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THE COLOR FACTOR: HOW PAULO FREIRE'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS THAT RACE AFFECTS HUMAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF UNITED STATES CITIZENS

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One of the most famous questions asked throughout Humanity courses is, "what does it mean to be human?" Although the answer may seem limitless, depending on the area of study, there are some facts about homo sapiens that are undeniable. Such as, each person's body develops in stages. Stage development refers to physical and mental growth. The stages of human life are broken into five distinct periods: infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and older adulthood. Each period includes events that lead either to favorable or unfavorable outcomes. For example, attachment theorists believe that infants who receive close attention and affection are more likely to develop successful relationships throughout their lives than babies who are neglected by their caretakers. Thus, being held as a baby may lead to rich connections with others, while neglect may lead to psychological factors that inhibit connecting with others (Beckett and Taylor 46). This essay uses Paulo Freire's ideas and the counseling perspective of five distinguished psychologists, neurologists, and physiologists to argue that the United States educational system contributes to disparaging outcomes for minority citizens by continuing the racial oppression that began with Native American massacres and African American slavery. By continuing United States oppression, social justice is being ignored (Russel 274).

The Melting Pot Theory, devised in 1908 describing the United States, is an important concept for this paper as it creates the illusion that social justice already exists in the country. The sense of unity forged by the melting pot image defines a country where diversity has no effect on social, economic, and political development in a person's life (Smith 387). Regardless of class values or nationalities, all individuals have the same chances for favorable or unfavorable outcomes during the stages of growth and

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development. The United States educational system demonstrates otherwise through neoliberal practices and policies that obstruct successful growth of minority cultures and citizens. Comparing the education system to a Brazilian educational philosopher, Freire, heightens awareness that discrimination is still affecting citizens of color through a system of racism. His time spent in the United States influenced him profoundly as he learned that oppression is not exclusive to third world countries (Collins 18). His concepts on teaching reinforce the idea that education is a prominent way to fight oppression and the United States is enacting policies that take away educational opportunities for non-whites, hindering successful progress through human development stages.

A philosophical viewpoint is important because philosophy "has always been and must always be concerned with ethical and political issues of equity and justice" (Ladd 213). Freire's ideas demonstrate a way in which education can work towards the betterment of all in a society. He believes the oppressed can gain power through the tool of literacy. Literacy programs help the oppressed focus on flourishing not just surviving. When he first encountered such populations, it became aware that they did not know the difference (Roberts 378). His experiences of working with the poor in Brazil caused him to realize that if the marginalized had the tools of literacy they would be able to take action and shape their own situations (Hadfield 96). His time in the United States expanded his ideas on oppression from a geographical concern to a political concept (Collins 19).

Oppression is the state of being subject to unjust treatment or control. While stage development is undeniably a human condition, oppression, exploitation,

discrimination, and domination are also common features of human life (Torres 1). The dominant class use oppression to keep their economic standings, maintain state relations, and create ideologies that legitimize them (Wilson 211-212). Despite the human nature of oppression, there is a social responsibility to realize human potential for individual and social justice.

Social justice, "can be defined as the ability of people to realize their potential in the context of the society in which they live" (Russel 274). Freire's ideas highlight how education in the United States is perpetuating oppression, not dissolving it. An understanding of his educational philosophy and the human growth and development stages will help obtain justice within the United States and become a true Melting Pot.

The five stages of human growth and development per Sigmund Freud's, Erik Erikson's, John Piaget's, Lawrence Kohlber's, and James Fowler's development theories provides context on human progression and identify factors that contribute to the favorable outcomes or unfavorable outcomes that individuals experience. The five theories selected for this essay cover different areas of study, all emphasizing that the final stage is one of mindfulness that allows an individual to contribute to the goal of social justice. Freire's ideas also show how education can be used to achieve justice. A history of oppression in the United States is needed in order to show that there were clear differences, based on the color of skin, which still play a role in today's education system. A brief history of Brazil frames the experiences that formed Freire's philosophy of education and oppression, and how his philosophical viewpoint connects the importance of mindfulness and social justice. Freire's ideas connect to the United States because he discusses techniques that are being used to perpetuate oppression and how

educational policies support the successful development of whites, while challenging

development for non-whites.

The Five Stages of Human Growth and Development

One circumstance true about all people is the process of growth and development. That is why numerous studies trying to pin-point similarities and differences that occur during developmental stages exist. Although no theory about human life can be completely objective or subjective, studying commonalities help counselors address issues with an informed understanding. While no life experience may replicate exactly someone else's, there are general cause and effect relationships that allow psychologists, neurologists, and physiologists form developmental theories. The universal concept of human growth and development aligns all individuals, despite their race or class, on the same playing field. However, United States racial inequalities are currently blocking more favorable outcomes for minority groups.

An array of well-known and widely accepted theories provides a sturdy foundation for understanding the stages of human growth and development, demonstrating the importance of each stage and the role of outside influences during each stage. Freud, Piaget, Erikson, Kohlberg, and Fowler offer insight into human development in the areas of personality, psychosocial, cognitive, moral, and faith. Their studies remain highly accepted in counseling academia and have since been the base of conducted research. Each of their models include stages that correspond with infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and older adulthood. All conclude that the final stage represents a maturity in which one can recognize situations beyond themselves. An awareness of others outlook helps create a just society in which the final stages are

obtainable by all citizens, despite their skin color.

Freud's Structure of Personality

Sigmund Freud, an early 20ᵗʰ century neurologist and physiologist, developed a structure of personality that demonstrates how individuals start with certain basic instinctual needs and grow towards a balanced act between self needs and the demands of society. Freud believes that there are three classifications of personality: the id, the ego, and the superego. The id refers to instinctual nature, meaning that animals and humans act on instinct, operating on the pleasure principal. He defines the ego as a conscious "you" that develops out of id and operates out of principle. The ego acts more from experience rather than instinct. The final personality stage is the superego and is a product of parents' and teachers' expectations. The superego acts as one's self-conscious, never fully allowing the individual to live by pleasure without having any guilt (Beckett and Taylor 24). As personality grows the consideration for others outside of self develops.

The superego is the stage in which the individual sets aside their own wants and desires in order to please their guardians. While the upbringing may depend on outside factors, ultimately someone who reaches the stage of superego shows maturity by thinking beyond oneself. Freud acknowledges, "things can go wrong along the line, which may hamper growth" (Beckett and Taylor 26). Traumatic events or difficulties can hinder a person's ability to grow into the final stage where the superego forms. Thus, in order to reach a state in which an individual can grow beyond their own instinctual needs or an immature viewpoint of the world, they need positive experiences and relationships to help them cope with tribulations in life.

Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development

Jean Piaget, a psychologist, developed four stages of cognitive development from birth to adulthood: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational. Piaget's theory of cognitive development is concerned with information, knowledge, and understanding. He wants to know how a human gains knowledge, builds knowledge, and applies knowledge. In his conclusions, knowledge builds off of each stage. In the early periods processes are based on observations and actions, while the later stages include mental operations demonstrating mature thought and understanding (Ghazi et al. 72).

Children act based off their instincts during the sensorimotor stage. This still occurs in the preoperational stage, but also children are able to comprehend beyond their senses to understand what is occurring around them. This stage coincides with Freud's *ego* because a broader understanding of the world is experienced as it relates to one's needs. Not until the concrete operational stage does a person begin to understand the world as it relates to others. During this stage, actions are based on the individual's understanding of how an occurrence relates to another person. Now they can act from behavior learned by their guardians. When a person reaches the formal operational stage, the individual is able to act from their own understandings (Beckett and Taylor 74-75).

The Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky offers critical insight of Piaget's theory. Whereas Piaget believes that cognitive development occurs internally, Vygotsky researched that external influences can speed or slow down the steps within Piaget's model. The term 'scaffolding' is what Vygotsky used to describe "educational methods that adults can use to help children move from one stage of understanding to the next"

(Beckett and Taylor 80). This is why, "Teachers of school-aged children should have knowledge about Piaget's theory and its implications in educational setting. Knowledge about how children learn is important for effective teaching" (Ghazi et al. 73). The cognitive development of children can be enriched with a teacher's education on how a child's thought process works. Without this, a student may not be able to excel to the next stage in Piaget's model.

In addition, the knowledge and the way that knowledge is learned in Piaget's cognitive development theory is different for individuals of color than it is for whites. As people are learning how they relate to others, it is important to acknowledge that race plays a role: "Folks of color know they are the *other*, and pretty soon they learn what that means. What's more, people of color not only recognize their *otherness*, but are also inundated by whiteness, by the norm" (Wise 27). Since the norm is white culture, "whites too often have the luxury of remaining behind a veil of ignorance for years, while people of color begin noticing the different ways in which they are viewed and treated early on" (Wise 27). Because white is "the norm," and minorities are "the other" an understanding of roles based on color affects cognitive development.

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

Kohlberg is a psychologist who adapted Piaget's theories but studied them through a moral lens. For Kohlberg, there are three levels of moral development which can be broken into two sections each. The first level is pre-conventional and describes how a child judges a situation based on punishment and self-interest. The second level, conventional, occurs in early adolescence and describes an individual who has mutual expectations in relationships and acts based within the rules of society. The final level,

post-conventional is broken into understanding that rules of society are not black and white and a personal system of moral principles affects their view of situations. Kohlberg highlights adolescence as a key period for moral development. In relation to Piaget's stage, this is where one moves beyond black and white thinking and sees complex factors (Beckett and Taylor 114-115).

Depending on the unpleasant consequences experienced at an early age, individuals learn to avoid certain behaviors. Once a person has a better understanding of nature and the obligations of their relationships with others, they are able to move beyond punishments, rules, and laws of social conventions as they develop a conscience and sense of morality (Beckett and Taylor 114). Piaget's work "remains important in highlighting the moral dimension of development and the role of education in supporting this" (Beckett and Taylor 115). Not only does education set up initial stages of right and wrong, but it is also the place where relating with others is discovered beyond the family. These relationships help form identity in which moral development emerges. Erikson's model takes a deeper look at how members of ethnic minorities have greater challenges establishing such an identity.

Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development

Erikson, a psychologist and psychoanalyst, created an eight-stage model for psychosocial development. Each stage has a favorable and unfavorable outcome (see table 1). For Erikson, the outcome is in correlation to both your nature and nurture realities. He theorized that youths' identity development is *relational* because children learn about themselves in relation to others, most importantly in relation to those who are most essential to them. If there is a strong identity formation, then an individual develops

positive relationships allowing more favorable outcomes to occur (Rivas-Drake et al.

711). The reason why this can be more challenging for ethnic minorities is because not

only are they trying to identify "in relation to the norms of the majority (white, Western,

secular), but also to those of [their] own family's culture" (Beckett and Taylor 115).

Table 1
Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development

Stage/Age	Life Crisis	Description	Favorable Outcome	Unfavorable Outcome
First Year	Trust v. Mistrust	The child needs consistent and stable care in order to develop feelings of security	Trust in the environment and hope for the future	Suspicion, insecurity, fear of the future
Second and Third Years	Autonomy v. Shame and Doubt	The child seeks a sense of independence from parents	A sense of autonomy and self-esteem	Feelings of shame and doubt about one's own capacity for self-control
Fourth and Fifth Years	Initiative v. Guilt	The child explores her environment and plans new activities	The ability to initiate activities and enjoy following them through	Fear of punishment and guild about one's own person feelings
Age 6-11	Industry v. Inferiority	The child acquires important knowledge and skills relating to her culture	A sense of competence and achievement. Confidence in one's own ability to make and do things	Unfavorable reactions from others may cause feelings of inadequacy and inferiority
Adolescence	Identity v. Role Confusion	The young person searches for a coherent personal and vocational identity	Ability to see oneself as consistent and integrated person	Confusion over who and what one is
Young Adulthood	Intimacy v. Isolation	The adult seeks deep and lasting relationships	The ability to experience love and commitment to others	Isolation; superficial relationships with others
Middle Adulthood	Generativity v. Stagnation	The individual seeks to be productive and creative and to make a contribution to society	The ability to be concerned and caring about others in the wider sense	Lack of growth; boredom and over-concern with oneself
Late Adulthood	Integrity v. Despair	The individual reviews and evaluates what has been accomplished in life	A sense of satisfaction with one's life and its accomplishments; acceptance of death	Regret over omissions and missed opportunities; fear of death

Source: Beckett, Chris, and Hilary Taylor. Human Growth and Development. 3rd ed., SAGE, 2016.

While challenges arise for ethnic minorities, if a good ethnic-racial identity (ERI) can be developed, then there will be better youth adjustment. This is important because "school is where youths have the potential to spend their time engaging with peers of ethnically diverse backgrounds. Moreover, just as identity formation is a salient and normative task of adolescence (Erikson 1968), the development of one's ethnic-racial identity (ERI) is now recognized as a salient and important aspect of normative development among youths in diverse societies" (Rivas-Drake 710). Diversity within schools can enrich relationships across races, helping develop a strong ERI, ultimately leading to favorable outcomes for individuals. However, if this does not take place, then unfavorable outcomes are likely to prevail.

Just as relationships and outside forces influence cognitive development, psychosocial is also affected by the relationships formed outside family walls. The settings of United States schools affect the experiences of the students who attend them. For example, higher criminal activity is likely to take place in urban areas. Thus, urban youth's experiences and criminal activity, "can lead to a 'cumulative disadvantage' – a piling up of negative experiences and failures that make it difficult for a person to succeed" (Stanfel 2393). Their experience with police are negative, not only marking the "end of innocence" for these students, but also changing the notion that police are there to serve and protect them (Stanfel 2393). Such experiences can make it easier or harder to develop successfully with favorable outcomes which create injustices on the playing field.

Fowler's Stages of Faith Development

James Fowler is an American theologian that determined seven stages of faith

development. Largely influenced by Kohlberg, Erikson, and Piaget, Fowlers stages

determine how throughout life, different experiences can alter the faith stage of an

individual. He defined faith as "the makeup of an individual's main motivation for life"

(Limke 123). The ultimate stage is called universal faith. Universal faith is the most

mature stage of faith development and it is extremely rare to achieve.

The first stage occurs in early infancy to early childhood and is often referred to

as "undifferentiated" stage. Children intuitive images of good and evil are formed.

Negative effects will trigger negative feelings that they will then associate as bad. The

second stage, intuitive-projective faith, typically occurs around three to seven years of

age when they can start to incorporate their community's ideals of good and bad. The

next stage, "mythic-literal" is based on more abstract thoughts, still conforming to other's

beliefs. These three stages include mostly outside influences while the next four stages

start to develop based on the individual's beliefs (Huitt and Robbins 6).

A seven to fifteen-year-old can think critically so that their beliefs extend beyond

the family. During the synthetic-conventional stage, young adults develop their own

worldview that is unique and individualistic. The sixth stage, called conjunctive, expands

to orient more towards others while still basing one's own beliefs on their personal

experiences. The final stage is hardly ever achieved, as an individual who reaches this

stage is a disciplined activist seeking to transform the social order by living and actively

fighting for justice. A person in universalizing faith loses an egocentric focus and gains a

consciousness of complex universal issues. The difficulty of moving past the first three

stages and achieving the final stage of faith highlights the abnormality of individuals

being able to look beyond themselves to work in the interest of others (Huitt and Robbins

6).

     Fowler's faith development theory highlights the importance of attachment and

relationships. The early stages of faith are formed by the community in which one

belongs and can only continue to develop as they trust that they are worthy of love and

acceptance. Sometimes fear of abandonment can falter being able to develop self-worth

and hinder a child's motivation to contribute to a better society (Limke 126). Freire

believes that faith is a vocation to be more fully human by creating and re-creating and it

"is not the privilege of an elite, but the birthright of all men" (Freire 79). Fowler's faith

development reinforces that progression requires outside support and the ability to look

beyond one's self.

     Each of the theories described above provide a linear track of the development

that occurs from when humans are born throughout their life. Genetic inheritance is just

the foundation of a person's development. In addition to genetic makeup, life events,

physical factors, social and cultural factors, upbringing and family relationships play key

roles when deciphering how an individual is as he or she stands today (Beckett and

Taylor 15). A linear track signifies that there is a progression from point A to point B,

with no barriers between stages allowing individuals to progress and regress throughout

development. Therefore, age is not always a factor that determines the stage a person is

in. Circumstances lead to favorable or unfavorable outcomes that affect stage

development.

     A significant portion of the steps in human growth and development take place in

early childhood. Schooling can start as early as two and half years for a child. This

means that a child's educational experiences are an important component to their

development and "components of identity formation are important for ensuring that individuals develop a sense of self that gives them confidence to make decisions about the future and to develop positive interpersonal relationships" (Rivas-Drake et al. 711). Before an analysis of how the United States education system is affecting citizen's development, a description of each of the five developmental theories needed to be explored.

Each theory deciphers general stages of human development. If all humans take part in development, then what is it that leads to favorable or unfavorable outcomes within the United States? As the country is becoming more ethnically and racially diverse, "understanding the process by which youth form friendships with diverse peers in school settings will become increasingly important" because these relationships are affecting whether that individual successfully progresses to higher stages (Rivas-Drake et al. 710). Past and present government policies have not always fostered an environment in which rich relationships occur for all citizens, regardless of their color.

Background on Race in the United States

Since 42% of Americans today still believe racism is only somewhat of a problem, a small problem, or not a problem at all, an in depth look at the oppression of Native Americans and African Americans provides context to the oppression in which the United States was founded on (Neal 1). The massacring of Native Americans and slavery of African Americans are two of the most extreme examples of oppression in the United States. The education and assimilation of Native Americans and African Americans today in comparison to original forms of oppression provides a groundwork for how racism is still a big problem because it shows similarities between past extremes and

present "progressive" policies. Oppression has been transformed not eliminated despite signs of dramatic progress in some areas (Wilson 223).

Much like the Melting Pot theory, the American Dream assumes that freedom is self-evident in the United States. However, this is only true to those who can assimilate with Western culture; "The English-only rhetoric in relation to the immigrant experience underlies these assumptions, for it assumed that immigrants who learn English and assimilate to American mainstream culture will share in the mythical freedom enjoyed by all U.S. citizens" (Hartman 190). Failure to assimilate can result in the realization that freedom may be just an empty promise. Unfortunately, this was also true for indigenous people. This is important because it highlights a white supremacist attitude that began when Westerners first landed on United States soil with Native Americans.

Once being the only population in the United States, Native Americans now make up less than one-percent of the total population (Norris et al. 1). Europeans used superior firearms to massacre Native Americans because they were unable to enslave them. Native Americans, "were tough, resourceful, defiant, and at home in these woods, as the transplanted Englishmen were not" (Zinn 21). The term "transplanted" highlights that the land originally did not belong to Englishmen. The United States was originally home to indigenous people. However, their beliefs began to disappear as government policies removed children from their native homes and traditions to "re-educate" them at boarding schools that taught Western ideologies (McKinney 156)

The resistance of Native Americans to assimilate caused European leaders to use negative stereotypes against Native Americans to build their superiority and claim for the land. For instance, Captain John Smith, an Admiral of New England, wrote that Native

Americans were irrational, easily angered and extremely vengeful people (Cave 86).

Assimilation was key to the anti-Native American dictum, "one should kill the Indian and

save the man" (Land 218). Smith's role gave him credentials and his writings reached

people who then believed his words. This begins an early installment of discrimination.

Such antagonistic views limited the possibility of the two societies co-existing; "The

emergent ideology of colonialism…rejected without serious consideration the possibility

of the co-existence on the American land of two separate but equal cultures" (Cave 89).

The image of Native Americans painted by Smith as savages that could never be equal to

Europeans resonates in the 1995 *Pocahontas* song, "Savages". *Pocahontas* is a popular

movie intertwined in mainstream media today showing how early discrimination against

Native Americans lives in popular culture.

Smith's manipulation is an example of how race was and still is a social construct

because he claimed that all indigenous people are savages based on their biology and this

image still resonated in popular culture. He used social groupings to distinguish both

groups as two separate races (Land 218). Europeans were able to suppress Native

American culture in order to remain in power. Unfortunately, the oppression against

Native Americans does not remain in the past.

Today, reservations receive governmental aide that includes food with little

nutritious value, poorly funded schools, and regulations that limit businesses from

succeeding. The circumstances in which Native Americans live disregards their cultural

values and lead to mental and physical health disorders. It is reported that "Native

Americans have a higher poverty and unemployment rate when compared with the

national average, but the rates are comparable to those of blacks and Hispanics"

(Krogstad 1). The poverty rates continue to increase as the Native American population continues to decrease. Such circumstances halt the growth and development of Native American children.

Unfortunately, Native Americans are not the only minority group that still face oppression. Even bigger populations, such as African Americans, Hispanics, and other racial minorities are faced with development challenges today based on their skin color. Since slavery was an evident form of oppression in the United States, this essay focuses on the transformation of racism since "slaves were freed" and how it lives today, as seen with African Americans, specifically in school policies and systems.

Similar to Native Americans, negative stereotypes were created describing African Americans. Historians believe that the working classes feared African Americans taking their jobs and used biological racism to assure that the difference between whites and blacks was not only highlighted, but worked to favor whites over blacks (Wilson 215). Thomas Dixon contributed to the negative stereotypes tied to African Americans through his book *The Clansman*. The movie, *The Birth of a Nation*, was an adaption of Dixon's book in which, "vivid and powerful images and stories of childlike, ignorant blacks under white tutelage, and beast-like black males who, when unrest-rained by whites, roamed the woods looking for white women to rape" (Wilson 218-219). The movie depicts the Klu Klux Klan as heroes that are needed in order to save women from trouble. Popular culture revealed that African Americans were threatening and dangerous to society while whites are protectors. This social construction leads to a positive definition of white and a negative definition of black. The connotations of white and black still remain and affect how citizens are viewed and

treated in the United States.

The images created long ago have sever effects on how American citizens live because of their skin color. Mass media messages construct stereotypes that effect the way others treat people of color. One example is a story of five black juveniles that were charged "of brutally assaulting and raping a 28-year-old jogger and investment broker. The jogger was so severely beaten that she was not expected to live…For years the case exemplified the pathology of the urban underclass and the need for police representation of inner-city black males" (Wilson 233). However, when the DNA testing, twelve years later, took place, the five black males were proven innocent. Even though they were innocent, "the stereotypical image of young black male predators remained a part of the dominant racist culture" (Wilson 233). Those five men lost their innocence and their development track altered solely because of racial stereotyping. This example highlights how prominent the color of one's skin affects his or her experiences.

Tests have been conducted to further study this phenomenon of implicit, or unconscious, racial bias. Implicit racial biases are the thoughts that pop into our mind, quickly, and randomly when shown a person from a particular group (Dasgupta 27). Implicit attitudes, from both blacks and whites, favor whites and associate African Americans with negative words, "so none of us are immune, we're all subject to the same conditioning" (*White Like Me*). Awareness to the privileges of having a positive stereotype associated with your color of skin is important for whites to know, as it gives them an advantage in the human growth and development process.

Awareness of white privilege illuminates the uneven playing field because it shows the advantages received by whites and how such privileges correlate to

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disadvantages and barriers of being non-white. People who ask, "why does it have to be African American, why can it not just be Americans" are ignoring that "it's hard to *just* be an American when you've rarely been treated like a full and equal member of the family" (Wise 29). The mass murdering of Native Americans and slavery no longer take place or outwardly exist, but there are still many issues that continue to kill and enslave minorities.   In fact, "Past Experiences with discrimination have left to a pessimistic perspective of Americans willingness to do the right thing for all of its citizens" (Miller and Clark 267). In order to be playing an equal field of opportunities, realizing that race is still a big problem is critical.

Per the scope of this paper, I look specifically at the United States education system. However, racial oppression is characterized by concentrated urban poverty, the warehousing of black males in the criminal justice system, high infant mortality rates, and diminishing political power (Wilson 223). These areas affect schools and more importantly the human growth and development of children. Such injustices were experienced by Freire while he was working with the poor in Brazil. Exploring his experiences and the Brazilian government at the time of his experiences frames commonalities between oppression against class and oppression against race. Since Freire's ideas demonstrate a more advanced stage in personality, cognitive, moral, psychosocial, and faith development in comparison to current policies as his actions and thought work for a just society.

Background on Brazil from 1960's

In order to understand the ideas of Freire and how they relate to the United States education system, it is important to know what was happening in his country during the

time that he began to develop his teachings. Dictator Getúlio Vargas committed suicide in 1954, allowing the Brazilian population to form a new governmental system. At first, leaders concentrated on nationalism and *desarrollismo* (developmentalism). In this era, Brazilian elites aimed to form their country into a modern industrial nation (Rupprecht 508). A reconstruction through, "Heavy industry, combined with economic and social planning and the education of the masses, was expected to bring about desired higher living standards and a stronger geopolitical position in the world, would lead to a postcolonial 'Third World' (Rupprecht 510). When Jânio Quadros resigned from presidency in the early 1960s, João Goulart claimed the position and his left-winged reforms made some political figures weary of his presidency. The 1964 coup d'état, led by the Armed Forces, claimed Goulart to be a socialist and communist. In fear of this government, U.S. helped Brazil overcome Goulart which eventually made Marshall Humberto de Alencar Castelo Branco, Army Chief of Staff, President in 1964.

Catelo Branco turned Goulart's political actions around as he worked to keep the power in the hands of the elite. During this time, South Africa's initiatives were ultimately "geared toward bolstering white economic, social, and political interests" (Hadfield 79). This meant that while the rich began to enhance their standard of living, the lower class was left to struggle with urban and rural poverty. Schools, work places, and the government were segregated based on social standings. In Brazil, "only land owners and the wealthy urban elites had political rights; the rest of Brazilian society, by far the majority, remained marginalized" (Collins 11). All populist movements were suppressed and Freire spent time in jail for his activities involving literacy movements.

Not until 1979 did the Brazilian government shift again. When João Baptista de

Oliveira Figueiredo came into office, Freire was invited to enter back into the country, after 15 years of exile for his work and ideas with the poor. Figueiredo continued the process of democratization where the classes remained separate and the elite were favored in society and political actions. There is still corruption and notable class differences. Freire, as he lived with the poorest of the poor in Brazil during the early 1960s wrote and worked to help minimize those difference through his ideas.

Paulo Freire

Paulo Freire, in short, was an educator and philosopher. He lived during the political reign described above in which he himself experienced poverty and spent much of his time teaching the lower class. Born on September 19, 1921 in a port city of northeastern Brazil he was no stranger to the struggles experienced by the poor. Growing up in the middle-class, Freire experienced firsthand financial failings during the Great Depression. He learned what it is like for a grade school child to go hungry (Collins 5). Malnutrition inhibited him from performing his best at school. Limited resources can halt human development processes.

As a teenager, he almost did not qualify for secondary school. Not until after the Great Depression and his family's financial circumstances improved was he able to complete school and move on to the University of Recife. In college, Freire enrolled in the Faculty of Law in addition to studying philosophy and psychology of language. Throughout school he also worked as a part-time instructor, teaching of Portuguese in a secondary school (Collins 5). His schooling begins his background working with language and teaching others. In 1959, he was awarded his doctoral degree, but it was from his experience with the poor that really led to his philosophies (Collins 5).

Freire entered the University of Recife to study law, but he favored his philosophy and psychology courses. His interest in law was not as strong as his interest in education, philosophy, and sociology of education. After passing the bar, "he quickly abandoned law as a means of earning a living in order to go to work as a welfare official and later as director of the Department of Education and Culture of the Social Service in the State of Pernambuco" (Collins 6).   During this time, he was in direct contact with the urban poor. Freire was exposed to the widespread illiteracy amongst the northeast areas. Illiterate occupants favored the dominant minority, "because eligibility for the franchise was dependent upon the ability to read and write" (Collins 7). His key pedagogical principles and political beliefs emerged when he was employed by the Social Service of Industry (Roberts 376). For Freire, oppression ends when those who are oppressed are given the tools in which they need to survive and progress.

Freire came up with ways in which he could give the poor tools to survive and progress. Literacy was the way he started to give people living in poor areas a way to better their life. He became the first director of the University of Recife's Culture Extension Service, "which brought the literacy programs now famous as the *Método Paulo Freire* to thousands of peasants in the northeast" (Collins 7). His programs were so successful that those who were learning how to read and right were able to do so in as short a time as forty-five days.

Freire's method included a system that "'codified' man's relationships with the world and then presented them to the peasants for discussion" (Collins 12). He would teach "generative words" that would be related specifically to the group he was working with. The words would be chosen based on investigations of the locale. By choosing

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words in which the population connects, they were then able to communicate on what is important to them and also use them to break down into components that could form new words (Collins 12). This system provided *conscientização,* or "conscientization", a word Freire used to describe authentic education. Conscientization means "developing a critical consciousness" (Hadfield 89). Freire installed in the poor that political change can come from reading and writing. Since literacy is where change can begin, it is important for the United States education system to be giving fair opportunities to people of all colors.

Freire's beliefs were successful but also threatening. He successfully could teach adults how to read and write, ultimately making him the director of the national literacy campaign, but the military coup in Brazil in 1964 stopped his efforts. They found Freire's work as a threat and placed him under house arrest until he was sent into exile in Bolivia for a short stay and later Chile for several years (Roberts 376-377). However, exile did not end his career.

Literacy as a tool of power is also seen in the United States. History of Native Americans and African Americans involved literacy as a way to suppress both groups. If individuals would participate in helping slaves to read or write, there were severe punishments of fines, imprisonment, and whippings (Collins 8). The fear of slaves learning to read and write highlights the importance of literacy and also the importance of education. Literacy gives the oppressed access to know injustices and communicate with out to revolt against them. The denial of literacy, keeps the oppressed passive and their growth to only early stages of development, ultimately hindering a just society.

Freire spent some time in the United States working at Harvard University where

he served various advisory roles for literacy and adult education. In 1980, he was allowed back in to Brazil due to a political change. He "quickly became active in Brazilian politics, supporting the Workers' Party and the leadership of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva ('Lula'), who would eventually become one of the most popular presidents in the country's history" (Roberts 377). His work as the Secretary for Education in the municipality of São Paulo, writing, and lecturing in Brazil and other parts of the world covers his work up until he died in 1997. Coming from once such an impoverished place himself during the Great Depression, Freire's experiences led to interactions that shape his beliefs on oppression and justice. He developed a true understanding of the meaning of oppression and was able to form a solution based on his understanding.

He found that the oppressed needed to communicate their needs rather than continue only benefiting the needs of those who are wealthier than them. Freire believed that education leads to liberation as it makes people become aware of their oppression and then also come up with ideas to stop it (Collins 21). They must know justice in order to overcome injustice (Stanfel 2392). A person can develop to their fullest by means of understanding their situation and using literacy to participate in voicing their concerns, needs, and cultural customs. If men can become the masters of their thinking, they will be able to "manifest in their own suggestions and those of their comrades" (Freire 118). This is contradictory to the thought that the oppressor has the power to free the oppressed.

The oppressors are typically deemed the power to free the oppressed because they are the ones "oppressing." This philosophy working in the United States is seen through mission work. However, when the upper-class volunteer to help minorities, they may not

be helping them achieve liberation. Freire believes by doing so, they are providing false charity by "banking" information that serves the purposes of the dominant class, rather than the needs of the oppressed. Freire believes that "Projection an absolute ignorance to others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry" (Freire 58). The "banking" concept relates to United States education system as the policymakers are the ones who decide curriculums and contribute to racial inequality. Freire saw that oppression in the United States is very prevalent despite having a different concept of race in comparison to Brazil.

Race in Brazil is determined by a combination of skin color, social class, marital status, education, and profession, while in the United States race is predominantly based on skin color. Freire's time at Harvard allowed him to see that the early creations of negative stereotyping still impacts citizens' experiences. He was awakened by his reading of the American scene as "he found that repression and exclusion of the powerless from economic and political life was not limited to third world countries and cultures of dependence" (Collins 19). Themes of alienation, domination, and oppression are found within third world and first world. His awakening made him realize just how important literacy is as a tool for political change. Freire believed that "no education can be neutral and that education ought to be culture action for freedom" (Collins 19). The past and current policies within the United States do not support culture action for freedom.

The United States Education System

The United States educational policies demonstrate inequalities that privilege the superior group as seen in the examples of oppression with Native Americans and African

Americans. A superior race is not unknown to countries; "Political scientists have long recognized that populations historically disadvantaged in public policy processes due to discrimination or other institutional inequities have an interest in being represented in government by officials whose backgrounds mirror their own (Grissom et al. 185). In United States, Americans have a "derogatory attitude of whites and the White majority toward people of color, the so-called minorities" (Land 213). If schools are teaching White majority ideologies, the beginning stages of human development will be affected.

The Civil Rights movement exemplifies that there was need for change since government officials were mirroring the past white superior attitudes. Leaders, like Martin Luther King Jr., were fighting for equal rights, including in the school systems. Social class, race or ethnic group membership, and education all affect ways in which young people think and the progression or regression to the higher stages (Land 213). Inequalities based on race do not provide an even playing field for all children to have the same chance at favorable outcomes.

The inequalities today stem from segregation of races. There are two Supreme Court Cases that have a major impact on diversity in United States education. *Plessy v. Ferguson* is a perfect example of de jure racism. The government ruled that school systems are separate but equal making it legal to deny individuals into certain schools based on their color. *Brown v. Board of Education*, deemed *Plessy v. Ferguson* as unconstitutional. While it institutionally may have been a step in the right direction, diverse schools did not mean desegregated schools. In reality, whites and blacks were still separated.

Inequalities exist because of the privileges whites have even after the progress of

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the Civil Rights movement because they inherit the legacy of it within United States. A change of law does not take the advantages received by whites through each generation away (Wise 4). Even after *Brown v. Board of Education* racial segregation of schools still existed. The term "white flight" describes how segregation still existed. Whites had the resources to move from the city to the suburbs so that they no longer had to attend public schools. Now races were separated based on public and private sectors (Stanfel 2392). Despite progress from changing the law, existing policies still separate the chance for children to develop to their fullest potential.

Neoliberal policies are not helping solve equality for all United States citizens. The nomination of the current United States Secretary of Department of Education, Betsy DeVos, was faced with great public resistance because people of color, teachers unions, and other proponents of public education did not support her neoliberal policies. Neoliberal policies in the education system work for privatization of schools and the closing of neighborhood schools. Charter schools are a result of this movement. Privatization is majorly affecting one race: African Americans. The problem is that DeVos is moving money out of traditional public schools, where there are high minority rates, and into charter or other "choice" programs. Since 2000, more than 130 schools have been closed, disproportionately impacting African American communities (Guitierrez and Waitoller 4). The impact is on the way a child attending public school develops.

Neoliberals are trying to expand the choice options so that individuals have the freedom to choose a better school than current public systems that do not have the best reputations. Reputations are tainted by the environments in which they are located. Such

"unique environments…illustrate that young people [have to] navigate daily a racially ordered geography of opportunity wherein the resources are distributed by race, class, and zip codes (Stanfel 2391). Black and Hispanic children are those students who are isolated in the worst performing urban schools. They have little chance at favorable outcomes. Public school systems have earned the nickname "dropout factory" as less than 60% of the 9th grade class is still enrolled four years later (Brathwaite 431). Dropping out of school does not progress human growth and development.

Therefore, increased choice is not helping students who attend public schools. The policy works best for middle-class students because "Middle-class tend to be more aggressive and knowledgeable when dealing with the school system" (Brathwaite 437). The parents of middle-class are able to visit schools and have the resources to travel to schools that are longer distances. The advantage of attending best-performing schools continues for middle-class. Unfortunately, schools that are not rated high because of less-experienced teachers, poorer facilities, and lack of textbooks and libraries are attended by the majority of students of color (Stanfel 2392). Where progress has been made in trying to merge races by law, the current dynamic of school environment is "diverse but not integrate" (Stanfel 2392). Unfortunately, "half of the remaining dropout factories are located in urban areas that serve mostly black and Hispanic students" (Brathwaite 431). These statistics show that early forms of oppression are still present affecting *some* United States citizen's ability to prosper.

Now the question for whites is, "'what is all the fuss about'" (Ladd 212). White privilege allows whites to see an even playing field in which all children have the same opportunities for favorable outcomes in human growth and development. Despite not

having the resources to explore other choice schools, minorities still have the option. The point of exploring inequalities is to show that the opportunities to achieve the American Dream are unevenly distributed (Miller and Clark 267). White privilege contributes to the 42% of people who do not think race is a big problem. Since whites are not negatively affected by segregation, they may see no need for change. That is the reason is it important to raise critical awareness of racial meanings and their implications. Without it, "policymakers and advocates for immigrant children, children of color, English learners, and children living in poverty [will not] work more intentionally to develop meaningful policy change" (Turner 33). Oppression will continue limiting children to advance to higher levels of development.

Research on the responses to racial/ethnic change and increasing poverty and immigration within the education system shows that schools and communities do little to respond to demographic change, while others have changed curriculums, hired new staff, and provided professional development to educators to help them with demographic change (Turner 5). There is of great importance to acknowledging such differences because "Studies indicate that we tend to make very fine distinctions based on color, and that we notice color difference almost immediately---the fact is, colorblindness is not the proper goal of fair-minded educators. The kids in those classrooms *do* have a race, and it matters, because it says a lot about the kinds of challenges they are likely to face (Wise 67). Colorblindness is a term that is used when people are treated the same due to the absence of race acknowledgment. An absence in recognizing color, leads to disadvantages to the growth of minorities. They are likely to struggle with identity development because they are growing up in an environment that does not recognize

them.

Elevating differences and overcoming colorblindness is two-part important in order to allow children to have the same opportunities for favorable outcomes in human growth and development. One, it serves to advance the current outcomes for children who are minorities by giving them resources that have been historically disproportionate in the past. Some children are not even aware of the disadvantages they experience:

For example, Shedd explains that students who attend primarily black schools and live in an 'extremely' isolated environment will have less knowledge about structural inequality and less awareness that they are likely to receive less treatment because of their race; they have smaller frame of reference with which to experience (personally or vicariously) injustice and relative deprivation (Stanfel 2392).

If an individual does not know *justice*, they cannot have a concept of *injustice* (Stanfel 2392). "I suggest that the real problem is that minority groups are underrepresented in positons of power, prestige, and potential for public service and leadership in American society today. Conversely, minorities are overrepresented in areas of poverty, inadequate education and health care, poor housing, and inadequate police protection. Inequities abound in our society" (Ladd 221).

Secondly, elevating awareness and differences not only serve minorities but enhance the growth and development of the majority as well. Exposure to diversity is beneficial to youth development. However, only if they are interacting. The current setup of diverse but not integrate is not benefiting the development of all children. As schools are becoming more and more diverse, studies are being conducted in order to

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trace the effects of race/ethnicity, immigrant generation, friendship composition, and school composition on integration at dyadic network, and institutional levels (Crea and Reynolds 501). While schools are becoming more diverse, "social freeways," defined as, "allow[ing] youth to navigate and move about the social landscape of a school setting to gain access to resources and opportunities" are not equally accessible; "indeed, forces of power and privilege make it so that some youth have access to these freeways, while others---practically youth of color and youth from immigrant families---do not" exist (Crea and Reynolds 503). Early on in school, children are exposed or denied social freeways. Access makes it easier to achieve the successful routes through the steps of human growth and development.

The stages in the developmental models are not a one period of life stop. Experiences can progress or regress a person's development. Lack of social access can hinder the ability to form friendships or relationships which are critical to favorable outcomes on the development track. A study shows, "adolescents in ethnically diverse schools [have] greater opportunities to engage in cross-ethnic friendships at classroom level, but it [is] youth who reported having cross-ethnic friendships who then reported significantly fewer feelings of vulnerability (i.e., more safe, less victimized, and less lonely (Rivas-Drake et al. 711). Whites often receive the privilege to feel secure because the Unites States was founded on white culture and superiority. However, evening out the playing field for all races could further whites experience of different cultures, further their development too.

Since "American society and schools are more diverse and more unequal than ever" there is opportunity to help level the field for favorable outcomes in the human

growth and development process (Turner 4).   Freire highlights ways in which the United

States is continuing the cycle of oppression and provides ways in which individuals can

work to overcome it and obtain justice for all. For him, "Education either functions as an

instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the

logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, *or* it becomes 'the practice

of freedom,' the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with

reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world" (Shaull 15).

Freire's experiences with oppressed societies and his time in the United States led him to

term our current educational process as an instrument of systematic racism. He proposed

ways in which United States could transform education system as a practice of freedom,

ultimately providing better opportunities to successfully navigate the stages of human

growth and development.

Freire believes filling a child's tabula rasa with information rather than giving

them the tools to think for themselves is a disservice to that individual. This is a problem

because

> Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits
>
> which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the "banking"
>
> concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends
>
> only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits (Freire 58).

This concept is used by the dominant elites to encourage passivity in the oppressed

(Freire 84). One of the ways this is seen through United States education system is

George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind Act.

Bush's 2001 No Child Left Behind Act was created to help find schools that are

poorly rated and institute a national standard of testing amongst the country. No Child Left Behind Act was created with the intention to close the achievement gap by providing funding to those conducting the testing (Ladd, H. 461). While there are sought benefits of collecting data and focusing on groups, the standardized testing system encourages teachers to base their lessons on the contents of the test in order to achieve high scores. The "teaching to the test" mentality ignores broader domains in which the questions originally aim to represent (Ladd, H. 465). In this sense, educators are "banking" information into a child's head, rather than allowing them to think critically on issues.

Freire believed it was educators' job not to "bank" information into students, but to give them the tools in which they can then use to form their own values and beliefs. By "banking" information into children, they are shaping them to conform to mainstream society and in effect keeping them at a disadvantage/oppressed. Since the world is ever changing, Freire believed that being able to analyze and criticize reality means more than the teacher standing in the front of a classroom speaking out. Both the teacher and the student, as cognitive, emotive, social, and historical subjects, need to learn from one another in order to adopt to the changes of society (Saul and Saul 64).

Banking is a disservice to the human growth and development of children in the United States because it is a process of dumping information rather than providing the tools that individuals can use to reach the final stages of development. When the U.S. educational system teaches an American culture by "banking" information rather than embracing and adopting to the differences of non-white cultures, it is forcing people to stay segregated in order to successfully progress to the next stages of development. Education should allow an individual to recognize and voice their needs. It plays a very

important role, "in allowing the injustices and contradictions of the neoliberal present to be identified and alternatives to be articulated" (Roberts 384). The role of education is important in order to overcome oppression and work for the justice of everyone.

United States current neoliberal policies are not conductive to the democracy that Freire believed will help all citizens; "Freire was clear that he favored a socialist form of democracy (Freire 1996, 137), but he was equally clear that this must be fought for and continuously reconstructed. Complacency is an enemy of utopia, and a better world, for Freire, is a world that never quite sits still" (Roberts 385). Schools are reinforcing segregation through such policies and "Giroux and Schmidt (2004) argue that education is now a private good used to gain an advantage rather than a public benefit to be consumed by all" (Brathwaite 437). In order to allow all children to have the same chances for favorable outcomes throughout their development, it is important to acknowledge the inequalities that still exist.

Freire's work with individuals in poverty opened his eyes to similar experiences happening in Brazil. The same concepts apply when looking at these beliefs regarding how the education system is needed in order to serve justice to all people, not just the dominant class. The U.S. education system and class system of Brazil are set up in order to serve and be an advantage to one group. A superior group oppresses others by not giving them the same opportunities to benefit and improve themselves and progress the stages of human life.

Conclusion

Through his work with the oppressed, Freire points out a commonality between all people who are oppressed; stating, "The truth is, however, that the oppressed are not

'marginals,' are not men living 'outside' society. They have always been 'inside'- inside the structure, which made them 'beings for others.' The solution is not to 'integrate' them into a structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become 'beings for themselves'" (Freire 61). Education is a prominent component of youth's growth and development and consideration to the institutional racism that still exists needs to be acknowledged in order to ever achieve social justice in the United States.

The United States' education system highlights inequalities that currently exist between majority and minority citizens. The system is acting unjustly by favoring whites and fostering more favorable outcomes for white versus unfavorable outcomes for minorities. Current "Policies influence much more than educational outcomes. They influence practices, people's beliefs and attitudes, community and institutional dynamics, and a whole range of human experiences and relationships (Guitierrez and Waitoller 6). Based on the color of a citizen's skin, their educational experience throughout the early stages of human growth and development contribute to the likeliness of favorable or unfavorable outcomes for the rest of their lives.

The "Melting Pot" may be an accurate term to describe the United States, but not because all cultures are mixed together and equal, but rather because all cultures get mixed into the American culture. The educational system teaches American history which, an analysis of the past will show, favors the majority: whites. Whites are more likely to live favorable outcomes throughout their development and minorities are more likely to live unfavorable outcomes. This is due to the oppression seen first with Native Americans that still remains today.

Racism is very much a thing of the present. Studies and statistics demonstrate how prevalent the color of one's skin is. Ninety percent of whites believe that black children have the same educational opportunities as whites. But the reality is that 70% of students of color are going to school with children of color, that happen to be 10 times more likely than majority white schools to have high levels of poverty. Even in higher education, college-educated African Americans are almost twice as likely to be unemployed compared to college-educated whites (*White Like Me*). Race as a social construct means that there are ways in which the meaning can again transform and individuals can have the same opportunities to progress towards higher stages, ultimately creating justice.

Freire demonstrates a more advanced track in the human growth and development models because his ideas and beliefs work to benefit all people, not just the elite. Creating programs and movements surrounding helping those who are oppressed, show his awareness of others. He was able to nurture a life of a human who has a successful journey to older adulthood and live a life full of self-worth, purpose, enriched relationships, and acts towards justice. The awakening he experienced in the United States shaped his ideas to include overcoming oppression in first world countries as he saw it was not exclusive to third world experiences. He saw education as the way to allow the oppressed to gain power and take political action.

By applying his methods to the current United States' education system, the image of the melting pot as cultures together *and* as equals could become a reality because every individual would be provided with the same opportunities to progress successfully in the stages of human growth and development. If the melting pot

represented a true mixing of nationalities, ethnicities, and cultures, the United States

would represent a just country, no longer transforming the oppression seen in early

history, but eliminating it. By eliminating oppression, the U.S. would successfully reach

a more mature development of growth in which Freire's ideals support. Accomplishing

this growth encourages one of the answers to "what is means to be human:" to live

outside the color factor. Where there is liberty and justice for all.

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