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Reading NCLB as a Form of Structural Violence

Kerry Burch

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If I were to formulate two broad generalizations to approximate the common-sense attitudes my students tend to exhibit toward the educational policies operating under the banner of No Child Left Behind (2001; NCLB), I would suggest that 1) despite perceiving marginal difficulties with the legislation, on the whole, many consider its original purposes to be well-intentioned and thus, morally legitimate; and that 2) largely because of this bestowal of legitimacy, the totality of NCLB's bureaucratic structure and presence, as a productive agency of state, is tacitly assumed to be politically neutral and innocent of power relations.

As teachers of the social foundations of education, I think it is crucial for us to unsettle these specific forms of common sense lest our students enter the teaching profession with veils of innocence shrouding their perception of the educational culture they will soon encounter. To better recognize the presence of this veil, that is, for my students to *repoliticize* their fundamentally *apoliticized* educational perceptions, I encourage them to interpret the signature features of this federal legislation on the basis of radical democratic criteria. I want them to learn to see NCLB both as a massive political imposition and as a source of domination, one whose institutional power becomes doubly dangerous and oppressive when it is "misrecognized" as devoid of these very power relations (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p. 17). The purpose of this essay, then, is to demystify the aura of moral legitimacy surrounding NCLB by learning to read its moral geography, so to speak, from a structural violence perspective.

I adapt the framework of structural violence to argue that today's dominant educational regime can be understood to manifest at least three forms of structural violence— violence against the psychological health and moral development of youth, violence against their developmental citizenship, and violence against teachers whose vocational identities are increasingly subjected to its punitive and authoritarian norms and protocols. I also develop the case that these three culturally injurious impositions cumulatively exercise a fourth synergistic violent effect against the very idea of America's democratic prospect.

The concept of *structural violence* was inaugurated by peace education advocates intent on describing social conditions in which there was a formal absence of war but also the presence of oppressive, institutional forms of violence. Its intellectual architects theorize a sharp conceptual distinction between the absence of war as constituting what they term *negative peace* from that of *positive peace*, which they describe not only as the absence

of war but also as the presence of just, egalitarian institutional structures (Galtung, 1969; Tickner, 1995).

Founding peace educators, such as Johan Galtung (1969) and feminist thinkers interested in similar analytical frames of reference (Tickner, 1995), developed the theory of structural violence to make intelligible the numerous ways in which instances of non-lethal violence could be imposed upon individuals and groups despite the absence of militarized formal states of war. Typical indices used to measure the quality of a good and decent life, such as life expectancy, caloric intake, literacy, and access to medical or educational opportunities have been invoked to ascertain the relative presence of peace or violence in any given cultural context. Broadly framed, then, structural violence is employed as a means for identifying the constraints imposed on human potential caused by unequal economic and political arrangements.

As part of his core methodological stance, Galtung (1969) asserts that the presence of violence in institutional structures can be ascertained by the intensity of difference that can be shown between what he calls an institutions' ideal *potential*, on the one hand, versus its *actual* consequences on the other:

Violence is that which increases the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is... Thus, if a person died of tuberculosis in the eighteenth century it would be hard to conceive of this as violence since it might have been quite unavoidable, but if he dies from it today, despite all the medical resources in the world, then violence is present according to our definition. (p. 168)

Galtung (1990) broadened the scope of the theory to include the principle of *cultural violence*, by which he means those symbolic or cultural influences, especially national, religious or educational ideologies that work to justify and legitimize or obscure manifestations of violence at the psychological and cultural level. So while the concept of structural violence originally focused on identifying oppressive institutional structures, cultural violence signifies a wider application of the concept to include a critical analysis of individual and group *psychological structures* reflected within the cultural sphere.¹

It is worth noting that Galtung's concept of cultural violence aligns closely with Bourdieu & Passeron's (1977) theory of *symbolic violence*, in that both designations refer to a process in which external, power-laden impositions of values and beliefs become internalized over time. Once internalized (uncritically) within individuals, these values and beliefs function to reproduce the oppressions and violence of the dominate order of things. According to Bourdieu & Passeron (1977), incidents of symbolic violence are compounded when individuals fail to recognize the power relations operative at the core of their own internalizations: "Every power to exert symbolic violence, i.e., every power

which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations” (p. 4).

For Bourdieu, when these internalizations coalesce within individuals and groups they form what he calls a “*habitus*” (p. 31-32), the psychic inner-landscape or symbolic repository from which culturally-conditioned attitudes of common sense find anchorage. Borrowing from Bourdieu, then, we could say that NCLB instantiates its own historically-situated, capitalist-oriented habitus—containing its own cluster of values, beliefs, and significantly, its own habitual ways of seeing and not seeing.

Similar to Galtung and Bourdieu, Paulo Freire (2010) adapts a discourse of cultural violence when he observes:

Any situation in which ‘A’ objectively exploits ‘B’ or hinders his or her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression. Such a situation in itself constitutes violence, even when sweetened by false generosity, because it interferes with the individual’s ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human. (p. 55)

Freire further employs a cultural violence perspective when he asserts that, “any situation in which some individuals prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence” (p. 85).

To narrow the focus of the inquiry, I am postulating that NCLB’s violent effects can be identified according to four categories of personal and civic injury. These injuries, I contend, can be traced directly to NCLB’s signature curricular policies, policies which can be enumerated as follows:

- The present moment comes to mean less and less educationally, a bias that inevitably retards individuals’ psychological and moral growth;
- The demotion of civic education and the treatment of controversial issues within the curriculum functions to deform a more wholesome development of democratic citizens;
- Teachers, rather than being encouraged to see themselves as the “consecrated servants of the democratic ideas” (Dewey, 1916, p. 269), instead are being well-regulated to accept rituals of bureaucratization that trivialize the civic dimension of their vocational identities as teachers.
- Cumulatively, these psychic and civic injuries do harm to the idea of America’s democratic prospect.

While my aim is to frame NCLB both as an historically-situated, cultural formation and as an institutional source of structural/cultural/symbolic violence, I am also interested in exposing the operations of capitalist ideological indoctrination that is covertly enacted within these designated curricular sites (Anyon, 2011).²

Race to the Top as the Devaluation of the Present.

American youth find themselves increasingly ensnared within the consequences of an educational culture that robs education of its soulful character. The celebrated *Race to the Top* (2009) narrative upon which the moral legitimacy of NCLB largely rests, symbolizes this soulless quality. It does so by imposing a kind of tyranny of the future into the minds of the young. This tyranny is cumulative: It is reflected in high-stakes standardized testing, in the adequate yearly progress (AYP) mechanism, and in curriculums that reduce the content of educational experience to future test preparation. The idea of the future also becomes tyrannical to the extent that teachers and administrators acquiesce to bureaucratically enforced imperatives that fail to heed the *reverential* quality of the present (Rud & Garrison, 2012).

Another expression of this spiritually vacant, educational discourse that I am attempting to critique can be found in the Common Core Standards. For example, in my home state, the New Illinois State Learning Standards Incorporating the Common Core was adapted in 2010 with the target date for assessment set for 2013-14. Its individualistic and future-driven purpose statement seems to represent rational thinking at its capitalist best: “The goal is to better prepare Illinois students for success in college and the workforce in a competitive global economy (Illinois Learning Standards, n.d.).

It should be made clear, of course, that some concern with the future and with developing students’ wherewithal to function in the economic sphere is perfectly consistent with a good, holistic education. The problem arises, however, when an inordinate emphasis on preparation for the future comes to mean preparation for the next dreary round of tests, in a race that must feel like a tedious marathon for many students. Under these circumstances, no one should be surprised when students become alienated from the present moment and manifest attention-deficit disorders in mass numbers.

Writing in counterpoise to the future-obsessed, educational culture we seem to have normalized today, Dewey (1938) captures the educational significance of revaluing the present moment above a “suppositious future” (p. 49):

What, then, is the true meaning of preparation in the educational scheme? In the first place, it means that a person, young or old, gets out of the present moment all that there is in it for him at the time that he has it. When preparation is made the controlling end, then the potentialities of the present are sacrificed to a suppositious future. When this happens, the

actual preparation for the future is missed or distorted. The ideal of using the present simply to get ready for the future contradicts itself. It omits, and even shuts out, the very conditions by which a person can be prepared for the future. We always live at the time we live and not at some other time, and only by extracting at each present time the full meaning of each present experience are we prepared for doing the same thing in the future. This is the only preparation which in the long run amounts to anything. (p. 49)

With this passage serving as a moral and intellectual touchstone, we can more readily grasp the ways in which the futuristic bias embodied within the Race to the Top drains the vital present of its potential meaning. As Dewey observes, such an orientation “omits” and “shuts out” engagement in and with the present, thus destroying the very conditions in which persons could experience what it means to learn. In theory at least, only in such moments are students favorably positioned to experience further psychological and moral growth.

One approach for weighing the consequences of omitting the value of the present within the educational process would be for us to fully appreciate that the present, as a temporal space, is itself a contested symbolic terrain. Despite this hermeneutic complexity and despite the fallibility of human agents who attempt to interpret the present as something containing significant educational value, I hope that, as educators, we can acknowledge that the present is the *radical space* of the educational moment, the uterine ground-zero where nascent, gestating, and inchoate desires to know are catalyzed into being. When the teleological trajectories of NCLB’s cultural *habitus* are permitted to extinguish our students’ potentially educative relations to a reverential present, we severely constrain the emotional and symbolic field conditions that make meaningful, transformative education possible.

Is it even possible for youngsters to develop a love for education when the present moment is rarely if ever treated as intrinsically meaningful?

In the final analysis, what makes hands-on and experiential forms of learning so attractive is that these pedagogies encourage the young to actually *dwell* in the fullness of the present. To approximate this excellent quality of present-mindedness in colloquial terms, we could say that in those moments in which students are absorbed in the present, time flies, and never do they experience the chronic boredom and alienation that tends to define NCLB’s disciplinary *habitus*. The ontological state of being the schools jeopardize today—call it pleasurable absorption in a vital present—is a state of being closely resembling Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s (1997) concept of *flow*, as flow refers to a heightened intensity of engagement which occurs only when persons are absorbed *in the depth* of a present (my emphasis).

Given this cursory review, it seems warranted to suggest that NCLB's inordinate concern with the future is emblematic of a profoundly anti-flow educational regime. If we are willing to recognize the validity of this allegation, we will be better situated to grasp how the implementation of this defining curricular policy reproduces various psychic imprints, traces, effects, and even habits—chief among them, habits of inattention and joylessness. These negative emotions can be regarded as the experiential core of NCLB's cultural *habitus*.

When Dewey repeatedly stresses that the present interests and activities of the child must be construed as *the* focal point of education, he does so because he believes he knows that the origin of learning and inquiry reside in that radical space. One crucial obstacle we face today, therefore, is that with shimmering images of the future pointing toward a kind of educational Emerald City, curriculums are increasingly structuring-out the value of the present from the educational culture.

More and more we read about the pressures imposed on teachers to teach to this or that future test. No doubt the intensity of these pressures has demoralizing effects on teachers and students alike. On the one hand, for example, this pressure benevolently coerces millions of youth to forget about their experiential present. The system-wide pattern to diminish the value of the present within the public space of the classroom should be regarded as a manifestation of violence against the personal and civic interests of the nation's youth. Another consequence of this unrelenting pressure to raise test scores, predictably, is the nation-wide pandemic of test score corruption cases (Fair Test, n.d.).

In yet another powerful affirmation of the value of the present, Dewey (1894) emphasized that “children proverbially live in the present...it is not only a fact to be evaded, but it is an excellence” (p.50). To which we might add today—yes, the quality of living/educating in the present ought to be seen as an “excellence,” that is, as a quality of being and moral ideal whose depth value needs to be remembered and much better understood than it is today. Moreover, since it is not self-evident in today's circumstances what it would mean for teachers to return to a renewed focus on the present, there is a need to further think through what might be called the question of the present in education.

It is important to note that Dewey's (1938) sustained focus on tapping into the “full meaning of each present experience” (p. 51) within the educational process is directly connected to his life-long project of attempting to spiritualize American democracy, that is, to bring out its moral, personal and therefore educable dimensions. Steven Rockefeller's (1991) comprehensive book on Dewey's religious faith and democratic humanism reaffirms that a strong emphasis on appreciating the fullness of the present was absolutely central to Dewey's democratic brand of spiritual practice.

All Citizens Left Behind: NCLB and the Deformation of Democratic Citizens.

In the previous section it was argued that an inordinate concern with the future prevents, or at least decreases, the likelihood that authentic learning and hence psychological and moral growth can occur within the young. Yet another manifestation of structural violence readily identified within the curricular bias of NCLB is its explicit demotion of civic education as a worthy educational objective. The significance of this curricular omission is that it impairs the capacity of the young to actually *be* citizens. This absence of caring with regard to civic development is injurious both to the happiness of individual citizens and to the long-term health of American democracy.

Judging from its intended purpose as a hyper-capitalist and highly individualistic educational ethos, NCLB has succeeded remarkably in achieving its objectives. However, if we shift the criterion for success and ask instead how well NCLB has achieved its role in initiating the young into a culture of democracy, we are on safe ground in saying that it has failed miserably to meet this crucial standard (Nussbaum, 2010; Levinson, 2012).

Along with many others, including the founders of this esteemed journal, I believe the single best curricular avenue for cultivating both civic awareness and a passion for public affairs is for students to encounter and learn to work through the most controversial issues our society faces. It doesn't matter what these controversial issues are. The reason for this is that simmering beneath the surface of every genuinely controversial issue are sets of pedagogically-ripe contradictions, and these political and cultural conflicts, once identified and discussed within the classroom, can become the basis for stimulating novel inquiries and new desires to know. From a teaching perspective, this open-ended and revisable interpretive stance seems far more alluring to the learning process than it would be to encourage students to adopt *finished* opinions or perspectives on any given controversial topic.

Dewey (1916) is characteristically prescient when he suggests that the highest level of democratic education involves precisely the initiation of the young into the difficult and anxiety-producing domains of educational inquiry. He asks:

Is there any meaning in the phrase “democratic control” of social affairs save as men (sic) have been educated into an intelligent familiarity with the weak places, the dark places, the unsettled difficulties of our society before they are overwhelmed by them practically? (p. 195).

Here, Dewey implies that one of the foundational purposes of American public education should be defined by the need to initiate the young into the nation's most vexing controversies. For, as he reasons, only as Americans develop an “intelligent familiarity” with the nation's weak, dark, and unsettled difficulties can we begin to develop the

“equipment for public life” necessary to deal with the mounting challenges we face (p. 194).

In revaluing controversy within the classroom, teachers can more effectively return their students to what I’ve been referring to as the vital present, since one advantage of encountering controversy in the classroom is its unparalleled ability to bring students and teachers into the here and now.

In an effort to highlight the deforming civic effects of NCLB’s curricular biases as well as to help rejuvenate the democratic educational project, I would like to suggest that teachers at all levels could benefit by reframing the pursuit of happiness clause in the Declaration of Independence as a site of critical analysis. This piece of public rhetoric should not be viewed as an intrinsically bourgeois or capitalist moral ideal. While the phrase has undoubtedly been interpreted in this way in the past, it’s also true that it can be interpreted from a radical, democratic perspective. For example, as the crown jewel of America’s political rhetoric, I see no reason why our critical pedagogies cannot creatively deploy the phrase to challenge the corporatized images of happiness underpinning today’s dominant narrative of national identity.

I want to make the case that a deeper appreciation of the forgotten civic dimensions of the pursuit of happiness clause can do much to restore a robust sense of civic purpose to the nation’s public schools. In the writings of Arendt (1963), Meyer (1976) and Burch (2012, 1-17), we see that during the Revolutionary period, the pursuit of happiness was popularly understood to include a parallel civic dimension deeply entwined with one’s capacity to actively participate in public affairs. The idea that the condition of happiness must necessarily include that of “being a participator in the sharing of public power,” as Jefferson remarked, is exactly the idea and vision of national identity that we seem to have collectively forgotten.

Another reason why the pursuit of happiness could be said to contain an untapped reservoir of radical democratic potential is because, properly framed, it can be used to raise necessary questions about the contested character of the national identity formation. Such contestations must be undertaken within our classrooms if teachers hope to play any role in de-centering the power of *Homo economicus* (Burch, 2012) as the dominant archetype of American identity. From a democratic perspective, the principle problem with *Homo economicus* is not only that its symbolic field reduces human life to an economic relation but that it also symbolizes a model of national identity incapable of recognizing the value of human interdependency.

What is at stake in the contest over the meaning of the pursuit of happiness, then, is whether the national identity will be adaptive enough to recreate a newly-minted democratic version of itself. Will the national identity and its accompanying narrative of

happiness continue to be predicated on the assumption that human beings are fundamentally isolated atoms of economic self-interest? Who would deny that such an assumption about human nature, albeit ideologically veiled, is foundational to NCLB as an agency of reproduction?

An alternative approach for renewing the public purposes of public education would be to democratize the national identity by grounding its accompanying narrative of happiness on the assumption that human beings, while individuals with distinct interests, should also be defined by their fundamental sociality?³

Given the demotion of civic education today, one of the most obvious and glaring problems is that, under the influence of NCLB and the Race to the Top narrative, the schools are functioning as ideological factories that efficiently reproduce mass levels of idiocy. I use the term *idiocy* here to refer to its original, Greek etymological meaning of purely private individuals; those who could participate in the *polis*, but chose not to. Such a curricular bias means that the public schools, once seen as the premier citizen-forming institutions in the nation, are now mass-producing privatized individuals as a matter of curricular policy. We can reasonably assert, then, given the degraded status of both civic education and the humanities within NCLB, that students shall have substantially less opportunity to encounter the kinds of moral and civic predicaments that would result in stimulating their moral, aesthetic, and civic development as citizens.

In light of recent trends, it seems justifiable to claim that NCLB systematically imposes upon youth a preventable type of civic deformation. On the basis of democratic criteria, it is perhaps warranted to interpret the psychological and de-mobilizing civic effects of this deformation as a form of symbolic violence, that is, violence against citizenship as violence against America's democratic prospect.

Teachers as Lovers or Shop-Floor Managers?

The third instance of cultural violence reproduced by NCLB can be defined by its demonstrated capacity to misshape teacher identity along anti-democratic lines. It was previously mentioned that the three sites of structural/cultural/symbolic violence under consideration in this essay worked together synergistically to create an overall violent effect. What this means, following Bourdieu & Passeron's notion of *habitus*, is that while these three curricular sites are conceptually distinct in certain respects, at a deeper level of analysis, they can be seen to have originated from the same cultural system and paradigmatic cluster of values.

In this section, I want to bracket a category of educational culture which, from a structural violence perspective, can demonstrate how NCLB's educational culture does violence to the civic dimension of teacher identity. By this I mean violence to that dimension of a teacher's identity that desires to converse meaningfully with the larger

public purposes, visions, and controversies that have historically been attached to the profession, precisely those deeply affective and civic qualities omitted from the prevailing educational discourse and culture.

The category of injury I am referring to here is intrinsically tied to the status of teacher autonomy, a moral principle that is foundational to education in a democratic republic. One cardinal indicator for measuring the slow-motion devolution of teacher autonomy in today's context would be to recount testimonies from disaffected teachers whose stories have recently appeared in the media.

After teaching 27 years in upstate New York, Gerald Conti, a social studies teacher, released his resignation letter to the public (as cited in Strauss, 2013). In the letter, Conti alerts us to the trends in public education that are having a profoundly corrosive effect on the integrity of the vocational identities of teachers. He reports that since the implementation of NCLB, the profession is being “demeaned” by a “pervasive atmosphere of distrust” which “dictates” that teachers are no longer in control of anything they do. Conti observes that “this approach not only strangles creativity, it smothers the development of critical thinking in our students and assumes a one-size-fits-all mentality more appropriate to the assembly line than to a classroom.” He remarks that, “creativity, academic freedom, teacher autonomy, experimentation and innovation are being stifled in a misguided effort to fix what is not broken in our system of public education.”

Conti describes the emotional and vocational depth of injury currently being imposed upon the civic dimension of teacher identity: “After writing all this, I realize that I am not leaving my profession, in truth, it has left me. It no longer exists.”

Another veteran teacher in suburban Chicago, Ellie Rubenstein (as cited in Gates, 2013), recently issued her resignation via a poignant YouTube video. Adopting language and imagery evocative of Conti's resignation letter, Rubenstein speaks affectionately about her pre-NCLB teaching career, presumably at a time when teachers' voices were listened to and when they exercised greater freedom and control—autonomy—over what they taught and how they taught it.

As an elementary school teacher, Rubenstein observed how the collaborative and warm educational culture that she once experienced was gradually transformed into a frigid, test-centric, hierarchical and authoritarian work environment:

I've experienced the depressing, gradual downfall and misdirection of education that has slowly eaten away at my love of teaching. The emphasis in education has shifted from fostering academic and personal growth, in both students and teachers, to demanding uniformity and conformity. Raising students' test scores on standardized tests is now the only goal, and in order to achieve it, the creativity, flexibility, and

spontaneity that create authentic learning environments have been eliminated. Everything I loved about teaching is extinct.

When Rubenstein says that everything she “loved” about teaching is now “extinct,” she frames her experience as a rupture, an unwelcome discontinuity. A sea change in cultural power seems to have occurred within the culture of the classroom, leaving her with less autonomy and less felt meaning attached to her role as a teacher. Among other things that could be counted as missing or lost in such an educational milieu would be a healthy aesthetic environment: *aesthetic* here defined as a felt emotional vitality and *environment* defined in its’ social aspect as an inter-subjectively held sense of common identity. While these testimonies are anecdotal, they still indicate that NCLB’s signature cultural formation has exercised a material effect in both de-aestheticizing and de-eroticizing these classroom spaces—an indoctrination of a very real sort, and one that masquerades as political neutrality. It is largely through the invisibility of this indoctrination that *Homo economicus* continues to be reproduced within the schools.

Both of these testimonies raise tough questions about the project of integrating democratic values and principles into educational institutions that seem increasingly hostile to any such integration. In my opinion, one future arena of critical inquiry that these stories suggest concerns the practical need to better understand those cultural and educational mechanisms that encourage or discourage *the perceived being or non-being of love in teaching and learning*. For it seems evident that the erosion of teacher autonomy reflected in both narratives produced conditions in which a sense of love for teaching and learning could no longer flourish in hospitable environments. Dan Liston (2012) articulates this feature of today’s dominant educational culture: “Neither reverence nor love typify our teachers’ and students’ classroom lives. Since we live in enforced learning settings, not reverential contexts, these settings of force need to be understood” (p. 37).

Rubenstein (as cited in Gates, 2013) explains how “these enforced learning settings” eroded her vocational identity as a teacher:

I no longer feel that I’m doing anything meaningful. I’m not being allowed to spark enthusiasm for learning in my own way. Rather I’m being forced to function as a cog in a wheel, and this wheel is not turning in the right direction. My sense of humor, personality, creativity, self-expression, passion, opinion, my voice—all are being stepped on, crushed, and ground down. And I have to get out before my sense of self and self-worth are completely obliterated. Sadly, there are many others who feel as I do.

The voices of Rubenstein and Conti, echoed by countless others, come to us as vocational canaries in the coal mine. They warn that the principle and practice of teacher autonomy has been losing its symbolic oxygen within the suffocating atmospherics of NCLB's educational culture. These testimonies go some distance in showing how the dominant educational culture exercises cultural or symbolic violence against the civic dimensions of teacher identity, an identity whose moral legitimacy depends on the viability of teacher autonomy.⁴

In addressing the subject of teacher identity, Dewey (1916/1998) thought that the nation's public school teachers should ground their vocational identities in a prophetic and transcendent idea of America—an idea of national identity he regarded as interchangeable with democracy and equality of educational opportunity. In Dewey's tripartite-vision, the nation, its educational system, and its democratic moral ideals constituted an indivisible, if moving, whole.

He wrote that Americans had failed historically to sustain any enduring fidelity to the democratic vision; indeed, they had failed to become erotically attracted to the spiritual, moral, and political dimensions of democracy as an historical project. Our great abdication, he wrote in 1929, was to give up on the vision of a more equitable and stable society. Dewey lamented that while democracy might have served as an organizing principle for the development of a new public philosophy, "its promise of a new moral and religious outlook has not been attained" (Dewey 1929, pp. 8-9).

Despite its imperfect realization, Dewey still thought the idea of American democracy could potentially generate the same kind of devotions, attachments and emotional intensities that religious ideas and commitments commonly inspire. Dewey understood that for democracy to kindle the spirit of human fraternity and to symbolize a transcendent meaning for its adherents, it would have to be *known* and *felt* as a kind of secular religious project. The only way this ideal could be realized was if Americans reconceived the purposes of democratic education to be that of learning to *be* democratic as opposed to learning *about* its external procedures. Because Dewey (1916) understood the enormous pedagogical, epistemic, and civic challenges that would be involved in educating for democracy at these exalted levels, he tried to recruit public school teachers to see themselves above all as "the consecrated servants of the democratic ideas" and as "energetic instruments" of the democratic moral values (pp. 208-210). The project of encouraging a critical mass of teachers to identify themselves in this manner so as to put the public back into the public schools, remains the creative task before us.

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Notes

¹ Although there are fine-grained analytic distinctions to be made between “structural,” “cultural,” and “symbolic” forms of violence, for the purposes of this essay, I will use the terms interchangeably at a general level of definition.

² For a timely Neo-Marxist deconstruction of NCLB's mystifying and deceptive egalitarian pretensions, see Jean Anyon (2011, pp. 75-76).

³ The hegemonic assumption that human beings are no more than atoms of economic self-interest is often justified and perpetuated on the basis of Charles Darwin's theory of the "survival of the fittest." Relying on this assumption, many have been led to believe that the acquisitive and competitive dimensions of capitalism are therefore perfectly consistent with the nature of human nature. Yet, as David Loye's (2004) work on Darwin persuasively argues, this alleged reciprocity is itself a gigantic myth. He concludes: "What Darwin was actually writing about in *The Descent of Man* is *love* (which he mentions 95 times), *moral sensitivity* (ninety-two times) and *mind* (ninety times). It seems that he was saying what educator and moral theorist Nel Noddings has been emphasizing more than a century later—that caring and the search for meaning are at the heart of human life and should comprise the core of our work in education" (p. 43).

⁴ A strong modernist defense of the moral and intellectual autonomy of the scholar can be found in Immanuel Kant's (1794) brief essay, "What is Enlightenment?" Kant provides a powerful argument that just republican societies must respect the autonomy and critical spirit of their public intellectuals if they hope to evolve and survive (as cited in Kramnick, 2001).