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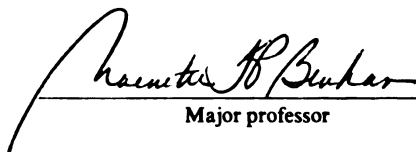
AN URBAN PUBLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S  
PROBLEM-SOLVING PRACTICES VIEWED THROUGH A  
FREIREAN LENS: AN ETHNOGRAPHY

presented by

Robert Dale Dalton

has been accepted towards fulfillment  
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AN URBAN PUBLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S PROBLEM-SOLVING PRACTICES  
VIEWED THROUGH A FREIREAN LENS: AN ETHNOGRAPHY

By

Robert Dale Dalton

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## ABSTRACT

### AN URBAN PUBLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S PROBLEM-SOLVING PRACTICES VIEWED THROUGH A FREIREAN LENS: AN ETHNOGRAPHY

By

Robert Dale Dalton

My purpose in this study was to examine the problem-solving practices of an urban public school principal to see how the principles of Freirean critical pedagogy were reflected in the carrying out of the principal's problem-solving duties. The practices that I examined in this study were decision making, managing dilemmas, and problem solving. This study was concerned with the praxis of Freirean thought and the liberatory or emancipatory qualities of the principal's problem solving.

Paulo Freire was a critical theorist who wrote extensively about issues pertaining to oppression and public school systems. He advocated for oppressed students living in various parts of the world, including the United States. Freire was one of the pioneers of applying critical theory to public schooling. This study was intended to increase readers' understanding of the applicability of Freirean thought to school leadership as it pertains to problem solving, as well as the value systems to which public school leaders ascribe.

The two methodologies chosen for this study were ethnography and phenomenology. Neither of the two chosen methodologies alone could adequately address the issues of interest in this study. Ethnography usually is concerned with studying the culture of a group of people (Wolcott, 1999), and phenomenology is concerned with examining the cognitive process and the essence of a phenomenon

(Moustakas, 1994). Although the culture of the principalship is worth studying, this study was more concerned with the culture surrounding the principal in reference to his or her problem solving.

There are many opinions as to how public school administrators should run their schools. Examining public school leadership through the lens of Freirean critical theory is controversial because critical theory is based on the assumption that there are traditionally oppressed groups who historically have suffered the consequences of oppression (Held, 1980). Many people in the educational community are interested in issues of social justice, and Freirean critical theory provides a basis for analyzing how social justice is reflected in the problem-solving practices of public school administrators.

In this study I discovered that four principles guided the principal's problem-solving practices: (a) utilizing alliances and partnerships, (b) critical leadership and management, (c) focus on learning, and (d) praxis. Each of these four principles was reflected in the vignettes that emerged from the field research. Six Freirean constructs also were reflected in the principal's problem-solving practices. These constructs are (a) dialogue with a purpose, (b) conscientization, (c) praxis, (d) banking education versus problem-posing education, (e) the universal common ethic and the politics of education, and (f) humanization. Both sets of principles and constructs helped to explain the principal's problem-solving practices. However, there were also examples in the data where Freirean critical theory was an inadequate lens for analysis. In addition, there was problem solving in which Freirean critical theory was not reflected.

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I dedicate this dissertation to my first two teachers, my mother, Verda, and my father, Grant. I will forever be grateful for their love, compassion, honesty, and all of their sacrifices. I am thankful that my parents believed in my abilities and encouraged me to realize my dreams.

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I am grateful to all of the participants in this study, who graciously allowed me to conduct interviews and to talk to them. They gave me the precious gift of their time, and I am extremely thankful. I wish them all the best in their professional and personal endeavors. I am also very pleased to have met “Mr. Kent,” who has inspired me through his enthusiasm and moral purpose.

I would like to thank all of my family members, friends, and neighbors for their support, understanding, and concern for my welfare during this arduous process. I am especially thankful for the inspiration of my brother, Gary. His witty comments, his love for academics, and his advice were truly helpful.

I am grateful to God for His guidance and inspiration. I have prayed for the success of my colleagues as well as for myself on many occasions, and I am pleased to see that all of us have been successful with our studies. I pray that we all will continue to successfully serve our constituencies.

I am grateful for the life of the last Hawaiian monarch, Queen Lili'uokalani. I have been inspired by her example. She could not bear the thought of her people dying

for her throne, so she abdicated. She worked hard to preserve her government, culture, and language when colonialists dominated Hawaii. Her life and example can serve as an inspiration for all of us.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

#### Introduction

In this dissertation, I attempt to redefine the limits of administrative action. I have consciously espoused a position that suggests that administration must, at its heart, be informed by critical models oriented toward social justice and individual freedom. This is not just “nice”; it determines our entire way of life and the purpose of our most important social institution, education. Most current administrative theories are models of control; they cannot address the question of what makes administration a *worthy* discipline (Foster, 1986). Freirean critical pedagogy is an appropriate vehicle with which to analyze the problem-solving practices of an urban public school principal because urban public schools are places where issues of social justice are reflected in the policies of local, state, and federal governments. This study is focused on educational leadership and the potential it has to promote change in oppressive practices through the principal's problem-solving practices, policies, or behaviors in the public school setting.

Paulo Freire was a critical theorist who wrote extensively about issues pertaining to oppression and public school systems. Freire advocated for oppressed students located in various parts of the world, including the United States. He was one of the pioneers of the application of critical theory to public schooling. This study is intended to increase readers' understanding of the applicability of Freirean thought to school leadership, as it pertains to problem solving, as well as the value systems to which urban school leaders ascribe.

Traditionally, educational administrators have been concerned with the pragmatic side of running a school (Foster, 1986). Scientific management shaped the pragmatism of early researchers in the field of school leadership (Watkins, 1983). Over the years, educational administration has evolved to the extent that, today, there are many paradigms for examining administrative theory (Foster, 1986). Two such paradigms are critical theory and critical pedagogy. For the purpose of this research, critical pedagogy was defined as the application of the principles of critical theory to the school setting, specifically, the field of educational administration (Bates, 1983; Foster, 1986).

Certain ethical and political issues pertain to the principal's problem-solving practices. In an urban school setting where students and the entire school community suffer the consequences of skewed funding, students are assessed with the same standardized tests as their wealthier suburban counterparts (Kozol, 1991). Good school leadership practices are not sufficient because there are political issues of exploitation and oppression that liberatory practice needs to address (Anyon, 1997). Freire believed that overcoming one's oppression is the responsibility of the oppressed (Freire, 1972); this implies that the school leader is responsible for leading the school community toward a praxis of profound and fundamental change. In other words, the principal leads the school community through dialogue with a purpose and conscientization.

All urban school principals must eventually resolve problems, manage dilemmas, and make decisions on a regular and frequent basis. For urban school principals, problem solving takes on an additional aspect when one considers that their resolutions can have emancipatory implications for their students, staff, and other members of the school

community. Urban public school principals can mitigate oppression through their problem-solving practices. For the purpose of this dissertation, oppression was defined as one group, or individual, receiving more goods or resources at the expense of another person or group of people. The skewed delivery of goods and resources may be the result of history, tradition, law, policy, attitude, and other factors.

The principles of the critical pedagogy developed by Paulo Freire have been applied to a variety of educational situations, including adult literacy, mental health counseling, and school discipline. However, there is a lack of research regarding the application of Freirean critical thought to the problem-solving processes of urban school administrators. It is particularly appropriate to look at the application of Freire's principles to the administration of urban public schools because Freire's constructs evolved from the assumptions of oppression being reflected in the public schools of a society that exhibits elements of oppression in its history, traditions, and policies. It is true that his experience and exile from Brazil prompted Freire's initial writing. However, Freire's philosophy has influenced a number of educators in the United States, such as Ira Shor, Donaldo Macedo, Michael Apple, and Peter McLaren. The Freirean constructs identified in the next chapter transcend the educational environment in any country that has oppression as a part of its history.

### Statement of the Problem

In general, urban public schools suffer from covert oppression; this oppression is the result of various laws, policies, hidden curricula, and attitudes. Because urban public schools represent students from the lower end of the socioeconomic scale, multiple

problems of oppression and inequality exist in these schools. One of the primary challenges of an urban school principal is the development of problem-solving skills that potentially address the issues of social justice. Urban public schools predominantly comprise populations from the lower end of the socioeconomic scale, whose students are more likely to be oppressed by a variety of issues. The type of oppression experienced in urban schools is most likely to occur in schools that are predominantly African American (Kozol, 2000).

One example of covert oppression is the insufficient funding available for urban public schools. According to critical theorists, this lack of funding is representative of the politics of power. In other words, the lack of funding is a reflection of oppressive policy. It is common for urban schools to have insufficient or outdated textbooks, as well as overcrowded classrooms in older buildings that are becoming inadequate (Anyon, 1997; Kozol, 1991).

Another example of covert oppression is Michigan's policy that state aid is awarded to high school students who score well on the high school proficiency test for attending a public university in the state. In general, urban school students do not score as well as suburban school students (Heller & Shapiro, 2000), thus perpetuating the skewed delivery of resources in which suburban schools are favored over urban schools. The fundamental problem is that suburban school students receive a better education than their urban counterparts, in part because the allocation of resources is skewed and there are laws and policies that favor suburban schools over rural and urban ones. One of the primary challenges for urban school principals is to mitigate this social injustice through their problem-solving practices.

### Purpose of the Study

There are many opinions as to how urban school principals should run their schools. Examining public school leadership through the lens of Freirean critical theory is controversial because critical theory is based on the assumption that there are traditionally oppressed groups who have historically suffered the consequences of oppression (Held, 1980). Many people in the educational community are interested in issues of social justice, and Freirean critical theory provides a basis for analyzing how social justice is reflected in the problem-solving practices of public school administrators.

My purpose in this study was to examine the problem-solving practices of an urban public school principal to see how the principles of Freirean critical pedagogy were reflected in the carrying out of the principal's problem-solving duties. The practices that I examined in this study were decision making, managing dilemmas, and problem solving. This study is concerned with the praxis of Freirean thought and the liberatory or emancipatory qualities of the principal's problem solving.

There is a tension between the theoretical side of Freire and the praxis of Freirean thought (Facundo, 1984). Freire successfully applied his principles to adult literacy and to educational leadership when he was a school superintendent in São Paulo, Brazil; this is the praxis of Freire's theory. Freire's principles also have been applied to educational programs in the United States (Braaten, 1987; Facundo, 1984). However, Braaten's and Facundo's writings did not pertain directly to problem-solving duties in educational administration.



### Importance of the Study

This study is important because it will indicate to what extent the problem-solving practices of an urban school principal are emancipatory. There is a dearth of research regarding public school administration and Freirean critical theory. Paulo Freire represents critical theory in a pragmatic way. An examination, through the lens of Freirean critical theory, of how a public school administrator navigates through problem-solving processes during key times in the school year will benefit school leaders by illuminating the thoughts and practices of school leaders who use Freirean principles of leadership.

The findings can be used to categorize different ways that public school administrators apply Freirean principles to problem solving. It is likely that an administrator may not know much about Paulo Freire but still execute her or his problem-solving practices in a Freirean way. This would indicate that the administrator believes that oppression in one of its many forms affects the operation of the school and that there is a need for emancipatory problem solving.

There are numerous examples of critical theory being applied to school administration (Foster, 1986). However, few, if any, researchers have applied Freirean principles to the problem-solving practices of urban public school administrators. Freirean critical pedagogy could serve as a new paradigm for administration of urban public schools. According to Foster, the application of critical theory is a valid approach to school leadership.

### Assumptions

The constructs of critical theory generally are concerned with the oppression found in relationships between groups of people. The oppression may be the intentional or unintentional result of traditions, practices, or policies (Held, 1980). Critical theory is based on several assumptions: that power relations mediate all thought that may result from historical or social relationships, that certain groups of people are privileged over other groups, and that oppression occurs when subordinated groups accept their social status as natural or necessary (Freire, 1972). This study was focused on educational leadership and the potential it has to promote change in oppressive practices through emancipatory problem solving, policies, and behaviors in the urban public school setting.

McLaren (1995) described critical pedagogy as a way of learning and taking action:

Critical pedagogy commits itself to forms of learning and action that are undertaken in solidarity with subordinated and marginalized groups. In addition to interrogating what is taken for granted or seemingly self-evident or inevitable regarding the relationship between schools and the social order, critical pedagogy is dedicated to self-empowerment and social transformation. (p. 32)

The self-empowerment and social transformation that McLaren spoke of are important aspects of critical pedagogy; schools reflect the social reality of their location.

Critical theorists must seek a balance in their approach to assumptions about education. Michael Apple is a critical theorist who has written extensively about critical pedagogy and the various issues of dominance in school systems. Apple (1996) described some of his assumptions about schooling and critical pedagogy as follows:

At times, some critical educators have been so critical that we too often assume—consciously or unconsciously—that everything that exists within the educational system bears only the marks of domination. It's all capitalists; it's all racist; it's all patriarchal; it's all homophobic. As you would imagine given my own efforts

over the past 3 decades, I do not want to dismiss the utter power of these and other forms of oppression in education or in anything else. Yet, in taking a stance that *assumes*—without detailed investigation—that all is somehow the result of relations of dominance, we also make it very difficult to make connections with progressive educators and community members who currently are struggling to build an educational system that is democratic in more than name only. (p. xvii)

In the preceding quotation, Apple encouraged a balance between the sometimes passionate arguments made by criticalists and the realization that not every relationship is a result of some form of domination.

### Research Question

Ethnographic research is descriptive in nature (Denzin, 1997; Wolcott, 1999).

Research questions that reflect an ethnographic approach must have a descriptive aspect as well as a framework that guides what the ethnographer observes. Wolcott (1999) explained:

There has to be an *idea* guiding what we choose to describe and how we choose to describe it. Ethnographers do not engage in what has been referred to lightheartedly as “immaculate perception.” We do not and cannot *simply observe, watch, or look*; we must observe, watch, or look at *something*. That fact surely tarnishes any notion that ethnography has somehow transcended the inherent human limitations of those who conduct it. (p. 70)

The guiding framework of this research comprised the constructs of Freirean critical pedagogy and recent thinking regarding decision making, management of problems, and dilemmas by researchers such as Larry Cuban, Joan Polimer Shapiro, Donald J. Willower, and Joseph W. Licata. In the next chapter, six constructs of Freirean thought are identified. These constructs guided the field research. Current thinking about problem solving, managing dilemmas, and decision making also guided the field research for this study.

The research question posed in this study is appropriate for an ethnographic study because it implies a descriptive aspect as well as a guiding framework: **In what ways, if any, is Freirean critical theory reflected in an urban high school principal's problem-solving practices?**

### Definitions of Terms

The following terms are defined in the context in which they are used in this dissertation:

Dilemma—A situation in which competing forces or values require resolution, where the forces or values are equally important and an ethical and ready solution is not apparent without extensive reflection and analysis.

Emancipatory problem-solving processes—The various ways that a secondary school principal resolves problems, manages dilemmas, and makes decisions that emancipate, liberate, or change oppressive situations.

Freirean pedagogy—Principles and constructs of the pedagogy and principles espoused by Paulo Freire.

Leader—A person who has established herself or himself in any of the following positions: public school union official, parent activist, student activist, teacher activist, other public school advocate, or public school administrator.

Oppression—When one group, or individual, receives more goods or resources at the expense of another person or group of people. The skewed delivery of goods and resources may be the result of history, tradition, law, policy, attitudes, or other factors.

Practices–Problem-solving processes, writings such as memoranda and letters to parents, how policies are elaborated, how conflict between various members of the school community is resolved, and how various meetings are conducted and who is invited to participate.

Problem–A situation that requires resolution which is either apparent to the principal or is routine in nature.

Problem solving–The resolution of a conflicted situation, which may imply the management of a dilemma, solution to a problem, or decision making by a group or individual.

Public school administrator–A person who works in a public school in any of the following capacities: assistant principal, principal, central office administrator, or a person serving on an interim basis in any of the aforementioned administrative positions.

Urban school–A school in a metropolitan area that has a population of 200,000 or more people.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF FREIREAN CONSTRUCTS

#### Introduction

Freedom is not an idea located outside of man; nor is it an idea which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion. (Freire, 1972, p. 31)

Paulo Freire has had a worldwide following since the appearance of his book Pedagogy of the Oppressed, which was first published in 1970. In this book, Freire explained the rationale for his method of teaching adult literacy. Freire also explained his views on oppression and the role that critical pedagogy plays in addressing such issues as humanization, conscientization, and praxis. This chapter begins with a brief biography of Paulo Freire, highlighting some of the life experiences that shaped his thinking. Next is a discussion of the development of critical theory, followed by a definition of critical theory and its relevance to urban schools. The development of critical pedagogy is then described, followed by a discussion of the Freirean constructs that were used in carrying out this study. Last, there is a discussion of problem-solving issues and their implications for emancipatory resolutions.

In this chapter, I demonstrate that a Freirean approach to education has been implemented in certain academic areas but not in educational administration. Further, I show that there is a need for research that includes Freirean principles in relation to problem-solving practices in educational administration.

### A Brief Biography of Paulo Freire

Paulo Freire was born into a middle-class family on September 19, 1921, in the city of Recife, which was located in a poor section in northeastern Brazil. His mother, Edeltrudes Neves Freire, was a devout Roman Catholic (Elias, 1994). Freire's father, Joaquim Themistocles Freire, who was not a practicing Catholic, spent time with his children writing in the sand in the shade of a mango tree. He wanted his children to do well in school, so he taught them how to decode words at an early age. As a result of Joaquim Freire's efforts, young Paulo could read and write when he entered school (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Freire had a warm and positive relationship with his father. When Paulo told his father that he wanted to become a Roman Catholic and intended to go to his first communion, Joaquim told the young Paulo that he respected his decision (Jeria, 1984). Paulo cited this experience and others like it as his early introductions to the importance of dialogue (Jeria, 1984).

The Freire family moved from Recife to Jatatao in 1931 because Joaquim Freire lost his job as a military police officer. Six years later, Joaquim died. As a consequence of the Great Depression of the late 1920s, Brazil was in an economic crisis, and life became difficult for the Freire family, who were living on a modest widow's pension.

Until Joaquim Freire lost his job as a military officer, the family had lived a middle-class life; however, as their economic situation began to deteriorate, they maintained only a tenuous connection to the middle class. During the early years in Jatatao, the Freire family experienced great economic difficulty, and Paulo knew hunger for the first time in his young life. The hunger Paulo Freire experienced affected him in three ways. First, he did not do well in school and would often fall asleep while studying,

due to hunger and fatigue. Freire claimed that some of his teachers thought he suffered from mild mental retardation. Second, he vowed to dedicate his life to people less fortunate than himself, even after the Freire family's economic situation improved slightly when Paulo's older brothers began to work. Third, Paulo and his brothers interacted with other young people who were from poor and working-class families. These interactions with people from other social classes helped Paulo appreciate families that were worse off than his own family (Jeria, 1984).

Paulo Freire's mother was determined to help her son continue his education. She found a school for him in Recife, where the family originally had lived, and negotiated what was probably a deferred payment plan (Sawyers, 1994). Dr. Alvizio Pessoa de Araújo, the director of the school, took a chance on the young Paulo Freire because of the family's economic difficulties and the fact that some of the youth's teachers had suspected he was mildly mentally retarded (Sawyers, 1994). Paulo proved to be an excellent student and developed a long-standing interest in grammar and syntax. He was grateful for the opportunity that Dr. Pessoa de Araújo and his wife, Genove, had afforded him. He eventually taught Portuguese grammar at Dr. Pessoa de Araújo's school, Colégio Oswaldo Cruz, while he took his preparatory course for law school (Freire, 1996).

In 1943, Paulo Freire married an elementary school teacher, Elza Maria Costa de Oliveira. While he was in law school, Freire and his wife joined the University Catholic Action group, which worked to promote the Catholic faith as well as social change. They soon became disenchanted with the group, however, because of the members' middle-



class values, which Freire considered bourgeois, and withdrew from it. After Freire married he became more interested in academia, especially Portuguese language and education.

Freire completed his law degree at the University of Recife in 1945 (Jeria, 1984), but he practiced law for only a short time. One case that Freire cited as significant in his brief law career was that of a young dentist who had overextended his credit and was facing bankruptcy. Representing the creditor, Freire confided in the dentist that he had recently decided to quit the practice of law. Freire told the young man that this would benefit him because it would give him more time to reconcile his debt as Freire would not send a letter advising his client that he was dropping the case for at least a week (Freire, 1996). Freire had just recently been invited to participate in an adult literacy program, and his meeting with the young dentist was significant in that it made him see that working in adult literacy would be more gratifying than practicing law. Freire described the influence of this experience in his book Pedagogy of Hope (1996). He also described how he had been invited to participate in an educational program sponsored by the Industrial Social Service (SESI) and how important that experience was for his writing career:

That evening, relaying to Elza what had been said, I could never have imagined that, one day, so many years later, I would write Pedagogy of the Oppressed, whose discourse, whose proposal, has something to do with that experience of that afternoon, in terms of what it, too, meant, and especially in terms of the decision to accept Cid Sampaio's invitation, conveyed to me by Paulo Rangel. I abandoned the practice of law for good that afternoon, once I had heard Elza say, "I was hoping for that. You're an educator." Not many months after, as the night that had arrived in such haste began, I said yes to SESI's summons to its Division of Education and Culture, whose field of experience, study, reflection, and practice was to become an indispensable moment in the gestation of Pedagogy of the Oppressed. (Freire, 1996, p. 16)

His experience with the young dentist motivated Freire to accept an invitation to participate in SESI. The invitation had come from a respected friend, Paulo Rangel Moreira. Freire described his contact with Moreira as follows:

One bright afternoon in Recife, he came to our house in the Casa Forte district, 224 Rita de Souza Street, and told us—Elza, my first wife, and me—of SESI's existence and what it would mean for us. He had already accepted the invitation extended to him by the young president of the organization, engineer and industrialist Cid Sampaio, to coordinate its social service projects. Every indication was that he would soon move to the legal department of the organization—his dream—to work in the field of his own expertise. (Freire, 1996, pp. 13-14)

Freire's interests turned to adult literacy and education. He viewed his experience with SESI as significant in relation to writing Pedagogy of the Oppressed. The beginnings of Freire's teaching methodology and the major constructs of his philosophy of education were being developed as he worked with the urban and rural poor through SESI.

Another life experience had a profound effect on Freire's approach to education. While Freire was working for SESI, he completed a study regarding authority and freedom and its implications for reward and punishment in education (Freire, 1996). Freire wanted to share the results of that study with parents who sent their children to primary schools run by SESI, so he organized a series of talks on various subjects, which he gave throughout the region. "Back then, I was accustomed to give long talks on the subjects that had been selected. I was repeating the traditional route of discourse *about* something that you would give an audience" (Freire, 1996, p. 22). Following one such talk, a man in the audience raised his hand because he wanted to ask Freire some questions:

“We have just heard,” he began, “some nice words from Dr. Paulo Freire. Fine words, in fact. Well spoken, some of them were even simple enough for people to understand easily. Others were more complicated. But I think I understood the most important things that all the words together say.” (Freire, 1996, p. 24)

The man continued to describe the modest conditions in which he and his compatriots lived; he then speculated that Freire’s living conditions were better than his own and his neighbors’. Freire admitted that the man’s suspicions about his living conditions were correct. During the course of the audience member’s questioning, Freire realized where the person was headed with his argument. Finally, the man concluded his argument by saying:

“Now Doctor, look at the difference. You come home tired, sir, I know that. You may even have a headache from the work you do. Thinking, writing, reading, giving these kind of talks that you’re giving now. That tires a person out too. But sir,” he continued, “it’s one thing to come home, even tired, and find the kids all bathed, dressed up, clean, well fed, not hungry—and another thing to come home and find your kids dirty, hungry, crying, and making noise. And people have to get up at four in the morning the next day and start all over again—hurting, sad, hopeless. If people hit their kids, and even go beyond bounds, as you say, it’s not because people don’t love their kids. No, it’s because life is so hard they don’t have much choice.” (Freire, 1996, pp. 25-26)

When Freire left the talk that night he felt humiliated, embarrassed, and defensive.

Driving home, Freire said to Elza, “I thought I’d been so clear. . . . I don’t think they understood me” (Freire, 1996, p. 26). She listened to him and then asked a question that helped Freire put the experience into perspective: “Could it have been you, Paulo, who didn’t understand them? . . . I think they got the main point of your talk. The worker made that clear in what he said. They understood you, but they needed to have you understand them. That’s the question.” (Freire, 1996, p. 26). Freire found this experience with the worker to be significant in developing his construct of dialogue with a purpose:

The fact that I have never forgotten the fabric in which that discourse was delivered is significant. The discourse of that faraway night is still before me, as if it had been a written text, an essay that I constantly had to review. Indeed, it was the culmination of the learning process I had undertaken long ago—that of the progressive educator: even when one must speak *to* the people, one must convert the “to” to a “with” the people. And this implies respect for the “knowledge of living experience” of which I always speak, on the basis of which it is possible to go beyond it. (Freire, 1996, p. 26)

The incident described above illustrates how Freire’s experiences influenced the development of his constructs. One can see how that experience affected Freire’s belief that dialogue should be approached with humility and faith in humankind.

Eventually, Freire became the director of SESI’s Department of Education and Culture. In 1954 he resigned from SESI and accepted a teaching position with the University of Recife, where he taught history and philosophy (Sawyers, 1994). Miguel Arraes, considered a radical democrat, was running for mayor of Recife in 1959 and wanted to benefit from the votes of the rural poor, who were denied the vote due to literacy laws. So Arraes formed a grassroots program entitled the Popular Culture Movement (PCM) as a way of teaching adult literacy (Sawyers, 1994). Freire became director of the PCM and henceforth began to develop his methodology of teaching adult literacy.

Freire completed his doctorate in 1959 at the University of Recife; his dissertation was entitled “Educao e Actualidade Brasileira” (Taylor, 1991). Freire later reworked his dissertation and published it as Educação Como Prática da Liberdade, which was the forerunner of Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 1996). Freire had been active in the teaching of adult literacy before completing his doctorate as well as his law degree.

Freire's method of teaching adult literacy was proving to be successful, and he gained notoriety for being a leftist educator (Elias, 1976). He formed political contacts during the populist government of João Goulart.

Freire's literacy program was extended to the entire nation after June 1963, when Paulo de Tarso, a friend of Freire, became Minister of Education. He was a member of Catholic Action groups, a liberal reformer, and popular among student leaders. De Tarso was instrumental in getting Freire's method used in the entire country. Through him Freire was appointed director of the national literacy campaign. Between June 1963 and March 1964, training programs for adult literacy educators were developed in almost all the state capitals. In Guanabara State alone, almost 6,000 people were enrolled. There were also courses in the states of Rio Grande do Norte, São Paulo, Bahia, Sergipe, and Rio Grande do Sul. These training courses were developed within eight months, with college students serving most vigorously as coordinators. (Elias, 1976, p. 14)

Freire achieved national renown as a result of his political appointment and the success of his literacy program. Some scholars have questioned the success of the Paulo Freire method of teaching adult literacy (DeKadt, 1970) and whether Freire's teaching methods were really for teaching adult literacy or more for teaching preliteracy (Taylor, 1991).

This was the *Método Paulo Freire*. In its short period of existence it gathered substantial momentum, although at the time of its repression in April 1964 it was still characterized by potential rather than actual achievements, by promise more than realization. (DeKadt, 1970, pp. 102-103)

Because of Freire's fame, he became a target of the newspaper O Globo (Elias, 1994), which ran stories about Paulo Freire and his literacy campaign almost daily. The articles were not flattering.

The leftist political parties were trying to improve their power base with various literacy programs, and the right-wing parties were concerned that the actual purpose of the literacy programs was to encourage the peasants to revolt (Elias, 1994). Finally, the military carried out a successful coup in April 1964. Freire was arrested and spent 75

days in jail. Freire's arrest made him realize that his reformist activity was inadequate to change the oppression of Brazil's proletariat (Elias, 1994). While in jail, Freire began writing his first book about education, Educação Como Practica de Liberdade (Education as the Practice of Freedom) (Collins, 1977). After he was released from jail, Freire sought political asylum in Bolivia; however, the altitude in La Paz was detrimental to his health and there were few employment possibilities (Elias, 1994).

Another military coup took place in Bolivia shortly after the Freire family arrived there. Freire then took his family to Chile, where he prospered for five years as a professor at the University of Chile, Santiago (Elias, 1994). Freire also worked for a literacy program directed by Waldemar Cortes of the Eduardo Frei government. The Chilean literacy program received recognition from international organizations such as the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Collins, 1977). Freire used the teaching method he had developed in Brazil but soon realized that he would have to adapt it to meet the needs of his Chilean students (Collins, 1977).

During Freire's stay in Chile, he began the first of his three periods of writing (Roberts, 2000). The first of the two books he wrote at that time was Educação Como Practica de Liberdade, published in 1967. He had begun writing this book when he was in jail in Brazil. The English version, Education for Critical Consciousness, was first published in 1973. According to Freirean scholar John Elias (1994), Education for Critical Consciousness is a better introduction to Freire's philosophy and method than is the more popular Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire's second book of this period. Pedagogy of the Oppressed was first published in 1968; the first English version of that

book was published in 1970. Pedagogy of the Oppressed received wide acclaim as well as criticism. Because of the acclaim Freire received for this book, he was invited to teach at Harvard University in 1969.

During Freire's time at Harvard he alternated work between Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Cuernavaca, Mexico (Jeria, 1984). In Cuernavaca, Freire worked at the Center for Intercultural Documentation (CIDOC) with Ivan Illich, who had similar ideas regarding education. Freire wrote two articles while working at Harvard: "Cultural Action and Conscientization" and "The Adult Literacy Process as Cultural Action for Freedom." Freire also befriended Jonathan Kozol, who espoused similar ideas about educational issues (Kozol, 1977). About the time Freire was invited to teach at Harvard, he was also invited to work for the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland. The latter invitation was significant because at that time few, if any, Roman Catholics held positions of leadership in that organization (Jeria, 1984). In January 1970, Freire and his family left the United States for Switzerland.

During the next four years, Freire continued to work on the seminar "Alternatives in Education" with Ivan Illich in Cuernavaca. Illich had founded CIDOC with two friends, Jerry Morris and Theodoro Stancioff. CIDOC, which was located in Cuernavaca, was considered controversial by many and generated a variety of articles that were critical of the Roman Catholic hierarchy as well as other institutions representing the status quo (Elias, 1976). Around that time, Guinea Bissau, an African nation that had been a colony of Portugal, became independent. Freire again was called on to participate in an adult literacy program. Freire led the efforts to design and implement a program in

Guinea Bissau that respected the native culture and reflected the needs of the newly independent nation (Freire, 1978). As a result of this experience, Freire wrote Pedagogy in Process: Letters to Guinea Bissau, which was published in 1978. Pedagogy in Process represents the second period of Freire's publications (Roberts, 2000).

In 1979, the Figuerado government approved a general amnesty for Brazil's exiles. Paulo Freire returned to Brazil in June 1980. He accepted teaching positions at two universities: Pontificia Universidade Católica de São Paulo and Universidade de Campinas in São Paulo (Taylor, 1993). In keeping with his belief in dialogue, Freire wrote books with other scholars, based on dialogues he had with them. "Freire became more productive in his writing than ever before, collaborating in a series of coauthored, 'talking' books with Ira Shor, Donaldo Macedo, Antonio Faundez, Myles Horton and others" (Roberts, 2000, pp. 5-6).

From 1989 to 1991, Freire served as the Secretary of Education of São Paulo. He served as administrator for two and a half years but then decided that he would rather be a political educator than an educated politician (Taylor, 1993). Freire made several trips to the United States to participate in conferences and seminars during the last 10 years of his life. Paulo Freire died of a heart attack on May 2, 1997.

### History of the Development of Critical Theory

A group of German philosophers, sociologists, historians, economists, and others developed the basic philosophy of critical theory in Frankfurt, Germany, during the 1920s and 1930s. The Institute for Social Research was founded in 1923 by Felix Weil, the son of a wealthy grain merchant, who led the efforts to procure private funding for the



Institute (Held, 1980). The Institute for Social Research was a part of the University of Frankfurt and thus is often referred to as the Frankfurt School (Macey, 2000). The first director of the Frankfurt School was Carl Grünberg, the first Marxist to hold a university post in Germany (Held, 1980). After Grünberg's retirement in 1929, Max Horkheimer became the director. Horkheimer was a social scientist as well as an intellectual Marxist who was critical of the communism practiced in the Soviet Union (Macey, 2000).

Horkheimer hired several of Germany's most influential intellectuals to work at the Frankfurt School.

The Institute's key figures were Max Horkheimer (philosopher, sociologist and social psychologist), Friedrich Pollock (economist and specialist on problems of national planning), Theodor Adorno (philosopher, sociologist, musicologist), Erich Fromm (psychoanalyst, social psychologist), Herbert Marcuse (philosopher), Franz Neumann (political scientist, with particular expertise in law), Otto Kirchheimer (political scientist with expertise in law), Leo Lowenthal (student of popular culture and literature), Henryk Grossmann (political economist), Arkdaj Gurland (economist, sociologist), and, as a member of the "outer circle" of the Institute, Walter Benjamin (essayist and literary critic). The Institute's membership is often referred to as the Frankfurt School. But the label is a misleading one, for the work of the Institute's members did not always form a series of tightly woven, complimentary projects. (Held, 1980, pp. 14-15)

Many of the members of the Frankfurt School were Jewish. In January 1933, the Nazi Party assumed power in Germany, and the Institute was forced into exile (Macey, 2000). The Institute relocated to Geneva, Switzerland, and then eventually found a home at Columbia University in New York City (Held, 1980). The Institute was able to relocate to its native Frankfurt, Germany, by 1953. Max Horkheimer became rector of the University of Frankfurt in 1955, and Theodor Adorno became a co-director of the Institute in 1958 (Held, 1980). Other members of the Frankfurt School, such as Marcuse,

Lowenthal, and Kirchheimer, remained in the United States. Marcuse became an important voice for the New Left of the 1960s (Held, 1980).

The most contemporary and perhaps one of the most influential members of the Frankfurt School is Jürgen Habermas (Macey, 2000). Habermas was born in 1929 and lived through the historical events of Nazi Germany. Habermas believed that his generation was distinctly different from the one that had embraced Nazism. According to Outhwaite (1994), the shock of what was revealed in the Nuremberg trials and liberal democratic education were important factors in Habermas's development:

As Habermas notes, the shock of the Nuremberg revelations and the fact that his first education in liberal democratic theory was in the context of "reeducation" separates his generation from those who had known the "half-hearted bourgeois republic" of Weimar, which made some of them impatient with the elements of restoration in post-war Germany. (p. 2)

Habermas was radicalized during the late 1950s and became an assistant to Theodor Adorno. Habermas began to see how Marxism and Freudian psychology could be put to systematic use. Held (1980) summed up the importance of Habermas to the field of critical theory:

The thought of the Frankfurt School has been a major source of stimulus to the man who has now become the leading spokesman for a new generation of critical theorists—Jürgen Habermas. Born in 1929 and brought up in Nazi Germany, Habermas did not become radicalized until the late 1950s. Under the influence of, among others, Adorno (to whom he became an assistant), Habermas discovered the systematic use that could be made of Marx and Freud. (p. 249)

Habermas began contributing to the philosophy of the Frankfurt School with various publications, such as Structural Transformation in the Public Sphere (translated to English in 1989), Towards a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science and Politics

(translated to English in 1970), and Theory of Communicative Action (translated to English in 1984) (Nordquist, 1986).

One of the reasons for the development of critical theory was the Frankfurt School's concern that positivism was considered the only path to true knowledge (Outhwaite, 1994). One of the major criticisms of positivism is that it may be inappropriate for analyzing the social sciences and education (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). To understand the development of critical theory, it is important to define positivism. According to Good (1973), positivism is

... historically, a philosophical trend, based on the thought of Auguste Comte (1798-1857), that sought a unified view of phenomena, both physical and human, through the application of the scientific method. His theory of three historical stages in philosophy includes first, the theological, depending on supernatural and divine being for explanation of phenomena; second, the metaphysical, depending on rational entities as explanatory principles; third, the positive, which facts and their relations are understood in their empirical certainty. (p. 430)

The scientific method has yielded some impressive results. When one looks at the scientific and technological advances of the past hundred years, one sees dramatic changes in the lives of those living in the first world. Many of these advances have been a result of the application of the scientific method to research. There are affordable personal computers, rapid and abundant communication options, more efficient transportation systems, improved medical care, and many other advances. Most of these advances have been based on the results of objective scientific research. The scientific method (logical empiricism, positivism) has a place in research. On the other hand, is the scientific method appropriate for the study of all phenomena? Critical theorists have questioned the use of positivism in the social sciences and education (Popkewitz &

Fendler, 1999). Are positivistic, scientific, empirical approaches to social science always appropriate?

One of the central aims of critical theory has been to reassess the relationship between theory and practice in the light of the criticisms of the positivist and interpretive approaches to social science which have emerged over the last century. Early critical theorists, such as Max Horkheimer, Theodore Adorno and Herbert Marcuse, were concerned with the dominance of positivist science and the degree to which it had become a powerful element in twentieth-century ideology. The success of research in the physical sciences led to attempts to emulate that success in the social sciences. The animate world was being treated as “methodologically” equivalent to the inanimate, and the forms of reasoning appropriate for dealing with the inanimate world were being applied increasingly and impetuously to the human and social worlds. (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 131)

As Carr and Kemmis indicated in the preceding citation, critical theorists have questioned the application of logical empiricism to all types of research.

The preceding sections provided a brief history of the life of Paulo Freire, highlighting events in his life that affected his thinking. The concept of critical theory was defined, and the development of critical theory in the social sciences was discussed. In the next section, the influence that critical theory has had on critical pedagogy is considered.

#### Defining Critical Theory and Its Relevance to Urban Public Schools

To understand the development of critical theory and its historical foundation, it is helpful to define critical theory. According to Torres (1999), critical theory is a negative philosophy

. . . because it challenges the tenets of the philosophy of positivism (a positive philosophy). However, it is a negative philosophy as well because, as it has been argued independently from critical theory by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, critical theory helps to deconstruct and critique the premises of the principle of common sense—which guides the daily construction of social interactions—as a contradictory and building hegemony. Or as Horkheimer puts it, “Among the vast

majority of the ruled there is the unconscious fear that theoretical thinking might show their painfully won adaptation to reality to the perverse and unnecessary.” (pp. 90-91)

Critical theorists have questioned whether a positivistic approach to research is appropriate for studying the social sciences (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

Another definition of critical theory can be found in The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy (Audi, 1995):

Critical theory [is] any social theory that is at the same time explanatory, normative, practical, and self-reflective. The term was first developed by Max Horkheimer as a self-description of the Frankfurt School and its revision of Marxism. It now has a wider significance to include any critical, theoretical approach, including feminism and liberation philosophy. When they make claims to be scientific, such approaches attempt to give rigorous explanations of the causes of oppression, such as ideological beliefs or economic dependence; these explanations must in turn be verified by empirical evidence and employ the best available social and economic theories. (p. 170)

It would be possible to devote an entire dissertation to the definition, development, history, and application of critical theory. However, only a brief account of the development of critical theory is provided here. It is important to understand critical theory in order to comprehend critical pedagogy. As noted in the preceding definitions, critical theory is based on the underlying assumptions of oppression and emancipation (Popkewitz & Fendler, 1999; Torres, 1999). The issues of oppression and emancipation are directly related to the social sciences; they are also related to public school education (Freire, 1998c; Freire & Shor, 1987). In urban public schools, oppression and emancipation are reflected in the policies that are imposed on them by the state and federal government, as well as in the amount, or lack of, funding they receive (Anyon, 1997; Kozol, 1991, 2000). The urban public school administrator plays an important role

in the school community and works daily with issues concerning oppression and emancipation.

School is more than simply a class to attend or a degree to attain; rather it is a living statement of culture and of values that forms a part of the consciousness of every social member. The administration of education is perhaps one of society's most central concerns; yet when administrative programs neglect social analysis, they neglect the possibility of choosing a more attractive future. (Foster, 1986, p. 10)

Given the importance of leadership in urban public schools and the underlying issues of oppression, emancipation, and appropriate approaches to educational research, we will now look at the history and development of critical theory, which is the predecessor of critical pedagogy.

### The Development of Critical Pedagogy

Freire was a pioneer in the development of critical pedagogy (McLaren, 1995). Freire developed his constructs throughout his writing career, which began in a Brazilian jail cell in 1964 (Elias, 1994). In one of his early books, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970), Freire developed an approach to the teaching of adult literacy based on critical pedagogy (Elias, 1994; Roberts, 2000; Taylor, 1993). The major difference between critical theory and critical pedagogy is the praxis of the theory. Critical theory comes from the social sciences (Held, 1980), whereas critical pedagogy is the application of the constructs of critical theory to the multiple aspects of schooling (McLaren, 1995; Torres, 1999).

Because critical theory involves issues of politics and oppression, it was inevitable that critical theory would eventually be applied to public school systems (McLaren & Giarelli, 1995), particularly urban ones (Anyon, 1997; Foster, 1986; Kozol,

2000). McLaren and Giarelli explained that critical theory includes issues of oppression and emancipation “at the core of inquiry”:

Critical theory is, at its center, an effort to join empirical investigation, the task of interpretation, and a critique of this reality. Its purpose is to reassert the basic aim of the Enlightenment ideal of inquiry: to improve human existence by viewing knowledge for its emancipatory or repressive potential. In this way, a statement of judgement and values becomes possible. Like interpretivism, critical theory holds that knowledge is socially constructed, contextual, and dependent on interpretation. In contrast to interpretivists, critical theorists see a need and a basis for forming and understanding hierarchies of contexts and types of knowledge and evaluating them for their possibilities of contributing to progressive material and symbolic emancipation. Of course, this does not settle the debate. What kinds of knowledge best serve human emancipation? However, unlike positivism and interpretivism, mainstream quantitative and qualitative approaches, critical theory puts this problem at the core of inquiry. (p. 2)

Knowledge, according to McLaren and Giarelli, has the power to either oppress or emancipate the individual, which is in keeping with the spirit of the Enlightenment.

Critical theory from the Frankfurt School has influenced the thinking of educators and has provided the basis for the development of critical theory in education (Popkewitz & Fendler, 1999). One important characteristic of critical theory in education is the position of the public school in reference to social and historical contexts. As Popkewitz and Fendler asserted, “The idea of a critical theory . . . is not only of the internal politics of schooling, but of the social conditions and historical relations in which schooling is positioned” (p. 1). According to these authors, then, the historical context in which we live will directly affect the evolution of critical theory as it relates to schooling.

According to critical theorist Henry Giroux (1995), critical pedagogy has evolved in the United States during the last 15 years:

Within the last fifteen years a radical theory of education has emerged in the United States. Broadly defined as “the new sociology of education” or “a critical theory of education,” a critical pedagogy developed within this discourse attempts

to examine schools both in their historical context and as part of the social and political relations that characterize the dominant society. While hardly constituting a unified discourse, critical pedagogy nevertheless has managed to pose an important counterlogic to the positivistic, ahistorical, de-politicized discourse that often informs modes of analysis employed by liberal and conservative critics of schooling, modes all too readily visible in most colleges of education. (p. 29)

Critical pedagogy mirrors the basic constructs of critical theory. Critical theory from the Frankfurt School is concerned with the issues of positivism, antipositivism, implications of politics, the historical context of oppression, and emancipation (Fletcher, 2000; Held, 1980). Critical pedagogy is the praxis of critical theory in the realm of schooling (Giroux, 1995; McLaren, 1995). There is a direct link between the development of critical pedagogy and critical theory (Popkewitz & Fendler, 1999).

### Identification of Freirean Constructs

From reading Paulo Freire's books as well as the research conducted by Freirean scholars John Elias, Peter Roberts, and Paul Taylor, I identified six basic constructs of Freirean thought. The book Education, Literacy, and Humanization: Exploring the Work of Paulo Freire (Roberts, 2000) was particularly useful in identifying Freirean constructs and understanding Freire's various writings.

By analyzing the works of Freire, it was possible to identify many major constructs. However, for the purpose of this research, I identified six constructs using the following criteria: Each construct had to appear in at least two of Freire's writings, and one of the writings had to have been from his third and last period of writing (1987 to 1997). Finding a Freirean construct in more than one of his writings made this a more scholarly endeavor. Freire's third period of writing was reflective in nature (Roberts, 2000) and provides a mature reflection of Freire's earlier thinking. The third period was



also a prolific one, in which Freire often referred to his earlier publications with the intention of clarifying and explaining his point of view. This is exemplified by the following quotation, in which Freire referred to his revision of Pedagogy of the Oppressed, which was first published in 1970.

In this phase of the resumption of Pedagogy, I shall be seizing on certain particular aspects of the book, whether or not they have provoked criticism down through the years, with a view of explaining myself better, clarifying angles, asserting and reasserting positions. (Freire, 1996, p. 65)

Using Freire's clarifications helped me identify constructs conducive to the present research. Last, I chose Freirean constructs that would be conducive to analyzing the practices and opinions of public school leaders.

Using the criteria described above, I identified the following six constructs:

(a) dialogue with a purpose, (b) conscientization, (c) praxis, (d) politics and a universal common ethic (pedagogy of politics), (e) banking education versus problem-posing education, and (f) humanization. In the following pages, I describe each of these constructs and support each one with appropriate citations from two of Freire's publications and from works by Freirean scholars such as Roberts, Taylor, and Elias.

### Dialogue With a Purpose

Roberts (2000) identified Freire's explanation of dialogue as dialogue with a purpose. For Freire, dialogue has a variety of characteristics that make it conducive to educational endeavors. When used properly, dialogue involves an exchange of ideas that demonstrates a deep and mutual respect for the participants (Freire, 1972). Dialogue is more than a conversation between two people; it has several aspects that give it a

humanizing quality (Taylor, 1993). Freirean scholar Paul Taylor (1993) identified the core construct of dialogue:

The core construct of Freirean Dialogue is revealed: against the matrix that Dialogue is “loving, humble, hopeful, trusting and critical,” it expresses [Freire’s] ontological view of humankind. More simply put, Freire is arguing that, without dialogue, one cannot be human. In a very real sense, dialogue precedes Monologue. (p. 62)

There is a direct relationship between two Freirean constructs—dialogue with a purpose and humanization. Dialogue makes us human, and without dialogue we cannot fully realize our human potential (Freire, 1972, 1996).

In the revised 20th-anniversary edition of Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire (1998b) explained that there is a need for dialogue between teacher and student, researcher and those being researched (or studied), and leaders and followers. Dialogue, according to Freire, should be mutually beneficial and should reflect the characteristics of love, humility, faith in humankind, hope, and critical thinking (Freire, 1972). Dialogue also has elements of oppression; if one denies others the possibility of dialogue, then that person is being oppressive.

Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world. Hence, dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish this naming—between those who deny others the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them. Those who have been denied their primordial right to speak their word must first reclaim this right and prevent the continuation of this dehumanizing aggression. (Freire, 1998b, p. 69)

In many of his publications, Freire discussed at great length his ideas about dialogue. When I examined Freire’s texts and the work of Freirean scholars such as John Elias, Peter Roberts, and Paul Taylor, dialogue emerged as an important Freirean

construct. Engaging in dialogue without the qualities that Taylor (1993) summarized—“loving, humble, hopeful, trusting and critical”—makes dialogue an oppressive endeavor.

A dialogic relationship—communication and intercommunication among active subjects who are immune to the bureaucratization of the minds and open to discovery and to knowing more—is indispensable to knowledge. The social nature of this process makes a dialogical relationship a natural element of it. In that sense, authoritarian antialogue violates the nature of human beings, their process of discovery, and it contradicts democracy. (Freire, 1997, p. 99)

Authoritarian antialogue is the opposite of dialogue with a purpose. Dialogue implies an interaction between participants that has a quality of critical thinking and is mutually respectful. Authoritarian antialogue is synonymous with oppression.

Last, Freire said that silence is an important part of dialogue because it allows us to listen to others and ourselves. Silence permits a true commitment to the process of the dialogue by all of those involved. When we listen to others, our silence will allow us to enter the rhythm of the speaker and more fully appreciate his or her point of view. Freire (1998b) wrote:

The importance of silence in the context of communication is fundamental. On the one hand, it affords me space while listening to the verbal communication of another person and allows me to enter into the internal rhythm of the speaker's thought and experience that rhythm as language. On the other hand, silence makes it possible for the speaker who is really committed to the experience of communication rather than to the simple transmission of information to hear the question, the doubt, the creativity of the person who is listening. Without this, communication withers. (p. 104)

Freire believed that dialogue should be liberating and not oppressive. Denying others the opportunity to engage in dialogue is, itself, an oppressive act. For dialogue to be meaningful, it must be liberating. According to Roberts (2000),

The wider purpose of liberating education is, as the name suggests, *liberation*, through the posing and addressing of problems. This involves, in part, the formation of dialogical settings devoted to questions of oppression. Each

educational program has, or ought to have, more specific purposes: for example, learning, to read and write, acquiring, knowledge in a given subject, discovering, how to perform particular tasks, and so on. Moreover, in any liberating educative effort, the concern is not to address this oppressive situation, or that one, nor some abstract notion of “oppression in general.” The purposeful character of liberating education also relates to the Freirean concept of an ontological vocation: the “purpose” of all human lives, simply through being human, is humanization, and all liberating educative efforts are ultimately directed toward this end. (pp. 62-63)

The six Freirean constructs I identified are related to each other in some respect.

Dialogue with a purpose lends itself to the idea of an ontological vocation, which is the humanizing quality of dialogue that contains the elements that Freire identified: love, humility, faith in humankind, hope, and critical thinking. Freire (1998b) was clear that dialogue must have a quality of mutual respect:

Critical and liberating dialogue, which presupposes action, must be carried on with the oppressed at whatever the stage of their struggle for liberation. The content of that dialogue can and should vary in accordance with historical conditions and the level at which the oppressed perceive reality. But to substitute monologue, slogans, and communiqués for dialogue is to attempt to liberate the oppressed with the instruments of domestication. Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building; it is to lead them into the populist pitfall and transform them into masses which can be manipulated. (p. 47)

How does the construct, dialogue with a purpose, pertain to public school problem solving and leadership? What would dialogue with a purpose look like in a public school setting? How do public school leaders apply the principles of Freirean dialogue to their problem-solving practices as leaders? Whether or not public school leaders or administrators can identify this Freirean construct, it would be interesting to see whether, in fact, these leaders consider love, humility, faith in humankind, hope, and critical thinking in their dialogue with themselves and other members of the school community.

## Conscientization

Conscientization pertains to a development of consciousness and, according to Freire, has a transforming quality. Freire did not coin the word *conscientization* (Taylor, 1993), although he is probably the person most responsible for popularizing it in his writings. Freire frequently used the word *conscientização* in the original Portuguese version of his works. The use of *conscientização* is particularly frequent in the 1972 edition of Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Taylor elaborated:

Freire has never claimed to be the author of the idea. It is now clear that the word *conscientização* emerged from a discussion group within the Higher Institute of Brazilian Studies where it was popularized particularly by Dom Helder Camara, the Bishop of Recife, at a time in the mid-1960s when the Catholic Church was increasingly involved in the Movimento de Educação de Base (MEB), successfully using radio learning and the national media for its literacy campaign. Freire does claim, however, to have been consistent in use of the word. (p. 52)

In this dissertation I use the English word, *conscientization*, for this construct.

What is conscientization and how does it pertain to the issues that public school leaders must resolve? When Freire used the word *conscientization* in one of his earlier books, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, he described in great detail three different stages of conscientization: magical, naive, and critical consciousness. Smith (1976) described these stages and believed that they were sequential. According to Smith, in the magical stage a person would start “naming” his or her world. This first stage would involve the identification of problems that are dehumanizing. In the second or naive stage, which is reflective, the person identifies the causes and consequences of the dehumanizing problems from the first stage. The third or critical-consciousness stage is an active one, in which the person determines what can be done to solve the dehumanizing problems. Some scholars believe that these stages are rigid and that one can navigate through them

consecutively (Smith, 1976). Roberts (2000), on the other hand, believed that the stages are less rigid and that one can fluctuate from one stage to another depending on the circumstances. He stated,

In his essay, "The Process of Political Literacy," . . . Freire suggests that conscientization involves "a constant clarification of what remains hidden within us while we move about the world." Conscientization "cannot ignore the transforming action that produces this unveiling," and "occurs as a process at any given moment" (in Freire, 1985, p. 107). This suggests that Freire intended conscientization to be seen not as a progression through a finite series of steps with a fixed set of attitudes and behaviors to be achieved, but rather as an ever-evolving process. This construct of conscientization stands in marked contrast to a theory based on distinct stages of consciousness. (p. 145)

Conscientization, then, is a process of consciousness raising, and it depends on the process of dialogue described earlier in this chapter. Conscientization implies an emerging realization of one's own oppression; it is a process that requires dialogue and reflection. Freire (1998b) explained it this way:

Reflection upon situationality is reflection about the very condition of existence: critical thinking by means of which people discover each other to be "in a situation." Only as this situation ceases to present itself as a dense, enveloping reality or a tormenting blind alley, and they can come to perceive it as an objective-problematic situation—only then can communication exist. Humankind *emerge* from their *submersion* and acquire the ability to *intervene* in reality, as it is unveiled. *Intervention* in reality—historical awareness itself—thus represents a step forward from *emergence*, and results from the *conscientização* of the situation. *Conscientização* is the deepening of the attitude of awareness characteristic of all emergence. (p. 90)

Becoming aware of one's oppression or oppressive situation is part of conscientization. We eventually emerge into a realization or conscientization due to our efforts of reflection and dialogue. Freire (1998b) reflected on his concept of conscientization during his third period of publishing:

I like being a human person because even though I know that the material, social, political, cultural, and ideological conditions in which we find ourselves almost

always generate divisions that make difficult the construction of our ideals of change and transformation, I know also that the obstacles are not eternal.

In the 1960s, when I reflected on these obstacles I called for “conscientization,” not as a panacea but as an attempt at critical awareness of those obstacles and their *raison d’être*. And, in the face of pragmatic, reactionary, and fatalistic neoliberal philosophizing, I still insist, without falling into the trap of “idealism,” on the absolute necessity of conscientization. In truth, conscientization is a requirement of our human condition. It is one of the roads we have to follow if we are to deepen our awareness of our world, of facts, of events, of the demands of human consciousness to develop our capacity for epistemological curiosity. Far from being alien to our human condition, conscientization is natural to “unfinished” humanity that is aware of its unfinishedness. (p. 55)

Clearly, Freire believed that conscientization is an important process for people’s development as human beings. Further, conscientization is dialogic in nature because it requires us to reflect on our interactions with others as well as the internal dialogues we have with ourselves.

Last, Freire used the term *conscientization* primarily in his early writings. He later avoided the term because he thought it had been overused and, consequently, misunderstood. As Elias (1994) noted:

Freire has now expressed some reservations about using the term because of the many misunderstandings that abound and the many usages to which it has been put. He is so identified with the term, however, that he cannot be dissociated from it, just as John Dewey cannot be separated from progressive education even though he became its severest critic. (p. 122)

Does this Freirean construct, conscientization, have a place in public school leadership or an administrator’s problem-solving practices? Do public school administrators move between the stages of conscientization that Smith (1976) identified when they interact with colleagues, administrators, parents, students, teachers, and other members of the school community? Is conscientization among school leaders an ongoing

process, as Roberts (2000) thought? What does conscientization look like in the problem-solving practices of public school leadership?

### Praxis

Freire frequently used the word *praxis* in his writings; this is especially true in Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1972). In that work, Freire defined praxis as reflection and action:

One of the gravest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge men's consciousness. Functionally, oppression is domesticating. To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it. (p. 36)

Here, again, we can see an interrelationship between the Freirean constructs that I have identified. Praxis is related to the construct of conscientization because both of these constructs require reflection. One of the characteristics of conscientization is that a person becomes aware of his or her oppression. Praxis, then, is the active stance that the oppressed take after their reflection, their conscientization, and their realization that they are, indeed, oppressed. In other words, praxis is the fruit of conscientization. When conscientization occurs, it involves the process of reflection, which, for Freire, leads to action.

Freire revisited this notion of being aware of one's oppression in The Politics of Education (1985). He discussed the situation in which illiterate people may not be aware of their oppression, in part because of their sense of "natural inferiority." Ironically, though, the action of illiterates can be transforming. In Freire's words:

Illiterates know they are concrete men. They know that they do things. What they do not know in the culture of silence—in which they are ambiguous, dual



beings—is that men’s actions as such are transforming, creative, and re-creative. Overcome by the myths of this culture, including the myth of their own “natural inferiority,” they do not know that *their* action upon the world is also transforming. (p. 50)

Although Freire cited the example of illiterates, who were one of his major interests, this construct transcends the status of illiterate people. Later in this dissertation, I contend that the praxis construct, as well as the others developed herein, transcends Freire’s focus on the teaching of adult literacy to other areas such as educational leadership. I believe that the sense of inferiority that illiterate people feel is similar to the sense of inferiority that working-class people feel.

Here I would like to share my own experience with a sense of inferiority. I come from a working-class background and once worked in a noisy, insufficiently ventilated factory where hot metal chips would fly into my eyes despite the safety glasses I wore. Later I worked in a factory where large rolls of paper weighing a ton or more were stacked to the ceiling, with nothing more than small wooden blocks holding them in place. Part of my job was to go to that storage area and remove the rolls of paper, using an electrical crane. More than once the rolls would slip dangerously and I would have to run or jump aside to avoid being hit by a one-ton roll of paper. I spent 10 years of my young adulthood working in those two factories. I attended college part time through those years, and I soon realized that my humble public school education was not equal to that of many of my wealthier middle-class classmates. Therefore, I can relate the Freirean construct of praxis to my own life experience.

I went through the phase of conscientization, reflected, and then took action so that my life would have more meaning for me. I went to college part time and looked with envy at my classmates who were able to be full-time students. I sometimes

confused my ignorance with inferiority and mistook their great good fortune for superiority. The real difference was that they, my middle-class peers, had a fuller and richer formal educational experience. I believe there is a direct, positive correlation between the kind of community in which one lives and the kind of education one receives. If a person lives in a community that is predominantly professional and upper middle class, then his or her education will be superior to that of most other people (Kozol, 1991). If one lives in an urban or a working-class neighborhood, then his or her education will reflect that community and the resources available there (Kozol, 1991).

Freire's idea that praxis is a result of reflection and action appears more than once in his writings. In The Politics of Education (1985), he wrote,

Prevented from having "structural perceptions" of the facts involving them, they do not know that they cannot "have a voice," that is, that they cannot exercise the right to participate consciously in the sociohistorical transformation of their society, because their work does not belong to them.

It could be said (and we would agree) that it is not possible to recognize all this apart from praxis, that is, apart from reflection and action, and that to attempt it would be pure idealism. (p. 50)

In the preceding citation, Freire again referred to praxis as reflection and action.

Roberts's (2000) analysis of conscientization and praxis supports their mutual dependency:

Freire speaks of conscientization as "the process by which human beings participate critically in a transforming act" (p. 206), and stresses "there is no conscientization outside of praxis, outside the theory-practice, reflection-action unity" (p. 160). Conscientization, Freire notes elsewhere, "can only be manifested in the concrete praxis (which can never be limited to the mere activity of the consciousness)" (1976, p. 147). I propose, therefore, that rather than separating the two concepts out, as many people attempting to apply Freirean ideas do, conscientization and praxis ought to be seen as *necessarily* intertwined. Conscientization occurs in the transforming moment where critical reflection is synthesized with action. (p. 146)

At this point it is important to address the following question: If conscientization and praxis are intertwined, why not treat them as one construct rather than two? The main reason is that it is possible for a person to go through the process of conscientization but never to realize praxis. Conscientization is, in part, the realization that one is oppressed; it is possible that one may realize her or his oppression and yet choose not to act upon it. One example of this would be a gay individual who lives in a culture or religious context that does not condone or tolerate homosexuality. This person most likely has gone through the process of conscientization but may choose not to act on his or her oppression; therefore, praxis is not realized.

The transcending quality of the construct of praxis may be different in the school community. Do educational leaders go through a process of conscientization and reflection when they analyze the situation of their students or when they are solving problems? Is Freirean praxis likely to occur in an urban school setting or a working-class community? Does this same reflection lead to action, which would be the application of the Freirean idea of praxis? Are an urban school principal's problem-solving practices related to Freire's idea of praxis? This research is intended to enhance the understanding of a public school principal's problem-solving practices and leadership and how they relate to the Freirean issues of praxis and conscientization.

#### Politics and a Universal Common Ethic (Pedagogy of Politics)

For Freire, the educational process could not be neutral (Freire, 1998c; Freire & Shor, 1987; Roberts, 2000). Freire believed that educators need to understand that their

profession is political and that each teacher should ask the fundamental question, “What kind of politics am I doing in the classroom? That is, in favor of whom am I being a teacher? . . . and against whom am I educating?” (Freire & Shor, 1987, p. 46). There is a dichotomy of moralistic implications to the two questions, “In favor of whom am I being a teacher?” and “Against whom am I educating?” Most educators probably would have no problem answering the first question; most educators probably would say that they are teaching in favor of their current students. The second part of this dichotomy is the difficult part: “Against whom am I educating?” Most educators would find this question difficult to answer because they would not want to admit that they were teaching against anyone.

The writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, as well as many other philosophers, influenced Freire (Freire, 1998b; Roberts, 2000; Taylor, 1993). Marx (1844/1970) wrote a critique of Hegel’s “Philosophy of Right,” and the introduction to this work contains Marx’s famous statement: “The wretchedness of religion is at once an expression of and protest against real wretchedness. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the masses” (p. 131). Freire embraced a socialist political perspective throughout his professional career. Freire’s religious beliefs perhaps mitigated his socialist political beliefs; whereas Marx believed that religion was the “opium of the masses,” Freire believed that Christ was, indeed, the Son of God and chose to live a Christian life.

At one level, given that he is both a product of, and a mirror of, the ambivalent response of the Catholic Church in Latin America to Marxism, Freire might deny any underlying tension between the Christian and Marxist elements which converge in his use of the word “praxis.” Although he was able to say . . . “God

led me to the people and the people led me to Marx,” he had to reaffirm his orthodoxy by adding, “When I met Marx, I continued to meet Christ on the corners of the street—by meeting the people.” (Taylor, 1993, p. 56)

In Pedagogy of the Heart, Freire (1997) discussed his faith and how it had influenced his stand regarding educational issues. Freire believed that his Christian faith was responsible for his opinions regarding oppression. Although he found it difficult to write frequently about his Roman Catholic faith, Freire eventually developed his thoughts in Pedagogy of the Heart, one of his latest publications:

I do not feel very comfortable speaking about my faith. At least, I do not feel as comfortable as I do when speaking about my political choice, my utopia, and my pedagogical dreams. I do want to mention, however, the fundamental importance of my faith in my struggle for overcoming an oppressive reality and for building a less ugly society, one that is less evil and more humane.

All arguments in favor of the legitimacy of my struggle for a more *people-oriented* society have their deepest roots in my faith. It sustains me, motivates me, challenges me, and it has never allowed me to say, “Stop, settle down; things are as they are because they cannot be any other way.” (p. 104)

The preceding quotation helps to show that Freire’s political beliefs had been influenced by his readings of philosophers such as Marx and Engels, as well as his own Christianity.

It is paradoxical that Freire’s political and educational views cannot be described accurately without mentioning both Karl Marx and Jesus Christ.

Throughout many of Freire’s writings, one finds references to moral and ethical dilemmas. The word *oppression* or one of its derivatives is used abundantly throughout Freire’s work. The word *oppression*, itself, has a political connotation because, by definition, one person or group oppresses another person or group. The following quotation will help clarify Freire’s (1997) political and moral stand:

It is important to be clear that I am speaking not about a restricted kind of ethics that shows obedience only to the law of profit. Namely, the ethics of the market. It seems that there is now a global tendency to accept the crucial implications of the New World Order as natural and inevitable. One of the speakers at a recent

international meeting of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) reports of hearing an opinion, frequently bandied about in the first world, that third world children suffering from acute diarrhea ought not be saved because we would only prolong lives destined for misery and suffering. Obviously, I am not speaking of that kind of ethics. (p. 23)

On the one hand, one might criticize Freire for choosing to use such an obviously immoral statement, that “children suffering from acute diarrhea ought not be saved because we would only prolong lives destined for misery.” We do not have the specifics of this statement. Who said this? Where was it said? What groups were representing which countries or organizations? Without those details, one is at the mercy of Freire’s brief and cryptic account. It would also be helpful to know who, from the first world, is “bandying about” this kind of unethical proposal. On the other hand, the statement provides a summation of Freire’s belief system. He cited a universal human ethic that he had mentioned elsewhere in his writings (Freire, 1998). There is also a political tension between the first world and the third world because some unknown first-world person is proposing that third-world children should not be saved due to their bleak prospects. Freire attacked the capitalist system when he mentioned the “ethics of the market,” implying that there is a higher and better ethic; this, also, is in keeping with his Marxist political orientation.

Freire (1998) described his universal common ethic by giving several examples of injustices. The following is a continuation of the preceding citation:

On the contrary, I am speaking of a universal common ethic, an ethic that is not afraid to condemn the kind of ideological discourse I have just cited. Not afraid to condemn the exploitation of labor and the manipulation that makes a rumor into truth and truth into a mere rumor. To condemn the fabrication of illusions, in which the unprepared become hopelessly trapped and the weak and the defenseless are destroyed. To condemn making promises when one had no intention of keeping one’s word, which causes lying to become an almost necessary way of life. . . . The ethic of which I speak is that which feels itself

betrayed and neglected by the hypocritical perversion of an elitist purity, an ethic affronted by racial, sexual, and class discrimination. For the sake of this ethic, which is inseparable from educative practice, we should struggle, whether our work is with children, youth, or adults. (pp. 23-24)

Freire claimed that his universal common ethic had implications for educative practice. At the heart of his ethic is the phrase “hypocritical perversion of an elitist purity.” The implication of oppression is found in this phrase because of Freire’s use of the words *elitist* and *hypocritical*. According to Freire, educators should be cognizant of this ethic and work to avoid oppressive pedagogy and policy so that oppressed students may become liberated.

That Freire remained essentially a modernist is perhaps most vividly highlighted in Pedagogy of Freedom, where he argues for a “universal human ethic.” . . . This is, in essence, a reinterpretation of the notion of humanization in response to both new forms of global capitalism and the increasing fragmentation of oppositional movements. Freire insists that we should not be afraid to condemn the policies and practices of neoliberalism, nor to speak of the illusions, lies, and ideological manipulation necessary to maintain gross inequities under globalization. Neoliberalism represents a perversion of the quest to become more human. (Roberts, 2000, p. 117)

One of Freire’s major ideas is that pedagogy is political and that educators and educational leaders should embrace a universal common ethic. What does this construct look like in the problem-solving practices of urban public school principals? Do public school principals use language like Freire’s, or do they express the same ideas using different terminology? What kinds of observations regarding a universal common ethic do public school leaders make that are Freirean in nature?

### Banking Education Versus Problem-Posing Education

Freire identified two general approaches to education—banking and problem posing. With the banking approach, students are asked to memorize information that

their teachers deposit in their minds; the students are then asked to repeat the data to the teacher. In problem-posing education, students are asked to resolve a problem with a feasible solution. At first it seems that Freire was proposing a dichotomy of teaching approaches, but in looking at his descriptions of these two basic approaches, one can see that each approach has broader implications for teaching and school leadership.

Freire described in detail the meaning and implications of the banking concept of education in Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1998b). The banking concept depends on the teacher narrating information to the students. The deeper meaning of what is being narrated is lost in the process. This kind of education has an oppressive nature because there is no dialogic basis for learning. The students are mere receptacles of data.

In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry. The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence. (Freire, 1998b, p. 53)

There is no inquiry or dialogue in the banking concept of education because it is based on the assumption that students are ignorant and that teachers are all knowing.

Freire (1998b) saw a dichotomy in the banking approach to education, whereas in the problem-posing approach there are more forms of learning:

The banking concept (with its tendency to dichotomize everything) distinguishes two stages in the action of the educator. During the first, he cognizes a cognizable object while he prepares his lessons in his study or his laboratory; during the second, he expounds to his students about that object. The students are not called upon to know, but to memorize the contents narrated by the teacher. (p. 61)



The opposite of banking education is problem-posing education. Using this kind of approach, the teacher poses problems to the students, who in turn look for solutions (Freire, 1972). Some of the problems that teachers pose may have solutions; others may not. This kind of process involves dialogue between the teacher and the students and among students. As Freire (1998b) explained,

The problem-posing method does not dichotomize the activity of the teacher-student: she is not “cognitive” at one point and “narrative” at another. She is always “cognitive,” whether preparing a project or engaging in dialogue with the students. He does not regard cognizable objects as his private property, but as the object of reflection by himself and the students. In this way, the problem-posing educator constantly re-forms his reflections in the reflection of the students. (pp. 61-62)

The problem-posing approach to education allows students and teachers to become engaged in dialogue with a purpose, which is one of Freire’s fundamental principles of education. The broader implication is that problem-posing education is liberating in the sense that students begin to associate reasons and meaning with their learning, with the ultimate goal of becoming more human and liberated. Roberts (2000) summed up Freire’s problem-posing approach by describing how it relates to dialogue and consciousness raising:

A new conception of the relationship between “consciousness,” “action,” and “world” emerges through critical dialogue. Where under the banking system social reality is posited as a fixed inevitability, through problem-posing education students confront, explore, and act purposely on a dynamic, ever-changing world. . . . As participants enter into dialogical relations with others and discover the dialectical interaction between consciousness and the world, they begin to sense that dominant ideas can be challenged and oppressive social formations transformed. (p. 55)

The problem-posing approach to education implies that there is more than one teaching technique. It would be reasonable to call banking education versus problem-

posing education a dichotomy. However, it would be a very broad dichotomy because problem-posing education involves a dynamic and always-changing world.

Banking education resists dialogue; problem-posing education regards dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality. Banking education treats students as objects of assistance; problem-posing education makes them critical thinkers. (Freire, 1972, p. 71)

What implications does banking versus problem-posing education have for the problem-solving practices of an urban public school principal? If the construct of banking versus problem-posing education were applied to problem solving and leadership, what would it look like? How might a public school administrator encourage teachers to employ methods conducive to problem-posing education? Does the principal's development of problem-posing education help that principal with her or his problem-solving practices? Would the practice of problem-posing education actually have liberating results for students, teachers, and the school community?

### Humanization

Humanization is a Freirean construct that is related to some of the other constructs described earlier. For example, dialogue is a part of the process of humanization because the capacity for dialogue is humanizing (Freire, 1972, 1997, 1998b).

The ability to reflect, to evaluate, to program, to investigate, and to transform is unique to human beings in the world and with the world. Life becomes existence and life support becomes world when the conscience about the world, which also implies the conscience of the self, emerges and establishes a dialectical relationship with the world. (Freire, 1997, p. 34)

Freire (1972, 1996) used analogies of humans and animals throughout much of his writing, particularly in Pedagogy of the Oppressed. The human-animal analogy is a device that allowed Freire to expand on his theme of humanization and the capacity for

dialogue. Many human beings are incapable of speech due to physiological limitations, yet everyone is capable of a level of abstraction. For example, many deaf people do not speak with their vocal cords, yet they might communicate richly and fully through sign language. The ability to communicate is directly related to the human capacity of abstraction, which is what enables humans to far surpass animals in communication skills. Humans' capacity for dialogue permits reflection, and the ability to reflect on one's actions and experience is a unique human experience. Animals may reflect on their experience to a limited extent, but they cannot attain the same level of reflection as humans.

One may well remember—trite as it seems—that, of the uncompleted beings, man is the only one to treat not only his actions but his very self as the object of his reflection; this capacity distinguishes him from the animals, which are unable to separate themselves from their activity and thus are unable to reflect upon it. In this apparently superficial distinction lie the boundaries which delimit the action of each in his life space. (Freire, 1972, p. 87)

The ability to reflect with oneself is part of the process of dialogue. This self-reflection is unique to human beings.

The banking concept of education is related to humanization because it is dehumanizing. Conversely, the problem-posing concept of education is humanizing because it involves dialogue with a purpose. Roberts (2000) elaborated:

Freire was always explicit in declaring his ethical and political position: his concern was to work toward the liberation of the oppressed. Of course, not all teachers, policy makers, and politicians share this goal. Freire believes, however—given his conception of humanization—that all teachers who are *against* the kind of dehumanization fostered through banking education ought to “side with” the oppressed in pursuit of a better social world. (p. 58)

Freire (1972, 1998b, 1998c) used the word *humanizing* several times in his writings; he claimed that becoming human has both ontological and historical aspects.

Becoming more human, or humanization, is a perpetual process set in our historical context. According to Freire, people never become completely human.

The dream of humanization, whose concretization is always a process, and always a becoming, passes by way of breach with the real, concrete economic, political, social, ideological, and so on, order, moorings that are condemning us to dehumanization. Thus, the *dream* is a demand or condition that becomes ongoing in the history that we make and that makes and remakes us. (Freire, 1996, p. 99)

Humanization is a process that is influenced by our historical context. Because our endeavors are related to our ever-changing historical context, whatever we choose to pursue will be affected by a series of events that may or may not abruptly change, causing us to adapt to the changes. The process of becoming human is never really complete because our varied experience causes us constantly to change.

It is important to emphasize that, in speaking of “being more,” or of humanization as ontological vocation of the human being, I am not falling into any fundamentalistic position—which, incidentally, is always conservative. Hence my equally heavy emphasis on the fact that this “vocation,” this calling, rather than being anything a priori in history, on the contrary is something constituted in history. (Freire, 1996, pp. 98-99)

Freire contended that humanization is a perpetual process that requires dialogue in the form of self-reflection within one’s historical context.

The Freirean construct of humanization is also reflected by his Christian faith. Dialogue is a necessary part of the humanization process and, according to Freire (1998a), should have the characteristics of love, faith, hope, and humility. It is paradoxical that Karl Marx, who believed that religion was the “opium of the masses,” heavily influenced Freire, albeit Freire was a Christian (Elias, 1994; Mackie, 1981; Taylor, 1993). Taylor (1993) also described the paradoxical nature of the Marxist influence on Freire:

Freire . . . was never converted to Marxist, revolutionary politics. When he makes his appeal for the creation of those conditions which will combat oppression, his core argument is couched not in the language of Marxism but in the biblical terms of love, faith, hope and humility. . . . As with his idealizing of revolutionary leadership, or his view that Conscientization is primarily a process of “humanization” and that Dialogue itself is the fulfillment of one’s “ontological vocation,” the language of the Christian faith is more than the mere clothes for dressing and presentation: it is actually the skeleton or underpinning of his philosophy and social analysis. (p. 56)

In the preceding citation we also see that another Freirean construct, conscientization, is part of the process of humanization as well as of the construct, dialogue with a purpose.

Last, what did Freire mean by “becoming more human?” Part of what Freire meant when he discussed becoming more human is that this is an evolving process. We are incomplete human beings who are constantly searching within our historical context. This is why Freire used the term *ontological vocation*—because becoming more human is our goal.

In my own case, taking up a theme again and again has to do principally with the oral status of my written word. It also has to do with the relevance of the theme of which I speak to the array of objects in which I invest my curiosity. And it has to do with the relationship that certain things have with other things, as they emerge during the course of my reflection. It is in this sense, for example, that I once again touch on the question of the unfinishedness of the human person, the question of our insertion into a permanent process of searching. (Freire, 1998, p. 21)

Freire (1998) contended that people can transform the future by their praxis. Humans want to improve the opportunity that the future offers by taking action. This desire to transform the future is part of the evolutionary process.

One of the most important tasks of critical educational practice is to make possible the conditions in which the 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; dreamers of possible utopias, capable of being angry because of a capacity to love. (Freire, 1998, p. 45)

In the preceding citation, we see other characteristics that Freire believed make people more human: “social, historical, thinking, communicating, transformative, creative persons; dreamers of possible utopias, capable of being angry” (p. 45).

If the Freirean construct of humanization were applied to the problem-solving practices of public school leadership, what would it look like? Do public school administrators use language that reflects humanization? Does Freire’s view of humanization mirror, in any way, the current practices of public school leaders or their problem-solving practices? Is Freire’s construct of humanization relevant to the administration of urban public schools?

#### Implementation of Freirean Critical Pedagogy and Implications for Research

The first person to apply Freirean pedagogy to teaching was Paulo Freire himself. Freire applied the constructs of his pedagogy to the teaching of adult literacy in Brazil and Chile during the 1950s and 1960s (Freire, 1972). In Brazil, the application of his principles was successful and, paradoxically, led to his exile (Freire, 1996). While living in exile in Chile, Freire used the method that he had developed in Brazil but soon realized that he would have to adapt it to meet the needs of his new Chilean students (Collins, 1977). During Freire’s exile from Brazil, he also implemented and adapted his adult literacy program with and for the people of Guinea Bissau (Freire, 1978). After Freire returned from exile to Brazil, he continued to collaborate with critical theorists in the United States; among the many people with whom Freire wrote were Ira Shor (Freire & Shor, 1987), Donaldo Macedo (Freire & Macedo, 1987), and Antonio Faundez (Freire &

Faundez, 1992). Freire's work with Shor, Macedo, and Faundez was dialogic in form, an application of Freire's construct of dialogue with a purpose.

Freire also applied his constructs of critical pedagogy in educational administration when he became the superintendent of the public school system in São Paulo, Brazil (Freire, 1993). In the introduction to Freire's Pedagogy of the City, Reynolds (1993) described how the educational system perpetuates the disenfranchisement of the urban public school:

What Paulo Freire experienced in São Paulo is not unique. For more than ten years the United States has reduced its proportionate share of support for public education, turned away from full funding of early childhood education and literacy campaigns. But the great assault has come on the public schools themselves. It is an orchestrated effort by education conservatives to retain and foster the growth of an elitist system of schooling insulated from and impervious to students from increasingly varied economic, social, and ethnic backgrounds. (p. 10)

Reynolds believed that the conservative agenda of the Reagan and Bush administrations perpetuated a system that negatively affected the early education of children from low-income families. Parents from the middle classes are more able to afford high-quality daycare and preschool programs than are those living in working-class and urban school districts (Kozol, 1991). Reynolds wrote:

Increased testing, which is fundamentally useless, has stigmatized students and schools for "failing" to meet the prescribed, accepted, or "received" truth based on the concept of a static and finite body of knowledge.

The result is a widening gulf, reduced resources, and such clever income transfer mechanisms as "choice" and voucher plans to take funding from the public treasury and give the dollars (vouchers) to advantaged parents. Thus, competition to the contrary, the public schools are further weakened, tested again, and punished in a round of punitive efforts that miss the mark of a public school in which students make knowledge of their own experience and learn to take an active role in the continuing transformation of society. (pp. 10-11)

The state of Michigan requires a proficiency test for all high school students who want to graduate with an “endorsed” high school diploma. This is important because students with high enough scores are awarded money toward their college-level studies. As Raynolds pointed out in the preceding citation, testing favors students from upscale suburban schools and punishes those from urban schools and low-income areas. This testing and possible monetary award would be concerns for any public school administrator, but they are particularly so for urban public school administrators whose students, due to low test scores, are less likely to benefit from this type of economic assistance (Heller & Shapiro, 2000).

Freire served as the Secretary of Education for the public school system of São Paulo for two and a half years (Taylor, 1993). During his tenure as a public school administrator, he attempted to apply his principles of education. Freire (1993) wrote:

I do not see a contradiction in the fact that today, as Secretary of Education, I try to carry through some of the proposals or put into practice some of the ideas for which I have been struggling for so long. I try to use the power derived from being a part of the city’s government to, at least, realize part of the old dream that moves me: the dream of changing the outlook of schools; the dream of overcoming authoritarian elitism, all of which can only be done democratically. Can you imagine trying to overcome the authoritarianism of schools authoritarily? (pp. 68-69)

Freire realized that applying his principles was challenging and that administrators often are caught up in the bureaucratic maze of mundane activities. He continued:

Of course, it is not easy. There are all sorts of obstacles slowing down transformative action. Piles of paper taking our time; administrative mechanisms blocking the development of projects, deadlines, time limits: it is a mess. In fact, this bureaucracy even gets in the way of the dominant class, but after all, the dominant class ends up adjusting the bureaucracy to its own interests. The hard thing is to have this bureaucracy at the service of the progressive dreams of a people’s government, rather than a populist one. (p. 69)



Freire realized that administrators could be burdened with paper work and bureaucratic procedures.

Freire had an opportunity to apply his principles to both adult literacy and school administration. We have seen how Freire attempted to apply his principles to urban schools in Brazil, but what we have not seen is the application of his principles to urban public schools in the United States. How would an urban public school administrator apply Freire's principles in the context of an urban school in the United States?

In Braaten's (1987) doctoral dissertation, "An Overview of Several Implementations of the Educational Philosophy of Paulo Freire From 1967-1987," she identified six groups that applied Freirean principles in various ways in educational settings in the United States. Of these six groups, she described in detail the following three: (a) educators who had transplanted the total Freirean concept; (b) educators who believed in the total Freirean concept and who worked in public secondary or higher education classrooms; and (c) educators, administrators, psychologists, and social science researchers who used Freire's concepts selectively to fit their unique contexts.

An organization that illustrates the first group is the Information and Resources Center for Educación Liberadora (IRCEL) (Facundo, 1984). IRCEL was a network of Latino organizations that applied Freirean principles to their various projects in the United States and Puerto Rico. According to Facundo,

IRCEL (Information and Resources Center for Educación Liberadora—liberating education) had two beginnings. "Officially" it started in September, 1980 when we received a federal grant to finance it. Unofficially, however, it started in 1978 when a group of representatives from some Hispanic Liberating Education projects surprised each other at a conference in Wisconsin. It was a Project Directors' meeting convened by a federal funding agency. I had been working with a group of Freire-inspired educators in Puerto Rico, trying to discover

through practice and based upon Freire's theories, a relevant alternative for the education of urban low-income adults. (p. 54)

Facundo believed that it was necessary to find an alternative to the educational process and that Freirean principles were worth applying to various projects. However, Facundo also believed that Freire was relevant in a theoretical sense and that Freirean pedagogical principles would need to be adapted for educational programs in the United States:

I must state that we did not see Freire's education philosophy as a source for a literacy "method" or "technique." As stated, out of 24 Latino projects I dealt with, only two had literacy programs, and of these only one tried to replicate Freire's method. We were not in search of a literacy technique, but of a total overhaul, both in the process and contents of adult education in the United States. Our stand was that as long as there is oppression in the United States, Freire would be relevant, at least at the theoretical level, but that practices for the United States had to be discovered in the United States based upon the realities of a complex, technologically-advanced industrial society that no one had succeeded at explaining. (p. 64)

Facundo (1984) criticized academicians for being "talkers" rather than "doers."

She believed that academicians are more likely to use Freirean critical pedagogy as a pretext for academic discussion rather than the pragmatic adaptation and application of Freire's principles:

. . . A series of frictions . . . took place between elite members of minority groups who were "inventing their way through" the application of Freire's pedagogy, right there in the field, and what they saw as mostly "WHITE" or "ANGLO" academicians who argued endlessly about the meaning and accuracy of Freire's theoretical formulations. We also argued endlessly. But we saw ourselves as "doers" and "them" as "talkers." We became separatists: a great gap developed between the Latino grassroots and all university-based people, Latino and Anglo alike. We felt that Freire was "used" as the subject of many publications and dissertations written by academics who were only moved by the publish-or-perish syndrome on behalf of their professional advancement. "Our" quest was felt as an endless, frustrating endeavor to make sense out of what we were learning in the field as compared with what Freire wrote. (p. 65)

Facundo noticed a friction between well-intentioned academicians who discussed Freirean critical pedagogy and professionals in the field who applied Freire's principles.

Perhaps this friction is inevitable because Freire himself was an academician, but he also practiced his own principles as demonstrated by his initial work in Brazil with adult literacy programs and his various stints as a university professor. I am also interested in the application of Freirean critical pedagogy in the field. Urban public schools exemplify issues of oppression (Anyon, 1997; Kozol, 1991). Facundo participated in a group of 28 small organizations that applied the principles of Freirean critical pedagogy in the field. None of those groups applied the principles of Freirean critical pedagogy to the administration of an urban public school. What would the application of Freirean critical pedagogy by an urban public school principal look like?

Mental health and counseling are fields in which Freire's principles have been applied (Demmitt & Oldenski, 1999; Stacey, 2001). Youth partnership accountability is an example of an application of the principles of Freirean critical pedagogy to the field of mental health (Stacey, 2001). Stacey wrote about the application of Freirean pedagogy as it pertains to youths and their relationships with adults:

Youth partnership accountability directly addresses the realm of relationship requiring an exploration of trust, respect and reciprocity, and therefore, ethics. Any approach to human services work needs to clearly identify the theoretical threads that inform it, articulating both epistemological standpoints and defining concepts. There is also the need to examine praxis through a process of critical reflection. This paper takes praxis, in the Freirean sense, . . . as the meeting place of theory and practice, the juncture at which words and actions meet and discourse and experience merge. (p. 209)

Demmitt and Oldenski (1999) made a case for applying Freirean principles to the mental health diagnostic process:

As counselors, our reading and understanding of Freire leads us to struggle with many issues in relation to the mental health profession. It seems that the mental health profession has evolved in such a way as to perpetuate oppression. That is, the profession seems to suggest that a person is never a whole person and never

liberated from their neurosis or dysfunction. In other words, a person is always oppressed by his or her very nature, by being who he or she is, and by what his or her life experiences have been and continue to be. In this same vein, it seems that the major trend in psychotherapy is to perpetuate the oppression of individuals. These concerns and issues lead counselor educators to reflect on the intended and unintended consequences of the choices that people make concerning their behaviors and life situations. (p. 232)

One of the constructs described in Chapter I of this dissertation was humanization. Freire (1996) believed that people are always trying to be more human and that most of us will carry on that attempt throughout our lives. The concept of humanization parallels Demmitt and Oldenski's idea of the perpetual neurosis implied in psychotherapy. Those researchers used Freirean principles to analyze the potentially oppressive aspects of the diagnosis and services provided to public school children with special mental health needs. This is another example of the application of Freirean principles of critical pedagogy in a school setting. We have yet to see the application of Freirean principles to urban public school administration. Urban public schools are places where forms of oppression exist, and Freire's principles apply directly to situations of oppression. This is especially true in public school settings, particularly in urban locales, where oppression may be as subtle as a single burned-out teacher giving up the fight to teach low-income students, or as extreme as statewide funding policies that favor the suburban middle class and provide less funding for urban public schools where the needs are greater. Another example of oppression in urban public schools is standardized testing's being tied to monetary awards for students who attain certain scores. Suburban middle-class students tend to receive these awards, whereas urban public school students tend to miss yet another opportunity.

### Problem Solving

As with all professions, public school administrators regularly and frequently are confronted with problems and dilemmas. Problems require resolution, and dilemmas require management (Cuban, 2001). According to Cuban, there is a difference between problems and dilemmas. Problems are routine in nature, and experienced professionals usually have a repertoire of solutions based on past experience. In contrast, dilemmas are more complicated and involve undesirable consequences of either competing resources or competing values (Cuban, 2001). Many problems must be resolved throughout the course of a public school administrator's professional career. Some public school principals seem to excel at their jobs due to their excellent problem-solving skills, whereas others are less successful because they are not skilled at solving problems (Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995).

Another important aspect to consider is the emancipatory quality of problem solving. Currently, there is little research on the emancipatory aspects of a school principal's problem solving. Skill in problem solving is important to the success of any administrator (Cuban, 2001; Greenfield, 1986; Simon, 1945, 1997). It is unlikely that there is particular a formula for problem solving that will work in all situations and for all administrators. According to Leithwood and Steinbach (1995), prescribing a set of specific behaviors for all administrative situations is not practical because

[the] reductionism they entail so poorly reflects the complicity of administrators' real worlds. Problem-solving is one of the primary skills for successful school principals:

In contrast, cognitive perspectives redefine expertise or effectiveness in terms of problem-solving processes rather than behaviors. From this perspective, although behavior may be contingent, expert administrative problem-solving processes may be quite constant; that is, the same kinds of expert thought

processes applied to different school circumstances may produce appropriate variation in administrative behavior. Improving the sophistication of administrative problem-solving processes is also emancipating. One need not be chained to a prescribed set of practices, however large one's repertoire of practice might be. (p. 8)

In the preceding citation, one can see that cognitive perspectives are important in more fully understanding the problem solving of administrators. The word *emancipating* is used in the context of liberating the principal because with improved problem-solving ability the principal has more options and alternatives instead of being obliged to use a prescribed set of behaviors. If improving the sophistication of a principal's problem-solving skill is emancipating for the principal, what emancipatory implications does the principal's improved problem solving have for the school community and, more specifically, the students? There is a lack of research on the emancipatory aspects of principals' problem-solving ability.

One of the first researchers to study administrative problem solving was Herbert Simon. In Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision-Making Processes Administrative Organization (1945), he examined various aspects of administrative behavior, emphasizing the importance of decision making. Leithwood and Steinbach (1995) cited Simon's book as the catalyst for the study of problem solving:

The decision-making focus on school administration dates back at least to Simon's seminal work in 1945 (see Simon, 1957). This focus was part of a more comprehensive effort to undergird administrators' practice with social science knowledge (the New Movement in educational administration) and was based on positivistic assumptions. In principle, the focus seems promising and well intentioned. For example, although Greenfield (1986) was well known as an articulate critic of science in administration, he was prepared to recommend that "we might well return to one of Simon's original starting points and seek to understand the logic and psychology of human choice" (p.45). He did not criticize this orientation to administrative inquiry but rather the ways in which it has been employed—in particular, the narrow focus on only rational aspects of the educational issues about which administrators must make decisions, and with

the reification of the organization in place of understanding the phenomenology of the individual administrator. (pp. 38-39)

Leithwood and Steinbach implied that a phenomenological approach to studying and understanding the school principal's problem solving is another viable alternative.

Simon (1945, 1958) contended that a scientific approach using social science methodologies was the most appropriate way of studying administrative problem solving. He acknowledged the human aspect of the consequences of decision making in the last edition of his seminal work, Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision-Making Processes Administrative Organization (1997).

What managers know they should do, whether by analysis or intuition, is very often different from what they actually do. One common failing of managers, which all of us have observed (sometimes in ourselves), is the postponement of difficult decisions. What is it that makes decisions difficult and tends to cause postponement? Often, the problem is that all of the alternatives had undesirable consequences. When people have to choose the lesser of two evils, they do not simply behave like Bayesian statisticians, weighing the bad against the worse in the light of their respective possibilities. Instead, they postpone the decision, searching for new alternatives that do not have negative outcomes. If such alternatives are not found, they are likely to continue to postpone choice. A choice between undesirables is not a choice but a dilemma, something to be avoided or evaded. "Disutility" minimization turns out to be an acceptable answer. . . . The bad consequences that lead a manager to postpone a decision are often bad for other people. Managers sometimes have to dismiss employees or, even more frequently, have to speak to them about unsatisfactory work. Dealing with such matters face to face is stressful to many, perhaps most, executives. (pp. 137-138)

Despite Simon's acknowledgment of the human aspect of decision making, that administrators tend to postpone making decisions that can negatively affect other people, the main point is that, according to Simon, scientific positivism is the only valid approach to the study of administration. Simon did not discuss emancipatory issues regarding an administrator's problem solving; he was more concerned with the efficient operation of

the organization and how effective decision-making skills promote organizational success.

Thomas Greenfield (1986), a critic of Simon's work, believed that the human dimension is lacking in the scientific approach to problem solving:

Because positivistic science cannot derive a value from a fact or even recognize values as real, we have a science of administration which can deal only with facts and which does so by eliminating from its consideration all human passion, weakness, strength, conviction, hope, will, pity, frailty, altruism, courage, vice, and virtue. Simon led the science of administration down a narrow road which in its own impotence is inward-looking, self-deluding, self-defeating, and unnecessarily boring. These shortcomings are created by the blinkered view of choice and administrative action afforded by a narrowly empiricist science which lets us see but a pale and reduced reflection of the human will to achieve a purpose, to mobilize resources, to influence others—to do all that people in fact do as they make choices and strive to transform their values into realities. (p. 61)

Greenfield was suggesting a paradigm shift in how researchers of educational administration should look at problem solving. According to Greenfield, the emphasis on research through methodology reflective of scientific positivism is shifting to an analysis of how administrators view their practice. With Greenfield's paradigm shift, a phenomenological approach would be appropriate for the study of decision making and problem solving by a public school principal. Greenfield suggested that administrative scientists should learn from practitioners:

What is required now is a transformation of the administrative scientist's attitudes toward the reality he studies. Scientists inspired by positivism approach administrators with the conviction that their theories and methods enable them to know administration in a way mere practitioners never could. The reverse assumption now seems a better point of departure: administrators know administration; scientists don't. The point of such inquiry would be to enable scientists to come to know what administrators know and to bring a fresh and questioning perspective to it. To accomplish this purpose, we might well return to one of Simon's original starting points and seek to understand the logic and psychology of human choice. (p. 75)



Both Greenfield and Simon agreed that a good starting point is to understand the logic and psychology of human choice (Greenfield 1986). What is missing is how the logic and psychology of human choice can have emancipating and liberatory effects for members of the organization. In the case of urban public schools, the principal solves problems that may have an emancipatory or liberatory result for students, teachers, and other members of the school community.

Little, if any, research has been done in reference to the emancipatory qualities of a public school principal's problem solving. Fletcher made a case for emancipatory practices in schooling. He proposed a new constellation of emancipatory theory and practice for public schools:

Liberal, critical, postmodern, and care-based educational theories share important commitments that place them in opposition to the dominant, neo-conservative discourse in American public education. One way of summarizing the critical agenda of emancipatory theories is in terms of their analysis of the many and complex ways that school policies and practices can have a limiting or constraining effect on individuals, especially insofar as they thwart the efforts of individuals to understand and pursue diverse identities and life-plans. Each emancipatory theory recognizes some means by which relations between differentially situated groups (e.g., women and men, cultural minority and majority members, homosexuals and heterosexuals, etc.) can (and have) become hierarchically organized in one group or another. The response of emancipatory educational theorists has been to promote the role of schools (among other institutions) in resisting the various forms of oppression and exploitation that grow out of these hierarchies. (pp. 30-31)

Problem solving is one practice that has emancipatory potential. Currently, students from the lower end of the socioeconomic scale (Kozol, 2001) predominantly populate urban public schools in the United States; traditionally and historically, these students have been oppressed. Because the problem solving of an urban school principal may have emancipatory qualities for students, teachers, and other members of the school community, it is appropriate to study the problem solving of an urban school principal.

## Chapter Summary

Critical theory is a school of thought that influenced many of the pioneers of critical pedagogy in the United States. A group of German philosophers, sociologists, historians, economists, and others developed the basic philosophy of critical theory in Frankfurt, Germany, during the 1920s and 1930s. Because critical theory involves issues of oppression and emancipation, which are directly related to the social sciences, it was inevitable that this theory would eventually be applied to public school systems (Freire & Shor, 1987; McLaren & Giarelli, 1995), particularly urban ones (Anyon, 1997; Foster, 1986; Kozol, 2000). One of my major objectives in this research was to examine the issues of oppression and problem solving in urban schools.

Through reviewing Freire's writings and the research by Freirean scholars, I identified six constructs for use in this study: (a) dialogue with a purpose, (b) conscientization, (c) praxis, (d) politics and a universal common ethic (pedagogy of politics), (e) banking education versus problem-posing education, and (f) humanization. Each of the constructs was supported with appropriate citations from Freire's publications and those of Freirean scholars Peter Roberts, Paul Taylor, and John Elias. These six constructs or principles of Freirean thought were used in analyzing the problem-solving practices of an urban public school principal chosen for this study.

Last, problem solving in public school administration was discussed. One of the first researchers to study problem solving through decision making was Herbert Simon (1958, 1997), who wrote extensively on the topic from a scientific point of view (Greenfield, 1986; Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995). Generally speaking, problems tend to have routine qualities, and professional administrators are able to draw on their experience for resolution. Dilemmas, on the other hand, are conflict-filled situations in

which the resolution has negative consequences (Cuban, 2001). In an urban school where forces are competing for limited resources, the principal is challenged to resolve these dilemmas and problems so that students will benefit from his or her liberatory problem-solving practices.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

This is a qualitative inquiry in which research strategies from ethnography and phenomenology were used to gather and analyze data in order to examine a particular urban school principal's problem-solving practice through a Freirean lens. This chapter begins with a description of the inspiration for one of the chosen methodologies, which is The Man in the Principal's Office, an ethnographic study by Harry Wolcott (1973). Next, ethnography is defined, followed by a discussion of the appropriateness of that approach for this study. Then there is discussion of the phenomenological method and how it pertains to this research. The procedures that were used in carrying out the study are explained, and interview probes reflecting the six Freirean constructs identified in Chapter II are set forth. The issues of trustworthiness and triangulation are discussed, limitations are delineated, and data-analysis procedures are described.

#### Why Two Methodologies?

Neither of the two chosen methodologies alone could adequately address the issues of this study. Ethnography is usually concerned with studying the culture of a group of people (Wolcott, 1999), and phenomenology is concerned with examining cognitive process and the essence of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Although I was interested in the culture of the principalship, I was more concerned with the culture surrounding the principal in reference to his or her problem solving. I was also

concerned with the principal's cognitive processes for problem solving and the essence of the emancipatory implications for that same problem solving.

Both of the methodologies used in this study are qualitative and share research procedures that are available to qualitative researchers (Moustakas, 1994; Wolcott, 1999). In The Man in the Principal's Office: An Ethnography, Wolcott (1973) described the workings of an elementary school principalship and the culture that surrounded it. Wolcott's work did not examine one specific aspect of the principalship. In contrast, in this study I examined the phenomenon of the problem-solving practices of an urban public school principal. This study was not a full ethnography; rather, I used certain strategies of the ethnographical approach. Because this study concerned a principal's problem-solving efforts, the strategies derived from an ethnographical approach were appropriate. Further, because I examined the essence of the principal's problem solving, a phenomenological approach was also appropriate.

#### Inspiration for the Methodology: Wolcott's The Man in the Principal's Office

Before writing The Man in the Principal's Office, Wolcott (1973) conducted research in the field for nearly one full academic year. He considered his research to be inspired by cultural anthropology. During the research period, he became the "shadow" of an elementary school principal in a medium-sized city. Wolcott triangulated his data by interviewing the principal's staff, family, and fellow principals, as well as observing various school functions and meetings both formally and informally. In the resulting book, Wolcott revealed many facets of the various influences on an elementary school principal and described how the principal, Edward Bell, undertook the daily tasks and met the challenges of being a public school administrator.

Wolcott (1999) said that, to write a successful ethnography, he had to treat the principalship and the culture of an American elementary school as strange rather than familiar. In selecting a methodology for this research, I was inspired by Wolcott's book. However, there are some differences between the two investigations because the present study was concerned with urban public schools.

One of the striking features of Wolcott's ethnography is the context in which the experiences of the principal were described and analyzed. This contextual aspect would be missing if the research had been quantitative in nature. In the preface to his book, Wolcott (1973) compared the context of ethnography to that of other methods of social science research:

The attention to context and to complex interrelationships in human lives is what makes ethnographic accounts different from accounts written from the perspective of other social sciences. Ethnographic accounts deal with real human beings and actual human behavior, with an emphasis on social, rather than on physiological or psychological, aspects of behavior. (p. xi)

The appeal, then, of using an ethnographic approach is that the researcher can address the issue of "real human beings and actual human behavior." In this study, I was concerned with an urban public school principal's interacting with various people and tasks; as such, the study reflects "real human beings and actual human behavior."

One of the ways the data in ethnographies can be analyzed is through role analysis (Langness, 1965). Wolcott was more concerned with the role of the principal than with the man who was the principal. This was also the case in the present research. An urban public school principalship presents a wide variety of challenges, which ethnography can aptly illustrate.

In explaining how he focused on the principalship rather than the principal in The Man in the Principal's Office, Wolcott (1999) stated:

My early study, The Man in the Principal's Office: An Ethnography, . . . provides another example in which one individual serves not only as a major informant but also as the central figure, although the focus is on a role and its cultural setting. The account is not a personality study, yet neither does it deny the importance of the individual acting in a professional role. In a person-centered account, by contrast, we expect the individual to hold center stage. When that individual's life provides the basis for organizing and presenting an ethnographic study, anthropologists have traditionally assigned it to a special category mentioned earlier and discussed next, the anthropological life history. (p. 159)

The anthropological life history concerns the cultural context of a person's life and how lives can affect and be affected by the culture (Langness & Frank, 1981; Wolcott, 1999). Langness and Frank researched how people can shape culture as well as be shaped by it. They found:

When Melford Spiro reviewed culture-and-personality research in 1972 and called for a reorientation, he argued that whereas personality in such studies had always been seen as *explanandum* it should be changed to become *explanans*. . . . For life-history studies this distinction means that rather than concentrating on how the particular individual was shaped by the culture we should concentrate on how the individual shapes or perpetuates the culture. How, that is, do the motives, beliefs, and acts of individuals interact with the environment and with significant others to create and maintain that abstraction we conceive of as culture? (p. 73)

One of my concerns in this research was how the principalship affects the culture of an urban public school and how the culture of that school affects the problem solving of the principalship.

Wolcott (1999) warned that it is important to have a contingency plan when doing an anthropological life history. He contended that certain variables outside the researcher's control could jeopardize a study's success:

Life histories, or person-centered ethnographies in some form that does not hinge so singularly on an entire life span, can bring a sharp focus to research efforts during fieldwork and a workable format and alternative to writing a traditional ethnography. The approach also introduces some uncertainty; the ethnographer is wise to work in such a way that a more general ethnography can be salvaged on the chance the focused life history does not pan out. Numerous things can go wrong when working with an unknown informant on such an ambitious undertaking. Too late one may discover that the informant is not well “informed” after all (and may be inclined to make up answers rather than admit to not knowing); loses interest in the project along the way; grows reluctant to divulge information; becomes concerned that the ethnographer has too much to gain, the informant too little; or begins to draw the account out, quite possibly in more than one way. So while one should always be on the lookout for an exceptional informant, it may be prudent to keep a more traditional ethnography in mind as a fall-back option. Person-centered ethnography represents a fortuitous relationship that may or may not present itself. (p. 161)

In Chapter II, life experiences that formed and shaped Paulo Freire’s thinking were discussed. In ethnographies that are centered on anthropological life histories, or as Wolcott (1999) termed them “person-centered ethnographies in some form that does not hinge so singularly on an entire life span” (p. 161), it is likely that key life experiences can be cited as having influenced the thinking of the individual being studied. On the other hand, due to time constraints on the research, these life experiences might not be revealed. Therefore, Wolcott’s idea of having a contingency plan is prudent. Although it was possible that not enough data would be generated in this study to write a life history, it was logical to assume that there would be enough information “that does not hinge so singularly on an entire life span” to write about.

### What Is Ethnography?

One of the methods that was used in conducting this research was an ethnography of an urban public school principal. Ethnography is a qualitative research approach that has gained wide use among educators, social scientists, and other researchers during the



past several years (Creswell, 1998; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Wolcott, 1999).

Several scholars have defined the term *ethnography*. Wolcott (1999) defined the term, coined by Margaret Mead, as “a way of seeing” (p. 288). Social scientist Norman Denzin (1989) defined ethnography as “the study of lived experiences, involving descriptions and interpretations” (p. 141). Hammersley and Atkinson explained what ethnography entails and indicated that it is synonymous with participant observation:

For us ethnography (or participant observation, a cognate term) is simply one social research method, albeit a somewhat unusual one, drawing as it does on a wide range of sources of information. The ethnographer participates, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions; in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned. (p. 2)

Creswell’s (1998) definition is also helpful in understanding the meaning of ethnography. He, too, said that participant observation is closely linked to ethnography:

An ethnography is a description and interpretation of a cultural or social group or system. The researcher examines the group’s observable and learned patterns of behavior, customs, and ways of life. . . . As both a process and an outcome of research, . . . an ethnography is a product of research, typically found in book-length form. As a process, ethnography involves prolonged observation of the group, typically through participant observation in which the researcher is immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people or through one-on-one interviews with members of the group. The researcher studies the meanings of behavior, language, and interactions of the culture-sharing group. (p. 58)

The three definitions given above share some common characteristics. One important commonality is that ethnography includes a variety of techniques, such as interviews, observations, and examination of artifacts. Another common characteristic is that some form of participant observation is part of an ethnographic study. Finally, all

three definitions implied what Wolcott (1973) referred to as observations of “real human beings and actual human behavior” (p. xi).

According to Gold’s (1958) typology of participant observation, the observer can take one of four different roles: (a) complete participant (“The true identity and purpose of the complete participant in field research are not known to those whom he observes” [p. 219]), (b) participant-as-observer (“Both field worker and informant are aware that theirs is a field relationship” [p. 220]), (c) observer-as-participant (“used in studies involving one-visit interviews” [p. 221]), and (d) complete observer (“The complete observer role entirely removes a field worker from social interaction with informants” [p. 221]).

The type of participant observation used in this study was participant-as-observer because it does not require the researcher to take on an occult role and enables the study to have more depth. The complete-observer role poses an ethical dilemma because it does not allow the people being studied to give or withdraw their consent. The other types, observer-as-participant and complete participant, are not conducive to the triangulation strategies that were used in this field research.

### What Is Phenomenology?

Phenomenology is founded on the work of Edmund Husserl, who was a German philosopher concerned with the role of consciousness in philosophy (Creswell, 1998; Mitchell, 1990). Before Husserl's work, early 19th-century philosophy was dominated by the concept of Cartesian dualism developed by Descartes, which assumed that there were two realms: mind (subject, consciousness) and matter (object, extended substance,

bodies) (Kazanjian, 1998; Stewart & Mickunas, 1990). Husserl resolved the issue of Cartesian dualism by arguing that consciousness and extended substances are part of a continuum (Moustakas, 1994; Stewart & Mickunas, 1990). This shift from Cartesian dualism to a continuum was highly significant for philosophers; however, there are many different views as to what phenomenology is and how it should be applied to research (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990).

There are different philosophical camps of phenomenological study, such as empirical phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology, reflective/transcendental phenomenology, and psychological phenomenology (Creswell, 1998). Because there are different types of phenomenology, it is difficult to find a definition that encompasses all of the approaches. The following is a definition of phenomenology provided by Stewart and Mickunas (1990):

Anyone about to venture forth on a new journey would be well advised to get a general idea of where he is going, to grasp the lay of the land, and to familiarize himself with some of the principal landmarks. As good a place to begin as any is the meaning of the term *phenomenology* itself. It is derived from two Greek words: *phainomenon* (an "appearance") and *logos* ("reason" or "word," hence a "reasoned inquiry"). Phenomenology is indeed a reasoned inquiry which discovers the inherent essences of appearances. But what is an *appearance*? The answer to this question leads to one of the major themes of phenomenology: an appearance is anything of which one is conscious. Anything at all which appears to consciousness is a legitimate area of philosophical investigation. Moreover, an appearance is a manifestation of the essence of that of which it is the appearance. Surprising as it may sound, other philosophic points of view have refused to make this move. (p. 3)

In the preceding definition, one can see some central themes of the phenomenological approach to research: appearance, essence, and consciousness.

This section is not intended to give a detailed analysis of the philosophical characteristics of phenomenology. Rather, the purpose of this section is to provide some

basic concepts underlying phenomenology. With this in mind, there is one more general point to make before continuing to the next section. To understand a phenomenological methodology and analysis of data, it is important to consider the concepts of *noesis* and *noema*. Noesis and noema are terms Husserl developed for understanding the fundamental idea of a continuum rather than Cartesian dualism (Moustakas, 1994; Stewart & Mickunas, 1990). According to Stewart and Mickunas, these two concepts, noesis and noema, are basic to phenomenology:

To underscore the phenomenological view of consciousness, Husserl introduced new terminology which would avoid the subject-object dualism of older philosophical views while respecting the polar structure of consciousness. The activity of consciousness he called noesis (from the Greek word meaning "mental perception, intelligence, or thought"), whereas the essence to which this mental activity is correlated he called *noema* (from the Greek word meaning "that which is perceived, a perception, a thought"). The adjective forms of noesis and noema are noetic and noematic. Still a word of caution is needed: the subject-object way of thinking is so ingrained in habits of thought that one would fail to understand Husserl if he identified the noetic with the subject and the noematic with the object. Husserl stressed repeatedly that noetic activity cannot be identified with psychological activity, for it deals not with psychic processes but with the meaning of those processes. Similarly, the noematic cannot be identified with the empirical object, for it deals not with the physical experience but with the meaning of that experience. (p. 37)

At the heart of understanding noesis and noema is the idea of understanding the meaning of the process and the meaning of the experience. These concepts, noema and noesis, have implications for analysis; the noema and the noesis always have a correlation to each other, and their fundamental meanings need to be determined (Moustakas, 1994).

#### Uses of Ethnographic and Phenomenological Approaches

According to Wolcott (1999), one of the most important things to consider when deciding what method of research is appropriate is the research question. He explained,

“To pose an ethnographic question is to ask a question in such a way that ethnographic research is a reasonable way—although not necessarily the only way—to go about finding an answer” (p. 68). Other researchers have concurred with Wolcott that the research method one selects depends on the research question (Creswell, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Thomas, 1998). The research question posed in this study has descriptive implications: In what ways, if any, is Freirean critical theory reflected in an urban high school principal’s problem-solving practices?

It was appropriate to use an ethnographic approach for this study because this method is conducive to descriptive studies (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). Another reason I chose ethnography as one of the methodologies is that it includes a variety of research techniques, such as one-on-one interviews, focus group interviews, observations, and examination of artifacts (Creswell, 1998). Using a variety of research techniques is conducive to both triangulation and data analysis (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1993). The observations and interviews with various members of the school community allowed me to see whether the principal’s practices reflected his policies. Further, because the research question was descriptive in nature, flexibility was needed to explore the unfolding story of the principalship. Flexibility is a characteristic of the broad category of qualitative inquiry, which includes ethnography and phenomenology (Eisner, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

I have discovered the following consensus regarding phenomenological research methods; this consensus is by no means definitive but served as the point of departure for conducting the phenomenological aspects of the research for this study. According to the

research of Creswell (1998), Mitchell (1990), Moustakas (1994), Polkinghorne (1989), and Stewart and Mickunas (1990), phenomenology is based on the following four beliefs:

1. There is an intentionality of consciousness; this means that consciousness is always directed at some object.
2. There is a refusal of the subject-object dichotomy; this means that an object is perceived through the experiential meaning of an individual.
3. Phenomenologists believe that philosophy should return to the Greek conception that philosophy is a search for wisdom; phenomenologists contend that scientific empiricism is not the only way to study a phenomenon.
4. Last, the idea of phenomenological reductionism is important; this is sometimes referred to as the *essence*, or *eidos*. Arriving at an *essence* is one of the primary objectives of phenomenological research.

According to Mitchell (1990), deriving an essence is essential to phenomenology:

The phenomenological method incorporates a world view as well as a way of viewing the world, just as the "scientific method" is a way of conceptualizing, or modeling, meaning within the physical world as a whole. Phenomenology is not a way to present either empirical or logical evidence to deduce truths or induce generalizations and predictions. Rather, phenomenology is a way of getting at the "is-ness," the kernel of meaning, of the phenomena being examined. (p. 256)

Other researchers have believed that it is possible to conduct phenomenological research that is empirical. Moustakas (1994) provided the following explanation, which highlights the importance of considering experience:

The empirical phenomenological approach involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of the experience. The approach "seeks to disclose and elucidate the phenomena of behavior as they manifest themselves in their perceived immediacy" (van Kaam, 1966, p. 15). The human scientist determines the underlying structures of an experience by interpreting the

originally given descriptions of the situation in which the experience occurs.  
(p. 13)

Phenomenological methodology includes bracketing, which comes from the mathematical tradition of setting aside a part of a problem (Mitchell, 1990). Husserl referred to bracketing as *epoche*, which means that the researcher suspends all judgments about reality until it is possible to establish judgment on a firm basis (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990). During this *epoche* process, it is important to treat every statement as equal in value; this is referred to as *horizontalization*. Moustakas provided the following summary of the process of a phenomenological research model:

*Epoche:*

Setting aside prejudgements and opening the research interview with an unbiased, receptive presence

*Phenomenological Reduction*

Bracketing the Topic Question

Horizontalization: Every statement has equal value

Delimited Horizons of Meanings: Horizons that stand out as invariant qualities of experience

Invariant Qualities and Themes: Nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping constituents clustered into themes

Individual Textural Descriptions: An integration, descriptively, of the invariant textural constituents and themes of each research participant

Composite Textural Descriptions: An integration of all of the individual textural descriptions into a group or universal textural description. (p. 180)

Moustakas's summary is useful for getting a broader view of phenomenological research methodology. Further, the summary has implications for data analysis.

Ethnography and phenomenology are different methodologies; however, they share similar data-gathering strategies. From the ethnographic methodology I borrowed the data-collection strategies of interviewing, observing, and analyzing documents; these three strategies are similar to those of phenomenology. From phenomenology I took a

look at how I framed the question and how I analyzed the data. I was interested in the phenomenon of problem-solving practice for an urban school principal.

### Procedures

The procedures that were used in the field research for this study are described in this section. Topics discussed are (a) ethical considerations, (b) selection of the principal, (c) interviews with the principal, (d) observations of the principal, (e) interviews with various focus groups, (f) an interview with the principal's immediate supervisor, and (g) selection of the vignettes. All of these procedures were chosen for the purpose of obtaining rich qualitative data as well as triangulating the data. All informants were asked to give their written consent before any research was conducted.

### Ethical Considerations

To maintain the ethical integrity of this research, all participants were informed of the following: (a) that their consent was voluntary, (b) that they did not have to answer every question and that they could refuse to participate or answer any question without penalty, (c) that I would transcribe all of the information gathered during the research and keep it on a password-protected computer, (d) that the identities of all people and places would remain confidential, (e) that appropriate pseudonyms would be assigned to participants and places, and (f) that only the members of the dissertation committee and I would see the data. However, despite all of my efforts to maintain confidentiality, it may be possible to identify participants and places; all participants were notified of this possibility in both the letter of introduction and the consent form.



### Selection of the Principal

I selected the principal after taking into consideration the following criteria: The principal should have at least six years of administrative experience, as either a principal or an assistant principal, in an urban public school and should currently be employed in an urban public school with a diverse student population. The student population should number at least 1,500 students, who should reflect a wide range of socioeconomic indicators. Finally, the principal should have a reputation for treating students and parents fairly and encouraging inclusion of all groups. I sought the advice and opinion of my dissertation committee members as well as others when I selected the urban school principal.

### Interviews With the Principal

Three in-depth interviews were conducted with the principal, each at an important time of the school year. The first interview took place in the late spring, when the school year was coming to a close. During the first interview, I used the concept of a life map, which was developed by Benham (1995), Colflesh (1995), Phendla (1999), Sanders-Lawson (1999), and Smith-Campbell (2001). In the first interview, I asked the principal to reflect on seven critical moments in his professional-personal life that had influenced the development of his problem-solving skills. The life map consisted of the seven critical points that served as a catalyst for discussing various aspects of the principal's personal-professional life as it related to problem solving. In the second interview, the principal was also asked to consider and respond to various aspects of a vignette that posed problems and dilemmas requiring resolution. In the third and last interview, I followed up on the emerging themes of the first two interviews as well as questions that

were inspired by the observations. I tape recorded all of the interviews and also took field notes during the interviews.

#### Observations of the Principal

I observed the principal on three different occasions, representing three times during the school year that present unique challenges: late spring, late summer, and early fall. During the observations, I took field notes and asked questions at appropriate times throughout the course of the day. If time allowed, the principal and I had brief follow-up conversations regarding the observations so that we could discuss the events of the day while they were still fresh in our minds.

#### Interviews With Various Focus Groups

I selected diverse focus groups comprising teachers, parents, and the assistant principals assigned to the principal's high school. Each focus group was exclusive in the sense that only teachers were in the teacher focus group, only parents were in the parent focus group, and only assistant principals were in the assistant principal focus group. Each focus group was interviewed once; members were asked to consider and respond to various questions regarding the principal's problem-solving practices. The interviews were tape recorded, and I took notes during the interviews, as well.

#### An Interview With the Principal's Immediate Supervisor

I conducted an interview with the principal's immediate supervisor because this person was not in a subordinate role, as were the teachers, and might have observed situations from an entirely different point of view. This individual was also asked to

consider and respond to various questions regarding the principal's problem-solving practices. The participant was asked how he thought the principal would resolve the issues currently facing the school.

### Selection of the Vignettes

There were two primary criteria for selecting the vignettes that emerged from the data analysis. The first criterion was that I found several participants talking about a specific set of events involving the principal's problem-solving practice; from these vignettes I chose the four that were richest in detail. The second criterion was the saliency that the four vignettes demonstrated for illuminating Freirean critical theory. As the process of vignette selection progressed, I became aware that the vignettes made my initial notion of emancipation and liberatory problem-solving processes more problematic. In the end, the vignettes that were selected show varying degrees of liberatory problem-solving practice. That is, one vignette fully illuminates Freirean elements, one does not, and the last two reveal some tenets, hence, a spectrum of oppression or the lack of attending successfully to oppression.

### Interview Probes Reflecting the Freirean Constructs

The Freirean constructs identified for this study were (a) dialogue with a purpose, (b) conscientization, (c) praxis, (d) politics and a universal common ethic (pedagogy of politics), (e) banking education versus problem-posing education, and (f) humanization. The probes listed under each construct in the following pages were used in the various interviews. Because the principal and the focus groups of teachers, parents, and assistant principals were seeing and experiencing events from different perspectives, in some

cases the interview probes were modified for particular interviews. The following probes were used when the participants were discussing the problem-solving practices of the principal:

1. **Dialogue with a purpose.** What role, if any, does dialogue play in the principal's problem-solving practices? If dialogue plays a role, what purpose do you believe it serves?

2. **Conscientization.** What role does consciousness-raising play in the principal's problem-solving practices? Has anyone become aware of his or her opportunities or lack of opportunities in anything that the principal has said or done? If this were so, how would you explain it?

3. **Praxis.** How important was reflection regarding that experience (decision, problem)? Did reflection help resolve that problem (dilemma)? What role did reflection play in reference to that decision (experience)?

4. **Politics and a universal common ethic (pedagogy of politics).** What spiritual or moral basis guides (or guided) your (his) decision (experience)? What ethical considerations help (helped) you (him) make that decision (or resolve that problem)?

5. **Banking education versus problem-posing education.** Did memory play a part in that decision? Would that decision or experience be of a routine nature? What helped you (him) the most when resolving a difficult problem or dilemma? What helped you (him) the most with forming an opinion?

6. **Humanization.** Did you observe people becoming more aware of the needs or desires of others? What changes did you notice in your (his) own level of awareness of the suffering (or joy) of others? What changes did you notice in other people's awareness of the suffering (or joy) of others?

### Issues of Trustworthiness and Triangulation

It is common for qualitative researchers to use terminology employed by quantitative researchers when discussing issues of trustworthiness (Johnson, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Johnson, there are researchers who propose abandoning traditional measures of validity and reliability and others who prefer a more moderate viewpoint:

Discussions of “validity” have traditionally been attached to the quantitative tradition. Not surprisingly, reactions by qualitative researchers have been mixed regarding whether or not this concept should be applied to qualitative research. At the extreme, some qualitative researchers have suggested that the traditional quantitative criteria of reliability and validity are not relevant to qualitative research (e.g. Smith, 1984). Smith contends that the basic epistemological and ontological assumptions of quantitative and qualitative research are incompatible, and, therefore, the concepts of reliability and validity should be abandoned. Most qualitative researchers, however, probably hold a more moderate viewpoint. Most qualitative researchers argue that some qualitative research studies are better than others, and they frequently use the term validity to refer to this difference. (p. 282)

Assuming that “some qualitative research studies are better than others” (Johnson, 1997, p. 282), the issue of validity or trustworthiness is important in determining whether a qualitative study is trustworthy or valid.

Other terms have been used as synonyms for validity. Wolcott (1999), for example, used the term *corroboration*. Creswell and Miller (2000) offered three paradigms to help researchers establish validity, one of which they called the constructivist position. In the following excerpt, they listed several procedures for establishing validity using the constructivist approach:

The constructivist or interpretive position emerged during the period of 1970 to 1987, . . . and it is reflected in stances toward validity today. Constructivists believe in pluralistic, interpretive, open-ended, and contextualized (e.g., sensitive to place and situation) perspectives toward reality. The validity procedures reflected in this thinking present criteria with labels distinct from quantitative

approaches, such as trustworthiness (i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability), and authenticity (i.e., fairness, enlarges personal construction, leads to improved understanding of constructions of others, stimulates action, and empowers action). (pp. 125-126)

The constructivist paradigm of validity was appropriate for this research. However, due to time and budgetary constraints, not all of the procedures that Creswell and Miller mentioned were applied.

An important research technique that helps lend trustworthiness and credence to qualitative studies is triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation provides a system of checks and balances that help determine the accuracy and trustworthiness of the various informants' responses (Wolcott, 1999). According to Denzin (1978), there are four basic types of triangulation:

(1) *Data triangulation* has three subtypes: (a) time, (b) space, and (c) person. Person analysis, in turn, has three levels: (a) aggregate, (b) interactive, and (c) collectivity. (2) *Investigator triangulation* consists of using multiple rather than single observers of the same object. (3) *Theory triangulation* consists of using multiple rather than single perspectives in relation to the same set of objects. (4) *Methodological triangulation* can entail within-method triangulation and between-method triangulation. (p. 101)

Generally speaking, most researchers think of using multiple data sources when they think of triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Because of time and budgetary constraints, I relied on data-source triangulation, which Denzin (1978) said

... forces the researcher to go to as many concrete situations as possible in forming the observational base. It forces the researcher to *situationally* check the validity and reliability of the specimens and emerging causal proposition. The attitudes a man expresses in private, for example, might be compared with those he offers when in the company of his larger social group. (p. 101)

The field research for this study entailed collecting data from various sources, such as one-on-one interviews, focus group interviews, and observations of the principal on the job.

Researcher reflexivity is another technique for establishing trustworthiness (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Johnson, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Creswell and Miller, reflexivity refers to researchers' disclosure of

. . . their assumptions, beliefs, and biases. This is the process whereby researchers report on personal beliefs, values, and biases that may shape their inquiry. It is particularly important for researchers to acknowledge and describe their entering beliefs and biases early in the research process to allow readers to understand their positions, and then to bracket or suspend those researcher biases as the study proceeds. (p. 127)

Thus, in this study, trustworthiness was established through triangulated data sources as well as researcher reflexivity.

This study was based on the critical theory elaborated by Paulo Freire. In the 1920s, the Frankfurt School first developed critical theory (Held, 1980). The basic principles of critical theory influenced educators, and a critical pedagogy was thus developed. Paulo Freire was a pioneer in the development of critical pedagogy (McLaren & Giarelli, 1995). Later, other researchers such as Jean Anyon, Michael Apple, Donaldo Macedo, Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux, Alberto Torres, and Jonathan Kozol began to embrace the principles of critical pedagogy. Both critical theory and critical pedagogy are based on the assumption that there are groups of people who historically have been oppressed (Giroux, 1995; Held, 1980; McLaren & Giarelli, 1995). Carspecken (1996) described some of the attributes of "criticalists":

Those of us who openly call ourselves “criticalists” definitely share a value orientation. We are all concerned about social inequalities, and we direct our work toward positive social change. We also share a concern with social theory and some of the basic issues it has struggled with since the nineteenth century. These include the nature of social structure, power, culture, and human agency. We use our research, in fact, to refine social theory rather than merely to describe social life. Together, we have begun to develop critical social research. (p. 3)

Freire (1972, 1976) claimed that all people are oppressed in some way. However, it seems that some groups such as African Americans, Native Americans, women, Mexican Americans, gay people, working-class people, and many others are more oppressed than others. Yet critical theory involves more than just the assumption of historical oppression. The intensity and perpetuation of oppression are other issues. Traditionally and historically, women have had fewer opportunities and rights than men; this is true in more than one culture and nation. Also, there are only a few places in the United States where gay people’s rights are legally protected, and even fewer in other parts of the world. Thus, because oppression is historical, intense, and continual, there is a place for critical theorists and critical pedagogues in conducting research about issues of social justice and inequality.

Urban public schools are a particularly appropriate place to study issues of oppression and social justice in educational systems. Policies are in place that perpetuate oppression and affect the opportunities of traditionally oppressed groups of people. Because critical pedagogy is concerned with broad issues of oppression in school systems, universities, and other educational institutions, it is an appropriate lens through which to view the practices of an urban public school administrator.



### Limitations

This study has the following limitations:

1. Time is the first limitation. To conduct a full ethnographic study, it would be necessary to have 1 to 2 years (if not more) of research time. Conducting the field research for this study took approximately 7 months, with an average of 2 hours a day spent on research activities.
2. Budget constraints are another limitation. This study was paid for entirely with my personal funds. There was no money for such things as transcription services, which might have facilitated the accuracy of the tape-recorded transcripts.
3. One way to enhance the trustworthiness of a qualitative study is to have more than one researcher conduct interviews and observations. This study had only one researcher.
4. It is possible that the Freirean constructs chosen for the study may not be reflected in the data.
5. Reflections of the Freirean constructs in the principal's practices may be coincidental.

### Procedures for Data Analysis

A primary task of an ethnographer is to look for emerging patterns in the various data collected during the fieldwork (Wolcott, 1999). One of the primary tasks in a phenomenological study is to look for the essence of the data (Moustakas, 1994, Stewart & Mickunas, 1990). Initially, these tasks may seem overwhelming, and too many patterns may be identified (Creswell, 1998; Wolcott, 1999). As Wolcott noted,

There is always too much happening in any setting selected for study; observation presents an impossible task. The observer feels torn between finding patterns everywhere and entertaining serious doubts as to whether there is any systematic patterning at all in what is being observed. (p. 256)

Because it was necessary to analyze a variety of data, the analysis procedures that Creswell (1998) and Moustakas (1994) suggested were appropriate for both the ethnographical and phenomenological aspects of the research. Creswell suggested that, in analyzing the various data generated in a study, it is best to think of the data-analysis process as various loops of a spiral rather than in a linear sense. Each of the loops represents a process that may be revisited in order to sort out emerging patterns that might not have been detected in the first analysis. The following is a brief description of the data-collection and -analysis procedures that Creswell recommended; this depiction is followed by some recommendations by Moustakas. The data-analysis methods may overlap, and I needed to determine which methods were the most appropriate for the field research.

**Data collection:** This is the process of doing the field research. In this research, the data-collection procedures included observations, one-on-one and focus group interviews, and examination of artifacts.

**Organization of data:** The data were organized according to type. I transcribed the tape recordings and noted my initial impressions in the margins. I organized the field notes and checked them for clarity; this was an ongoing task from the start of the data-collection process.

**Managing of data:** I continually studied the data so that I could get a general idea of what was available in the entire data base.

**Reading and memo writing:** I read over the entire data base several times, immersing myself in the details before breaking the data into parts.

**Reflection and note writing:** Writing memos in the margins of the field notes and transcripts helped in the initial exploration of the data base.

**Context, categories, and comparisons:** In this phase of the data analysis, I determined initial and tentative categories and emerging patterns. I examined the data for their reflection of Freirean constructs.

**Describing, classifying, and interpreting:** I took apart the text of the qualitative data and reexamined emerging themes. The goal was to establish five or six general themes. The data were interpreted on the basis of the Freirean constructs identified in Chapter II.

**Development of visuals:** In this phase of the analysis, I developed various visuals (i.e., matrices, trees, webs) in the hope of visually reflecting the outcomes of the data analysis.

**Representing and visualizing:** The data were organized and are presented in Chapter IV as the study findings. This step included editing the visual devices, such as tables or figures, developed in the preceding phase.

**Discussion:** The final analysis includes a discussion of the Freirean constructs and how they are reflected in the practices of the principal selected for study. Moustakas (1994) modified a data-analysis method originally developed by van Kaam. The following items, based on that modification, were added to Creswell's suggestions in order to meet the requirements of a phenomenological data analysis.

1. *Listing and Preliminary Grouping:*

List every expression relevant to the experience. (Horizontalization)

2. *Reduction and Elimination:* To determine the Invariant Constituents: Test each expression for two requirements:

a. Does it contain a moment of the experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding it?

b. Is it possible to abstract and label it? If so, it is a horizon of the experience.

Expressions not meeting the above requirements are eliminated. Overlapping, repetitive, and vague expressions are also eliminated or presented in more exact descriptive terms. The horizons that remain are the invariant constituents of the experience.

3. *Clustering and Thematizing the Invariant Constituents:*

Cluster the invariant constituents of the experience that are related into a thematic label. The clustered and labeled constituents are the core themes of the experience.

4. *Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents and Themes by Application:*  
Validation

Check the invariant constituents and their accompanying theme against the complete record of the research participant. (1) Are they expressed explicitly in the complete transcription? (2) Are they compatible if not explicitly expressed? (3) If they are not explicit or compatible, they are not relevant to the co-researcher's experience and should be deleted.

5. Using the relevant, validated invariant constituents and themes, construct for each co-researcher an *Individual Textural Description* of the experience. Include verbatim examples from the transcribed interview.

6. Construct for each co-researcher an *Individual Structural Description* of the experience based on the Individual Textural Description and Imaginative Variation.

7. Construct for each research participant a *Textural-Structural Description* of the meanings and essences of the experience, incorporating the invariant constituents and themes. (pp. 120-121)

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

#### Introduction

In this chapter I provide contextual information on the community of West Starville, the setting for this study. I describe the high school itself and the principal's professional background. Next, I present four detailed vignettes that illuminate the principal's problem-solving practices. Throughout the discussion, pseudonyms are used to maintain anonymity. Last, I discuss emerging themes based on a textual analysis of the four vignettes and present a matrix of qualities exhibited in those vignettes, which assisted me in building a local theory of practice, presented in Chapter V.

#### Demographic Characteristics of the Community

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (1983), the population of West Starville was 130,414 in 1980; by the year 2000, the population had declined to 119,128. West Starville's change in demographics is typical of American cities with populations of more than 100,000. The city's racial distribution in the year 2000 was approximately 65% Caucasian, 22% African American, 18% American Indian and Alaskan Native, .1% Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders, 4% other races, and 4% two or more races (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

West Starville's many manufacturing facilities provide the city with jobs and a tax base. Unfortunately, most of the employees (along with their incomes) no longer live within the city limits of West Starville. When West Starville's industries are doing well, the city benefits from higher tax revenues, but the converse is true when economic times are poor. The city has had to offer tax benefits to its industries because they have

threatened to leave the community in search of less expensive labor as well as lower taxes.

During the early 1970s, the West Starville School District experimented with a desegregation plan for its elementary schools. However, this voluntary plan met with opposition, and many members of the school board were recalled. When the new school board took office, they rescinded the desegregation plan. In 1978, a U.S. district court ordered the West Starville School District to desegregate its schools; this meant that many students would be bused to various schools within the district in order to achieve racial balance. Teachers and administrators also were reassigned to different buildings so that there would be racial balance among the professional staff. Despite the court-ordered desegregation plan, there were no violent or passionate demonstrations. Most scholars who have studied the West Starville desegregation order do not believe that it caused the Caucasian community to flee the city. In 1980, Caucasians constituted about 81% of the total district population, yet in 2000 the percentage of Caucasians had fallen to 65%.

#### Description of Macedo High School

Construction of the new Macedo High School began in August 1958; its doors were opened in fall 1959 to a student population just under 1,000. There had not been enough time to plant grass and do other landscaping before school opened in the fall, so students and staff had to contend with a muddy campus during the first two months or so of school. The original building, which was located about four blocks away, had become too small for the growing number of students enrolled there. There had already been four major renovations as well as several additions to the old school. The first class to graduate from the new high school was the class of 1960. Initially, Macedo High School

was predominantly Caucasian; however, over time, the school has become racially diverse.

Today, Macedo High School reflects the racial diversity of West Starville. About 40% of the students at Macedo High School qualify for free breakfast and free lunch programs; qualification for these programs is based on low family income. About 1,800 students currently are enrolled, which is the maximum capacity according to the architect's original plan. Approximately 550 students are freshmen. The school is typical with regard to its staffing. There are about 150 full-time teachers, a principal, 3 assistant principals, 8 secretaries, a school nurse, various custodial and kitchen staff, and 3 security guards. One of the assistant principals works primarily with curriculum, scheduling, and special projects. The other two assistant principals work mainly with student discipline, but they also perform a variety of other duties.

Although Macedo High School is more than 40 years old, it has been well maintained over the years, and it is difficult for most people to guess its age. A four-story classroom wing has an elevator for use by custodians, as well as by students and staff with physical challenges. It is sometimes difficult to navigate the sprawling building because it is so large. The total gross area of the building is 301,150 square feet on what was originally a 57-acre site. The total cost of the original building was a little more than \$5.5 million. Today, it would cost significantly more to build such a facility.

### The Principal's Background

Michael Kent, the principal who was the subject of this study, attended a one-room schoolhouse in a rural community. He lived so close to the school that occasionally the chiming of the school bell would awaken him. When he overslept, he would dress quickly and run all the way to school before class started. He was the only child in his

family, which included both a mother and a father. His father expected the boy to help out around the farm. As he grew older, his duties increased; in fact, by the time the youth was in high school, he worked as many as 60 hours a week during the summer months. His father paid him for this work, so when he was a teenager he always had spending money as well as a car. Michael Kent was popular in high school; he rarely studied because getting good grades was easy for him.

On Michael Kent's first day of college, he changed his major from agriculture to mathematics. At the time, he was not sure what he would do with a major in mathematics; he simply preferred this subject to agriculture. Upon reflection, though, he decided to become a teacher. One of the reasons he wanted to be a teacher was that one of the few teachers who had challenged him was a mathematics teacher. Both of Michael Kent's parents also had been teachers. His father had attended a normal school and taught for two years before dedicating the rest of his working years to farming. His mother studied to become a teacher after her son reached young adulthood. She began as a junior high school teacher in the rural district where her son had attended school; later she taught in West Starville, where her son was employed, because the pay there was significantly higher there than in the rural district.

Mr. Kent began his teaching career in the West Starville School District. Early on, he became interested in computers and eventually was one of the first teachers in the district to organize a computer laboratory. He also became interested in administration early in his career and was principal of the high school adult education program for 25 years. This part-time position allowed him to gain administrative experience. In 1987, Mr. Kent became an assistant principal of one of the high schools in the district. In 1995,



he became interim principal of Macedo High School, and two years later he was named the permanent principal.

Throughout the interviewing process and observations of Mr. Kent, I was impressed with his personable nature. When Mr. Kent spoke about Macedo High School, he preferred to stress its strengths and rarely, if ever, talked about any anguish he was having about administering a large urban high school. I am not sure why Mr. Kent did not discuss any of his shortcomings regarding the challenges he faced, nor did I ask him directly. I did, however, query his responses to my interview probes so as to get the best picture of his perception regarding his problem-solving processes. In addition, I queried other interviewees (e.g., teachers, community members, his supervisor), and generally they described Mr. Kent's work ethic, problem-solving capacity, and human relationship building in very positive ways. Much of Mr. Kent's success can be attributed to the fact that he is a seasoned school administrator and has worked most of his professional career in this school district, first as teacher and then at different levels of administration.

#### Four Vignettes Illustrating the Principal's Problem-Solving Practices

In the following sections, I present four vignettes that I developed from the data collected for this study. These vignettes illustrate the principal's problem-solving practices and amplify patterns that emerged regarding the Freirean principles that guided Mr. Kent and his practice. The four vignettes are titled (a) Empowering Through Inclusion, (b) Collaboration and Teamwork, (c) Using Alliances to Achieve a Solution, and (d) The Dilemma of Race. It is important to note that the vignettes show varying degrees of emancipation and liberatory practice. That is, the first vignette, Empowering Through Inclusion, is the strongest as it illuminates many of the Freirean constructs. The second and third vignettes, Collaboration and Teamwork and Using Alliances to Achieve

a Solution, demonstrate moderate degrees of Freirean constructs. The last vignette, The Dilemma of Race, does not reflect Freirean constructs. What we learn in this last vignette is that institutional barriers often hinder liberatory practices. These vignettes serve as a foundation for a three-layer analysis of the principal's problem-solving practices. The first two layers are included in this chapter, and the third appears in Chapter V.

Vignette 1: Empowering Through Inclusion:  
The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Student Club

During the fall of the 2001-02 school year, two students, a male and a female, asked to speak to Mr. Kent privately. These students, both of whom had been on the honor roll their entire time at Macedo, wanted to form a club at the high school that would promote human rights, especially those of gay people. They asked Mr. Kent what they would need to do to form such a club. He told them they would have to do what everyone else did—find an advisor and write a description of how the club would be organized and who would be allowed to join. The two students said they wanted the club to be open to both gay and straight students, and the principal thought this was a positive direction to take.

The students told the principal that they knew some students who might be interested in joining their club but that many potential members would be hesitant to join because they were afraid to admit to an alternative sexual orientation. Mr. Kent told the two students that he was willing to give them permission to form the club, provided they write up a proposal for the club, find a faculty advisor, and speak to the assistant principal who was responsible for overseeing events and the organization of school clubs. Mr.

Kent believed that gay students should have the same rights as other students, as illustrated in the following excerpt from the field notes:

The kids come to me and they want to do it; I'll back [them]. You know, the Gothic Kids' Ball, that kind of thing. The idea that just because you have a different sexual orientation, well, what's the difference between that and the color of your skin? And there are some gifted people. Macedo High School's tolerant. Could you have done that in other systems? Could you have done that around West Sikeston? Oh, God, no! (Michael Kent, tape transcripts)

The two students told Mr. Kent they were surprised that forming the club would be so simple, and they asked if he was afraid of repercussions. They knew that forming such a club could be controversial because there was sure to be opposition from fundamental religious groups, which generally opposed human rights for gay people. The principal replied that he did not think he had any reason for concern. He was aware that this school club had potential to be controversial; however, he believed that it was ethically correct to recognize gay students as part of the school community.

At that point, Mr. Kent asked a counselor and a social worker to help him deal with derogatory statements that students or staff might make about the club or its members. The guidance counselor, Delores Owens, had several years of experience in various kinds of counseling and readily agreed to accept the position of club advisor. She was impressed with the students and enjoyed her role as their club advisor. She stated,

There were kids who were fabulous students, who were involved, every one of them; they were concerned about human rights more than homosexuality. And so our discussions were about equality, about legislation, about civil rights, about tolerance and not in just one facet; it was truly across the board. And the group was formed to raise awareness and in addition to give a group of students who felt like they were a minority and that they were often ridiculed, persecuted, a place where they could talk about things that they cared about. Even if it was TV shows; if it was whatever topic that was important to them, that they had a place where other people had similar things going on in their lives, and that just made them comfortable. (Delores Owens, tape transcripts)

The social worker, Candice Janeway, was a veteran of the school district and agreed with Principal Kent that forming a gay and straight student club would be beneficial to the school community.

About two weeks after the students met with the principal, representatives from the Gay Rights Organization United for Peace (GROUP), a national organization that promotes fair treatment of gay people, made an appointment to meet with Mr. Kent. At that meeting, six representatives of GROUP explained the purpose of their organization and offered Mr. Kent their support. They gave him a thick packet of background information, as well as their business cards, so that if he were ever challenged he would have a resource available.

The students did all of the things that Mr. Kent had asked them to do. They met with the assistant principal who oversaw student clubs, and they found a faculty advisor. They also wrote up a proposal in which they explained that any Macedo High School student could join the club, regardless of sexual orientation. The students named their club the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Students Club (GLASS). At the time, there was much diversity in the building, and GLASS was just another diverse group. The way the club was founded indicates the diversity at Macedo High School. According to assistant principal Gomez,

I think that the way it was conceived and the way we proceeded to handle it and the advisor who was over it had a lot to do with making it so that it didn't come across as either offensive, or brash, to the rest of the student body or staff. And it didn't really ruffle any feathers. And there is so much [diversity] even within that group; there's so much diversity in this building and more than just tolerance. I think that there's a quasi acceptance of differences, and these students worked side by side with other students all of the time. And it wasn't that each one of those students in that organization was labeled particularly one way or the other. I think that there was enough of a mixture there of people being empathetic to the plight of others. (Linda Gomez, tape transcripts)

The six original members of GLASS reflected the diversity within the high school; both genders and several racial or ethnic groups were represented. The club grew slowly because the principal wanted to make sure that staff members were prepared to provide support to students who admitted to an alternative sexual orientation and were subjected to negative comments from prejudiced classmates.

At times, members of GLASS suffered repercussions from joining the club. On a few occasions, when club members were hanging posters to promote club membership, they overheard fellow students making derisive comments. Initially, most posters were ripped down as soon as they went up. However, over time, when members of GLASS put up posters, fewer and fewer of them were ripped down. Mr. Kent believed this was an indication that students were slowly accepting the GLASS club and its members.

Mr. Kent was unaware of the precise number of students who belonged to GLASS. He believed that the faculty advisor and the students should run student clubs: "I'm hands-off on all organizations. If it's the chess club, do I go and count the number of players? Why would I count the number of players here? Other than I had the guts to take it. It's like having a Gothic Kids' Ball" (Michael Kent, tape transcripts). However, Delores Owens, the GLASS advisor, informed Mr. Kent that the membership had increased significantly since the club's founding. GLASS had regularly scheduled meetings, and club members continued to hang posters inviting interested students to attend their meetings. In January 2001, the local chapter of GROUP invited Mr. Kent to a banquet at which he was given an award for supporting the formation of a gay and straight student organization at his high school.

Vignette 2: Collaboration and Teamwork:  
A Tale of Two Academies

During late winter of the 2001-02 school year, Principal Kent and Linda Gomez, an assistant principal, talked about the possibility of establishing two academies at Macedo High School. They were concerned that the building's curriculum lacked direction and believed that the various academic disciplines were not unified in any way, other than being aligned with the district curriculum. Both agreed that one way to address this lack of direction would be to form academies. Mr. Kent had been thinking about forming an International Performing Arts Academy (IPAA) for the past 10 years, but for a variety of reasons the time never had been right. He explained,

I'm a math major, but I know that people in performing arts gather confidence, and whether or not you've got brains, if you can stand on your feet and talk, present yourself, you can make a living. So that was important to me. [Also], in order to maintain the population here of all the standard students, performing arts people tend to be academically more advanced. (Michael Kent, tape transcripts)

Thus, one of Mr. Kent's primary reasons for wanting to form the IPAA was that learning a performing art increases a person's confidence, which carries over to other academic areas, as well. He had observed that students who were successful in a performing art tended to do better in their academic courses than those who had no such training.

One of the principal's strategies for initiating this innovation was to build consensus among interested people. He realized that when there was consensus, an innovation was more likely to be successful because like-minded people were working toward similar goals. One disadvantage of consensus building was that it could be excruciatingly time consuming. Previously, Kent had built consensus by forming committees of motivated teachers and providing them with resources to develop a program. However, he also had seen committees that dissipated without producing much in the way of tangible results. He wanted teacher input, but he sensed that forming a

teacher committee might not be the best way to establish the academy. Assistant principal Gomez also had observed this dichotomy between including teachers in decision making and needing to complete the work in a timely manner. She stated,

There has to be a buy-in, I think, for all parties. Sometimes you are really fortunate and you get teachers outside of that area that have a direct interest or a passion for whatever subject area. In this particular instance, why try to reinvent the wheel when you already had a performing arts and visual arts department who were already working very well together, very cemented? We already had a ninth-grade team that, through a connected model, were just cemented and very well founded on their feet. You take the best of two worlds and put it together, and there is a marriage there. (Linda Gomez, tape transcripts)

Mr. Kent knew that the performing arts teachers would be interested in developing the IPAA, and that the business teachers would be interested in developing the Write It Right Academy of Teaching and Commerce (WRATC). So even though some teacher committees he had formed had not achieved beneficial results, he generally preferred to work with committees because they were more inclusive and allowed teachers to have a voice. Mr. Kent's preference was reflective of Freire's dialogue with a purpose because it was inclusive (Freire, 1972). The principal thought that the time was right for founding the academies and that there were skilled and talented teachers who had great potential for developing those academies. However, he was not sure that formal committees could produce the necessary work in a timely manner. He said,

Formal committees, I've found over the years, unless you are personally involved and they do not have a vested interest, then there won't be much that will come after that. So, I needed a commitment. . . . That's why we kept them in the two areas. You've got a business department that worked together for the first time in its life. They actually even talked to each other. That's basically what we did with performing arts. (Michael Kent, tape transcripts)

The principal was also concerned about involving enough people in each department for the academies to be successful. If any people were not sufficiently motivated, the likelihood of success would be compromised.

Mr. Kent did not have many resources at his disposal for carrying out his plans. There were no economic incentives for potential committee members, and the only benefit that he had to offer was an academy that would highlight their departments. With only a few potential committee members, the principal wondered how he would be able to form two productive committees. He also questioned how effective his committee-forming strategy might be. He wanted the two academies to come to fruition the following school year and was not willing to wait for a slow-moving committee to develop a new curriculum and an implementation plan.

The two academies would provide a focus to the education of students at the high school; the academies were unique and therefore met different student needs. Freshmen could select an academy upon enrolling for their first semester and generally would stay with the academy during their four years of high school. The primary goal of the first academy, the IPAA, was for students to attain proficiency in a performing art. The other academy, the WRATC, would stress attaining advanced computer and business skills. These two academies are reflective of Freire's construct of problem-posing education as opposed to banking education. The purpose of the academies was to help students develop higher-order skills, which is also the purpose of problem-posing education. Students in the WRATC would take a variety of technology classes, such as accounting, computer science, and business writing. They would also take several courses in advanced word-processing. Helping students develop advanced skills is what Freire would classify as problem-posing education, in contrast to banking education, which is focused on lower-level skills that promote rote memorization.

Linda Gomez, the assistant principal responsible for curriculum development and curriculum maintenance, supported the formation of both academies. She was especially



interested in the IPAA, due to her long-time attraction to the performing arts. One of the reasons Mr. Kent had wanted Ms. Gomez to be an assistant principal at his school was that she shared his long-time passion for performing arts; eventually, he would be able to tap her skills to implement the IPAA. In an interview, he had this to say about his relationship with Ms. Gomez: “She’s my detail person. She may be the front [person], but I’m the one that has to get the money and pull the miracles to get things to happen” (Michael Kent, tape transcripts). Their different skills would complement each other as the two academies were developed.

The other two assistant principals, Ethyl Fontaine and Norma Flowers, were also involved in planning the academies; however, their participation was more in the sense of proofreading and providing technical support. Generally speaking, Mr. Kent and the three assistant principals considered themselves a team. During observations and interviews, I noticed that the four administrators worked together well. Ms. Flowers corroborated this observation:

I think we do really well with each other because, first of all, we accept each other as individuals. And we accept the strengths and weaknesses that we have. But we also work very hard to support one another. There is no member of this team that runs around behind the other one, undercutting. We have our responsibilities. It’s not uncommon for somebody to walk in and ask me a question and I’ll say, “You know what? That’s Ethyl’s thing. She’s working with that.” Then some kid will come in, “I want my schedule changed.” “No, it’s midway through the semester and I can’t touch a schedule at this point; I’m not authorized to touch schedules during this period of time. You want to talk about a schedule, you better go talk to Ms. Gomez.” We know what our responsibilities are and we take care of our responsibilities, and we take care of each other as a team. And we function very well as a team. I would dare say that we are probably one of the best-functioning teams in the district. (Norma Flowers, tape transcripts)

The administrators frequently consulted each other during work hours, held impromptu meetings, finished each other’s sentences when conversing, and assisted each other with a variety of administrative tasks. Mr. Kent was notorious for changing

direction in the middle of expressing a thought; as a result, his sentences often were convoluted and difficult to understand. When this happened, the assistant principals felt confident enough to ask him to explain himself.

Ms. Gomez was the primary advocate of the two academies. She regularly consulted with Mr. Kent about progress that was being made in curriculum development and the implementation plan. Like Mr. Kent, she was eager to institute the academies at the beginning of the next school year and was concerned that forming teacher committees might retard the process of curriculum development and eventual implementation. At the time of this research, 150 full-time teachers were employed at Macedo High School. Various part-time and rotating special education faculty also served other buildings in the district. Among these faculty members were several teachers who were interested in supporting and participating in the academies, but some teachers resisted change and were unlikely to be helpful.

Because skeptical teachers could stall the timely implementation of the two academies, for the remainder of the school year, Ms. Gomez and Mr. Kent met with interested teachers as a group and individually so that they could share ideas about the curriculum, course offerings, and selection of people to teach the academy courses. The performing arts teachers had been in favor of an academy featuring performing arts and enthusiastically embraced the proposal by writing curriculum and developing courses. Ms. Gomez and teachers who participated in writing the curriculum were enthusiastic about the proposed academies.

On two occasions, Mr. Kent talked to the Parent and Faculty Senate about the academies. He was optimistic that additional funding for the academies would become available in the future, but he stressed that the organization of the academies would not

be contingent on receiving any special funding. Therefore, he was confident that the academies would come to fruition the following school year, 2002-03.

The first people to start planning for the academies were Ms. Gomez and Mr. Kent; they met a few times to talk about the process. Mr. Kent thought some of his veteran teachers would be key to making the academies successful. The performing arts teachers had received awards for their innovations, and the business teachers were known for being hard working and for challenging their students. The principal did not want to form another committee of well-intentioned but slow-moving professionals who were unlikely to complete the proposal for the academies in a timely manner. However, he did want to include teachers in the process; in fact, he generally included teachers in much of his decision making as well as in developing programs for the high school. Andrew Parker, a Macedo High School teacher, spoke of Mr. Kent's success in including teachers and other administrators in his problem-solving practices:

I think the problem solving not only with students, but he's very good with the teachers and administration, combining them both. Because he'll listen to both sides, and when someone feels they've given an answer that's going to be used, that's the positive thing. He will use some answers from the teachers. But just the way he connects administration with the teachers as far as the problem solving, I think that's awesome. (Andrew Parker, tape transcripts)

Mr. Kent and Ms. Gomez started inviting people to come to the school and talk to them about potential resources for the academies. Representatives from the nearby university's performing arts program provided help during the year. For a nominal fee, a local performing arts institute also assisted in writing the curriculum. Thus, the principal included teachers, outside consultants, and his administrative team in developing the two academies. Freirean scholar Peter Roberts (2000) defined Freire's idea of praxis as being closely intertwined with another Freirean construct, conscientization:

Freire speaks of conscientization as “the process by which human beings participate critically in a transforming act,” and stresses “there is no conscientization outside of praxis, outside the theory-practice, reflection-action unity.” Conscientization, Freire notes elsewhere, “can only be manifested in the concrete praxis (which can never be limited to the mere activity of the consciousness).” I propose, therefore, that rather than separating the two concepts out, as many people attempting to apply Freirean ideas do, conscientization and praxis ought to be seen as *necessarily* intertwined. Conscientization occurs in the transforming moment where critical reflection is synthesized with action. (p. 146)

In forming the two academies, Mr. Kent was taking action or realizing praxis by providing an educationally enhanced program for his students. His action, his praxis, was a result of conscientization or coming to the realization that the curriculum lacked direction.

Mr. Kent and Ms. Gomez talked to Buellah Carter, a business teacher and head of the business department, about the potential for a business-related academy. The principal was apprehensive about meeting with Ms. Carter’s colleagues because they were not known for consulting and sharing ideas. They were all independent-minded professionals who might not have been able to engage in the consultation and teamwork that would be required for working on joint projects toward implementation of the WRATC. Both Mr. Kent and Ms. Gomez believed the ninth graders would need to be included in the academies for them to be successful, and the veteran business teachers were accustomed to teaching students in the higher grades. During the winter of the 2001-02 school year, Mr. Kent and Ms. Gomez met with Ms. Carter and described their ideas about forming the academies and the role her department would play in that effort.

Ms. Carter was receptive to the idea and met with teachers in her department, who had many questions about the organization and implementation of the WRATC. Ms. Carter suggested that they meet with Mr. Kent and Ms. Gomez. During that meeting, there was much discussion and questioning regarding the curriculum and organization of

the WRATC. The business teachers finally agreed with the formation of the academy and began writing a curriculum. When they finally completed their curriculum and delivered it to Mr. Kent, he was pleasantly surprised and impressed with the progressive nature of that curriculum. He stated,

The business piece was the biggest gamble I ever took in my life because of the personalities of the people. Other than Palmer—he is what I would call the only mainstream teacher. Josephine is a recluse. Bill Mulligan is, in his own way, a recluse—very open, always goes to parties, always does that, but he’s still a recluse. Buellah is like a quiet program. But they wrote me—together as a team, as people who don’t really get along—the most progressive curriculum in this state. (Michael Kent, tape transcripts)

At a board of education meeting in spring 2002, Mr. Kent made a computer presentation (using PowerPoint software) on the founding of the two academies. The academies came to fruition at the same time, at the beginning of the 2002-03 school year.

No formal teacher committees were formed because Mr. Kent and Ms. Gomez believed they would be unnecessary. They thought that, by working with motivated teachers, the process of developing curriculum and designing an implementation plan would be more expeditious than if large committees were formed. Initially, it seemed that forming committees might have been the best approach. However, it became clear to both Mr. Kent and Ms. Gomez that meeting with concerned and motivated teachers individually and in small groups was their best option for achieving a timely implementation of the academies.

The IPAA and WRATC benefited students by giving them more opportunities to develop skills that are reflective of Freire’s problem-posing education. As of spring 2003, the two academies had been in existence for about seven months. Thus, it is premature to evaluate whether they have met their goals of providing direction and

enhancing students' learning experiences. However, it is important to look at the reasons for implementing the academies, in light of Mr. Kent's problem-solving practices.

A major purpose of implementing the IPAA was to help students develop a variety of skills in the performing arts that would carry over to other academic areas. Mr. Kent had observed that students who did well in the performing arts tended to succeed in other academic areas, as well. Researchers have indicated that his observation was accurate (Chapman, 1998a; Sylwester, 1998). Many scholars have found that education in the performing arts helps students develop skills and attitudes that enhance their self-confidence, organization, time management, and public-speaking abilities (Chapman, 1998a, 1998b; Gardner, 1999; Sylwester, 1998).

The WRATC was intended to help students develop business and computer skills, which is currently considered a best practice for public schools (Daniels, Bizar, & Zemelman, 2001). Skill in mathematics, language arts, and science is necessary in business; however, the business community often finds it necessary to train employees in these areas (Eurich, 1990). The WRATC was designed to improve students' skills in both technology and business. Skills in these areas enhance students' employment opportunities and improve their success in postsecondary education. Hence, Mr. Kent was providing his students an opportunity to enhance their educational experience by participating in these academies.

### Vignette 3: Utilizing Alliances and Partnerships to Achieve a Solution: A Program to Develop and Encourage Self-Esteem and Manners

Principal Kent was adept at using alliances; he had a unique talent for including various concerned people in a way that prevented them from feeling left out. He made everyone believe they were the ones he consulted and asked for advice.

What Mr. Kent is extremely talented at, or knowledgeable of, is the processes that are there so that he's able to work those to Macedo High School's benefit. And in doing so he allows himself to get to know the people as they come on board well enough to be able to know which piece he wants to approach them with so that he can pull all of the things together to make things happen. (Norma Flowers, tape transcripts)

In this vignette, I show how Mr. Kent used his skill in forming alliances and partnerships to establish a motivational program for students.

During the fall semester of the 2002-03 school year, Mr. Kent identified major problems that ninth graders were presenting to the high school. According to several teachers, public safety personnel, the assistant principals, and his own observations, many of the freshmen were being disrespectful, skipping classes, wandering the hallways, and getting low grades. Various members of the high school staff approached the principal and expressed their concern about many ninth graders' lack of discipline. Ethyl Fontaine, the assistant principal in charge of ninth-grade discipline, had received more than 800 written disciplinary referrals from teachers during the first four months of the school year. She told Mr. Kent several times that this number was significantly higher than in previous years. The school nurse also complained that ninth graders had been going to see her disproportionately more than upper-class students did. She said one ninth grader had gone to see her every class period one school day, and not once did the visit warrant her attention. During all of these dialogues, Mr. Kent was listening and observing. This illustrates the Freirean construct of dialogue with a purpose, which entails listening to one another with mutual respect. Silence is another aspect of Freire's dialogue with a purpose. Silence can be interpreted in many ways; for Freire, silence meant actually listening without interrupting (Freire, 1986b).

As a result of this dialogue with a purpose, Mr. Kent was willing to admit that his school needed help. He decided to consult with someone who could offer him some

assistance. In the past, he had worked with several people who were experienced in improving adolescents' behavior. The principal decided to call Garth Thompson, a community member, because he know from experience that Garth would have useful ideas for resolving the ninth-grade discipline problem. When Mr. Kent was looking for a way to resolve a dilemma or problem, he frequently called people with whom he had previously established alliances. His assistant principal, Norma Flowers, observed that Mr. Kent had a talent for talking to people in a way that indicated mutual respect, thereby promoting the alliance or partnership. She stated,

He meets people easily, and he's very good at understanding people and where they're coming from, which is a gift or a talent that I don't necessarily possess. He will be able to bring insight to me sometimes when I'm not seeing the picture. He's able to look at the picture and understand what the picture is, where people are coming from. He's very attuned to other people and their feelings. . . . He's able to see what's important to them, and he can be sensitive to those things. And so it makes it something that he's good at as far as talking to people and being able to relate to them in such a way that they feel comfortable. (Norma Flowers, tape transcripts)

Principal Kent called Garth Thompson in October and asked to talk to him at the high school. Mr. Thompson was a community activist and had not always agreed with the way things were done in the district. He had opposed a bond issue promoted by the school district about two years before. The bond was intended to raise money to improve the district's aging infrastructure. West Starville voters had defeated the bond proposal, partly because of Mr. Thompson's vocal opposition to it in the press. Yet Mr. Kent know about the kind of program Mr. Thompson would bring to the high school. He explained:

I asked them to bring their program in; I already knew about their programs. And I had to change the momentum of what we were doing other than a punitive act. And I knew that Mr. Thompson threw dollar bills around as an incentive-type thing and with high energy. But I could predict exactly what they would do and what they would respond to, and they have done just that. I sought them out; they did not seek me out. (Michael Kent, tape transcripts)



Another person who Mr. Kent knew would be a good resource was Norman Anderson, a former employee of the district. The principal remembered that Mr. Anderson had developed a successful program when he had worked at Macedo High School; he was known and respected by the faculty and student body. When Mr. Anderson had worked at Macedo High School, he had established a program to help resolve conflicts between students, and he had defused numerous violent altercations between students. The faculty often consulted with Mr. Anderson about conflicts involving their students. He had recently retired, though, after much careful consideration and might not be interested in accepting even a temporary consultation position.

In previous years, most of the behavior problems had occurred during the hour-long lunch period. Students had the privilege of an open campus, so they could leave the high school grounds at lunch time and go to local fast-food restaurants. Because most ninth graders were too young to drive, they would walk to the restaurants and then back to school. During that time, some ninth graders would harass residents of surrounding neighborhoods. Mr. Kent and Superintendent Cunningham were determined to stop this negative behavior; they decided that, starting the next year (2002-03), freshmen would no longer have an hour-long open campus lunch period. Mr. Kent, Mr. Cunningham, and the principal's supervisor, Shawn Roberts, decided that freshmen would have a closed campus, with a half-hour lunch period and a half-hour class. One half of the ninth graders would go to the first lunch period and then their half-hour class; the others would go first to their class, followed by lunch. Most of the freshmen were upset with this solution and complained bitterly to Mr. Kent and the assistant principals, as well as their teachers.

In addition to lunch-hour problems, Mr. Kent knew that he needed to resolve the broader issue of student misbehavior. Ninth graders were skipping school and cruising through the surrounding neighborhoods, shouting obscenities at people who were leaving their homes, and indulging in other disruptive behavior. Residents had telephoned and visited Principal Kent to report the problems and even had called the local police department to complain about students' behavior. Mr. Kent believed that it was his responsibility to resolve this issue.

The principal hoped that Mr. Thompson and Mr. Anderson would accept his invitation to try to improve the behavior of ninth graders as well as motivate them to be better students. He was concerned that Mr. Thompson might be a political liability because of his opposition to the proposed bond two years before. If the principal attained authorization from central office administration to hire Mr. Thompson, he and his supervisors would risk being accused of pandering to an active and skilled critic. In fact, Mr. Thompson himself might not accept the challenge because of the possibility of being seen as a political liability. Further, Mr. Kent realized that Mr. Anderson was enjoying his retirement and might not want to come out of retirement, even temporarily.

Nevertheless, the principal asked Mr. Thompson and Mr. Anderson to work together on this project. They had excellent reputations and had previously collaborated on similar projects in West Starville. Mr. Kent asked the two consultants to write a description of a program to foster and improve ninth-grade students' manners and self-esteem. They accepted the challenge, and together they wrote a description of such a program, to be called Development and Encouragement of Self-Esteem and Manners (DESEM). Mr. Kent, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Thompson, and Ms. Gomez met several times to share ideas and improve the program and implementation plan as much as possible

before approaching central office administrators for approval and funding. This partnering of the two consultants, Mr. Kent, and Ms. Gomez is illustrative of Freire's dialogue with a purpose because all four participants were engaged in a dialogue about how to help students who were engaging in self-defeating behaviors. Their purpose was to devise a motivational program that would inspire students to change their negative behavior. The implementation of this plan is an example of praxis because the plan of action had resulted from the dialogue.

The next dilemma that Mr. Kent needed to resolve was obtaining funding for the DESEM program. Mr. Kent and Mr. Thompson attended several meetings with various central office administrators to promote the DESEM program with the hopes of obtaining funding. Mr. Kent made a case to his supervisor, Shawn Roberts, Superintendent Cunningham, and other central office administrators for the need to address and alleviate students' misbehavior. Mr. Kent then suggested possible sources of funding for the DESEM program. One source, in particular, seemed promising; this was Title Six funding, money given to school districts through what public school administrators call categorical spending. This money comes from the federal government and is directed to disenfranchised groups in the United States.

Mr. Kent was eager to begin the DESEM program and took the plan to his immediate supervisor, central office administrators, and then the school board for approval. He realized that he needed to enlist the help of school board members so that they would help to sell his plan. Therefore, he made a detailed presentation to the board in early November 2002, hoping that a majority of board members would approve the plan. Mr. Kent knew that most of the board members were reluctant to seek funding for programs proposed after the school year began. Further, certain board members might

still be upset about Mr. Thompson's vocal opposition to the bond proposal. Finally, Mr. Kent was concerned about where the school district might obtain funding for the program. Eventually, the program was approved, and it was funded through Title Six categorical spending.

The DESEM program was aimed at students whose success in school was being jeopardized by their antisocial behavior, inappropriate language, and poor attendance. The program organizers—Mr. Thompson, Mr. Anderson, and Mr. Kent—believed that the primary approach in the DESEM program should be to motivate students to improve their behavior, rather than to punish them for misbehaving. In the program, students would engage in various activities designed to improve their self-esteem and study habits. Mr. Thompson was a charismatic and motivating speaker. Students enjoyed listening to his presentations, in which he told funny stories and anecdotes to illustrate his points. One assignment that Mr. Thompson gave the students was to look at their family's budget and determine monthly costs. The students were asked to consult with their parents and then write down their family's household costs, such as electricity, telephone, natural gas, water, and groceries (field notes, 2003).

#### Vignette 4: The Dilemma of Race: The Ethics of Athletic Coaching

In spring 1995, Maxwell Cunningham, superintendent of the West Starville School District, called and asked Mr. Kent to meet with him. (Mr. Cunningham retired in 2001, and Chloe Larsen became superintendent that same year.) Mr. Cunningham had become aware that Macedo High School's coaching staff were having serious disagreements. At that time, Mr. Kent was an assistant principal at another high school in the district. In the past, he had been sent to other buildings to help resolve problems

involving students, staff, and administrators, and over the years he had developed a reputation for being a fair-minded peacemaker. During the meeting in Mr. Cunningham's office, the superintendent told Mr. Kent there was a serious problem with the coaching staff of a particular sport at Macedo High School.

Mr. Kent was aware that the former principal of Macedo High School recently had accepted a new position at a large suburban school near a major city in the Midwest. Superintendent Cunningham informed Mr. Kent that the former principal had been having problems with the coaches for the past two years but had not been able to resolve their disagreements. Mr. Cunningham was concerned because the conflict had racial overtones; four Caucasian coaches, four African American coaches, and one Hispanic coach were involved. The racial distribution of the coaching staff, their years of coaching experience, and each coach's attitude toward the conflict are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Coaching-dilemma matrix.

Name	Race	Years of Coaching Experience	Attitude Toward the Conflict
Andrew	African American	7	Definitely hostile
Mike	African American	8	Definitely hostile
Fred	African American	4	Somewhat hostile
Justin	African American	3	Avoided conflict
Gonzalo	Hispanic	3	Avoided conflict
George	Caucasian	2	Peaceful observer
Ron	Caucasian	4	Definitely hostile
Rich	Caucasian	4	Somewhat hostile
Joe	Caucasian	3	Avoided conflict

Mr. Cunningham was aware that there had been heated exchanges, including racial slurs, between the Caucasian and African American coaches. Justin, an African American, and Joe, a Caucasian, were trying to stay out of the conflict. Two other Caucasians, Ron and Rich, were hostile; Ron was definitely hostile, and Rich was

somewhat hostile. Further, two African Americans, Andrew and Mike, were definitely hostile. Two Caucasian coaches were trying to stay out of the conflict: George was a peaceful observer, and Joe avoided the conflict altogether. The Hispanic coach also avoided the conflict. Superintendent Cunningham, believing that Mr. Kent would be an excellent candidate for resolving the animosity among the coaches, invited him to be the interim principal of Macedo High School (field notes, 2003).

The superintendent offered Mr. Kent the position as interim rather than permanent principal because he intended to place Mr. Kent in another building as principal at a later time. Mr. Kent had been successful in his previous position as assistant principal; he enjoyed working with the current curriculum and developing new curriculum. Thus, he was in no particular hurry to move on to another post. Yet he realized that if he was successful at Macedo he would be made assistant principal or principal of another school in the district. So after consulting his wife about the offer, he decided to accept the challenge.

Mr. Kent began as interim principal in fall 1995. His task was to resolve the coaching dilemma; then he would move to another administrative post in the district. At Macedo High School, the disagreement regarding coaching style had become apparent to many staff members, parents, and students. For the most part, the arguments did not erupt in public places; however, most observers could detect that a problem existed among the coaches, even though most of the conflict was expressed at meetings attended only by coaches. On Sunday afternoons the coaches would meet at the high school to review videotapes of the previous Friday's game. During these review sessions, heated arguments often erupted among members of the coaching staff.

Mr. Kent became aware that the coaches were arguing vehemently at the Sunday afternoon coaches' meetings. Some had even begun pushing and shoving one another during heated exchanges while viewing videotapes of the previous Friday's game. Many racial epithets were hurled, especially between the four Caucasian coaches and three of the four African American coaches. The other African American coach and the Hispanic coach were staying out of the heated exchanges and trying to calm the situation; however, their efforts were inadequate. Student athletes were aware of the animosity, but it is difficult to say whether they realized how emotional the arguments had become. Mr. Kent was concerned that the pushing and shoving might escalate to fisticuffs. He also was concerned that the coaches were setting a bad example for the athletes and undermining their morale.

Macedo's athletic director, William Preston, was aware of the conflict, but his position was just part time, and he had few resources and little time to devote to alleviating the problem. Because the issue involved racial conflict, he asked Mr. Kent to help him relieve the tension. Mr. Kent began attending the Sunday afternoon coaches' meetings because he was afraid the coaches might resort to violence. He explained,

It got to the point that I would have to come in on Sunday afternoons and sit because I was afraid that there would be a fistfight between the two groups of guys. It was purely racial. But those same coaches still work for me, some of them do. One of them is the head coach. It was nothing personal; the thing was, they couldn't work together. I was never attacked racially, but the athletic director, Preston, was. (Michael Kent, tape transcripts)

The teams were also suffering from this dissension. The varsity team had lost every game during the past four years. This loss record had become a bone of contention and source of embarrassment for the student athletes and the school community as a whole.

Another problem that interfered with the teams' success was that the head coach did not communicate well. Further, most of the coaches had trained under different head coaches and had learned varying approaches to managing their teams. Each coaching group was convinced that its style of coaching was superior to the others'. They enjoyed so much autonomy that there was no consistency in how the freshman, junior varsity, and varsity teams were coached, and there was no overall team spirit. Although such autonomy is relatively common in many high schools, Mr. Kent believed that this was detrimental in Macedo's situation. The head coach was skilled in designing strategies; however, he was not successful in inculcating team spirit among the coaches and student athletes. Mr. Kent believed that the inconsistency in coaching styles and lack of team spirit had been demoralizing to the student athletes, and it was beginning to affect the coaching staff's ability to recruit players. He believed that if the coaches were consistent in their approaches, student athletes would better understand their coaches' expectations, thereby increasing their potential to win some games. Also, because athletic programs are highly visible, Mr. Kent was well aware that the coaching strife was unhealthy for the school community. It was obvious to him that he had to take action and that ultimately some people would be unhappy with his decisions.

Mr. Kent examined the problems involving the coaching staff and decided that he would first try to alleviate the animosity among coaches. He did not believe he could help the current coaches resolve their conflict; he would have to take a more dramatic step.

There were too many racial overtones. Even though the white head coach had a father who had been a successful coach of minority students, he could never overcome it in the real world. Afterwards he went to an all-white school, where he was fairly successful. There was at that point so much hostility that even with sitting and talking they could never work it out. (Michael Kent, tape transcripts)



The tradition in Macedo's sports program had been to automatically renew coaches' contracts each year. However, the principal decided to reorganize the coaching staff and not to renew any of the coaches' contracts for the following year. Instead, all of the coaching positions, including head (varsity) coach, were posted at the end of the season, and coaches were given an opportunity to apply for those positions. Assistant coaches for the freshman and junior varsity teams would be under the leadership of the varsity coach. Mr. Kent believed this would add consistency to the coaching styles.

The coaches were upset with Mr. Kent's decision. The African American coaches accused him of being racially biased, and they filed civil rights charges. There was negative publicity in the local newspaper, as well as on local television and radio stations. However, during his long tenure in the district, Mr. Kent had established a reputation among all ethnic groups for being fair minded. In fact, he was one of the first Caucasian administrators to promote the hiring of African American administrators and teachers. He also had cultivated positive relationships with other ethnic groups in the district. Hence the charge of racial prejudice would be difficult to prove.

Some of the coaches applied for coaching positions at the school, and one of them was made head coach. The former head coach received an offer to be head coach at a different district, and he accepted the position. Gonzalo Rivas, the Hispanic coach, who had remained neutral during the time of dissension, became the assistant athletic director. Other members of the original coaching staff still worked in the school district, either in other schools or as coaches of other sports. Mr. Kent even hired one of the coaches, Mike Hubinger, to be head coach in a different sport. Mr. Kent explained:

[Mike] never attacked me even in the most hostile moment. His hostility was directed to the head coach. But I had to fire everybody in order to get it changed because it just wouldn't work. And anytime you pick one race over the other, you're dead meat. So I just fired everybody and went from there. But he is a

quality coach, and you can't argue with that. So, when he came back and asked, "Can I work for you?" I said, "In what?" He said in a different sport. So I said, "Yes. My argument with you is not black or white or your coaching ability; it was just the incompatibility I had in the first sport." (Michael Kent, tape transcripts)

The following school year, the teams began to improve. The freshman and junior varsity teams actually won some games, although the varsity team's losing streak continued. However, even though the varsity team was still losing, they were playing better and the final scores were less humiliating. Finally, the varsity team won a game, and there was much celebrating throughout the school community. The win was exhilarating, especially for the student athletes and the new coaching staff; during the remainder of the season they won a few more games. Although the varsity team lost more games than they won that season, at least they had put an end to their four-year losing streak.

Mr. Kent was exonerated of the civil rights charges. There was no compelling evidence that he had based his decision not to renew the coaches' contracts on racial prejudice. Further, most of the former coaches were still working at West Starville schools. Many faculty members were pleased with the manner in which Mr. Kent had resolved the coaching problem, as well as his efforts to bring more resources and programs to Macedo High School. Therefore, they circulated a petition, which they then presented to the superintendent, requesting that Mr. Kent's interim status be changed to permanent.

### What Was Learned About the Principal's Practice

In analyzing the data, I developed a three-layered analytical approach to help explain Principal Kent's practice. The first two layers are presented in this chapter, and the third layer is included in Chapter V. The two layers presented in this chapter are

(a) an analysis of Mr. Kent's local practice as a school leader (high school principal), and  
(b) an analysis of Mr. Kent's practice employing Freire's constructs. The third layer, presented in Chapter V, is a universalization of the principal's local practice. This analytical approach can be characterized by the telescoping bulls-eye shown in Figure 4.1. The innermost circle represents the principal's local or particular practice. The middle circle represents how the principal's practice might be viewed from a Freirean perspective. The outermost circle represents the extending of the local or particular practice.

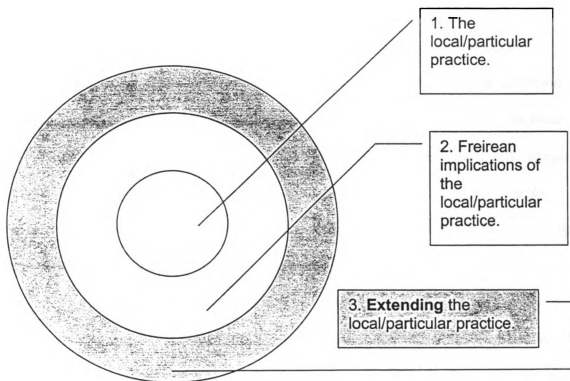


Figure 4.1: Three-layered analytical approach used in this study.

### The Local View: Mr. Kent's Practice as a High School Principal

From the analysis of the vignettes presented earlier, four themes emerged as guiding Mr. Kent's problem-solving practices: (a) utilizing alliances and partnerships, (b) critical leadership and management, (c) focus on learning, and (d) praxis. In the following sections, I describe these four themes.

#### Theme One: Utilizing Alliances and Partnerships

A common theme that emerged from the vignettes was that Mr. Kent was skilled in utilizing alliances to resolve problems and dilemmas. For the purpose of this research, I defined alliance building and a partnership approach to educational leadership as the active pursuit of establishing professional contact with a variety of people who indicate promise and a willingness to work in mutually beneficial ways to resolve issues of common interest in a public school setting. When Mr. Kent and Ms. Gomez undertook to initiate the two academies, the principal tapped into his network of contacts in the local university's performing arts program. He also contacted a local performing arts institute for help in writing up the curriculum. When he decided to do something about ninth graders' negative behavior, he also accessed his alliances and partnerships by consulting with a former district employee and a community activist. These two men's help in developing the DESEM program and in locating funding was invaluable. In the case of the gay student club, Mr. Kent was not able to access any alliances of his acquaintances, but he did form new alliances with members of GROUP. Last, in the case involving the high school coaches, Kent's partnership-building skills resulted in his being named interim principal of Macedo High School. He was not pleased to have to resolve the dispute among disgruntled coaches, but he was not one to run away from a challenging assignment.

Mr. Kent's skill at utilizing alliances helped him be a successful principal. Further, his alliance-building skill helped in problem solving because he had many resources and contacts at his disposal. When Mr. Kent needed advice about how to solve a problem or if he needed help in implementing a new program, he almost always knew someone who could give him advice or provide a particular resource. Norma Flowers, an assistant principal, substantiated Mr. Kent's talent for utilizing alliances and partnerships:

What Mr. Kent is extremely talented in, or knowledgeable of, are the processes that are there, so that he's able to work those to Macedo High School's benefit. And in doing so he allows himself to get to know the people as they come on board well enough to be able to know which piece he wants to approach them with so that he can pull all of the things together to make things happen. (Norma Flowers, tape transcripts)

Using alliances and partnerships in one's problem-solving practices is considered by leadership researchers as a desirable leadership approach. Spillett (1999) said that the effort to create partnerships and alliances is important for effective leadership. He continued,

Although partnership opportunities sound very inviting—and they are—it takes a special style of leadership to make them work for your organization. It is important for the leadership in partner organizations to openly embrace the partnership and encourage its development. Indeed, such strategic thinking is a very important aspect of the leadership role in most organizations today. (p. 269)

Not only did Mr. Kent openly embrace and encourage the development of partnerships, he also actively sought them out so that he would have a variety of people whom he could consult on pertinent issues. Eisler (2000) defined the partnership model and what it means for educators:

The four core elements of this configuration are a more democratic and egalitarian family and social structure, gender equity, a low level of institutionalized violence and abuse (as there is no need for fear and force to maintain rigid rankings of domination), and a system of beliefs, stories, and values that supports and validates this kind of structure as normal and right. After much pondering, I chose the term *partnership model* to describe this template for structuring relations. (p. 5)

Mr. Kent's practice was closely related to Eisler's partnership model because he worked to be inclusive. For example, he built an alliance with Mr. Anderson and Mr. Thompson with the goal of motivating students to improve both their behavior and their study skills. The approach was innovative because Mr. Kent stressed the aspect of motivation rather than punishment. Motivation is reflective of Eisler's partnership model, which he believed has implications for educational leaders. In Eisler's words,

Hierarchies of actualization are primarily based not on power over, but on power to (creative power, the power to help and to nurture others) as well as power with (the collective power to accomplish things together, as in what is today called teamwork). In hierarchies of actualization, accountability flows not only from the bottom up but also from the top down. That is, accountability flows in both directions.

In other words, educational structures orienting to the partnership model are not unstructured or laissez-faire; they still have administrators, managers, leaders, and other positions where responsibility for particular tasks and functions is assigned. However, the leaders and managers inspire rather than coerce. They empower rather than disempower, making it possible for the organization to access and utilize the knowledge and skills of all its members. (p. 21)

Again, the definition of alliance building and a partnership approach to educational leadership is the active pursuit of establishing professional contact with a variety of people who indicate promise and a willingness to work in mutually beneficial ways to resolve issues of common interest in a public school setting. Freire (1998) contended that people could transform the future by their praxis. Humans want to improve the opportunity that the future offers by taking action. This desire to transform the future is part of the evolutionary process. According to Freire,

One of the most important tasks of critical educational practice is to make possible the conditions in which the 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; dreamers of possible utopias, capable of being angry because of a capacity to love. (p. 45)

We can see many examples of this in Mr. Kent's practice. For example, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Thompson, and Mr. Kent formed an alliance so that they could transform the future capacity of the school to meet the needs of its diverse population. They wanted to improve ninth graders' chances for success by motivating them to improve both their behavior and their study skills. Mr. Kent formed an alliance with the two consultants, which reflects his strategy of alliance building for solving problems. Ms. Flowers made the following observation regarding Mr. Kent's strategy for alliance and partnership building:

One of the things that makes him so effective as an instructional leader is that he does have a very extensive network of people that he's affiliated with. He belongs to a lot of outside organizations; he sits on a lot of boards. He's active in the local police precinct, for example, and he's made sure that he is a force within the community also. So that when we come up with these things and when we start throwing out our ideas in our meetings and as we are listening to them, we hit on things. And there's almost nothing that you can come up with that Mr. Kent doesn't know someone who isn't connected in some way with some organization, or some person, that he can then tap into to see how we can make this happen the way we want it to. (Norma Flowers, tape transcripts)

### Theme Two: Critical Leadership and Management

Another theme that emerged from the data was that Principal Kent frequently used critical leadership and management in his problem solving. Critical leadership and management are defined here as negotiating consensus among the school community especially the staff, empowering staff and students to make decisions that affect their school, engaging in dialogue as a necessary step in problem solving, and having a participatory leadership style. We saw that Mr. Kent employed this strategy in partnership with alliance building. For example, in the Two Academies vignette, Mr. Kent and Ms. Gomez built an alliance (a network of committed individuals) and employed a critical leadership approach to empower faculty, staff, and students to

develop a curriculum emphasis in the performing arts. His partnership made a lot of sense because he knew that she had had a long-time interest in the performing arts.

In addition, Shawn Roberts, the principal's immediate supervisor, observed characteristics of critical leadership in Mr. Kent's practice.

I think the way he's operating he's got to believe it's the best way, the best start, and that it's the best way for him to make his best decision because he's able to have the dialogue, do the consensus building, and make the consensus decision and then go from there. He deals with a diverse global population. . . . He's got good judgment of character, of ethnicity, of genders, and keeps that in mind like he always has, because those practices that he puts into his decision making, whether it be presentation or whether it be staffing, he keeps that as a foundation as an equality statement, which has allowed him to make some of his best decisions. (Shawn Roberts, tape transcripts)

Important aspects of a critical leadership approach are negotiating consensus among staff and students, as well as empowering staff and students to make decisions that affect themselves (Gooden, 2001). This type of negotiation liberates both teachers and students. Bates (1983) believed that a participative approach to educational administration includes negotiation:

One common example of such negotiation results from the widespread conflict between those holding representative and participatory views of democracy.

The representative view is readily compatible with forms of bureaucratic, centralized control. It is also compatible with banking education and with certain forms of social control. The participative view is often opposed to centralized, bureaucratic control and decision-making and embraces a liberationist, activist, constructivist view of learning and the learner. It is a view which argues . . . that only through participation in the struggle to shape institutions in their own image can people find purpose and meaning in their lives. (pp. 269-270)

Mr. Kent knew that certain teachers would be interested in helping plan and develop the two academies, and he invited them to participate in this initiative.

Empowering the teachers is another example from the same vignette that exemplifies the application of a critical leadership approach to resolving problems, reflecting what Bates said about a participative view that "embraces a liberationist, activist, constructivist view



of learning and the learner” (p. 270). When Kent wanted to develop the DESEM program, he enlisted and empowered Mr. Anderson and Mr. Thompson; their diligent work resulted in swift implementation of a program that had not been anticipated the previous year, when the current year’s budget was being formulated.

Mr. Kent’s practice evidenced a critical leadership style because he applied principles of that approach to his decision making. Gooden (2002) defined critical leadership as

. . . leadership that seeks not only to serve those traditionally subjugated but also to empower them. Using these notions of leadership, it becomes apparent to the administrator why it is necessary to filter through specious evidence of intelligence surrounding IQ tests and unfounded claims about obvious economic and social problems facing students in this type of environment as reasons not to teach these students. Critical leadership is expected to focus on teaching students in a manner that does not devalue their culture and does not make light of their differences in the context of a discriminating world. This leadership seeks to educate before attempting to control. (p. 142)

The approach Mr. Kent took with the DESEM program corresponds to Gooden’s definition of critical leadership. The goal of that program was to motivate students to improve, not to punish them. By motivating students, Mr. Kent was teaching them in a manner that did not devalue their culture. Freire (1997) expressed ideas that are reflective of Bates’s participative view and Gooden’s cultural view when he discussed dialogue and antidiologue:

A dialogic relationship—communication and intercommunication among active subjects who are immune to the bureaucratization of the minds and open to discovery and to knowing more—is indispensable to knowledge. The social nature of this process makes a dialogical relationship a natural element of it. In that sense, authoritarian antidiologue violates the nature of human beings, their process of discovery, and it contradicts democracy. (p. 99)

Both a dialogical relationship and what Bates referred to as a participative view imply two-way communication. Freire’s authoritarian antidiologue is similar to what Gooden criticized as an attempt to control; according to Gooden, educating should be preferred

over attempting to control. Similarly, Freire believed that an authoritarian antidialogue contradicts democracy and violates the nature of human beings.

In the GLASS vignette, it was seen that Mr. Kent entrusted authority to an assistant principal because one of her duties was to oversee the formation and activities of student clubs at the high school. He also gave students the responsibility for organizing the GLASS club. In the Coaches vignette, Kent delegated authority to the head coach after reorganizing the coaching staff so that the varsity, junior varsity, and freshman teams all would be under the leadership of that one head coach. Both of these vignettes illustrate the principal's participatory administrative style. Shawn Roberts, Mr. Kent's immediate supervisor, observed that Mr. Kent empowered the three female assistant principals to make important decisions.

They are one of the most unique teams I have ever seen operate, and I would say one of the strongest teams that I've seen pinch hit, come to blows. Well, not come to blows but come to disagreement, but agree to disagree and be professional about it. All of them work very hard. . . . But Dale's not afraid to let go of that authority. . . . All of them have ability, and I think what Dale has done, he didn't know how that was going to work out, but he gave it a chance. And by giving it a chance, and being able to play second fiddle at times, allowed him to be very successful and empowered some women who were very, very competent. (Shawn Roberts, tape transcripts)

### Theme Three: Focus on Learning

A third underlying theme that emerged from the vignettes is a focus on learning, which guided all of the principal's decisions. I have defined a focus on learning as the perpetual search for new programs as well as the effort to improve existing ones; this constant effort also pertains to curriculum and staff development, attainment of a variety of resources, and anything that indicates promise to benefit students. He sought out programs that would benefit his students. His supervisor corroborated this observation, stating that the principal looked for what was best for his students. Because Mr. Kent

focused on learning for his students, everyone in the school community learned, as well.

His entire decision-making approach was based on how the outcome would benefit students. Norma Flowers stressed this idea in one of the interviews:

When he looks at things, if it's not good for kids, if it's not going to benefit kids or the majority of the kids, it's not an issue. That's gone. We're not even going to consider that because how does that help kids? And so he's able, through his "Aw, shucks" kind of demeanor, to articulate that genuine care for people in the things he says. There are things that he does and people respond positively to them. (Norma Flowers, tape transcripts)

In another interview, Shawn Roberts, Mr. Kent's supervisor, corroborated what Ms. Flowers said. He stated that Mr. Kent ensured that any school event, program, or resource would benefit his students. According to Mr. Roberts, this was one of the principal's strengths. He said,

Mr. Kent's my maverick because he's going to try to find a win-win for most people. . . . It's hard to anger him because he'll figure a way around you or he's going to wrap you around his finger. You know, he takes multiple roles and shifts gears. Kent's strength is he focuses on kid outcomes. And that keeps him in good light with everyone because how can you argue with what's best for kids? And sometimes I think he favors his kids so much that sometimes he overlooks, not the rights, [but] the perceived rights of teachers. (Shawn Roberts, tape transcripts)

Mr. Roberts asked, "How can you argue with what's best for kids?" The obvious answer is, "You can't!"

Mr. Kent had worked to establish a focus on learning at Macedo High School. The DESEM program demonstrated such a focus because students were motivated to learn new study skills and to change unproductive habits. The two academies also demonstrated a focus on learning because the basic rationale for their existence was to give students purpose and direction; in other words, the academies would help students learn in a purposeful manner. In addition, the IPAA illustrated a focus on learning because a performing arts curriculum enhances students' success in all of their courses.

Mr. Kent had learned from his experience as both a teacher and an administrator that students who excelled in the performing arts also did well in their other classes.

One way to illustrate the importance of a focus on learning, according to Law and Glover (2000), is to compare the business manager with the school manager. According to these authors, teachers face a wider variety of tasks than do employees in commercial settings. Therefore, management in the school setting must focus on learning geared to school leaders rather than business leaders. Law and Glover quoted various scholars who supported the importance of school leaders' having a focus on learning:

Education organizations are different from commercial organizations because "teachers perform multiple roles . . . an important factor in distinguishing schools from other organizations" (Buckley & Styan 1988:7). Echoing this, Shipman (1990) reminds us that educational leadership and management "cannot be confined to the classroom and staffroom" and calls for a "synoptic view of management," where:

- Promoting learning is the focus of management;
- Management training improves teaching quality and raises levels of attainment;
- School management has an evidence base from studies of school excellence which can support improvement;
- Managing teaching and learning through the curriculum involves paying attention to breadth, balance, continuity and progression. (p. 167)

Beck (1994) supported the idea of the principal's being an instructional leader with a focus on learning rather than management:

Early in the history of educational administration, persons who filled leadership roles considered themselves to be, first and foremost, teachers. In the early part of this century, the emphasis shifted from pedagogy to management, and school leaders began to look to business for models and methods. . . . Recently, theorists and practitioners alike have begun to focus again, on the administrator as an instructional leader. . . . Administrators guided by an ethic of care would certainly embrace this role, for they would recognize that schools promoting optimum development would be those in which students are taught well. (pp. 87-88)

Mr. Kent fit the definition of a principal who considered himself a teacher first; in fact, he had been a teacher before becoming an administrator. His focus on learning benefited the entire school community because everyone was learning.

#### Theme Four: Praxis

Mr. Kent did not allow petty egos to interfere with his interactions with other people. In each of the cases described in the four vignettes, there was potential for emotional reactions from the principal, but he approached each dilemma with praxis. I defined praxis as the action that the principal took, keeping in mind a set of ethical principles that enabled him to hear and see all sides and to propose a fair process to find a solution. He applied praxis to his problem-solving practices. In the Coaches vignette, Mr. Kent easily could have become angry with the coaches and resorted to antagonistic behavior such as shouting. During the field research, more than one participant commented, “He doesn’t take it personally.” As Ms. Flowers said,

You know, he’s pretty good about reminding his assistant principal of that [laughter], to not take it personally. Linda does a pretty good job; she goes out there and says, “It’s business, it’s just business.” I’m not always able to make that distinction as quickly, but Michael is pretty good about not taking things personally. (Norma Flowers, tape transcripts)

A parent of students at Macedo High School agreed with Ms. Flowers’s assessment:

You get upset about things, and in principals’ situation I think that probably happens to them more than they’d like—people getting in their face about things. And I think he, at least in my experience, he doesn’t seem to take that personally. He tries to keep it in perspective. (Samuel O’Conner, tape transcripts)

Principal Kent’s effectiveness in mediating dilemmas facilitated his interactions with people who were upset. In a large high school like Macedo, situations often arise that cause people to become upset; Mr. Kent had to confront these emotional issues every day.

Freire (1972) defined praxis as people’s reflection on their oppressive state and the action they take to alleviate it. It is possible to be oppressed by a wide variety of issues; lack of money can be oppressive when it interferes with buying the essentials of life. Being illiterate also can be oppressive as it interferes with the kind of work people

are able to attain, as well as their daily lives. Emotions can oppress people by causing them to make decisions that may not be in their best interests. Freire believed that people can overcome oppression by taking action after reflecting on their oppressive state.

One of the gravest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge men's consciousness. Functionally, oppression is domesticating. To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it. (Freire, 1972, p. 36)

Arendt (as cited in Young, 1989) defined praxis by contrasting it with poiesis.

Young explained,

In her major work, *The Human Condition*, Arendt explored the nature of praxis as distinct from poiesis. Poiesis is making, it involves technique and craftsmanship, whereas praxis is acting or doing, and it includes political-ethical actions based on prudent practical judgments. (p. 26)

The challenge for Mr. Kent and other urban school principals is to reflect and then act. Taking the time to reflect before taking action is a luxury that not all principals can afford. However, educational leaders who invest time initially in reflecting on their challenges tend to be successful problem solvers (Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995). In Principal Kent's practice, praxis was reflected in all of the situations described in the vignettes. He had no choice but to take unpleasant action in the coaches' conflict; he reflected on how to change the coaching hierarchy and followed through on a difficult decision. In instituting the two academies, Mr. Kent and Ms. Gomez developed and promoted a new curriculum that would benefit both students and staff; this decision also required reflection, collaboration, and action. The GLASS vignette also reflected praxis because Mr. Kent allowed a traditionally oppressed group of students to form a club that would provide support in what could be an alienating high school experience for many gay students. His action was to support the students in forming that club, which had the

potential to be controversial. The DESEM vignette also reflected praxis. In this case, Mr. Kent came to realize that he needed help to resolve a challenging issue; his reflection comprised making his own observations, consulting with his assistant principals, and listening to his staff. His reflection led to collaboration with Mr. Thompson and Mr. Anderson and then to a plan of action.

### Theorizing About Mr. Kent's Practice: Freirean Implications

I began this dissertation by questioning whether Freirean constructs were applicable to the problem-solving practice of urban school principals. There are reflections of Freirean critical theory in the problem-solving practices of Principal Kent. There are also many aspects of the principal's problem solving that do not reflect Freirean critical theory. In addition, there are aspects of Mr. Kent's practice that Freirean critical theory does not adequately address.

In Chapter II, I identified six major constructs of Freirean critical theory: (a) dialogue with a purpose, (b) conscientization, (c) praxis, (d) banking education versus problem-posing education, (e) the universal common ethic and the politics of education, and (f) humanization. In the following section I will discuss the reflections of the Freirean constructs as they relate to the four vignettes. Later in this chapter, I also will discuss the significance of the degree of these reflections.

### Dialogue With a Purpose

One of the aspects of the first construct, dialogue with a purpose, is that it requires mutually respectful dialogue between people as they discuss an issue. This construct was reflected in the DESEM, Two Academies, Coaches, and GLASS vignettes. Teachers collaborated with Ms. Gomez and Mr. Kent on planning and implementing the two

academies. This is an example of Freire's dialogue with a purpose because the teachers were empowered to make decisions about the curriculum. Dialogue with a purpose reflects the idea of an ontological vocation, which is the humanizing quality of dialogue that contains the elements Freire (1972) identified: hope, love, faith in humankind, humility, and critical thinking. In the DESEM vignette, dialogue with a purpose was reflected in a positive way because the program developers, Mr. Anderson and Mr. Thompson, wanted students to develop self-esteem and manners. The principal promoted these qualities to the students by demonstrating his own respect for them; he had developed a program that would benefit them.

Another aspect of dialogue with a purpose is that its objective is to help another person realize the level of his or her oppression. Mr. Kent was trying to help students see that their negative behavior would have oppressive consequences and to do this in a way that would motivate them to do better. He chose motivation over punishment, which is also indicative of the mutual respect between the adults involved—Mr. Kent and the two consultants—and the students. In the GLASS vignette, Mr. Kent decided to approve students' request to form a club for gay students. This is another example of dialogue with a purpose; it meets Freire's requisites of being mutually respectful and of helping people realize the level of their oppression.

The Coaches vignette contained a good example of what happens when mutually respectful dialogue does not take place. Mr. Kent solved this problem by reorganizing the coaching staff. If he and the coaches had been able to engage in mutually respectful dialogue, the parties might have been able to resolve the problem more satisfactorily. However, such dialogue did not take place, and many people, including the principal, were dissatisfied with the outcome.



### Conscientization

The second construct, conscientization, was evident in the GLASS vignette as well as the DESEM vignette. The GLASS students went through the process of determining the level of their oppression; this is precisely what conscientization is about. The students then decided to take action, which is also part of conscientization. Even though this is a classic example of what Freire meant by conscientization, it is not a strong reflection of the principal's problem solving because he had little, if anything, to do with the GLASS students' conscientization process. Mr. Kent did, however, allow the students to form their club, so in this respect he facilitated their plan of action. The GLASS group had the potential to be controversial; however, during my time at the high school, no negative publicity about the club appeared in the news media. Mr. Kent's decision to support a potentially controversial group brings us to the third construct, praxis.

### Praxis

Praxis involves taking action to alleviate one's oppression. In the GLASS vignette, praxis was illustrated by students' approaching Mr. Kent about forming a club; his role was to facilitate the process. In the Two Academies vignette, praxis was illustrated by the action that Mr. Kent, Ms. Gomez, and the teachers took to establish an innovative and flexible curriculum that ultimately would improve the students' schooling. In the DESEM vignette, Mr. Kent led a campaign to organize and implement a program that would benefit students by motivating them to learn more acceptable ways of expressing themselves in a variety of situations. The Coaches vignette demonstrated how the opposite of praxis resulted from a damaging dispute among the coaches.

### Banking Education Versus Problem-Posing Education

The fourth Freirean construct reflected in the principal's problem-solving practices is banking education versus problem-posing education. This construct was reflected in the Two Academies, DESEM, and GLASS vignettes. Forming the two academies gave direction to the students' coursework. Because the curriculum of the two academies led to higher-level thinking skills in business accounting and the performing arts, students would benefit from problem-posing education. The DESEM vignette illustrated how students were involved with problem posing. In the DESEM project, students were presented with a variety of problems they needed to resolve. I observed one example of problem-posing education when Mr. Thompson asked students to look at their family budgets and determine monthly costs. Students were supposed to consult with their parents and then write down the family's expenditures for electricity, telephone, natural gas, water, groceries, and other typical household needs (field notes).

Problem-posing education also was reflected in the GLASS vignette because the students were acting upon their lack of inclusion at the high school. One aspect of the problem-posing construct is that it involves a dynamic of change. According to Roberts (2000), problem posing is a remedy for a fixed inevitability.

A new conception of the relationship between "consciousness," "action," and "world" emerges through critical dialogue. Where under the banking system social reality is posited as a fixed inevitability, through problem-posing education students confront, explore, and act purposely on a dynamic, ever-changing world. (p. 55)

By forming the GLASS club, students were purposefully acting to alleviate their oppression. They were confronting a world that traditionally had oppressed them.

## The Universal Common Ethic and the Politics of Education

The fifth construct reflected in the data is the universal common ethic and the politics of education. Freire (1998) elaborated on this ethic:

The ethic of which I speak is that which feels itself betrayed and neglected by the hypocritical perversion of an elitist purity, an ethic affronted by racial, sexual, and class discrimination. For the sake of this ethic, which is inseparable from educative practice, we should struggle, whether our work is with children, youth, or adults. (pp. 23-24)

In the Two Academies vignette, the curriculum was designed so that students would develop skills that helped them in other academic areas. In the DESEM vignette, the principal and Mr. Thompson met several times with various central office administrators in their efforts to obtain funding for the program. They endeavored to convince these administrators that the program could be funded through Title Six of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Among other things, Title Six provides for the funding of environmental or grass-roots groups that promote improving the environment. These meetings exemplified the Freirean construct of the politics of education.

Another reflection of the universal common ethic and the politics of education is found in the GLASS vignette. The gay students did not believe that they were an integral part of the school community and chose to act on this belief by founding the GLASS club. The founding of GLASS at Macedo High School reflects the Freirean construct of the politics of education because students were working formally to be included in the school community. Many gay students in the United States have complained about lacking a sense of inclusion (Human Rights Watch, 2001), and forming clubs in which gay as well as straight students are welcome to participate is an act of inclusion. The founding of GLASS at Macedo High School is an example of the principal's promoting inclusion at his school, as well as of students working to improve their sense of inclusion.

## Humanization

Last, we see the reflection of Freire's construct of humanization. Freire believed that all people strive to be more human. According to Freire, people want to feel loved and want to love others. Humanization is a perpetual process that requires self-reflection within one's historical context. The Two Academies vignette reflected the construct of humanization because students were experiencing a new direction and purpose to their academic studies. The DESEM vignette also reflected this construct because developing manners and study skills is humanizing. Further, the newly formed GLASS organization would allow gay students to feel they were a more integral part of the high school, thus making their high school experience more humanizing. Finally, the Coaches vignette demonstrated humanization because the coaches were relieved of a troubling situation and the student athletes began to win some games. The coaches' argumentative attitudes had been dehumanizing, especially for the athletes.

## Summary

There are important patterns that emerged from an analysis of the vignettes through a Freirean lens. As a means to better understand this second level of analysis, theorizing practice through a Freirean lens, I present two matrices. The first (see Table 4.2) presents a summary of Mr. Kent's emancipatory problem-solving practices. The second (see Table 4.3) presents the impact of Mr. Kent's problem-solving practice. In essence, I provide an overview of the emancipatory actions of other people as a result of Mr. Kent's problem-solving practice.

As we can see, in the GLASS vignette, Mr. Kent employed liberatory practices to empower a group of gay and lesbian students. The students were never treated differently from their peers. This is an example of Mr. Kent's commitment to inclusion

Table 4.2: Cross-reference summary of Freirean constructs and vignettes: Mr. Kent's direct problem solving

Freirean Construct	Vignette			
	The Dilemma of Race: The Ethics of Athletic Coaching	Collaboration and Teamwork: A Tale of Two Academies	Using Alliances and Partnerships to Achieve a Solution: A Program to Develop and Encourage Self-Esteem and Manners	Empowering Through Inclusion: The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Student Club
Dialogue With a Purpose		Mr. Kent collaborated with the assistant principal and teachers to create innovative programs for students.	Mr. Kent engaged in mutually respectful dialogue with consultants, teachers, and students.	Mr. Kent engaged in dialogue with the purpose of allowing the students and their advisor to take action.
Conscientization			Mr. Kent articulated a clear understanding of the importance of school-community connections and that students were responsible citizens in this.	Mr. Kent understood the volatility of supporting GLASS, but was committed to the idea that this group would be fairly treated.
Praxis		Mr. Kent and his staff took action to change a traditional curriculum to a more innovative one.	Mr. Kent supported the actualization of this work with resources and time.	Mr. Kent facilitated the efforts of GLASS and its faculty advisers.
Banking Education Versus Problem-Posing Education		Mr. Kent and his staff planned and implemented two programs that would present problem-posing educational opportunities for students.		Mr. Kent worked with the students and their advisers to address problems in an open fashion and to be active about teaching understanding regarding their preference.
The Universal Common Ethic and the Politics of Education			Mr. Kent saw this as a learning opportunity, hence supported a program that was motivational and not punitive.	Mr. Kent chose to support the GLASS club even though there was potential for controversy.
Humanization	Mr. Kent reorganized the coaching staff.	Mr. Kent gave students the opportunity to select their academy. This fostered self-efficacy and empowerment.	Mr. Kent approved and promoted a program that resulted in students' making better decisions about their behavior and study habits.	Mr. Kent's support of GLASS reaffirmed his and the school's commitment to equity and justice.

Table 4.3: Cross-reference summary of Freirean constructs and vignettes: The products of Mr. Kent's problem-solving practice

Freirean Construct	Vignette			
	The Dilemma of Race: The Ethics of Athletic Coaching	Collaboration and Teamwork: A Tale of Two Academies	Using Alliances and Partnerships to Achieve a Solution: A Program to Develop and Encourage Self-Esteem and Manners	Empowering Through Inclusion: The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Student Club
Dialogue With a Purpose		Teachers collaborated with one another and the assistant principal in respectful dialogue about learning and teaching.	Consultants, administrators, teachers, students, staff, and community members began to dialogue in mutually respectful ways.	Students fostered continued dialogue with one another, straight students, and faculty/faculty advisor.
Conscientization			The motivational program that promoted students' positive attitudes and behavior stimulated new understanding about school.	The students, aware of their oppression, took action to establish their identity as well as their contribution to the school community.
Praxis		Teachers began to think about, plan, and initiate new strategies	Students learned productive skills, and the school-community interaction became more positive.	The establishment of GLASS was emancipatory for students who have little social/cultural capital.
Banking Education Versus Problem-Posing Education		The new pedagogy illustrated problem-posing education with a focus on developing higher-level thinking skills.		Gay and lesbian students serve the school community in a number of substantive ways.
The Universal Common Ethic and the Politics of Education			Students learned community respect. The school learned to work productively with the community.	The ethic of identity was addressed head-on and in an equitable manner.
Humanization	Due to a new coaching staff, coaches and students athletes begin to work as a team.	Giving students a choice between the two academies enhanced their sense of self-direction and ownership of the learning process.	Students developed self-esteem, manners, and respect for community.	Equitable treatment is exemplified.

and diversity. Mr. Kent honored the students' request, and although he acknowledged that endorsing a gay and lesbian club would be controversial, he welcomed their application and told them that they would have to seek out an academic advisor. In fact, in the second table, we can see that Mr. Kent's efforts resulted in students' and teachers' taking ownership and creating a sanctioned school club. The GLASS club would never have been created if Mr. Kent had not given his initial approval; however, the students, with the help of their advisor, were successful in founding the first school club to encourage interaction between straight and gay students.

In the second and third vignettes, we see some effort on the part of Mr. Kent to employ emancipatory and liberatory practices. He attempted to move the school's capacity to provide engaging learning opportunities with the creation of the two academies and the DESEM program. These two programs benefited students by helping them develop improved study skills and gain a sense of direction for their studies. Both of these vignettes illustrate the products of Mr. Kent's problem-solving practice because he did not actually implement the programs as an individual; however, he helped plan the implementation of both programs yet it was the professionals that he brought together who attempted to reach praxis of the actions. And in fact, students, teachers, and community members attempted to be self-determined, but did not quite reach the level of action necessary for emancipatory praxis.

Finally, in the Coaches vignette, we see very little in the way of Freirean constructs. Although Mr. Kent attempted to facilitate a more collaborative dialogue, he resorted to dismantling the coaching staff. This vignette raises an important question: Why are Freirean constructs not seen in some of the situations? In both tables we notice that there are blank spaces that require our attention. It appears, if we take a closer

reading of the vignettes, that the lack of reflections of the Freirean constructs, represented by the blank spaces in the tables, can be attributed to the institutional barriers that pervade the structure of an urban school. Urban high schools, like most public schools, are highly bureaucratized places where there are academic departments, elaborate state and district rules and regulations, and time constraints. These institutional structures interfere with such Freirean concepts as collaboration, teamwork, developing alliances or partnerships, and empowering students and staff.

Urban public schools are places where rigid school structures exist. This is especially true in public school settings, particularly in urban locales, where rigid state and district rules, regulations, and policies can interfere with innovative school practices. Some of the policies put in place for urban schools by state and local officials can result in oppressive situations (Anyon, 1997; Kozol, 2000). Some policies can be so extreme that statewide funding policies favor the suburban middle class and provide less funding for urban public schools, where the needs are greater. Another example of rigid policies that are potentially detrimental in urban public schools is standardized testing being tied to monetary awards for students who attain certain scores. Suburban middle-class students tend to receive these awards, whereas urban public school students tend to miss yet another opportunity (Heller & Shapiro, 2000).

In conclusion, the six Freirean constructs were reflected to varying degrees in the problem-solving practices of the principal. Freirean constructs also were reflected in the products of the principal's problem-solving practice; these decisions, or this problem solving, resulted from Mr. Kent's empowering other people to make decisions as well as to solve problems. Further challenges remain, due to politics, organizational history, culture, fiscal constraints, and national trends. Freirean critical theory does not



adequately address these issues. A deeper, telescoping assessment of this work suggests that one way one might think about school leadership and Freirean theory is through a discussion of pedagogy of place. Such a discussion is the focus of Chapter V.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

#### Introduction

My purpose in this study was to examine the problem-solving practices of an urban public school principal to see how the principles of Freirean critical pedagogy were reflected in the carrying out of the principal's problem-solving duties. In other words, I examined Freirean constructs in Mr. Kent's problem-solving practice. The practices that I examined in this study were decision making, managing dilemmas, and problem solving. I was concerned with the praxis of Freirean thought and the liberatory or emancipatory qualities of the principal's problem solving.

In Chapter IV, I developed four vignettes that illuminate the principal's problem-solving practices. These vignettes emerged from the data gathered for this dissertation. From the four vignettes, I identified four principles that guided the principal's problem-solving practices; I referred to this part as the principal's local or particular practice. I also looked at reflections of Freirean critical theory in the principal's problem-solving practices. In this chapter, I revisit the research question, beginning with an overview of the findings, followed by illustrations of Freirean constructs in the principal's problem-solving practices, and issues that emerged from the data that Freirean critical theory does not adequately address. Last, I extend the theory by presenting for your consideration three concepts: naming the world, pedagogy of place, and the spirit of problem solving.

### Revisiting the Research Question

The research question posed in this study is: In what ways, if any, is Freirean critical theory reflected in an urban high school principal's problem-solving practices? In Chapter IV, I described and developed four principles that guided the school administrator's problem-solving practices: (a) using alliances and partnerships, (b) critical leadership and management, (c) focus on learning, and (d) praxis. Each of these four principles was reflected in the vignettes presented in that chapter. The six Freirean constructs developed in Chapter II were reflected in varying degrees in the principal's problem-solving practices. In the end, I found that institutional barriers and cultural norms (see Coaches vignette, in particular) tempered the reflection of the six constructs in three of the four vignettes.

### The Principles of the Instructional Leader's Problem-Solving Practices

For the purpose of this research, I defined alliance building and a partnership approach to educational leadership as the active pursuit of establishing professional contact with a variety of people who indicate promise and a willingness to work in mutually beneficial ways to resolve issues of common interest in a public school setting (Eisler, 2000). In building alliances and partnerships, Mr. Kent maintained contact and developed associations with a variety of people from different situations. He then used these sources when he needed advice, resources, or information. Mr. Kent used his skill at alliance building throughout much of his problem solving.

The second local or particular principle is critical leadership, the major focus of which is its participative approach. An important element of a critical leadership approach is negotiating consensus among staff and students, as well as empowering staff

and students to make decisions about issues that affect them (Gooden, 2002). Critical leadership was reflected in Mr. Kent's problem-solving practices. In other words, he sought to empower people and include them in the decision-making process whenever possible.

Focus on learning is the third principle; that is, all of Mr. Kent's efforts were focused on how to improve students' learning. As Mr. Roberts, the principal's supervisor, said, "Mr. Kent's strength is he focuses on kid outcomes. And that keeps him in good light with everyone because how can you argue with what's best for kids?" Mr. Kent had been a teacher for several years before becoming an administrator; his leadership practices had been focused on learning. One of the primary concerns of the instructional leader is teaching and learning (Beck, 1994).

The fourth principle is praxis, which encompasses reflecting and then taking action (Freire, 1972). Instructional leaders do not always have the luxury of time when they are making decisions. However, educational leaders who invest more time initially with their challenges tend to be more successful problem solvers (Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995). This investment of time is reflective of Freire's idea of praxis. Praxis is the actions that the principal takes in order to improve students' and staff members' chances for success. Mr. Kent applied praxis to his problem-solving practices.

#### Freirean Critical Theory and Educational Leadership

In this section, I discuss the major themes that emerged from Mr. Kent's practice and the implications they have for educational leadership. Included in this discussion are the issues that emerged when the principal's problem-solving practices were viewed through a Freirean lens, as well as issues that Freirean critical theory does not adequately address. In this discussion I also revisit the research question and discuss the possible

answers as well as issues surrounding the research question that either were not answered in this study or require explanations other than those provided by Freirean critical theory. Last, I develop the construct, pedagogy of place, and explain how it relates to both Mr. Kent's practice and Freirean critical theory.

Certain ethical and political issues pertain to the principal's problem-solving practices. In an urban school setting where students and the entire school community suffer the consequences of skewed funding, students are assessed with the same standardized tests as their wealthier suburban counterparts (Kozol, 1991). Good school leadership practices are not sufficient because there are political issues of exploitation and oppression that liberatory practice needs to address (Anyon, 1997). Freire believed that overcoming one's oppression is the responsibility of the oppressed (Freire, 1972); this implies that the school leader is responsible for leading the school community toward praxis of profound and fundamental change. In other words, the principal leads the school community through dialogue with a purpose and conscientization.

In urban public schools, oppression is reflected in the policies that are imposed on these schools by state and federal governments, as well as by the amount of funding (or lack thereof) they receive (Anyon, 1997; Kozol, 1991, 2000). The challenges that confront urban schools are multiple and complex. According to Hill (1996), a variety of issues have caused urban schools to be less effective than they might be:

Why did Americans get schools that are different from what everyone wants? The answer is complex and, because it lacks a single villain, unsatisfying. The situation has come about through the gradual accretion of small decisions, not by design. Since the mid-1960s, when schools first became the focus of social policy, they have been subject to wave after wave of rules and regulations, court orders, teacher-contract provisions, and other formal rules that bind and delimit what teachers and principals can do. Do schools have too few or too many minority students, or does a desegregated school have too many segregated classes? The answer is a rule of court order. Are handicapped children neglected in some schools? The answer is a new legal principle and access to the courts for

aggrieved parents. Do some students need extra help in school? The answer is a series of federal and state categorical programmes, each with its own set of controls designed to ensure that the services bought with federal and state funds go to the intended beneficiaries and no one else. (p. 177)

Hill contended that it is difficult to specify one specific reason for the inadequacy of urban schools. Students who attend urban schools simply do not receive the same quality of education as their suburban school counterparts (Anyon, 1997; Kozol, 2000).

Urban schools are places where the principal's problem-solving practices have the potential to be liberatory. In other words, the decisions that the principal makes have the potential to enhance students' success. In the case of Mr. Kent, some decisions helped improve the students' chances of success, and others were not liberatory. The GLASS, DESEM, and Two Academies vignettes illustrated liberatory problem-solving practices because they reflected the constructs of Freirean critical theory and demonstrated how students' potential for success was improved. In the GLASS vignette, the principal decided to allow the establishment of a gay student club, which was controversial because there were conservative and religious groups that would oppose the formation of such a club under any circumstances. This example illustrates Freirean praxis because the decision was the result of both conscientization (the students realized that they were not included in the school community) and dialogue with a purpose (the students engaged in a dialogue with the principal for the purpose of taking action). Mr. Kent's approval of the club is an example of praxis because he took action to improve the gay students' status in the school community.

In the Two Academies vignette, there were also reflections of Freirean critical theory in the principal's problem-solving practices. Perhaps the most salient example of Freirean critical theory in this vignette is the construct of banking education versus problem-posing education. The purpose of forming the two academies was to improve

and enhance students' educational opportunities. This vignette illustrates the Freirean construct of dialogue with a purpose for the adults involved in the planning. There is also a reflection of problem-posing education because the students would be using higher-level thinking in the academics

In the Coaches and the DESEM vignettes, we see examples of Freirean critical theory as well as examples of Freirean constructs not being reflected in the principal's problem-solving practices. In the Coaches vignette, we see the antithesis of Freirean critical theory. The coaches were not engaged in mutually respectful dialogue with a purpose among themselves or with the principal. The principal was unable to promote conscientization among the coaches. The student athletes were aware of the conflict, yet they were powerless to resolve it; this was a dilemma for them. In general, coaches should set an example for their athletes; in this case, however, the adult example was inconsistent with what the coaches would have expected of their student athletes. There was another example of a lack of reflection of Freirean critical theory in the DESEM vignette. The students were not given a voice in how their problem would be resolved. Perhaps it is naïve to think that a principal could have included students' voice in planning the DESEM program. On the other hand, he could have consulted the freshman class officers or other student representatives.

When Mr. Kent's problem-solving practices reflected the constructs of Freirean critical theory, his practice was liberatory. When his problem solving was not Freirean, it became tacitly oppressive. It does not appear that Mr. Kent purposefully oppressed the coaches or the students in the DESEM program. He relieved the coaches of their positions but gave them an opportunity to apply for other positions that were open. Students were not involved in the development or planning of the DESEM program, but

the focus of the program was motivational, which would be Freirean, rather than punitive, which would be anti-Freirean.

#### Emerging Issues Unexplained by Freirean Critical Theory

Freirean critical theory does not adequately explain all aspects of the four vignettes developed in Chapter IV. There were examples in the data in which Freirean critical theory was an inadequate lens for analysis, and there was problem solving in which Freirean critical theory was not reflected. Issues in which Freirean critical theory was not reflected are discussed in the following paragraphs.

In the Coaches vignette, there was no dialogue with a purpose. The conflict had begun before Mr. Kent came to Macedo High School. Likewise, conscientization did not occur in this vignette, other than, perhaps, with the students. The whole coaching dilemma was more closely reflective of banking education than problem-posing education because no one but the principal was attempting to resolve the problem; in a problem-posing situation, all of the participants would have had a voice. Freire's universal common ethic was not reflected in this vignette because there was overwhelming animosity on the part of the coaches. One way that the universal common ethic could have been reflected would have been if the coaches had resolved their differences on their own, without intervention. When the coaches left, however, there was humanization because the teams began to win games, which they had not done in four years. The whole school community, especially the students, benefited from the change in coaches. Thus, we have an example of a situation in which Freirean constructs were not reflected, yet Mr. Kent's decisions ultimately led to a better athletic program.

The six Freirean constructs are by no means exhaustive; there are other constructs that were not a part of this dissertation. Additional Freirean constructs might illuminate



the principal's problem-solving practices from another point of view. Perhaps Freirean theory was an inappropriate lens for the Coaches vignette, or perhaps some characteristic of Macedo High School prevented the application of the six Freirean constructs to that vignette.

### Extending the Theory

Wolcott's (1973) The Man in the Principal's Office was the inspiration for using an ethnographical approach in this study. One analytical technique that Wolcott used to bring together his data was to extend his theory. Essentially, Wolcott looked at some broad themes that emerged from his data, such as socialization of the principal, the principal as socializer, and the image of the principal. He took these issues and then developed explanations based on his field research as well as the work of other researchers. I used Wolcott's analytical strategy as a model for developing my extension of theory in this section.

The third layer of the bull's-eye diagram (Figure 4.1) in Chapter IV is presented in this section. The first two layers pertained to Mr. Kent's local or particular practice and the Freirean implications of that practice. The third layer, extending the local or particular practice, is developed in this section. Three concepts emerged from my Freirean analysis of Mr. Kent's problem-solving practice: (a) naming the world, (b) pedagogy of place, and (c) the spirit of problem solving.

### First Concept to Consider: Naming the World

Freirean scholar Antonia Darder (2002) believed that theory is an ongoing and perpetually developing entity. In Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire (1972) discussed the idea of naming the world. For Freire, naming the world meant that a person going

through conscientization would begin by seeing things from his or her own perspective. A conservative politician might say that most people who live in urban communities are poor, yet the people themselves might say that they are not poor, but rather they are exploited. In short, naming the world is a necessary part of dialogue with a purpose, conscientization, and praxis, Freirean constructs that were reflected in the principal's problem-solving practices. Darder wrote:

Theory, then, as a product of a historical process of knowledge construction is ongoing and regenerative. It is never complete but always exists within a particular set of conditions shaped by particular relations of power. In the process of teaching, dialogue is considered the self-generating praxis that emerges from the relational interaction between reflection, naming of the world, action, and the return to reflection once more. It is a continuous, purposefully motivated, and open exchange that provides participants the space in which, together, to reflect, critique, affirm, challenge, act, and ultimately transform our collective understanding of the world. (p. 82)

Darder's idea, then, is conducive to allowing theory to evolve and change due to the dynamic concept of education. Even Freire believed that his ideas and theory ought to be reinvented. Darder continued,

Freire's literacy project has been often mechanized into a "method" and stripped of its revolutionary intent. In their foreword to Teachers as Cultural Workers (1998), Donaldo Macedo and Ana Maria Araujo Freire discuss Paulo Freire's serious concern with such reification of his work. In a conversation with Macedo, Freire emphasizes, "It is impossible to export pedagogical practices without reinventing them. Please tell your fellow American educators not to import me. Ask them to re-create and rewrite my ideas." (p. 150)

Paulo Freire was inviting us to reinvent his ideas so that they do not become a mechanized method but serve as a way to understand the world. This is conducive to Freire's idea of naming the world; our place would affect how we name that world. In other words, we reinvent Freire's naming the world because it will change according to our cultural and geographical context. A good example of what Freire meant by naming

the world is the preceding example of a person's deciding that he or she is not poor but rather is exploited. The term *exploited* has a different connotation from the word *poor*.

Freire (1973) defined naming the world as the process by which people name things as they relate to their reality. In other words, people are empowered to name things in the world; this is important because people also name things according to their life experiences. According to Freire (1998b), naming the world has political implications of control and being controlled:

Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world. Hence, dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish this naming—between those who deny others the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them. Those who have been denied their primordial right to speak their word must first reclaim this right and prevent the continuation of this dehumanizing aggression. (p. 69)

People are empowered when they can name the world because they have a choice as to what word and its connotation they will use in their dialogue.

The concept of naming the world can be reflected in the problem-solving practices of a school principal. For example, Mr. Kent allowed the GLASS club to be established; this is an example of naming the world because the students had chosen to refer to themselves as gay and lesbian. Some of their classmates referred to them by the derogatory word *faggots* when they were putting up posters announcing the club. The students were prepared to respond to this treatment because they had been empowered and had named their world. In the Two Academies vignette, two new programs were developed and named in order to give a more logical purpose to the course sequences and the curriculum. The principal's naming the world is an example of power. When the principal encourages others in the school community to name the world, they are

empowered. Mr. Kent empowered his students and teachers by encouraging them to name their world.

Naming the world is important for the principal's problem-solving practices because it is one way that the principal can empower other members of the school community. Naming the world strengthens the process of humanization and praxis because people are empowered. When you empower someone, you are demonstrating your faith and trust in that individual's judgment, which can lead to greater intrinsic motivation on his or her part. Naming the world is part of the ethical process of problem solving; to do otherwise is dehumanizing (Freire, 1998b).

#### Second Concept to Consider: Pedagogy of Place

Place, as a concept, can have numerous implications. It might seem counterintuitive to think of place as a complex concept; however, when we consider several aspects of place, it soon becomes apparent that place can have a profound influence on us. Casey (1993) wrote about place and its importance in how we interact with others:

The power of place such as a mere room possesses determines not only where I am in the limited sense of cartographic location but how I am together with others (i.e., how I commingle and communicate with them) and even who we shall become together. The "how" and the "who" are intimately tied to the "where," which gives to them a specific content and coloration not available from any other source. Place bestows upon them "a local habitation and a name" by establishing a concrete situatedness in the common world. This emplacement is as social as it is personal. The idiolocal is not merely idiosyncratic or individual; it is also collective in character. (p. 23)

According to Casey, we attach social and personal meaning to our place. In an urban high school, a variety of issues relate to place. The word *urban* has significance as a place because the term has demographic implications. Thus, the context and the place of

working in an urban school will influence the decision-making practices of an urban school principal.

In the following discussion, I address several issues that emerged from the data gathered for this study. I look at the four principles that guided Mr. Kent's local or particular praxis, reflections of Freirean critical theory in the principal's problem solving, and the concept of pedagogy of place as a unifying way to bring all three of these phenomena together. It is important to consider the concept of place because it determines the different contexts in which an urban school principal must function. Mr. Kent had to keep in mind the politics of his local school district, as well as state and federal regulations. Not only did he need to understand how these rules and regulations worked; he also needed to know the nuances of how to navigate through all of these requirements and still bring the best education possible to his students. To be successful, Mr. Kent needed to know his place, not in the sense of his status or social standing, but in the sense of the personal, social, cultural, and legal aspects of the school community.

Gruenewald (in press) believed that, for educators, extending our consciousness of place will help ameliorate our sense of isolation from the rest of the world:

The point of becoming more conscious of places in education is to extend our notions of pedagogy and accountability outward toward places. Thus extended, pedagogy becomes more relevant to the lived experience of students and teachers, and accountability is reconceptualized so that places matter to educators, students, and citizens in tangible ways. Place-conscious education, therefore, aims to work against the isolation of schooling's discourses and practices from the living world outside of the increasingly placeless institution of schooling. Further, it aims to enlist teachers and students in the firsthand experience of local life, and in the political process of understanding and shaping what happens there. (p. 3)

For Mr. Kent to resolve problems successfully, he had to know the community and, as Gruenewald advised, not let the school operate in isolation from the rest of the community.

Mr. Kent's four basic principles—utilizing alliances and partnerships, critical leadership and management, focus on learning, and praxis—reflect the place where they evolved. For example, his use of the principle of utilizing alliances and partnerships was closely related to place because his allies and partners were a part of either the school district or the local community. If Mr. Kent left Macedo High School and went to a suburb of a large city, he would not be able to use the alliances and partnerships that he had worked so hard to establish at Macedo because they were place specific. He would need to begin developing new alliances and partnerships in his new community, which would be a time-consuming process.

Place is also important to the principle of critical leadership and management because an urban school is a place where people traditionally are not empowered (Anyon, 1997; Apple, 1996; Kozol, 1991). One of the important aspects of critical leadership is that people who traditionally have been subjugated are empowered (Bates, 1986; Gooden, 2002). The place where Mr. Kent practiced critical leadership was an urban setting where many of the families had low incomes and little, if any, political power. The GLASS vignette illustrates how students were empowered, the Two Academies vignette illustrates how teachers were empowered, and the DESEM vignette illustrates how Mr. Anderson, a community activist, and Mr. Thompson, a retiree, were empowered to implement a motivational program for students.

The third principle, focus on learning, is also relevant to the basic ideas of pedagogy of place. Mr. Kent was always looking for what was, according to his supervisor, Mr. Roberts, "what's best for kids." This mantra seemed to underlie Mr. Kent's problem-solving practices. The Two Academies vignette demonstrated a focus on learning because the basic rationale for the academies' existence was to give added

purpose and direction to students; in other words, the academies would help students learn in a purposeful manner. The two academies also related to pedagogy of place because their foundation was based on what were perceived to be the needs of students at Macedo High School. The DESEM vignette also relates to both the principle of focus on learning and pedagogy of place because students were being motivated to learn and adopt new behaviors. Mr. Kent and others in the school community had identified behaviors that were not reflective of the community's values. These behaviors were in need of change. Gruenewald (in press) believed that places should matter to educators:

The point of becoming more conscious of places in education is to extend our notions of pedagogy and accountability outward toward places. Thus, extended, pedagogy becomes more relevant to the lived experience of students and teachers, and accountability is reconceptualized so that places matter to educators, students, and citizens in tangible ways. Place-conscious education, therefore, aims to work against the isolation of schooling. (p. 3)

The vignettes illustrate place-specific events that reflect their origin. Mr. Kent's problem-solving practices were also place specific; in other words, his problem solving was based on the events in each vignette as well as on the principles that guided his practice.

In Mr. Kent's practice, we see praxis reflected in all of the vignettes. He had no choice but to take unpleasant action in the situation described in the Coaches' vignette; he reflected on how to change the coaching hierarchy and followed through on a tough decision. In the Two Academies vignette, Mr. Kent and Ms. Gomez developed and promoted a new curriculum that would benefit both students and staff; this decision also required reflection, collaboration, and action. The GLASS vignette, too, reflects praxis because Mr. Kent allowed a traditionally oppressed group of students to form a club that would provide many gay students support in what could be an alienating high school experience; his action in supporting the students had the potential to be controversial.

Last, the DESEM vignette also reflects praxis. In this case, Mr. Kent came to realize that he needed help to resolve an issue that he found to be challenging; his reflection comprised making his own observations, consulting with his assistant principals, and listening to his staff. His reflection led to collaboration with Mr. Thompson and Mr. Anderson, and this collaboration led to a plan of action. Praxis is the action that one takes after reflecting (Freire, 1972). Praxis is related to pedagogy of place (Gruenewald, in press):

While natural history and cultural journalism are two pathways to greater experience with and understanding of the ecological and cultural life of the places we and others inhabit, the significance of action research to place-based education is its potential to engage teachers and students as problem-solvers and place-makers. This means extending experience with the study of places to participation in the political process that determines what they are and what they will become. (p. 34)

Action-based research is reflective of praxis, yet the difference here is that Mr. Kent used praxis as a principle for his problem solving and the preceding citation looked at action-based research as a tool that reflects pedagogy of place.

There is a relationship between pedagogy of place and the six Freirean constructs developed in Chapter II: (a) dialogue with a purpose, (b) conscientization, (c) praxis, (d) banking education versus problem-posing education, (e) the universal common ethic and the politics of education, and (f) humanization. I grouped the first three constructs together for the purpose of discussing their relationship to pedagogy of place. However, each of the first three constructs is independent of the others. It is possible to realize the first two constructs, dialogue with a purpose and conscientization, but not necessarily come to praxis. Praxis is the reflection and action one takes based on dialogue with a purpose and conscientization; it is the culmination of the first two constructs.



In the Freirean tradition of critical praxis, the school leader, the principal, has an important role of facilitating the actions of students, teachers, and other members of the school community. The principal also has the role of empowering others. A more traditional principal might resort to performing a dictatorial role rather than being a facilitator and one who empowers others. There are examples of Mr. Kent's facilitating the actions that people wanted to take. In the GLASS vignette, Mr. Kent empowered students to form a group. He also facilitated the action that the students wanted to take, despite the potential for controversy. In the DESEM vignette, he took action by facilitating and empowering the work of Mr. Thompson and Mr. Anderson, both of whom were members of the community. The lack of student voice regarding the planning and implementation of the DESEM program contradicted Freirean praxis as well as the principle of critical leadership. However, the resulting program was motivational rather than punitive in nature, which closely relates to Freirean praxis as well as the principle of critical leadership.

The construct of problem-posing education versus banking education also has implications for pedagogy of place. In problem-posing education, students attempt to resolve problems that their teachers pose to them. Conversely, in banking education, students are asked to memorize facts (like depositing money in a bank) and then write them down on work sheets or tests (like withdrawing money from a bank) (Freire, 1973). Problem-posing education is a valid strategy for all students, regardless of where they live. However, students in an urban community have the benefit of engaging their local community in a unique way; they can address a variety of problems as part of the problem-posing process. Mr. Kent applied this construct to his resolution in the DESEM vignette; he contacted two members of the community to help resolve the problem of

inappropriate student behavior. By selecting members of the local community, Mr. Kent was using concepts of pedagogy of place. However, the practice portrayed in the DESEM vignette was not strictly Freirean because the students did not have a voice in helping to plan or implement the program.

The Freirean construct of the universal common ethic and the politics of education also pertains to pedagogy of place. Mr. Kent chose to support the formation of the GLASS club, which helped gay students become more a part of the school community. He could have chosen not to support the formation of such a club; a weaker administrator might have wanted to avoid the potential for controversy. In reference to pedagogy of place, it was important for Mr. Kent to consider the local political risks of choosing to support students in establishing the GLASS club. In the DESEM vignette, Mr. Kent had to convince the central administration that his program met the requirements for Title Six funding. This was not an easy task, but the principal met the challenge because he believed that the program was “good for kids.” To be successful, he needed to know how best to propose the plan to his supervisors, which required knowledge of the local school district’s politics.

Humanization was reflected in all four vignettes. Humanization is a perpetual process that requires dialogue in the form of self-reflection within one’s historical context (Freire, 1973). The DESEM vignette reflected humanization because the manners and study skills developed in the program would help students be more successful in school. The GLASS organization allowed gay students to feel more a part of the high school, thereby making their high school experience more humanizing. And the Coaches vignette demonstrated humanization because the coaches were relieved of a troubling

situation and the student athletes finally began to win some games. Conversely, the argumentative attitudes of the coaches were dehumanizing, especially for the athletes.

According to Gruenewald (in press), place-conscious education is intended to strengthen the relationship between school and community. “This treatment of place-conscious education aims at strengthening the connection between education and the places where we, and others, live” (p. 4). The examples from the vignettes illustrate how Mr. Kent’s problem-solving practices helped strengthen the connection between school and community. The athletic program traditionally is a highly visible part of the public high school; Mr. Kent’s efforts to resolve the coaching dilemma resulted in the team’s eventually winning games. This outcome was humanizing for the student athletes as well as the community at large. The GLASS vignette was humanizing for the students because they became a more integral part of the school community.

Examining pedagogy of place is one way to extend Freirean critical theory. As illustrated in the preceding section, place-conscious education illuminates the constructs of Freirean critical theory. The principal’s problem-solving practices were related to pedagogy of place, the six Freirean constructs, and the four basic principles that Mr. Kent applied to his problem solving. Whereas the Freirean constructs emerged to different degrees, another question needed to be addressed: What is the nature of this leadership? The answer is that the pedagogy of place defines the leadership process. There are other ways, as well, to view the principal’s problem-solving practices and how they relate to Freirean critical theory. In the next section, I discuss some of the spiritual aspects of the principal’s problem-solving practices.

### Third Concept to Consider: The Spirit of Problem Solving

When one discusses the *spirit*, it often conjures up religious connotations.

Although the spirit is an important aspect of many religions, it also has meaning in a secular context. It is common for a coach to talk about the spirit that his team exhibits. Many schools actively promote the idea of school spirit, which usually means pride in one's school. Many of us get into the spirit of an upcoming holiday. In much the same spirit, the good school principal comes to problem solving with a disposition that reflects respect, pride, care, and celebration.

The Dalai Lama (2001) believes that a sense of caring for others is an important teaching of all religions. He also believes that those who prefer a secular belief system can appreciate basic human values. He wrote,

I believe that the methods by which we increase our altruism, our sense of caring for others and developing the attitude that our own individual concerns are less important than those of others, are common to all major religious traditions. Though we may find differences in philosophical views and rites, the essential message of all religions is very much the same. They all advocate love, compassion, and forgiveness. And even those who do not believe in religion can appreciate the virtues of basic human values. (pp. 8-9)

The Dalai Lama (1999) also believes that there is a missing element in schools, which pertains to the spirit:

From my rough impression of the Western educational system, although it is very impressive to see the high standard of the facilities, the many material resources, and the perfection of so many different aspects of intellectual development, the thing that seems to be lacking is the dimension of enhancing and developing the heart. The questions we must ask are how to promote these human values. How to teach the development of a good heart? (p. 87)

Having a good heart and caring for others is also a basic belief in Christian religions. According to the Gospel of Matthew, a Pharisee lawyer asked Jesus which was the greatest commandment in the law:

But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matthew 22:34-40, King James Version)

Jesus believed that these two commandments were important because he said, “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” The second commandment that Jesus mentioned, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” is in accord with the Dalai Lama’s (2001) message of “developing the attitude that our own individual concerns are less important than those of others” (p. 8). It is also important to note here that Jesus said that to love our neighbors as we love ourselves is equal to loving God. The Dalai Lama also believes that other religions share this fundamental belief in putting others first. What do the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Dalai Lama have to do with an urban school principal’s problem-solving practices? Both Jesus Christ and the Dalai Lama taught that we should be altruistic in our dealings with other people.

This same sense of spirit, a foundation of altruism, guided Mr. Kent’s problem-solving practices. During Mr. Kent’s first interview, he shared,

I learned real quick from Bill Jostens, he was a principal at Macedo, that in order to solve any problem you had to personalize it, and put the individual first. And if you had a family problem or an injury, that that was always a first priority to whatever happens, the humanistic side. (Michael Kent, tape transcripts)

Putting the individual first anchors the four principles that guided Mr. Kent’s problem-solving practices. Each of the four principles has characteristics that are illuminated by Mr. Kent’s belief in putting the individual first. In the first principle, utilizing alliances and partnerships, the principal sought out relationships with other individuals in the hope of accessing their skills and resources, with the ultimate goal of improving his school.

The second principle, critical leadership and management, also illustrates how Mr. Kent put others first because he chose to empower teachers and students. The third principle, focus on learning, also demonstrates the principal's spirit of altruism; by promoting the DESEM program and the two academies, he was encouraging learning. Mr. Kent was not required to pursue either of these programs, but he voluntarily chose them over other options.

Praxis is guided by the spirit of putting others first. Essentially, "praxis is acting or doing, and it includes political-ethical actions based on prudent practical judgments" (Young, 1989, p. 26). Paulo Freire (1972) defined praxis as "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 36). Mr. Kent's altruistic spirit and ethical treatment of students and staff guided his use of praxis.

All six Freirean constructs share a common theme of altruism. The spirit of altruism extends Freirean thought because it adds a new dimension to his ideas. The spirit of altruism has implications for the principal's problem-solving practices. The ethical approach of putting other people first enhanced the principal's problem-solving practices because it increased the likelihood that decisions and problems would be resolved in a way that would benefit the most people.

#### Actualization: From Theory to Practice

In this section, I discuss some pragmatic applications of the principles that emerged from my analysis. In this section I present an approach to problem-solving practices that stresses ethical considerations. I borrow two of the Freirean constructs. The first is praxis because it is directly related to taking action; the second is humanization because it involves the perpetual process of being and becoming more

human. From Mr. Kent's practice, I borrow utilizing alliances and partnerships, critical leadership and management, focus on learning, and praxis.

Freirean praxis requires that one realize the steps of dialogue with a purpose and conscientization; these two constructs are embedded in the construct of praxis. Praxis requires reflection and then action. For the principal's problem solving to approach an ethical standard, it is necessary for these steps to occur. The challenge is that dialogue with a purpose, conscientization, and reflection can be time consuming, yet by investing in this process, one can resolve the problem in a more ethical way. According to Leithwood and Steinbach (1995), investing time initially in the problem-solving process results in better decisions with fewer complications when they are implemented.

The second Freirean construct, humanization, reflects Mr. Kent's practice of putting people first, as well as his spirit of altruism. This spirit of altruism underlies an ethical problem-solving practice. One of the most challenging problems that a principal has to resolve is the need to lay off an employee. Sometimes this decision is not actually made by the principal due to language in the teachers' union contract. Nonetheless, putting the person first by carefully examining all other alternatives is important in reaching an ethical resolution. Unfortunately, education is like all professions in that there will be times when jobs are threatened by economic conditions.

Utilizing alliances and partnerships is a skill that requires political knowledge. Mr. Kent was a gifted conversationalist who used his skill in establishing a variety of alliances and partnerships. One of the purposes of building alliances is to find sources of programs, resources, and funding; however, this is not the only purpose. It is difficult to predict who might give valuable advice or be a valuable source for solving a problem in the future. One of the most valuable aspects of alliance building is that, having a wide

variety of contacts, there is a likelihood that people, especially those outside of the school district, will be able to provide different and invaluable perspectives that the principal has not anticipated.

It is not possible to list all of the problems that an urban school principal might encounter and then suggest ethical approaches to solving them. However, by applying the Freirean constructs of praxis and humanization, guided by a spirit of altruism, ethical problem solving would be the likely result.

### Implications for Further Study

The findings from this study suggest some implications for further study. The six constructs of Freirean critical theory developed in this study are by no means exhaustive. It would be helpful to see more development of Freirean constructs because they might shed more light on practices such as problem solving. In addition, the development of additional constructs might lead to other applications of Freirean critical theory that I did not contemplate. One pragmatic application of Freirean critical theory could be the elaboration of case studies for teaching purposes. The proposed case studies would have strong characteristics of emancipation and liberation; these case studies could help improve the practice and education of learner-practitioners as well as other educators by allowing them an opportunity to contemplate issues of social justice. This approach would teach not only pragmatic skills for problem-solving practice but also humanization.

It would also be interesting to see this study duplicated, as such research would broaden the understanding of problem-solving practices as well as the applications of Freirean critical theory. This study could be duplicated in order to understand issues of power and empowerment in an urban setting. Another study would yield a varying



perspective on problem-solving practices because the emerging vignettes would be different and would require a unique analysis. Also, it would be interesting to see an analysis of diverse practices, such as the principal's efforts to organize professional development or perhaps to meet the requirements of standardized testing.

One voice that is absent from this research is that of the students at Macedo High School. Adding their voice to this research would not only have illuminated the principal's problem-solving practices from a unique perspective, but it also would have been in harmony with the philosophy of Paulo Freire, who believed that people need to have the right to name the world. I would strongly recommend that, if this study is replicated, students be included as active participants.

### My Own Liberation

Embracing the challenge of writing a doctoral dissertation has taught me some important lessons. I have learned to respect rigorous qualitative research procedures at a higher level. I have also learned the value of sharing my work with others who are pursuing doctoral studies. When I participated in study groups with other doctoral candidates, I gained valuable insights regarding the evolution of my colleagues' research as well as my own.

Carefully examining Freirean critical theory also has opened my mind to new ways of seeing the world. The forms that oppression takes can be so subtle that we may not readily see them. Because I have studied Freirean critical theory, I now see oppression where it was not so obvious to me in the past. I also have become more aware of the oppression of other people in ways that I had not anticipated.

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

THE VIGNETTE

## Vignette

Ms. Anderson has been the principal at Big City High School for the past five years and during this time has made a reputation for being an effective high school principal by students, teachers, parents, and the school superintendent. Ms. Anderson has made a successful and sincere effort to manage the high school to the best of her ability. One of her strengths has been to successfully include diverse groups of students, parents, and teachers in a variety of programs that have brought much needed resources to her urban high school. The school has a large racially diverse group of students; the student body is made up of 70% African-American, 15% Hispanic, 10% Caucasian, and 5% Asian. Currently the student population is at about 1,800 students. The number of Hispanic and Asian students is significantly increasing every school year and the majority of them have limited proficiency in English. A little more than half the students qualify for reduced and free lunch programs.

Big City is located in the Midwest and has had an industrial base as the largest source of employment. During the past ten years, however, the industrial base has been declining. The city has lost about eight thousand jobs during the past eight years. No other business or organization has been able to replace the lost jobs and as a result the city as well as the school district have less resources than in the past.

Ms. Anderson has recently received two proposals for two new programs at Big City High. Both of the proposals come from veteran teachers who have excellent reputations for planning, implementing, and seeing projects through completion. Neither teacher gives up easily when confronted with obstacles. Both teachers have filled out the

proper forms and written their proposals for funding according to school district policies and guidelines.

Ms. Hughes, a mathematics teacher, has written a detailed proposal that has the purpose of increasing the enrollment in college by Big City High students. The program also proposes to help students receive financial aid. The program would be available to all students who are interested in attending traditionally black colleges. A non-profit organization known as, the Foundation for Increasing African-American College Enrollment (hence F.I.A.C.E.), has contacted Ms. Hughes and has committed itself to a significant number of resources to the high school provided that certain conditions are met. F.I.A.C.E. has implemented the same program in other high schools similar to Big City with great success. Here are the highlights of the program:

- 95% of F.A.I.C.E. participants in other high schools that are similar to Big City High have been accepted to colleges and have received financial aid.
- The foundation has offered to pay 50% of the cost to participate in a one-week tour of traditionally black colleges; the tour would include tour guides, first-class charter buses, food, and lodging.
- The foundation will also provide preliminary promotion of the tour, a responsible tour guide/contact person, extensive help with filling out financial aid forms, and post-tour meetings to encourage students to follow through with college applications.
- There will also be an after school-tutoring program with paid qualified tutors.
- Due to legal reasons F.A.I.C.E. must have a written commitment as well as an initial payment of five thousand dollars from the school in order to participate in their program.

- The program is renewable each following year for up to five years at no extra charge.
- F.A.I.C.E. has given Big City High the first opportunity to commit to the program, however, the foundation is also considering other high schools should Big City High decline the offer. Ms. Hughes knows that other teachers in other school districts will not hesitate to accept the program.

City of the Towers Publishers (hence C.T.P.) is a large publishing company that wants to implement a new teaching methodology at Big City High for limited English proficient students. A representative from C.T.P. has contacted Mr. Sanchez, the ESL teacher, and has made an interesting offer. Instead of a textbook the company will provide a laptop computer to each student enrolled in the English as a second language program. Currently, Mr. Sanchez has no curriculum from the district and there are no specific textbooks. The number of limited English proficient students has been increasing every year. The district has, however, provided several resource books and a liberal photocopy budget for the ESL program. In the past Mr. Sanchez has used books from the publishing company and has been impressed with their usefulness. He is convinced that the interactive software that is loaded on the computer will definitely help his limited English proficient students to significantly improve their English skills. Here are the highlights of the program:

- City of the Towers will subsidize the program for a period of five years; each student will receive a free laptop computer.
- The program looks very promising and is based on the latest research.

- The interactive characteristics of the software will allow students to learn at their own rate, which will benefit students with a wide range of language skills.
- The company has committed itself to provide initial training as well as on-going support; there will be a technician on campus during the first four weeks that the program is implemented to help with any computer problems.
- There will be ongoing contacts with the developers of the program so that adjustments can be made quickly.
- The legal department at City of the Towers Publishers will require a written commitment from the school district as well as a one-time payment of five thousand dollars.
- City of the Towers Publishers has given Big City High the first opportunity to commit to the program, however, the company is also considering other high schools should Big City High decline the offer. Mr. Sanchez knows that other teachers in other school districts will not hesitate to accept the program.

Ms. Anderson wants to implement both programs but the budget is extremely tight and there is only enough money for one of the programs. The superintendent, Dr. Smith, is pressuring her to find a way to get both programs but has warned her that the budget must be balanced. Both Ms. Hughes and Mr. Sanchez have asked interested parents to call the principal and convince her of the need for their respective programs. So far, Ms. Anderson has taken several phone calls from parents regarding both programs. Ms. Anderson is well aware that both programs will provide students with more goods and services than their five thousand-dollar costs.

The school secretary, Ms. Jones, has just informed Ms. Anderson that she has an urgent call from City of the Towers Publishers which is on hold on line one, the superintendent is on line two, and that a representative from the F.A.I.C.E. foundation is waiting in the outer office and would like to speak to her for just a moment. How should Ms. Anderson resolve which program should get her approval?



## **APPENDIX B**

### **FIELD NOTE PROTOCOL FOR OBSERVATIONS OF THE PRINCIPAL**

### **Field Note Protocol for Observation of the Principal**

- What type of problem was resolved?
- How was the problem resolved?
- What was the outcome?

**Time:**

**Comments:**

**Freirean Construct:**

**7:30AM**

**7:45AM**

**8:00AM**

**8:15Am**

**8:30AM**

**8:45AM**

**9:00AM**

**9:15AM**

**9:30AM**

**9:45AM**

**10:00AM**

**10:15AM**

**10:30AM**

**10:45AM**

**11:00AM**

**11:15AM**

**11:30AM**

**11:45AM**

**12:00 Noon**

### **Field Note Protocol for Observation of the Principal**

- What type of problem was resolved?
- How was the problem resolved?
- What was the outcome?

<b>Time:</b>	<b>Comments:</b>	<b>Freirean Construct:</b>
<b>12:15PM</b>		
<b>12:30PM</b>		
<b>12:45PM</b>		
<b>1:00PM</b>		
<b>1:15PM</b>		
<b>1:30PM</b>		
<b>1:45PM</b>		
<b>2:00PM</b>		
<b>2:15PM</b>		
<b>2:30PM</b>		
<b>2:45PM</b>		
<b>3:00PM</b>		
<b>3:15PM</b>		
<b>3:30PM</b>		
<b>3:45PM</b>		
<b>4:00PM</b>		
<b>4:15PM</b>		
<b>4:30PM</b>		
<b>4:45PM</b>		
<b>5:00PM</b>		

## **APPENDIX C**

### **INTERVIEW PROBES**

## **First Interview Protocol for the Principal**

**Interviewer:** Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of this interview is to better understand the seven life experiences that have helped you develop your problem-solving skills.

As a reminder, this interview should take from one to two hours. I will tape record our conversation and take notes. Please know that at any time you may request to turn off the tape recorder. You also have the right to refuse to answer any particular question. The tape recordings will be kept in a safe place—in a locked file cabinet—and your identity and the school where you are employed will not be disclosed.

I will be transcribing the tape recorded interviews which will be kept on a password protected computer. I will send you a copy of the transcription as well as any documents or artifacts that you may share with me. The only people who will have access to the tape recordings and transcriptions will be my dissertation advisor, Professor Maenette Benham, and the members of my doctoral committee: Professors Chris Dunbar, John Dirkx, and Kris Renn.

You have already identified seven experiences that have helped you develop your problem-solving skills. During this first interview I will ask you to elaborate on these seven experiences.

Do you have any questions?

**Interview Probes:**

1. Select one of the experiences that you have listed and describe it with as much detail as possible.
2. If you were to draw a diagram that helps explain the connections or relations between your problem-solving experiences what would it look like?
3. If you were to draw a diagram that helps explain the development of your problem-solving skills what would it look like?
4. You have listed seven experiences that have helped you develop your problem-solving skills. In your opinion are any of these experiences more important for you than others? Which ones have had the most importance for you?
5. What are some of the differences in these seven experiences?
6. What are some of the similarities?
7. What characteristics do all of your experiences have in common?
8. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

## **Second Interview Protocol for the Principal**

**Interviewer:** Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of this interview is to better understand how you would resolve a dilemma involving two teachers and two groups of students who are competing for the same limited resources. We will be talking about a vignette that you have read prior to today's interview.

As a reminder, this interview should take from one to two hours. I will tape record our conversation and take notes. Please know that at any time you may request to turn off the tape recorder. You also have the right to refuse to answer any particular question. The tape recordings will be kept in a safe place—in a locked file cabinet—and your identity and the school where you are employed will not be disclosed.

I will be transcribing the tape recorded interview which will be kept on a password protected computer. I will send you a copy of the transcription as well as any documents or artifacts that you may share with me. The only people who will have access to the tape recordings and transcriptions will be my dissertation advisor, Professor Maenette Benham, and the members of my doctoral committee: Professors Chris Dunbar, John Dirkx, and Kris Renn.

You have already read a vignette that describes a principal's dilemma regarding the selection of one of two programs for her school. During this first interview I will ask you to elaborate on how you would resolve this dilemma.

Do you have any questions?

**Interview Probes:**

Select one of the experiences that you have listed and describe it with as much detail as possible.

1. Generally speaking, how would you resolve the dilemma that confronts Ms. Anderson?
2. Do you see any other alternatives to resolving the dilemma?
3. If you were Ms. Anderson, which program would you support? Please explain why?
4. If you needed to resolve a dilemma like this at your school who would you ask for advice?
5. Have you ever had to resolve a dilemma similar to this? If so, how did you resolve it?
6. If you could change one aspect of this dilemma what would you change? Why?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add?

### **Third Interview Protocol for the Principal**

**Interviewer:** Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of this interview is to better understand how resolve problems. We will be talking about your personal and professional experiences that have helped you develop problem-solving skills.

As a reminder, this interview should take from one to two hours. I will tape record our conversation and take notes. Please know that at any time you may request to turn off the tape recorder. You also have the right to refuse to answer any particular question. The tape recordings will be kept in a safe place—in a locked file cabinet—and your identity and the school where you are employed will not be disclosed.

I will be transcribing the tape recorded interview which will be kept on a password protected computer. I will send you a copy of the transcription as well as any documents or artifacts that you may share with me. The only people who will have access to the tape recordings and transcriptions will be my dissertation advisor, Professor Maenette Benham, and the members of my doctoral committee: Professors Chris Dunbar, John Dirkx, and Kris Renn.

Do you have any questions?

**Interview Probes:**

1. How do most principals develop their problem-solving skills?
2. What do you believe is the single most important thing that has helped you with your own problem-solving?
3. What advice would you give a novice principal that would help her or him with their problem-solving?
4. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

## **Interview Protocol for the Focus Group of Teachers**

**Interviewer:** Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of this interview is to better understand the experiences you have had with your principal and problem-solving.

As a reminder, this interview should take about an hour. I will tape record our conversation and take notes. Please know that at any time you may request to turn off the tape recorder. You also have the right to refuse to answer any particular question. The tape recordings will be kept in a safe place—in a locked file cabinet—and your identity and the school where you are employed will not be disclosed.

I will be transcribing the tape recorded interview which will be kept on a password protected computer. I will send you a copy of the transcription as well as any documents or artifacts that you may share with me. The only people who will have access to the tape recordings and transcriptions will be my dissertation advisor, Professor Maenette Benham, and the members of my doctoral committee: Professors Chris Dunbar, John Dirkx, and Kris Renn.

Do you have any questions?

**Interview Probes:**

1. Select a problem-solving experience that you have had with the principal and describe it with as much detail as possible.
2. What do you believe are the principal's strengths regarding problem-solving?
3. In your opinion, what has been one of the greatest problem-solving challenges that your principal has faced? How did she or he resolve the problem?
4. If you were to give your principal advice about how to resolve problems what would you say to her or him?
5. What have you learned from your principal about problem-solving?
6. What do you believe is the single most important thing that has helped the principal with his or her problem-solving?
7. Is there anything else that you would like to add?



## **Interview Protocol for the Focus Group of Parents**

**Interviewer:** Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of this interview is to better understand the experiences you have had with the principal and problem-solving.

As a reminder, this interview should take about an hour. I will tape record our conversation and take notes. Please know that at any time you may request to turn off the tape recorder. You also have the right to refuse to answer any particular question. The tape recordings will be kept in a safe place—in a locked file cabinet—and your identity and the school where you are employed will not be disclosed.

I will be transcribing the tape recorded interview which will be kept on a password protected computer. I will send you a copy of the transcription as well as return documents or artifacts that you may share with me. The only documents I will keep will be my field notes and the tape recorded transcription of the interview. The only people who will have access to the tape recordings and transcriptions will be my dissertation advisor, Professor Maenette Benham, and the members of my doctoral committee: Professors Chris Dunbar, John Dirkx, and Kris Renn.

Do you have any questions?

### **Interview Probes:**

1. Select a problem-solving experience that you have had with the principal and describe it with as much detail as possible.
2. What do you believe are the principal's strengths regarding problem-solving?
3. In your opinion, what has been one of the greatest problem-solving challenges that your principal has faced? How did she or he resolve the problem?
4. If you were to give your principal advice about how to resolve problems what would you say to her or him?
5. What have you learned from your principal about problem-solving?
6. What do you believe is the single most important thing that has helped the principal with his or her problem-solving?
7. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

## **Interview Protocol for the Focus Group of Assistant Principals**

**Interviewer:** Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of this interview is to better understand the experiences you have had with your principal and problem-solving.

As a reminder, this interview should take about one or two hours. I will tape record our conversation and take notes. Please know that at any time you may request to turn off the tape recorder. You also have the right to refuse to answer any particular question. The tape recordings will be kept in a safe place—in a locked file cabinet—and your identity and the school where you are employed will not be disclosed.

I will be transcribing the tape recorded interview which will be kept on a password protected computer. I will send you a copy of the transcription as well as return documents or artifacts that you may share with me. The only documents I will keep will be my field notes and the tape recorded transcription of the interview. The only people who will have access to the tape recordings and transcriptions will be my dissertation advisor, Professor Maenette Benham, and the members of my doctoral committee: Professors Chris Dunbar, John Dirkx, and Kris Renn.

Do you have any questions?

### **Interview Probes:**

- Select a problem-solving experience that you have had with the principal and describe it with as much detail as possible.
- What do you believe are the principal's strengths regarding problem-solving?
- In your opinion, what has been one of the greatest problem-solving challenges that your principal has faced? How did she or he resolve the problem?
- If you were to give your principal advice about how to resolve problems what would you say to her or him?
- What have you learned from your principal about problem-solving?
- What do you believe is the single most important thing that has helped the principal with his or her problem-solving?
- Is there anything else that you would like to add?

## **Interview Protocol for the Principal's Supervisor**

**Interviewer:** Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of this interview is to better understand the experiences you have had with your principal and problem-solving.

As a reminder, this interview should take about an hour. I will tape record our conversation and take notes. Please know that at any time you may request to turn off the tape recorder. You also have the right to refuse to answer any particular question. The tape recordings will be kept in a safe place—in a locked file cabinet—and your identity and the school where you are employed will not be disclosed.

I will be transcribing the tape recorded interview which will be kept on a password protected computer. I will send you a copy of the transcription as well as return documents or artifacts that you may share with me. The only documents I will keep will be my field notes and the tape recorded transcription of the interview. The only people who will have access to the tape recordings and transcriptions will be my dissertation advisor, Professor Maenette Benham, and the members of my doctoral committee: Professors Chris Dunbar, John Dirkx, and Kris Renn.

Do you have any questions?

**Interview Probes:**

- Select a problem-solving experience that you have had with the principal and describe it with as much detail as possible.
- What do you believe are the principal's strengths regarding problem-solving?
- In your opinion, what has been one of the greatest problem-solving challenges that your principal has faced? How did she or he resolve the problem?
- If you were to give your principal advice about how to resolve problems what would you say to her or him?
- What have you learned from your principal about problem-solving?
- What do you believe is the single most important thing that has helped the principal with his or her problem-solving?
- Is there anything else that you would like to add?

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