Spring 3-2016

Esteemicide: Countering the Legacy of Self-Esteem in Education

Kenzo Bergeron
Loyola Marymount University

Spring 3-2016

Esteemicide: Countering the Legacy of Self-Esteem in Education

Kenzo Bergeron
Loyola Marymount University, kenzoemilebergeron@gmail.com

LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Esteemicide: Countering the Legacy of Self-Esteem in Education

by

Kenzo Bergeron

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

Loyola Marymount University,

in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

2016

Esteemicide: Countering the Legacy of Self-Esteem in Education

Loyola Marymount University
School of Education
Los Angeles, CA 90045

This dissertation written by Kenzo Bergeron, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

3-28-16
Date

Dissertation Committee

[redacted]
Dr. Antonia Darder, Committee Member

[redacted]
Dr. Ani Shabazian, Committee Member

[redacted]
Dr. William Parham, Committee Member

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

How do we hang with uncertainty? How do we struggle without falling into despair? The answer can be found in the radical hope that Committee Chair, Professor Antonia Darder inspires. She has been at the forefront of this project and it is through working with her that I have learned there is no way to initiate change without the support of individuals and communities. For this I am grateful.

I would like to express the deepest appreciation to Committee Members, Professor Ani Shabazian and Professor William Parham. As the journey moves forward, their mentorship, enthusiasm, kindness, and commitment to the study continues to inspire the necessary courage to push against historically drawn boundaries.

Likewise, I am indebted to the effort and assistance of the Educational Leadership for Social Justice faculty and staff at Loyola Marymount University, especially Deanna Pittman, Pamela Willis, and Michaela Cooper.

Without the unending support of my wife Naomi, I would not have believed that I had the capacity or ability to begin, let alone complete this journey. Her creativity, intellect, and passion for all things encouraged me to engage the concrete with the philosophical. I hope that she can recognize this project as "ours."

I am grateful to my mother and father, Carole Takaki, Diana Kimura, Kiyoshi Shinkai, the Takaki family, and the Shibata family—all of whom have not only taken great care to nurture me but have also taught me along the way a great deal about how to nurture others. My work will always be a reflection of their collective love and spirit.

Special thanks to my classmates in Cohort X, with a forceful nod of kinship to the solidarity found among those in my dissertation group: Arturo Acevedo, Atheneus Ocampo, Becky Alber, Evelyn Licea, and Kortney Hernandez. Together, we give credence to the affirmation: "In order to live in truth, we have to recognize multiple truths."

Additionally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to The Willows Community School and the school leaders and colleagues who both encouraged and supported my efforts at LMU. Special thanks are due to my teaching partners during the years of study and research: Alex Wolfe, Jane Lewine, Dakota Smith, and Taylor Stacey. Your efforts provided me with an opportunity to balance, work, school, and life.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the memory of Alan Kaplan, a truly remarkable educator. Your paradigm-shattering wisdom and unparalleled wit casts infinite influence upon this world. I wrote to you when I began this project and in our last email exchange you replied: "You conferred on me the double honor of having earned your love and esteem." I remain confident—considering the topic of this dissertation—that if you were still here we would share a good laugh over that line and perhaps argue the merit of certain titles.

DEDICATION

For

Joan, Skip, & Naomi

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Esteemicide: Countering the Legacy of Self-Esteem in Education

by

Kenzo Bergeron

The concept of self-esteem has so thoroughly infiltrated American education that "most educators believe developing self-esteem to be one of the primary purposes of public education" (Stout, 2001, p. 119). That the available scholarship challenging the validity of self-esteem principles has had little to no impact on schooling and school policy demonstrates the need for more a comprehensive interrogation of a concept that has become so pervasive and commonsensical that many administrators and teachers do not even think to question its place in traditional pedagogy, let alone consider the possibility that self-esteem is a damaging ideological construct. The rhetorical (and impossible) promise of self-esteem as both a quantifiable and fixed human resource has proliferated in educational language as schools continue to promote self-esteem among racialized and poorly performing students, while the structural conditions that negatively impact these students' performance in the first place remain intact.

The legacy of self-esteem in educational discourse requires a critical interpretation, or re-interpretation, by educators who wish to challenge oppressive commonsense assumptions and feel-good principles that covertly help to maintain "dominant cultural norms that do little more than preserve social inequality" (Darder, 2015, p. 1). This study takes a decolonizing approach that involves a substantive interrogation—historical, political, and philosophical—of the Eurocentric epistemological concept of self-esteem, in order to demonstrate the debilitating effects that self-esteem has on students from working-class communities of color. It then suggests an emancipatory understanding of the self and alternative critical pedagogical principles of social empowerment.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO NOTION OF SELF-ESTEEM

> Studies have repeatedly shown that having high self-esteem does not improve grades, does not improve career achievement, it does not even lower the use of alcohol, and most certainly does not reduce the incidents of violence of any sort. As it turns out, extremely aggressive, violent people think very highly of themselves.
>
> — George Carlin, *Complaints and Grievances*, 2001

Midway through "Complaints and Grievances," George Carlin's 12th HBO stand-up special, first aired on December 11, 2001, the comedian launches into a lengthy critique of American culture. Carlin's sermon-like analysis—punctuated by his characteristic molto allegro tempo—on "how we eat, think, feel about the world, the work we do, the games we play, mannerisms, manners, education, economy, men and women, sexuality, what shocks us and what does not" (Kona, 2010, p. 5) substantiates the words of Carlin biographer Larry Getlen (2013), who remarked: "George used comedy to smash through what he called the official 'okie-doke' story" (Kindle Locations 97–100). The comedian's lengthy critique finally narrows to the over-protected, over-scheduled, over-managed lives of contemporary American youth, as he grumbles to the audience: "All of this that children have been crippled by has grown out of something called the 'self-esteem movement'" (Carlin, 2001). As the epigraph above illustrates, Carlin is ahead of the curve when he contends that the widespread belief about self-esteem—namely, that individuals with high self-esteem make positive life choices and those with low self-esteem make negative life choices (Kahne, 1996)—is nothing more than a popular ideological assumption.

In perfect *Carlinesque* spirit (Kona, 2010), the comedian goes on to implicate a complex nexus of actors and institutions within the educational system responsible for the maintenance of self-esteem principles. Thus, Carlin (2001) is not simply challenging a philosophical supposition; rather, he is discrediting a problematic epistemological doctrine at the heart of education two years before the Association for Psychological Science concluded that the concept of self-esteem is polluted with flawed scholarship (Bronson, 2007), and a year after the publication of Maureen Stout's (2001) *The Feel Good Curriculum: The Dumbing Down of America's Kids in the Name of Self-Esteem*.

As Carlin (2001) suggests, the axiomatic nature of the self-esteem discourse conceals a dangerous set of deeply rooted values, which positions self-esteem alongside other "okie-doke" narratives—such as, the press is free, justice is blind, all men are created equal, to protect and to serve—that we are spoon fed throughout our lives by those in positions of authority. Thus, our longstanding cultural reliance on the self-esteem mythos should be seen as more than a simple and polite agreement with the value of feeling good because, at its core, self-esteem is a movement, an ideology, a philosophy, and a social doctrine that has historically held the power to define and determine a person's level of success, worth, achievement, and so on—a generalization that reproduces colonialist discourse.

One of the more troubling features of the self-esteem mythos is that it has become mired in educational controversies that continue to this day. In fact, self-esteem may represent one of the most basic and pervasive mentalities ever to dominate the American psyche (Covington, 1989), one in which educators remain the primary moral agents and leaders in propagating its value (Gramsci, 1971). With this study, I intended to demonstrate that the term *self-esteem* and

the self-esteem movement that Carlin (2001) described in "Complaints and Grievances" are still going strong, especially in the context of education. According to Twenge (2014), a simple Google search for "elementary school mission statement 'self-esteem' can yield 2.9 million Web pages of schools from across the country, including those in cities, suburbs, small towns and rural areas" (p. 74). The reality is that self-esteem, with its varied meanings and widespread cultural support, has become so commonsensical that we have not thought to question the concept (Kahne, 1996). Thus, the rhetorical power and impossible promise of self-esteem as both a quantifiable and fixed human resource are played out again for a new generation of students, parents, and educators.

The respect for these common sense assumptions, along with the absence of any large-scale cultural or scholarly opposition to the encroachment of the self-esteem discourse within education, has led to exaggerated connections between self-esteem and desirable educational policy. The students who are the most damaged by these fallacies are those who were meant to benefit from them: racialized students who are already at the highest risk for school failure (Stout, 2001). Moreover, promoting student's self-esteem, particularly that of "minority and poorly performing students" (Kahne, 1996), has allowed for the strategic coproduction of privilege and disadvantage, accomplished in part by the voluminous literature in education that has accumulated in the endorsement of self-esteem and self-concepts of school children and adolescents.

This body of empirical work "generally places a high premium on [individual] self-discovery, self-expression, and self-fulfillment *without much explicit discussion of broader educational aims, or social, cultural, moral, and political contexts of education*" (Martin, 2007,

p. 5, emphasis added). By ignoring the structural conditions that negatively impact performance, educators and the general public act and react in ways that privilege the values of some groups over those of others. This process results in what Ellis (1998) described as "the needless pathologization of individuals from marginalized groups" (p. 242). Indeed, the tenets of the self-esteem discourse masquerade as products of technical and empirical analysis, the culmination of some fully realized universal human trait, but under close scrutiny exist simply as ideas derivative of ideological, cultural, and political commitments (Kahne, 1996).

In short, the incursion of self-esteem principles within educational policy have produced ineffective results for society as a whole, and are responsible for the creation of even greater educational inequities, especially among subaltern populations who have been simultaneously neglected by and blamed for society's ills (e.g., working-class students of color). Based on restrictive and psychologically reductive principles, these commitments to self-esteem dogma are embodied in a variety of self-esteem strategies and act in service of limiting the control and choices afforded to subaltern student populations by positing fundamentally flawed assumptions about the nature of self, culture, and identity that serve to legitimate the dominance of Western culture within educational arrangements in the United States. And the assumption that the self-esteem of minoritized children in particular requires constant focus and improvement, or that their psychosocial sphere can be manipulated by well-intentioned, yet ill-prepared White educators, is not simply an unfortunate principle of American education, but also reflects how psychology, as a discipline, functions to perpetuate major forms of inequality and oppression within education.

Legacy of Self-Esteem in Education

Irrespective of a plethora of prior theological, philosophical, and scholarly preoccupations with the concept of the self, by the midtwentieth century, the carefully invented subject of "self-esteem" began to consume the attention of psychologists and educators alike. Early theorists attempted to ground the validity of research findings through an emerging practice of social scientific inquiry that mimicked the physical sciences. "By the early 1970s, social science research had amassed hundreds of studies on the antecedents of self-esteem and the effects of self-esteem on personal and social issues" (Wells, 1976, p. 5). During this era, the network of individuals working on self-esteem also began to develop relationships outside the insulated academic environment of the social sciences.

These new alliances dissolved the once-restrictive borders of empirical research and allowed the term to permeate mainstream culture. Accordingly, this fueled the widespread popular belief that "a child's self-esteem is the primary cause of academic achievement" (Pajares & Schunk, 2002, p. 14). As a result, myriad conclusions on self-esteem became distributed across public institutions, and "a number of existing social movements and popular issues, such as educational pedagogy, social policy, business success, self-help, women's issues, and parenting advice" (Ward, 1996, p. 7). Eventually, these institutions and organizations came to champion self-esteem as "the royal road to happiness and personal fulfillment, and an antidote to a variety of social ills" (Brown & Marshall, 2006, p. 4).

By the turn of the millennium, tensions generated by the necessity of the self-esteem discourse in education had polarized the vast majority of the public and educators into one of two camps: "The pro self-esteemers, mostly educators, who scarcely believe that anyone would

question the importance of trying to improve children's perceptions of their own worth; and the critics who dismiss such efforts as ineffective distractions from academics" (Kohn, 1994, p. 272). The majority of scholars opposed to self-esteem principles contended that the self-esteem movement, and the variety of educational curricula it has inspired, have not stimulated the economy or cured the variety of social ills it promised. But this critical perspective has gone without much popular support. And the absence of any widespread rejection of self-esteem beliefs, especially within education, has resulted in the persistence of ideological assumptions and empirical justifications that support the promotion of mainstream self-esteem dogma. So, the core ideas and features of the self-esteem discourse endure.

Stout (2001) argued that self-esteem has "slowly infiltrated education to the point that today most educators believe developing self-esteem to be one of the primary purposes of public education" (p. 119). Kahne (1996) recalled asking a group of prospective educators, "How would you know if you were a successful teacher?" One student answered: "I want them to learn that they can accomplish anything, if they believe in themselves" (p. 7). And another: "We need to raise their self-esteem" (p. 7). When asked if they all agreed, "Many nodded; no one disagreed" (p. 7). Kahne's anecdote raises many concerns, among them questions such as why does self-esteem enjoy such privilege? And, why do educators attach notions of professional success to levels of student self-esteem?

In short, educational institutions accepted the claim that raising self-esteem would improve schoolwork (Baumeister, 2013). Accordingly, teacher practices and academic strategies have been redesigned to foster students' self-esteem (Pajares & Schunk, 2002). Teachers are instructed to provide pupils with affirmative pronouncements (i.e., "You're incredible!"), to

implement classroom activities in which students are directed to make advertisements and commercials to sell themselves (Canfield & Wells, 1976), and finally, to incorporate "realizing your uniqueness" lessons into their curriculum (McDaniel & Bielen, 1990). In such a climate, children are taught to "make 'me' flags of their putative 'me' nations, to view history and fiction through the filter of their *feelings*, and start school days with affirmations such as '*I always make good choices*' and '*Everyone is happy to see me*'" (Tarcher & Rufus, 2014, p. 1).

Even acclaimed educational critic Alfie Kohn (1994) has acknowledged the (seemingly) inescapable socializing capacity of self-esteem when he writes:

> There is no getting around the fact that most educators who speak earnestly about the need to boost students' self-esteem are unfamiliar with the research that has been conducted on the question. At best, they may vaguely assert, as I confess I used to do, that "studies" suggest self-esteem is terribly important. (p. 272)

But unlike the prospective teachers in Kahne's (1996) "Educational Foundations" course, who not only accept the value of student self-esteem but also promote the notion by adopting the very language used by hardened self-esteem advocates, Kohn goes on to inject an important sense of doubt into the subject.

Perhaps because high self-esteem feels good, people naturally surrender to the conclusion that it generates positive results. But the common sense interpretation that self-esteem actually leads to various positive outcomes can be misleading. While today's students may hold themselves in higher regard than students in decades past, there are now studies that link high self-esteem with aggression, territorialism, elitism, racism, and other negative qualities (Tarcher & Rufus, 2014). Beneficiaries of the self-esteem boom have been brainwashed to believe they

deserve the best grades, the best treatment, the best of everything. They are very easily offended, angered, disappointed, and crushed by even the faintest criticism (Tarcher & Rufus, 2014).

University of Pennsylvania psychology professor Martin Seligman (2014) has lamented: "Uncritical endorsement of the cultural value of high self-esteem may be counterproductive and even dangerous. The societal pursuit of high self-esteem for everyone may literally end up doing considerable harm" (as cited in Tarcher & Rufus, 2014, p. 1). Additionally, critics have pointed to the danger of policies and programs that blindly emphasize student self-esteem, where any talk about generosity or caring is prefaced with the assertion that you must love yourself first in order to be able to love others (Kahne, 1996). "I'm special, I'm important; here's how I feel about things . . . we are taught that individual achievement and self-actualization are what matter" (Kahne, 1996, p. 12)

These egocentric practices fuel the sort of privilege that allow policymakers—primarily through the system of education—to fundamentally recast the problems of poverty, sexism, racism, and so on. Echoing Antonio Gramsci's (1971) notion of the ideological power of commonsense ideas, Erica Koch (2013) described the acceptance of self-esteem into the political sphere as one based on "intuitive" assumptions:

> Because high self-esteem feels good, people may naturally conclude that it results in positive consequences. A common sense interpretation of the correlations between self-esteem and positive outcomes suggests that self-esteem actually *leads* to those outcomes. Thus, even those familiar with some psychological research might conclude that self-esteem causes various positive outcomes. (pp. 262–263)

A multitude of conclusions deemed "scientific" pushed self-esteem into the public policy arena, where it was believed that self-esteem could and should be "monitored and improved to ensure health and well being" (Kahne, 1996, p. 3). This commonsense tendency to assume self-esteem is good because it feels good proved to be a powerful force. Ideas of self-esteem, propelled by the influence of common sense, quickly captivated the public imagination, causing parents, educators, policy makers, and others to believe it "unpardonable for schools, educators, and educational researchers to neglect the cultivation of this core resource" (Martin, 2007, p. 55). Kahne (1996) underlined the misguided aims of such policies:

> If poverty, sexism, or other factors systematically constrain the self-esteem of whole groups of individuals, and if self-esteem is a goal, then policymakers must find ways to address poverty, homelessness, sexism, and so on. If, on the other hand, improving self-esteem judgments is viewed as a means of promoting "socially desirable" behaviors, then policy makers can focus instead on raising the self-esteem of poor or homeless individuals. (p. 10)

These commonsensical beliefs have produced psycho-educational practices and interventions that emphasize individualism to the point where "students are encouraged to pursue their self-interest at the expense of acquiring knowledge and understanding about, and engaging with, perspectives and interests different from their own" (Martin, 2007, p. 65). The sweeping encouragement of self-esteem principles has served not only to atomize student populations but also to sterilize the critical capacity of teachers. Through the required implementation of homogenized, prepackaged, mass-produced, teacher-proof, social and emotional curricula,

classroom teachers are stripped of their critical capacity, and systemic inequalities are repositioned as the responsibility of those with poor self-esteem.

Certainly, few psychological paradigms have been responsible for the generation of a multibillion-dollar industry, as has the industry of classroom curriculum promoting teacher practices and academic strategies aimed at fostering student self-esteem. The psychological machinery responsible for the maintenance of self-esteem principles has been further buttressed by the expansion of psychoeducational interventions organized by teacher advocacy groups and outspoken parents concerned with their children's future academic success and eventual labor opportunities out in the world. Together, these forces, steeped in the mainstream ideological lens of self-esteem, both function to shape and reinforce popular cultural sensibilities, especially within the marketplace, where advertising professionals overwhelmingly mine the consuming power of this hegemonic construct.

Psychologist Lauren Slater (2002) argued: "The pursuit of self-worth has become the dominant paradigm and it has inveigled its way into educational programs, rehabilitation, and therapy" (p. 3). Slater's position accounts for the seductive power of self-esteem in that it has nullified most efforts to combat the necessity and value of the concept within educational discourse. As a result, the concept remains a "no brainer." However, it is important to consider that because mainstream educational institutions frequently emphasize relativistic notions of academic achievement, it is both counterproductive and unfair to communicate to all those below average that their status is a result of their self-esteem when, in fact, it is a result of our competitively oriented or meritocratic system of evaluation, in which "half of all students will always be below average on any competitive measure" (Kahne, 1996, p. 19).

Consequently, while individuals from marginalized groups were supposedly to be experiencing low self-esteem, the way in which this construct has been conceptualized, legitimized, and operationalized upholds the patriarchal relations that position women as inferior to (and dependent on) men, and subordinates people of color. The "You just need to believe in yourself!" message persists for individuals striving for any combination of success, recognition, and survival within a meritocratic system that only allows for a limited number to persevere. For the many who do not succeed, the reason is obvious: a lack of self-esteem and the absence of positive self-regard.

Vasconcellos and The Mantra of Self-Esteem

It is also important to recognize that the term *self-esteem* was reformulated during a critical point in history, in order to reflect a broad ideological shift, representative of a new politics and a new social order (Cruikshank, 1999). During this era, self-esteem principles were sharpened as ideological, cultural, and political weapons. In the 1980s, self-esteem became a national buzzword, embedded within an increasingly neo-liberalist discourse that swept across the United States. While it is no coincidence that a reformulation of self-esteem took place in concert with the strengthening of a comprehensive neoliberal agenda, surprisingly, cultural studies theorists have either ignored or largely underestimated the symbolic and pedagogical dimensions that neoliberal corporate power has put into place for more than 30 years (Giroux, 2011a).

Neoliberalism, which denies the importance of collectivism and community, would use self-esteem to shape a form of political and social discourse where "citizenship and self-government are tirelessly put forward as solutions to poverty, political apathy, powerlessness,

crime, and innumerable other problems" (Cruikshank, 1999, p. 1). This reformulation of the self and self-esteem promised to solve social problems by heralding a revolution—"not against capitalism, racism, patriarchy, and so on, but against the wrong way of governing ourselves" (Cruikshank, 1999, p. 79). This new political and social paradigm took shape in tandem with neoliberal policies that would have a profound effect on the way we perceive our existence in the world.

The intrusion of psycho-educational interventions within the day-to-day classroom environment reached a nadir in 1986 when California lawmaker John Vasconcellos headed the "California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal Responsibility." Vasconcellos's decision to form this task force suggested that self-esteem in the contemporary context with its varied meanings and widespread cultural support was being "used by actors in policy contexts to further a wide range of popular agendas" (Kahne, 1996, p. 10). The guiding assumption of the task force was that low self-esteem caused every kind of social problem from teenage pregnancy to poor test scores and high dropout rates. As a result, school curricula and parenting techniques were radically transformed, with "their main objective now being to cultivate high self-esteem among the young, which activists proclaimed would cure those social woes and make America a safer, happier, and better place" (Tarcher & Rufus, 2014, p. 1).

As part of its charge, the Vasconcellos task force issued a final report that claimed: "A lack of self-esteem is central to most personal and social ills plaguing our state and nation" (Ward, 1996, p. 1). Although the report contained little evidence to support this conclusion, it signaled an alarming ideological shift within the self-esteem movement. The report's three primary recommendations regarding education were:

> Every school district in California should adopt the promotion of self-esteem and personal and social responsibility as clearly stated goals, integrate self-esteem in its curriculum, and inform all persons of its policies and operations. School boards should establish policies and procedures that value staff members and students to serve to foster mutual respect, esteem, and cooperation. Course work in self-esteem should be required for credentials and as a part of ongoing in-service training for all educators. (California State Department of Education, 1990, p. 6)

It was no accident that Vasconcellos (1990) and the "California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal Responsibility" found the ideal location from which to ideologically stage their intervention in the banking system of education. As Antonia Darder (2002) has argued:

> Schools are inextricably linked to a large set of political and cultural processes that reinforce and give legitimacy to the reproduction of a "banking" system of education, in which the teachers see themselves as the owners of knowledge and the students as empty vessels into which the teachers deposit their knowledge. The reflection of the dominant class is inscribed in the educational policies and practices that shape public schooling. (p. 58)

The neoliberal establishment insisted that unemployment, alcoholism, criminality, child abuse, and school failure could be solved through the attainment of higher levels of self-esteem. The strategy of placing higher levels of responsibility upon individuals within a historically unequal social, political, and economic system worked to completely shift the role of social, political, and economic intervention. Additionally, such a shift came on the heels of the civil

rights era, turning back the clock on questions of social responsibility from a Keynesian approach of state responsibility for the welfare of its citizen to a revamped bootstrap mentality that not only placed responsibility for economic success or failure squarely on the individual, but also negated the state's communal obligation to intervene more broadly in matters of equality (Darder, 2011).

Thus, the promotion of self-esteem in the era of neoliberal educational policies can be seen as a discriminatory tool used to identify problems in the population, especially children, as part of an accepted policy of early intervention, where the erratic and flawed accountability practices attempt to normalize those deemed "deviant" or "deficient." The way that neoliberal policies transformed certain aspects of the self-esteem discourse has not only limited the way(s) in which the self may be thought about, but also has produced dangerous implications, especially for those belonging to subaltern groups. According to this reformulation of self-esteem, while it may be possible for certain individuals to perceive themselves as "successful" or "intelligent," it may not be possible for others, given the asymmetrical relations of power that inform the methodologies employed by psychological researchers and practitioners in the field (Ellis, 1998).

The Politics of Inferiorization

What emerges from self-esteem, as a construct, as a quasi-religion, as a value system, is a tradition reminiscent of the colonial relationship between oppressed and oppressor, as outlined in Fanon's (2007) seminal examination of the violent political, social, and moral exchange that takes place during a colonial encounter. Hook (2012) explained: "The key problematic that Fanon is concerned with is that of being the subject of cultural oppression/racism in which one is incessantly fed with cultural values and understandings which are hostile, devaluing of oneself

and one's culture" (p. 480). In the preface to Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, Sartre (1963) asserted that the ontological and psychological coordinates of self-esteem reveal the state of a nervous condition, an anxious and agitated state (both politically and psychologically) in which one possesses little or no cultural resources of one's own because they have been eradicated by the cultural imperialism of the colonizer.

In this context, the self-esteem discourse embodies the relationship between the colonial encounter and the transmission of hostile cultural values as it is transmitted primarily through the institution of education. According to Darder (2012):

> Schooling defines students' potential for them on the basis of the hierarchy's needs, while ignoring the needs of students. Schooling for a hierarchical structure is therefore a colonizing device. It may change the types of choices that individuals from subordinated cultures can have, but nonetheless it serves to limit the control bicultural students can ultimately have over their own lives. (p. 7)

Edward Said (1979) linked this phenomenon to the colonizing impact of education on the Other. Meaning, education as a space for the socialization of students, can be thought of as the colonizing institution for dealing with the Other, by making statements about it, describing it, teaching it, ruling it. In short: "Western education functions as a hegemonic apparatus for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Other" (as cited in Darder, 2015, p. 9). Moreover, this judgment of *Others* encourages atomization from one another.

The obsessive enhancement of self-esteem reflects Western ideas that do nothing more than glorify what to Europeans and Americans constitutes a healthy, competent individual (Hoffman, 1996). This pervasive process of ideological hegemony is accomplished with the

support of a huge network of human agents who, consciously or unconsciously, principally see their work as that of cultivating the self-esteem of working-class children and youth of color in schools and communities—students who are most often perceived by mainstream teachers as inherently deficient of self-esteem. The methodical implementation of self-esteem-related curriculum across the entire system of education in the United States simply maintains the dual features of disadvantage and oppression; essentially, self-esteem materializes as a powerful assimilative force (e.g., Americanization process) within working class communities of color, achieved through a politics of inferiorization.

It is for this reason that critical educational theorists (Apple, 2004; Darder, 1991/2012, 2015; Giroux, 1981; hooks, 1994; McLaren, 1998) have argued that teachers must work critically within their classrooms and out in the world to unveil the hidden curriculum of oppressive pedagogical notions such as self-esteem in order to forge more emancipatory views of student voice, social agency, solidarity, and empowerment. Such a critical process demands, as Freire (2000) contended, a reinventing and re-imagining of pedagogy for the evolution of social consciousness within the classroom and beyond. Challenging the orthodoxy of self-esteem provides critical educators with the opportunity to transform the language of classroom life and student development, so as to focus on notions of self-determination and social agency in ways that counter the way we speak to, conceive of, and practice pedagogies linked to the empowerment of students, particularly working class students of color.

Despite reliable scholarship that unveils the ineffective nature of self-esteem principles, the concept remains "one of the most influential notions of our time and certainly one of the most controversial in its implications for schooling and school policy" (Owens, Stryker, &

Goodman, 2001, p. 351). The historical legacy and continued influence of the self-esteem model on current educational discourse demands a critical re-interpretation, by those who wish to challenge the oppressive assumptions and feel-good principles, which veil "dominant cultural norms that do little more than preserve social inequality" (Darder, 1991, p. 1). Contemporary educators cannot deny the influence of self-esteem notions within educational contexts, but when it comes to the question of whether schools should help boost self-esteem, too many of us suffer from dire limitations, including unfamiliarity with research results, vague conceptual understandings, and disagreement over the operational definition of self-esteem, just to name a few.

Critical educators who embrace the tenets: "Education is ideological. Teaching always involves ethics; Teaching requires a capacity to be critical; Teaching requires humility; and Teaching requires critical reflection" (Freire, 2000, p. xiii), must also struggle, as Darder (2015) has argued, "to create counterhegemonic intellectual spaces in which new readings of the world can unfold" (p. 63). The critical interrogations of supposed truths carry with them the potential to lead us toward change, both in theory and in practice.

Commonsensical notions imbued with both affective and ideological dimensions drive the need for critical scholarship on self-esteem discourses. For those familiar with the burden of surviving oppression, such lived experiences already prime subaltern researchers to respond with the necessary courage required to resist, rethink, and reinvent—all significant epistemological aspects that encourage decolonizing expressions of inquiry. This constitutes the spirit that flows throughout this critical bicultural examination of the emergence and evolution of self-esteem within the system of education in the United States. Hence, this is an effort that deconstructs the

historical, political, and philosophical foundations of the use of the term self-esteem in education; and, by so doing, illustrates the limitations of the concept especially for working class students of color. The study concludes with a summary of critical pedagogical principles of self-determination and social empowerment, which offers educators a more socially just perspective of subaltern lives. The major questions driving the study include: What are the historical, political, and philosophical foundations of the use of the term self-esteem in education? What are the limitations of the self-esteem discourse, especially for working class students of color? Finally, what critical pedagogical principles offer educators a more socially just perspective of subaltern lives?

Statement of the Problem

Over the past 30 years, self-esteem has become deeply embedded in popular culture, championed as a kind of "Easy Street" that leads to happiness and fulfillment. Self-esteem is also often portrayed as a psychological elixir to remedy social ills, including unemployment, violence, and teenage pregnancy. Despite its widespread social service, there has been some division with respect to self-esteem's true function and benefit (Kernis, 2006). Whereas many would argue that high self-esteem is essential to human functioning and injects life with meaning (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Solomon, Arndt, & Schimel, 2004), others have asserted that it is of little value and may actually cause more harm than any of us are willing to admit (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003; Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996). Between these two extremes lie various intermediate positions awash in a complex and nuanced vocabulary. For example, people can be described as mild, reserved, quiet, and so on. By contrast, they may be smug, conceited, proud, or grandiose. In light of this seemingly unending continuum, how do we

explain the centrality of self-esteem in the mainstream, especially in regards to our description of the self?

Part of the focus must be attributed to the way in which the criteria of self-esteem have been vigorously promoted and safeguarded by religious, moral, and philosophical institutions. American children learn from a very early age that maintaining self-esteem requires separating oneself from others and seeing oneself as different from and better than others (Katz, 1993). When these conditions are allowed to develop in society, they support prejudice and oppression. If one's own self-esteem is the result of a comparison with others, its maintenance may contribute to constant wariness of the risk of coming out poorly in such comparative assessments of self-worth and perpetuate the need to identify inferior individuals or groups (Katz, 1993). The best-case scenario is that self-esteem practices may contribute to unreasonable competitiveness and distract individuals from giving their full attention to the tasks and people around them.

Another major problem with the contemporary guidelines that are used to determine student self-esteem is that they are influenced by oppressive traditions characteristic of the dominant cultural ideology. Rather than attempting to understand the myriad interactions of persons in contact with each other, educational psychologists typically ask students and educators to reduce the holistic complexity of their lives to feelings and judgments about themselves as individuals—for example, through decontextualized statements such as: "I feel confident that I will do well" (Martin, 2014)—as if they somehow exist outside of the sociocultural and cooperative contexts of teaching and learning. Cigman (2004) characterized the potential damage of this reductive approach:

> Self-esteem becomes a kind of gold-standard, a scale on which, supposedly, people can be ranked as having more or less of the precious metal. The trouble with standards is that they both assume and demand commensurability, consigning to oblivion all values that cannot be expressed in their terms. Like any other standard, that of self-esteem thus represents a totalizing tendency, demanding that all other kinds of qualities of persons be translated into its coinage. And so all kinds of subtleties of character are lost. (p. 56)

Thus, for Westerners, actualizing one's own attributes, having accomplishments validated by others, and being able to compare oneself favorably to others is believed to result in the achievement of high self-esteem.

In the United States, we are beset by binaries: present/absent, true/false, man/woman that generally imply that one pair of terms is superior while the other is lacking, deficient, and inferior. On the one side are proud, robust, vigorous, forceful, individuals with high self-esteem: on the other, meek, humble, shy, individuals suffering from low self-esteem (Smith, 2006). The binaries characteristic of mainstream United States ideology can seem rather narrow options in contrast to Asian and other non-Western cultures. For example, developmental studies reviewed by Markus and Kitayama (1991) indicated that self-enhancement and promotion are perceived negatively in Japan. Moreover, research has indicated that in other cultural contexts, "children are socialized in an interdependent manner, so they begin to appreciate the cultural value of self-restraint and, furthermore, to believe in a positive association between self-restraint and other favorable attributes of the person" (Katz, 1993, p. 5). Along similar lines, Trafrimow, Triandis, and Goto (1991) distinguished between private and collective aspects of the self, and argued that the private self is emphasized more in individualistic cultures. These alternative views suggest

that while self-esteem seems important across many cultures, it can be achieved in diverse ways according to a variety of definitions.

While psychosocial constructs such as acculturation, ethnic identity, and self-esteem have become foundational concepts in cultural and cross-cultural psychology, discussions about how larger sociopolitical conditions, especially oppressive or colonial ones, may play a role in shaping such cultural constructs have been scarce (Okazaki, David, & Abelmann, 2008). Erich Fromm (2010) attributed this lack of contestation and critical analysis to the fact that throughout most of human history, "obedience has been identified with virtue and disobedience with sin" (pp. 9–10). Only one condition has been necessary for a minority to rule the majority: the many had to learn obedience. According to Fromm (2010), obedience incorporates the weak into the structure of power, which provides them with a false sense of strength. This question of power is central to the analysis of hegemonic educational notions such as self-esteem and the structural apparatus that sustains popular obedience to its ideological dictates (Darder, 2012).

The categorization of Others as possessing either high or low self-esteem denies the need or motivation for collectivist action and simultaneously keeps students unaware of the larger structures and conditions that impact their lives and their school performance. Our goal, then, as emancipatory educators should be to restore and revitalize the importance of humanity. To accomplish this task, we must continue to interrogate topics that seem at first glance to reflect common sense. In an effort to dismantle the structures that perpetuate exclusion, it is necessary to approach the topic of self-esteem within education from a critical pedagogical perspective and expose the social conditions that produce this type of normalizing language in the first place.

Psychologia Incognitus

In a 2001 essay, Nathaniel Branden recalls sitting next to a professor who would soon contribute to a book titled *The Social Importance of Self-Esteem* (1989). Branden (2001) asked innocently how the professor defined self-esteem and if he and the other contributors to the book agreed. In Branden's words, "The professor drew back tensely", and demanded, "Why do you want to know?" Still reeling from the professor's tone after more than a decade, Branden writes:

> If the research was to have value one would need to know what the writers meant by "self-esteem" and if all the writers were working with the same concept. Otherwise, it would be a Tower of Babel, and what merit could their conclusions have? (p. 440)

For Branden, the biblical story of Babel illustrates the contemporary problem of self-esteem—namely, that it lacks a concrete definition. It is an umbrella term used to describe a whole range of things that may well be qualitatively different (Watson, Emery, & Bayliss, 2012). On the problem of definition, Mruk (2006b) writes:

> First, social scientists define it in at least three very different ways, each of which has a long history of legitimate use in a field that is already over a century old. Second, each definition gives rise to a different body of research findings, theories, and conclusions about self-esteem…Third, with at least three active definitions and an intermingling set of findings, it is surprising to find that relatively little attention is devoted to thinking about just how important defining self-esteem is in this field. (p. 10)

Prominent self-esteem authors like Morris Rosenberg (1979), creator of the most widely used self-esteem scale, further added that self-esteem involves feelings of self-respect, self-liking, and self-acceptance. Bednar, Wells, and Peterson (1989) defined self-esteem as

"subjective and realistic self-approval" (p. 1). These authors believe that self-esteem reflects how the individual views and values the self, at the most fundamental levels of psychological experiencing. Thus, different aspects of the self generate a profile of emotions associated with the different roles in which the individual operates. In this domain, self-esteem can be thought to consist of feelings of being loved, accepted, and valued by significant others rather than of feelings generated from the evaluation of oneself against external forces (Katz, 1993).

As recently as 2005, Albert Ellis tried to clearly define self-esteem in his book *The Myth of Self-Esteem*, where he offered the following description:

> You rate yourself, your being, your personality, your essence, your totality, in terms of two main goals: if you succeed in getting what you want you feel yourself to be good. If you fail in getting what you want you feel yourself to be bad. (p. 20)

And in 2006, Kernis added his two cents, declaring: "A century of theorizing and research has resulted in a broad consensus that self-esteem is the joint product of (1) reflective self-evaluations, and (2) the appraisal of others" (p. 157). A person who doubts his ability in school may be said to have low academic self-esteem, and a person who thinks she is good at sports may be said to have high athletic self-esteem. However, the research community does not always make this distinction. Therefore, the debate over what constitute appropriate criteria of self-esteem has not been settled empirically, despite the fact that these evaluative criteria and their associated language are deeply embedded within the culture. Thus, the only true consensus surrounding the importance of self-esteem appears dependent on the lack of consensus and lack of agreement regarding the meaning of the term (Kahne, 1996). However, this puzzling feature

of self-esteem has generated relatively little concern; and this paradox has not slowed the qualitative and quantitative work on the subject.

In fact, the lack of a consensus definition has led to the condition where the term "self-esteem" is used interchangeably with a variety of other psychosocial constructs. As Katz (1993) pointed out, models that are related to the construct of self-concept are also usually described by hyphenated terms such as self-worth, self-esteem, self-assurance, and self-regard. For example, the term self-esteem is used in reference to mental health (as a kind of synonym for mental health), social and emotional learning, social and emotional literacy, and social and emotional intelligence. The terms self-confidence, self-evaluations, or self-appraisals, and self-efficacy have also been used in discussions of self-esteem. The process of matching a definition to a specific work generates so much confusion that Mruk (2006a) insisted every discussion on the subject of self-esteem should begin with "what one means by the words self-esteem" (p. 10).

The interchangeability of the term self-esteem points to the need, especially within education, to unsnarl its mangled historical and conceptual use in order to disrupt the power of self-esteem as a hegemonic force within schools and society. While the task of definition may in most cases remain monumental, for the purposes of this study, I use a combination of the most popular/lay definitions of self-esteem/self-concept as most often cited in the literature. Let it suffice to say that self-esteem most often refers to the attitudes about various persons in the environment, one of which is the self. This set of attitudes toward the self or the vision a person holds of the self is generally referred to as self-concept (Beane, Lipka, & Ludewig, 1980). The self-concept refers to the manner in which an individual sees himself, primarily in terms of

adequacy and esteem. Specifically, self-esteem is the level of satisfaction that individuals attach to the personal attributes they think they possess based on their values.

The Problematics of Measurement

Change can only impact aspects of social life that can be measured. Thus, policy and its resulting practice are dependent on measurement. Measurement defines, categorizes, and lays out an ordinal progression from the normal to the pathological and allows the development of technologies to normalize those deemed deviant or deficient (Watson et al., 2002). There are over 200 tests that reportedly measure levels of self-esteem, a fact that seems to give credence to the idea that policy is dependent on quantifiable results. Each test operates from the perspective that by "determining the degree of self-esteem possessed by an individual, it becomes possible to access, predict, control, or enhance an individual's life" (Ward, 1996, p. 5). But there are inherent difficulties in the processes that propose to measure self-esteem (regardless of stage of life, gender, class, race, socioeconomic standing, etc.), given that self-esteem is constructed according to norms laid out by the dominant class.

The empirical evidence gathered through surveys, qualitative data collected through interviews, and self-assessment reports encourage participants to construct a certain reality for their audience. Kahne (1996) concludes that most participants score ratings from middle to high because few individuals will admit they have low self-esteem. This lack of correlation may reflect the fact that others do not have access to a person's inner-thoughts and feelings, or that some people are either unable or unwilling to provide accurate reports about their self-worth. Additionally, the linear model of self-esteem measurement—from low to high—points to an unexamined dialectical tension. That is, the dimension between these two poles (high and low) is

relatively absent of any critical or substantial findings. This begs the question; can one possess a medium level of self-esteem? Such a simple question immediately exposes the positivist assumption that this type of human characteristic exists, and that it can be quantified. If the research reveals anything at all, it may be that self-esteem scales rarely provide reliable and accurate data.

This brings us to another important feature of measurement. Foucault (1977) described measurement as a necessary part of the processes of examination of the public body, underpinning the ability of the state to regulate the lives of its citizens and to control their destinies. According to Martin (2014), "Psychological measurement is different in that the psychological attributes that are hypothesized (e.g., self-esteem) are not obviously quantitative in the manner of physical attributes" (p. 169). Through the discursive practices of examination and the modern concept of intervention, the measurement of self-esteem is used to identify problems in the population (especially children) as part of an accepted policy strategy of early intervention. For example, if you spot a problem early, it can be eradicated.

What exactly do self-esteem interventions in education or psychology seek to change? As a psychological construct, self-esteem secures legitimacy through the process of scientific measurement, which in turn justifies the development of therapeutic or pedagogical technologies—discourse, programs, curriculum, and so on—that have come to influence every aspect of contemporary American life. In this context, measurement is a tool that serves to guarantee protection of certain ideological and political priorities associated with the use of the term self-esteem, particularly in policy discussions. Broad support for self-esteem "coupled with vague and varied understandings—results in its capacity to buttress a wide range of political

priorities" and "current empirical and conceptual work on self-esteem by academic analysts are not sensitive to political and ideological issues" (Kahne, 1996, p. 4). Such questions, in the context of social problems like crime or school failure, and the interventions aimed to address them, mean that policy statements based on academic research will most often be founded only upon illusions of authority.

Educators interested in standing in solidarity with their students, particularly poor students of color, must work to broaden the range of possible criteria from which individuals might choose when making self-evaluations. In this context, it is possible to disregard the flexibility of labels such as "she suffers from low self-esteem" (and this explains her failure); the direction for change is to "increase self-esteem" (so that she will begin to achieve). According to this logic, if working class students of color suffer from low self-esteem, this explains their failure; if we increase their self-esteem, they will begin to achieve. As assumptions go, this mantra of self-esteem seems understandable. "Who of us would want our children not to feel as good about themselves as possible, especially when leading educational researchers proclaim that self-esteem provides a crucial building block on which all our actions and experiences are based?" (Martin, 2007, p. 1).

The Mythology of Self-Esteem or Depoliticized Speech as Mythology

Self-esteem can be seen as related to a set of uniquely American myths, perhaps the most significant being the rags-to-riches narrative of Horatio Alger. The "socially destructive" (Dalton, 1995), Horatio Alger Myth conveys three basic messages: "(1) Each of us is judged solely on her or his own merits; (2) we each have a fair opportunity to develop these merits; (3) ultimately merit will out" (Dalton, 1995, p. 278). These standards represent a strain of the rugged

individualist ethos characteristic of the quintessential American perspective and suggest, falsely, that success in life has nothing to do with "pedigree, race, class, background, gender, national origin, and sexual orientation—in short, anything beyond our individual control" (Dalton, 1995, p. 278). Just as there is a fundamental tension between the promise of opportunity enshrined in the Alger myth and the realities of a racial caste system, there is also tension between the assumed classification maintained in the mythology of self-esteem and the cultural hegemony of social institutions, particularly schools. Quite apart from race, or identity politics, it is in our national interest to give the pull yourself up by your bootstraps mythology a rest, for it broadcasts a fourth and equally false message—that we live in a land of unlimited potential.

In sum, the Alger myth serves to maintain the racial pecking order by encouraging people to blink at the many barriers to racial equality that litter the institutional landscape. And in a similar fashion, self-esteem labors to distract humanity from "a deeply reflective interpretation of the dialectical relationship between our cultural existence as individuals and our political and economic existence as social beings" (Darder, 2002a, p. 35). These mythologies foster beliefs that serve to trivialize, if not erase, the social meaning of racialized, economic, and political inequalities—conditions that serve to "dehumanize us, distorting our capacity to love each other, the world, and ourselves" (Darder, 2002a, p. 35).

Methodology

While critical qualitative studies have gained popularity over the past decade as a preferred category among researchers who find themselves committed to conducting inquiries through which they can locate and in some way confront the hegemonies and inequalities of social life, the present limitation of contemporary studies is that they neglect to fully incorporate

historical, cultural, philosophical, and educational literature as powerful socializing forces in the quest to dismantle oppressive notions of education. This study, in contrast, interrogates the concept of self-esteem in education and examines its impact on curricular interventions on oppressed communities through a critical interpretive method, which "seeks to unveil and destabilize existing structures of power that perpetuate the material and social oppression of the most vulnerable populations" (Darder, 2015, p. 4).

In sync with this decolonizing lens, I analyze the most influential literature in the fields of education and psychology to determine the different ways that self-esteem has been defined and conceptualized within education, and to trace how self-esteem moved from a philosophical supposition to a hegemonic construct in mainstream Western culture. The critical interpretive method also involves an investigation of curricula and curricular practices in order to expose what Henry Giroux (1981) described as "those unstated norms, values, and beliefs embedded in and transmitted to students through underlying rules that structure the routines and social relationships in school and classroom life" (p. 385).

The hope here is that by analyzing the political in such a psychological way, and vice versa, one might be able to think strategically about how to combat the pervasive ideological hegemony that determines the boundaries of power and culture. As a bicultural educator and researcher, I am committed to providing a substantiated critique of self-esteem in order to create the space for emancipatory practices in oppressed communities—practices that are rooted in democratic participation and political self-determination. As Darder (2015) asserted, the critical bicultural methodology is a meta-process that:

> Involves the interrogation and disruption of currently held values, beliefs, and assumptions and from this systematic interrogation and disruption a move toward a bicultural reformulation of how the social phenomenon of oppressed populations is understood. (p. 4)

The overriding intention that drove this study was a commitment to critically investigate the implications of the myth of self-esteem. Crucial to this interrogation is an understanding that what lies beyond any idealized notion of the self must ultimately be a critical understanding of one's individual and collective relationship to others and the world; and, moreover, that these relationships are fundamentally shaped by asymmetrical relations to power. With this in mind, the study strove toward "developing a language for thinking critically about how culture deploys power and how pedagogy as a moral and political practice enables students to focus on the suffering of others" (Giroux, 2011a, p. 5).

Summary of Purpose

This project is a declaration of a radical, combative discourse aimed at decentering cultural notions of worth. Meaning, it is at the same time a war on the historical and contemporary framework of value—especially the perceived worth of racialized, working class, bicultural students—and an assault on the values that serve to reinforce unequal relationships within spheres of culture and power. Subaltern students are not just the victims of poverty and indifference, but are also the victims of bad ideology, imposed on them by teachers and administrators who refuse to give up their ideas, even in the face of miserable results. Buzzwords abound no less in education than in any other field of social interaction. As they gain popularity and slip into everyday speech, buzzwords assume the status of common sense. As a result, the

complexities surrounding their origins, applications, and intent are lost, and they become a representation of a most uncritical way to view reality.

Whatever the supposed value the concept of self-esteem may have had, it is now simply a tool that aids in the deadening of the emancipatory potential of education. It is necessary, now more than ever, to propose an emancipatory and socially transformative agenda that is properly responsive to the demands of society. The hope is that by being able to recontextualize notions of the self and concomitant understandings of its value in a critical fashion, we can successfully intervene in ways that can disrupt the culturally hegemonic force of the term.

Outline of Dissertation Chapters

As discussed throughout the introduction, this study critically interrogates the phenomenon of self-esteem and in subsequent chapters provides further evidence of the problematic nature of self-esteem in contemporary educational discourse and practices, offering new theoretical considerations that speak to emancipatory possibilities. Through such an analysis, questions tied to a liberatory consciousness, social agency, and social empowerment undergird our theoretical and practical efforts toward creating a more just world.

The following chapters explore in detail the development of self-esteem in education and the resulting impact, particularly on oppressed communities. In Chapter 2, I trace the emerging meaning of the "self" from the middle of the 17th-century to the present and discuss the historical relationship of self-esteem in education. In Chapter 3, the literature and ideas speak to the manner in which education, historically and in the contemporary moment, has served as an assimilative force (e.g., Americanization process) in working class communities of color, through a politics of inferiorization. Chapter 4 provides a critique of Eurocentric epistemologies

and examines traditional curriculum materials and directives on self-esteem over the years, and their colonizing consequences. The concluding chapter (Chapter 5) lays out a decolonizing path that integrates an emancipatory understanding of the self and answers question as to why this is a significant and necessary move, particularly given the current historical moment. Furthermore, I engage Freirian constructs of consciousness and introduce the transformative principles of actualization, social agency, and empowerment, which are necessary to the formation of a more emancipatory pedagogical practice that supports self-determination.

Definition of Terms

Banking Education: This concept asserts that schools exist as instruments for the social reproduction of the labor force. According to Freire (2000), it is a system in which "the scope of action allowed by students extends only as far as receiving, filling, and storing the deposits" (p. 72), and where knowledge is a gift bestowed upon those who are considered to know nothing (students) by those who consider themselves knowledgeable (teachers).

Commonsensical: The relatively unchallenged assumptions that are often confused with sound reasoning and serve to reproduce and legitimize the dominant culture.

Critical Consciousness: A process that allows individuals and communities to challenge hegemonic assumptions (perceived inadequacies, pathologies, etc.) in an effort to restore a sense of possibility for themselves and others.

Critical Pedagogy: Critical pedagogy proposes a humanizing education grounded in critical principles (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2008) and capable of creating the necessary conditions for social transformation. The practice, uncompromisingly committed to the most

vulnerable, focuses on supporting the lived experiences and genuine expression of voices from which critique, resistance, and alternatives are to be realized.

Empowerment: A critical component of the decolonizing process of individuals that encompasses a political and personal shift in both theory and practice.

Hegemony: Refers to the successful attempt of a dominant class to use civil and state resources, for example, media and educational system, to establish its view of the world as universal (Giroux, 1981).

Ideology: A lattice of ideas that permeates the social order but fails to grasp the real conditions of human existence. Also a lens by which consciousness, whether dominant or emancipatory, is formed and expressed in society (Darder, 2012).

Mainstream culture: The network of meritocratic, relativistic social structures that perpetuate racialized, gendered, economic, sexual, and other forms of social exclusions and cultural values within the larger society.

Self-esteem: Self-esteem is used to represent the way people generally feel about themselves, that is, the level of satisfaction that individuals attach to the personal attributes they believe they possess.

Self-determination: Describes the process by which a person controls their own life, which necessitates a reinvention of classroom processes and pedagogy as the main site of this struggle.

Social Agency: A resistance-oriented process that suggests the responsibility of an individual to understand the world and his/her relationship to others.

Voice: Voice, as it is used in this study, has two meanings. First, it refers to the voice of the subject as it seeks to interrupt hegemonic processes. The second use of the term is intended to question who speaks for whom, to whom, and for what purposes.

CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORY AND POLITICS SELF-ESTEEM

Many good words get spoiled when the word self is prefixed to them.

— John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*, 1922

In 1878, Hungarian artist Mihály Munkácsy sold a poster-sized oil painting completed the year before tat simultaneously earned him the security of a 10-year contract and solidified his place as an established member of the art world. The painting (which now resides on the third floor of the New York Public Library) depicts a dark but handsomely decorated room. The central focus of the painting is the brooding patriarch, seated at the head of a long table, fist clenched over the center of his chest. Tom Vitale (2008) wrote of the figure: "He was an interesting man, politically—one of the first European intellectuals to argue in favor of divorce on the grounds of lack of spiritual companionship" (p. 4). He also published a book devoted to the topic of censorship, was read by the founding fathers in America, and held political office as Secretary for the Foreign Tongues. After a visit with Galileo in 1638, he became the first to use the word "space," in the sense of "outer space" (Vitale, 2008, p. 4). Who is the mysterious main character of Munkácsy's painting? John Milton.

Munkácsy's painting is unique in that it depicts Milton (1667) in the process of creating his most famous work, *Paradise Lost.* It may come as no surprise to those familiar with Milton's biography that Munkácsy depicts a seemingly tortuous writing process. This may be attributed to the fact that by the time he began the work, Milton was completely blind. To *complete Paradise Lost,* Milton would recite 40 lines to his amanuensis every morning for seven years. In the context of this study, Milton is important because he is often credited with the genesis of the

term “self-esteem” (Vitale, 2008). But according to Pickering (2008), *Paradise Lost* is not the first time Milton used the term. Milton’s first use of the term appears in an installment of political pamphlets that criticized the Episcopalian church leadership.

Moreover, the appearance of the concept (self-esteem) in Western discourse during the mid-to-late 1600s is not limited solely to Milton (1667). In *Contemplative Prayer*, a series of mystical treatises that appeared in 1657, Father Augustine Baker (1907) also uses the term “self-esteem.” Pickering’s (2008) scholarship implies that as early as 1642, the notion of self-esteem had become a culturally relevant and increasingly invoked concept. Together, the works of Baker and Milton signal the beginning of a massive social, economic, political, and cultural shift. Over the course of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, certain events combined to “nurture the principle of individualism” and “the pursuit of rational self-interest” (Held, 1980, p. 67). As a result, terms such as self-concept and self-esteem appear as logical by-products of the cultural belief in the individual, the person, and the self. In particular, self-esteem was a term that would prove to have profound global implications, especially in reference to more contemporary understandings of the individual as a deeply psychological being.

Cogito, Ergo, Sum, **and so on**

What we now consider the modern worldview unfolded from the 16th to the 18th centuries in ways that would embody and bolster core Western values (Martin & McLellan, 2013). The intellectual force generated over the course of this historical epoch would eventually call into existence more contemporary psychological conceptions of selfhood. An early 17th century example from Shakespeare’s (1987) *Hamlet*, where Polonius burdens his son, Laertes, with the unwanted advice, “Above all things, to thine own self be true” (p.176), is just one

historical buoy set among the tide of changing beliefs about the self. In other words, the secret of selfhood began to be seen in terms of authenticity and individuality, and its history is presented as a biography of progress toward that goal, overcoming great obstacles in the process (Porter, 1997).

The ideal of self-realization had powerful appeal, and it would easily complement the power of other emerging Western values, such as democracy, freedom of speech, and equal opportunity. There are far-reaching implications to be considered during this era in that autonomy would come to imply a type of inner character building through processes of emancipation from external constraints like religious and political persecution. In regards to this shifting global perspective, scholars have identified three major events. The first, according to Martin and McLellan (2013), was the Protestant Reformation. The second event was the advent of modern science. And the third, as Held (1980) argued, was the Enlightenment.

Science was the driving force behind the Enlightenment and the "scientific revolution," as it has come to be known, represented a major shift in Western attitudes and values that would have far-reaching consequences. The culminating feature of the Enlightenment project includes the mathematization of nature, and the development of a universal, formulated science, and knowledge. The 18th century, in particular, was a time of great inventiveness in the creation of measurement tools, among them the thermometer, the sextant, and the marine chronometer (Davies, 2015). The introduction of these new measuring tools and standards exemplified the increasing necessity of reliable, standardized measures. According to Davies (2015), "It was equally important that everybody was using the same yardsticks of comparison, or the whole

project [the Enlightenment] would collapse into a relativist babble of subjective perspectives" (p. 23).

Propelled by some of the most valorized intellectual figures in Western history (Spinoza, Locke, Voltaire, Newton, Rousseau, etc.) the Enlightenment period has been described as a cultural movement, a reaction to (and perhaps even rejection of) centuries of religious wars across Europe. Wilson (1998) argued, "Western science took the lead in the world because it cultivated reductionism and physical law to expand the understanding of space and time beyond that attainable by the unaided senses" (p. 17). An entirely new methodological approach of induction overtook the Aristotelian system of deduction, which had been the basis of university education until then (Bennett, 2007). Many scholars have traced the first stirrings in this direction back to Francis Bacon; however, Bennett (2007) located what he believes to be the true birth of scientific discourse in the writings of Isaac Newton, "in which processes were systematically reconstructed as things for the first time, chiefly by means of the linguistic device of nominalization" (p. 160). This view would help to establish the framework for a positivist philosophy throughout the English-speaking world.

In concert with the neoteric design of selfhood, the Enlightenment featured a call for reason, the dissemination of knowledge, and advocated the idea of an ordered, explainable universe. It was an age that would solidify reductionism and analytic, mathematical modeling as the most powerful intellectual instruments of modern science. It was a period that provided a powerful foothold for individualism. In standard accounts, it is described as the time and place when mankind, "by which was implicitly meant literate, gifted, elite males—began to liberate itself from the chains of custom, conformity, and the Church, taking a fearless leap forward into

self-discovery and self-fulfillment" (Porter, 1997, p. 3). Literary and scholarly movements rejected theological dogma, and began to obsess over the joys of man himself. New cultural genres—the portrait (above all the self-portrait), the diary, and the biography (especially the autobiography)—revealed heightened perceptions of individuality. With all of these novel conventions in tow, European thought officially entered into an era of positivism.

I Am that I Am

While the concept of the "self" has concerned philosophers since Plato, it is Rene Descartes's (1659) famous cogito—"I think therefore I am"—that captures the 17th-century shift in thinking about the self, which still persists today. Ramon Grosfoguel (2013) wrote: "Descartes' phrase constitutes a new foundation of knowledge that challenged Christendom's authority of knowledge since the Roman Empire" (p. 75). Descartes's tradition of thought claimed to produce a type of knowledge equivalent to God. This new "I" construct, a prominent feature of Descartes's (1659) *Principles of Philosophy*, represents a turning point in the thinking about the nonphysical being. Cartesian philosophy has been highly influential in Westernized projects of knowledge production, and the emphasis on mind and body duality that Cartesian rationalism came to represent remains a powerful force in philosophical and psychological thought. What is particularly relevant to the Western tradition of thought introduced by Cartesian philosophy is that it constituted a world-historical event (Grosfoguel, 2013).

And while Descartes's cogito is seen to personify Enlightenment thinking, perhaps no thinker was to be as influential in the history of prepsychological and psychological selfhood as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762). It was Rousseau who not only postulated a highly contradictory self, but also formulated, in his text É*mile*, the first and potentially most influential articulation of

psychological development and its educational implications (Martin & McLellan, 2013). Martin (2008) asserted that Rousseau can be characterized by "his over-arching concern for the authentic self-esteem of the learner as a buffer against the invidious comparisons with others that are encouraged by traditional modes of education and society in general" (p. 3).

Regarded by many as the father of modern progressive education and developmental psychology, Rousseau (1979) believed that natural self-love is corrupted by societal demands and expectations for individuals to compete with each other over resources and prestige. Society thus breeds a kind of vanity and self-importance (*amour proper*). Rousseau maintained that the concept of selfhood possessed the potential for self-destruction. Born out of inequitable social opportunities and comparisons, this oppressive feature of selfhood robbed individuals of their naturally good self-love (*amour de soi*) and replaced it with self-destructive self-regard (*amour proper*) (Martin & McLellan, 2013). For Rousseau, then, the duality (between self-love and self-regard) would form as individuals began to live in more stable societies, where they would begin to increasingly rely on others.

In an effort to combat the corrupting influences of society on its members, Rousseau (1979) produced highly original and influential writings in political and educational theory. The primary purpose of his educational theorizing was "to prevent *amour de soi* from turning into *amour proper*, for this is the true source of man's dividedness" (Martin, 2007, p. 2). In Rousseau's model, the teacher's role is to arrange activities to ensure that the child is not required to make social comparisons with others before they are satisfied with themselves and truly concerned with others.

Rousseau's (1979) emphasis on the interests, activities, and development of pupils became revered in a general form of education that focused on the whole person, individual differences in interests and abilities, learning by doing, and interacting with nature. Since the publication of *Émile*, *or On Education* in 1762, Rousseau's (1979) emphasis on the interests and self-love of the child has influenced more than two centuries of progressive education, earlier forms of which tended to retain his emphasis on moral and political education, but latter forms of which have tended to take more decidedly psychological directions (Martin, 2007). Rousseau is also often credited with contemporary ideas of self-understanding, self-expression, and authenticity, which motivated both 19th-century Romantics and 20th-century psychologists (Martin & McLellan, 2013).

The Origin of a Species

By the early 1800s, traditional rural existences were being transformed by expanding urban centers. This expansion included an emerging middle class and its newly minted members who "endorsed a bourgeois politics of liberal individualism that increasingly attributed political rights and responsibilities to individuals" (Martin & McLellan, 2013, p. 30). By the end of the 1850s, Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* had appeared, and his theory of evolution encouraged some social Darwinists to advocate social and political views that emphasized the success of individuals by attributing them to differences in character and ability.

This era stands as a significant historical period for the development and professionalization of science in both Europe and America. The hyperfocus on individualism would prove fertile ground for the emergence of scientific disciplines that would justify political, social, and economic orders. According to Martin and McLellan (2013), "In cases where

economic and demographic circumstances seemed insufficient to account for differences in relative success, new forms of explanation focusing on the mental characteristics of individuals began to flourish" (pp. 3031). Against this backdrop, the notion of self-esteem emerges as a way to explain the radical social, political, and economic differences that were becoming painfully obvious.

Since its formal introduction to the discourse of social science in the late 19th century, "self-esteem has become one of the more prolific concepts in psychological research, psychotherapy, and popular discussions of the self and self-help" (Ward, 1996, p. 1). And from the end of the 19th century forward, the concept of self-esteem grew from a fragile idea used within the discipline of psychology to a basic truth about human experience. According to Pajares and Schunk (2002), "When American psychology began to take its place among the other academic disciplines, there was a great deal of interest both in the self and in the role that self-beliefs play in human conduct" (p. 8). It was during this era that "positivism (to measure is to know) was riding high" (Richardson, 2006, p. 44).

During the same two-year period (1877–1878) that Munkácsy was diligently working on his painting of Milton, a continent away another pivotal figure in the history of self-esteem would decide to change his professional focus from physiology to psychology. This man, William James, would write:

> It seems to me, that perhaps the time has come for Psychology to begin to be a science—some measurements have already been made in the region lying between the physical changes in the nerves and the appearance of consciousness—(in the shape of sense perceptions) and more may come of it. (Richardson, 2006, p. 87)

In highly romanticized retellings, James, an American psychologist and philosopher, captures the aggressively individualistic spirit of his age. He approached the world with a sort of innocent recklessness, and spent a significant amount of time experimenting with a variety of drugs. He was from a well-to-do family, was more or less forced to give up his early ambition to be a painter, traveled the world in search of adventure, and better health. He was a pioneer in the technique of "icing" sore muscles and joints. His father and a handful of his siblings were well known and he fraternized with some of the most influential scholars of the time, all before becoming a well-regarded professor at Harvard.

The Firebrands

According to Richardson (2006), there are at least three main reasons to remember James, often cited as the first to use the term self-esteem with scientific intent:

> First, as a scientist, a medical doctor, and an empirical, laboratory-based experimental physiologist and psychologist . . . Second, as a philosopher (psychology, in James's day, was a branch of philosophy and taught in the philosophy departments of universities)…Third, James is the author of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, the founding text of the modern study of religion, a book so pervasive in religious studies that one hears occasional mutterings in the schools about King James—and they don't mean the Bible. (pp. 5–6)

Each of Richardson's (2006) claims holds a certain degree of merit. Certainly, James was interested in how the mind works, believing that "mental states are always related to bodily states and that the connections between them could be shown empirically" (Richardson, 2006, p. 5). James was also developing what can now be recognized as the modern concept of consciousness

at the same time Freud was developing the modern concept of unconsciousness (Richardson, 2006). When William James (1950) wrote the *Principles of Psychology*, his chapter on "The Consciousness of Self" was the longest in the two volumes.

Moreover, James was one of the first individuals to mathematize the term self-esteem, which he described as: "a self-feeling that in this world depends entirely on what we back ourselves to be and do" (as cited in Pajares & Schunk, 2002, p. 9). James argued that self-esteem is determined by the ratio of our actualities to our supposed potentialities. As people experience success in acquiring this basic human need they feel a sense of self-satisfaction, which builds their self-appreciation. In essence, "how we feel about ourselves depends on the success with which we accomplish those things we wish to accomplish" (Pajares & Schunk, 2002, p. 9). Martin Seligman (2007), author of *The Optimistic Child,* believes the beauty of James's definition is that "it stresses two ingredients of self-esteem which have been present in debates about the concept ever since: namely, self-esteem includes the idea of 'feeling good' and 'doing well'" (p. 1).

Thus, when all is said and done, "William James, widely recognized as the founder of American psychology, comes down in favor of an inner psychological self for which individuals themselves are responsible" (Martin & McLellan, 2013, p. 33). But even James seems to dodge a true definition of self-esteem. The ingredients that he provided as a definition seem problematic to say the least, especially considering that James's (1950) definition appears as the most commonly cited across the majority of empirical research on the subject.

In January of 1894, James wrote a review of Pierre Janet's "État Mentale des Hystériques," which would be published in *Psychological Review.* The same issue also had a

"brief review by James of the short paper by Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud that is usually identified as the starting point of the psychoanalytic movement" (Richardson, 2006, p. 336). Freud's work would become so influential that it would be reasonable to say that "few concepts in psychology are as closely associated to the concept of self in modern parlance as that of ego" (Pajares & Schunk, 2002, pp. 10–11). Considered a milestone in the quest for understanding internal processes, Freud (1957) framed the self as the regulating center of an individual's personality and shed light on self-processes under the guise of id, ego, and superego functioning. Freud introduced the hypothetical construct of ego, in an effort to explain what he considered to be a psychic struggle that all individuals must endure, between instinctual drives, sociocultural norms, and the world of reality.

Freud's (1957) tripartite model was offered to explain this psychic tension and to account for human agency. In his model, the function of the ego (in German the *ich*, or *I*) mediated and resolved the conflict between the id (or *it*), the superego (in German *uberich*, or *greater than I*), and the external world. According to Pajares and Schunk (2002):

> The id consists of pleasure-seeking, instinctual drives with which all individuals are born; the superego consists of the conscience and ego-ideal developed as a result of sociocultural and familial influences. It is the task of the ego to delay, re channel, or if necessary circumvent id gratification and adapt the individual to the reality of the world at large. (p. 12)

Freud believed that "the most powerful genesis of our experiences and actions are internal forces about which we have little conscious awareness and even less knowledge, and over which we have little or limited agentic control" (Martin & McLellan, 2013, p. 33), and he opened up new

horizons of selfhood with his upstaging of the Cartesian cogito. Freud's conception of the ego—as part unconscious—did not distinguish it from traditional concepts of the self, but it "clearly distinguishes it from the self-beliefs such as self-esteem, which are generally considered to exist at a conscious level of awareness" (Pajares & Schunk, 2002, p. 12). Freud argued that the ego is part unconscious, and so its executive function is not always thought to reflect intentionality and conscious purpose.

In 1902, Charles Horton Cooley introduced the metaphor of the looking glass self to illustrate the idea that individuals' sense of self is formed as they develop self-beliefs that have been created by their perceptions of how others perceive them. Meaning, the appraisals of others act as mirror reflections that provide feedback that we use to define our own sense of self. The concept of the looking glass self necessarily assumes that we are in great part what we think other people think we are. Kernis (2006) described the relationship between the looking glass self and self-esteem:

> Pride or shame in oneself is determined in large part by one's inferences concerning *others' appraisals* of the self. If others are believed to judge the self favorably, then self-esteem is high; if one's family and friends are perceived as judging the self negatively, then low self-esteem should result. (p. 7)

Cooley's ideas concerning social influences on self-esteem were the foundation for thousands of studies examining the relation of self-esteem to the perceived perceptions of significant others—particularly parents and teachers—a line of work that continues today.

By the early 20th century, the ideas of Rousseau, Darwin, Freud, James, Cooley, Dewey, and others had created a theoretical and practical niche that allowed psychology to develop

rapidly as a social science and profession that claimed unique expertise in matters relating to the self (Martin, 2007). The work of these "Firebrands" paved the way for the view of psychology as a domain of expertise with theories and practices capable of purging individuals of their psychological burdens. American psychology, now on par with other academic disciplines, focused a great deal of attention on both the self and the role that self-beliefs play in the human experience, conceptions that would dominate the work of a first generation of psychologists who focused on relations between society and selfhood.

The popularity of psychology would be further supported by the prohibition of child labor and the move toward compulsory education in the United States. As a result, an entirely new life-stage referred to as "adolescence" came into being. The concept of adolescence would generate an entirely new set of interventionist practices, reciprocally informed by the discipline of psychology (Martin, 2007). The emerging progressive emphasis on the nature, development, and self-esteem of the child also garnered considerable attention from the discipline of psychology. Teachers colleges and departments of education distributed large-scale surveys that asked all parties involved in education (parents, teachers, and other professionals) "to observe and record data on everything from children's emotions and food preferences to their self-images" (Martin & McLellan, 2013, p. 46).

Thus, the argument can be made that very near its inception, modern psychological theories have always influenced, or at least informed, educational matters. For example, James's (1992) educational ideas as outlined in his "Talks to Teachers," were embraced by the educational community of his day and served as the prevailing influence on most educators during the first two decades of the century. Richardson (2006) described these talks:

> In November and December of 1894, James gave a number of talks to teachers in Boston. James almost never speaks about the content of education. He has nothing to say about the value of classics or the need for more science or languages, no expressed opinion on the value of any one subject over another. His emphasis is on how most effectively to teach whatever it is you wish to teach. (p. 341)

Richardson (2006) is correct that James (1992) only occasionally mentioned the content of education. Although he did often warn his audience:

> I say moreover that you make a great, a very great mistake, if you think that psychology, being the science of the mind's laws, is something from which you can deduce definite programs, and schemes, and methods of instruction for immediate schoolroom use. Psychology is a science, and teaching is an art; and sciences never generate arts directly out of themselves. An intermediary inventive mind must make the application, by using its originality. The science of logic never made a man reason rightly, and the science of ethics (if there be such a thing) never made man behave rightly. (James, 1992, p. 717)

With the focus on children specifically and the field of education generally came significant political, social, economic, and even legal developments, or consequences. As the importance of the church steadily declined, a new self-conscious view of man would flourish alongside processes of industrialism, urbanization, and increased social inequality. Macro level societal changes, together with liberalism, social Darwinism, and the rising tide of positivism only served to emphasize the success of the individual. Additionally, the links between social management and social science intensified (Jansz & van Drunen, 2004). The discipline of psychology, riding

on the wave of these tremendous changes, found the necessary force to institutionalize itself as the dominant discourse of human experience.

The Term of the Century

While it may be impossible to pin down a single moment from which the Western focus on the individual originated, it seems safe to say that by 1910, practical psychology was well underway, and in the United States by the early 1920s it already overshadowed academic psychology. Psychologists rallied around various schools of thought—for example, Freudianism and behaviorism, which shared the common belief that individuals' lives were determined largely by forces out of their control—and solidified their positions by conducting empirical investigations that produced convincing research results grounded on what they maintained was sound scientific inquiry (Craig, 2009).

While Freudianism has certainly played a major role in the tradition of Western psychology, in 1913, animal psychologist John Watson (1925) gave a lecture at Columbia University that would serve as a proclamation for one of the most influential scientific traditions of the 20th century: behaviorism. Watson promoted behaviorism far beyond notions of superiority within American psychology, as he allied the term within dimensions of social policy and management that he believed could be shaped by behaviorist practices. Watson (1925) stated: "If psychology would follow the plan I suggest, the educator, the physician, the jurist and the businessman could utilize our data in a practical way, as soon as we are able, experimentally, to obtain them" (as cited in Davies, 2015, p. 87). Despite this explicit offer of collusion with political and economic forces, and having not yet studied a human being, within two years of the

Columbia address, Watson was named president of the American Psychological Association (Davies, 2015).

Shortly before his death, William James expressed reservations about how antiphilosophical American psychology had become. He worried that the mysteries of the mind risked being obscured by so much emphasis on measurement and observation, especially in the service of institutions. But in the face of global conflict and economic depression, concepts like the self, self-belief, and self-perception were abandoned in lieu of the behaviorist thinking of Thorndike (1912), John Watson (1925), Pavlov (1926), and later B.F. Skinner (1938). As a result, these behavior-oriented psychologists tightened their grip on American psychology and turned attention away from the self, self-belief, and self-perception, along with internal constructs such as the mind, consciousness, awareness, and will, and instead focused on observable stimuli and responses.

Very little of the research that emerged from early to midcentury was based on what we would now think of as disciplined inquiry. Most studies were characterized by their neglect of rigorous experimentation, reliability, validity, replicability, and so on. Additionally, terms such as the mind, soul, psyche, and the self were often used interchangeably, with scant regard for consistent vocabulary or scientific experimentation (Martin, 2007). Regardless of their methods, in the hands of the behaviorists, psychology would become a "tool of expert manipulation" (Davies, 2015, p. 91), ready-made for clients in the government and private sector.

By 1920, the advertising industry was fully alert to the potential offered by psychology, and scientific advertising became all the rage. Stanley Resor, president of the Madison Avenue firm J. Walter Thompson, vowed to turn his business into a "university of advertising" (Davies,

2015, p. 93). The importance of psychology also complemented the political machinery. This type of political knowledge soon became commercially available. For example, when George Gallup's opinion-polling company predicted the outcome of the 1936 presidential election. The accuracy of the Gallup Poll led to soaring prestige and complemented the development of new forms of psychological testing during the 1920s and 1930s.

These events would increase the social and cultural capital of psychometrically inclined psychologists, and in turn, psychoanalytical tools would help to move the concept of self-esteem from the periphery of psychology, psychotherapy, and experimental psychology to an "indispensable concept for doing the normal, day-to-day science of psychology and psychotherapy" (Pajares & Schunk, 2002, p. 14). Moreover, the panoply of measurement systems complemented several goals of progressive educators, such as the adaptation of curricula and instructional methods to individual learners (Martin & McLellan, 2013). Over the course of the 20th century, this trend only gained momentum, as parents and teachers increasingly relied on educational psychologists for "information on how the educational development of children should be determined, measured, assessed, and improved" (Martin & McLellan, 2013, p. 47).

The continued insistence on the relationship between education and psychology received an enormous boost from the bourgeoning field of personality psychology. In this arena, Gordon Allport (1937) is credited for establishing a psychological science of personality and selfhood. It was Allport who mapped out a self that reflected the new realities of industrialized America. This was a self that could be defined, governed, and effectively managed. According to Martin (2008), "It was a self that could be embraced by employers and officialdom and one to which upwardly mobile individuals could aspire" (p. 8). Allport's work on individual measurement

would transform the intangible value of individuality into an empirical reality. This process freed Americans from group-based categories and directly and indirectly influenced subsequent generations of psychologists and educational psychologists concerned with both self-expression and self-management (Martin, 2007).

These are just a few of the tumultuous and consequential developments characteristic of American life during this time. The bourgeoning population of public schools in concert with broad attempts at the reformation of American life led to the institutionalization of features now common to the educational system, including practices such as tracking, standardized testing, and civic education (Flinders & Thornton, 2004). Additionally, as early as 1918, men like Franklin Bobbitt were convinced that "professional knowledge applicable to curriculum work could be found in the logic of 'scientific management,' which had been applied to raising worker productivity in industry" (Flinders & Thornton, 2004, p. 3).

Giroux (1988) argued that the development of psychological science and the new technologies of individual personality management set the foundation for the eventual suppression of historical consciousness. Additionally, the consolidation of culture by new technologies of mass communication, coupled with recently invented social science disciplines ushered in powerful, new modes of administration in the public sphere (Giroux, 1988). As a result, all areas of social existence were informed by the rationality of advanced industrial capitalism. And while industrialization was transforming daily life, scientific management, including psychology and sociology, was dramatically reshaping traditional patterns of work. Now the 20th century could confidently turn its back on the 18th- and 19th-century concerns of

moral self-improvement and self-discipline in the interest of building a better society, and instead focus on the justification of material and technical growth.

Something Wicked This Way Comes

Nearly coinciding with the apex of the behaviorist movement at midcentury came what is often referred to as the humanistic revolt in psychology. Dissatisfied with the direction that psychology was taking and apprehensive about what they considered the narrow and passive view of human functioning that behaviorism represented, a group of psychologists called for renewed attention to inner experience, internal processes, and self-constructs (Pajares & Schunk, 2002). Parents, traumatized by war abroad and civil unrest at home, were in search of ways to reduce the stresses of modern life. The simple proposition of raising their children's self-esteem seemed to be a reasonable solution.

The root of the revolt against behaviorism began with the type of work developed by Abraham Maslow (1943). Now generally recognized as the father of modern humanistic psychology, Maslow began his academic career as a behaviorist but came to find the theory deterministic and limited in scope and depth. Maslow believed that all individuals have inner lives, potential for growth, creativity, and free choice. In *A Dynamic Theory of Motivation* Maslow outlined a motivational process based on the view that human beings are motivated by basic needs that must be satisfied and are hierarchically ordered. Maslow considered esteem the second most important human need.

According to Storr (2014), "A nation of workmen was turning into a nation of salesman . . . Rising divorce rates and the surge of women in the workplace were triggering anxieties about the lives of children born into the baby boom" (p. 2). In this context, Maslow's (1943) work is

significant because he connected self-esteem to other forms of status such as marital happiness and success (Ward, 1996). This connection would impact the direction of future research as high levels of self-esteem have been attached to numerous positive attributes, such as good performance (Dukes & Lorch, 1989) and well-adjusted children (Buri, Kirchner, & Walsh, 1987), while low levels of self-esteem have been the proposed cause of problems like teenage pregnancy (Crockenberg & Soby, 1989), suicide (Choquet, Kovess, & Poutignat, 1993), and homicide (Loewenstein, Thompson, & Bazerman, 1989).

Amid the chaos of changes brought on by the forces of industrial capitalism, the first comprehensive experimental studies of self-esteem began to appear in the early 1940s and gained prominence through the 1950s. Articles began to show up in the leading human behavior journals relating self-concept and self-esteem to such issues as ethnocentrism (Pearl, 1954), social class (Klausner, 1953), levels of social interaction (Manis, 1955), delinquency (Reckless, Dinitz, & Kay, 1957), and private and public failure (Stotland & Zander, 1958). The 20-year period, beginning in 1940 and stretching to the end of the 1950s, is also characterized by the use of psychological concepts, measures, and interventions related to students' "selves."

During the second half of the 20th century, psychology would reshape notions of student conduct, experience, and goals in American schools. Professional psychology had gained the necessary momentum, which would allow for the transformation of a variety of educational ideals. The focus now was on the development of students as individuals with high levels of self-esteem, self-concept, self-efficacy, and self-regulation (Martin & McLellan, 2013). As a consequence, research and empirical evidence on the "selves" of students became enshrined in school and classroom rhetoric and practices. Free from the limited work of the behaviorists, for

the rest of the 20th century educational psychologists would be able to employ their widely acknowledged expertise in educational research, assessment/measurement, and psycho-educational intervention in an ever-expanding variety in schools (Martin & McLellan, 2013).

Within educational psychology, numerous studies began to focus attention on the self-esteem and self-concept of school children, often in terms of congruency between self-descriptions and self-ideals (i.e., Long, Henderson, & Ziller, 1967; Soares & Soares, 1969). Others focused on relationships between measures of self-concept/self-esteem and academic achievement and motivation, a focus that continues into the present day (Wigfield & Karpathian, 1991). The power and relevance of this empirical work quickly evolved through mergers with more traditionally scientific forms of psychology and educational psychology. One such association was among psychometrists, who rapidly developed scales and subscales for the measurement of self-esteem and self-concept (Piers & Harris, 1964). A second merger occurred, once the cognitive revolution in psychology and applied psychology had taken a firm hold in education by the late 1960s. This involved a new breed of cognitive psychologists interested in structures and operations of cognition in classroom settings that included motivational and affective components (Martin, 2008).

The relationship between social scientific research and compulsory education has generated thousands of subcategories: gender (Buckley & Carter, 2005; O'Malley & Bachman, 1979), race (Adams, 2010), body image (Clay, Vignoles, & Dittmar, 2005; Usmiani & Daniluk, 1997), adolescence (Barrett, Webster, & Wallis, 1999; Bijstra & Jackson, 1998), achievement (Chandler, 2012), and even happiness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The geography of the self-esteem landscape is dotted with a plethora of tools (surveys, questionnaires, etc.) that purportedly

measure the level of self-esteem possessed by an individual. The results range from quantitative data gathered through large-scale surveys to qualitative data gathered through interviews, and mixed methods.

The majority of quantitative work relies on the use of self-assessment reports, including: the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1979); Racial Centrality Subscale of Multi-Dimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Sellers, Rawley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997); Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974); Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (Coopersmith, 1967); and the State Self-Esteem Scale (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991). Despite charges that these self-identification methods encourage participants to construct responses that may hold little to no truth, there is no denying that these products of the self-esteem discourse had a powerful impact on both academia and the popular imagination.

Soul on Ice

During the 1950s and 1960s, the connection between self-esteem and supportive school programs was fully forged, coinciding with the harsh realities of postwar segregation and the dramatic events of the Civil Rights Movement. Arguments for enhancing the self-esteem of students in schools followed three lines of reasoning. The first concerned the school's role as a social agency that "meant to contribute to the general health and well being of young people" (Smith, 1997, p. 128). The second line of reasoning had to do with the correlation between self-esteem and various types of achievement. This popular notion outlines the belief that enhanced self-esteem will cause children to feel better about themselves, and this will produce increased school performance (Smith, 1997). The third line of reasoning for self-esteem enhancement

programs in schools posited: “Personal efficacy through personal development, which in turn may lead toward action for improving one’s situation” (Smith, p. 128).

During this period (the 1950s through the 1960s), psychologists like Maslow and Carl Rogers (1957) worked against the assumptions of behaviorism and renewed the focus on internal processes in psychology, with an emphasis on individually unique experiences. Pioneering work on the self within education, however, is often attributed to Stanley Coopersmith (1967), who published the “The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory,” designed to measure the level of self-esteem in children, as well as *The Antecedents of Self-Esteem*, considered by many to be a seminal psychological treatise on the subject.

Since the late 1960s, researchers inspired by Coopersmith’s (1967) holy trinity of self-esteem, self-concept, and values have worked tirelessly to hinge these principles to certain processes within education. Coopersmith worked to establish a relationship between parenting style and levels of self-esteem in children and adolescents. This connection was said to be an important determinant of the ability of an individual to lead a successful and productive life (Ward, 1996). Additionally, Coopersmith identified a supposed link between self-esteem and frailty:

> In children, domination, rejection, and severe punishment result in lowered self-esteem. Under such conditions they have fewer experiences of love and success and tend to become generally more submissive and withdrawn (though occasionally veering to the opposite extreme of aggression and domination. (as cited in Stearns, 2008, para. 4)

In Coopersmith, one can find the antecedents of many common beliefs held by contemporary educators. Moreover, these values serve as the basis for several modern self-esteem interventions.

Coopersmith's (1967) popularity is actually predated by the work of psychologists like Dewey (1886), James (1892), and even Rosenberg (1965) who were among the first to theorize that the success or failure of an individual is related to varying levels of self-esteem. If Dewey and James had already made connections between success and self-esteem prior to Rosenberg and Coopersmith's work, then what factors contributed to the term's disappearance from popular culture for the period between? Also, what were the economic, political, and cultural conditions that would facilitate a return of the term self-esteem? And, what conditions were necessary to expand the concept of self-esteem, making it an inseparable—even necessary—feature of the system of education within the United States?

Craig (2009) argued that the empirical work on self-esteem that occurred during the 1960s had a particularly strong impact on educational institutions, in that psychology created theories that put the "self-directed" individual at the center of his or her own life. The rise of wealth and consumerism meant that it was easier to conceptualize the individual at the center of his/her own destiny. And within this period, several important books were published that helped further establish self-esteem as an indispensable concept for doing psychological research.

The first was Morris Rosenberg's (1965) *Society and the Adolescent Self-Image*. Of this work, Ward (1996) wrote: "Rosenberg identified a number of elements that influence the self-esteem level of adolescents, such as family structure, social class, ethnicity, and religion. He also tied self-esteem to a series of personality and social problems" (p. 6). Rosenberg (1979) wrote,

"When we deal with self-esteem, we are asking whether the individual considers himself adequate—a person of worth—not whether he considers himself superior to others" (p. 6).

Two years later, Nathaniel Branden (1969), a disciple of Ayn Rand, published *The Psychology of Self-Esteem*. Branden argued that self-esteem "has profound effects on a man's thinking processes, emotions, desires, values, and goals. It is the single most significant key to his behavior" (as cited in Storr, 2014, p. 3). An international bestseller, Branden's book is credited with the generation of an entire movement. Branden's work is limited but sophisticated, and his definition of self-esteem and methods of how it can be raised remain a far cry from the feel-good dialogue that have come to characterize self-esteem–building exercises in American schools.

The work of this second set of self-esteem "Firebrands"—Rosenberg (1965), Coopersmith (1967), and Branden (1969)—was further supported by scholars like Erik Erikson (1968), who contributed seminal work on the significance of childhood and the development of identity. Erikson, like most of his contemporaries, believed that questions of self take on major importance in adolescence as that age group confronts the classic identity crisis. Erikson wrote: "Identity, is as unfathomable as it is all-pervasive. It deals with a process that is located both in the core of the individual and in the core of the communal culture" (p. 84).

Interestingly, Erikson (1968), was also concerned with issues of social protest and changing gender roles that occurred throughout the 1960s. In his essay, "Race and the Wider Identity," Erikson explored the psychological core of races and nations that sought emancipation from the remnants of colonial patterns of thought. "Alienated from the world to which he is born and from the country to which he is a citizen, yet surrounded by the successful values of that new

world, and country, how can the Negro define himself?" (p. 295). Erikson was not alone in his focus. The general social discord that accompanied the Civil Rights movement and school desegregation garnered significant attention from the social science community. As a result, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, educational researchers, psychologists, and policy makers focused their attention on "disadvantaged" children (DeGrandpre, 2000).

Whitey on the Moon

The highly charged atmosphere of speculation, research, and intervention upon the self-system of minoritized children was only exacerbated by a 1965 report that was released by the Johnson Administration. Written by Assistant Secretary of Labor Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and available for forty-five cents, the "Negro Family: The Case for National Action" cited sociologists and government surveys to underscore a message meant to startle, "The Negro community was doing badly, and its condition was probably getting worse, not better" (Saaneh, 2015, p. 63). Moynihan, a trained sociologist, judged that "most Negro youth are in danger of being caught up in the tangle of pathology that affects their world, and probably a majority are so entrapped" (as cited in Saaneh, 2015, p. 63). He returned again and again to his main theme: "the deterioration of the Negro community," and only at the end called—briefly, and vaguely—for a national program to "strengthen the Negro family" (as cited in Saaneh, 2015, p. 63).

Martin Luther King once referred to the study in a speech but also worried that some people might attribute this social catastrophe to "innate Negro weaknesses" (Saaneh, 2015, p. 64). King further worried that discussion of the Moynihan Report, as it is commonly referred, could be used to justify neglect and rationalize oppression. Many sociologists were harsher. A harbinger of Ryan's (1971) framework for blaming the victim, sociologist Andrew Billingsley

wrote, “The greatest problems facing black families are problems which emanate from the white racist, militaristic, materialistic society which places higher priority on putting white men on the moon than putting black men on their feet on this earth” (Saaneh, 2015, p. 63). It seems apparent that Moynihan had mistaken the symptom for the illness.

According to Spencer (1988), when the two decades of research that occurred before the 1965 Moynihan report on the Black family are reviewed, consistency of empirical themes and deviant-linked interpretations are evident. First, the data suggested that preschool-aged Black children evaluated the color black and Black persons in a negative manner. The interpretive trend was that the Black family and Black community were ineffective or incapable of protecting Black children. Although there were no data to support the conclusions of pathological problems and/or ineffectiveness, the assumptive conclusions had an impact on school desegregation policy and proposals for implementation (Spencer, 1988). Paradoxically, as desegregation policies were implemented, Black youth, more often than not, found themselves in schools that either formally or informally implemented dual education programs on the same campus or within the same classrooms.

The traditional self-concept theorists who described Black self-concept were usually concerned with children’s racial attitudes or reference group orientation. Meaning, these researchers were generally interested in Black self-concept but the design of their studies was based on the assumption that a low or negative Black self-concept existed because of the unbuffered effects of racism. The conclusion inferred was the presence of self-hatred and general personal disorganization (Spencer, 1988).

Moreover, evaluations of Black students and achievement patterns were often based on teachers' assumptions about the students' attitudes and/or efforts. In the two decades of research conducted before the Moynihan report, findings did not show lower self-esteem for Black children. In fact, studies often showed that the self-esteem of Black children was equal to or greater than that of their White counterparts (Rosenberg & Simmons, 1971). However, because of achievement gaps between Black and White students, these findings were interpreted as suggesting that Black youths have unrealistically high self-esteem.

One important result of these studies, infrequently cited by child development researchers, was the demonstration that young, cognitively egocentric children could feel good about the self (personal identity), while also showing a Eurocentric orientation toward the cultural group. Meaning that race awareness was correlated with the child's knowledge of racial stereotypes. As Spencer (1988) described, "For the first time, research conducted during this period was linked to normal maturational processes consistent with caste-related experiences" (p. 66). As noted, until the 1970s, the consistent findings of Eurocentric racial attitudes among young Black children were interpreted as suggesting general psychopathology or self-rejection (e.g., low self-esteem). And the presumptions and assumptions characteristic of minority-focused research efforts remained relatively unchallenged until research conducted in the early 1970s by a movement of indigenous psychology scholars.

Self-concept studies comparing Blacks and Whites done during the period 1943–1958 showed that the differences were marked, with self-concept being less adequate in Blacks (Powell, 1973). Many studies of racial comparison completed just after 1958 through the 1960s also supported the earlier findings that Blacks possessed a more negative self-concept. These

studies utilized a variety of measures and led researchers to conclude that the hypothesis of the damaged self-percept of Black children was supported by their data because the White children tended to see themselves more accurately and realistically, while Black children tended to overrate their abilities. In *Negro Self-Esteem in a Transitional Society*, Williams and Byars (1968) attempted to study the self-concept of black adolescents during a period of increasing social and academic integration. The Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, utilized in the study, reported that Black students were low in self-confidence, defensive in self-description, confused concerning self-identity, and similar in performance to neurotic and psychotic people (Powell, 1973).

It is interesting to note, however, that a comparison of self-attitudes of eighth-grade southern rural Black and White students in Baughman and Dahlstrom's (1968) study contradicted the pervasive assertion of the damaged self-percept of the Black child. The eighth-grade Black students in Baughman and Dahlstrom's (1968) study more frequently reported themselves as being popular with their peers, satisfied being the kind of person they were, and having a happier home life than that of the average child. Baughman and Dahlstrom concluded:

> Clearly if the self-concepts of these Negro children have been unduly damaged, this fact is not reflected in their interview statements about themselves nor in the educational and vocational aspirations which they report for themselves (and which they seem optimistic about realizing. (p. 462)

Likewise, a study by Rosenberg and Simmons (1971) showed that Black students had a higher self-esteem than White students, and that in secondary schools Black students had higher self-esteem if they attended more segregated schools. Although Coopersmith (1967) and Rosenberg

(1979) found that higher social class is directly related to favorable self-concept, a study by Soares and Soares (1969) showed that disadvantaged children did not necessarily reflect more negative self-perceptions or lower self-esteem than advantaged children.

Darder (2012) suggested that it is significant to note in any discussion relating to the self-concept and/or self-esteem of bicultural students, that a number of studies exist (Gay, 2010; Valentine, 1971; McAdoo, 1977; Cross, 1978; Porter & Washington, 1979, as cited in Darder, 2012). These studies challenged the validity of the "essentially monocultural criteria utilized in earlier studies to assess the self-concept/self-esteem of bicultural children" (Darder, 2012, p. 236). While most of the major work in the field has focused on Black children, there is sufficient evidence to believe that assessment of self-concept/self-esteem in other bicultural children would produce similar results under similar conditions (Darder, 2012). While psychocultural constructs like self-esteem have become foundational concepts in cultural and cross-cultural psychology, discussions about how larger sociopolitical conditions, especially oppressive or colonial ones, may play a role in shaping those constructs are scarce. Due to the dissatisfaction of many psychologists in non-Western societies with American psychology's adherence to logical-positivistic, quantitative, universal-seeking, and Western-centric paradigms, the indigenous psychology movement gained popularity during the 1970s (Okazaki et al., 2008). Similarly, since the late 1960s, the Black and Chicano movements in the United States have had comparable aims, and have been interpreted as movements of internal decolonization (Hurstfield, 1978).

Ideologically, the indigenous psychology movement strives toward developing a system of psychological knowledge based on research that is compatible to the examined phenomena in

economic, cultural, and historical contexts. Indigenous psychology scholars counter the comparative paradigm characteristic of cultural psychology. Critics believe these paradigms reproduce Western beliefs and assumptions on the practice of psychology among non-Western peoples. These ill-fitting psychological theories and practices prevent an accurate understanding of non-Western individuals and groups (Okazaki et al., 2008).

In light of these concerns, the indigenous psychology movement has sought to situate the ideological sources of psychological notions within the complex histories of colonialism and colonial discourse. Through the absence of a legacy of rich scholarship on identity processes by majority-group behavioral scientists, combined with a pattern that overlooks or ignores new directions of research by subaltern scholars in the field, racialized communities continue to be labeled "at risk," subjected to all the detrimental consequences the label brings (Allen, 2014).

"Voodoo" Economics

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed a sharp decline in funding for schools and communities across North America. In the midst of this dramatic economic and industrial restructuring emerged one of the most public examples of the reliance on self-esteem principles within the United States. In 1986, California legislators created the State Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility. The agency received national attention with a budget that exceeded $700,000. According to Kahne (1996), the task force "may represent the most significant attempt made by any public body to focus specifically on self-esteem" (p. 10). Its primary purpose was to discover how self-esteem is nurtured, harmed, and rehabilitated and to understand its relationship to social problems. John Vasconcellos, the lawmaker responsible for the formation of the task force, compared the new emphasis on self-esteem with unlocking

the secrets of the atom and the mysteries of outer space (Kahne, 1996). According to Vasconcellos (Mecca, Smelser, & Vasconcellos, 1989) the task force was a bipartisan effort that "demonstrated self-esteem may be the unifying concept to reframe American problem solving" (p. viii). Barbara Bush told interviewers that "self-esteem has everything to do with how well all human beings live and work," while Bill Clinton praised the California task force's report as a "remarkable document" (Storr, 2014, p. 5). In retrospect, the State Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility fit perfectly into its time and place.

Vasconcellos's (1989) first attempt to introduce the bill had limited support in the Senate and was eventually vetoed by the governor. As a result, Vasconcellos adopted the strategy of "trying to speak to the concerns of more conservatives" (p. xv). When he reintroduced the bill in 1986, he broadened his project's task from the sole promotion of self-esteem to include "personal and social responsibility" (Mecca, Smelser, & Vasconcellos, 1989, p. xv). After broadening the task force's focus to include welfare dependency, teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, poor scholastic performance, child abuse, and criminal activity, Governor Deukmejian had no problem authorizing the bill. Vasconcellos added that the task force "wanted to help people learn how to live without government taking care of them" (p. xvi).

Ultimately, the inclusion of the concepts "personal and social responsibility" led the task force to accept an unusual definition of self-esteem: "Appreciating my own worth and importance and having the character to be accountable for myself and to act responsibly toward others" (California State Department of Education, 1990, p. 18). After three years of review, the task force's final report concluded:

> Self-esteem is the likeliest candidate for a social vaccine, something that empowers us to live responsibly and that inoculates us against the lures of crime, violence, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, child abuse, chronic welfare dependency, and educational failure. The lack of self-esteem is central to most personal and social ills plaguing our state and nation as we approach the end of the 20th century. ("Toward a state of esteem," 1990, p. 4)

Although the final report contained little evidence to support this conclusion, it fueled the most damaging legacy of the self-esteem movement: that enhancement of self-esteem can be used as a social vaccine.

Andrew Mecca chaired the task force, with 25 members who reflected a diverse range of priorities. As a result, consensus was often difficult to reach. Its members were not even able to agree on a definition for self-esteem. "For some, self-esteem is the conscious appreciation of our own worth and importance, the reputation we have with ourselves. For others, the need to be responsible for ourselves and to act responsibly is paramount" (California State Department of Education, 1990, p. 18). In fact, seven members chose to make personal statements voicing concerns they had with the final report. Jean Barnaby faulted the task force for "never coming fully to grips with the cultural sensitivities and qualities of the Latino community" (California State Department of Education, 1990, p. 139). Paul Froman was disappointed that the task force did not include "Project Ten," which supports gay and lesbian youth, on its list of model programs (California State Department of Education, 1990, pp. 139–140).

Eventually, a book was commissioned, entitled *The Social Importance of Self-Esteem* (1989) that called for "placing self-esteem at the center of the social science research agenda"

(Mecca, Smelser, & Vasconcellos, 1989, p. 11). The analysis, written by a team of noted scholars, begins with a simple assumption: low levels of self-esteem are not only a central cause of various psychological problems, but also an important contributing factor to a multitude of social problems. Meaning: "Many, if not most, of the major problems plaguing society have roots in the low self-esteem of many of the people who make up society" (Mecca et al., 1989, p. 4).

However, the work of the multiple contributors called into question many of the task force's original assumptions. Bhatti, Derezotes, Kim, and Specht (1989) found "no solid evidence that counseling and psychotherapy can increase self-esteem" (pp. 61–62). Schneiderman (1989) reported: "There is little reason to believe that self-esteem is a strong influence on chronic welfare dependency" (p. 235). Even one of the book's editors, Neil Smelser wrote: "The news most consistently reported is that the associations between self-esteem and its predicted consequences are mixed, insignificant, or absent" (p. 15). Martin Covington's chapter on self-esteem and education reviews the research on self-esteem and achievement, and he concludes that there are consistent, though relatively small, correlations between the two measures "but no strong evidence that raising students' self-esteem will promote their achievement" (p. 72).

As Kahne (1996) pointed out: "Findings that questioned the likelihood of ameliorating social problems by promoting self-esteem were ignored. More precisely . . . they were overruled" (p. 15). Carol Weiss (1980), in her study *Social Science Research and Decision-Making*, found that although decision makers valued research quality and studies that challenge the existing practices and assumptions of the institutions in which they work, they generally rejected research

when findings conflict with their strongly held personal beliefs. Consistent with this pattern, the rhetoric that permitted rejection of these findings by the task force emphasized the insights of practitioners and the general public.

The necessity of including concerns of "personal and social responsibility" essentially made self-esteem a means and not an end for the task force, given that personal and social responsibility is quite different from self-esteem. Moreover, the legitimacy of self-esteem as a category within the policy process came to depend on the belief that increasing self-esteem could provide cost-effective solutions to particular social problems (Kahne, 1996). By legitimizing the idea that individuals should not look to the government for help, the task force members undercut their ability to argue for legislation that might respond to some of the underlying structural causes of supposed levels of low self-esteem (poverty, racism, inadequate job opportunities, homophobia, etc.). Thus, to borrow Ryan's (1971) framework, the focus on self-esteem became a mechanism for blaming the victim. Vasconcellos (1989) illustrated this point when he wrote that the task force represented "a pioneering effort to address the causes and cures of many of the major social ills that plague us all today . . . an historic and hopeful search for a 'social vaccine'" (p. 23). Thus, Vasconcellos obscured the need for institutional change and government action.

By the end of 1990, a year after the release of the California Task Force's report, each county in California had established its own local task force to promote self-esteem. Schools adopted a variety of programs to bolster self-confidence. And, according to a U.S. Department of Education survey, self-esteem programs were in 86% of California's elementary schools and 83% of high school districts (Nave, 1990). All practices or circumstances that could conceivably

damage a person's self-esteem were to be purged from the curriculum and educational establishments. Around the time of the California initiative, teachers and those working with young people became increasingly reluctant to voice meaningful relative judgments about those in their care (Emler, 2001). Genuine criticism was far too risky and, according to this logic, there could be no separation between announcing winners and announcing losers.

Consequently, standards were dumbed down and merit awards were handed out based solely on participation. Within the policy environment, these types of programs have followed one of two major courses. First, directive self-esteem policies that aimed to help individuals identify and develop characteristics and abilities that policymakers believed should be valued. This orientation dictates that social policy directs personal behavior by symbolically and materially rewarding individuals and promoting their self-esteem when they demonstrate particular beliefs and behaviors (Kahne, 1996). The other program type is a laissez-faire affirming approach.

Affirming policies aim to help individuals recognize and develop personal qualities of their own choosing. And while the affirming approach may seem to support individuals and groups with priorities that are marginal to mainstream culture, it has been criticized for a promotion of narcissism. As Kohn (1994) explained: "The danger of policies and programs which emphasize self-esteem is that they lead children to focus on themselves" (p. 6). Kahne (1996) argued that there was another problem with affirming approaches in that they may help to preserve the status quo; and do nothing to facilitate critique of or reflection on the values in society that are marked as the sources of self-esteem.

Affirmative programs became the dominant feature in the process of gaining support for the California initiative. If poverty, sexism, or other factors systematically separated whole groups of individuals, and if self-esteem is a goal, then policymakers must find ways to address poverty, sexism, and so on. But, if improving self-esteem is a goal, then policy makers can focus instead on simply raising the self-esteem of poor or racialized individuals. Thus, the task force merely argued that changing individual self-perception, rather than government initiatives or structural changes, was needed to confront the six pressing social issues that they identified (Kahne, 1996). This fervent cultural commitment to the assumptions of the self-esteem discourse led to widespread support for self-esteem despite the consistent failure of researchers to demonstrate a causal connection between self-esteem and prosocial behavior. As a result, educational consultants, curriculum coordinators, and developers reacted to the shared set of beliefs, and a variety of educational programs, particularly those serving "at-risk" youth included components that strive to develop self-esteem.

In sum, self-esteem beliefs in the United States are closely tied to the obsessive focus on the individualistic spirit. This spirit guides many educators, citizens, and advocates of the self-help industry to argue that if you believe in yourself, then anything is possible. Despite the number of conclusions that countered the task force's guiding assumption, both the report and the book did not put the issue to rest. Instead, the task force found tremendous success in legitimizing the idea that individuals should not look to the government for help and the full onus of responsibility for overcoming the impact of oppression was placed squarely on the shoulders of the oppressed, rather than on the larger structural forces that negatively impacted their lives.

Generation Me

As the 1980s rolled into 1990s, schools began to actively seek out updated self-esteem programs, characterized by uncritical exercises like encouraging children to write letters to themselves, telling themselves how special they are (Storr, 2014). By this time, psychologists had elevated self-esteem to the status of core beliefs that determined success in school and life. As a result, classroom curricula and activities were saturated with exercises to boost self-esteem as an end in itself—"Make a list of all the ways in which you are special," "Let's all focus on Daniel, and each of us tell him what we admire about him, and so on" (Martin, 2014, p. 177).

The self-experiences of learners described and rated in what became standard measures of self-esteem and self-concept, such as the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, and the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale for Children, contain items such as: "I feel that I do not have much to be proud of," "All in all, I'm inclined to feel that I'm a failure," and "I am good in my school work." And the work of educational psychologists focused on the "selves" of learners and insisted that self-development, self-esteem, self-concept, self-efficacy, and self-regulation were of central importance to education. Thousands of meaningless merit awards were handed out in schools across the nation, and grades were inflated to protect the self-esteem of low performers, leaving little doubt that the psychologizing of education was here to stay (Martin & McLellan, 2013).

Smith (2006) wrote about how self-esteem, a term with no particular therapeutic association until the 1990s, has now completely colonized our picture of the good, or at least the well-adjusted, life, where it is named as a "core skill" in the teaching of citizenship and democracy in schools. Alarmingly, rather than attempting to understand learning, development,

knowledge, experience, actions, and interactions as activities and accomplishments of embodied, enculturated human beings in interaction with each other (e.g., students, their peers, and teachers), educational psychologists have institutionalized self-esteem so as to require students and educators to reduce the complexity of their lives in schools to personal feelings and judgments about themselves, understood outside of the sociocultural, relational, and interactive contexts of teaching and learning. This process is revealed through decontextualized mantras such as "I feel confident that I will do well" (Martin, 2004).

And this obsessive focus on the individual self before all else has allowed for the reproduction of historic inequalities tied to race, sex, and class. You may feel confident that you will do well, but in doing so you ignore the capacity and necessity of collective action and, more importantly, the reality of structural inequalities that shape the communal condition that impact the lives of individuals. What emerges in lieu of substantial and meaningful change is the reproduction of reified knowledge, pacification of minds, and preparation programs that function in the interest of the brutalizing force of capitalism. About this, Leonardo and Grubb (2013) argued:

> In general, U.S. schools support the economic structure of capitalism and become one of its functions by training the workforce it requires. Thus, it is hardly fair to hold educators responsible for fixing problems they did not create. However, there are education-specific practices in which educators participate on a consistent basis…Some well-established school practices not only reproduce racial inequality, but actively produce it. (p. 5)

Martin and McLellan (2013) referred to this phenomenon as a psychocracy, "a social structure in which psychology plays a decisive role in the distribution of educational chances and

social position—and therefore in the legitimization of social difference" (p. 48). In support of these claims, the literature seems to be completely absent of information on the "vast inequities in types and quality of schooling experiences" (Lewis, 2003, p. 156), especially for working class students of color. This paradigm leaves students from impoverished communities oppressed from the very beginning, hampered by lowered expectations and limited educational opportunities, which—according to the doctrine of self-esteem—is their own responsibility.

The Passive Citizen

And by the end of the 20th century, self-esteem can be said to dominate most discussions of the self. It seems as though somewhere along the way, self-esteem was made impenetrable to critique. By linking it with the newly emerging concept of human nature in psychology, and by making it a seemingly indispensable conceptual tool for experimental psychology and psychotherapy, the notion of self-esteem was transformed from "revolutionary to normal knowledge" (Ward, 1996, p. 2). There are approximately 3,000 studies of self-esteem and/or self-concept listed in the ERIC database (Martin, 2004). Many of these examine the factors, structures, and psychometric properties of an expanding array of measures and scales (Byrne & Shavelson, 1986; Winne & Walsh, 1980, as cited in Martin, 2004). Others examine relationships among measures of self-esteem/self-concept, academic achievement and motivation, and personality variables (Ames & Felkner, 1979; Jordan, 1981, as cited in Martin, 2004).

From 1970 to 2000, there were over 15,000 scholarly articles written on self-esteem and its relationship to everything—from sex, to career advancement, to aging (Bronson, 2007). But under closer scrutiny, the results were often contradictory or inconclusive. After having reviewed the literature for the Association for Psychological Science, even acclaimed self-esteem advocate

and researcher Roy Baumeister (2013) concluded that the promise of high self-esteem was problematic:

> Baumeister's team concluded that self-esteem was polluted with flawed science. Only 200 of those 15,000 studies met rigorous standards. After reviewing those 200 studies, Baumeister concluded that having high self-esteem didn't improve grades or career achievement. It didn't even reduce alcohol usage. And it especially did not lower violence of any sort…At the time, Baumeister was quoted as saying that his findings were the "biggest disappointment of my career." (as cited in Bronson, 2007, pp. 5–6)

Despite conclusions of this nature, possessing a positive self-concept continues to be considered a fundamental ingredient for psychological health, personal achievement, and positive relationships. In fact, self-concept is thought to make such a difference that people who think positively about themselves are believed to be healthier, happier, and more productive (Martin, 2007). According to Craven, Marsh, and Burnett (2003): "Enhancing self-concept is considered necessary to maximizing human potential, from early development to school achievement, to physical/mental health and well being, to gainful employment and other contributions to society" (p. 96). This notion is supported by the ever-expanding array of psycho-educational interventions currently in place in most North American schools that target enhanced self-esteem as a primary goal, independent of other educational aims.

The system of self-esteem requires that the self be continuously measured, judged, and disciplined. But it has also been argued that the self-esteem discourse escapes the boundaries of the personal domain and ushers in a new politics and a new social order. About this, Martin (2007) argued:

> The fact that so many proponents of self-esteem in the classroom and school have little to say about moral and political matters is indicative of the pervasive individualism that afflicts this area of contemporary educational theory, research, and practice, and its relative neglect of the social, cultural (including the moral and political) constitution and concerns of fully functioning citizens and persons. It simply is educationally unsound to hold that the fostering of self-esteem and self-concept in classrooms is an adequate basis for the preparation of students as full participants in those sociocultural contexts in which they are embedded. (p. 7)

The self-esteem discourse promises to solve problems by heralding a revolution—as Cruikshank (1996) described, "not against capitalism, racism, patriarch, or other social inequalities, but rather against the (wrong) way of governing ourselves" (p. 234). This idea is representative of the active citizen, a process where individuals are to become experts of themselves, becoming educated and responsible about self-care in respect to their bodies, minds, social relationships, and the regulation of their own behavior (Watson et al., 2012. And so, in the contemporary moment, self-esteem exists as a technology of the self, used for evaluating and acting upon ourselves, "so that the police, the guards, and the doctors do not have to do so" (Cruikshank, 1996, p. 234). The underlying notion that intractable, entrenched problems are the problems of individuals, who do not properly avail themselves of the ample opportunities provided by the state—according to the ideology of individual responsibility—allows the state to punish working class people of color, as if the reason for the individual's condition was solely inherent within the individual self (Langman & Kaplan, 1978).

Fromm (2010) described the evolution and impact of the ideology of individual responsibility on society over the course of the 20th century:

> The "organization man" thus reared in the family and in the school and having his education completed in the big organization has his opinions but no convictions; he amuses himself, but is unhappy; he is even willing to sacrifice his life and that of his children in voluntary obedience to impersonal and anonymous powers. (pp. 23-23)

Fromm's (2010) critique of the status of the individual is supported by the surplus of self-esteem literature that advocates for positive thinking and positive feelings as the keys to significant individual change and social reform. Our conformity is displayed in the various ways that we are urged to believe in ourselves, be proud of ourselves, and be happy with ourselves. It is assumed that the reservoir of positive self-esteem decisions and actions will promote our real interests and welfare.

But this view is naïve for several reasons. For example, people in oppressed social situations may be urged to feel happy and self-satisfied in order to maintain their oppression, rather than support the development of self-determination and collective empowerment necessary to confront the sources of oppression. Also, focusing attention and concerns inward, onto personal domains of self-evaluation, self-esteem programs imply that individual transformation can occur without the need to confront larger questions of social conventions, social structures, and the distribution of privilege and power in their social relationships (Kenway & Willis, 1990).

The most defensible conclusion from scientific research is that there are no clearly demonstrated, consistently appearing, or important correlations between self-esteem and the

many social problems that most people believe are created by low self-esteem. This evidence argues persuasively that our prevailing ideas about enhancing self-esteem are part of a mythology—not part of any scientifically or rationally based ideas. And when believing in a myth leads to intervention strategies that have harmful side effects, there are important reasons to be concerned (Burr & Christensen, 1992).

Self-esteem, moreover, is intimately related to official public discourse. When we talk about self-esteem in our everyday conversations, somewhere in the background—and not always only in the background—a commonsensical psychological interpretation is being invoked. Self-esteem has become the barometer for psychological health, motivations, and personal identity (Emler, 2001). Through the cultural hegemony of educational socialization, individuals are conditioned to desire self-esteem, just as they may be expected to desire prosperity, good physical health, or freedom of thought.

In the process, individuals come to regard self-esteem as something they should have by right. And, if they lack self-esteem, this is because they have been denied or deprived of it through the actions of others. The hard sciences have made this aspiration legitimate, even admirable, in an interesting way. They have encouraged the belief that self-esteem is good for the individual but it is also good for society. In other words, this is a case in which self-interests coincide with the common good. And this puts it firmly on the political agenda. If self-esteem is good for collective well being, it is worth spending public money to ensure there is more of it to go around (Emler, 2001).

The emphasis on self-esteem in the social sciences and helping professions often contributes to greater selfishness, excessive individualism, and processes that are undermining

the health of family and community life. The emphasis on promoting or enhancing self-esteem tends to focus people's attention on the self, and this promotes a certain type of self-consciousness, self-attention, and self-preoccupation. It elevates the concern people have for their individual self and the net result is that it promotes an egocentric approach (e.g., selfishness). Attention to the self preoccupies one with the inner self and thereby shifts attention away from one's care, concern, love, compassion, and connection with others.

Additionally, much of the research on self-concept continues to permit an unemotional exploration of race and its impact on the life cycle development of racialized children, without actually discussing racism and its etiology. This approach to the issue of race encourages an assumption about the need to aid the victims with their problems, as opposed to supporting a multilevel interactive analysis of a developing individual within a complex environment, during a particular psycho-historical period (Spencer, 1988).

When conceptions and models of self-esteem and self-concept focus only on the feelings and experiences of individuals, they provide too narrow a venue for the education of persons and citizens. Self-esteem does not have to be conceptualized along such narrow individualistic terms. The early theorists, including James (1890) and Cooley (1998) at least recognized the self as developing within an interactive social context. Thus, emerging self-concepts were seen as emerging social concepts. That is, the individual learns simultaneously about the self and society. From this perspective, social change and individual change are inextricably linked (Kenway & Willis, 1990).

Self-esteem dispatched as part of the current educational discourse focuses on individuals rather than on social structures. However, authentic selfhood or personhood is possible only in

the context of shared traditions and ways of life with others. The role of education in democratic societies must be to ensure some minimally acceptable level of knowing and understanding that goes beyond our own interiors, and attend to the world in which we live with others. This path underscores the foundation of a culturally democratic approach to education (Darder, 2012).

It is difficult to know why exactly our culture has been so slow to recognize the undesirable effects of the self-esteem movement (Burr & Christensen, 1992). Perhaps emphasis on individuality at the expense of our connectedness is a result of the Western heritage that emphasizes rationality, independence, individuality, and liberty. In the Western world, we tend to give priority to the economic and political aspects of the human experience, and the ecology that is needed for healthy family life and critical individual perspective is not among our top priorities. As a result, we believe that we can solve problems such as substance abuse, crime and deviance, and premature parenthood in the courts or with military, political, or educational solutions. We naïvely assume that rational, legal, and bureaucratic programs will solve these human problems, but the roots of these difficulties exist among emotional connections in the private, unenforceable parts of the human condition (Burr & Christensen, 1992). What we ought to do instead is focus our attention on the welfare of the intimate, emotional, and compassionate connections we have with others. That part of our existence deserves attention and, if in the process we happen to feel good about ourselves, that is a fine byproduct.

CHAPTER 3

SELF-ESTEEM AND ITS COLONIZING IMPACT

> It took many years of vomiting up all the filth I'd been taught about myself and half-believed, before I was able to walk on the earth as though I had a right to be here.
>
> — James Baldwin, *They Can't Turn Back*, 1985

The romanticized qualities of American democracy—dignity, equality, freedom, justice, and opportunity—are firmly embedded in the American institution of free public schools. Since its inception, universal schooling was supposed to sever the tie between social or professional status and personal life history, offering equal opportunity to all. Through these Pollyanna narratives, Americans became convinced, according to Giroux (1981) that "education was the great democratic institution that enabled even the most humble of its citizens to enjoy the chance for self-improvement" (p. 1). But the logic that sustains this collective agreement—beliefs that inspire confidence while requiring only the passive acceptance of shallow rhetoric—allows the American public school system to enjoy an unparalleled position as the great leveler and equalizer of opportunity for all, without actually living up to its professed obligations.

The reality of the association between, on the one hand, the tenets of American democracy and, on the other, public education, are certainly debatable. But, the two concepts remain systematically reinforced by the fantasy that schooling in this country works to facilitate socioeconomic mobility and promote equal opportunity. This is an especially dire fable for historically oppressed communities, in that education is believed to offer what Darder (2012) described as "the only legitimate hope for escape from poverty for those from racialized communities" (p. 1).

The reality is, idyllic sketches of the system of education in the United States are distorted when juxtaposed with the long-documented efforts of students, parents, teachers, and community movements seeking to improve the nature of education and create greater opportunities for working-class Black, Latino, Asian, and Native American students of color—students who continue to suffer from neglect, pathologization, and criminalization brought on by the mainstream bias of schooling (Darder, 2012; Rios, 2011). In light of this more accurate portrayal of education, as a contested site over power and culture, instead of being labeled "the great equalizer," education would probably be more accurately considered "the great rationalizer."

And what exactly is it that the system of education in the United States seeks to rationalize? In short, the process of schooling perpetuates the economic and institutional control of the power elite from generation to generation. As such, the dominant culture labors to control the structure of schooling and to ensure that its children are securely placed in positions of power, in order to enter controlling roles in American society (Darder, 1989). This process requires that schools, as an institution, rely on a system of economic and social belief that wounds both the contemporary culture and history of oppressed groups. The concomitant convictions of this arrangement demand that students have their potential defined for them on the basis of the hierarchy's needs, neglecting their own needs, and forcing them to adjust to the authority of social, political, and economic necessity. This process, a form of cultural invasion that occurs within the system of education in the United States, parallels notions of the politics of colonization as identified by dissident, radical, and critical scholars (Césaire, 2001; Fanon, 2008; Freire, 1998a; Darder, 1991/2012; Memmi, 2013).

We could begin by listing the covert functions performed by modern school systems, such as "custodial care, selection, indoctrination, and learning" (Ilich, 1971, p. 25), where the majority of students from economically oppressed communities are positioned according to their class location within the racialized economic order (Darder, 2015). Standing in for parents, God, or the state, the teacher-as-moralist indoctrinates the pupil about what is right or wrong, not only in school but also in society at large (Ilich, 1971). Moreover, the alienation established by this arrangement has reached such proportions that any opposition to halt its movement or challenge the colonizing impact on our lives seems impossible (Darder, 2015). As would be expected, this educational scheme promotes the children of the affluent, while the majority of poor and working class students of color continues to be regarded as academically underachieving, a status where "they, their families, their culture, and their language are held suspect and responsible for their failure" (Darder, 2015, p. 31).

All of this takes place in concert with larger economic inequalities and hegemonic educational forces that hold firm in a victim-blaming ideology of accountability and personal choice, "along with the myth that equality and fair treatment is available to all deserving students who genuinely work hard" (Darder, 2015, p. 31). These colonizing paradigms work to render students from poor and working class communities of color passive agents in their own learning, echoing what Darder (2015) described as "modernity's historical project of political and historical colonization, drafted from a conceptual narrative and societal design that legitimates and normalizes the economic and military domination, disempowerment, and dispossession of the majority of the world's population" (p. 36).

Indeed, there exists an enormous amount of social, psychological, and infrastructural work, all necessary ingredients for the production of both colonizer and colonized. What emerges as a result of these efforts is a thread that unifies colonizing value systems in the United States, identifiable features that emerge across a variety of institutions; from local and federal government, to law enforcement, the mass media, disciplines like psychology, and the general framework of education. These institutions serve to legitimize the existent social order, for they systematically neglect change and conflict and do not portray humans as creators or recipients of values. Instead, the hegemonic culture of schooling socializes students to accept their particular place within the material order, a role that "historically has been determined by the colonizing forces of the dominant society, based on the political economy and its sorted structures of oppression" (Darder, 2015, p. 8).

Okazaki et al. (2008) attributed the colonial mentality present in the United States to systems representative of classic colonialism, reinforced through the generations by internal colonialism (e.g., contemporary oppression). As a result, we are faced with what Freire (2000), called a "dehumanizing pedagogy," a pedagogy that actually oppresses both the oppressed and the oppressor. In this context, the self-esteem discourse is inextricably linked to processes whereby, as Darder (1991) maintained, "the dominant culture perpetuates language domination and racism, resulting in a debilitating impact on the intellectual formation of students from racialized communities" (p. 34).

In their seminal work, *Schooling in Capitalist America*, Bowles and Gintis (1976) argued that the social hierarchy is maintained along cognitive and behavioral skills directly related to social class. These skills become significant in relation to the content presented to students about

their location within society. This process is evident in the types of behaviors that are encouraged among affluent students (i.e., autonomy, original thinking, aggressiveness, and personality) and those passive behaviors rewarded among working-class students of color (i.e., respecting authority, routine, and so on) (Darder, 1991). Just as in the colonial model, these methods and their rationalized outcomes distort the culture and history of both the oppressor and the oppressed groups.

Bowles and Gintis (1976) contended that schools were assigned by capital with the task of reproducing labor power for an industrial order. According to Ilich (1971), there was no chance that schools could become "democratic vistas, because they were structurally incapable of such outcomes" (p. x). Further, according to Illich (1971), school ideology was oriented toward blaming the victim for inequality and poverty. The sole objective of public education was to produce workers at various levels of the capitalist labor process. Even for the trickle who "made it" into the technical or managerial strata, "the intention of the school system was not to achieve equality, but quite the reverse: to reinforce inequality" (Ilich, 1971, p. x).

The importance of these conclusions should be obvious in that they threaten the very legitimacy of democratic ideals of the American system of education—an institution that all too often does not practice what it continues to preach. The primary purpose of this chapter is to place the colonial question front and center in an attempt to reveal the manner in which education, historically, and in the contemporary moment, has served as an assimilative force (e.g., Americanization process) in working class communities of color through a politics of inferiorization and, more specifically, how self-esteem has been deployed in both practice and

discourse to transmit and reproduce ethnic, sexist, and class-based attributes that reinforce oppressive policies directed at communities of color.

Strange and Terrible Unions

In *Columbus and Western Civilization*, Howard Zinn (1997) wrote: "Those who dominate our society are in a position to write our histories" (p. 479). For the celebrated historian, this is why the retelling of the Columbus narrative is important. Zinn began with a discussion of Columbus's journal:

> His journal was revealing. He described the people who greeted him . . . He described them as peaceable, gentle, and said: "They do not bear arms, and do not know them for I showed them a sword—they took by the edge and cut themselves." (p. 480)

Zinn (1997) also noted that throughout Columbus's journal, he wrote of the Native Americans with what seemed like profound admiration:

> They are the best people in the world and above all the gentlest—without knowledge of what is evil—nor do they murder or steal . . . they love their neighbors as themselves and they have the sweetest talk in the world . . . always laughing. (p. 481)

But then, in the midst of all this, Columbus makes an unusual observation: "They would make fine servants. With fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want" (Zinn, 1997, p. 481). What is often emphasized in the standard tales told about Columbus is his religious feeling, "his desire to convert the natives to Christianity" (Zinn, 1997, p. 481). Certainly, Columbus was concerned with God, but the brief entry about turning "natives" into "servants" reveals a more sinister motive, one that would evolve over time into a system characterized by violence and domination.

From 1492 on, both the religious Christian-centric global hierarchy and the racial/ethnic Western-centric hierarchy of the capitalist, patriarchal modern, colonial world-system identified the practitioners of a non-Christian spirituality as being inferior or subhuman (Grosfoguel, 2013). Conversion was attempted in nearly all cases and its lack of success only contributed to the interpretation of the nature and behavior of people as inferior (Jansz & van Drunen, 2004). And while the root of colonial subjugation may have been inspired (at least originally) by Christian ideals, its growth was fueled and sustained by the necessities of commercial capitalism.

During the 17th century, international trade grew exponentially and, as a consequence, conquering the world for the purpose of making money supplanted the Christian ideal of saving souls. Activity in colonized locations across the world became an economic asset. The changing stakes of commercial capitalism demanded greater exploitation of both natural and human resources. And it was the colonial subjects who would be forced to do the hard and unpleasant work in this new mercantile system. The maintenance of a dominant colonial position would eventually evolve to the point where it required a more secular legitimation, rather than one founded on Christian principles. It resulted in a thorough reworking of the image of the Other, as part of a civilizing offensive that unfolded from the early 1800s onward (Jansz & van Drunen, 2004).

In the first half of the 19th century, proponents of Western superiority started to draw their arguments from biology. This biologization of cultural differences was to radically reorganize the world (Azoulay, 2006). Biologization of cultural differences was to receive a powerful stimulus in 1859, when Darwin's theory of evolution was published. Mechanisms of Darwin's theory, such as "natural selection" and the "struggle for life," were credited with the

distinction between superior and inferior races. This necessarily implied a harsh verdict on non-Western cultures. According to Jansz and van Drunen (2004), these populations were seen as "backward as a result of their low position on the evolutionary ladder" (p. 169).

As the 19th century progressed, biological and scientific arguments generated by Western civilization were used increasingly to quantify standards against which non-Western races were measured. Bhatia (2002) analyzed the historical role played by European and American psychology (notably the pioneering figures in psychology) in constructing the psychological representation of the formerly colonized non-Western Others as inferior and primitive. Bhatia (2002) situated the source of the British Empire's scientific racism in the mid-to-late 19th century within the Orientalist ideas present in the writings of psychology's pioneers.

As a result, temperament, intellectual, physical, and moral features were assessed within a racist frame and were "often employed to justify the regime to which the indigenous peoples were subjected" (Jansz & van Drunen, 2004, p. 171). In the last decades of the 19th century, European colonialism developed into global imperialism, exaggerating the effects of these notions on non-Western civilizations. Simultaneously, in the United States, ideas about mental abilities, inferiority, and aptitude became a regular feature for debate within the scientific and psychological community, and this discourse would in turn profoundly shape political, economic, social, and cultural dialogue.

The political, economic, social, and cultural significance of the union among science, biology, and psychology had a tremendous impact on another unique feature of American life that emerged at the turn of the century. In 1900, Ellen Key published *The Century of the Child*, a bestseller that marked how "the child increasingly became the object of intervention, through

institutional care for delinquent and marginalized children, the ban on child labor, and the enforcement of compulsory schooling" (Jansz & Van Drunen, 2004, p. 46). These novel forms of social management replaced earlier philosophical ideas about children. These were not necessarily new ideas, even Locke and Rousseau had written about the nature of the child, and about childhood as being a distinct phase in life, but the impact of social management on the experience of 19th-century children and families greatly enhanced the idyllic portrait of childhood as a time that should be devoted to play and education.

This period of American life appears to have laid the groundwork for the eventual psychologizing of education and childhood/adolescence. In the United States, this process was only accelerated by the structure of education. While many education advocates, even at the turn of the century, saw schooling as a means of "alleviating the lot of the lower classes, as well as of demolishing time-honored boundaries between the sexes" (Jansz & Van Drunen, 2004, pp. 51–52), the majority of educational reformers, considered general education to be a means of "instilling order, discipline, and love of one's country, in short, as a way of turning the unruly lower classes into a law-abiding, hard-working population" (Jansz & Van Drunen, 2004, pp. 51–52). Caught in the turbulence of this system, through no fault of their own, most commonly were working-class minorities and immigrants (to use the language of the system); their futures prescribed by the almighty ideological apparatus of public education, "developed and sustained within the context of a unique set of historical and social experiences that buttressed an economic and political order" (Giroux, 1981, p. 6).

Les Armes Miraculeuses/The Miraculous Weapons

The heading *Les Armes Miraculeuses*, or *The Miraculous Weapons* is borrowed from a volume of poems written by the revolutionary Martinican, Aimé Césaire (1983). The collection represents "the climax of the surrealist influence on Césaire and was met with various degrees of praise or reservation, depending upon an individual's commitment to politics or avant-garde literature" (Eshleman & Smith, 1983, p. 21). Among the proponents of Négritude and other persons familiar with the long history of anti-colonial struggle, Césaire's poetry is "nothing less than insurrectional" (Eshleman & Smith, 1983, p. 9). And for the "Wretched of the Earth" (to use Fanon's phrase) whom the modern world had forgotten about, Césaire's work represents much more than inventive, lyrical prose. It is a conscious attempt to simultaneously resolve certain contradictions that materialize within the colonized psyche and an effort to return the world to its original simplicity; this requires liberation from particular power structures that enforce oppression and exploitation (Hook, 2005).

In this context, *The Miraculous Weapons* intended to invoke an assault on the re-ordering of life (and the world) that resulted from the colonial encounter. In this way, Césaire (1983) would not only provide a lens through which we can decenter colonial discourses, but also offer a framework from which to launch a counter-narrative, a methodology for the organization of human agency, one that insists *The Miraculous Weapons* work as subjects within history to subdue the brutality of colonial domination. Césaire's writings continue to stand as a vibrant indictment of colonialism and, more importantly, is still of great relevance in the debate over the knowledge-power dichotomy characteristic of contemporary systems of education in the United States.

It is important to distinguish colonialism as distinct from other modes of domination, injustice, coercion, and so on, in that colonialism is a very specific form of oppression. What makes it particularly difficult to combat is that the circulation of colonial ideology—an ideology of racial and cultural hierarchy—is rendered both essential and commonsensical to colonial rule (Césaire, 2001). In the United States, these colonial values are evident in the portrayal of communities of color as a problem for an educational system—a portrayal that alternates between expectations of assimilation based on Eurocentric epistemologies and accusations of being a drain on valuable resources.

Leonardo and Grubb (2013) attributed this seesawing action to racial conditioning, or the "White racial frame" that has become the default orientation of teachers in their attempts to understand and make sense of the world; and as a result, "White teachers reduce life chances to individual worth and effort" (p. 58). This framework parallels the deficit notions inherent in the old bootstrap mentality (see Horatio Alger myth), which alleges that the underachievement of the oppressed can be explained as their own shortcoming. It is *their* fault because *they* lack something. Without the necessary critical capacity of disruption, this perspective becomes a tool that can be employed to sustain the colonial mentality, as well as thwart awareness of the political consequences that result from this perspective. Accordingly, the oppressed simply underestimate the role of the dominant group's racial interest in maintaining social institutions exactly the way they are. Furthermore, this lack of acknowledgement benefits Whites as a racial group.

Epistemological Privilege

One must also consider the world-system responsible for circulation of the colonial ideology; a set of beliefs that rests upon multiple creative destructions, carried out on behalf of civilizing or liberating projects, which aim to narrow our understanding of the world along lines of Western epistemologies. Historically, the processes of exclusion, oppression, and discrimination characteristic of the colonial orientation took root in the epistemological privilege granted to modern science from the 17th century onward. This historical era witnessed the generation of technological revolutions that served to consolidate Western supremacy. The process of civilizing the subhuman forced a conversion of the knowledge of colonized peoples (along with their diversity) into a subordinate position against modern science, perceived as the sole source of true knowledge (Sousa Santos, Nunes, & Meneses, 2007).

The domination characteristic of colonialism would also come to rely on the invention of the savage as an inferior being. Namely, the colonial encounter required a specific and unique reinvention of the colonized. Sousa Santos et al. (2007) described the form of the Other as "a being devoid of knowledge and culture . . . [the Other] was the counterpoint of the colonial requirement of transporting civilization and wisdom to peoples who lived in the dark recesses of ignorance" (p. xxxv). Sousa Santos et al. (2007) elaborated on this development:

> The adoption of universally valid, Eurocentric legal and political models, such as the neoliberal economic order, representative democracy, individualism, or the equation between state and law often rests…on forms of domination based on class, ethnic, territorial, racial, or sexual differences and on the denial of collective identities and rights

considered incompatible with Eurocentric definitions of the modern social order. (pp. xx–xxi)

In his seminal work, *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1979) touched upon this notion as he detailed the various ways that European colonial powers created and justified the image of the Orient (the Arab and Middle East) as primitive, exotic, uncivilized, and in need of Western civilization. Said argued that Western scholarship's agreement with Western colonial and imperial hegemony (particularly in its representation of non-Western cultures and subjects as the Other) served the European exercise of power.

As a vanguard of both perspectives, Césaire (2001) believed that the colonizers' sense of superiority, their sense of mission as the world's civilizer, absolutely depended on turning the Other into a barbarian. "The Africans, the Indians, the Asians cannot possess civilization or culture equal to that of the imperialists or the latter have no purpose, no justification for the exploitation and domination of the rest of the world" (p. 9). In a rather significant political (and philosophical) move, after summarizing the material and spiritual chaos created by colonial activities and announcing colonial discourse as a key element of colonial ideology, Césaire (2001) reduced the calculated destruction of the history of colonized populations—with its concomitant talk of progress, achievements, and improved standards of living—to a simple equation: "colonization = 'thing-ification'" (p. 42).

By doing so, Césaire (2001) summed up, in one word, the pinnacle of Western civilization's dehumanization project, where the African, the Indian, the Asian, and so on, has been transformed into a thing, an object, a lifeless tool of modernity. In Césaire's words: "An instrument of production" (p. 42).

> Between colonizer and colonized there is room only for forced labor, intimidation, pressure, the police, taxation, theft, rape, compulsory crops, contempt, mistrust, arrogance, self-complacency, swinishness, brainless elites, degraded masses. No human contact, but relations of domination and submission which turn the colonizing man into a class-room monitor, an army sergeant, a prison guard, a slave driver, and the indigenous man into an instrument of production. (Césaire, 2001, p. 42)

This transmutation—from subject to object—is consistent with the experiences of working-class people of color in the United States. The dehumanization process creates the necessary justification for injustices to be perpetrated on the oppressed while simultaneously being tolerated by the oppressor.

The "them/us" racial ploy has always been a potent force in the United States. The racial bonding that it affords Whites ensures that racialized interests are always vulnerable to diminishment if not outright destruction (Bell, 1992). Whites are consistently rallied on notions of racial pride and patriotism to accept their humble lot in life; and instead of letting loose their frustration on an inequitable and dishonest system, they are encouraged to oppose any serious advancement by minoritized groups. As Bell (1992) explained:

> Crucial to this situation is the unstated understanding by the mass of whites that they will accept large disparities in economic opportunity in respect to other whites as long they have priority over people of color for access to the few opportunities available. (p. 9)

Undoubtedly, the colonial legacy is complex, tangled up with a number of significantly interrelated discourses: Othering, epistemological domination, and the rise of science, individualism, social management, psychology, education, and so on. The colonial subject is

formed through the networking capability of the systems that exist to measure, compare, and explain human difference; all necessary modes that justify the radical imposition of the colonizer on inferior people in need of intervention.

In "Poetics of Anticolonialism," the introduction to Césaire's (2001) *Discourse on Colonialism*, author Robin D. G. Kelley described how colonialism works to decivilize both the colonizer and colonized, a process that succeeds in pulling the master class deeper and deeper into the abyss of barbarism. This process was further supported through promotion of scientific and technological progress as an imperative to achieve the highest stage of development—Western civilization. This is particularly evident in the historical and contemporary manifestations of deficit perspectives held by the ruling classes and directed toward working class students of color in the United States.

Certainly, these attitudes have produced devastating consequences across multiple spheres of American life. Leonardo and Grubb (2013) described the profound implications of deficit perspectives in relation to education:

> This is not only about individual students' perceived failures but a way of constructing the racial community in which he or she belongs through an impoverished lens. The student becomes the target of competencies to which he or she must be provided access, such as valuing education, de-emphasizing immediate gratification, and respecting authority, making the situation ripe with paternalism. (p. 58)

Thus, the deficit perspective labels students of color uneducable, and condemns them as nearly impossible to educate. Within this framework, the oppressors (comprised of educators and policymakers) perceive the oppressed (working-class students of color) as lacking certain

cultural competencies by virtue of being different or nonmainstream (Allen, 2014). Once under the spell of this perspective, one can easily assume that it is the students who must change, not the schools.

Deficit perspectives are a common method of marginalizing communities of color; they are often difficult to detect but can be just as damaging as outright segregation. Essentially, deficit perspectives allow the cultural authority subtle opportunities to message students of color and their families that they are not valued. As a result, working class students of color and their families are moved from the position of living subjects in the present moment of history to objects living on unequal footing with their White counterparts.

In Gramscian terms, students of color quickly learn that "school is ruled by inner codes that are characterized by a strong inequality of power between teachers and students, which facilitates the shaping of students into the molds imposed by adults" (Paraskeva, 2011, p. 16). As a result, the vast majority of students quietly learn to operate within the codified structure of social norms, which regulate and perpetuate the social order according to the status quo.

The Souls of Black Folk

The deliberate and brutal silence forced upon working-class communities of color throughout the history of the United States is only intensified by the blatant discrimination that continues, mostly uncontested, to drive the character of the country. Despite the critical roles that the shared history of slavery, colonization, genocide, exploitation, and detention offer between people of color, most have been, according to Darder (1991), either "marginalized or whitewashed" in traditional curricula and lessons in American schools. Moreover, minoritized

individuals are often tasked with the problem of searching for authentic cultural selves against these histories.

Together, these elements have systematically conditioned working-class students of color to identify "with the assumed superiority of the dominant culture to the extent that they participate in their own oppression via an internalized inferior view of their own culture" (Darder, 1991, pp. 38–39). And this is the internal anxiety that Césaire (2001) and other scholars have referred to: a continual awareness of the dislocation between the ideals of the valorized Western culture and those of the hegemonic order, which results in a deeply rooted sense of inferiority, a constantly problematized sense of identity—both split and at war with itself—causing, as his former student Fanon (2008) would later call them, "pathologies of liberty" (Hook, 2005).

This set of colonial circumstances becomes important to any study of self-esteem in that contemporary psychological theories suggest that life in such a hostile, threatening environment has a direct impact upon personality development. And, as I have already established, psychological theories have always had a strong influence on education. Nowhere is this psychological link to the institution of education more evident than in the race relationships that have been historically generated and sustained in the United States.

Self-Esteem and the Colonial Self

At the beginning of the 20th century, W. E. B. Du Bois (2004) wrote treatises on Black life in America, captured famously in *The Souls of Black Folk*. In the text, Du Bois posed a haunting question to the reader, "How does it feel to be a problem?" Meant partly as an ironic statement about Black marginalization, Du Bois's inquiry also accurately captured what life is

like when one is perceived by an oppressive group as the problem. The result, as Du Bois (1995) contended, is the "twoness" of Black existence. In her critical theory of biculturalism, Darder (1991) acknowledged this phenomenon and noted that, since the 1900s, "writers, educators, and social theorists of color have made references in their work to the presence of some form of dual or separate socialization processes among their own people" (p. 46). These terms are the result of attempts to describe the personality development of nonwhites who are socialized within a racist society. Of this phenomenon, Du Bois (1995) wrote:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (p. 694)

Du Bois's words articulate an important mechanism by which the sense of self is developed, a sense of looking at one's self through the eyes of another.

According to Quintana and Segura-Herrera (2003): "A contemporary of Du Bois, Cooley (1902) developed the metaphor of a 'looking glass self' in which a sense of self is derived from reflected self-appraisals based on the perception that others have of the self" (p. 271). As Kenneth Clark (1989) would write many years later in *Dark Ghettos: Dilemmas of Social Power*, "It is still the white man's society that governs the Negro's image of himself" (p. 64). True to this statement, it seems that in his era, Du Bois (2004) could not escape the reality that Blacks lived through their own values, but functioned under the imposition of White values. In response

to this dialectical tension, Du Bois (2004) coined the phrase "double-consciousness" to describe the experience of being Black in the United States.

It should come as no surprise that Du Bois (2004) incorporated a psychological framework in his work. After all, as a student at Harvard in 1888, he registered for "Philosophy 4: Theistic Ethics," a class taught by William James (Richardson, 2006). Du Bois and James would remain in contact for many years after Du Bois left Harvard. In fact, James was so moved after reading *The Souls of Black Folk* that he wrote two letters. The first, an appreciative letter to his former student Du Bois and, the second, a letter to the editor of a Springfield, Massachusetts, paper which ran as "A Strong Note of Warning Regarding the Lynching Epidemic from Prof. James of Harvard" (Richardson, 2006, p. 441). While these anecdotal communications may well be important as they clue us in to a tight network of academic intelligentsia who opposed racist structures and practices at the turn of the century, perhaps it is equally important to reflect back to Du Bois's work, as it offers an important glimpse into certain phenomenon characteristic of his era.

Du Bois (1995) not only forcefully described the experience of being Black in the United States. Additionally, his writing incorporated aspects of modern psychology and implicated the institution of education as an oppressive mechanism of American life. Further, Du Bois was writing at a time when psychology began to carry newfound significance and credibility. In this respect, he is nothing less than a harbinger for the contemporary criticism directed at colonial legacies that in turn inform the institution of education. In its entirety, *The Souls of Black Folk* illustrates the development of a sense of self, or selves, whereby Blacks are measured through a biased metric of the mainstream culture, with little to no regard for cross-cultural existence.

Adding emphasis to this conclusion, Du Bois (1995) told of his educational journey from grade school to Harvard, where he would be the first Black person to earn a doctoral degree, and where he was made to feel like an intruder despite his talents, achievements, and resolve. Through this anecdote Du Bois, who was viewed as a "problem" by many of his White counterparts, constructed a symbol for the larger social phenomenon whereby entire racialized communities become a "problem" to be fixed (Leonardo & Grubb, 2013). Du Bois's poetic description of this experience of the double consciousness, in which his own experience of self is contrasted with how others perceive, or measure his "soul" in a stigmatizing manner, demonstrates the essence of the dehumanizing process that blocks individual self-affirmation and development of an integrated sense of self (Quintana & Segura-Herrera, 2003). Despite the intuitive force of Du Bois's pronouncement, throughout the 20th century, communities of color would commonly face marginalization at the hands of the very mechanism described by Du Bois (2006) in *The Souls of Black Folk*.

The Veiled Self

There has been a significant amount of biographical scholarship that documents the critical events in the life of Du Bois (Lewis, 1994; Moses, 1975; Stepto, 1991). These experiences are important because they offer us clues as to what events contributed to his ceaseless, radical interrogation of the racist power structure in the United States, particularly those found in the deep South. Much of this scholarship focuses on an early interaction that Du Bois (2006) documents in *The Souls of Black Folk*. The anecdote appears in the passage that directly follows the question, "How does it feel to be a problem?" (p. 694). In the text, Du Bois (2006) testified to the shock of becoming conscious of prejudice:

> In a wee wooden schoolhouse, something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards—ten cents a package—and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card—refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil, to creep through; I held all beyond it in common contempt, and lived above it in a region of blue sky and great wandering shadows. (p. 694)

Perhaps because of this experience at the schoolhouse, Du Bois (1995), even at the turn of the century, implicated education as a site characterized by radical asymmetries of power and privilege. In *Negro Education*, which first appeared in a 1918 issue of *The Crisis*, Du Bois attacked the conclusions of the recently published Jones report (1917). Published under the full title of *Negro Education, a study of the Private and Higher Schools for Colored People in the United States*, and prepared under the direction of Thomas Jesse Jones, a specialist in the education of racial groups, Du Bois regarded the report as a dangerous and unfortunate document (Du Bois, 1995).

In his words, Du Bois's (1995) report insisted "by direct statements, by inference, and by continued repetition" (p. 260) on three assumptions of a thesis.

> *First*, that the present tendency toward academic and higher education among Negroes should be restricted and replaced by a larger insistence on manual training, industrial education, and agricultural training; *secondly*, the private schools in the South must "cooperate" with the Southern whites; and, *third*, that there should be more

> thoroughgoing unity of purpose among education boards and foundations working among Negroes. (pp. 261–262)

The trend of the study and its general recommendations portrayed the education of Blacks as difficult, if not impossible. And the real difference between the two schemes of education offered by the report was that the industrial education encouraged for Blacks deliberately shut the door to any possibility of being accepted to an institution of higher education. Additionally, many of the trades taught in the majority of "the Negro vocational schools" were not the "important trades of the world that are today assembled in factories and call for skilled technique and costly machinery" (Du Bois, 1995, p. 264). This admonition is directly related to the absolute inadequacy of educational provisions given to Black children, particularly in the South. For Du Bois (1995), cooperation with the White South would mean "the surrender of the very foundations of self-respect" (p. 266).

For Du Bois (1995), this proposition of cooperation served to reveal that the White community desired to keep Blacks in the country "as a peasant under working conditions least removed from slavery" (p. 266); a system that was not designed to produce independent, self-reliant citizens but was instead more interested in controlling every aspect of the lives of those enslaved. Southern codes made it a crime to teach a slave to read and write and, as a result, more than 90% of slaves were illiterate. And this historical legacy of inferior education that deliberately restricted opportunity is part of a larger historical context in which Blacks were "scientifically" consigned to a subhuman existence that, in turn, justified the absurdity of their alienating social reality (Steiner, Krank, Bahruth, & McLaren 2004). After the abolition of slavery, the dominant ideology employed "science" as a way to dehumanize Blacks in the United

States. Bob Moses, a civil rights organizer in Mississippi in the 1960s referred to this legacy as a sharecropper education, "a limited education for people assigned to manual work" (Children's Defense Fund, 2007, p. 122).

In many ways, Moses's (2007) depiction of a sharecropper education parallels the work of Carter G. Woodson (1969), who in 1933 produced a definitive critique of the educational system, with "special reference to its blighting effects on the Negro" (p. 1). Both Woodson (1969) and his intellectual contemporary Du Bois (1995) believed that education "propagandized and indoctrinated youth, draining them of self-confidence, self-respect, and self-knowledge" (Woodson, 1969, p. 4). Woodson considered the state of Black education an American tragedy that "doomed the Negro to a brain-washed acceptance of the inferior role assigned to him by the dominant race, and absorbed by him through his schooling" (p. 1).

Unsurprisingly, what was presented in terms of Afro-American history generally depicted individuals in menial, subordinate roles that neglected any authentic historical presence, thus relegating the Black child within the classroom to a state of "nothingness and nobodyness" (Woodson, 1969, p. 1). Both Woodson (1969) and Du Bois (1995) shared a desire to provide for Black youth access to the kind of education that would "nullify or diminish the false and belittling propaganda type of history which had been handed to them by whites" (Woodson, 1969, p. 5). The type of education these scholars advocated for would "build up the Black child's self and race knowledge as well as his self-respect" (Woodson, 1969, p. 5).

Woodson's (1969) term, *Mis-education*, remains equally salient in contemporary challenges to the educational system. However, it must have seemed exponentially necessary when he first published *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, as the economic depression forced the

problems facing Blacks into the forefront of need. These historical circumstances raised yet another critical matter connected with Woodson's *Mis-education*. The low level of expectation associated with Black communities was made a reality through the poor financing of segregated school systems. In 1930, the average expenditure per school-age child was $45.00 per White pupil and $14.95 per Black pupil (Woodson, 1969). Moreover, the average White teacher's salary was $1,020, while the average Black teacher earned $524. Woodson believed that "the inequity of the two societies within the nation, black and white with its financial and propagandistic suppression of blacks through education and otherwise, was efficiently responsible for the social ills that he deplored" (p. 6).

Black Skin, White Masks, or The Great Camouflage

This existence of being just one step removed from the brutalizing system of slavery raises important questions that have to do with psychology's complicity with colonialism and colonial discourse. The human personality does not spring full-grown at birth, but is rather the product of the complex interaction of a person, with his/her own set of potentialities, and his/her environment. In comparing the personality development of any particular community in the United States, we must focus on the radically different environment within which each group finds itself. With this in mind, there have been efforts within psychology to examine the hypothesis that the legacy of colonialism continues to matter in the psychology of the formerly colonized. Additionally, there have been discussions of colonial legacies as they inform the practice and study of psychology in formerly colonized states (Quintana & Segura-Herrera, 2003).

Frantz Fanon (2008), a psychiatrist by training and a brilliant intellectual to boot, would contend that colonialism is not only the appropriation of land and territory, but also a process of appropriating the means and resources of identity, causing powerful forms of mental and physical distress. It was Fanon who synthesized the various political, social, and economic elements of colonialism with the psychological—creating a psychopolitics—which insisted that beyond the colonization of a land, its people, and its culture, colonialism involves a colonizing of the mind. In many ways, Fanon's (2008) *Black Skin, White Masks*, breaks from the traditional academic prescription, as evidenced in the introduction to his book.

> Why am I writing this book? Nobody asked me to. Especially not those for whom it is intended. So in all serenity my answer is that there are too many idiots on this earth. And now that I've said it, I have to prove it. (Fanon, 2008, p. xi)

As a departure from more traditional academic work, *Black Skin, White Masks* exists as a searing indictment of colonial racism and how it produces a hellish existence for people of color (Rao, 2015). Fanon's work found resonance because of its emphasis on the dehumanizing aspects of colonialism, beyond exploitation and into the realm of the psychological, which he identified as being based on racist biological and psychological theories of the native's character (Memmi, 1967).

Fanon (2008) also developed an account of the psychological effects of racism based, in part, on his own experiences of life among the Black middle class in the French Caribbean. In the introduction to Fanon's (2008) *Black Skin, White Masks* Appiah wrote: "The dominant colonial culture, identifies the black skin of the Negro with impurity; and the Antilleans accept this association and so come to despise themselves" (p. ix). These contrasting psychologies both

derive from and reinforce the existing power relations in the classic colonial situation (Hurstfield, 1978). But because these instances of racism are unconscious—embedded deep within a culture, within the language of the culture—we have to go beyond the specific manifestations and look at what's happening in the psyche of people in a racist society.

Fanon (2008) believed that Whites are trapped in a false and limited notion of humanity that seeks to universalize the very idea of a human (Rao, 2015). For example, a normal Black child, having grown up with a normal family, will become abnormal at the slightest contact with the White world. If there is an inferiority complex, it is borne out of the fact that the person of color is always defined in a subordinate relationship to the White person. In this social system, the Black or colonized person finds that he/she can only become human if they act White, speak White, and ideally become White, which only signals social death (Rao, 2015). According to Greenberg (1972), Fanon succeeded in the translation of the colonial experience into psychological development. Finally, the colonial discourse that spanned questions of human capacity, pathology, and the identity of the colonized could be more thoroughly challenged through this particular engagement of psychology and psychoanalysis.

It is important to note that for Fanon (2008), independence from colonialism did not mean liberation because even aspirations of freedom are primarily those of the colonized bourgeoisie, who simply replaced the colonial rule with their own form of dominance, surveillance, and coercion over the vast majority of the people, often using the same language of power (Rizvi, Lingard, & Lavia, 2006). Instead, Fanon posited that could colonialism only be understood as a complicated network of complicities and internal power imbalances between groups within the broader categories of colonizer and colonized. Consequently, even after

independence, colonial subjects remain colonized internally and psychologically. Therefore, the colonized are continually forced to read their worlds through White masks.

There are two distinct but related facets of social and cultural domination that deserve exploration here. More specifically, it is important to distinguish forms of colonization and mental colonization. Colonized peoples were rarely, if ever, passive recipients of their oppression. The colonial system maintained control through the effective distribution of terror, violence, and coercion to the point where the dominant group was able to manipulate indigenous systems. Mental colonization has been often referred to as a "false consciousness," and is meant to explain the effects of ideological domination. Quintana and Segura-Herrera (2003) defined false consciousness as: "The holding of false or inaccurate beliefs that are contrary to one's own social interest and which thereby contribute to the maintenance of the disadvantaged position of the self or group" (p. 273). This definition focuses on the collusion of disadvantaged groups in their own oppression and suggests that advantaged and disadvantaged groups play critical roles in perpetuating systems of oppression.

A significant amount of scholarship has been devoted to the examination of processes whereby, although unwittingly, members of colonized groups are exploited in ways that supported the colonization of their group. This mental colonization is believed to represent an ideological or psychological hegemony of dominant groups over subordinate groups (Quintana & Segura-Herrera, 2003). For example, Blauner (1972) developed a model of "internal colonialism" whereby "Blacks and Chicanos are defined as colonized groups who have been subjected to forms of oppression, which characterize both 'classic' and 'internal' colonial systems" (p. 60). Blauner believed that both groups were disproportionately confined to

categories of low status labor; they were subjected in all areas of their lives to White bureaucratic control; their culture is destroyed, depreciated, or transformed; and they were the victims of an ideology of racism that rationalized the colonizer's domination over them (Hurstfield, 1978). If Blauner's model is an appropriate one for the United States, then, it is hypothesized, the self-conceptions of Blacks and the Chicanos on the one hand, and Whites on the other, will resemble, respectively, the self-images of the subordinate and dominant groups in situations of classic colonialism.

Additionally, crude versions of Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony are linked to discussions of false consciousness, in which the masses are seen to be "swayed, dominated, and duped by the ruling classes (Augoustinos, 1999, p. 299). There is little evidence to suggest that an uncritical acceptance of ruling-class ideologies exists among subordinate classes. Rather, as Augoustinos (1999) asserted: "It is the ideological cohesion in the middle to upper classes and the ideological disunity and fragmentation among subordinate classes which helps maintain the stability of liberal democracies" (p. 299). Unfortunately, social psychologists, influenced by Marxist social theory, have invoked a narrow psychological and cognitive account of false consciousness to explain the empirical research devoted to explanations of political acquiescence and the maintenance of system-serving beliefs by members of oppressed groups (Augoustinos, 1999). These social psychological phenomena include behavioral compliance, the tendency for society's victims to blame themselves or to blame and scapegoat other disadvantaged persons or groups.

Augoustinos (1999) argued: "Negative self-stereotyping and favoritism towards dominant outgroups" (p. 302), periodically demonstrated by low-status groups were simply psychological mechanisms that contribute to the justification of inequitable social relations.

> When the oppressed engage in self-hate and deprecation, when people in general come to view existing social relations as natural and inevitable, when stereotypes mystify and obfuscate the real relations of dominance and exploitation within a society, then we have what some would regard as psychological evidence for the existence of false consciousness. (Augoustinos, 1999, p. 302)

Thus, the distorted paradigm of false consciousness as invoked by contemporary social psychologists is akin to victim blaming and pathologizing. An account of false consciousness that locates ideological distortion within the cognitive and perceptual domain of the individual continues the longstanding tradition (especially within psychology) of attributing blame to society's victims.

The concept of internal colonialism sits comfortably with a highly individualized and psychological account of false consciousness. Both notions seem to emphasize the limited and faulty cognitive capacities of the individual (Augoustinos, 1999). Those who believe it to be a psychological-cognitive phenomenon located within the individual, when it is instead a socially emergent product of a capitalist society, have misappropriated the notion of false consciousness. Yet, false consciousness remains a useful theoretical construct, "not as a psychological and cognitive affliction suffered by the 'less enlightened', but as a phenomenon grounded in social reality itself: in particular, the material reality of late capitalism and postmodern culture" (Augoustinos, 1999, p. 295).

From this perspective, it makes sense to locate false cognitions within the minds of people rather than in the social and material world in which they live. According to the more critical approaches to the concept of ideology that have emerged from structural Marxist accounts, ideology is the cement that keeps capitalist social formations intact, despite inherent social and economic contradictions. And while there are many sites where this cement is laid, for example, religion, the media, the cultural marketplace, and economic systems, there is arguably no more powerful a location than within schools.

An(Other) Talk to Teachers

For almost a century after the abolition of slavery, America's Black population lived under a brutally harsh system of control. In the South especially, "the whims of a sheriff, an employer, even the driver of a bus, could hold Black lives in thrall" (Hacker, 2010, p. 20). In the North, intimidation and oppression were less explicit, but nonetheless real. Significant change was initiated only by the necessities generated by World War II, when for the first time Black Americans were openly courted by White society. Abroad, Blacks fought in the armed forces, while at home a shortage of civilian labor forced employers to offer jobs to workers who previously had been excluded. More than a million Black women left domestic service never to return. At the conclusion of the conflict, "notions of civil rights and racial integration, of social equality and economic progress" (Hacker, 2010, p. 21) took coherent shape. In particular, college students in the South decided it was time to contest the denial of basic rights enforced upon most members of their race.

In 1963, James Baldwin published an article in "The Saturday Review" titled "A Talk to Teachers" that addressed, in part, the rising tide of dissent. In "A Talk to Teachers," Baldwin

(1963) berates American society as a conspiracy against Black Americans, particularly Black American children. Baldwin argued that any Negro who undergoes the American educational system runs the risk of becoming schizophrenic. On the one hand, he is born in the shadow of ideals like "liberty and justice for all," and on the other hand, his country and countrymen assure him that "he has never contributed anything to civilization" (p. 43).

A crucial paradox that Baldwin (1963) confronted was that the whole process of education occurs within a social framework that is designed to perpetuate the aims of society.

> The purpose of education [should be to] create in a person the ability to look at the world for himself, to make his own decisions, to say to himself this is black or this is white, to decide for himself whether there is a God in heaven or not. To ask questions of the universe, and then learn to live with those questions, is the way he achieves his own identity. (p. 42)

But Baldwin eventually confessed that no society is really anxious to host that kind of citizen, and he admitted that what societies really wanted is "a citizenry which will simply obey the rules of society" (Baldwin, 1963, p. 42). For Baldwin (1963), social institutions did little more for Black children than to ensure that:

> He, his father, his mother, and his ancestors were happy, shiftless, watermelon-eating darkies who loved Mr. Charlie and Miss Ann, that the value he has as a Black man is proven by one thing only—his devotion to white people. (p. 43)

It is difficult to discount Baldwin's (1963) claim given the absurd myths about Black life that continue to saturate this country. One need only to reference the history of Black Americans in cinema and television to bear witness to the appearance of a variety of carefully constructed

personalities, bearing the fanciful names of "The Coon," "The Tragic Mulatto," "The Mammy," and "The Brutal Black Buck." According to Bogle (2001): "All were character types used for the same effect: to entertain by stressing Negro inferiority. Fun was poked at the American Negro by presenting him as either a nitwit or a childlike lackey" (p. 4).

Baldwin (1963) confessed to his readers that all of this entered the child's consciousness much sooner than we would like to think it does. "It isn't long—in fact it begins when he is in school—before he discovers the shape of his oppression" (Baldwin, 1963, p. 43). But to resist these types of constructed social stereotypes would require that Blacks assert that they do not believe in the role that society has prescribed for them. And the dangerous logic that begins to unfold from that affirmation would require that Whites acknowledge that they are not what they think they are either. Baldwin (1963) described this sequence as "the crisis" (p. 45).

This is the other paradox of education for Baldwin (1963): at precisely the point when one begins to develop a conscience, they must find themselves at war with their society. This is the dialectical tension—between internal worth, on the one hand, and external worth, on the other—illustrated by the Baldwin epigraph that opens this chapter. The epigraph is taken from a 1960 article originally published in *Mademoiselle,* titled "The Price of the Ticket." In it, Baldwin (1985) finds himself, "the only Negro passenger at Tallahassee's shambles of an airport" (p. 217), on the way to visit Florida A & M College. The purpose of the visit is to write a story on the recent nonviolent protests of Black students, described by Baldwin (1985) as "an attempt to free the entire region from the irrational terror that has ruled it for so long" (p. 216). According to Baldwin (1985), what students in the South were demanding was nothing less than a total

revision of the ways in which Americans saw the Negro, and this could only mean a total revision of the ways in which Americans saw themselves.

It is important here to distinguish between the two most widely discussed types of school climate: custodial and humanistic. The custodial climate is characterized by the focus on maintenance of order, autocratic procedures, student stereotyping, punitive sanctions, and impersonal distance. While the humanistic climate is characterized by democratic procedures, student participation in decision-making, respect, fairness, flexibility, and so on (Paraskeva, 2011). Additionally, the school is ruled by inner codes characterized by an inequality of power between the teachers and students, which facilitates the shaping of students into molds imposed by the adults.

As a result, students learn specific social norms that serve to structure their future life. In this way, the school contributes to individual adaptation to a continuous social order (Paraskeva, 2011). Moreover, the way in which the objectives, contents, methodology, and evaluation procedures are involved with power relations and built on economic, political, and cultural spheres is often overlooked, or ignored. In the end, the majority of schools follow the custodial climate, functioning as a political field of socialization that competes with the family and forces students to adjust to authority.

The term “postcolonial” involves a range of theoretical claims about the legacy of colonialism but at a very general level, the “post” in postcolonialism refers to the historical period after the territories and people that had once been colonized. On this subject, postcolonial studies concerned with the relationship between knowledge and power are linked directly to education, which has a systematically ambivalent relation to postcolonialism. According to Rizvi

et al. (2006): “Education is a site where the legacies of colonialism and the contemporary processes of the global market intersect” (p. 257).

It is clear to Baldwin (1985) that when one considered the lengths to which the South had gone to prevent Blacks from ever becoming or feeling like equals, the Southern states could not have used schools in any other way. Thus, when placed in contrast to the aforementioned framework, Baldwin’s (1985) assertion that “the segregated school system in the South has always been used by the southern states as a means of controlling Negroes” (p. 219), comes as no surprise.

> The society into which American Negro children are born has always presented a particular challenge to Negro parents. This society makes it necessary that they establish in the child a force that will cause him to know that the world’s definition of his place and the means used by the world to make this definition binding are not for a moment to be respected. This means that the parent must prove daily, in his own person, how little the force of the world avails against the force of a person who is determined to be free. (Baldwin, 1985, p. 227)

Baldwin (1985) concluded with his thoughts on why Americans kept wondering what had “got into” the students. He asserted that what had “got into” them is their history in this country. “It is because these students remain so closely related to their past that they are able to face with such authority a population ignorant of its history and enslaved by a myth” (Baldwin, 1985, p. 220). Confronting this mythology was what Baldwin (1963) targeted as his goals for education.

> I would try to make them know—that those streets, those houses, those dangers, those agonies by which they are surrounded, are criminal. I would try to make each child know

> that these things are the results of a criminal conspiracy to destroy him. I would teach him that if he intends to get to be a man, he must at once decide that he is stronger than this conspiracy and that he must never make his peace with it. And that one of his weapons for refusing to make his peace with it and for destroying it depends on what he decides he is worth. (Baldwin, 1963, p. 48)

Baldwin acknowledged that the system of education contributed to the "filth" he had been taught about himself. But he was also very aware that the students he interacted with at Florida A & M, by contesting the very same systematic degradation, proved unmistakably what most people in this country have yet to discover: Racism is a material and social condition that degrades all.

The Beaten Path

Teachers, like parents, seldom ponder the significance of the thousands of episodic events that combine to form the daily routine of a school (Jackson, 1990). Certainly, school is a place where tests are taken, friends are made, and skills acquired. But it is also a place where rules are learned, obedience praised, and conformity expected, so much so, that it would be difficult to argue against the idea that school is a location that assigns and distributes social roles (Ilich, 1971). And while the amount of time children spend in school can be calculated with a fair amount of quantitative precision, the psychological significance of these accumulated hours (about 1,000 in a typical school year) seem to receive less attention from those who are interested in education.

There is no single enclosure in which a child spends a longer time than they will in the classroom, and there is no activity that occupies as much time as that involved in attending school (Jackson, 1990). The elements of repetition, redundancy, and ritualistic action that

characterize the majority of school campuses "initiates young people into a world where everything can be measured" (Ilich, 1971, p. 40). Over time, students no longer have to be put in their place, but place themselves into their assigned roles and, in the process, put their peers into places, too, until everybody and everything fits (Ilich, 1971).

Each of the major activities plays out according to well-defined rules that students are expected to obey. For example, no running in the hallway; keep your eyes on your own paper; raise your hand; and so on. Even by the early grades, these rules are internalized. The school child, like the incarcerated adult, must come to grips with the "inevitability of his experience. He too must develop strategies for dealing with the conflict that frequently arises between his natural desires and interests on the one hand, and institutional expectations on the other" (Jackson, 1990, p. 9). Of equal importance is the fact that schools also exist as evaluative settings. Adaptation to school life requires the student to become used to the constant condition of having all things evaluated by others (Jackson, 1990).

In this respect, Ilich (1971), a strident critic of traditional schooling, contended that teachers are more powerful than students and emerge as substitutes for "parents, God, or the state" (Ilich, 1971, p. 31). This difference in authority is another feature of school life that students must learn to navigate. The environment, the constant evaluation, the potential for praise, and authoritarian leadership combine to collectively form a hidden curriculum that "each student (and teacher) must master if he is to make his way satisfactorily through the school" (Jackson, 1990, p. 12).

Thus, the latent functions performed by modern school systems, that is custodial care, selection, indoctrination, and learning (Ilich, 1971), forces students to subjugate their desires to

the will of the teacher and subdue their own actions in the interest of the common good. According to Jackson (1990), students learn "to be passive and to acquiesce to the network of rules, regulations, and routines in which [they are] embedded" (p. 13). Nevertheless, there is at least one strategy available to all students: psychological withdrawal.

Sound the Alarm

The litany of crimes against racialized groups in the United States is by now as familiar as are the results: poverty, poor health, miseducation, substandard housing, incarceration, and violence. Disadvantage extends into every sphere of social life, whether it is the schools, health care, housing, legal system, or interpersonal relations. Members of minoritized groups are bombarded with messages that they belong to despised groups from which they have no escape. Greenberg (1972) asserted that while all of the latter are to be bemoaned, it is the damaged psychological development of children that is perhaps the most tragic outcome of American racial oppression—that is, colonialism.

The literature of the early 20th century is replete with descriptions of low self-esteem and feelings of powerlessness among Blacks in general and Black children in particular. Greenberg (1972) cited Malcolm X, who once said, "The worst crime the white man has committed has been to teach us to hate ourselves" (p. 293). This poignant observation has been well corroborated by extensive scholarly research. Additionally, the statement echoes the sentiments of scholars like Du Bois (1995) and Baldwin (1963/1985), who acknowledged the system of educative processes that worked to dehumanize, demean, and oppress Blacks and other racialized populations in the United States. The divergent environments for both oppressed and oppressor are manifested with particular saliency in two distinct areas of psychological development: self-

esteem and powerlessness (Greenberg, 1972). This emphasis is especially crucial for children from subaltern groups.

The decision to focus on the self-concept of subaltern children is not accidental but based on several considerations. First, it has been suggested by a number of scholars that the conception of self is a primary element of individual personality; the core around which the remainder of the personality is constructed. Second, and equally important, the self-concept seems to be the principal component of personality most adversely affected by life in America among people of color. Finally, there appear to be significant linkages between how a person defines the self and how he or she defines and relates to the world around him or her (Greenberg, 1972). While Greenberg's (1972) assertions may very well be valid, he missed the opportunity to name the school as a central location for the socialization of students from oppressed communities.

No wonder then that schools continue to enjoy the popular view that they exist as neutral and apolitical institutions whose sole purpose is to educate students. This basic lack of critical inquiry into the relationship between schools and the larger society permits the ideology of the dominant culture to be rendered unproblematic and concealed within mainstream educational processes (Darder, 1991). The truth is that schools, just like other institutions, hide behind a number of legitimating forms that exist to produce (and sustain) hegemonic ideologies. At the core of this perspective is the idea that certain forms of cultural capital defined by the dominant group as socially legitimate are inequitably distributed (Giroux, 1988). In the words of Darder (1991): "American schools strongly reinforce an acceptance of differential roles in the economy and society as a just and democratic way of organizing social relations" (p. 7). In this way, the

class-based system of education allows the dominant culture to civilize and contain racialized populations in order to communicate to the wider society that they are safe.

In fact, one of the unfortunate principles of American multiculturalist education discourses is the assumption that the self-esteem of minoritized children requires improvement. Surely, it would be myopic to neglect the variety of cultural backgrounds that populate a classroom. However, it is equally misguided to assume that students want or need affirmation of their cultural identity and self-esteem. This perspective privileges the majority, oppressive culture by defining it as the standard—especially regarding the levels of self-esteem toward which subaltern students should strive.

Furthermore, this process raises several moral and ethical issues that deserve consideration. The first is that teachers are often provided with seemingly innocent strategies for fostering self-esteem in educational contexts that are both artificial and manipulative. These practices foster inauthenticity in teacher-student relations and additionally encourage patronizing attitudes of cultural superiority. As Cole (1986) noted in his analysis of multicultural education programs and racism in Britain:

> That it has been believed that teachers are morally equipped to enhance Black self-concept means that dangerous assumptions have been made about the capacity of white "middle-class" teachers to "do good" to young Blacks. Such an approach is patronizing and allows the teacher to avoid examining his/her own racism and encourages an aura of cultural superiority. (p. 562)

This goes hand in hand with the idea that one's privileged position can very easily turn into a type of missionary paternalism, especially within schools, that limits the potential creation

of processes that lead to authentic empowerment. The fanciful desire to empower subordinated students leads to the kind of paternalism that requires the oppressor to constantly remind the oppressed of their condition. In this regard, the liberal colonialist contradiction is no different from that of White liberal educators, particularly those who advocate for "risk and prevention" programs, "who proselytize about empowering minorities while refusing to divest from their class-and-whiteness privilege—a privilege that is often left unexamined and unproblematized and that is often accepted as a divine right" (Freire, 1998, pp. xxx–xxxi).

The pervasive effects of individualism and enhancement practices of self-esteem reflect Western cultural biases. They simply celebrate what to Euro-Americans constitutes a healthy, well-functioning individual. To that end, they focus upon fulfilling the potential of individuals, rather than upon the welfare of collective groups. This perspective places the burden of responsibility for failure on the students' shoulders (Darder, 1991). Moreover, Bennett (1990) noted: "Feeling good about oneself, having a positive self-concept, and high self-esteem are generally regarded as essential to success in learning, both in school and out" (p. 560). But the self-esteem discourse makes a number of assumptions that are, under close scrutiny, not tenable cross-culturally.

The first is that self-esteem is based on a person's awareness of him or herself as a unique individual with a particular sequence of abilities, potentials, and so forth. A view of self-esteem based on this sense of uniqueness may be accurate for the dominant culture, but not necessarily in other cultural contexts. In many other cultures, the self is experienced, defined, and known entirely through and by social relations with others. In such environments, the Western ideal of the individuated self—a self that Western developmental psychologists claim occurs at

adolescence—which requires standing apart from others to assert its value, might be regarded as immature in its self-centeredness. The second, related assumption behind the American understanding of self-esteem, is that it is directly dependent upon so-called individual abilities, qualities, and performances (including academic performance). This formulation almost completely ignores the existence of different cultural models of learning in which school success, for example, is not at all seen as dependent on innate ability but on effort.

Within the United States, self-interest represents the precedent for the general category of social relationships. The cultural monopoly of the school is representative of a system that legally combines prejudice and discrimination (Ilich, 1971). And at every level, the structure of schooling reproduces the moral posture of selfishness (Giroux, 1988). By maintaining pedagogical structures that undermine collective action, the message bursting forth from most educational sites is one that reveres the self at the expense of the group. Children are taught to compete for the infinitesimal "top" positions in society, rather than to work together to improve their collective condition (Darder, 1991). The message is one that clearly supports a culture of assimilation through alienation. Of this Freire (2000) asserted: "The interests of the oppressors lie in changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them" (p. 74). To achieve this end, oppressors implement the banking concept of education along with a paternalistic worldview in which the oppressed are viewed as nothing more than welfare recipients or second-class citizens.

CHAPTER 4

SELF-ESTEEM CURRICULUM AS EPISTEMICIDES

> I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. The universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.
>
> — Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 1955

Historically, public education in the United States has survived on the notion of teaching students the "3Rs," reading, writing, and arithmetic, as well as some simple subjects in social studies and language. Within this framework, an individual teacher's curriculum can be thought of as all of the plans, activities, and materials used to teach a particular unit or class; a collection of lesson plans, projects, books, media, tests, and quizzes (Dillon, 2009). But the meaning of curriculum may extend beyond any of these descriptions, because curriculum creation includes certain values and politics that define what is legitimate knowledge and how it should function in society (Leonardo & Grubb, 2013). In this context, standardized curricula have ensured the survival of the school campus as a colonizing site. Together, the school campus and its attendant curricula represent a socializing force that primes working class students of color to accept commonsensically as necessary the brutal conditions characteristic of Western capitalism.

According to Ilich (1971), universal schooling was meant to detach role assignment from personal life history. As such, education held the potential to mold future citizens, transmit

national values, inspire academic achievement, and engender personal development. Ilich (1971) argued that the school system simply monopolized the distribution of success and used curriculum to assign social rank. These assertions stand in stark contrast to the feel-good notions around which curriculum scholars have organized theory, research, and evaluation; inquiry that is supposedly grounded in the examination of concepts such as, "What do schools teach?", "What should they teach?", and finally, "Who should decide?" While these examinations have contributed greatly to dialogue regarding the intended aims of education, they equally fail to adequately acknowledge that curriculum formation does not exist as separate from the political economy or contemporary social life.

Thus, curriculum, as it has been widely debated over the years, cannot be simply thought of as a neutral reference to the academic work offered or required by an educational institution for the successful completion of a degree or credential (Darder, 1991), but rather should be understood as "a bundle of planned meanings, a package of value, a commodity whose balanced appeal makes it marketable to a sufficiently large number to justify the cost of production" (Ilich, 1971, p. 41). In that sense, the curriculum production process mimics the assembly of any other modern staple (or product) that serves to justify present-day economic systems, the organization of labor, and so on.

Ilich (1971) described the mode of educational production, as it begins "with allegedly scientific research, on whose basis educational engineers predict future demand and tools for the assembly line, within the limits set by budgets and taboos" (p. 41). At the end of the process, the distributor-teacher delivers the finished product to the consumer-pupil, whose reactions are carefully studied to provide data for the preparation of the next model that may be "ungraded,

student-designed, team-taught, visually-aided, or issue-centered" (Ilich, 1971, p. 41). Thus, the meaning of curriculum can additionally be thought of as what is successfully conveyed in differing degrees to students, by teachers implementing materials and legitimated bodies of knowledge chosen by representatives involved in the teaching of a specified group of students (Dillon, 2009).

Curriculum formation is rarely represented as a clear process. It undergoes multiple alterations before becoming accepted as an official set of documents, "debated at every foreseeable level of education, from local to national, informal to formal" (Leonardo & Grubb, 2013, p. 14). This process ensures the educational materials that eventually make their way onto school campuses are the result of presumptions of consensual values and practices of people who share the same worldview, or episteme. It is this allegiance to collective norms and values that creates boundaries for insiders/outsiders. Therefore, curriculum creation and curriculum as a finished product is nothing more than a tightly regulated set of enterprises, the result of a single or theoretical mix of hegemonic principles, where the autonomy of educators is oftentimes completely stripped away. In this way, curriculum decisions merely come to represent larger societal values and biases inherent in the cultural and class worldviews of those who design and approve curricula policies and practices. And it is in this manner that curriculum content and methodology is derived from the larger function of education in American society: The perpetuation of values and social relations that produce and legitimate the dominant worldview at the expense of a vast number of citizens (Darder, 1991).

The Employability Curriculum

This mainstream curriculum and the role of schools as a colonizing apparatus became especially important when neoliberalism began to make inroads into European and American social systems. By the 1980s, neoliberalism had begun to exert tremendous influence on the political structures and functions of Western democracies. Gradually, these developments began to have an influence on the planning and administration of educational systems. Neoliberal ideology, which focused on promoting efficient markets and economic rationality, declared that productivity was not limited solely to economic affairs but was also relevant to the field of education (Darder, 2011/2012; Giroux, 2011b). In effect, neoliberal policies institutionalized the process of redefining education according to the tenets of neoliberal philosophy. As a result, education was reshaped to impart the skills required in the contemporary neoliberal paradigm of working life. Talk of "competencies" began to permeate educational discourse and students were now seen as parts of a production chain, a target for the market and consumer, an enthusiastic advocate of competition (Dillon, 2009).

Within this framework, curriculum formation is clearly a political matter, as forging it conserves the interests of power elites (Leonardo & Grubb, 2013). For example, when *A Nation at Risk* (1983), was commissioned under President Ronald Reagan's administration, a national debate was sparked regarding the kind of curriculum that would give the United States a competitive global edge at a time when conservatives bemoaned that educational standards had fallen below acceptable levels. Under President George W. Bush, formal laws, such as No Child Left Behind, drove what standard curricula looked like in an attempt to alleviate achievement gaps. These formal federal interventions focused on four subgroups: English language learners,

students with disabilities, poor or working-class children, and racial minorities (Leonardo & Grubb, 2013).

It would be irresponsible to divorce the field of curriculum theory or methodology from these historical circumstances. Therefore, curriculum theory needs to be understood as "an historical construct assembled out of cultural battles over power and knowledge" (Paraskeva, 2011, p. 17). And as such, curriculum theory needs to be treated as a category whose meaning is not only unsettled, but also continually contested. Critical curriculum theorists argue that the traditional model of curriculum formation rests on a number of flawed assumptions about the nature and role of theory, knowledge, and science. Furthermore, Giroux (1988) argued that these assumptions "have resulted in truncated forms of inquiry that ignore fundamental questions concerning the larger relationship between ideology and school knowledge as well as meaning and social control" (p. 13). These are not isolated tensions generated by a handful of scholars, but rather signal the demand for an examination of curricula that is appropriately framed within economic, political, cultural, religious, and ideological frameworks that have emerged from within the United States.

Confronting the Pedagogical Unsaid

According to Flinders and Thornton (2004), curriculum scholars owe their relevance to the exponential growth of public schools that occurred at the beginning of the 20th century. The first such scholars saw their work as part of a broader reformation of America, owing their ideals in large part to the Progressive movement (Flinders & Thornton, 2004). This group of Progressive educational reformers is credited with the institutionalization of many of the contemporary features of school curriculum—elements such as tracking, standardized testing,

and civic education. But even during these inaugural years, the curriculum field was littered with various disagreements about its proper aims and practices, resulting in radically different meanings of curriculum. What remains clear, however, is that curriculum decisions were made by a small, elite group of individuals most often responsible for the operation of schools (Flinders & Thornton, 2004).

How is it that a handful of individuals can be responsible for the creation, approval, and implementation of curriculum? Part of the answer lies in the fact that curriculum as it currently exists in the United States enjoys an epistemic privilege, due in part to the efforts—at the end of the 19th century—of a number of groups to secure a hegemonic position in the curriculum field (Paraskeva, 2011). This privilege boasts forms of knowing that are considered superior to the knowledge of great numbers of working-class people of color in this country. Numerous educational scholars (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 1998, 2012; Darder, 1991; hooks, 1994; Paraskeva, 2011) have raised concerns about the role that schools and curriculum play in reproducing the values and attitudes necessary for the maintenance of the dominant society. These critics share concerns over how meaning is constructed and acted upon in schools, arguing that all too often, curriculum specialists and classroom teachers ignore the governing principles of curriculum design, research, and evaluation.

Consider, as Grosfoguel (2013) does, that Western Universities responsible for producing these very same educators are based on learning theories born from the experience and problems of "a particular region in the world, with its own particular time/space dimensions" (p. 74). Thus, the five countries that exist under the banner of Western Europe (Italy, France, England, Germany, and the United States) utilize a discourse of universality; whereby "their theories are

supposed to be sufficient to explain the social/historical realities of the rest of the world" (Grosfoguel, 2013, p. 75).

One of the consequences of this insistence on universality has been that educators are conditioned to operate out of common sense assumptions that fail to raise fundamental questions about how teachers perceive their classroom experiences and most importantly, their students (Giroux, 1988). Further, questions concerned with how particular classroom materials mediate meanings between teachers and students, schools and the larger society go unquestioned. Subsequently, as articulated by Giroux (1988): "There is little room for students to generate their own meanings, to act on their own lived histories, or to develop attentiveness to critical thought" (pp. 16–17).

New interdependencies created by the information and communication capital work not only to strengthen the concept of universality, but also to co-author the permanence of "hierarchies in the world" (Sousa Santos, 2001, p. xxi). The processes of neoliberal globalization invoke the notion of hierarchy for much more than simple distinctions between countries. Sousa Santos (2001) described hierarchy today as existing between "economic sectors, social groups, regions, knowledges, forms of social organization, cultures, and identities" (p. xxiii). Hierarchy as it exists within the environment of transnational networks and alliances represents the "accumulated effect of unequal relations between the dominant and dominated forms in each of these social fields" (Sousa Santos, 2001, p. xxiii). On the one hand, this global hierarchy has transformed countries on the periphery and semi periphery—linguistic distinctions that point to the existence of a globalized hierarchy—into oppressed locales that supposedly legitimize the subordination to Western imperialism. On the other hand, the failed promises of "peace,

rationality, freedom, equality, progress, and the sharing of progress" (Sousa Santos, 2001, p. xvii), tethered to Western epistemological privilege have given rise to considerable counter-hegemonic global movements.

In this fashion, academic discourse—especially as it relates to curriculum creation and implementation—is revealed, from the outset, to be a self-referential, self-justificatory practice that determines what may legitimately be considered knowledge. As Bennett (2007) described it: "A discourse provides a set of possible statements about a given area, and organizes and gives structure to the manner in which a particular topic, object, or process is to be talked about" (p. 153). In short, discourse encodes ideology, captures a particular vision of the world, and determines the possibilities of what is thought and said by the communities using them. Additionally, Bennett (2007) identified the totalitarian aim of discourse, in that it "colonizes the social world imperialistically, from the point of view of one institution" (p. 153). Therefore, traditional curriculum personifies a view of rationality that is ahistorical, consensus-oriented, apolitical, and conservative. Control, not learning, occupies the highest priority in the traditional curriculum model.

There is a "hidden" curriculum that exists as well. This hidden curriculum, as described by Ilich (1971), "adds prejudice and guilt to the discrimination which a society practices against some of its members and compounds the privilege of others with a new title to condescend to the majority" (p. 33). The hidden curriculum is a part of the bureaucratic and managerial functions of the school and serves as a ritual of initiation into a growth-oriented consumer society for rich and poor alike (Ilich, 1971). This hidden curriculum, or pedagogical unsaid, is representative of attempts to deform knowledge into a discrete and decontextualized set of technical skills

packaged to serve big business interests, cheap labor, and ideological conformity related to authority, behavior, and morality (Paraskeva, 2011; Steiner et al., 2004). Hence, to try and make sense of the pedagogical unsaid means that schools have to be analyzed as legitimating agents that labor to produce and reproduce the dominant values, and social relationships necessary for the maintenance of the larger society (Paraskeva, 2011). In this way, a critical examination of the pedagogical unsaid allows for an exploration of the dialectical tensions that accompany the process of reproduction at the level of day-to-day classroom interactions.

Jackson (1990) offered a number of arguments for why the daily routines of practice should be of paramount concern for those interested in school curriculum. These routines are often overlooked because they are commonplace, repetitive, and ordinary. Herein, we find an interesting paradox; if Jackson is right, practice is ignored for the very reasons that it is important. Classroom routines have an enduring influence specifically because they are commonplace, repetitive, and ordinary. Jackson further argued that the "daily grind" itself teaches a hidden curriculum of unspoken expectations, and these expectation are what most often determine a student's school success or failure. If researchers were to examine educational programs solely on the basis of its stated objectives, the hidden curriculum would in all likelihood remain just that—hidden (Jackson, 1990). Ultimately, the curriculum cannot be analyzed in isolation from the social dynamics and economic consequences that construct themselves daily around constitutive and preferential rules. The school actually functions in this capacity as a distributor of a concrete rationality of dominance.

Traditional curriculum supports a passive view of students, utterly incapable of examining the ideological presuppositions that tether it to a narrow mode of reasoning. Because

of this, Steiner et al. (2004) argued that school practices need to address, more than ever before, "the objective, material conditions of the workplace and labor relations in order to prevent the further resecuring of the ideological hegemony of the neoliberal corporatist state" (pp. 16–17). Critics like Freire (1998) have pointed out that schools do not exist in a vacuum, separated from the rest of society. In fact, schools are not things, but concrete manifestations of collective attitudes, rules, and social relationships.

As a result, the organization of schooling in the United States remains value-based. Similarly, curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation, as Giroux (1988) explained, "always represent patterns of judgments about the nature of knowledge, classroom social relationships, and the distribution of power" (p. 15). To focus on systems of reason is to consider the rules and standards that order the practices of curriculum and teaching. According to Popkewitz (2009): "These rules and standards are historically produced, and function as cultural theses about how the child is, and should live" (p. 303). Under this explanation, the reason of schooling embodies a style of comparative thought that differentiates, distinguishes, and divides (Popkewitz, 2009).

Traditionally, the collection of values and social relations that produce and legitimate a dominant worldview has been described as an epistemology. Epistemologies seek to address issues related to the fundamental conditions of knowledge, as well as mechanisms related to the creation, dissemination, and legitimization of knowledge. Paraskeva (2011) defined epistemology as "the study of knowledge, its justification(s), and its vast theories" (p. 3). He further argued:

> Epistemology helps us understand that the knowledge of reality is inevitably limited by the level of development of the (technical/scientific) means and methods used to investigate and discern what actually is true; this is the case in all areas of knowledge about natural and social reality. (p. 3)

Dominant knowledge structures, or epistemologies become a primary concern in the context of education when you consider that many subaltern student populations exist on campuses in an almost schizophrenic state, "being present and yet not visible, being visible and yet not present" (Freire, 2000). Sousa Santos claimed that this epistemological terrain has been divided by an "abyssal line" that depicts the global South as nonexistent and produces epistemologies that bolster the unequal power dynamics necessary for the hegemonic production of this nonexistence (as cited in Janson & Paraskeva, 2015). This double consciousness, so to speak, is representative of what de Sousa Santos (2010) called an "epistemicide," that is, the extermination of knowledge and ways of knowing that coincide with the emergence of modern/colonial structures of knowledge as the foundational epistemology of Westernized systems of education. Sousa Santos (2010) coined the term "epistemicide" to give name to the devastating effects of globalization, as well as to combat attacks upon the very existence of racialized populations who exist outside of the global North.

However, we do not have to expand our scope as far as the non-Western world to find evidence of epistemicide. Sousa Santos's (2014) *Epistemologies of the South* provides a framework for the deconstruction or reconstruction of curriculum studies that no longer relies on the hegemony of Western rationale. Additionally, de Sousa Santos (2010) spoke on the need to confront dialogue on educational and curriculum policy within the United States that produces

youth and teachers as nonbeings. These policies, embodied in reform efforts like Race to the Top and Common Core, are forced upon schools within the United States as part of an increasingly privatized public educational system, a manifestation of internal (re)colonialism (Janson & Paraskeva, 2015).

Yeah, That's the Ticket!

The 1950s and 1960s witnessed unprecedented federal and private support for curriculum development projects that alternated between frameworks of crisis and optimism. Flinders and Thornton (2004) described the crisis, set against the backdrop of Cold War politics, as being focused on "national security and academic rigor" (p. 47). Mathematics, science, and foreign language curricula were perceived as directly relevant to national defense, and thus the first to receive attention (Flinders & Thornton, 2004). National measures revealed that students performed poorly across these school subjects. However, the period's optimism was fueled by the belief that "subject matter experts, armed with specialized knowledge and modern techniques, could set American schools back on track" (Flinders & Thornton, 2004, p. 47).

For those who would additionally follow the doctrines disseminated by the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, there was no doubt that the schools were the place to begin to eradicate the widening economic, political, and social gaps between Blacks and Whites, workers and the middle classes, men and women (Willis, 1977). For those concerned with this particular strand of educational reform, the main issue was the persistence of poverty among a large minority of the population, which had been excluded from the American dream (Willis, 1977).

This era also witnessed the initial effects of one of the most provocative discoveries in modern educational psychology: The finding that children's levels of achievement and behavior

were influenced by how they feel about themselves (Lawrence, 2006). At the center of the majority of empirical work responsible for these results was the concept of self-esteem. Eventually, or rather inevitably, this view of student achievement found its way into the official civil rights discourse and was often incorporated into arguments that suggested the academic achievement of racialized students might be hindered by low self-esteem in a White-dominated society. It was believed that since education has long been recognized as the primary route to upward mobility in American society, racially stratified performance contributed greatly to the perpetuation of a racially stratified social order. The connection between minority school disadvantages and feelings of personal inferiority imparted by a racially discriminatory society was the logic that informed the era's discourse on equality.

Since that time, the concept of self-esteem has continued to play a major part in discussions of minority underachievement. For example, advocates of multicultural education have frequently placed self-esteem at the center of their arguments. Additionally, the perception that segregated schools led to feelings of inferiority among racialized students played a prominent role in the legal struggle against school segregation. Thus, even though these beliefs failed to fully consider the pervasive effects of both the material domination and exploitation of working class communities of color by the powerful elite, the topic of self-esteem emerged with particular significance in reference to questions of racial inequality, school performance, reform efforts, and curriculum development.

For example, in their famous doll studies, the Clarks (1989) argued that black children's preference for White dolls demonstrated the low self-esteem of these children. Additionally, in a 1951 *New York Times* article, "Pupil Segregation Held Drag on U.S.," John Popham detailed the

first all-out legal attack in a Southern courtroom on the principle of segregated schools. "Experts in the fields of education and psychology testified in a crowded Federal Court . . . . that under the South's segregated schools systems the children of both races suffer basic personality damage that ultimately endangers the welfare of the nation" (Popham, 1951, para. 1). Specifically, in the case of "Negro school children," plaintiffs held that segregation practices resulted in "a lowering of self-esteem, a strengthening of resentment and hostility, and a personality development that emphasized the desire to escape or withdraw from social participation" (Popham, 1951, para. 10).

Hence, it is not surprising that when the Supreme Court issued its historic *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, the justices implicitly adopted a self-esteem perspective on education and believed that increased self-esteem for Black students was an expected outcome of school desegregation. The justices wrote, "Racial segregation generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone" (Bankston & Zhou, 2002, p. 389).

In the decades following America's initial attempts to redress its long history of racial inequality, calls for building up the self-esteem of Black students, in particular, became commonplace to urban education programs. Much of the early work on ethnic minority youth adjustment focused on identifying disparities that existed between ethnic minority and ethnic majority youth on major indices of adjustment (Toomey & Umaña-Taylor, 2012). This work established that ethnic youth who belonged to subaltern social groups were "disproportionately at risk for poor health and academic outcomes, more likely to live in poverty, and overrepresented in the juvenile justice system" (Toomey & Umaña-Taylor, 2012, p. 8). In this context, self-

esteem has been used to justify the need for intervention programs that specifically target processes that promote well being. Typically, the goals of these programs have focused on addressing the effects of common stressors experienced by vulnerable youth, while neglecting the source.

There are, however, at least three types of challenges to claims that racial inequality in school performance can be attributed to variations in self-esteem. First, several researchers have found that Black students have more self-esteem than White students, not less (Simmons, 1978). Second, some have found that the connection between self-esteem and school success is weaker for Black students than for White students, since black students may detach their self-images from school success in order to protect themselves from feelings of failure (Osborne, 1995). And, third, some researchers and theorists have maintained that there is little connection between self-esteem and academic performance, or that there is even a negative association between the two (Baumeister, 1996).

The civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s unfolded alongside the planting of a long-term neoliberal strategy, "steeped to the gills in a homogenizing logic that would threaten to obstruct the possibility of any genuine form of cultural democracy in the United States" (Darder, 2012, p. 414). As a result, curriculum was transformed in ways that proved not only to be culturally irrelevant, but also failed to engage the longstanding historical inequalities and social exclusions that persisted in the United States (Darder, 2012). In the process, activism for equality, political inclusion, economic access, and human rights has given way to "an emphasis on multiculturalized market niches . . . and the occasional portrayals of colored faces and celebratory rhetoric for public relations pamphlets and Websites" (Darder, 2012, p. 413).

Neoliberalism would prove a to be a determined advocate that worked to silence discourses of difference. One of the primary ways in which this was accomplished was through the concept of self-esteem as employed across educational institutions.

Curriculum creation emerged as the most appropriate way to begin a discussion around education and racism (Leonardo & Grubb, 2013). Because schools are places where students study something daily for a given amount of time, curriculum represents the actual material that facilitates this interaction. It could also be argued that the traditional academic curriculum is simply a mechanism for identifying and defining certain students as failures. The multicultural curriculum made popular in the late 1980s is an example of this trend. It condemned certain social groups to exclusion by virtue of its discriminatory cultural presupposition that the Anglo male culture of competitive academic success is universally superior (Kenway & Willis, 1990).

Curriculum setting is thus a part of race creation rather than merely reflecting or celebrating it. It is not a mirror, but a prism that bends the story of race for particular reasons. Curriculum has the ability to recreate race because students read their existence into and through their experience in school. In the worst cases, curriculum further marginalizes racialized student populations, adding to the social inequality they experience outside of school. According to Leonardo and Grubb (2013):

> Although curriculum on its own, and education for that matter, are not responsible for the myriad reasons that lead to high minority drop-out rates and underachievement…it stands to reason that students who do not see themselves reflected in the curriculum will not have an organic connection with schooling, and will perceive it as separate from their

> intellectual development. This kind of disconnection has far-reaching implications for the kind of education they experience. (pp. 16–17)

Method to the Madness

It has become generally accepted that schools ought to develop learning in a variety of areas, including personal and social development. In fact, as Beane et al. (1980) observed: "Intrinsic to the notion of the 'hidden' curriculum is the idea that the self and social outcomes of schooling are at least as, if not more powerful than, academic outcomes" (p. 78). In the United States, many teachers are all too familiar with conscious efforts aimed at improving students' self-esteem, either through praise, awards, or specific intervention programs. Craig (2009) noted that in 2005, a retired head teacher of the Professional Association of Teachers put forward a motion that the word "fail" be deleted from school vocabulary and replaced with the term "deferred success" as a way to protect young people with fragile self-esteem. Craig (2009) wrote of the outcome: "The motion was defeated but some argued it was unnecessary as schools no longer use the word 'fail' anyway" (p. 4). The consequences of these practices have been well documented.

Policies such as social promotion—passing children on to the next grade level regardless of academic performance—may be attributed to preserving children's self-esteem. Furthermore, grade inflation may stem from concern over protecting students' self-esteem. Cross-cultural evidence suggests that North American teachers are more reluctant to give challenging assignments that potentially threaten self-esteem, whereas Japanese teachers are more likely to believe that children thrive when challenged (Kernis, 2006). It seems then that schools and teachers in the United States have become responsible for ensuring that all students develop

inner psychological resources that enable them to lead fulfilling lives, "complete with high levels of self-regard, self-understanding, self-confidence, and strategically directed self-interest" (Martin & McLellan, 2013, p. vii).

Beane et al. (1980) wrote: "Each experience in school can affect self-concept, personally held values, and/or subsequent self-esteem of the learner" (p. 85). For this reason, it is believed: "An understanding of self-concept and esteem in general, how they function in youth, and how the schools might enhance or hinder them must be a major concern of those responsible for curriculum planning and implementation" (Beane et al. 1980, p. 85). As such, the general advice to teachers today is that they must consistently signal to learners that they can pursue successfully the academic, social, and personal goals of school experience. Thus, planned activities should not be beyond the grasp of the learner, if feared or actual failure is to be avoided, as Beane et al. (1980) surmised, "Self-concept and self-esteem as learner may account to a large degree for school success and may be enhanced by teacher action" (p. 85).

Despite the tendency of researchers to further confuse the issues, due in part to a lack of consensus on substantive definitions and muddled research findings, "the promotion of high self-esteem and the prevention of low self-esteem are seen as an important societal goal" (Robins, Trzesniewski, & Donnellan, 2012, p. 3). For example, English and English (1958) identified over a thousand different combinations and uses of terms in the arena of self-concept, with the same term often used to mean different things, and different terms such as self-esteem, self-concept, and self-image often used interchangeably to mean the same thing (Lawrence, 2006). It is no wonder then that the umbrella term "self-esteem intervention" is commonly used to cover a broad range of programs and intervention strategies.

The emphasis in many school development programs is upon cooperation and positive mutual regard between students themselves and students and teachers, given that "there is a concern with pastoral care, with classroom and school morale and climate" (Kenway & Willis, 1990, p. 10). Other programs may involve the allocation of a certain period of the school week to self-esteem raising activities. During these periods, students may draw up lists of all their skills, work on developing assertiveness, or the skills for dealing with anger. These technologies are evident in publications such as *100 Ways to Enhance Self-Concept in the Classroom* (Canfield & Wells, 1976), and *Self-Esteem: A Classroom Affair—101 Ways to Help Children Like Themselves* (Borba & Borba, 1978). In fact, much of the material on self-esteem available for classroom teachers consists of a blank line in which you can fill in for the number of ways you would like to enhance self-esteem.

One way of enhancing self-concept and esteem in schools is to provide a curriculum specifically designed for that purpose. Through such units as "Developing My Personal Values," "Getting Along With Others," "Living in Our School," or other similar topics, students are exposed directly to the value systems and environmental expectations involved in thinking about and making decisions related to self-perceptions (Borba & Borba, 1978). The logic that schools have both the opportunity and responsibility to enhance the development of individuals beyond the acquisition of facts generates myriad other intervention strategies that include: creating a climate characterized by student participation in decision-making, minimizing failure and emphasizing respect, permitting students some control over their own lives by having them participate in formulating school rules, and including curriculum that gives direct attention to personal and social development (Beane et al., 1980).

Typically, lists of school goals include statements of intent to help students develop a positive sense of self-worth, independence, confidence, and self rather than external direction (Beane et al., 1980). In 2000, Dr. Mary Williams and Dr. Edward DeRoche of the International Center of Character Education at the University of San Diego formulated a set of "Desired Outcomes" to be obtained from the implementation of a Character Education Program. Their list of "Desired Character Education Outcomes" includes:

> Better student behavior at school, better student behavior in the community, fewer classroom disruptions, more examples of students respecting adults and each other, more students doing homework, understanding multiple perspectives, demonstrating concern for the welfare of others, applying skills of ethical decision making to solve problems, demonstrating skills of social cooperation, demonstrating responsibility for their own learning, and exhibiting a positive attitude towards learning and school. (Borba, 1989, p. 1)

These intervention processes extend into the home as well, as schools are expected to assist parents to enhance their children's self-perceptions by conducting workshops for them. It is believed that through parenting workshops, parents may learn the interaction patterns necessary to help their children develop self-concept and self-esteem (Beane et al., 1980).

The arena abounds with acronyms. Tested programs include KICK, DARE, GREAT, SMILE, GOAL, and POP, as well as interventions aimed at young children titled Little Acorns and Big Buddies, each with an implicit, if not explicit, theory as to what damages or depresses self-esteem and what can raise it. Some programs focus on providing particular kinds of information, others on developing competencies, or training particular patterns of behavior, or

modifying existing habits of behavior, yet others on modifying attitudes or perceptions. Indeed, in the United States, there are so many of these materials in circulation that the National Council for Self-Esteem was established to provide details on the range of curricula available.

While the variety of programs is immense, there are also enormous variations in forms of delivery (Emler, 2001). Just about every intervention program devised to raise self-esteem, as well as the basic premise of most popular books devoted to raising self-esteem, is based on Cooley's (1901) assumption that if the feedback we receive from other people is uniformly negative, this will be absorbed into our self-appraisals (Emler, 2001). One such example, *501 Ways to Boost Your Child's Self-Esteem* (Ramsey, 2002), is simply a list of different ways and opportunities that parents can give positive feedback to their children.

Self-esteem is widely used to explain and justify school programs, which vary considerably in scope and intentions. They can encompass educational reforms up to a fundamental restructuring of the whole school curriculum. It has been acclaimed by many as a means both of addressing educational problems and enhancing educational processes (Kenway & Willis, 1990). Robins et al. (2012) found that the most common type of intervention was one that focused on practice or training for a specific task. This strategy yielded a positive result, but was not nearly as powerful for increasing self-esteem as interventions that used praise and/or feedback. According to Robins et al. (2012): "Interventions that used attributional feedback, and contingent praise had the most powerful effect" (p. 6).

Most of the literature on self-esteem, is aimed at helping educators appreciate how they can influence the self-esteem of children in the classroom not only by the quality of their relationships with children, but also through practical activities (Lawrence, 2006). However,

authors are quick to remind their audience (teachers) that they must remain in charge of their classrooms. Thus, teachers are directed to communicate to students that their problems are understood, but not to the extent that teachers lose their identity as the person in charge. This can be accomplished through the strategy of using "I" messages and "you" messages to maintain the distinction between the deed and the doer, further separating behavior from the character of the child.

Cardelle-Elawar (1996) described a self-regulating teaching approach to help teachers improve minority students' self-esteem. This approach aims at releasing teachers from stereotypes about minority students. Cardelle-Elawar (1996) documented a case study in which a teacher used the IDEA model to improve students' self-esteem. The IDEA model is a series of workshops designed to help bilingual teachers and parents find methods of improving their Hispanic children's self-esteem, and suggests 52 ways to build children's self-esteem and confidence, suggesting that teachers' manifestations of caring might be the foundation of their students' self-esteem and confidence.

Based on a self-regulating teaching model, IDEA describes the ideal relationship of teacher to student in the following manner:

> The role of the teacher is to give students opportunities to be successful, teachers should be profoundly involved in making the formation of their students' self-esteem one of their top teaching priorities, and no one better than a teacher can instill self-esteem in students who by watching, listening, and following the teacher will understand that they have an opportunity to be successful. (Cardelle-Elawar, 1996, p. 25)

This paternalistic model, based on self-regulation is very much in line with Freire's critique of the banking system of education, where students are viewed as empty vessels to be filled with the teacher's knowledge (Paraskeva, 2011).

Moreover, these institutionalized values are essentially quantified ones. Scholars like Ilich (1971) refused to allow the obsession with quantification to become associated with the measurement of human beings. "Personal growth is not a measurable entity. It is a growth in disciplined dissidence, which cannot be measured by any rod, or any curriculum, nor compared to someone else's achievement" (Ilich, 1971, p. 40). On the subject of the dangerous but assumed usefulness of measurement, Ilich wrote:

> People who submit to the standard of others for measure of their own personal growth soon apply the same ruler to themselves. They no longer have to be put in their place, but put themselves into their assigned slots, squeezing themselves into niche, which they have been taught to seek, and, in the very process, put their fellows into their places too, until everybody and everything fits. (p. 40)

There is a tendency in the literature to treat the notion of self-esteem as a universal one and thus to ignore the specific cultural circumstances of working class students of color, especially the manner in which their culture intersects with hegemonic conceptions of educational achievement and ambition (Kenway & Willis, 1990). Thus, intervention strategies are particularly targeted toward populations that are regarded as educationally and socially disadvantaged. As a result, much of the research on self-esteem and subsequent prescriptive technologies reflect a discriminatory curriculum. It seems that educational programs, which

emphasize raising self-esteem by granting respect to differences through curriculum, are often based on an oversimplified reading of the situation.

Oversimplification of Multicultural Curriculum

This oversimplification is also evident in the popularity of the multicultural discourse of the late 1980s, which incorporated several aspects of the self-esteem discourse. A convenient summary of "Key learnings" from multicultural curriculum includes the following assertions: "Everyone is unique; All cultures are special; We are all part of a family; What makes a good friend is the same in all cultures; I am friends with people from all cultures; Families, like people, are unique" (Hoffman, 1996, p. 553). Scholars like Darder (2012) have insisted that the tides of the multicultural movement that began in the 1980s would stand in stark opposition to the multicultural discourses associated with the antiwar movement and civil rights struggles of the 1960s and early 1970s.

The multicultural gains of the 1960s and 1970s made within the larger society and educational system were "more consistent with liberal Keynesian-inspired economics still at work during that era, which recognized the importance of federal investment in social welfare programs in order to stave off the downside of corporate capital investments" (Darder, 2012, p. 416). In contrast, the multicultural discourse that took shape in the late 1980s "gained currency among the deregulatory policies of Reaganomics, with its dramatic economic shift to the current neoliberal values and ruthless consequences of inequality that we are grappling with today" (Darder, 2012, p. 416). As a result, multiculturalism, a project that once carried with it both revolutionary and transformative potential, fell prey to the politics of identity and state

appropriation. This process can be examined through the variety of social and political policies that took shape during the late 1980s.

In 1989, soon after Thomas Sobol was appointed Commissioner of Education, he created a Task Force on Minorities: Equity and Excellence. The task force and its consultants viewed the curriculum through the eyes of the following cultures: African American, Asian American, Native American, and Latino/Puerto Rican. The task force also repeatedly asserted that the bias in curricular materials was responsible for the poor performance of children from racial and ethnic minorities (Ravitch, 1989). In July 1989, the task force's report on the New York state curriculum was submitted to the Board of Regents for discussion. The first sentence of the task force report summarized its major findings.

> African Americans, Asian American, Puerto Ricans/Latinos, and Native Americans have all been the victims of an intellectual and educational oppression that has characterized the culture and institutions of the United States and European American world for centuries. The Task Force report calls for sweeping changes in what and how we teach. It is not a curriculum; it is a proposal for a new curriculum, new instructional strategies, and a new administrative office in the State Education Department to enforce "cultural equity" and changes in teacher education. (Ravitch, 1989, p. 2)

In Ravitch's (1989) view, the task force was interested in using history and social studies to teach self-esteem to children of minorities, and she concluded, "It is perfectly appropriate to find in history many examples of achievement by people of all races and ethnic backgrounds. Doing so enables all children to see that one's skin color or ethnicity is no barrier to success" (p. 9). At that time, Ravitch (1989) saw her primary task to be the condemnation of the

multicultural/multiracial approach in the proposed New York State curriculum guide, "A Curriculum of Inclusion," with respect to her own efforts on the California State history/social sciences curriculum. Ravitch (1989) claimed that the New York task force endorsed "the notion of collective, historical guilt; and encourages racial chauvinism and racial superiority" (p. 1).

Ravitch (1989) went on to remark that the task force's treatment of "cultures" was troubling, in that great emphasis was placed in every grade "on teaching civic values, democratic behaviors, and human rights" (p. 5). According to Ravitch:

> Children are encouraged by word and deed to respect themselves and to respect others; to admire those cultures that respect human dignity and to criticize those that do not. They learn to take a critical view of societies that enslave people; that treat women as beasts of burden, and that deny basic human rights like freedom of religion and freedom of press and speech. (p. 5)

She ended with the sentiment:

> Each child should learn to value himself or herself as a member of the human race. Self-esteem ultimately must derive from one's own hard work and accomplishments, not from pride in one's skin color, which is an inherited attribute rather than an accomplishment. (p. 9)

In this context, Ravitch (1989) represented the multitude of "white, liberal, multicultural gurus who came to dominate and distort the more revolutionary discourses born out of decolonizing struggles that had been waged by Black, Latino, Asian, and American Indian educators" (Darder, 2012, p. 34). In their place, discourses of urgency that blamed racialized children, families, and their culture for personal and community dysfunctions were used as

rationales for obstructing newly gained opportunities to advance the establishment of and participation in culturally democratic structures of decision making (Darder, 2012).

Thus, the critique posited by Ravitch (1989) can be seen as an attack on the self-determination of those teachers and parents of color who had risen together under political categories of struggle and called for a problem-posing pedagogy that would support the evolution of critical consciousness in the education of children from oppressed communities (Darder, 2015). In the early history of the Civil Rights Movement, as alluded to earlier, educators and activists of color viewed multicultural education as a "counter-hegemonic alternative for decolonizing the curriculum and transforming classroom life" (Darder, 2015, p. 32). However, just as critical multicultural education efforts began to take hold in the late 1970s and early 1980s, "reactionary conservative backlash and liberal rewriting of multiculturalism began to steadily erode the transformative intent and counterhegemonic purpose" (Darder, 2012, pp. 32–33). Rooted in a conservative ideology of deficit notions, "'whitewashed' expectations of multicultural education became the norm, while discussions about the 'race' problem or 'race' as the determining factor in the academic underachievement of students of color prevailed in educational debates" (Darder, 2012, p. 34).

Beyond its well-intentioned rhetoric, watered down multicultural materials are no more effective than their assimilationist and integrationist predecessors, in that they ignore and fail to engage issues of culture and power (Darder, 2012). As a result, the educational system simply continues to disenfranchise subaltern children, while appropriating and objectifying aspects of their culture. For example, anthropologists have criticized the way the concept of culture has been simplified and reified to fit multiculturalist discourses that support visions of personal,

ethnic, or national cultural identity that are fixed, essentialized, stereotyped, and normalized (Hoffman, 1996). Most of the work that has emerged out of theories of multiculturalism has replicated, in one form or another, a melting pot philosophy. In these circumstances, the melting pot is devoid of "understanding of or respect for the cultural integrity of oppressed populations," and are driven by "an obsessive need to construct a false sense of social unity and sameness without addressing social conditions that have fueled intense cultural and class divisions in this country for centuries" (Darder, 2011, p. 83).

Olneck (1990) suggested that, taken as a whole, "these discourses can be considered a symbolic order that constructs and constrains action and choice" (546). The very fact that the prepackaged curriculum associated with multicultural discourse was codified seems to undermine the essential multicultural theme. Instead of openness and flexibility, these lessons were characterized by their insistence on a particular vocabulary, the proper way to think, and a one-dimensional approach to awareness. Many of the multicultural education efforts that took hold in schools during the 1980s and 1990s "not only conserved a racializing hierarchical structure of power but also deficit notions, which served to readily sustain the meritocratic process of class formation within working class communities of color" (Darder, 2012, pp. 32–33). In the words of Darder and Torres (2004): "Multiculturalism became an effective mechanism of the state, used to manage and preserve racialized class division, while in the marketplace the new multiplicity of identities generated new products for consumption" (p. 19).

Progressivist educators, concerned with the cultural insensitivity and discriminatory power of the traditional curriculum, have increasingly come to advocate for diversified curriculum based on culturally specific needs and relevance. But cultural differences also

embody asymmetrical relations of power that can reproduce severe inequalities. Moreover, reproducing the difference in such a reified manner can also mean reproducing and reinforcing existing inequalities, albeit while wearing a benevolent multiculturalized smile. As Kenway and Willis (1990) posited: "The macramé multicultural curriculum not only trivializes what it classifies as cultural difference but is ironically all too relevant to a society divided by class, gender, and ethnicity" (pp. 160–161).

Beyond the Cult of a Growth Mindset

Although the self-esteem discourse has been legitimated through government policy and underwritten by government funding for research and curricula development, and even though many teachers embrace the idea of improving their students' path to learning by improving their self-esteem, some hesitation surrounding the concept has emerged. This includes a strong sense of unease about the uncritical way in which the ideas associated with self-esteem have become embedded within popular educational thinking. The claims being made on its behalf as an explanation of school failure and as a potion for success and individual liberation seem simplistic to say the least (Kenway & Willis, 1990). But to come out in opposition to mainstream programs designed to enhance students' self-esteem can easily be considered hazardous or dangerously akin to opposing happiness. This is particularly the case given the manner in which the current cult of the "Growth Mindset," touted as the new psychology of success (Dweck, 2006), is permeating the educational landscape across the country.

For almost 30 years, Dweck (1999) has done research on motivation and achievement while working for institutions like Columbia and Stanford. In 2006, Dweck published *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success, How We Can Learn To Fulfill Our Potential*. While the title is

more than a mouthful, the literature itself can be whittled down to the "self-fulfilling belief that one can become smarter" (Kohn, 2015, para. 1). Dweck's basic thesis is supported by her (own) decades' worth of good data, and according to Kohn (2015), the premise is repeated with "uncritical enthusiasm by educators and a growing number of parents, managers, and educators" (para. 3).

The problem with sweeping claims about the power of attitudes or beliefs is that it carries with it a tendency to divert attention from the nature of tasks themselves and leaves educators and students unable to address elements like the quality of the curriculum, or the relevance of pedagogy (Kohn, 2015). The uncritical acceptance of notions like Dweck's (2006) *mindset* can lead to consequences such as the perpetuation of Eurocentric epistemologies, questions of identity, and the perpetuation of Western concepts of human development (Darder, 2015). For communities betrayed by schooling processes, it is important to foster alternative visions that resonate with the anticolonial struggle for "self-determination and political aspirations to become full subjects of our histories, as well as control our own destinies" (Darder, 2015, pp. 5–6).

The self-esteem movement and its associated rhetoric, concepts like Dweck's (2006) *growth mindset,* and the popularization and eventual commodification of terms like *grit*, and *resiliency,* along with a number of other related brands within the bourgeoning industry of social/emotional growth represents a process where the more obvious outer chains of social, emotional, political, and economic restrictions have been cast off, while the inner chains are more deeply conditioned. About this phenomenon Fromm (1992) explained:

> This is so because man can at least be aware of outer chains but be unaware of inner chains, carrying them with the illusion that he is free. He can try to overthrow the outer chains, but how can he rid himself of the chains of whose existence he is unaware? (p. 7)

With this in mind, I turn to the tale of the "Absurd Hero" as it appears in the epigraph that begins this chapter. In a literal sense, Camus (1955) admitted *The Myth of Sisyphus* was his way of addressing legitimacy, life, and meaning. But I believe *The Myth of Sisyphus* can also offer insight into the supposed social and individual necessity of self-esteem, especially as it has played out within educational spheres. The plot of *The Myth of Sisyphus* reminds us all that we are too often resigned to commit ourselves to a futile and infinite struggle. "His scorn of the gods, his hatred of death, and his passion for life won him that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted toward accomplishing nothing" (Camus, 1955, p. 120).

The very elements that make Sisyphus a thinking, acting, living, creative agent indeed are the very reasons the Gods enact punishment upon him. The Gods believed that for Sisyphus, there could be "No more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labor" (Camus, 1955, p. 119). So in this way, the struggle to attain levels of high self-esteem parallels the Sisyphean experience. We too are encouraged by seemingly invisible forces to push the boulder up the hill, only to watch it roll back down. The self-esteem narrative relies on the same unquestioned labor—pushing up and chasing down the rock—in the hope of distracting us from the reality of our purpose and the potential liberatory power of education.

And while most of us would focus on the literal aspects of the punishment: the hill, the rock, the physical struggle, the repetitiveness, the eternity of it all; Camus (1955) alternatively contemplates the descent of our hero: "It is during that return, that pause, that Sisyphus interests

me" (p. 121). For Camus (1955), the walk down signals consciousness and reflection, it is a positive thing: "Like a breathing space which returns as surely as his suffering, that is the hour of consciousness" (p. 121).

Hence, it is for this reason, that Camus (1955) believed: "At each of those moments when he (Sisyphus) leaves the heights and gradually sinks toward the lairs of the gods, he is superior to his fate. He is stronger than his rock" (p. 121). So the mythology can be read to us as well in those moments, free of the labor required to chase after high levels of self-esteem we can be taught: "The higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks . . . The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy" (Camus, 1955, p. 123).

Avoiding the Positivist Trap

In 1976, California completed a statewide school/community goals process. Not surprisingly, every school/community placed reading, writing, and arithmetic among its primary goals for its children. Surprisingly, every school/community also declared that self-esteem was also among its primary goals for its children. In the foreword to Canfield and Well's (1976) *100 Ways to Enhance Self-Concept in the Classroom: A Handbook for Teachers and Parents,* John Vasconcellos, then chairman of the Joint Legislative Committee on Educational Goals and Evaluation, wrote that the addition of self-esteem as a fourth major goal of education was monumental.

> It signals a revolutionary cultural reversal from self-denial to self-actualization. But it is a revolution in the best American sense—for it signals as well the embodiment of, and

foundation for realizing, the dream of our founding fathers, real self-determination. (Canfield & Wells, 1976, p. xii)

Yet, despite 30 years of multicultural reforms, those who hold institutional power have remained constant. The few authentic opportunities extended to those who have been historically marginalized signal the powerful influence that the culture of positivism exerts on modern thought. The major assumptions that undergird the culture of positivism are based on the logic of scientific methodology that seeks to explain, predict, and control a majority of subaltern populations. The pervasiveness of the culture of positivism and its concomitant commonsense assumptions continue to exert a powerful influence on the process of schooling in the United States. That is, how particular kinds of knowledge and science have been able to acquire a dominant position while those outside the realm of Western rationality have been systematically marginalized, silenced, and repressed.

But these tensions also represent a potential point of departure, an opportunity to struggle against epistemicides, "the way hegemonic epistemologies, predominantly that of the Western male, have been able to violently impose, both secularly and religiously, a coloniality of knowledge" (Paraskeva, 2011, p. 3). This is the work being taken up by critics who make up the new sociology of curriculum. This group argues that schools are part of a wider societal process, and that they must be judged within a specific socioeconomic framework (Giroux, 1998). This reexamination of curriculum focuses on the relationship between schools and the dominant society, and on how day-to-day classroom relationships generate different meanings, restraints, cultural values and social relationships. According to Giroux (1988), "Underlying both of these concerns is a deep seated interest in the relationship between meaning and social control" (p. 16).

But teachers at all levels of schooling also represent a potentially powerful force for social change.

However, if educators do not critically unveil their own basic assumptions about curriculum and pedagogy, they do more than transmit unquestioned attitudes, norms, and beliefs. They will continue to run the risk of being dictated to by repressive institutional authority and of losing their creative and participative capacities. Additionally, they may unknowingly end up endorsing forms of cognitive and dispositional development that strengthen forms of institutional oppression (Giroux, 1988), despite all rhetoric to the contrary.

In an effort to challenge commonly accepted definitions about work, achievement, intelligence, mastery, failure, and learning, educators need to fight for an educational system that unveils and confronts *savage inequalities* (Kozol, 1995). By doing so, we can enable the development of new kinds of relationships in the curriculum field, raise different kinds of questions and, more importantly, cultivate and nourish emancipatory forms of classroom life, where a liberatory vision of social agency, empowerment, and self-determination can assist us in steadily dismantling the longstanding legacy of epistemicides in education.

CHAPTER 5

AN ACT OF ARMED LOVE: CURRICULUM FOR SOCIAL AGENCY, EMPOWERMENT, AND SELF-DETERMINATION

> Those who emerge from the anguish of poverty and dispossession know only too well the need to be ever vigilant and conscious of how political power in society is exercised. Such scholars exist in direct opposition to myths of modernity that would have us believe that our world can only be genuinely known through dispassionate inquiries and transcendent postures of scientific neutrality, as defined by Western philosophical assumptions of knowledge.
>
> —Antonia Darder, *The Making of a Postcolonial Dissident Scholar*, 2011a

We live in a brutal and unforgiving time (Freire, 1998b), and there is no more dangerous a place to exist in this time than at the intersection of poverty and race. Racial disparity continues to negatively impact the life chances of racialized individuals, and a sampling of institutions reveal limited access to health care, lack of quality early educational experiences, and failing schools replete with harsh disciplinary policies that suspend, expel, and thwart the development of children who drop out and then just as seamlessly drop in to juvenile detention and adult prison systems (Children's Defense Fund, 2007). According to a 2007 report by the Children's Defense Fund: "Black children are twice as likely as White children to be put into programs for mental retardation, almost twice as likely to be retained in a grade, and three times as likely to be suspended" (p. 38).

Undoubtedly, people of color experience systematic discrimination in a range of areas, including the delivery of public education and other services, job hiring and promotion, housing

opportunities, and treatment by police and the criminal justice system (Entman, 2006). So, the legacy of inferior education, deliberately restricted opportunity, low expectations, and criminalization—in short, racial and economic injustice—continues to inflict considerable harm, especially upon children from working class communities of color. At critical points throughout their development, from birth through adulthood, millions of these children confront a multitude of debilitating conditions. Public attitudes restrict their lives and keep them from enjoying the full range of opportunities and benefits of American society and the total impact of these interactional phenomena on education, employment, networking, and market transactions cannot be overestimated (Entman, 2006).

While the existence of these disparities would seem to seriously threaten democratic stability, in the face of these divisive inequalities of race and class, political constancy remains relatively secure and overt resistance rare (Cruikshank, 1999). The absence of successful open conflict is representative of how hegemonic institutions have come to rely on technologies of citizenship, efforts that seek to forge a new terrain of politics and new modes of governing the self, as opposed to new forms of government. Contained within these policies is a single ideal: "that individual activity might be diverted towards goals selected by elite power, but without either naked coercion or democratic deliberation" (Davies, 2015, p. 88)—namely what Gramsci (1971) termed "cultural hegemony."

Over the course of the last half-century, the self-esteem movement and its associated discourse has emerged as one of the more resilient technologies of citizenship. According to Cruikshank (1999), the self-esteem movement has successfully replaced any vision of social revolution with a model of personal recovery. Of this phenomenon, Cruikshank (1999) wrote:

"The self-esteem movement does not so much avoid real political problems as transform the level on which it is possible to address those problems" (p. 88). Essentially, the logic of the self-esteem discourse alters the relationship of self-to-self into a relationship that is governable, one that deceptively strips citizens of political social agency as they focus on the minutiae of the self, which supposedly bolsters self-esteem and thus increases the likelihood of individual success.

The science of the self, especially as it has been conceived since the 1960s, places the hope of liberation in the psychological state of poor urban people of color, who are at the same time blamed for crime, violence, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, child abuse, chronic welfare dependency, and educational failure (Cruikshank, 1999). As these processes unfold, poor, young people of color remain the target of stereotyping, fear, anger, misunderstanding, and rejection, and they are simultaneously encouraged to believe that individuals in isolation can act to bring about social and democratic change. Cruikshank (1999) described how contemporary political technologies (such as efforts to achieve high self-esteem) promise a certain kind of freedom, not in the form of liberation from social constraints but through the "slow, painstaking, and detailed work on our own subjective and personal realities, guided by an expert knowledge of the psyche" (p. 92). By transforming the topography of the self into an apolitical, ahistorical, and decontextualized terrain, the citizen acts on behalf of the state as their own master, attributing his or her lack of power and control in the world to a lack of self-esteem.

Historically, advocates of the self-esteem movement have argued that taking up the goal of self-esteem would defray the costs of social problems and, because of this belief, it wasn't until the close of the 20th century that concerns about the societal consequences of our culture of self-esteem began to be heard—particularly with respect to the effects of this culture within

educational spheres (Martin & McLellan, 2013). As Davies (2015) argued: "When we put our faith in behavioral solutions, we withdraw it from democratic ones to an equal and opposite extent" (p. 88).

Davies's (2015) assertion can be seen playing out in the debate over the importance of self-esteem to the extent that deficiencies in self-esteem are seen as causal. As a result, children—and in particular, working-class students of color—are held responsible for all the negative results associated with low self-esteem (i.e., crime, drug abuse, poor academic achievement) rather than the racializing and economically unjust system that perpetuates their distress. Moreover, because self-esteem is viewed as a policy matter, educators share the tendency of the larger public to narrowly define worth in terms of an abundance of traits generally associated with efficiency and productivity, such as assertiveness, punctuality, competition, and compliance.

One clear reason for the attachment of the self-esteem discourse to popular educational thought can be attributed to the plethora of self-literature and research that emerged from the discipline of social psychology and the human potential movement. These perspectives informed a wide range of progressive attempts both to humanize the curriculum and to engineer educational change, but did so by attaching hopes for educational and social progress on individual growth. In this scenario, teachers were to play a central role in a movement wherein individuals were conditioned to develop their "full potential" through a detached and universalizing self-dialogue.

Meanwhile, the liberal humanist approach to education, with individualism and universalism as two of its main tenets, only served to repress matters of culture, ideology, and

power, as if to say "never mind" to the qualities of selfhood that are given different expressions in different cultures and groups. Therefore, much of the research, policy, and curriculum generated through the support of the self-esteem discourse can be viewed as theoretically, culturally, and historically detached; and none of this can be adequately understood unless placed in the context of a particular theory, culture, time, and place.

Undoubtedly, proponents of the self-esteem movement made desperate attempts to address the educational differences, difficulties, and achievement gaps that working-class students of color experience in United States schools. The resulting picture, steeped in a racializing epistemology, neglected any real sense of diversity as it lives and intersects with the power and privilege of the dominant culture. In reality, the self-esteem discourse could never confront multicultural issues or the authentic self within working-class communities of color, because it is firmly located within the value system of the White, patriarchal, middle-class, and Euro-American perspective. And if the field has neglected prominent features of ethnicity and race, it is almost blind in matters regarding social class (Darder & Torres, 2004). In this respect, the self-esteem discourse only serves to dichotomize student populations by further distinguishing between *us and them*. As Darder (1991) described:

> American schools strongly reinforce an acceptance of differential roles in the economy and society as a just and democratic way of organizing social relations. In this manner, the class system of education provides an effective vehicle for the dominant culture to civilize racialized populations to ensure that society remains orderly and safe. (p. 7)

In the simplest terms, self-esteem personifies notions of individual value, worth, competence, and so on, as held by one's self; particularly in how they feel themselves to be perceived. These

paradigms of worth have serious implications in a world where working-class children of color everyday feel exponentially less valued by the larger society, where they continue to live separately from Whites in the United States, and remain the cultural inspiration of phobia, stereotyping, anger, misunderstanding, and rejection.

Further compounding this problem is the serious oversimplification that occurs when diverse cultures, nationalities, ethnicities, religions, and other distinctive attributes of those usually categorized as "Asian" or "Hispanic/Latino" are lumped together. For growing numbers of those with multiracial or multiethnic identities, this ambiguity is even more apparent. Although historically important to political counterhegemonic struggles in the United States, the lumping together of non-Whites under umbrella identities often negates very real cultural, historical, class, and linguistic differences that distinguish Blacks, Japanese Americans, Filipino Americans, and other "hyphenated" nationalities. Sadly, the unique traits of each of these cultures have been labeled as weaknesses or inabilities to cope because of both the scarcity of research by investigators who are members of minoritized groups themselves and the questionable interpretations of prior studies generated by Euro-American researchers.

The self-esteem movement and its hegemonic pedagogical discourse has waged an unrelenting assault on the values of working class, racialized communities, primarily through the system of education in the United States. As such, it is just another artifact of "the myriad of illusions that masquerade within modern society as justice, freedom, autonomy, and democracy" (Darder, 2002a, p. 1). Hence, the hegemonic apparatus of self-esteem as we know it can have little meaning for working-class students of color. The incompatibility between the individualism

espoused by the self-esteem discourse and the communitarian values held by subaltern populations exist in stark contradiction.

One way to combat the oppressive features that infect mainstream ideas of education is to deconstruct current conceptions of self-esteem and supplant them with an emancipatory understanding of the self. For too long, teachers "content with trite, psychological notions of student failure, [have failed] to engage with the fundamental historical practices of domination and exploitation that perpetuate social, political, and economic relationships of inequality" (Darder, 2002a, p. 3).

It is necessary, particularly given the current historical moment, that educators begin to make possible the conditions in which "learners in their interaction with one another and with their teachers, engage in the experience of assuming themselves as social, historical, thinking, communicating, transformative, creative persons" (Freire, 1998b, p. 45), as full subjects of history. It is time to deconstruct the generic, yet dangerous sentiments of "esteem" as it contributes to a debilitating concept of the self. Only then can we begin the process of reconstruction, "bearing in mind that the assumption of oneself does not signify the exclusion of others" (Freire, 1998b, p. 46).

What follows is a decolonizing pedagogical discussion that integrates an emancipatory understanding of the self, based on Freirian ideals of education. In the contemporary United States, this decolonizing process requires that we overcome our current state of alienation, make significant political changes to the economic system, create work that is meaningful and concrete, rid the educational system of teacher-proof curriculum and high stakes testing, engage spiritual values that include love, truth, and justice, interrogate the political sphere, challenge the

necessity of certain educational discourses, and adjust our priorities with regard to home and family life.

All of these categories can no longer be rationalized as separate but instead must be understood as interrelated components, working in partnership to create emancipatory opportunities, where social agency, empowerment, and self-determination can flourish in the context of community life. Awareness of and appreciation for the value and worth of subordinate cultures and their epistemological strengths can assist us to transform present conditions of disaffiliation and disregard in order to genuinely recognize and acknowledge how our cultural diversity can enhance democratic life in schools and society.

The Great Promise

The spread of free compulsory education has almost everywhere been followed by an increase in the power of ruling oligarchies at the expense of the masses (Huxley, Baker, & Sexton, 2000). The failure of the "Great Promise" of education in the United States, aside from the presence of industrialism's essential economic contradictions, was built into the system by its two main psychological premises: (a) that the aim of life is happiness, that is maximum pleasure; and (b) that egotism, selfishness, and greed, as the system needs to generate them in order to function, actually lead to harmony and peace (Fromm, 1976). The selfishness that the system generates makes its leaders value personal success more highly than social responsibility. Thus, as Fromm (1976) asserts, "It is no longer shocking when political leaders and business executives make decisions that seem to be to their personal advantage, but at the same time are harmful and dangerous to the community" (p. 9).

If selfishness is one of the pillars of modern practical ethics, why should anyone act otherwise? Indeed, it seems fair to say that the general public is so selfishly concerned with their own lives that they pay little attention to anything outside the personal realm. But this programmed disinterest—with everything that lies outside the self—is additionally tangled up with the unquestioned results of scientific research that advances through means of simplification. When applied to the problems of society, the development of simplification is a process, inevitably, of "restraint and regimentation, of curtailment of liberty and denial of individual rights" (Huxley, Baker, & Sexton, 2000, p. 265), where the entire spectrum of diversity is reduced to identity. This reduction of human diversity to a quasi-mechanical identity is achieved through propaganda, legal enactments, and if necessary, brute force of those who persist in their desire to remain themselves (Huxley, Baker, & Sexton, 2000).

These habits of scientific thought and action have, to a certain extent, "been carried over into the theory and practice of contemporary politics" (Huxley, Baker, & Sexton, 2000, p. 265), where they did not go unnoticed by Freire (1998b) who "feared the consequences of the explosion of the international economy and the destructive efforts of deindustrialization" (Steiner et al., 2004, p. 9). In fact, Freire (2000) believed: "the politics of education is part and parcel of the very nature of education" (pp. 126–127)—meaning that not only did politics interfere with the institution of education, but also that teaching and learning within schools constitutes a political act tied to the ideological forces of the dominant class. Of this belief, Darder (2002) writes: "It does not matter where or when it has taken place, whether it is more or less complex, education has always been a political act" (p. 56). Moreover, the more you deny the political

dimension of education, “the more you assume the moral potential to blame the victims” (Darder, 2002a, p. 57).

Freire (1998b) was also critical of the depoliticized collectivization of civic agency associated with neoliberal state formations (Steiner et al., 2004). Steiner et al. (2004) believed that mainstream pedagogical efforts most often seen in “democratic” schools were closely tied to a liberal-capitalist social order that “reproduces inequalities at the ideological level, in which asymmetrical relations of power are legitimated under the banner of autonomous agency and unfettered competition in the capitalist marketplace” (p. 9). Thus, whether we are conscious of it, teachers are responsible for perpetuating values, beliefs, myths, and meanings about the world (Darder, 2002a). In this way, education can be understood as a politicizing (or depoliticizing) institutional process that indoctrinates students into “dominant ideological norms and political assumptions of the prevailing social order” (Darder, 2002a, p. 56).

It was Freire (1998b) who offered a critical analysis of schooling situated firmly against the “dynamics of capitalist accumulation and the reproduction of a deeply racialized and gendered labor force” (Darder, 2015, p. 23). Freire (1998b) argued that schools merely replicated the “authoritarianism of the capitalist mode of production” (as cited in Darder, 2015, p. 23), a system that reduced a highly complex world by means of simplistic answers. Market relations carry with them the power to alter the politics of schooling according to the economic interests of the ruling class. That is to say, the economic and political spheres are not a separate part of the lives of teachers and students but, rather, inform large facets of their lives, saturating aspects of their thoughts, dreams, and desires.

But, paradoxically, education holds the greatest hope for promotion of social justice, the transformation of an unjust society, and the reversal of the destructive results of deindustrialization, globalization, and so on. Freire (1998b) contended that teachers who are unaware of the political nature of their power and authority would be unable to develop well-conceived alternative pedagogical approaches and perpetually fall into contradictions (Darder, 2015). Thus, coming to terms with the role of political economy in the process of schooling is essential to an emancipatory vision of schooling (Darder, 2015). Freire realized that capitalism is intricately embedded in everyday life and his pedagogical response offers the possibility for new ways of mobilizing pedagogy in the interests of a larger social transformation. In opposition to the reliance on processes of simplification and the reduction of human diversity, Freire (1998b) stressed certain conditions he believed were necessary for making sense of our lived experiences.

In the contemporary moment, our ideological belief systems exist within the realm of unexamined assumptions, which are preserved by the reliance on historical commonsense (Darder, 2015). Darder (2015) believed these suppositions guide our attitudes and practices about:

> Why we believe people are poor; what we think it means to be a person of color; the attitudes we hold about children and their rights; how we articulate differences between men and women; our views about God or spirituality; and what we perceive to be legitimate power relations within schools. (p. 20)

Given the way that unexamined assumptions and beliefs about the world intrude upon our pedagogy, it is essential that critical educators reflect often on their practice of authority and educational decisions (Darder, 2015). This may seem to be a difficult, if not an impossible

proposition. All too often, the contemporary moment is characterized by people who seek answers to guide them to joy, self-knowledge, and salvation. But they also demand that it be easy to learn, require little or no effort, and that results be quickly obtained (Fromm, 1992). In order to function smoothly, Fromm (1955) contended that our society requires a certain kind of individual:

> It needs men [and women] who cooperate smoothly in large groups; who want to consume more and more, and whose tastes are standardized and can be easily influenced and anticipated. It needs men who feel free and independent, who do not feel subject to any authority or principle or conscience, yet are willing to be commanded, to do what is expected, to fit into the social machine without friction—men [and women] who can be guided without force, led without leaders, be prompted without any aim except the one to be on the move, to function, to go ahead. (pp. 30–31)

The basis for any approach to self-transformation requires casting off these illusions in order to gain an ever-increasing awareness of reality. Faith in life, in oneself, in others during this process, that is to say, "on the capacity to see evil where it is, to see swindle, destructiveness, and selfishness not only when they are obvious but in their many disguises and rationalizations" (Fromm, 1992, pp. 20–21), is built on the hard rock of realism. But in this context, the need for profound human change emerges not only as an ethical or religious demand, not only as a psychological demand calling out from our present social character, but also as a condition for the sheer survival of the human race (Fromm, 1976).

Educators can begin to make sense of their individual narratives through the identification of the seemingly irresolvable contradictions that exist within their own daily

praxis. This stage marks the beginning of a new strand of development in regards to pedagogical practice, necessary for the possibility of a new reality. Only critical reflection upon practice has the ability to generate a transformation of consciousness—what Freire (2000) described as *conscientização*/*conscientization,* or *critical consciousness*. This form of understanding does not represent an accumulation of knowledge or experience. Rather, it brings authentic critical awareness to the real conditions of existence (Grundy, 1987). Confronting the ideological distortion bridges the gap between reflection and subsequent action, efforts that must occur within critical communities, that challenge the endemic narration sickness of our contemporary educational system (Freire, 2000).

Freire (2000) was convinced that schools existed as significant sites of struggle and teachers, "who embrace an ethical responsibility as citizens of history, are in an ideal position to collectively fight for the re-invention of the world" (Darder, 2002b, p. 31). Freire's (2000) vision of a humanizing education is achieved through a reflective praxis where individuals become conscious of themselves. If we were to reject the perils of the exploitative system of capitalism—a means whereby men and women are empowered to realize their ontological vocation—we would find on the other side a more meaningful existence. To achieve this Freire (2000) provided us with a language and theoretical framework to being, "transcending a colonial existence that is almost culturally schizophrenic: being present and not yet visible, being visible and not yet present" (p. 11).

Indeed, faith, love, and hope must go together with such a passion for seeing reality shed of all its ideological protection that many would be prone to call the attitude "cynicism." And cynical it is, when we mean by it the refusal to be duped by the lies that cover almost everything

that is said and believed. But this kind of "cynicism" is not true cynicism; "it is uncompromisingly critical, a refusal to play the game in a system of deception" (Fromm, 1992, pp. 20–21). In concert with this critical reading, Giroux (2001) has defines socially engaged citizenship as the "refusal of political cynicism" (p. 3), and the willingness to participate in the process of one's individual and collective self-determination—a self-determination that is embodied through the cultivation of social agency and the process of personal and community empowerment.

Social Agency, Empowerment, and Self-Determination

Now it seems pretty obvious that human psychological needs cannot be fulfilled unless, first, one has a fair amount of personal independence, and unless, secondly, one's work possesses a certain aesthetic value and human significance, and unless, in the third place, one is related to the natural environment in some harmonious way (Huxley, 2000). Freire (2000) extended this trilateral logic by asserting that our capacity to live free requires a fundamental shift in the way leaders, educators, and students define our lives and the conditions of our labor. This requires moving beyond the internalization of oppression, it means the rejection of colonizing ideologies responsible for cultural domination, it calls for a recognition of the self as a subject of history, it involves the establishment of solidarity with others, the courage to disobey whenever necessary, and to nurture a well-developed sense of empowerment. These ingredients must be combined in order to: "critique, decolonize, and reinvent the world anew, in the interest of a truly just and democratic future" (Darder, 2015, pp. 40–41).

Freire (2000) encouraged teachers and students to unveil the contradictions of educational policies and practices that sought to dehumanize racialized populations, a

mechanism that prevents their "political expression as full subjects of history" (Darder, 2002b, p. 35). This radical social shift required that we engage one another in a critical understanding of the world that encourages inventive emancipatory arrangements (Darder, 2002b). Certainly, the pursuit of our full humanity could not be achieved in isolation or as individuals, but "only in the fellowship and solidarity of community and social movement" (Darder, 2015, p. 39). In this way, educators are challenged to embody a commitment to political consciousness and social transformation within the everyday relationships they make within and outside cultural communities (Darder, 2015).

Freire's (2000) pedagogical treatises linked the transformation of schools to the retreat of socioeconomic injustices related to the political and economic structures of society. But he was equally concerned with the subjects of diversity and self-determination—a cultural politics—in relation to larger goals of liberation and social justice (Steiner et al., 2004). Freire's (2000) work was as much about unveiling the structures of domination as it was about decolonizing our minds of "hegemonic ideologies that made us complicit with our oppression" (Darder, 2015, pp. 34). Instead of educating students for the dehumanizing roles prescribed by Eurocentric epistemologies, Freire's (2000) pedagogy challenged notions of identity and Western concepts of human development (Darder, 2015). For communities that have been at the same time, purposefully neglected, and willfully damaged, by the colonizing processes of schooling, Freire's message calls for an educational project linked with other anticolonial movements for self-determination and political aspirations to become full subjects of history, in control of their own destinies.

In this context, empowerment goes far beyond the limitations of simple buzzwords tied to the contemporary cult of self-esteem. In fact, it speaks to a larger individual/collective political process enacted by dominated classes who seek freedom from domination, within a long historical process where education is just one front (Darder, 2002b). Thus, empowerment emerges as a significant feature of a revolutionary praxis of teaching, rooted in a political conception of education as a permanent fixture of struggle, resistance, and transformation. Freire believed that the political empowerment of teachers functions to nourish and cultivate the seeds of political resistance—"a resistance historically linked to a multitude of personal and collective struggles waged around the world in efforts to democratize education" (Darder, 2002b, p. 61).

Freire's (2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* also signaled a pedagogy of transgression—"transgression of oppressive ideologies, attitudes, structures, conditions, and practices within education and society that debilitate our humanity" (Darder, 2015, pp. 5–6). This radical transformation would require a humanizing educational process that could support the ongoing development of critical consciousness, and prepare students from oppressed communities for "voice, participation in civil society, and ethical decision making in all aspects of their life" (Darder, 2015, p. 6). In this way, individuals from oppressed, racialized, working class communities could find the "cognitive, emotional, and spiritual strength necessary to critique and denounce conditions of oppression, embrace a life of solidarity, and announce new possibilities for a more just world" (Darder, 2015, pp. 6–7). Such a pedagogical process extends beyond the limited self-esteem discourse of educational policies or the superficiality of self-esteem curriculum.

Further, Freire (2000) believed that "poverty, racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of discrimination are not natural traits of our humanity" (Darder, 2002b, p. 31). Instead, these circumstances materialized as "naturalized" delusions, invented within history by human beings (Darder, 2002b). Following this logic, it becomes possible to imagine that oppression can also be "reinvented" out of existence (Darder, 2002b). Hence, Freire believed that teachers, critical and courageous enough to embrace their ethical responsibility as citizens and subjects of history were in the most ideal position to launch a fight for the reinvention of the world (Darder, 2002b).

But in contemporary educational environments, teachers are fearful. "They are no longer with their students because the force of punishment and threatening dominant ideology comes between them . . . In other words, they are forbidden to be" (Darder, 2002b, p. 60). Surely, a departure from the ideological values and beliefs that support standardized, pre-packaged, teacher-proof curricula, rigorous testing and assessment procedures, and rigid promotion criteria come with significant consequences. This is the constant threat communicated to teachers who desire an emancipatory vision of pedagogy, school, and community life. Intimidation in this form can be silenced by working in solidarity within communities to engage students in a critical understanding of the world, so they can become more than "reliable workers, complacent citizens, and avid consumers" (Darder, 2002b, p. 57).

One need not look far for the strength to begin a pedagogical process that supports social agency, empowerment, and self-determination. It can be found by recognizing the humanity of students from oppressed communities, a humanity that for Freire (2000) was not merely a "simplistic or psychologized notion of 'having positive self-esteem,' but rather a deeply reflexive

interpretation of the dialectical relationship between our cultural existence as individuals and our political and economic existence as social beings" (Darder, 2002b, p. 35). Central to such a politics of education, according to Darder (2015), is an understanding of *love as a political force,* which nurtures a deep sense of hope and possibility.

Armed Love and Infinite Hope

The struggle against economic domination could not be waged effectively without a humanizing praxis that engages the complex phenomenon of class struggle and effectively fosters the necessary conditions for critical social agency among the masses. Freire (2000) knew that this would require a critical commitment to move beyond "piety, sentimentalism, and individualistic gestures, so that we might 'risk an act of love' and enter into sustaining and nurturing political relationships of dialogue and solidarity" (Darder, 2015, p. 43). In order to transform the world in this manner and create educational programs that support the social agency, empowerment, and self-determination of students, in an effort to transform their own lives and communities, we must labor to teach critically in ways that reconnect the heart, mind, and body. To do so, we must instill a critical sense of hope and love. About this, Freire (1998a) reminds us: "Hope is something shared between teachers and students. The hope that we can learn together, teach together, be curiously impatient together, produce something together, and resist together the obstacles that prevent the flowering of our joy" (p. 69). This understanding of hope defies the fabricated notions of self-esteem that locate hope (and happiness) solely in the interiors of the individual. For Freire (1998a), social consciousness is fostered in the classroom through our collective efforts to overcome educational structures and practices—in that solidarity and community is built through our collective labor for our liberation (Darder, 2015).

The notion of love and its manifestation in our work and our lives does not refer to the more traditional, romanticized version of "love," but what Freire (1998a) called "Armed Love." Darder (2015) has described "armed love" as lively, forceful, inspiring, challenging, critical, and insistent—a love that exists in contrast to the false generosity or the false charity of teachers and administrators who would blindly adhere to a system that transgresses principles of cultural and economic democracy. This form of love is rooted in a committed willingness to struggle with purpose in our lives and to intimately connect that purpose with what Freire (1998a) called our "true vocation." This is what it truly means to be human—to be humanized.

Armed love forges a path, a humanizing education, through which teachers and students together become more and more conscious about their presence in the world; taking into consideration their needs, but also the needs and aspirations of others. To do so requires that educators recognize that every prescribed behavior (i.e., behaviors tied to self-esteem curriculum) also represents an imposition—an imposition that moves us toward an abstracted and false understanding of the self and the world (Darder, 2015). It was for this reason that Freire (2000) expressed concern for banking educational approaches, where even well-meaning teachers, through a lack of critical moral leadership, participate in disabling the hearts, minds, and bodies of their students.

A labor of love constitutes a critical pedagogical process in our struggle to break the oppressor-oppressed contradiction and the conflicting beliefs that incarcerate our humanity. In order to challenge the asymmetrical relations of power that perpetuate fatalism among those with little power, critical educators must problematize the conditions of schooling—and, in this case, problematize the epistemicide of self-esteem—with their colleagues, students, and parents, and

through a critical praxis of reflection, dialogue, and action capable of denouncing the injustice of reified notions of positive self-esteem and struggling for ways of knowing the self that genuinely support social agency, empowerment, and self-determination.

Quis Custodiet Custodes?

As discussed throughout this study, the self-esteem discourse creates an inner dialogue of judgment and, thus, illustrates an inimitable duality of existence: *those* who ask the question attempt to distinguish, categorize, and define *others* in relation to the *self*, while at the same time understanding that others define themselves in relation to us. This phenomenon was described in Rousseau's (1984) *Discourse on Inequality*: "Social man lives always outside himself. He knows how to live only in the opinion of others, and it is, so to speak, from their judgment alone that he derives the sense of his own existence" (p. 237). Here Rousseau illustrated the dialectical tension between the personal/individual and the social/collective, especially as they inform the interaction between individuals in the world. Internal dialogue that suggests we only exist "in the opinion of others" works to keep people atomized from each other in that the very action of judging others requires the construction of the "Us/Them," "I/Thou" paradigm.

Freire (1998a) argued against Rousseau's (1984) description of this dialectical moment, and instead insists that educators seek a dialectical movement that informs theory, practice, and our potential as social agents. As a result, Freire (1998a) repositioned the dialectical tension between "what we inherit and what we inquire" (p. 94).

> At times in this relationship, what we acquire ideologically in our social and cultural experiences of class interferes vigorously in the hereditary structures through the power of interests, of emotions, feelings, and desires, or what one usually calls the "strength of

> the heart." Thus, we are not only one thing or another, neither solely neither what is innate nor solely what is acquired. (p. 70)

The effort needed to deconstruct these tensions discourages individuals from recognizing the capacity of a shared, collective humanity.

Whether we are conscious of it, when we perpetuate the tenets of self-esteem, we simultaneously dismantle the ability to critically engage with reality, and in doing so, we effectively negate the importance, the difference, and the complexity of our humanity. The duality of existence is a direct result of the "banking" concept of education, wherein student/teacher relations mimic the Hegelian master/slave dialectic. To combat the effects of a capitalist system that relies on a "banking" epistimicide within education, Freire (2000) posited "Conscientização—a term that denotes the skill of perceiving social, political, and economic contradictions—to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (p. 35). This social consciousness affirms a commitment to the humanity of oppressed communities, anchored by a "deeply reflexive interpretation of the dialectical relationship between our cultural existence as individuals and our political and economic existence as social beings" (Darder, 2002b, p. 568).

Freire (2000) believed that the rebuilding of solidarity among educators was a vital and necessary radical objective because only human beings joined in solidarity can move against capitalism's intrinsic perversity—its antisolidarity nature. Like us, history is limited and conditioned by the very knowledge that we produce. Nothing that we engender, live, think, and make explicit takes place outside of time and history. Moreover, we as historical beings must see ourselves as the creators of our history and, hence, the guardians of our freedom. In light of this, Freire understood that this historical process for our liberation had to emerge from our everyday

praxis within schools and communities—a praxis anchored in emancipatory relationships of love and solidarity, where students can truly *be*, as they evolve critically into socially conscious human beings.

Epilogue (By Way of Conclusion)

This project represents an assault on values that serve to reinforce unequal relationships within spheres of culture and power; associations that prove racialized students are not just the victims of poverty, and indifference, but also of bad ideology imposed on them by teachers and administrators who refuse to give up their ideas—even in the face of miserable results. The proposal of an emancipatory and socially transformative agenda that is properly responsive to the demands of society seems a critical necessity, especially given the contemporary cultural circumstances, a climate dominated by calls to "Make America Great Again."

Thus, this project is additionally symbolic of the unification of my own personal, professional, and political spheres. As such, it stands in solidarity with Darder's (2002) assertion that: "Education must be understood as a politicizing (or depoliticizing) institutional process that conditions students to subscribe to the dominant ideological norms and political assumptions of the prevailing social order" (p. 56). As a bicultural educator, researcher, and educational leader, I realize now more than ever how committed I am to providing a substantiated critique of the axiomatic tenets of education in order to create the needed space for emancipatory practices—rooted in democratic participation and political self-determination—especially within historically oppressed communities.

Fanon (2008) insisted: "The I posits itself by opposing" (p. 197). In this way, I too, posit myself. And, I do so by opposing dominant knowledge structures, or epistemologies that conceal

a dangerous set of deeply rooted values, which labor to suppress the value, and indeed the necessity, of cultural diversity, social struggle, and human rights. The antagonistic stance taken against the entire body of work generated by notions of self-esteem, principally within education, is placed front and center by the title of this study: *Esteemicide*. Borrowed from de Sousa Santos's (2007a) term "epistemicide", or the murder of knowledge, *Esteemicide* is my declaration of a radical, combative discourse aimed at decentering cultural notions of worth. Meaning, it is at the same time a war on the historical and contemporary framework of value—especially the perceived worth of racialized, working class, bicultural students—and an assault on the values that serve to reinforce unequal relationships within spheres of culture and power. In this way, I am working toward the death of knowledge disseminated by the dominant culture. Fanon (2008) believed that "*to induce man to be actional* . . . is the task of utmost urgency for he who, after careful reflection, prepares to act" (p. 197). And so, this project is not only limited to the move of "positing myself by opposing", but also representative of Fanon's "*actional*." The conclusion of the study is, to reflect Fanon's description, the final stage of "careful reflection"; and its completion marks where I "prepare to act" with educators, students, parents, and communities to unveil the hidden curriculum of oppressive pedagogical structures in order to forge more emancipatory views of student voice, social agency, solidarity, and empowerment by reinventing and re-imagining a pedagogy for the evolution of social consciousness within the classroom and beyond.

References

Adams, P. E. (2010). Understanding the different realities, experience, and use of self-esteem between Black and White adolescent girls. *Journal of Black Psychology, 36(3),* 266–276. doi:10.1177/0095798410361454

Allen, K. (2014). Breaking the "at risk" code: deconstructing the myth and the label (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from pqdtopen.proquest.com/doc/1629480653 .html?FMT=AI&pubnum=3641922

Allport, G. W. (1937). The personalistic psychology of William Stern. *Journal of Personality*, *5*(3), 231–246.

Apple, M. W. (2004). *Ideology and curriculum*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Augoustinos, M. (1999). Ideology, false consciousness and psychology. *Theory & Psychology*, *9*(3), 295–312.

Azoulay, K.G. (2006). Reflections on race and the biologization of difference. *Patterns of Prejudice*, *40*(4–5), 353–379.

Baker, A. (1907). *Contemplative prayer; Ven. Father Augustine Baker's teaching thereon: From 'Sancta Sophia*. New York, NY: Benziger.

Baldwin, J. (1963). A talk to teachers. In Johnson, W.C. (Ed.), *Child development and learning* (7–12). New York, NY: MSS Information Corporation.

Baldwin, J. (1985). *The price of the ticket: Collected nonfiction, 1948–1985*. New York, NY: Macmillan.

Bankston, C. L., & Zhou, M. (2002). Being well vs. doing well: Self-esteem and school performance among immigrant and nonimmigrant racial and ethnic groups. *International Migration Review*, *36*(2), 389–415.

Barrett, P. M., Webster, H. M., & Wallis, J. R. (1999). Adolescent self-esteem and cognitive skills training: A school-based intervention. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *8*(2), 217–227.

Baughman, E. E., & Dahlstrom, W. G. (1968). *Negro and white children: A psychological study in the rural south*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Baumeister, R. F. (Ed.). (2013). *Self-esteem: The puzzle of low self-regard*. New York, NY: Springer Science & Business Media.

Baumeister, R. F., Smart, L., & Boden, J. M. (1996). Relation of threatened egotism to violence and aggression: The dark side of high self-esteem. *Psychological Review*, *103*(1), 5.

Beane, J. A., Lipka, R.P., Ludwig, J.W. (1980). Synthesis of research on self-concept. *Educational Leadership,*
38(1), 84–89.

Bednar, R. L., Wells, M. G., & Peterson, S. R. (1989). *Self-esteem: Paradoxes and innovations in clinical theory and practice*. American Psychological Association.

Bell, D. A. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Bem, S. L. (1974). Sex role adaptability: One consequence of psychological androgyny. *Journal of personality and Social Psychology*, *31*(4), 634.

Bennett, A. (1990). *The death of the organization man*. New York, NY: William and Morrow Company.

Bennett, K. (2007). Epistemicide! The tale of a predatory discourse. *The Translator*, *13*(2), 151–169.

Bhatia, S. (2002). Orientalism in Euro-American and Indian psychology: Historical representations of "natives" in colonial and postcolonial contexts. *History of Psychology*, *5*(4), 376.

Bhatti, B., Derezotes, D., Kim, S., & Specht, H. (1989). The association between child maltreatment and self-esteem. *The social importance of self-esteem*, 24-71.

Bijstra, J. O., & Jackson, S. (1998). Social skills training with early adolescents: Effects on social skills, well being, self-esteem and coping. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, *13*(4), 569–583.

Blauner, B. (1972). *Racial oppression in America*. New York, NY: Harper Collins College Div.

Bogle, D. (2001). *Toms, coons, mulattoes, mammies, and bucks: An interpretive history of Blacks in American films*. London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Borba, M. (1989). *Esteem Builders: A K-8 Self-Esteem Curriculum for Improving Student Achievement, Behavior and School Climate*. Rolling Hills Estates, CA: Jalmar Press.

Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (1976). *Schooling in capitalist America: Educational reform and the contradictions of economic life*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Branden, N. (2001). *The psychology of self-esteem: A revolutionary approach to self understanding that launched a new era in modern psychology*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Bronson, P. (2007, August 3). How not to talk to your kids. Retrieved from http://nymag.com/news/features/27840/

Brown, J. D., & Marshall, M. A. (2006). The three faces of self-esteem. In M. H. Kernis (Ed.), *Self-esteem issues and answers: A sourcebook of current perspectives* (pp. 4–9). New York, NY: Psychology Press.

Buckley, T. R., & Carter, R. T. (2005). Black adolescent girls: Do gender role and racial identity impact their self-esteem? *Sex Roles*, *53*(9–10), 647–661.

Burr, W. R., & Christensen, C. (1992). Undesirable side effects of enhancing self-esteem. *Family Relations*, 460–464.

California State Dept. of Education. (1990). *Toward a state of esteem. The Final Report of the California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility* (ISBN-0-8011-0846-2). Sacramento, CA: Bureau of Publications, California State Department of Education.

Camus, A., & O'Brien, J. (1955). *The myth of Sisyphus, and other essays*. New York, NY: Vintage.

Canfield, J., & Wells, H. C. (1976). *100 Ways to enhance self-concept in the classroom: A handbook for teachers and parents.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Cardelle-Elawar, M. (1996). A self-regulating teaching approach to improve minority students' self-esteem in a multicultural classroom environment. *Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingüe*, 18–23.

Carlin, G. (Writer), & Urbisci, R. (Director). (2001, December 11). In Urbisci, R (Producer), *Complaints and grievances* [Television broadcast]. New York, NY: HBO.

Césaire, A. (1983). *The collected poetry*. (C. Eshleman & A. Smith, Trans.). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Césaire, A. (2001). *Discourse on colonialism*. New York, NY: NYU Press.

Cesaire, S. (1996). *The great camouflage*. (M. Richardson & K. Fijalkowski, Trans.). New York, NY: Verso.

Chandler, M. A. (2012, January 15). In schools, self-esteem boosting is losing favor to rigor, finer-tuned praise. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/local /education/in-schools-self-esteem-boosting-is-losing-favor-to-rigor-finer-tuned-praise /2012/01/11/gIQAXFnF1P_story.html

Children's Defense Fund (U.S.). (2007). *America's cradle to prison pipeline*. Children's Defense Fund.

Choquet, M., Kovess, V., & Poutignat, N. (1993). Suicidal thoughts among adolescents: An intercultural approach. *Adolescence*, *28*(111), 649.

Cigman, R. (2004). Situated self-esteem. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, *38*(1), 91–105.

Clark, K. B. (1989). *Dark ghetto: Dilemmas of social power* (2nd ed.). Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Clay, D., Vignoles, V. L., & Dittmar, H. (2005). Body image and self-esteem among adolescent girls: Testing the influence of sociocultural factors. *Journal of research on adolescence*, *15*(4), 451–477.

Cole, M. (1986). Teaching and learning about racism: A critique of multicultural education in Britain. *Multicultural education: The interminable debate*, 123–147.

Cooley, C.H. (1998). *On self and social organization*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Coopersmith, S. (1967). *The antecedents of self-esteem*. San Francisco, CA: W.H. Freeman.

Covington, M. V. (1989). Self-esteem and failure in school: Analysis and policy implications. *The social importance of self-esteem*, 72–124.

Craig, C. (2009). Well-being in schools: The curious case of the tail wagging the dog. *Centre for Confidence and Well-being*. Retrieved from http://www.centreforconfidence .co.uk/projects.php?p=cGlkPTU2JmlkPTYzMw==

Craven, R., Marsh, H., & Burnett, P. (2003). Cracking the self-concept enhancement conundrum. *International Advances in Self Research*, *1*, 91–126.

Crockenberg, S. B., & Soby, B. A. (1989). Self-esteem and teenage pregnancy. *The social importance of self-esteem*, 125–164.

Cruikshank, B. (1999). *The will to empower: Democratic citizens and other subjects*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal performance.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Dalton, H. L. (1995). *Racial healing: Confronting the fear between Blacks and Whites*. New York, NY: Doubleday.

Darder, A. (1991). *Culture and power in the classroom: A critical foundation for bicultural education*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Darder, A. (2002a). *Reinventing Paulo Freire a pedagogy of love*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Darder, A. (2002b). Teaching as an act of love: Reflections on Paulo Freire and his contributions to our lives and work. In Darder, A., Baltodano, M., & Torres, R. (Eds.). *Critical pedagogy reader*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Darder, A. (2011a, April 10). *The making of a postcolonial dissident scholar*. Speech presented at 2011 Postcolonial Studies in Education SIG Meeting American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, New Orleans.

Darder, A. (2011b). A dissident voice. *Essays on culture, pedagogy and power, New York and Frankfurt*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Darder, A. (2012). Neoliberalism in the academic borderlands: An on-going struggle for equality and human rights. *Educational studies*, *48*(5), 412–426.

Darder, A. (2015). Decolonizing interpretive research: A critical bicultural methodology for social change. *The International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives*. *14*(2), 63–77.

Darder, A., & R. D. Torres (2004). *After race: Racism after multiculturalism.* New York, NY: NYU Press.

Darder, A. M. Baltodano, & R. D. Torres (2008). *Critical pedagogy reader*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Davies, W. (2015). *The happiness industry: How the government and big business sold us well-being*. New York, NY: Verso Books.

DeGrandpre, R. J. (2000). *Ritalin nation: Rapid-fire culture and the transformation of human consciousness*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

de Sousa Santos, B. (2001). Nuestra America reinventing a subaltern paradigm of recognition and redistribution. *Theory, Culture & Society*, *18*(2–3), 185–217.

de Sousa Santos, B. (Ed.). (2007). *Cognitive justice in a global world: Prudent knowledges for a decent life*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

de Sousa Santos, B. (2015). *Epistemologies of the south: Justice against epistemicide*. New York, NY: Routledge.

de Sousa Santos, B. D. S., Nunes, J. A., & Meneses, M. P. (2007). Opening up the canon of knowledge and recognition of difference. *Another knowledge is possible.* London, UK: Verso.

Descartes, R. (2012). *Principles of philosophy*. New York, NY: Start Publishing.

Dewey, J. (1990). *The school and society; and, The child and the curriculum*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Dewey, J., & McDermott, J. J. (1981). *The philosophy of John Dewey*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Dillon, J. T. (2009). The questions of curriculum. *Journal of curriculum studies*, *41*(3), 343–359.

Du Bois, W. E. (1995). *WEB Du Bois: A Reader*. D. L. Lewis (Ed.). New York, NY: Holt.

Du Bois, W. E. (2004). The souls of black folk. In H. L. Gates & N. McKay (Eds.), *The Norton anthology of African American literature* (2nd ed.) (pp. 692–765). New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company. (Original work published in 1903).

Dukes, R. L., & Lorch, B. (1989). Concept of self, mediating factors, and adolescent deviance. *Sociological Spectrum*, *9*(3), 301–319.

Dweck, C. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York, NY: Random House.

Dweck, C. S. (1999). *Self-theories: Their role in motivation, personality, and development*. Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press.

Ellis, A. (2006). *The myth of self-esteem: How rational emotive behavior therapy can change your life forever*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.

Ellis, S. J. (1998). Is Self-esteem political? *Feminism and Psychology, 8*(2), 251–256. Retrieved from www.psy.dmu.ac.uk/brown/dmulib/SE.htm

Emler, N. (2001). *Self esteem: The costs and causes of low self worth*. London, UK: York Publishing Services.

English, H. B., & English, A. C. (1958). *A comprehensive dictionary of psychological and psychoanalytical terms: A guide to usage*. New York, NY: McKay.

Entman, R. M. (2006). *Young men of color in the media: Images and impacts*. Washington, DC: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Health Policy Institute.

Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity, youth, and crisis*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.

Eshleman, C., & Smith, A. (1983). *Aimé Césaire: The collected poetry.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press

Fanon, F. (2007). *The wretched of the earth*. New York, NY: Grove Press.

Fanon, F. (2008). *Black skin, white masks*. New York, NY: Grove Press.

Flinders, D. J., & Thornton, S. J. (2004). *The curriculum studies reader*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.

Freire, P. (1998a). *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Freire, P. (1998b). *Teachers as cultural workers. Letters to those who dare teach. The edge: Critical studies in educational theory*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Freire, P., & Macedo, D. P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic.

Freud, S. (1957). *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (J. Strachey & A. Freud, Trans.). London, UK: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis.

Fromm, E. (1955). The present human condition. *The American Scholar*, 29–35.

Fromm, E. (1976). *To have or to be?* New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Fromm, E. (1992). *The art of being*. New York, NY: Continuum.

Fromm, E. (2010). *On disobedience: Why freedom means saying "no" to power*. New York, NY: Harper.

Gardner, D. P. (1983). *A nation at risk.* Washington, DC: The National Commission on Excellence in Education, US Department of Education.

Getlen, L. (2013). *Conversations with Carlin*. Amazon Digital Services LLC.

Giroux, H. A. (1981). *Ideology, culture & the process of schooling*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Giroux, H. A. (1988). *Teachers as intellectuals: Toward a critical pedagogy of learning*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Giroux, H. A. (2011a). *On critical pedagogy*. New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Giroux, H. A. (2011b). Public pedagogy and the politics of neo-liberalism: Making the political more pedagogical. *Policy Futures in Education*, *2*(3–4), 494–503.

Gramsci, A., Hoare, Q., & Smith, G. N. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks*. London, UK: Lawrence & Wishart.

Greenberg, E. S. (1972). Black children, self-esteem and the liberation movement. *Politics & Society*, *2*(3), 293–307.

Grosfoguel, R. (2013). The structure of knowledge in Westernized universities: Epistemic racism/sexism and the four genocides/epistemicides of the long 16th century. *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, *11*(1), 8.

Grundy, S. (1987). *Curriculum product or praxis?* New York, NY: The Falmer Press.

Hacker, A. (2010). *Two nations: Black and White, separate, hostile, unequal*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Heatherton, T. F. (Ed.). (2003). *The social psychology of stigma*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Heatherton, T. F., & Polivy, J. (1991). Development and validation of a scale for measuring state self-esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social psychology*, *60*(6), 895.

Held, D. (1980). *Introduction to critical theory: Horkheimer to Habermas*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Hoffman, D. M. (1996). Culture and self in multicultural education: Reflections on discourse, text, and practice. *American Educational Research Journal*, *33*(3), 545–569.

Hook, D. (2005). A critical psychology of the postcolonial. *Theory & Psychology*, *15*(4), 475–503.

hooks, b. (2003). *Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Hurstfield, J. (1978). 'Internal'colonialism: White, black and Chicano self-conceptions. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *1*(1), 60–79.

Huxley, A., Baker, R. S., & Sexton, J. (2000). *Complete essays*. Chicago, IL: I.R. Dee.

Illich, I. (1971). *Deschooling society*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Jackson, P. W. (1990). *Life in classrooms*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

James, W. (1950). *Principles of Psychology: Volume one*. New York, NY: Dover Publications.

James, W. (1992). *William James: Writings 1878–1899*. New York, NY: Library of America.

Janson, E. E., & Paraskeva, J. M. (2015). Curriculum counter-strokes and strokes: Swimming in non-existent epistemological rivers. *Policy Futures in Education*, *13*(8), 949–967.

Jansz, J., & Van Drunen, P. (2003). *A social history of psychology*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons.

Kahne, J. (1996). The Politics of Self-Esteem. *American Educational Research Journal, 33*(1), 3–22. doi:10.3102/00028312033001003

Kant, I. (1963). *Lectures on ethics*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Katz, L. G. (1993). Distinctions between self-esteem and narcissism: implications for practice. Perspectives from ERIC/EECE: A Monograph Series, No. 5.

Kelley, R. D. (1997). *Yo'mama's disfunktional!: Fighting the culture wars in urban America*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Kenway, J., & Willis, S. (2003). *Hearts and minds: Self-esteem and the schooling of girls*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Kernis, M. H. (2006). *Self esteem: Issues and answers*. New York, NY: Psychology.

Klausner, S. Z. (1953). Social class and self-concept. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, *38*(2), 201–205.

Koch, E. J. (2006). Examining the role of self-esteem in psychological functioning and well-being. In M. H. Kernis (Ed.), *Self-esteem issues and answers: A sourcebook of current perspectives* (pp. 260–268). New York, NY: Psychology Press.

Kohn, A. (1994). The truth about self-esteem. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *76*(4), 272–83.

Kohn, A. (2015, August 16). The perils of "Growth Mindset" education: Why we're trying to fix our kids when we should be fixing the system. *Salon*, Retrieved from http://www.salon.com/2015/08/16/the_education_fad_thats_hurting_our_kids_what_you_need_to_know_about_growth_mindset_theory_and_the_harmful_lessons_it_imparts/

Kona, P. (2010). Being George Carlin: Carlinesque as performative resistance. *Americana: The Journal of American Popular Culture, 1900 to Present*, *9*(2), 4-10.

Kozol, J. (1995). *Amazing grace: The lives of children and the conscience of a nation*. New York, NY: Crown.

Langman, L., & Kaplan, L. V. (1979). The crises of self and state under late capitalism: A critical perspective. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry, 1*(4), 343–374.

Lawrence, D. (2006). *Enhancing self-esteem in the classroom*. New York, NY: Pine Forge Press.

Leonardo, Z., & Grubb, W.N. (2013). *Education and Racism*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Lewis, A. (2003). *Race in the Schoolyard: Negotiating the color line in the classroom and communities*. Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Lewis, D. L. (1994). *WEB Du Bois, 1868-1919: Biography of a race* (Vol. 1). London, UK: Macmillan.

Loewenstein, G. F., Thompson, L., & Bazerman, M. H. (1989). Social utility and decision making in interpersonal contexts. *Journal of Personality and Social psychology*, *57*(3), 426.

Long, B. H., Henderson, E. H., & Ziller, R. C. (1967). Developmental changes in the self-concept during middle childhood. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly of Behavior and Development*, *13*(3), 201–215.

Manis, M. (1955). Social interaction and the self concept. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, *51*(3), 362.

Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological review*, *98*(2), 224.

Martin, J. (2007). A case against heightened self-esteem as an educational aim. *Journal of Thought, 42*(3/4), 55.

Martin, J. (2014). Psychologism, individualism and the limiting of the social context in educational psychology *Psychology in Education* (pp. 167–180). New York, NY: Springer.

Martin, J., & McLellan, A. (2013). *The education of selves: How psychology transformed students*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Maslow, A. (1998). *Toward a psychology of being*. New York, NY: Wiley.

McDaniel, S., & Bielen, P. (1990). *Project self-esteem: A parent involvement program for improving self-esteem and preventing drug and alcohol abuse, k-6. Revised*. Rolling Hills, CA: Jalmar Press.

McLaren, P. (1998). Revolutionary pedagogy in post-revolutionary times: Rethinking the political economy of critical education. *Educational theory*, *48*(4), 431–462.

Mecca, A. M., Smelser, N. J., & Vasconcellos, J. (Eds.). (1989). *The social importance of self-esteem*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Memmi, A. (2013). *The colonizer and the colonized*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Milton, J., Kastan, D. S., & Hughes, M. Y. (2005). *Paradise lost*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub.

Moses, W. J. (1975). The poetics of Ethiopianism: WEB Du Bois and literary Black nationalism. *American Literature*, 411–426.

Moynihan, D. P. (1997). The Negro Family: The Case for National Action (1965). *African American Male Research*. Retrieved from http://www.utexas.edu/cola/coretexts/_files/resources/texts/1965%20Moynihan%20Report.pdf

Mruk, C. J. (2006a). Changing self-esteem: Research and practice. In M. H. Kernis (Ed.), *Self-esteem issues and answers: A sourcebook of current perspectives* (pp.164–169). New York, NY: Psychology Press.

Mruk, C. J. (2006b). Defining self-esteem: An often overlooked issue with crucial implications. In M. H. Kernis (Ed.), *Self-esteem issues and answers: A sourcebook of current perspectives* (pp. 10–15). New York, NY: Psychology Press.

Nave, B. (1990). *Self-esteem: The key to student success*. National Dropout Prevention Center.

Okazaki, S., David, E. J. R., & Abelmann, N. (2008). Colonialism and psychology of culture. *Social and personality psychology compass*, *2*(1), 90–106.

Olneck, M. R. (1990). The recurring dream: Symbolism and ideology in intercultural and multicultural education. *American Journal of Education*, 147–174.

O'Malley, P. M., & Bachman, J. G. (1979). Self-esteem and education: Sex and cohort comparisons among high school seniors. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *37*(7), 1153.

Osborne, J. W. (1995). Academics, self-esteem, and race: A look at the underlying assumptions of the disidentification hypothesis. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *21*(5), 449–455.

Owens, T. J., Stryker, S., & Goodman, N. (Eds.). (2001). *Extending self-esteem theory and research: Sociological and psychological currents*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Pajares, F., & Schunk, D. H. (2002). Self and self-belief in psychology and education: A historical perspective. *Improving academic achievement: Impact of psychological factors on education*, 3–21.

Paraskeva, J. M. (2011). *Conflicts in curriculum theory: Challenging hegemonic epistemologies*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pearl, D. (1954). Ethnocentrism and the self concept. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, *40*(1), 137–147.

Piaget, J. (1962). *Play, dreams and imitation in childhood*. New York, NY: Norton.

Pickering, E. (2008). Unidentified first use of self-esteem: Milton's *An Apology for Smectymnuus* (1642). *Notes and Queries, 55*(3), 287–289.

Piers, E. V., & Harris, D. B. (1964). Age and other correlates of self-concept in children. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *55*(2), 91.

Popham, N. Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES., B. J. (1951, May 29). Pupil segregation held drag on U.S. *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, p. 25. Retrieved from http://electra.lmu.edu:2048/login?url=http://electra.lmu.edu:2071/docview/111944338?accountid=7418

Popkewitz, T. S. (1988). Culture, pedagogy, and power: Issues in the production of values and colonialization. *Journal of Education*, 77–90.

Popkewitz, T. S. (2009). Curriculum study, curriculum history, and curriculum theory: the reason of reason. *Journal of Curriculum studies*, *41*(3), 301–319.

Porter, R. (1997). *Rewriting the self: Histories from the renaissance to the present*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.

Powell, G. J. (1973). Black Monday's Children: A Study of the effects of school desegregation on self-concept of southern children. New York, NY: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Powell, G. J. (1983). *The Psychosocial Development of Minority Group Children*. Larchmont, NY: Brunner/Mazel Publishers.

Pyszczynski, T., Greenberg, J., Solomon, S., Arndt, J., & Schimel, J. (2004). Why do people need self-esteem? A theoretical and empirical review. *Psychological bulletin*, *130*(3), 435.

Quintana, S. M., & Segura-Herrera, T. A. (2003). Developmental transformations of self and identity in the context of oppression. *Self and Identity*, *2*(4), 269–285.

Ramsey, R. (2002). *501 ways to boost your child's self-esteem*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill Professional.

Rao, N. (Presenter). (2015, July 9). The politics of Frantz Fanon: A Marxist appraisal. [Radio Broadcast]. In *We Are Many*. Chicago, IL. Center for Economic Research and Social Change.

Ravitch, D. S. (1989, November). *Multiculturalism in the curriculum.* Paper presented before the Manhattan Institute, New York, NY.

Reckless, W. C., Dinitz, S., & Kay, B. (1957). The self component in potential delinquency and potential non-delinquency. *American Sociological Review*,*22*(5), 566–570.

Richardson, R. D. (2006). *William James: In the maelstrom of American modernism*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Rios, V. M. (2011). *Punished: Policing the lives of Black and Latino boys*. New York, NY: NYU Press.

Rizvi, F., Lingard, B., & Lavia, J. (2006). Postcolonialism and education: Negotiating a contested terrain. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, *14*(3), 249–262.

Robins, R. W., Trzesniewski, K. H., & Donnellan, M. B. (2012). A brief primer on self-esteem. *Prevention Researcher*, *19*(2), 3–7.

Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Rosenberg, M. (1979). *Conceiving the self*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Rosenberg, M., & Simmons, R. G. (1971). *Black and white self-esteem; The urban school child*. Washington, DC: American Sociological Association.

Rosenthal, R., & Jacobson, L. (1968). Pygmalion in the classroom. *The Urban Review*, *3*(1), 16–20.

Rousseau, J. (1979). *Emile: Or, On education*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Rousseau, J. (1984). *A discourse on inequality*. New York, NY: Penguin.

Ryan, W. (1971). *Blaming the victim*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.

Said, E. (1979). *Orientalism*. New York, NY: Vintage.

Samuelson, R. J. (2010, April 5). The poisonous politics of self-esteem [Editorial]. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.washingtongpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2010/04/04/AR2010040272.html

Sanneh, K. (2015, February 9). Don't be like that. *The New Yorker*, 62–68.

Scheff, T. J., & Fearon, D. S. (2004). Cognition and emotion? The dead end in self esteem research. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 34*(1), 73–90.

Schneiderman, W. M. (1989). Self-esteem and chronic welfare dependency. In Mecca, A.M., Smelser N.J., & Vasconcellos, J. (Eds.), *The social importance of self-esteem* (p. 200). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Sears, P. S., & Sherman, V. S. (1964). *In pursuit of self-esteem; case studies of eight elementary school children*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub.

Self-Esteem: Building a child's confidence and success. (2007). *Children's Home Society of California*. Retrieved from https://www.chsca.org/_images/files/FEP_SelfEsteem_Eng_print.pdf

Seligman, M. E. (2007). *The optimistic child: A proven program to safeguard children against depression and build lifelong resilience*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Sellers, R. M., Smith, M. A., Shelton, J. N., Rowley, S. A., & Chavous, T. M. (1998). Multidimensional model of racial identity: A reconceptualization of African American racial identity. *Personality and social psychology review*, *2*(1), 18–39.

Shakespeare, W. (1987). *The Oxford Shakespeare. Hamlet*. G. R. Hibbard, & S. W. Wells (Eds.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Slater, L. (2002). The trouble with self-esteem. *New York Times*, *3*(02), 44–47.

Smith, K. J. (1997). *Reconceptualizing self-esteem: An analysis of the concept, research, and educational practice* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Seattle Pacific University.

Smith, R. (2002). Self-esteem: The kindly apocalypse. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, *36*(1), 87–100.

Smith, R. (2006). On diffidence: The moral psychology of self-belief. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, *40*(1), 51–62.

Soares, A. T., & Soares, L. M. (1969). Self-perceptions of culturally disadvantaged children. *American Educational Research Journal*, 31–45.

Spencer, M. B. (1988). Self-concept development. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, *1988*(42), 59–72.

Stearns, P. J. (2008). "Self-Esteem." Self-Esteem- The 1880s through 1930s, The 1950s to the present. *Encyclopedia of children and childhood in history and society*. Retrieved from <http://www.faqs.org/childhood/Re-So/Self-Esteem.html>.

Steiner, S. S., Krank, H. M., Bahruth, R. E., & McLaren, P. (2004). *Freireian pedagogy, praxis, and possibilities: Projects for the new millennium*. London, UK: Routledge.

Stepto, R. B. (1991). *From behind the veil: A study of Afro-American narrative*. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Storr, W. (2014, February 25). The man who destroyed America's ego. Retrieved from https://medium.com/matter/the-man-who-destroyed-americas-ego-94d214257b5

Stotland, E., & Zander, A. (1958). Effects of public and private failure on self-evaluation. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, *56*(2), 223.

Stout, M. (2001). *The feel-good curriculum: The dumbing-down of America's kids in the name of self-esteem*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books.

Tarcher, J. P., & Rufus, A. (2014, August 13). Is the omnipresent push for self-esteem destructive? *The Journal of Negro Education*, 195–203. Retrieved from http://www.farfallino.alternet.org/books/omnipresent-push self-esteem-destructive Males.

Toomey, R. B., & Umana–Taylor, A. J. (2012). The role of ethnic identity on self-esteem for ethnic minority youth: A brief review. *Prevention Researcher*, *19*(2), 8–12.

Trafimow, D., Triandis, H. C., & Goto, S. G. (1991). Some tests of the distinction between the private self and the collective self. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *60*(5), 649.

Twenge, J. M. (2014). *Generation me: Why today's young Americans are more confident, assertive, entitled--and more miserable than ever before*. New York, NY: Atria Paperback.

Usmiani, S., & Daniluk, J. (1997). Mothers and their adolescent daughters: Relationship between self-esteem, gender role identity, body image. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *26*(1), 45–62.

Vitale, T. (2008, December 7). John Milton, 400 Years Of Justifying God To Man. Retrieved from http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=97831678

Ward, S. (1996). Filling the world with self-esteem: A social history of truth-making. *Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahiers canadiens de sociologie*, 1–23.

Watson, J. B. (1925). Experimental studies on the growth of the emotions. *The Pedagogical Seminary and Journal of Genetic Psychology*, *32*(2), 328–348.

Watson, D., Emery, C., & Bayliss, P. (2012). *Children's social and emotional wellbeing in schools: A critical perspective*. Bristol, GBR: Policy Press.

Weiss, H. M. (1980). The utility of humility: Self-esteem, information search, and problem-solving efficiency. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, *25*(2), 216–223.

Wells, L. E. (1976). *Self-esteem: Its conceptualization and measurement*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Wigfield, A., & Karpathian, M. (1991). Who am I and what can I do? Children's self-concepts and motivation in achievement situations. *Educational Psychologist*, *26*(3–4), 233–261.

Williams, R. L., & Byars, H. (1968). Negro self-esteem in a transitional society. *The Personnel and Guidance Journal*, *47*(2), 120–125.

Willis, P. E. (1977). *Learning to labor: How working class kids get working class jobs*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Wilson, E. O. (1998, March). How Self-knowledge leads to totalitarianism. *The Atlantic Monthly Online*. Retrieved from http%3A%2F%2Fwww.theatlantic.com%2Fmagazine%2Farchive%2F1998%2F03%2Fback-from-chaos%2F308700%2F

Woodson, C. G. (1969). *The mis-education of the Negro*. C. H. Wesley & T. D. Perry (Eds.). Trenton, NJ: Africa World Publishing.

Wylie, R. C. (1961). *The self concept; a critical survey of pertinent research literature*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Zinn, H. (1997). *The Zinn reader: Writings on disobedience and democracy*. New York, NY: Seven Stories Press.