lens through which to understand the students in this study. They have pursued grades at the expense of learning. They have pursued college acceptance at the expense of developing an intrinsic motivation and vocational interest. By "doing school" (Pope, 2001), they have relegated their locus of control (Weiner, 1990) to external forces of teacher demands, teacher assessment, and the pursuit of grades. Literally, they are doing the "job of childhood" (Corno & Xu, 2004) while their days of childhood evaporate.

Perhaps homework and the grade game do foster behaviors, beliefs, and disposition which ready students for future work in cubicles (Buell, 2004). Mindless worksheet completion for homework is perhaps not so different than processing insurance claims or collating office files. The practice of homework, testing, and school lecture destines many if not most of these students to be prepared for rote, boring work. Much like the way Robinson (2006) describes school, the practice of homework does not prep students for creativity, innovation, or collaboration. It is dull, repetitive work aiming for fixed answers to be completed singularly, alone, and in isolation.

In this college-prep setting, parents are stretching by most accounts to afford the tuition and hidden costs of private school. They are paying tuition, though, so that their daughters' future is tied to the growth, the innovation, and the promise of the capitalist dream. They are doing so to give advantage to their daughters in the pursuit of work, privilege, and power in the future economy. The irony is that this perceived advantage may not produce the intended results for their children. "The U.S. economy is already turning out more college graduates than any foreseeable vacancies in these professional fields" (Buell, 2004, p. 76).

Student health. Medina (2009) regards sleep, exercise and stress as the chief concerns regarding brain health. More than half of the students at this school site participate on school athletic teams. Those in the survey reported spending significant time exercising. Yet, the students also revealed that they sleep much less than they need during the week, only to crash on the weekend to catch up on much needed rest. This lack of sleep partly explains their overwhelming perception that homework is stressful, because without proper sleep, students' brains are less able to function and cope with stress (Levine, 2008; Medina, 2009). In this study, students revealed the conditions of perpetual stress which dominated their consciousness, particularly concerning grades and homework. The American Psychological Association (APA) regards this perpetual condition of stress as chronic stress and defines it as "a feeling of being overwhelmed, worried, or run-down" (APA, n.d.). Though the APA acknowledges that some short-term stress can be beneficial to promote a greater focus or to boost performance, chronic stress is a physical and emotional problem. An APA study released in 2012 revealed compelling linkages between chronic stress and disease among adults.

The school environment which fosters the promotion of chronic stress among its students is not unlike the work and lived experience of the adults in the United States. Schools prepare students to stress as adults by stressing them now through practices of large amounts of homework. This notion is similar to what Kohn (2007a) refers to as "better get used to it" with regards to distasteful practices of school such as homework which are encouraged at younger and younger ages.

Cost of Homework. Mastery of learning was wanting and the purpose for learning was articulated as an internalized formula: hard work begets college acceptance begets a good job begets a good life. Student responses about homework support Pink's (2009) notion of Motivation 2.0, where motivation and creativity are crushed by the pursuit of short-term rewards and punishments. In this pursuit, cheating and short-term solutions abound. In the current homework culture of the school, short-term thinking trumps long-term vision and meaningful goal setting.

Similar to the conclusions of Willis (1997) and Bowles & Gintis (1976/2011), the culture of this school trains future workers, consumers (Giroux, 2009), and citizens. Yet what is distinct about this school is that students here are socialized to stay busy, incessantly busy, and focused on the task, but not on what they love. There is no time for rest, only for work. There is no time for family, only stress, isolation, and worry. And, students are expected to do so without complaint. If this is the education for future citizenry (Buell, 2004), we are educating students not to care about the world, to feel victimized by their place in the world, and yet to remain busy working, instead of being engaged and helping to make the world better, more peaceful, more

just. These findings affirm conclusions that schools and the practice of homework promote the training of a docile workforce (Buell, 2004; de Carvalho, 2001).

Irony of Autonomy. At the center of the discussion concerning intrinsic motivation is the notion and emphasis on autonomy (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990; Pink, 2011; Robinson, 2009) and self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The unit of analysis is largely the individual directed toward understanding what motivates the best, most creative efforts in individuals. The discussion of intrinsic motivation is situated in the realm of business and economics (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Pink, 2011), with claims to inform other areas such as education (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990; Robinson, 2009).

The irony of autonomy regarding this study is twofold: 1) there is little but a GPA that students believe they self-determine at school, and 2) one of the problems articulated clearly by students in this study concerned the isolating, lonely nature of homework. Yet, what students wanted was relationship (Boyle, 2010) with their learning, and specifically their teachers. Often, the students lamented that their efforts at homework went unnoticed and disregarded by their teachers. They spent too much time on homework at the expense of studying for their tests. The pursuit of a college applicable GPA seemed exhausting, if not elusive. Though the cumulative GPA of the focus group participants was high relative to the school, there was little celebration or pride in the group for their efforts. Grades and academic accomplishments had lost significance (Kohn, 1999).

Students also wanted contextual relevance in their learning, not an artificially truncated and divided approach by subject. They yearned for exuberance, but could only wistfully hope that it lay in a weekend, an atypically understanding teacher, or in some distant moment in the

future. They achieved their GPA, but did not speak of their accomplishments in terms of competency, autonomy, or relatedness (Pink, 2011). They demonstrated by their GPA that they had learned, but were quick to admit that they could not remember what they had learned.

I Do Homework

Ten minute rule. The students at this school site report homework levels per night well above the recommended level of 10 minutes per night multiplied by grade level of student (Cooper, 2007). Cooper's (2007) recommendation is most apt, to "not overload students with homework. It can ruin motivation" (p. 102). If student self-assessed homework time and experience should be trusted (Cooper, 2007), the school here prescribes homework in ways and amounts that are not optimal for learning. Cooper (2007) recommends that "1.5 to 2.5 hours per night" is an "optimal amount of homework for 12th graders" (p. 34). Also, student responses in this study are as a counter narrative to the findings of Gill & Schlossman (2003a), who claim that "most teenagers do very little homework, and most 17-year-olds do no more than most 13-year olds" (p. 180).

Student achievement. It is not clear whether the practice of homework at this school favors students of affluence (Anderson, 2011; Kravolec & Buell, 2000; Kohn, 2006a), though arguably students at this site are children of affluent families. The survey, however, revealed that homework at this site favors students with higher GPAs, who often have higher GPAs because they earn an extra point for every honors or Advanced Placement (AP) class they complete. Students with GPAs greater than 4.00 perceived less stress than those with GPAs less than or equal to 4.00.

Similar to the findings of Van Voorhis (2011), the students in the focus groups who reported that their experiences of homework quality, purpose, and teacher direction are much more satisfying were the students with higher GPAs. Those students who were dissatisfied were students who experience homework as busywork with poor teacher direction. That is, poor homework quality may be more pronounced in 1) classes that are not honors or Advanced Placement (AP) and 2) with students who do not readily succeed in this school structure of a fixed curriculum with testing and homework. Similarly, students with higher GPAs are more motivated to do homework. Again, this may be due to a different teaching style in an AP or honors course in which certain students thrive by grade achievement.

Motivation and homework. Yet, students in this study confirm the chief finding of homework researchers: homework quality is the issue (Bembenutty, 2011; Cooper, 2007; Coutts, 2004; Dettmers, Trautwein, Lüdtke, Kunter, & Baumert, 2010; Marzano & Pickering, 2007; Trautwein & Lüdtke, 2007; Van Voorhis, 2011; Vatterott, 2009). Students resent crossword puzzles, worksheets, word finds, coloring assignments, character relationship diagrams, and, especially, exorbitant amounts of work. They, like Kohn (2007a), abhor cavalier attitudes of teachers who presume that weekends are simply extra time to do more homework. They are dumbfounded by the practice of cumulative homework from their seven teachers who do not coordinate deadlines and test dates (Gill & Schlossman, 2003a). This study confirmed that the less students understand the purpose of the homework, the less motivation they have for completing homework.

A huge aspect of the dissatisfaction with homework at this school also confirms the findings of Leone and Richards (1989): students are unhappy and lacking motivation when

doing homework alone. The isolated practice of homework not only is a poor practice for learning, it is an alienating practice that causes unhealthy stress and inherent dissatisfaction with school. Students want efforts to collaborate and socialize, not to compete with others through thousands of frantic hours spent in isolated places.

Gender and Catholic school. Though this study was not about gender or Catholic school per se, the amount of homework that students reported is worth understanding in these contexts. Student focus group discussions of their teachers confirmed the findings of Bempechat, et al. (2007) that college preparatory, Catholic single-sex school teachers are demanding, but disconfirmed the notion that these same teachers drive toward excellence. In most subject areas of the school, students found cause to complain of busy work, noting having to "color the cross". They had to rush to complete their homework. The interruption noted in the focus groups indicated strongly to these students that teachers dictate their time, and that they should get used to it.

This study revealed that 78% of students spend 20 or more hours per week on homework which is well above two Freshman Survey (Sax, et al., 2009) comparisons:
1) 34.5% of female students in single-sex Catholic schools reported spending 11 or more hours per week on homework and 2) in independent schools, single-sex environments report that 62% of students spend 11 or more hours on homework per week.

Data Dumping. Students in this study revealed that they cannot remember content from their classes after they complete assessments in the form of homework, quizzes, or tests (Kohn, 2006a). The students described their learning as ephemeral. They were unable to remember class content just moments, days, and weeks after they were quizzed or tested. They are largely

memorizing data in the short-term to dump it effectively for a grade to be recorded. The banking concept of education that Freire (1970/2010) condemns is not only oppressive of students, but is an unsuccessful model for promoting learning. The irony is that those who promote the banking concept of education presume that knowledge will fill the empty receptacle of the student's mind. In this study, students revealed that the bank deposits are empty.

Thousands of hours. Gladwell's (2008) discussion of the advantage of spending 10,000 hours for explaining why some individuals achieve such great success is relevant here. Homework is often falsely trumpeted (Kohn, 2006a) as the way forward for academic achievement, student success, and for developing a capable future workforce.

The passion and aptitude that Robinson (2009) espouses was evident in a few exceptional moments of dialogue as students trumpeted a clear hope for their lives, distinct from the lives they currently led as students at this school. These were, however, exceptions. Students in this study, by their lifetime of homework completion, demonstrate that they are no closer to becoming the Beatles or Bill Gates by their efforts, because they have pursued homework completion at the expense of doing what they love with those they love. Instead, what I would suggest is that what students are practicing in a cumulative homework pursuit of thousands of hours is a habit-forming docility and acquiescence to perceived authority (Chomsky, 2011). Students in this study had the perception that high school would be fun (Coutts, 2004), but laughed in focus group at the notion that this was the best moment of their lives, noting "it gets worse after this?"

Hope for Educators?

> To overcome the anxieties and depressions of contemporary life, individuals must become independent of the social environment to the degree that they no longer respond exclusively in terms of its rewards and punishments. To achieve such autonomy, a person has to learn to provide rewards to herself. She has to develop the ability to find enjoyment and purpose regardless of external circumstances. (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990, p. 16)

Csíkszentmihályi's (1990) words capture the ideal and fleeting fantasy of flow, particularly for high school students at this school. In homework, students are not in flow and possibly in direct opposition to it. Because of homework and the nature of schooling, students are seldom in flow while at school. When asked about flow, the clearest answers students could give were "daydreaming" and "laughing." Laughing was referenced because students believed it was at that time when they were most purely in control of their own lives, because they could laugh at it, with friends, and at others. There was, however, no indication that students had any totally exhilarating, timeless experience with homework or learning that resembled the phenomenon of flow.

Hope. Where there may be hope for educators is in the example of Hope, a student participant in the focus groups. She possessed a keen awareness of her love of life and the cost that homework had placed on her pursuit of her goals. She sought professional therapy when school became too stressful. She followed the advice, though at times reluctantly, of her mother. She remained clear in her thoughts and devoted to the notion of "smelling the roses," despite being able to see through the veil of the grade game of homework. She was aptly critical of the

practice of homework and for any educator serious about homework reform, she would be a trusted ally. I do not believe, though, that Hope was atypical. Nor do I believe that her participation in this study was exceptional. I remain committed to the belief that all students are capable of great insight (Stipek & Seal, 2001) and wanting the opportunities in education to determine their respective paths (Levoy, 1997). This will continue to be possible only if teachers and educational leaders can allow themselves to trust that their students possess keen insight worthy of their attention and action (Freire, 1970/2010).

Self-Determination. Though the work of Deci & Ryan (2000) and Pink (2009) is compelling and has merit, the ideal conditions for learning and working that they espouse were not evidenced at this school. Students do not have autonomy to self-direct their learning toward a chosen vocation, let alone have the time to rest and to pursue avocational interests. They must isolate themselves to succeed. Their work is seldom collaborative, and their relatedness with family and peers is ephemeral.

As mentioned above, their pursuit of the grade game literally trains them to cheat and to falsify learning to advance (Cooper, 2007). This is not unlike the banking scandals of 2008 to the present, where large banking institutions wreaked havoc on people and global financial systems by their accounting practices, risky investments, collusion to fix bank lending rates, and by laundering money ("Global Banking," 2012). Adults were cheating the system to advance themselves; perhaps they advanced similarly and previously in schools.

Agency or Auto Pilot? Though students spoke continuously about the debilitating nature of homework (Shernoff & Vandell, 2007), their very act of articulation gave them life. Where agency was most fully promoted was in reading the words from the open response

questions from the survey. These pages of printed perspective spurred the students in the focus groups to recognize that they were not alone in their perspective. They shared an understanding and an experience of homework with over half of their school, and in this sharing they found the courage to speak up in the focus group. The snacks were ample and were enjoyed at the table. The students who participated were all nice, kind, thoughtful, and wanting to help. But what moved them to speak, and to speak with urgency, was a hope born that their words, put by transcription into print, would speak to their teachers and change the practice of homework at the school (Warton, 2001).

Though they largely recognized that either 1) homework was worthwhile or 2) they acquiesced in recognition that homework would not be cancelled, they exited each of the focus group sessions energized. They were energized as if they had been on a retreat, emboldened because they were no longer alone, isolated. They shared a part of their story (Boyle, 2010). Because they were listened to by their peers and by one of their teachers, they were energized by this liberating experience (Darder, 2011). They entered the room largely strangers, and left more confident that they shared a common understanding of a major part of their historical lives with one another. Mostly all articulated that homework became a burden for them in high school. As much as each of the students liked or loved this school, the setting of this focus group provided them the unique opportunity to gather, to share their story, and to critically assess their experience of homework within this school. In so doing, they exited the room hopeful, re-energized, and more alive. This study affirms the practice of engaging student voice (Cook-Sather, 2009, 2010a, 2010b; Mitra, 2004; Noguera, 2007; Osberg, Pope, & Galloway, 2006; Pope, 2001; Warton, 2001).

Catching up or leading the way. Zhao (2009) remarked that the vast majority, 82%, of adults in the United States, want work that is interesting. Students in the focus groups in this study would probably agree with this desire, but were unable to name what the interesting work would be. Perhaps, this is because school had not awakened or nurtured their wonder or their hope. In lecture-driven classrooms, they had become bored and disenchanted (Robinson, 2006). With homework, they became focused on a narrow pursuit of grades at the expense of health. Day after day, they repeated this cycle, at times having breakdowns, meltdowns, illness, and fights with parents (Abeles & Congdon, 2009). Catching up or leading the way? (Zhao, 2009). This remains a great question. The students at this site need to catch up on sleep in order for them to aptly lead the way.

Essentialized Practice of Homework. Students have internalized the message of homework and grades. By far, the dominant worldview expressed by students and best evidenced by the concluding statements of students in the focus groups, was that homework is worthwhile. After reading the student survey results, after each student spent two-and-a-half hours in focus group discussion blasting the terrible effects of homework on their lives, they agreed: homework is worthwhile. The dominant discourse (Darder, 2011) trumpeted from politicians and education leaders for at least the past 55 years (Buell, 2004) has stuck. Though homework causes meltdowns, fights with parents, nervous breakdowns, stress, lack of sleep, anger, illness (Abeles & Congdon, 2009), students still abide by the dominant discourse that homework is worthwhile. What is behind this hidden curriculum (Freire, 1970/2010) to have students accept that school can extend its reach into their young lives at home and at the cost of their participation in extra-curricular life? There may be fear (Mustakova-Possardt, 2004) which

inhibits a greater level of consciousness by students, teachers, and parents. But, there is no evil conspiracy. There are consensual social practices between students, parents, and teachers enshrined in an unquestioned belief that homework (even if it is busywork of coloring worksheets) is worthwhile and worth the sacrifice, because it will earn them the grade to get into college to have a good job and, by extension, to have a good life. School culture enjoys an hegemony (McLaren, 2009) with respect to students and their consensual adherence to homework completion. The ideal of the Horatio Alger story is at work in the discourse of homework. These students, I suspect, are very similar to students across this country who participate in the grade game of meritocratic high school education (Abeles & Congdon, 2009; Buell, 2004; Kohn, 2007a; Kravolec & Buell, 2000; Levine, 2008; Pope, 2001).

Homework for critical consciousness. Most remarkable to me about the focus group transcripts were the ways in which consciousness could be sparked by dialogue (Darder, 2011). Students were sharing of their experience. Sometimes the extroverted students dominated, competing for the groups' attention. But in a moment, one student would offer a new insight or a different perspective, and it would raise the level of awareness in the room. This spurred brainstorms. It spurred laughter, excitement, storytelling. In six focus group sessions, the term "Group laughs" was transcribed 81 times. This group found in their laughter a common sharing (Graban, 2001), relief of nerves, and an irony. What they were laughing at – the loss of sleep, the onset of stress, the unrealized nostalgic hope for simpler days and understanding, pro-active, sensitive teachers – was not funny. It was sad. These were young women ages 14 to 18 in a moment when their minds and bodies were as fresh and strong as they would ever be. They were laughing that they were spending these years sitting still in lectures at desks (Shernoff, et al.,

2003) for eight hours, to be assigned another three to six hours of homework. They were laughing that their teachers were largely uncaring about their burden of homework and stress. They were laughing at the absurdity of it all. And they were one-upping one another, with doozies of lived experience that could only make the group take notice.

How deeply did the awareness go? It is difficult to say. In each group, there were definitely a-ha moments that ran through the entire group. In each group, there were certainly individuals because of age or lived experience who shared wisdom uncommon in the group. However, I believe that by the engagement of students through dialogue, a transforming process of critical consciousness emerged (Darder, 1991, 2012). Work for critical consciousness remains in expanding this dialogue with teachers and more students. There is, with teachers and administrators, an inertia. Though the students in the study and I perceive the problem of homework as a major problem that is linked to the structure of schooling, the problem seems largely ignored. Yet, movements to reform education, government, or systems of thinking do not change in a singular moment or effort (Ackerman & Duvall, 2000). Movements must engage many diverse individuals and groups to create and sustain meaningful transformation.

I am convinced that if teachers could hear the students (Warton, 2001), they would start to understand. I want to take their advice and post the survey results for the faculty. I have done this before during accreditation when students spoke up wanting a bona fide cafeteria and tables at which to eat. Though there was initial attention around this, the efforts to secure lunch tables or more never materialized. In this effort regarding homework, I want to post the results, but only if I can be confident that I have helped to develop a teacher culture receptive to its message. I do not want to contribute to an even deeper cynicism with our students.

Why are teachers reluctant to change homework practice? Perhaps, they are entrenched in their practice and fearful of change. Perhaps, adults perceive themselves as exhausted and, therefore, unwilling to listen. Perhaps, teachers are unversed or unfamiliar with the practice of dialogue. Perhaps, the culture of the school prohibits mutuality on many levels between teachers and students, teachers with teachers, and teachers with administrators. Needless to say, the people at this school site need the practice of dialogue to continually listen to one another, and then to re-shape their future together (Darder, 1991, 2012).

The most telling moments about how their lives were shaped by the reality of school and homework were when students spoke with a vision about the future. They asked is perpetual work was all there was to life. When one student (Lemon) talked about leaving her after-school job and seeing all the other workers going home after having spent their days working, she was exhaustedly sad. A most capable and accomplished senior student, she saw before her a life she thought her strident efforts could avoid with accomplished grades and completed homework Incessant work is not what she, or the group, had idealized for their future. She had hoped for fun, relaxation, relationship, and not the perpetual grind.

What is homework for "critical consciousness" (Darder, 1991, 2012)? I believe it is the reality that in schools, we have an essentialized practice of homework. As a nation, we fought to establish a 40 hour work week (*Fair Labor Standards Act*, 1938), yet we cannot do the same for our youngest and brightest. Children need most the time to rest (Medina, 2009), dream, explore, and develop talents in areas they love (Robinson, 2009). This is the homework assignment our nation faces in its structure of schooling. The monotone drumbeat of standardized tests and college acceptance continues while students are becoming disengaged from their natural drive

and ability to learn, to be curious, to engage with their world (Robinson, 2009). They send themselves to isolation in their bedrooms disallowing the urge to sleep in pursuit of a fictionally scarce resource of grade (Kohn, 2007a). They do so in a belief that this is the competition they must win (Kohn, 1999) so that their whole lives are not locked in a perpetual rut of work. Yet, with little prompting, they recognize that this competitive life is unending, perpetually busy, and futile. Their participation in the grade game excludes and prevents visionary thinking.

What, then, is our homework as educators and educational leaders? To develop critical consciousness. Ironically, it is the homework we prescribe to our students, which prevents our ability to recognize we are preventing the development of their critical consciousness.

Conclusion

Chapter Six presented an analysis of the findings of the study in light of the three theories of the conceptual framework: intrinsic motivation, social reproduction, and social reproduction. It also presents emergent themes of the study, while drawing linkages to the research literature concerning academic homework. Chapter Seven will conclude the dissertation with a summary of the study contextualized in a discussion of recommendations for the future practice and study of homework in schools.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

CONCLUSION

This study sought to understand student perspectives about homework and its impact on the lives of students enrolled in an all-female, Catholic college preparatory high school. Toward this end, the history of educational, legal, and research trends regarding homework in the United States were first explored and reviewed. Through a mixed methods approach, the study examined student perceptions of homework in light of student motivation and stress. The conceptual framework for analysis encompassed three lenses: intrinsic motivation (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990; Pink, 2011; Robinson, 2009; Stipek & Seal, 2001), social reproduction (Bowles & Gintis, 1976/2011; Willis, 1977), and critical pedagogy (Darder, 1991, 2002, 2011, 2012; Freire, 1970/2010; Giroux, 2009; hooks, 2003, 2010; McLaren, 2009).

Students (*N*=225) participated in a voluntary online student survey of 36 Likert scale questions and four open response questions. The survey questions asked demographic questions about grade level, GPA, amount of homework (daily and weekly), amount of sleep (weeknight and weekend), amount of exercise, and the percentage of grade dedicated to homework. The use of the Likert scale used helped to assess student perceptions of intrinsic motivation and homework purpose. By utilizing survey questions of previous studies (Katz, et al., 2011; Xu, 2005, 2010), portions of the survey demonstrated high internal reliability. The four open response questions which concluded the survey asked students to describe 1) the best and worst aspects of homework, 2) what they would do if they did not have homework, and 3) what they would want their teachers to know about their homework experience.

After the survey, students (*n*=22) participated in three focus groups of 6-8 members each to validate the survey data and, more importantly, to engage in a practice of critical dialogue (Darder, 2002; Freire, 1970/2010) with the researcher (an assistant principal at the school), regarding the practice of homework. What students shared was convincing; the practice of homework is causing undue stress on the lives of these students. For example, "most adults work eight to 10 hour days and expect unstructured time in the evening to complete household chores and connect with families, hobbies, and interests" (Suskind, 2012, p. 54). This study found that students feel the same way. Homework is their "job of childhood" (Corno & Xu, 2004) and they resent the pressure that it places on their lives.

Students sacrifice sleep and time with family to complete homework. Students often complete homework solely to pursue points, in order to increase their grades. Students in this study complete homework at rates well above what is recommended (Cooper, 2007) and what is historically documented (Gill & Schlossman, 2004). Nevertheless, in focus group dialogues, students repeatedly expressed that "homework is worthwhile," yet hoping that teachers would work to coordinate deadlines and plan homework assignments more effectively. Mostly, the students seek to understand from teachers why they are asked to complete homework, without any expressed acknowledgment nor explicit sense of its purpose.

Most importantly, if these students could participate in a dialogue with teachers about the quantity, purpose, and scope of homework, they believe that their stress would lessen and that they would be more effective learners. This study also revealed that the practice of engaging students authentically, in the process of critical dialogue, is enlightening, energizing, and an important (and often missing) way to move forward toward effective educational reform.

Students bear insights worthy of hearing and worthy of acting upon. For educators, this premise would constitute rethinking homework for critical consciousness.

Context of Homework

What this study evidenced is the need to engage students in meaningful dialogue about their lived experiences with homework practice within school. This is necessary because it is largely unpracticed as a method of knowing about homework and its actual impact on students (Warton, 2001). It is also legal and prudent as the Supreme Court decision in *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District* (1969) asserts that "a student may express opinions on controversial issues" (Thomas, Cambron-McCabe, & McCarthy, 2009, p. 115), provided the speech does not substantially disrupt the order of the school. Acknowledging and including students in discussions about homework practice and policy could radically improve and transform its practice. With this in mind, schools should seek to provide appropriate forums (DeMitchell & Onosko, 2012), to include and solicit student voices in discussions about homework using a critical dialogic model for community engagement.

As educators, we must recognize that laws, policies, and the practice of homework are part of a fluid, dynamic, and political history of schooling. Homework has been enforced with corporal punishment in the late 1800s and is still enforced as such in some school settings today. Homework has been banned in the past and there are those who, once again, promote a ban of homework in schools today. Recent efforts to restrict and negotiate homework practice by parents in Calgary, New Hampshire, and other school districts nationwide are evidence of how historical trends swing like a pendulum. But these efforts also evidence growing efforts by

parents to individualize and personalize education, in ways that make it more relevant and meaningful for their children.

If the past is any indication, homework debates will continue to ebb and flow in the coming years. Where energy could be placed, however, is in resolving the link that still exists between the practice of homework and punishment, and the reality that homework *is* punishment. As the case of *Bolding v. State* (1887) demonstrates, the practice of homework is tied historically and currently to an issue of enforcement, and at times enforcement by corporal punishment. As discussed earlier, *homework* is also the term for court mandated effort for prisoners on probation and parolees, which has served as a means for returning prisoners to jail. By anecdote, I have worked in several schools that enforce academic homework completion with a threat of punishment by detention. Ideally, schools are not preparing students for jail, noting again "the child is not the mere creature of the State; those who nurture him [or her] and direct his [or her] destiny have the right, coupled with the high duty, to recognize and prepare him [or her] for additional obligations" (Ross, 2000, p. 3). Educators, therefore, have the duty to prepare students to be critically conscious.

Recommendations for Homework Practice

"Futurists suggest that successful individuals going forward will be those who have the creativity to make a multiplicity of connections that aren't evident within the boundaries of their own disciplines and instead adapt, view, and combine perspectives previously thought of as unrelated" (Suskind, 2012, p. 54).

Much of what can be recommended from this study echoes the conclusions of other scholars, affirms that teachers need to improve, and beckons toward emerging solutions. These recommendations for homework practice are discussed below.

Echoes of scholars. For school principals, Kohn (2007a) emphasizes that the practice of homework should not be promoted merely from tradition. He encourages solutions including but not limited to the following: "Rethink standardized 'homework policies.'…reduce the amount, but don't stop there…[and] use homework as an opportunity to involve students in decision-making" (pp. 2-3). Similarly, Harvey Craft (2009), a retired educator, suggests that schools focus students, to a fault, on grades and not learning. To address this, he encourages using homework as a formative and not a graded, summative assessment.

The concerns that Gill & Schlossman (2003a) raise about efforts to reform the practice of homework include:

> …thorny implementation problems regarding the content and scheduling of homework that must guide any concrete effort to change practice. Mundane though they may seem at first, issues of scheduling cut to the heart of class management, administrative norms, and principal-teacher power relations. This is especially true at the high school level, where teaching is divided by subject areas and supervised by separated academic departments. (p. 332)

Further, much can be learned from homework reform efforts of the mid-20th century, where reformers "tried to transform homework into more interesting, challenging, and diverse educational experiences for students" (p. 332). Efforts to reform homework, then, were not

about time, per se, given that "mere exhortations to spend more time on homework will come up against limits imposed by students, teachers, and sometimes parents as well" (p. 333).

Xu (2011) found that if students received "teacher feedback" on homework, they were more likely to complete it (p. 179). Patall, Cooper, & Wynn (2010) found that students who were given choices with options of homework had higher intrinsic motivation to complete assignments. Katz, Kaplan, & Gueta (2010) affirm that students learn better in contexts where they are intrinsically versus extrinsic motivated. Their finding corresponds to this study where students were exhausted pursuing extrinsic rewards of grades and college acceptance. Learning, at least described by students, was only for short term reward of quiz and test grades. To change this, Katz et al. (2010) and Deci & Ryan (2000) agree that when students have "environmental supports" such as parents and teachers, they are better able to find intrinsic motivation. In this study, this was evidenced by Hope, who learned with her mother how to cope with homework pressures.

Many of the students in this study remarked that they missed the carefree days of elementary school. They perceived the present moment as a fixed and difficult circumstance. Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck (2007) described this reality by affirming school cultures which are "less failure-prone" (p. 258) such as elementary schools. When students have fixed mindsets (in this case for high grades and college acceptance), they are more prone to suffer in their failing when schools are set up to reward success and disregard or punish failure.

Purpose and Motivation. Homework debates struggle to find consensus because of a diverse experience of homework by different students, parents, and teachers, though the debates continues in countries across the globe (Goldberg, 2012). What might be the best path forward is

to engage school communities in efforts to re-think and, borrowing from Freire, to reinvent homework. As this study evidenced and homework researchers agree, homework quality is the issue (Bembenutty, 2011; Cooper, 2007; Coutts, 2004; Dettmers, Trautwein, Lüdtke, Kunter, & Baumert, 2010; Marzano & Pickering, 2007; Trautwein & Lüdtke, 2007; Van Voorhis, 2011; Vatterott, 2009).

This process of improving homework should involve students (Warton, 2001) and should begin by improving teacher training with regard to the design and use of homework (Van Voorhis, 2011). Ideas abound about how to do this, including but not limited to: active learning (Center for Math and Science Teaching, 2012); problem-solving curriculum (Freire, 1970/2010); non-graded homework (Craft, 2009; Fisher, Frey, & Pumpian, 2011); allowing students to tackle real world issues by embedding skills development in projects (Green & Medina-Jerez, 2012); collaboration and project based learning, flipped classroom (pocketlodge, 2011); and universal design for learning (UDLCast, 2010). Each of these efforts at curricular improvement regarding homework must focus on homework purpose. Without this focus, students are left without motivation to complete the homework and to engage their learning intrinsically.

Stress and Wonder. What is most evident in this study is that student stress due to the practice of homework contributes directly to the loss of wonder. Student stress is real and manifests itself in adolescents in varied and troubling ways (Levine, 2008). Without necessary sleep, learning and health are compromised (Medina, 2009). When students are stressed and directed to focus continually on grades and homework, they do so at the cost of developing other talents and abilities (Kohn, 2006a).

Schools should equip students with abilities to learn, to succeed, but also to rest, play, and discover (Robinson, 2009). Part of this effort is in helping students develop a "growth mindset" (Dweck, 2006) to deal with and to balance stress. Part of this effort is in improving the quality of learning and homework, so that students find purpose and motivation to learn (Csíkszentmihályi, 1984). Yet, the chief part of this effort concerns the isolating practice of homework. So that students are given the greatest opportunity to learn, to grow, and to wonder, they must be given the autonomy (Pink, 2011), the locus of control (Weiner, 1990), and the agency (Freire, 1970/2010; Mitra, 2004) to choose how to spend their free time. Ultimately, the students in this study echoed the words of Freire (1974), "to be human is to engage in relationships with others and the world" (p. 3). There is little possibility for the development of wonder when students are isolated, stressed, tired, and solely focused on grades.

Limitations

This study examined student perception about homework among an all-female, private Catholic high school in an affluent area of Southern California. The public school system of California is large and diverse and as such, this study is limited by its pool of participants. A replication of this study would be helpful to assess whether a different result would be obtained from a school in a different context. Furthermore, this study experienced a history threat in the preceding two years of the study where three-fourths of the students viewed the film *Race to Nowhere*, which documents the prevalence of student stress in schools, particularly with regard to homework. This may have affected student response. This study may have also experienced multiple treatment interference, as the entire school was asked to complete two sets of student surveys for the school accreditation in the preceding fall semester. The previous surveys

addressed some questions about homework, though those questions were distinct from the homework questions in this present survey. What should be noted, however, is that the findings of this study are not exceptional (Abeles & Congdon, 2009; Kohn, 2006a; Luthar & Becker, 2002; Lyons, 2004; McDermott, et al., 1984; Pope, 2001; Shernoff, Csíkszentmihályi, Schneider, & Shernoff, 2003; Wilson & Rhodes, 2010) and may be generalizable.

Strengths

The study had three strengths worth noting. One, the most compelling strength of this study is that it asked students to be honest about their lived experience. The veracity of their response was triangulated between survey and three different student groups in focus group dialogue. Two, the survey instrument had strong internal reliability, replicating survey questions from previous studies (Katz et al., 2011; Xu, 2005, 2010). Thus, it is possible to assert that the findings were accurate. Three, the large size of the survey sample (N=225) lent significance to the correlations that were run.

Future Studies

Going forward, the lived experience of students regarding homework needs to be taken seriously and addressed in schools. The study of homework, particularly regarding student voice, will continue to be an important topic for educational research (Kohn, 2006a; Warton, 2001). Future studies should involve action research where student voice is taken seriously to create change (Mitra, 2004; Noguera, 2007; Warton, 2001). Most critically, action research based upon the notion of dialogue (Darder, 2002; Freire, 1970/2010) is a most authentic and promising effort to understand and to co-create homework reform with students by including

students, teachers, and parents in dialogue to develop curricula to foster critical consciousness and relatedness, not busy-ness and isolation.

Kohn's (2006a, 2007a) recommendations remain as guideposts for homework reform and study: 1) homework quantity needs to be reduced, 2) homework practices need to be questioned, and 3) learning needs to be individualized. Yet, further, longitudinal studies of homework environment are needed (Xu, 2012). Longitudinal studies of homework, motivation, and teacher support are needed (Katz, et al., 2010). Further studies similar to Leone & Richards (1989) which employ the Experience Sampling Method (ESM) of Csíkszentmihályi (1984) could document the reality of homework for students in real time. The "thorny implementation" (Gill & Schlossman, 2003a, p.332) of homework reform mentioned above needs to be studied in the context of 1) assessing quantity of homework (documenting time, calendaring tests/projects at school); 2) improving the student/teacher feedback loop; and 3) understanding the inherent connection between purpose and motivation.

Conclusion

Transformation of societal structures does not derive from a single moment, event, or voice (Ackerman & Duvall, 2000). When asked if and how the results of this study should be shared with the school community, students were clear that results should be posted and action should be taken to improve the practice of homework. In regard to this, I take the following quote seriously: "the use of stories as a means to foster identification with the other is not enough; vicarious distress in hearing of another's suffering or trauma alone does not lead to justice – action does" (Kumagai & Lypson, 2009, p. 785).

In this study, students expected change in homework policy and practice at the school. When change did not come immediately, students raised concern that their efforts on the survey and focus groups were wasted. These moments prompted further dialogue and deeper reflection. So that students do not become cynical or feel ignored, betrayed, and without hope, there needs to be broader participation in dialogue and processes of transformation. There is much work still to be done. Yet, I believe I am not alone as an educator that cares about the lived experiences of students. Going forward, I seek to continue to work with students in the Gandhian notion (B'Hahn, 2001), "to be the change [we] wish to see in the world."

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Appendix A
Student Survey

Thank you for taking the time to complete this student survey about homework. Choose the answer that best reflects you and your attitudes. The responses to this survey are anonymous by design. Please rate the following questions as honestly as possible. There are 40 total questions. Though each question is important, please skip any questions that you are not comfortable answering.

1) What Grade are you in? 9 10 11 12
2) How many hours (on average) do you spend per DAY on homework?
   0 .5 1 1.5 2 2.5 3 3.5 4 4.5 Other
3) How many hours (on average) do you spend per WEEK on homework?
   0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 Other
4) How many hours (on average) do you sleep per SCHOOL NIGHT?
   0 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 10 11 12
5) How many hours (on average) do you sleep per WEEKEND NIGHT?
   0 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 10 11 12
6) How many minutes (on average) do you exercise per day?
   0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70+
7) What is your GPA?_____ (Enter to two decimal places. For example, 2.75).

Please check the most accurate response for each of the questions below.

8) How much of your homework is discussed in class?
   None, Some, Most, All
9) How much of your homework is collected by teachers?
   None, Some, Most, All
10) How much of your assigned homework is checked by teachers?
    None, Some, Most, All
11) How much of your homework is graded by teachers?
    None, Some, Most, All
12) How much of your assigned homework is counted in your overall grade?
    0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Doing homework…

13) Doing homework helps me understand what's going on in class.
    Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree
14) Doing homework helps me learn how to manage my time.
    Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree
15) Doing homework gives me opportunities to practice skills from class lessons.
    Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree
16) Doing homework helps me develop a sense of responsibility.
    Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree
17) Doing homework helps me learn to work independently.
    Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree

Homework is…

18) Homework is necessary.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree

19) Homework is boring.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree

20) Homework is busy work.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree

21) Homework is fun.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree

I do homework because…

22) I do homework because it can help me in the future.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree

23) I do homework because it helps me to succeed in school.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree

24) I do homework in order to improve my understanding in the subject.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree

25) I do homework because I love to learn.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree

26) I do homework because it is challenging to me.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree

Doing homework…

27) Doing homework helps me prepare for the next lesson.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree

28) Doing homework helps me to develop good discipline.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree

29) Doing homework helps me learn study skills.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree

30) Doing homework stresses me out.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree

I do homework because…

31) I do homework because I want to get a better grade.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree

32) I do homework by copying it.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree

33) I do homework so I don't feel bad when parents ask me about my homework.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree

34) I do homework because I would feel ashamed if the teacher found out I didn't do it.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree

35) I do homework because I have always done homework.

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree

36) I do homework, but I would rather do something else.

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Disagree and Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree

In the last 4 questions, please complete the following statements:

37) The best thing about homework is…

38) The problem with homework is…

39) If I didn't have homework, I…

40) If I could tell my teachers one thing about homework, I would want them to know…

Appendix B
Focus Group Guiding Questions

Focus Group One (A1, B1, C1)
Good Afternoon and Welcome!
In the next 75 minutes, we will have a chance to talk about homework, and specifically, the results of the survey that the entire school took in these past days. The next time we meet, we will talk about homework and how homework affects you personally.

I am hoping that we can be a group of great listeners and can also share our insights openly with one another. What I know is that we will be a better group if we have trust with one another. I will keep your responses anonymous. I will ask you to each other's thoughts confidential. To help other groups have their own thoughts in here, and to ensure that no one feels betrayed leaving here, I would ask you to keep what is said, in this room. Can you agree?

To begin, I would ask you to introduce yourself, except, I would ask you to think of a pseudonym. You know, an alias, a new name. When I write the report about our conversations, I will want to keep you anonymous. And so take a moment to think of a fun name that you would like to have while we meet in the two focus groups.

Ok, let's say our name and our grade.

Next, I have the results of the survey. I would ask you each to take a copy, grab a pencil, and take a moment to read the results. Feel free to mark on the copy and write comments or questions. This is your copy for the meeting. I will collect them and shred them at the end of the meeting. While you're reading, feel free to grab a snack (in the middle of the table).

(After they read the results). **What did you notice?** What surprised you?
What are students saying to us about homework?

A number of questions were asked about motivation and homework. What do you notice?

For you, how are you motivated to do homework?

For motivation, they are two basic kinds "Intrinsic" and "Extrinsic".
When our learning, and our pursuit of something, is motivated from inside, we call it intrinsic. When it's forced from outside it's extrinsic. Does that make sense? Can someone give me an example? Intrinsically, or extrinsically? Why? Let's take a look back at the survey, **what are students saying to us about intrinsic or extrinsic motivation?**

To close today, I would ask us to take a moment and consider what we have heard.
Before leaving today, I would ask each of us to take a turn and share an insight, a thought you have that summarizes your experience today._____

Focus Group Two (A2, B2, C2)

Good Afternoon and Welcome Back!

In the next 75 minutes, we will have a chance to talk about homework and how homework affects you personally. Like I said the last time we met, I am hoping that we can be a group of great listeners and can also share our insights openly with one another. What I know is that we will be a better group if we have trust with one another. I will keep your responses anonymous. I will ask you to each other's thoughts confidential. To help other groups have their own thoughts in here, and to ensure that no one feels betrayed leaving here, I would ask you to keep what is said, in this room. How did that go?

Ok, as a review, can you say your name, grade, and **your favorite thing to do**?

Why are they your favorites?

What do you really enjoy doing? (Flow) What is it like when you are doing it?

When **you** are in charge of doing something, what is it like? (Autonomy, Mastery, Purpose)

Wait, but I thought we were here to talk about homework.

There was part of the survey results that I kept for today. These are the qualitative responses, the words that people typed. Just like last week, grab a copy, a pen, a snack, and let's take a quiet moment to read.

What do you notice?

What are students trying to say to us?

If you could speak for the students, if you could tell your teachers anything about homework, what would you say?

If you could tell your parents anything about homework or school, what would you say?

Does homework have any value? Why/not?

If you could get rid of homework, what would happen?

What would your life look like without homework?

Why do we have homework?

What is the purpose of school?

What does school prepare us for? What does homework prepare us for?

Is homework related to anything in society? Government? The economy?

We are about to finish. As last time, take a moment to think about what others have said.

What insight do you have as we close our discussion?

Was this a good process? What made it work? How could it be better?

Thank you for all of your help, your time, your honesty, and your insights!

Appendix C

Survey Script for Teacher/Proctor

Dear English Teacher,
Please have students take out laptops, turn them on, and log into their email.
Please read the following aloud to your homeroom.

Dear Students,
Earlier in the year, all students completed an online survey in English class for the school's accreditation. The survey helped teachers to better understand your perspectives. Hopefully, your responses have also helped to make your experience at our school better.

This week, each English class has been asked to devote some time to completing an anonymous survey about homework. This survey is part of a dissertation study that Mr. Bates is researching for his doctoral program in educational leadership for social justice at Loyola Marymount University. The survey is also part of an effort to better understand the practice of homework at our school.

Your effort to complete this survey honestly is much appreciated. If you do not wish to answer a question, you are not required to. All responses will be kept anonymous and confidential.

When you are finished, please remain quiet or work on something else quietly while others finish the survey. Results of this survey will be shared with you later in the year, when the study is completed. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

At this time, please open the email from Mr. Bates and click the link to open the survey.

Please keep room quiet.
When finished, please read:
Thank you for completing the survey. If topic of homework interests you and you feel that you have insights you would be willing to share, there will be after school meetings (focus groups) to discuss the survey and the practice of homework at school. If you are interested, there will be a signup available in the front office in the coming days. Listen to your homeroom announcements. Thank you students for your time and effort to answer the survey honestly. Your efforts, ideally, will help to improve your learning experience at our school. Thank you!

Appendix D
Announcements

Homeroom Announcement:

Student Body: Last week, you all took a survey about homework. If you are interested in sharing your perspective about homework and can commit to two after school meetings this month, signups are available in the front office. Each meeting will last 75 minutes. Snacks will be provided. Your participation will help inform the practice of homework at our school. There are fifteen signup spots available.

Email reminder to students about survey

Homework Survey 2012

Dear Student,

"If you could tell your teachers one thing about homework, what would you want them to know?"

To be able to respond to this question (and more questions) you must hand in your blue Consent form in homeroom TOMORROW. Help me work with your teachers to know your perspective on homework. You do not have to participate, but if you do, I believe your effort will help current and future students.

Sincerely,

Mr. Bates

Appendix E
Focus Group Signup Sheet

Homework Student Focus Group Interest Sheet

In the past days, you all took a survey about homework. If you are interested in sharing your perspective about homework and can commit to two after school meetings this month, your participation will help inform the practice of homework at our school. Each meeting will last 75 minutes. . Mr. Bates will contact you through homeroom about participation.

Only sign up if can commit to the dates and times listed.

Tuesday, March 13th (1:30pm-2:45pm) AND Monday, March 26th (1:30pm-2:45pm)

Name _____ Grade _____ Homeroom_____
Name _____ Grade _____ Homeroom_____
Name _____ Grade _____ Homeroom_____
Name _____ Grade _____ Homeroom_____
Name _____ Grade _____ Homeroom_____

Thursday, March 15th (1:30pm-2:45pm) AND Wednesday, March 28th (2:15pm-3:30pm)

Name _____ Grade _____ Homeroom_____
Name _____ Grade _____ Homeroom_____
Name _____ Grade _____ Homeroom_____
Name _____ Grade _____ Homeroom_____
Name _____ Grade _____ Homeroom_____

Thursday, March 22nd (1:30pm-2:45pm) AND Friday, March 30th (1:30pm-2:45pm)

Name _____ Grade _____ Homeroom_____
Name _____ Grade _____ Homeroom_____
Name _____ Grade _____ Homeroom_____
Name _____ Grade _____ Homeroom_____
Name _____ Grade _____ Homeroom_____

Appendix F
Parent Letter

(on school letterhead)

February 16, 2012

Dear Parent/Guardian:

In the coming weeks, the students of our school will have the opportunity to complete a 40 question survey, which evaluates the practice of homework. Their participation, however, is voluntary. The surveys will be anonymous by design and will be conducted on laptops in the English classes. To participate in the study, students will need to complete and hand in the attached Consent and Assent form to their homeroom teacher by February 24, 2012.

To better understand the results of this survey, 15-24 students may additionally self-select to participate in two afterschool focus group discussions which will take place in March. Signups for these focus groups will take place the last week of February.

This current evaluation of homework is the focus of my dissertation at Loyola Marymount University, where I am in my second year of the program. I am pursuing a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership for Social Justice. It is my hope that the results of this study will help to better inform the practice of homework at our school.

If you think it is appropriate for your daughter to participate in the focus group discussions, please complete the attached Informed Consent and Assent Form for Loyola Marymount University's Internal Review Board (IRB) and return it to her homeroom teacher. The IRB oversees the quality of research for the university, and specifically, works to ensure the safety of participants in university research studies.

I thank you for your support and for your consideration. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at [phone number] or via email at mbates@[school.org]

Most sincerely,

Michael Bates
Assistant Principal for Student Life

Appendix G
Informed Consent and Assent Form

Informed Consent and Assent Form

Date of Preparation February 14, 2012 page 1 of 2

Loyola Marymount University

Understanding the Effects of Homework:
If your child/you choose to participate in this study about homework, please note, participation in this study is VOLUNTARY.

1) I hereby authorize Michael Bates, Assistant Principal for Student Life, to include me/my child/ward in the following research study: "A Critical Interrogation of the Practices of Homework and their Effects on Adolescent Students."

2) I/my child/ward have(has) been asked to participate in a research project that is designed to better understand the effects of homework on the development of intrinsic motivation to learn and the development of critical consciousness. The study will last for approximately four weeks.

3) It has been explained to me that the reason that I/my child/ward have (has) been included in this project is because all students at the school are invited to take an online survey in English class about homework and homework experience. After the survey, I/my child/ward may participate in after-school group discussions about homework if interested. **Participation is voluntary.**

4) I/my child understand(s) that if I/she am a subject, I/she will not be paid for my/her participation.

The investigator(s) will conduct an all-school survey. If I/my child/ward choose to participate in the follow-up discussions about homework, there will be two 75 minute discussions about the practice of homework with 6-8 students in the conference room after school over the course of four weeks. **Participation is voluntary.**

These procedures have been explained to me by Mr. Michael Bates, Assistant Principal for Student Life, through a letter explaining the study.

5) I understand that if I/my child/ward participate in the discussions, I/my child/ward will be audiotaped in the process of these research procedures. It has been explained to me that these tapes will be used for teaching and/or research purposes only and that my/my child's identity will not be disclosed. I/my child have (has) been assured that the tapes will be destroyed after their use in this research project is completed. I/my child understand that I/my child have (has) the right to review the tapes made as part of the study to determine whether they should be edited or erased in whole or in part.

6) I/my child/ward understand(s) that the study described above may involve the following risks and/or discomforts: 1) The student may not know the students in my focus group beforehand, 2) though asked to keep the conversations confidential, students in the focus groups may not honor confidentiality, 3) as homework involves stress, a discussion of homework may be stressful.

7) I/my child understand(s) that I/she will receive no direct benefit from participation in this study. However, the possible benefits are that I/she may learn more about myself or others and that I/she may have a greater understanding of secondary education. I/she may understand the role of homework in my life to a greater degree. My insights might help to shape future homework policy at my school.

10) I/my child understand(s) that Mr. Michael Bates (who can be reached at mbates@[school.org] or at [phone number] will answer any questions I/my child may have at any time concerning details of the procedures performed as part of this study.

11) If the study design or the use of the information is to be changed, I/my child will be so informed and my/her consent will be reobtained.

12) I/my child understand(s) that I/she have(has) the right to refuse to participate in, or to withdraw from this research at any time without prejudice.

13) I/my child understand(s) that circumstances may arise which might cause the investigator to terminate my/her participation before the completion of the study.

14) I/my child understand(s) that no information that identifies me/her will be released without my/her separate consent except as specifically required by law.

15) I/my child understand(s) that I/she have(has) the right to refuse to answer any question that I/she may not wish to answer.

21) I/my child understand that in the event of research related injury, compensation and medical treatment are not provided by Loyola Marymount University.

22) I/my child understand(s) that if I/she have(has) any further questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I/she may contact David Hardy, Ph.D. Chair, Institutional Review Board, 1 LMU Drive, Suite 3000, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles CA 90045-2659 (310) 258-5465, david.hardy@lmu.edu.

23a) In signing this consent form, I/my child acknowledge receipt of a copy of this form, and a copy of the "Subject's Bill of Rights".

24) Subject's Signature_____ Date _____

Subject's Printed Name_____ Date_____

...AND...

25) Subject is a minor (age_____)

Mother/Father/Guardian Signature_____ Date_____

Mother/Father/Guardian Printed Name_____

Please return signed Consent and Assent Form to your Homeroom teacher.
Please keep the second copy of the Consent and Assent Form AND the Subject's Bill of Rights.

LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Experimental Subjects Bill of Rights

Pursuant to California Health and Safety Code §24172, I understand that I have the following rights as a participant in a research study:

1. I will be informed of the nature and purpose of the experiment.

2. I will be given an explanation of the procedures to be followed in the medical experiment, and any drug or device to be utilized.

3. I will be given a description of any attendant discomforts and risks to be reasonably expected from the study.

4. I will be given an explanation of any benefits to be expected from the study, if applicable.

5. I will be given a disclosure of any appropriate alternative procedures, drugs or devices that might be advantageous and their relative risks and benefits.

6. I will be informed of the avenues of medical treatment, if any, available after the study is completed if complications should arise.

7. I will be given an opportunity to ask any questions concerning the study or the procedures involved.

8. I will be instructed that consent to participate in the research study may be withdrawn at any time and that I may discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me.

9. I will be given a copy of the signed and dated written consent form.

10. I will be given the opportunity to decide to consent or not to consent to the study without the intervention of any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, coercion, or undue influence on my decision.

Appendix H
1901 California Ban on Homework

THE

STATUTES OF CALIFORNIA

AND

AMENDMENTS TO THE CODES,

PASSED AT THE

THIRTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE LEGISLATURE,

1901.

BEGAN ON MONDAY, JANUARY SEVENTH, AND ENDED ON SATURDAY, MARCH SIXTEENTH, NINETEEN HUNDRED AND ONE.

SACRAMENTO:
A. J. JOHNSTON, : : : : SUPERINTENDENT STATE PRINTING.
1901.

CHAPTER CCXXXVIII.

An act to amend section sixteen hundred and sixty-five and section sixteen hundred and sixty-six of the Political Code of the State of California, relating to the course of study for the public schools of this State.

[Approved March 23, 1901.]

The people of the State of California, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section sixteen hundred and sixty-five of the Political Code of the State of California is hereby amended to read as follows:

Course of study in public schools of this state.

1665. Instruction must be given in the following branches in the several grades in which they may be required, viz: Reading, writing, orthography, arithmetic, geography, nature study; language and grammar, with special reference to composition; history of the United States and civil government; elements of physiology and hygiene, with special reference to the effect of alcohol and narcotics on the human system; music, drawing, and elementary bookkeeping, humane education; *provided*, that instruction in elementary bookkeeping, humane education, elements of physiology and hygiene, music, drawing, and nature study may be oral, no text-books on these subjects being required to be purchased by the pupils; *provided further*, that county boards of education may, in districts having less than one hundred census children, confine the pupils to the studies of reading, writing, orthography, arithmetic, language and grammar, geography, history of the United States and civil government, elements of physiology and hygiene, and elementary bookkeeping until they have a practical knowledge of these subjects; *and it is further provided*, that no more than twenty recitations per week shall be required of pupils in the secondary schools, and no pupil under the age of fifteen years in any grammar or primary school shall be required to do any home study.

Restrictions on number of recitations and home study.

Appendix I
HB 542

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Eleven

AN ACT relative to exceptions for objectionable material in public school courses.

Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:

271:1 New Paragraph; State Board of Education; Duties. Amend RSA 186:11 by inserting after paragraph IX-b the following new paragraph:

IX-c. Require school districts to adopt a policy allowing an exception to specific course material based on a parent's or legal guardian's determination that the material is objectionable. Such policy shall include a provision requiring the parent or legal guardian to notify the school principal or designee in writing of the specific material to which they object and a provision requiring an alternative agreed upon by the school district and the parent, at the parent's expense, sufficient to enable the child to meet state requirements for education in the particular subject area. The name of the parent or legal guardian and any specific reasons disclosed to school officials for the objection to the material shall not be public information and shall be excluded from access under RSA 91-A.

271:2 Effective Date. This act shall take effect January 1, 2012.

Approved: Enacted in accordance with Article 44, Part II of N.H. Constitution, without signature of the governor, January 4, 2012.

Effective Date: January 1, 2012