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Teaching as Intellectual Solidarity

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Abstract

This paper is a critical case study, which proposes intellectual solidarity as a grounding framework for education. Our initial assumptions considered the following: first, what are those antagonisms limiting authentic human relationships and social transformation in schooling and society? Second, what are some of the dispositions, pedagogies, and experiences of teachers who identify as critical educators and endeavor to transform those antagonisms with students and community members? As we proceed, we describe what we understand to be the interconnected relationship between schooling, socialization, and alienation. We argue the relationship between intellectualism and solidarity might be understood as an important remedy to the harmful ideologies limiting personal freedoms and especially collective agency. We identify middle class neoliberal whiteness as the prevailing ideological construct limiting work teachers might otherwise conduct, that is education for intellectual solidarity. We further argue teachers might begin by adopting and embodying a critical ontological pedagogical posture to articulate transformational forms of learning. Finally, we acknowledge intellectual solidarity is not a series of practices, but rather an approach; working toward informed collective agency.

Antagonisms and Responses: An Overview

A commitment to collective agency, truth, and love are the ethos of solidarity and progenitors to democratic revolution. This critical case study is an analysis of intellectual solidarity as it compelled critical teachers and their students to resist and transform social antagonisms they faced in schooling. Given this disposition, the purpose and intention of this four-year study was to examine the ways self-identifying critical teachers transformed epistemologies, school curricula, via dialogue and praxis as they developed intellectual solidarity with their students. This paper does not suggest these examples *par excellence*, as there is not a singular or prescriptive form of intellectual solidarity. Instead, we provide an analysis of intellectual solidarity and highlight examples to describe a range of praxiological responses to domination, alienation, and oppression.

Often eviscerated by capitalism, critical examinations of epistemology and ontology can unite teachers and communities. Critical study, theory, and inquiry have illuminated the value of collective attention to epistemology, ontology, and transformation in classrooms (Freire, 2000; hooks, 2014; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007). Scholars have noted critical epistemological and ontological dispositions may help a community analyze the racist, classist, and hetero-sexist socio-historical foundations of society as a means to clarify the struggle against alienation (Marx et al., 1867/1990; Rodriguez, 2008). The theoretical implications for these classroom dispositions challenge the social dogma relegating the masses to their lot in life (Freire, 1998; McLaren, 2015; Shor, 1987; Souto-Manning, 2010).

How we live affects how we think. How we think affects the positions we take toward the social relations of production, that is the capitalist market and functioning of its society (Rodriguez & Magill, 2017). Democratic teachers demonstrate their desire to support students in the social project of and for revolution by breaking from the educational policy status quo: No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top and Every Student Succeeds (Rodriguez, & Magill, 2016; Sondel, 2015). Manifestations of these institutional antagonisms have been explored as they present in schools. Discourse and experiences in education are too often focused on a student's perceived contribution within neoliberal society (Aronowitz, 2008). What often occurs is a teacher's pedagogical disposition reflects the ideologically informed classist hierarchies that subsequently pervade schools and consequently classroom practice (Crawford, 2011; Jones & Vagle, 2013; Rose, 2005). Often, attention to the lived experiences of students is lost, as is attending those policies that restrict their access to democracy (Osgood, 2011; Reay, 1998). Replacing more authentic experiences becomes the task of a functionary, as teachers are encouraged to focus on tracking students while conforming to systems rather than relating to students and communities. Perhaps well-meaning teachers subsequently focus on traditional measures of student performance instead of exploring how to inform their teacher student relationships with lived experience. Students then are understood as deficient, trained to internalize scholastic ideas related to individual responsibility, autonomous transformation, and their diminished role in society (Fraser, 2009; Gibson-Graham, 2006; Jones & Hughes-Decatur, 2012).

Given these realities, teachers only go so far without the support of mentors, colleagues or transformational experiences that might help them develop ideological clarity (e.g. Bartolome, 2004; Segall, 2003). Rather than having liberating experiences or seeking mentors to address class struggle, well intentioned educators limit themselves to critiquing the inequitable structures they observe in curriculum and society. Many are unwilling to risk material wellbeing by engaging in authentic experiences with students or in communities that will allow them to transform society (Hill, 2012; Marx et al., 1867/1990 & 2010; Ross, Mathison & Vinson, 2014; Sondel, 2016). Some

teachers are content to adopt social justice practices, as long as this does not compromise their career, middle class lifestyle, creature comforts, or job security (Rodriguez & Magill, 2016). Fear of freedom and losing a middle-class identity or privilege prevents some teachers from seeking out the conditions for praxis as they attempt to act on and clarify the schooling dynamic (Rodriguez, 2008; Magill & Rodriguez 2015; Fromm, 2001). These teachers often crave limits to their relationships with students because it provides conceptual limits on what they are expected to do with students (Amin & Vithal, 2015). The limits are useful for teachers fearful that they may be expected to be part of a relationship that might otherwise engage a praxis of freedom (Greene, 1988). Several important theories explore aspects of the neoliberal disconnections that pervade the educational experience. Furthermore, scholars have explored how to incorporate the passions, lives, locations, funds of knowledge, social positions and agency of students and teachers (eg. Magill & Rodriguez, 2015b; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). These approaches demonstrate, in part, some of the ways teachers do work to minimize social antagonisms, and encourage solidarity, creativity, inquiry, and capacity (Jones & Vagle, 2013). As these begin to occur, teachers become socially aware and committed researchers (Apple, 2012) and intellectuals (Giroux, 2001) who work to expand their understandings of the world.

Ultimately, clarity, experience, and transformation as praxis become an essential part of the continual struggle toward becoming and engaging in social transformation. As teachers interrogate critical epistemologies or ontologies, they might understand their fellow person as comrades in the struggle for liberation. Ontological struggle, understanding what we are not, what we cannot see or what we cannot do and transforming them foments more authentic relationships with others. This struggle is needed as one apprehends epistemology, for Hegel (1977), negation of what is and negation of negation as we experience life as free subjects. The struggle for intellectual solidarity, then, is ideological and epistemological, personal, spiritual, philosophical, material, and perpetual. This becoming is the realization that critical work requires teachers commit class suicide to apprehend the other in class struggle (Cabral, 1970; Lenin, 2012). Ontological clarity then, in supportive and intellectually focused communities of teachers, students, and community members is the conversation needed for a transformative education.

Abstraction and Knowledge

Schooling creates the conditions where problematic epistemological foundations go unchallenged. Experiences or artifacts related to the oppressed, the revolution, and to human transformation are not seen as objects of analysis. Transformation of one's social condition is unlikely to occur when the only experience one has with an issue is understood through the lenses provided by textbooks, twitter feed, mainstream media, or social myths. Consider the unifying concepts of Freedom, Democracy, or America, within the schooling or media used as means of enslavement when curated with an epistemology of domination. These ideas are consumed and manipulated in schooling and reinforced as ideological class structures (Eagleton, 1991). In this context, an epistemology of domination appears born of a natural socio-historical evolution (Kosik, 1976). One only needs consider framing within current political processes to observe how they function as a means of division.

As with the epistemology of concepts, the schooling spectacle becomes a replacement for experiencing the real (Žižek, 2008; Baudrillard, 1994; Debord, 2012; Leonardo, 2018). The teacher lives in this system believing success given neoliberal standards offers students social capital or mobility as they navigate the system. However, this justification recreates and legitimizes

exploitation in the first case and alienation as its consequence. As the teacher helps students advance within the social hierarchy, students are taught to leverage their privilege or manipulate the working class. This extreme form of symbolic interaction teaches students how to exist, while it teaches others to leverage their privilege or whiteness (Baudrillard, 1994; Debord, 2012; Lacan, 2006; Leonardo, 2018). These students empower themselves socially but remain ideologically tied to neoliberal whiteness.

These ideologies promote false consciousness, which informs what pundits call domestic terrorism. White, neoliberal, nationalism, within a decaying system focused disposability, wealth, and privilege is the natural evolution of a society emerging from an epistemology of hate. Whiteness, privilege, and a supportive community, under the current regime, has us convinced that terrorists target America. White rage then targets immigrants, people of color, and other social groups as a symbolic and cathartic form of public lynching. Much of society condemns the acts but the spores of whiteness allow people to feed ideology while denouncing its evil. As Marx (1975) observed, the development of these forms of false consciousness are parcel of how we are trained to understated others in the world:

> Every industrial and commercial center…now possesses a working class divided into two hostile camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life.
>
> In relation to the Irish worker he regards himself as a member of the ruling nation and consequently he becomes a tool of the English aristocrats and capitalists against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination over himself.
>
> Antagonism is artificially kept alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic
>
> papers, in short, by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes…. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power. And the latter is quite aware of this. (pp. 223-224)

While it may lead to mass slaughter, as was the case in El Paso, TX, actualizing whiteness or privilege will inevitably lead to blindness and violence. Blindness then obscures the connections oppressed groups can make transculturally as they interrogate social conditions. Violence then occurs in the everyday as knowledge frames education and experience. Western knowledge of political economy, subjectivity, racism, sexism, sexuality, and religion are often understood as objective truth or the socially accepted origin of *humanus.* Intellectual solidarity then becomes transformation of the savage political epistemologies that lead to isolation and fear (Mignolo 2009 & 2011). Finally, whiteness describes false consciousness; this is the conceptual foundation by which we might develop epistemic insurgency to decolonize the foundations of social knowledge.

Humanization as Pedagogical Posture

Beyond ontological and pedagogical clarity, what are lost in schooling experiences are perceptions of humanity, ideas and experiences that might otherwise unite communities. If teacher *is* knower, the student (or other) *is* recipient of knowledge and teaching is a prescribed curriculum, learning then is the acceptance of domination or the means to dominate (Freire, 2000). Ontology is shaped by pedagogy and as a consequence of epistemological norms, which naturally become the medium through which students understand their relationship to the world as value in society

(Rodriguez & Magill, 2016). Schooling is the medium and the *massage* (McLuhan, 2001) as a teacher's disposition informs their pedagogy which supports an "oppressor consciousness" where privilege and power are authoritarian teaching conditions (Freire, 2000; Rodriguez, 2008). Understanding consciousness then and the ways it frames experience allows teachers to consider how subjective and communal relations unfold in the maintenance or response to oppressive conditions. In this sense, personal liberation emerges pedagogically as a teacher adopts the afore mentioned critical ontological teaching posture where experience is the intersection of critical ontology, and epistemology (Rodriguez, 2008; Magill, 2019; Freire, 1998 & 1976).

Consider the following example: what is a teacher's response to arguing for transgender bathroom legislation or policy, that we might consider a hegemonic state decree, that is when teachers identify as hetero-normative but do not know that they do? Might they believe that students are simply a transgender person? And, that society is not an actor in their living experience? We might further consider how a teacher's response to this legislation is reflected in the degree to which their ontology is understood and reflected as reproduction of humanization or pedagogy. This is to say someone who is not transgender might adopt a critical pedagogical posture- not an identity. Nor does it imply that a purportedly white teacher understands the oppression a person of color might feel, but rather that the teacher understands humanity and spirit in such a way that compels them to take on oppression in teaching and learning as mutual humanization with their students. Teachers might further include students, colleagues, community members/leaders, administrators, and activists in dialogue as we consider ways to transform society. New forms of social organization or acts of what is considered civil disobedience beyond the classroom might follow. The intellectual and communal responsibility of teachers, then, is to contextualize communal classroom experiences, articulate material freedom, and act toward their transformation (Dunayevskya, 1958 & 1982).

Method and Analytical Framework

At the onset of writing we considered a framework for analysis that assumed an informed public. Critical theory and pedagogy (Freire, 2000), intellectualism (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985; Mills, 2000), and solidarity provided a springboard, a means to approach teaching: a conception of critical teaching implicating materialist social relations of production that affect all areas of public life (Marx, 2010). We understand solidarity to be the antithesis of the divisive white, neoliberal nationalist project. Therefore, we consider solidarity an essential part of class struggle claiming unification is itself to be a form of class struggle. In this way solidarity exists both inside and apart from institutional processes. Critical pedagogy supports ideas of mutual recognition and education for personal and social transformation (Freire, 2000; Hegel, 1977). This sets the stage for meaningful interactions with students, rather than the consumption of the human spirit (Rodriguez, 2008). In mutuality and recognition, we are concerned with the explicit and implicit forms of power that manifest in the relationships between teachers and students in classrooms and everyday public life (Kreisburg, 1992; Macedo, 2003; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007).

Critical pedagogy then provides a means to examine the above-mentioned decrees and accept or negate the unequal hegemonic relationships; we can live out or transform oppressive social relationships or conditions. To this end, in this critical case study we compared the ways participant teachers understood materialist social engagement and worked to transform ideas limiting human potential of themselves and their students (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2007; Stake, 2005). Our goal was to determine how, where, and why teachers worked beyond what was given within educational contexts. Our belief is understanding the ways power existed in participant

classrooms will help us better understand the ways consciousness, social interactions and personal interpretations inform the potential for human agency.

To analyze the data, we collected from multiple sources over a four-year period. Data included observations of practice, semi-structured interviews, classroom artifacts, and informal conversations (Creswell, 2002). Our hope was to capture teacher interactions with students, other teachers, activists, stakeholders, and communities in and beyond the classroom. We conducted six formal classroom observations of participant teaching recording field notes, noting dialogue in and beyond lessons. We collected artifacts to help more completely establish teacher purpose and approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). We reflected on informal, social and communal dialogical interactions with teachers, considering their unedited responses in order to understand the ways they considered power beyond what was evident in interviews and observations. These exchanges provided, among other things, "linkages among language and discourse" and other interpretations of interactional power (Attinasi, 1997, pp. 280-281). These data allowed for increased contextualized analysis of each participant (Merriam, 1998).

Finally, we analyzed data through a constant comparative approach, noting similarities and differences across teachers and concepts outlined in a literature review related to a critical conceptual framework, in order to ensure that participant voices emerged in our writing. Subsequent patterns were organized as the themes we discuss in our findings (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013). Data were coded based on observable relationships between antagonisms and responses, abstraction and knowledge, pedagogical posture, and action. Initial codes included "consciousness/recognition," "identity," "negating alienating relational power," "dialogical instruction," "traditional pedagogy," "work beyond the classroom," and "transformational teaching." These were then narrowed based on their relationship to the conceptual framework. For example, ideas like "dialogical instruction" and "beyond the classroom" became more thematic ideas like, "identity," "intellectualism," and "solidarity." These ideas then were coded into broader categories that become themes. These categorizations included "Dialogism and Social Antagonisms" and "Intellectual Solidarity." The constant comparative approach ultimately allowed contrasts between data types and discernment of trends emerging across contexts (Creswell, 2002; Stake, 2005). We understand that power is inherent within our own political agendas and situates our interactions and research which play a role in the way we understood the contexts, examined data and interactions within this study (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002).

This paper then, became an investigation of solidarity as it occurs among teachers and with students, the following statement and questions guided this research: 1) schooling limits what people experience and as a consequence know about social and material engagement (Illich, 1971); 2) we therefore asked, does schooling control how teachers and students approach relationships and action as they are positioned in a given reality; and 3) what are conditions that help teachers and students transform these conditions? The results of our analyses indicate teachers and students cannot and do not organize or act as a consequence of the epistemological, ontological, and structural realities in which they exist [i.e. schooling, instead, intellectual solidarity, an acquired disposition, clarifies commodification, alienation, and regulation]. These conditions foster, class-consciousness, needed for social transformation as communities seek material praxis. In the succeeding sections we offer an analysis of schooling as a barrier to transformation through actors' overt and covert acts of domination. We also provide examples of intellectual solidarity in which we argue that despite oppressive realities, teachers and students have power through their mutual

agency to transform the conditions they face in schooling and society. Finally, we provide examples of how participant teachers understand collective agency and we suggest contesting the epistemological and ontological assumptions upon which social life is based are necessary for developing intellectual solidarity the precursor for transformation of social democracies. The succeeding sections of this paper then is an argument for intellectual solidarity and an investigation of the lives of teachers as they accept their own humanity while recognizing potentialities of their students.

Intellectual Struggle: Participants and Procedures

The following examples are taken from our experiences working with Miriam and Andres, social studies teachers who identified as critical Chican@s. We first met Miriam and Andres via a teacher preparation program. Our initial discussions had them describing ways they work to transform knowledge and the material reality of their communities. Miriam and Andres were of particular interest to us since we were beginning to write on intellectual solidarity and both teachers demonstrated a desire to more completely understand and embody what we called a critical ontological posture. Furthermore, both Andres and Miriam shared a desire to transform their pedagogies, to affect schooling and social structures, while more fully connecting with students.

Kevin continued to work with both teachers as they progressed through their teacher education programs and into their experiences as teachers of record. Kevin acknowledges his close teaching/learning relationship with the participants and considers them friends and colleagues. Each participant attended the same university secondary teacher education program that focused on context specific knowledge within urban schooling experiences and emphasized more critical interpretations of the social studies disciplines. Their program was at a large urban university in the Southwest United States in a city that Milner (2012) would likely describe as Urban Emergent or Urban Intensive. The teacher education certification program was explicit in its attention to counter narratives and issues of racism, sexism, classism, lingualism, and other antagonisms. The design of the program was meant to deliberately promote humanizing pedagogies as pedagogical praxis (Bartolomé, 2008; Magill & Rodriguez, 2015). Kevin had initially observed their critical dispositions, ideological positions, and transformational social approaches to classroom teaching in this program.

Kevin and Arturo examined experiences of these teachers in and out of the classroom over a four-year period to see how the participants engaged with students, teachers, and administrators. The four-year timeframe evolved naturally a consequence of mutual respect. We worked to support them and to observe their interactions with students, communities, and parents while interrogating and engaging what it means to teach. We collected field notes and artifacts from formal and personal exchanges (at least three in class periods and invited/shared experiences outside class). Each teacher agreed to be interviewed twice a semester over the course of our study. What is presented below is only a small portion of the data collected and is only partially representative of ways they understood and acted in intellectual solidarity with their students.

Participant Experiences

Miriam, who identified as Chicana, described the relationships between her teaching, her culture and her students stating, “they don’t feel comfortable in ‘white’ spaces.” Reflecting how she had been situated in similar ways as a young person, she mentioned that working in solidarity was in part to “develop the types of relationship with them” in which they could “have important conversations” about social realities.

> I had a lot of white experiences where people would say 'you are kind of pale.' I hid who I was...didn't use my home language and kept my home and school life separate, because of the power it had. I invited people to my quinsenera and I had to introduce that side of myself to [my white friends]. Then [in] Mexico every summer, they said you are not from here and called me the "gringa" (white girl). I felt like I was not really Mexican and not really American…the more I learn about myself and about my history ...the more I can learn about my identity and the more I want to know about my place in the world. I want my students to have that experience too. I think they experience similar things.

Miriam realized how whiteness framed her experiences and that she went through a process of transforming her knowledge of the world and her ontology to better serve her community. While her lessons remained largely in the classroom, she promoted research, dialogue, and advocacy based on what her students described of their everyday experiences. Through her own familial inquiries she found that her "grandfather was Spanish and my grandmothers were indigenous" explaining they were "ostracized…and it made me feel like I needed to help students see their own histories and change things for our communities."

Miriam also suggested that one of her goals was to, "see women break the glass ceilings and discuss women's rights." She said, "I see the power of gender affecting students. My girls are shy and quiet. The majority of my Latinas are like me. I…want to say [to them] you have a voice and it will be all right." She explained that "social borders" such as gender bias, limit possibility, and responded to this type of social positioning by developing lessons that focus on things that help authentic aspects of a student's identity, consciousness, and agency unfold.

Students would commonly research civics topics and discuss progressives and reformers that changed society, while also discussing how they might also change their own community. Her experiences allowed her to develop what she considered to be socially just lessons, that address the ways people are situated by reframing the epistemological foundations of knowledge and agency. These lessons first focused on inquiry and dialogue related to advocacy and historical relationships. Miriam shared how one such lesson unfolded. Students first learned about muckraking and then were asked to "critique an aspect of schooling" that they felt limited who they were…we built a set of guidelines about what a 'movement' means, what characteristics it entails, and different approaches towards making change." Students "conducted mini-muckraking research" where they walked around the school and examined issues in need of community redress. Acting as muckrakers, they began "interviewing students, faculty, and administration about their chosen issue… some students took pictures [related to] the issue, gathered more research and background about the current issue as well as its origin, function, or purpose." They then "created videos where they asked community members to take action." Some of these projects were presented School Board meetings, though no real change occurred because of these interactions. Miriam's work with students is largely classroom based, but her students began to work with others in their school community in ways foundational to praxis.

Andres understood whiteness similar to Miriam. However, he was more determined to deconstruct the ways it affected the formalized curriculum with his students. He mentioned, "the official state curriculum is alive and well…I dislodge this by asking students to step outside of themselves and consider alternative perspectives through … critical historical thinking." Students commented to him that they did not feel comfortable "in white places" he then utilized curriculum to address the pervasive and oppressive nature of whiteness. With his largely Latin@ class, Andres

discussed the "exotic way the Aztecs are portrayed in textbooks" arguing this historical narrative "Orientalizes… Latinos as internal-external others…this discourse makes its way into the ways we understand my culture" (Said, 1979). Students began to have discussions about social change, which unfolded in part from their conversations about how the Aztecs are often inappropriately situated as barbarians in textbooks. He states:

> We are told they [the Aztecs] practice sacrifice on X thousands of people, that they were very aggressive, and that they were defeated by the Spaniards because of their technological inferiority. Instead, I choose particular documents to humanize the Aztecs.

The class discussed how these narratives were designed to dehumanize the Aztecs to justify Indigenous person removal, historically, and situate non-"white" life in the current moment. A few weeks later, they read newspapers from two different countries that told the same story, while using different words like "terrorist" and "freedom fighter" to describe the actors. He also provided other more contemporary examples like the Central Park Five to discuss how these ideas and narrativizations occur when people are situated socially. As the class read newspapers from several different countries, they discussed the framing of these incidents in depth as part of a critical discussion.

Student 1: I guess one person's freedom fighter is another person's terrorist [referring to two articles with different political leanings, from different countries]

Student 2: ...in our article, there was definitely racism in the way the news talked about the Central Park Five. Like Trump saying they were guilty now even though they were not guilty.

Andres: That is how we need to look at society...at history. We need to read articles and several primary sources to figure out the facts. What really happened as best we can. Read tonight and we will continue the lesson.

Later in the semester students began to look more pointedly "at the [Standing Rock] protests," particularly reflecting on the way the media were framing the issue. Here students began to better understand the relationships between solidarity and agency. The following was a discussion among Andres' students.

Student 1: I support the protesters. It is crazy that they can just do that to people and more people are not doing anything.

Andres: I feel that way as well. What can we do to help them?

Student 2: We could do like a bake sale and send stuff to them.

Student 3: What do they need?

Andres: Well, they are probably cold and hungry.... If you set up collection boxes, I'll put an announcement out and get a box on [college campus]…I will take the box to Standing Rock.

Despite the somewhat abstracted efforts to support the protesters at Standing Rock, a more materialist response emerged. As Andres promised, he joined protests over his Thanksgiving break

and reported back to class. Before leaving for the protest, he shared this idea with several colleagues and two decided to join him. They became involved in the protest for four days and shared the experience with the students when they returned,

> It was a big campsite... cold every night. There was a big pile of canned food, clothes, hand warmers and jackets, socks, and other things that everyone had access to. People would drop off what they didn't need so other protesters could have them... we were happy to have these things. We did drum circles and ate together and shared together as a community of love and respect.....police and the company hired people that surrounded the camp. One day we went up to meet them at a hill near the camp... they were on sovereign nation land and we tried to peacefully get them to go away... we were shot with rubber bullets and water cannons…Some people got maced. I'm sure there were spies that were in the camp with us...the propaganda was saying we were the violent ones.

This lesson led to new conversations and opportunities for the class to engage and act on. Furthermore, his approach to ontology and epistemology allowed students to reframe how these events were portrayed in schooling, media, and popular discourse. Andres argued for adopting critical pedagogy, which he understood in practice to mean, "asking students to…imagine a world that provides more social political and economic justice for all." He described wanting, but sometimes struggling to "act" in ways he understood the world, to "become an activist…[and] help students act."

Andres's willingness to work in solidarity with his students also led to new coalitions of support between himself and other teachers. One such example saw Andres and Miriam (and other teachers) attending to the issue of asbestos in a school building in which they were working. According to Andres, the material was "getting into a breathing apparatus several students used and it was making the students sick." He continued, "One student showed symptoms of pneumonia." Miriam and Andres brought this injustice to the attention of another teacher, who said, "that is terrible... I'm sure they know about it. Right?" When nothing was done, they contacted their University class and developed a coalition of professors, students, teachers and parents. They wrote and sent an anonymous letter to the school asking them to take action. The school responded politically suggesting they were looking into the matter. Upset with this benign response, the coalition thus contacted the local news. This caused people who were unsure what side to take, like the other teacher, to become part of the conversation and join in the fight. The increased attention compelled the school district to provide needed funds to address the problem.

Recently, we observed these and other teachers dialoguing, organizing, and resisting in response to the threats being made against the immigrant parents of their students. When President Trump called for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids, teachers in one community brought together civil rights lawyers and advocates to inform parents of their rights. Some of these teachers volunteered their homes as spaces to organize and places where these families could go in case of emergency or if families needed to provide an address to the federal government.

Analyses: Dialogism and Social Antagonisms

Our inquiry allowed us to examine the ways participant teachers understood the material and ideological implications of working within contexts governed by whiteness and concomitantly social class. Teachers applied a critical philosophical approach to teaching and working with

others, each instance allowing for transformational work to occur. Consider that both Miriam and Andres were aware of the ways whiteness was affecting them, the curriculum, their students, and communities beyond their institutions. These insights became foundational to how they would approach the world, in addition to their philosophical and pedagogical approaches to the classroom. While these elements likely vary from teacher to teacher, the participants came to see social relations situating their practice and consequently their identity. Deep introspection allowed them to foreground the lived experience and identity of their students, work within and apart from schooling systems/class structures and become a more authentic part of the communities they hoped to transform.

Understanding oneself in ways that facilitate transformation is courageous and difficult. As Yeats has said, "it takes more courage to examine the dark corners of your own soul than it does for a soldier to fight on a battlefield" (Taylor, 2008). Intellectual solidarity then begins with knowing oneself and one's students and shedding those parts of ourselves that have been cultivated in fear, privilege, and limited ontological recognition. It then supports teachers in developing the capacities needed to begin working within and beyond institutions toward praxiological transformation. This is, understanding oneself as a critical social agent bridges understanding and educational experience. For participants, the technical curriculum became a vehicle to consider philosophical questions related to teaching, it revealed the ways identity and culture were marginalized. From these experiences, the communities of learning could move toward transformational action.

The geographical spaces we inhabit affect the class-consciousness we possess and the transformational work we are able to engage. As Gramsci (1971) notes, the organic intellectual understands the nature of a particular social class but is able to work beyond the system's planned constraints for this class. Teachers might exist beyond class structures and the situation of personal identities to engage in social transformation thereby bridging the philosophical with the educational. Participants then understood the ways they were positioned as teachers but worked beyond what was given or expected.

It is also clear that teachers require supportive mentors, colleagues, students, and community members to help them transform their own identity and consequently the material conditions they encounter in the school. Teachers might be supported in understanding the interrelatedness between their philosophical, epistemological, and ideological approaches and how these factors unfold in schooling and society. The manifestation of these more critical approaches are teachers becoming more full participants in the lives of their students.

How then are self-examination and practice, working within and beyond institutions, and in and beyond class distinctions accomplished? As Freire (2000) argues dialogue and experience becomes foundational to understanding oneself and the praxis of freedom (Magill & Rodriguez, 2019; Macedo, 2003; Subedi, 2008). The transformational possibility of a group emerges from sharing and working through relational oppression to disrupt and negate unequal dialectical power relations and uniting communities toward material transformation (Magill, 2019; Rodriguez, 2008; Freire, 2000). By sharing understandings of the world, seeing and sharing ways power relationships order life we actualize the mechanism by which we internalize lived experiences of others and begin to develop intellectual solidarity (Freire, 1973; Matusov & Marjanovic-Shane, 2017; Shor, 2012). As we see it, critical transformational dialogue fosters spaces which can decolonize epistemological and ontological perspectives (Magill & Blevins, 2020; Magill & Rodriguez, 2019; Mohanty, 2013; Subedi, 2018); including epistemologies that contradict the

status quo (Mayo, 2012; Welton, et al., 2015); and students as participants and actors in their own lives (Lennon, 2017; Tofade, Elsner & Haines, 2013).

Unfortunately, insidious education and social policies, their mediated subsystems, and oppressive ideology, obscures the possibility of inter-group relationships that might otherwise unite, like the response of the above-mentioned other teacher (Marx et al., 1867/1990; Vinson & Ross, 2010). For Miriam the classroom was simulated life and therefore an imagined reality in which knowledge and human nature are manipulated (Baudrillard, 1994). A fetishized relationship existed in this and in other contexts between the teacher and education. Education is understood as the thing itself rather than as a tool of social participation, human becoming, or material transformation. Because teachers and students are actively discouraged from authentic participation, they rely on the epistemologies that exist in the norms of classroom relationships. Systemically organized or *quasi* social abstraction ensures teachers are unable to apprehend authentic social life.

Many of these self-regulating elements color what are possible for administrators, teachers, students, and community members. At issue is the ability to see power organizing and enforcing everyday public life. Consider Žižek's discussion of the parallax view, which describes the perceptual gap that exists between what is in motion and the nature of the object itself (Žižek, 2009). A teacher's willingness or unwillingness to address social issues as a critical pedagogical actor is akin to the relationship between perception and essence. The parallax fracture can be observed when well-meaning teachers teach social justice topics believing they are transformational while enforcing structures they endeavor to change. They are, perhaps, critical behind closed doors of their classroom but enforce the oppressive policies they critique. Here we see the need for teachers to engage in a parallax shift, resolving the fractures between perception, consciousness, and action. Experience then becomes understanding and attending to relationships between learned epistemology, ideology and ontology, which are the essence of material reality.

Consider too that civics educators ask students to participate in the symbolic aspects of democratic life that constitute social systems, like state organized control, rather than more authentic experiences like considering their role in the voting process. As we further see it, teachers working in intellectual solidarity reconcile fractures via their engagement with students as critical actors in the world. Understanding teaching as solidarity is about being clear and deliberate about the authentic nature of mutual struggle in efforts "to unify all natural and social groups in a family that is infinitely diverse in make-up but characterized by moral(ity)" (Solovyov, 1989, pp. 617–618). Simply put, teacher solidarity is a social force that promotes communal relationships (Efremenko & Evseeva, 2012). As Bakunin (1947) argues, these efforts are ontological in nature since,

> no person can recognize or realize his or her own humanity except by recognizing it in others and so cooperating for its realization by each and all. No man can emancipate himself save by emancipating with him all the men about him. (p. 14)

Dialogue and Liberation

An intellectual approach to human nature and knowledge helps us reveal those realities needed for a more just society, which may include evolutionary imperatives (Bellamy-Foster, 2000; Kropotkin, 2016). How do the conditions for this type of shared purpose occur? The answer begins with collectivism and dialogical thinking toward material action. In the examples above the

teachers spoke with researchers, professors, teachers, community members, and students. The process began with teachers continuing to question social organization: how are my student and I positioned? What am I doing to bring about political change? What is my role in bringing about this change? How do the social relations of production inform subjectivity? What is the nature of and how are we using our shared agency? As Lukács (1971) suggests people can avoid their own commoditization as they become conscious of social reproduction and understand themselves as producers of society (Jay, 1996). All transformative education, or education itself is dialogical and therefore intellectual, solidarity then is its byproduct.

But teachers may or may not understand themselves as connected beyond their classrooms, as Vygotsky (2004) notes, "the human personality is formed under the influence of social relations…(and it) will inevitably lead to a change in consciousness, a change in man's whole behavior" (P. 181). Liberatory teaching, then, is about understanding the duality or multidimensional nature of epistemology, ontology, and pedagogy; it fills the gap that exists between abstraction and material realities. Teachers that help interrogate real as pedagogical praxis help connect to others to develop intellectual solidarity. Since a teacher's ideological position determines what he or she believes is possible in teaching and learning, uncovering or transforming epistemologies, ideologies, and ontologies is a reconciliation of neoliberal capitalist societies, it limits our ability to attend to the inequitable social relations maintaining oppression (Alexander, 2012; Apple, 2006; Hill, 2007; Magill & Salinas, 2019; Ross, Mathison & Vinson, 2014, Ross & Gibson, 2007). The teaching examples provided above demonstrate some of ways teachers dialogue and lean toward intellectual solidarity with students. Though perhaps not intellectual solidarity, the approaches Miriam, Andres, and other teachers take, offer perspectives on how teachers might approach dialogical praxis with and for their students.

Intellectual Solidarity

Given the reality of education as a mediated subsystem of society; critical educators might begin by asking, what is critical teaching for? The history of critical theory might speak to some of the ways teachers understand intellectual solidarity. Several studies have demonstrated the importance of a critical disposition—toward the world in general—but particularly in discussing the value of relational pedagogy for social change (Freire, 2000; hooks, 2014; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007). The implications for intellectual solidarity as classroom practice are that it must actively and personally challenge the social antagonisms working to relegate the masses to passive recipients of the social relations of production (Freire, 1998; McLaren, 2005; Shor, 1987; Souto-Manning, 2010). Intellectual solidarity, then, is requisite for supportive relationships that lead to transformational schooling experiences. The essence of intellectual solidarity is unification among individuals.

The project of intellectual solidarity is a praxis of freedom (ideological and material), which is *a* central tenet for critical educators. As Maxine Greene (1988) contends, examining freedom and acting, is part of the existential experience required for embracing the human spirit. Working with others is foundational for achieving mutual freedom and helping secure the wellbeing of all people. Teachers then interrogate dialectical tensions as part of this praxis (see Freire, 2000; Hegel, 1977). Intellectual solidarity becomes the cultural work of praxis (Bauman, 1999; Freire, 2000 & 2005). Critical teachers demonstrate a willingness to dissent and reject laws that regulate public life despite the repercussions (Chomsky, 2011; Rodriguez & Magill, 2017b) asserting the right to struggle for democratic access (Giroux, 2001; Mills, 2000). Solidarity implies a willingness to stand with and experience oppression alongside students (Freire, 1972). The values

that underpin organizing to provide for the basic human needs of all people is the vocation of a critical educator.

Intellectual solidarity then is critical interpretation to address present and historical social issues with students (Knight & Watson, 2014). We can do more. Intellectual solidarity is about embodying the spirit of another to engage in perpetual negation of oppressive social conditions (Freire, 2000). The result, teachers understand their students as human beings, capable of agency, where life is the curriculum (Rodriguez, 2009). That is, it is living one's convictions, acting for justice and equity, and doing what is necessary to achieve material freedom (Rodriguez, 2008). Intellectual solidarity is the principal who encourages her teachers to live in the local community with their students. It is a teacher organizing with colleagues and administrators to bring about policy changes that are in the best interests of all in the community. It is the coalition developed by community partners and police to stop the unjust harassment of students walking home too close to someone on probation. It is the teacher who lives, teaches, and acts for justice. It is the work needed to ensure that human dignity and not greed is the value upon which our society rests. Liberation is won as we are united in our critical praxiological approaches to the living curriculum (Rodriguez & Smith, 2011). Intellectual solidarity attends to fear by supporting a perpetual and shared epistemological and ontological becoming.

Conclusion

Regardless of skill we teachers and students never fully accomplish anything - particularly social transformation – on our own. Furthermore, rarely do we transform ideology, consciousness, or society without shared experience. Intellectual solidarity involves a deep understanding and respect for lived experience, engaging with students meaningfully, and working to support students as transformative intellectuals. When we negotiate rigid binaries of true and false, they align themselves with power, majoritarian norms, and in the case of teaching, pedagogies that cater to those selfsame social norms. What then is the meaning of transformation? For some teachers, transformation is the desire to support future change marked by what they or their students could potentially do based on critically constructed experiences of their classroom.

As we have seen, intellectual solidarity is the condition by which understandings of human nature unfold with a community of transformational subjects. Given the above intellectual solidarity is a perspective by which teachers exist across philosophical questions as agentic and informed actors in community with and for students (Camosy, 2014; Hollenbach, 2002). Teachers who enact intellectual solidarity come to identify and transform relationships in the capitalist superstructure and the resultant ideologies in maintenance of hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). Teachers working in intellectual solidarity sacrifice by dissenting and rejecting laws that regulate public life especially when it lessens one's own privilege or power (Chomsky, 2015). Intellectual solidarity is a clear assertion of the community's rights to struggle for democratic access toward common good from a position of mutual humanity (Efremenko & Evseeva, 2012; Giroux, 2001; Mills, 2000). At its essence, intellectual solidarity then involves cultivating consciousness to relate with students (and others). These relationships help facilitate possibilities for the transformation of what Marx calls the social relations of production. The class antagonisms ensuring struggle in and outside the classroom. In the case of our participants, the technical curriculum led to critiques, which, in some cases, became intellectual and philosophical discussions. These discussions allowed new forms of engagement in work that transform aspects of the white, neoliberal, nationalist project, the mis-education of our students, and the apathy that sometimes comes with

traditional education. To achieve intellectual solidarity then is understanding and working within and beyond institutional structures and class distinctions.

The above might be understood through our approach to ethical considerations, not as a design to *save* people, but as a support community of stakeholders who promote the community capacity to engage in one's own democratic projects (Badiou, 2012). Furthermore, intellectual solidarity is not the donation we give to charity or our psychological contentment to the values we believe makes a good person. Instead, an ethics of intellectual solidarity is about understanding that our social contributions provide one another the tools of knowledge; these are nature and solidarity as means to meet social challenges. An ethical approach to intellectual solidarity is a commitment to your comrades where a quick fix may not exist. Lastly, it is the acknowledgement that humans are better able to maintain the practices they know to be in the best interest of students when they have a strong, supportive, and ideologically aligned community (e.g. Martell, 2013). Building this community involves internalizing the struggles of others, dialoguing to understand realities, and cultivating the conditions for transformation. Given the above examples, intellectual solidarity unfolds for teachers as they understand their identity; their culture within the teaching context and social relations of production.

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