

**A Habitus of Resistance**  
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**Abstract:** This paper will reconsider praxis as not only a site of learning, but as a way of registering resistance, a form of protest, from which freedom emerges. If Christian religious education as a socializing process hopes to be liberating, it must educate not solely through the transmission of a metanarrative, but rather through practices of protest, a habitus of resistance. I ultimately argue that CRE through not only the liturgy but also acts of service, offers the church freedom from a compulsion to compete with a self-interested cultural hegemony, while respecting individual experience.

The field of Christian religious education (CRE) often points to the importance of practices that teach the life of faith to future generations. Through the liturgy and the broader curriculum of the church, CRE's praxis shapes the Christian identity of the learner.<sup>1</sup> More precisely, Christian religious education forms identity counter to self-interested material culture, particularly as it is defined by materialism and consumerism.<sup>2</sup> Through this counter-culture formation, CRE develops disciples who actively resist cultural hegemony. I argue, in addition to the practices of the liturgy, embodied actions of resistance and protest can be educative as a part of CRE curriculum, actively orienting desires away from perceived cultural norms. In considering a postcolonial critique, I consider CRE's praxis as not only a site of learning, but as a way of registering resistance. In what I will discuss as a *habitus* of resistance, CRE raises consciousness, engages the imagination, and celebrates human agency in order to develop Christian identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Liturgy as a Site of Resistance**

Those who focus on the formative and transformative character of practices in Christian education will waste little time before discussing the importance of the liturgy. In October 2011, at a conference hosted at Garrett-Evangelical, Dr. Fred Edie made such a connection.<sup>3</sup> The culture of consumerism, often lamented by those working with Youth and Young Adults, is filled with activities and advertisements telling young people what they need in order to be “cool,” what they must become to succeed.<sup>4</sup> In Edie's view, this drive toward consumerism is actually a “competing cultural liturgy,” shaping and forming the habits and practices of young people.

James K. A. Smith makes similar arguments about liturgy, claiming,

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<sup>1</sup> This ecclesial education is discussed by Maria Harris, *Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> Katherine Turpin makes the argument for the reality of North American consumer culture as a religious system from which we need a conversion experience. Katherine Turpin, *Branded: Adolescents Converting from a Consumer Faith* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Fred Edie, “Youth Theological Institute Panel.” Panel Discussion for the Captured By A Compelling Narrative Conference, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois. 28 October 2011. r. Edie is a professor at Duke Divinity and director of the Duke Youth Academy and was a part of a panel discussion about Youth Academy around the country doing theological education with young people.

<sup>4</sup> Turpin, 42. These desires are driven by the meta-myth (quoting deChant) as, “the myth of success and affluence, gained through a proper relationship with the economy, and revealed in the ever-expanding relationship with the economy, and through the ever-increasing acquisition and consumption of products by individuals.” Here, Turpin sites the work of Dell deChant, *The Sacred Santa: Religious Dimensions of Consumer Culture* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2002).

[L]iturgies – whether ‘sacred’ or ‘secular’ – shape and constitute our identities by forming our most fundamental desires and our most basic attunements to the world. In short, liturgies make us certain kinds of people, and what defines us is what we love.<sup>5</sup>

Eddie’s solution to these competing liturgies is to reclaim the intent of the church’s original liturgical practices through the *ordo*.<sup>6</sup> Eddie expands this *ordo* to include, more broadly, “the patterned communal way of life shaped around the practice of these holy things.”<sup>7</sup>

Eddie’s belief that practices, such as the *ordo*, lead to holistic Christian life, or “the good life,” is by no means novel. He points to Aristotle, arguing,

... theoretical knowledge does not exhaust all forms of human knowing. [Aristotle] champions practical knowing (praxis), **a kind of knowing characterized by thinking-informed action or active reflection**... In contrast to the passively contemplative nature of theoretical knowledge this practical knowledge is **oriented to doing, to living**. Moreover, this kind of knowing requires cultivation of virtues, **bodily habitual dispositions** that assist persons toward acting consistent with a community’s vision of the good life... Aristotle contends that persons (usually youth in his day) are formed into this life of virtue not by sitting in school and contemplating theoretical knowledge but by following around and imitating virtuous persons – in short, by practicing the good life.<sup>8</sup>

What is at stake for Eddie’s articulation of praxis is its power to form individuals *counter* to the formation taking place as a result of their location within a material culture.<sup>9</sup> For Eddie and for Aristotle, the habits developed through the practice of the *ordo* make all the difference in “the good life” modeled to Christian disciples.<sup>10</sup>

If actions through the *ordo* form habits that teach how and what to love, then to define cultural “liturgies” as competition implies that the church’s liturgical practices are already forms of resistance. In exploring CRE as a form of resistance, I find the critique of postcolonial theory, specifically its cry for de-centering and decolonizing practices, a compelling framework out of which to examine a counter-cultural CRE.<sup>11</sup> In response to such a critique, I will include a *habitus* of resistance as integral to understanding the praxis of Christian religious education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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<sup>5</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 25. Smith writes about liturgy as a Reformed philosopher, seeking to enliven a Reformed position around the Augustinian anthropology of humans as creatures “fundamentally oriented and identified by love.” (44)

<sup>6</sup> Fred P. Eddie, *Book, Bath, Table, and Time: Christian Worship as Source and Resource for Youth Ministry* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2007), 7. The *ordo* is defined as the instructions for worship, which include the practices of baptism (bath), communion (table), and a rhythm of liturgical timekeeping (time).

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, 11. Emphases mine.

<sup>9</sup> Turpin explores this process as a type of ongoing conversion. (Awakening, Repentance, Justification, and Regeneration) Similarly, I will explore this counter-formation in terms of the habituated practices that make such turning possible.

<sup>10</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 24. Aristotle wrote that in order for a man to “learn” what is good, ultimately through the characterizing practices in which he took part. “This is why the activities we exhibit must be of a certain kind; it is because the states of character correspond to differences between these. It makes no small difference, then, whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather all the difference... Thus, in one word, states of character arise out of like activities.”

<sup>11</sup> Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011). In Mignolo’s assessment, a “colonial matrix of power” has been at play for centuries. To think beyond this matrix would involve “decolonial thinking and doing... as responses to the oppressive and imperial bent of modern European ideals projected to and enacted in, the non-European world.” 3.

See also: Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

## Postcolonial Theory

Part of postcolonial theory's central thesis is a desired dislocation from a decidedly Western epistemological hegemony and the power structures of empire, colonization, and even rationality as the central, solitary, or normative way of understanding the world.<sup>12</sup> Contributors to this body of work speak about the ability to overcome this hegemony with alternative, imaginative epistemologies. Postcolonial theorists argue for alternative epistemological stances, rather than simply replacing the normative with another ultimate truth. Walter Mignolo argues for decolonial options for a global future, the goal of which, "is not to take over, but to make clear, by thinking and doing, that global futures can no longer be thought of as one global future in which only one option is available; after all, when only one option is available, 'option' entirely loses its meaning."<sup>13</sup>

This critique, I believe, informs CRE in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by giving language to the task of resistance to hegemonic forces of affluence and materialism in the global north. If the media and marketing of our culture has educated the masses toward a hegemonic version of consumerism as the "good life," then to offer other ways of seeing the world, alternative epistemologies and narratives, is a task for both postcolonial theory and CRE. Postcolonial theory also issues a challenge the discipline of CRE to resist implementing yet another hegemony through practices and teachings which are liberating, and not further colonizing.<sup>14</sup> Any form of education that teaches with absolute certainty, as argued by Paulo Friere, limits the "ontological vocation to be more fully human," presenting a barrier to freedom.<sup>15</sup> Just as postcolonial theory critiques western epistemology for its hegemonic and colonizing characteristics, CRE must work to resist similar "Certainties" in its pedagogy. Education must allow for the experience and expressions of individuals, rather than uniformly replicated, domesticated, colonized participant in the Christian empire.

I engage postcolonial/decolonial/deimperial critique because I see it pressing for a more holistic *ordo*.<sup>16</sup> A *habitus* of resistance begins to respond to such a critique. First, just as postcolonial theory blends "intellectual engagement and activism in the world today," a *habitus* is **praxis**, action and reflection.<sup>17</sup> The second and third elements of this *habitus* are **imagination** and **agency**. Postcolonial theory argues for freedom to imagine alternative ways of knowing

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<sup>12</sup> Rocert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 11. Young defines Postcolonial theory as "focus[ing] on forces of oppression and coercive domination that operate in the contemporary world: the politics of anti-colonialism and new colonialism, race, gender, nationalisms, class an ethnicities define its terrain."

<sup>13</sup> Mignolo, 24.

<sup>14</sup> Christendom is the fairly obvious example of the way Christianity was used as a colonizing force, designed to unite the world under a unified Christian faith and identity. Allowing postcolonial theory to inform CRE praxis means that Christianity and the lingering effects of Christendom do not go unchallenged.

See also Young, 21. The colonial project, from the earliest forms of European expansion is deeply interconnected with religious, economic and technological motivations, and is important to consider as one looks to methods of cultural and counter-cultural formation. While much of postcolonial theory deals with the economic ties to the rise of capitalism, it is important for the field of CRE to examine the connections between Christendom and colonialism. Much of Young's text summarizes these motivations, although a large portion is focused on the economic motivations surround the rise and expansion of capitalism.

<sup>15</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group INC., 1970), 74. Freire breaks down models of education he calls "banking methods" in which, "... the scope of action allowed to the student extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing deposit." 72.

<sup>16</sup> I do not intend to indicate that postcolonial and decolonial efforts are the same projects. However, the ways I discuss postcolonial theory in this paper also issue a call for decolonial actions. While my own perspective as a white female in the academy might entail that my own approach to this conversation be a deimperial one (as a result of my location of privilege within the empire), I try here and throughout the paper to use the terms as they are used by the authors I engage.

<sup>17</sup> Young, 11. "Above all, the assumption guiding postcolonial critique is that it is possible to make effective political interventions within and beyond its own disciplinary field by developing significant connections between different forms of intellectual engagement and activism in the world today."

through the recovery of human agency.<sup>18</sup> This critique directly impacts the responsibility of Christian educators to insure faith formation remains liberative, and not domesticating.<sup>19</sup> CRE, in light of postcolonial critiques, must take responsibility for inspiring imagination in the faith formation process.<sup>20</sup>

### **Habitus of Resistance**

The concept *habitus* describes embodied ways of learning, practices that, over time, form identity.<sup>21</sup> Given the postcolonial critique, Christian religious education can develop a *habitus* of resistance by asking questions of and protesting the realities of a context. In so doing, the site of learning becomes a place to resist both cultural and traditional forms of oppression, and to celebrate the agency of the individual and community to freely choose expressions of faithful living. If CRE takes seriously Mignolo's call for decolonial options in shaping global futures, it must be a site for liberative education, not solely through the transmission of a metanarrative, but rather through embodied practices of liturgical protest that register resistance to oppressive expressions of theology and tradition.<sup>22</sup>

I define a *habitus* of resistance as an engaged, imaginative, ecclesial education through reconceived liturgical acts of protest, resisting formation by hegemonic forces of self-interest. Through this *habitus* of resistance, CRE frees individuals to engage in creative ways of grounding new, faithful practices in their own context, rather than through mimicry or copying a singular understanding of a metanarrative.<sup>23</sup>

### **Implications for Christian Religious Education**

This praxis opens up alternative epistemological trajectories. CRE, then, will be “polydoxical” as a result of this kind of epistemological freedom.<sup>24</sup> Through reflections on embodied actions of protest and resistance, rather than a simple transmission of normative claims, individuals and community are freed to develop a renewed understanding of faithful living.

In a recent article, religious educator Mai-Ahn Le Tran conducted a survey of 24 graduate school syllabi in introductory religious education coursework, looking at the goals, environment, content, and process of each educational framework.<sup>25</sup> Her findings point to the diversity within the field today, diversity she names as “polydoxy,” generating a need to address

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<sup>18</sup> Such is the “goal” of this critique as defined by Sankaran Krishna, *Globalization & Postcolonialism: Hegemony and Resistance in the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009). 6.

<sup>19</sup> Colonization is not just a geopolitical phenomenon. Colonization of the mind is also central to CRE critiques of transmissive models of education. Psychological colonization, while beyond the scope of this argument in its current format, is central in the work of Kelly Oliver, *The Colonization of Psychic Space: A Psychoanalytic Social Theory of Oppression* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

<sup>20</sup> Imagination is dealt with in great detail in the work of Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005). In this focus, Pui-lan draws heavily from the work of Gayatri Spivak. Such imagination, then, evokes what Gayatri Spivak calls a “noncoercive rearrangement of desire.” This rearrangement is dealt with in W. Anne Joh's treatment of Spivak in “Love's Multiplicity: Jeong and Spivak's Notes toward Planetary Love,” in *Planetary Loves: Spivak, Postcoloniality, and Theology*, ed. Stephen D. Moore and Mayra Rivera, 168-190 (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011). Here, Joh is making use of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Use and Abuse of Human Rights,” *boundary 2*, no. 1 (2005): 148.

<sup>21</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990). 70. Working to break from the mind-body dualism commonly characteristic of a Cartesian bias, Bourdieu believed the body was a product of its culture, and that culture was the primary agent in constructing the behaviors and postures of the body.

<sup>22</sup> The concept of “decolonial options” is dealt with in depth in Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011). Mignolo names decoloniality and spirituality as different projects in the shaping of global futures, however, they can sometimes co-exist and work together.

<sup>23</sup> Homi Bhabha, *Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994). 121. The concept of mimicry is discussed in a variety of postcolonial sources, including in Homi Bhabha's discussion of Fanon.

<sup>24</sup> Mai-Ahn Le Tran, “Diferente Desde Aqui: Twenty-four Ways of Looking at Religious Education,” *Religious Education*, 2011: 147-161.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid*, 147-161.

the polyphony of voices to maintain CRE as a site of, “ecologies of formation and transformation.”<sup>26</sup>

Tran’s argument explores a new way of understanding the ecology in which Christian religious education takes place so that educators do not reinscribe colonial articulations of the faith. She asks,

If ‘faith formation in community’ is the most stated *telos* of Christian religious education, what kind of ‘community’ and what kind of ecology are we talking about? What ‘eschatological visions of ultimate environments’ can we offer to contrast the lived reality of fear, uncertainty, terror, trauma, and conflict that define both sacred and ordinary spaces?... We all know that the ‘default’ image of the quaint neighborhood church or the high-steeple church at the center of the public square whose missional activities spread with far-reaching impact no longer suffices, ***but we are not all clear about what ought to stand in its place.***<sup>27</sup>

It is here I wish to carry Tran’s argument a bit further given CRE’s praxis and my argument for a *habitus* of resistance. Christian Religious Education can never be neutral, but rather, is a socializing process that either domesticates or liberates.<sup>28</sup> A *habitus* of resistance is implemented in order to free people.<sup>29</sup> In these final pages, I develop three elements of pedagogy, markers of a *habitus* of resistance that desires to take seriously the decolonial process of developing, or “setting free” other ways of knowing, alternative epistemologies. First, in order for CRE to not be a process of colonization, it must engage in practical knowing, praxis, which raises consciousness and reflects on experience. Secondly, it shapes the imagination, allowing the learner to imagine and experience alternative ways of seeing the world through acts of resistance. Lastly, the goal of this work of imagination and resistance is to develop a renewed understanding of the sacred worth of individuals, honoring the agency each person possesses.

### ***Consciousness-Raising: An Awareness of our Polydoxy***

Before one can act, one must be aware.<sup>30</sup> The work of postcolonial theory stresses the importance of a release from the hegemony of western epistemology. The effects of colonialism, however, are such an integral part of liberal university education and the scholarship it produces that the majority of the western world operates as if this epistemology is “the only way.” Therefore, a *habitus* of resistance responds to these critiques by raising the consciousness of individuals and communities, becoming aware of the systems and structures that hold inequalities in place.

Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire’s pedagogy unearths assumptions of oppressors, building a framework from which to hear the voices of the oppressed. Students and teachers work

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<sup>26</sup> *ibid*, 150. Tran given credit to the constructive theologian Marion Grau for her own work in investigating “polydoxy”

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*, 159-160. Emphasis mine.

<sup>28</sup> Boys, 124. In comparing the work of Paulo Freire and George Alebert Coe, Boys argues that both shared, “a deep conviction that education is inherently political and never neutral. Education either domesticates or it frees people.”

<sup>29</sup> Turpin, 39. This freeing *telos* speaks to the critique of resistance as ideology expressed in Turpin’s work. Turpin argues, “a life lived solely in negative reaction and/or ironic playfulness ultimately lacks hope and the ability to forge new institutions that sustain human community and life. Defining ourselves solely in resistance to something is perhaps enough to survive, but not enough for our lives to flourish and constructively add to the common good.” I argue here that modeling a “good life” counter to such material culture is a form of resistance that can contribute to freedom and agency, and to the “common” good in the sense of respect for the polyphony of voices within the community.

<sup>30</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group INC., 1970), 47. “To surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity.”

together as co-learners in a problem-posing model of education as they explore the ideas and themes of importance to students, not the agenda of the teacher.<sup>31</sup> Freire argues, “Authentic liberation – the process of humanization – is not another deposit to be made in men. Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it.”<sup>32</sup>

This action and reflection can influence the kind of alternative liturgical catechesis, or alternative pedagogy, considered here as a *habitus* of resistance.<sup>33</sup> Human experience, the physical, social, and geopolitical experience of everyday life, is a valid source of knowledge. As a result of social location and the ongoing effects of the colonial project, these experiences are varied, meaning that for different individuals, Christian histories and theologies, as well as experiences of the Divine, can manifest differently. This is the polydoxy we face if we teach through a *habitus* of resistance. CRE, then, resists its own history of colonizing influence and inspires individuals with the freedom to imagine their world differently and to engage in the actions necessary to make such transformation happen.

### ***Imagination: Diferente Desde Aqui***<sup>34</sup>

Critiques from postcolonial theory have argued, “colonialism is tantamount to the corraling of our very imaginations and paralyzing our capacity to conceive of the future in ways other than the modernization project.”<sup>35</sup> Through a *habitus* of resistance, however, the use of imagination is central to overcoming this hegemonic viewpoint, liberating persons to imaginatively engage the world from their own location and context. Kuan-Hsing Chen argues that one’s ecology (here conceived of as educational context) must be understood in order to, “deconstruct, decenter, and disarticulate the colonial cultural imaginary, and to reconstruct and rearticulate new imaginations and discover a more democratic future direction.”<sup>36</sup>

Tran echoes Homi Bhabha’s use of hybridity to highlight the diversity required by this decentering in the colonial.<sup>37</sup> Tran argues that the recognition of hybridity is imperative within the, “contemporary present, postcolonial, transnational, globalized world in which we live, whether our faith community exists in rural America, suburbanized middle-class enclaves, cosmopolitan network cities, or ghettoized inner-city neighborhoods.”<sup>38</sup> Tran points to Boys’ argument, that CRE “makes accessible” the “sources considered ‘normative’ to the faith community so that the truth, goodness, and beauty found within individual personal myths could be held in dialogic imagination\* with communal narratives of faith.”<sup>39</sup>

Tran’s discussion of hybridity speaks directly to the connection between the postcolonial critique and the future of Christian Religious education. If we accept the validity of human experience as a form of knowledge, we must be willing to accept the multiplicity of outcomes. Tran argues that CRE has a role in helping individuals to speak their own narrative, requiring the field to be able to accept a, “wider shifting of our collective subjectivities,” and begin to question

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<sup>31</sup> *ibid*, 81.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid*, 79.

<sup>33</sup> The process of consciousness-raising opens up alternative epistemological trajectories out of which, individuals truly experience their own subjectivity and agency.

<sup>34</sup> Tran’s title.

<sup>35</sup> Sankaran Krishna, *Globalization & Postcolonialism: Hegemony and Resistance in the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009). 156.

<sup>36</sup> Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 112.

<sup>37</sup> Homi Bhabha, *Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>38</sup> Mai-Ahn Le Tran, "Narrating Lives, Narrating Faith: "Organic Hybridity" for Contemporary Christian Religious Education," *Religious Education* 105, no. 2 (March-April 2010): 189.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid*, 196. Tran gives Kwok Pui-Lan credit for the notion of “dialogic imagination”

and resist the ways, “Christian theologies (and CRE theories) stifled narratives and perpetuated oppressive norms.”<sup>40</sup>

Imagination itself is a form of protest. It acknowledges differences within individuals and opens alternative ways of conceiving the present; a way of seeing beyond what is normative or expected. Imagination, then, is the ability to see things differently, both past and present, and to seek the “interstitial future” that Bhabha argues, “emerge in-between the claims of the past and the needs of the present.”<sup>41</sup> Kwok Pui-Lan also affirms that imagination requires a way of understanding your own present in order to moving beyond. She writes, “what we cannot imagine, we cannot live into and struggle for.”<sup>42</sup>

### *Anthropology & Agency*

In order to truly develop imagination through the consciousness-raising praxis offered here, a *habitus* of resistance must also work to respect and re-cover the sacred worth of all people.<sup>43</sup> Mary Boys quotes George Albert Coe’s definition of religious education as, “the systematic, critical examination and reconstruction of relations between persons, guided by Jesus’ assumption that *persons are of infinite worth*, and by the hypothesis of the existence of God, the Great Caller of Persons.”<sup>44</sup> Christian religious education as a *habitus* of resistance needs to not only raise consciousness of the contextual and structural ecology in which it hopes to develop a sense of imagination, but it needs also to raise such consciousness about the assumptions in the most basic of human relationships.<sup>45</sup>

As one engages in the embodied acts of resistance in the context of a *habitus* of resistance, one practices their very humanity. Freire argues,

[the] oppressed, who have been shaped by the death-affirming climate of oppression, must find through their struggle the way to life-affirming humanization. . . In order to regain their humanity they must cease to be things and fight as men and women.<sup>46</sup>

The ability to resist, to practice protest, celebrates agency. A CRE pedagogy that engages resistance, then, can teach and re-cover definitions of anthropological worth through such practices.

A *habitus* of resistance operates to challenge structures and foster agency in the process of faith formation. Such practices develop a renewed understanding of human anthropology, our sacred, created worth in the *imago dei*, in light of claims upon both tradition and texts of the past, as well as the lived experiences of individuals.

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<sup>40</sup> *ibid*, 188-203.202

<sup>41</sup> Bhabha, 313.

<sup>42</sup> Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 30.

<sup>43</sup> The idea of “recovery” of one’s agency implies that one lost it, or it needs to be rediscovered or given again. Spivak and other postcolonial theorists would critique this understanding on the basis of the implication that the subaltern, the person at the margins, the student, somehow was without agency at some point. Here I use “re-cover” as a way of talking an intentional commitment of educators within the church to acknowledge and celebrate the individual worth and agency of each person by “re-covering” a positive theological understanding of anthropology in our pedagogy and lessons.

<sup>44</sup> Boys, 53. Emphasis mine.

<sup>45</sup> The distinction between the forces of social structures and one’s agency is a deeply contested and ongoing argument. In theological studies, this agency is tied to one’s understanding and articulation of a human anthropology. A theological understanding of one’s worth and createdness can have a deep impact on the way one articulates human agency in response to societal structures. Practical theologian Richard Osmer defines these parameters as such: “structure, thus, indicates the impact of social institutions on people’s lives. Agency points to the active role individuals and groups play in interpreting their experiences and their freedom to respond to social institutions in a variety of ways. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.),155.

<sup>46</sup> Freire, 68.

### **A *Habitus* of Resistance: Action informing Epistemology**

Mary C. Boys argues against Christian Religious education solely transmitting information from one generation to the next, for if we only ask, “How shall we convey God’s revelation?,” we are only concerned with CRE as a means of transmission.<sup>47</sup> Boys’ text is a testament to the complex nature of the field and the growing diversity encapsulated in what it means to be a “religious person.”<sup>48</sup> Boys is clear that both the understanding of “religious” and the manifestations of “education” are varied throughout the history and practices of the discipline.<sup>49</sup>

Teaching to the diverse understandings of “religious” requires “education” to be polydoxical. A *habitus* of resistance, includes acts of resistance as a part of educators’ methodologies to free students from restrictive, colonizing approaches to faith formation. How could our faithful-living be transformed if we began to talk about our lives of faith in terms of resistance to oppressive, colonizing forces of materialism and enacted practices of a *different* “good life” for others to model? What if examples of radical hospitality, expressions of solidarity with the poor, and peace demonstrations were engaged as educative moments in CRE, as actions shaping one’s Christian identity? How might religious educators help others to reflect upon the practices of resistance developed in this *habitus* to deepen their sense of concern for their community and for the world?

While globalization is heralded as an inevitability, the postcolonial critique cautions against wiping away all difference in the name of global unity.<sup>50</sup> If Christian religious education hopes to continue the work of passing on faith to new generations, it needs to consider how its practices contribute or detract from such hegemony. Images and actions of resistance should be incorporated into CRE through a *habitus* of resistance. For, if the practices of Christian worship teach us what to love and how to be, certainly a *habitus* of resistance, ecclesial education through sustained practices of protests, can develop counter-cultural discipleship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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<sup>47</sup> Mary C. Boys, *Educating in Faith: Maps and Visions* (Lima, Ohio: Academic Renewal Press, 1989). 4

<sup>48</sup> *ibid*, 6.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid*, 10. The classical expressions covered in *Educating in Faith* are: evangelism, Christian education, and Catholic education (catechesis).

<sup>50</sup> Although, even postcolonial theory has been critiqued for reinstating a kind of universalism, which seems to speak to the inclination toward generalization in any theoretical argument. This argument for a “new universalism” is taken up by, Malini Johar Schueller, *Locating Race: Global Sites of Post-Colonial Citizenship* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2009), 50.



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