



# Postcolonial Directions in Education

Volume 6 Issue 2, 2017

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**Apurba Chattopadhyaya**

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## **Postcolonial Directions in Education**

### **Focus and Scope**

Postcolonial Directions in Education is a peer reviewed open access journal produced twice a year. It is a scholarly journal intended to foster further understanding, advancement and reshaping of the field of postcolonial education. We welcome articles that contribute to advancing the field. As indicated in the Editorial for the inaugural issue, the purview of this journal is broad enough to encompass a variety of disciplinary approaches, including but not confined to the following: sociological, anthropological, historical and social psychological approaches. The areas embraced include anti-racist education, decolonizing education, critical multiculturalism, critical racism theory, direct colonial experiences in education and their legacies for present day educational structures and practice, educational experiences reflecting the culture and 'imagination' of empire, the impact of neoliberalism/globalisation/structural adjustment programmes on education, colonial curricula and subaltern alternatives, education and liberation movements, challenging hegemonic languages, the promotion of local literacies and linguistic diversity, neo-colonial education and identity construction, colonialism and the construction of patriarchy, canon and canonicity, Indigenous knowledges, supranational bodies and their educational frameworks, north-south and east-west relations in education, the politics of representation, unlearning colonial stereotypes, internal colonialism and education, cultural hybridity and learning in postcolonial contexts, education and the politics of dislocation, biographies / autobiographies reflecting the above themes, deconstruction of colonial narratives of civilization within educational contexts. Once again, the field cannot be exhausted.

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## **NEOLIBERALISM, GLOBALIZATION AGENDAS AND BANKING EDUCATIONAL POLICY: IS POPULAR EDUCATION AN ANSWER?<sup>1</sup>**

**Carlos Alberto Torres**

*University of California at Los Angeles*

**ABSTRACT** Discussing the tensions between the global and the local, this paper offers a description of cosmopolitan and local competing globalization agendas. Three agendas, as ideal types, are highlighted: the Hyper-Globalizers, Skeptics and Transformationists. After explaining the competing agendas for globalization and some of their potential impacts in education, three main claims are made in this paper. The first one is that the dominant technocratic rationale in policy making, which is part and parcel of a neoliberal regime, constitutes a form of banking education so brilliantly criticized by Paulo Freire. This technocratic rationality is based on instrumental rationality discussed by Max Weber, Herbert Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas. A second claim is that there is a great potential for challenging the intellectual narratives and praxis of neoliberal education in the new approach of a global citizenship education portrayed in the First Global Educational Initiative announced by the U.N. General Secretary and currently being implemented by UNESCO. The final claim is a question: could popular education be an answer to the growing inequality, poverty, and lack of solidarity in the contemporary world? The basic premise of this paper is that neoliberalism, emerging as the dominant face of globalization may be conducive to what has been termed banking education. The distinguished tradition

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1 Paper prepared for a meeting of the Max Weber Foundation in New Delhi, India, February 13-16, 2015. This paper benefits from my work that appeared in the following publications: Carlos Alberto Torres, *Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Critical Global Citizenship Education*. New York, Routledge/Taylor and Francis, 2017; Massimiliano Tarozzi and Carlos Alberto Torres, *Global Citizenship Education and the Crisis of Multiculturalism: Comparative Perspectives*. London & Oxford, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016; Torres, Carlos Alberto. *First Freire. Early Writings in Social Justice Education*. New York, Teachers College Press, 2014.

of *popular education* in Latin America is considered as a possible alternative.

**KEYWORDS** Neoliberalism, globalization, cosmopolitan and global agendas, technocratic rationality, global citizenship, popular education.

### **Neoliberalism**

Neoliberalism has utterly failed as a viable model of economic development, yet the politics of culture associated with neoliberalism is still in force, becoming the new common sense shaping the role of government and education. This 'common sense' has become an ideology playing a major role in constructing hegemony as moral and intellectual leadership in contemporary societies.

Neoliberal globalization, predicated on the dominance of the market over the state and on deregulatory models of governance, has deeply affected the university in the context of 'academic capitalism'. The resulting reforms, rationalized as advancing international competitiveness, have affected public universities in four primary areas: efficiency and accountability, accreditation and universalization, international competitiveness and privatization. There is also growing resistance to globalization as top-down-imposed reforms reflected in the public debates about schooling reform, curriculum and instruction, teacher training and school governance.

Torres has discussed the implications of neoliberal globalization in education and universities and K-12 education (Torres, 2011; 2013). The impact of neoliberal globalization on universities raises several important questions. Do shifts toward a market-oriented ideology within the wider society suggest similar and inevitable shifts within universities? Do such shifts bring about the inevitable commodification of professional activities, family life and the environment, or the life of the professoriate? If such responses are unavoidable, does this necessitate a move in the direction of a free-market ideology on a global scale and hence the obtaining of comparative data to assess who is who in higher education? To what extent can the emergence of a single, global monoculture in higher education be expected once we have established a firm ranking of quality



universities on a world scale? While not all these questions can be addressed in a conceptual paper like this one, I would like to submit a set of tentative answers which may guide empirical research on the subject.

How are we to cope with these challenges of globalization in the universities, and how we can produce models of global cooperation? What are the goals of a global university for the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Facing the challenges of globalization some universities aspire to become global research universities. They try to educate students but also develop new knowledge to take into account a changing world, a world full of hybridity, competing values, different histories and geographies, dynamics, social structures and population levels. Yet they operate in a world that is fully interlinked and interpenetrated, hence exposed to the world's epidemics, intensification of trade and circulation of people, shifting climates, consumer tastes, social imaginaries conveyed via mass media and the like. All of this is happening while global research universities are built around scientific models that are conducted in English and with metrics of evaluation in line with the Anglo-Saxon positivistic world—though standard scientific narratives, particularly in the social sciences and humanities, are contested and new narratives are emerging.

Thus, the traditional roles and functions of the universities are changing. In a recent document from UCLA it is highlighted there are five key dimensions that need to be incorporated in any analysis of the role and functions of global universities. These include global learning, global research, global reputation building, global engagement and global service. Occasionally, some global research universities attempt to become scientific and cultural hubs in specific regions of the world, fully supported by regional and national governments. These roles and responsibility contrast with the roles and responsibilities that are supposed to be carried out by the national oriented universities. (UCLA, 2014)

*Global learning* speaks to the way in which universities focus their theoretical and political orientation, trying to offer knowledge, skills and dexterities to specific individuals, many of them connected with elites or aspiring to be an elite, and joining the ranks of those constituting democratic cosmopolitanism.

Professors, researchers, and particularly graduate students in these universities see themselves as working with the depository of knowledge that has been created by humanity, and trying to enhance, via models of creativity and ingenuity, the new frontiers of capital accumulation. The movie *Social Network*, depicting the ‘invention’ of Facebook by Mark Zuckerberg while an undergraduate student at Harvard, or the folk stories associated with the way in which Steven Jobs and associates, and Bill Gates and associates, developed their digital culture products that changed the way we live, interact, communicate and produce commodities. They indicate that, though they ultimately were university drop outs, they were organically connected or at least linked to universities that facilitate these innovations. Most of these universities are ranked today as global research universities.

The pursuit of *global research* is in keeping with the nature of global research universities. Moreover, because research ranks so highly in the context of global universities, becoming a research university is the trademark of the global university. This reverberates in the quality of its researchers and professors and their contributions to knowledge, technology and productivity worldwide. Global research is a centerpiece of *global reputation building*, well represented in rankings such as Times Higher Education Global University Rankings,<sup>2</sup> though many are those who will argue that university rankings distort the function and structure of universities (Yeagle, Working Paper n/d). The majority of rankings focuses on teaching (and the number of international students attracted to the campus), international outlook, industry income resulting from innovations in the universities, the type of research and collaborations through publications that are made by scholars situated in diverse national borders, the citations that their research attracts, research funding and an overall score.

Finally, global universities aim to provide *global services* and in doing so seek avenues for *global engagement*. The

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<sup>2</sup> Reputation building is intimately related to rankings and they have all but proliferated in the last three decades. Consider for instance *The Times Higher Education World University Rankings*, the *Washington Monthly College Guide*, *QS World University Rankings*, and the most read in the United States, *US News & World Report*, among others.

type of service they aim to contribute goes beyond the national boundaries of the nations in which they are located, occasionally aided by contributions from major donors who are not even nationals but alumni and want to produce symbolic gestures with their funds so they are remembered and recognized in their *alma mater*. Many of the great global universities in the world, particularly the private ones, have sizable endowments. The type of global engagement that global universities pursue relates to institutions of the world system, multinational corporations or national and/or international activities of their own nation-states. The recent rush to create university hubs in the Asia-Pacific area, and the struggle to acquire international prestige in the region is another indicator of this global engagement.

There are a number of questions that one may pose looking at global cooperation and the role of universities. Should global cooperation be solely, exclusively or mostly based on the platform that global universities offer? After all they are, apparently, the quintessential cosmopolitan institutions and global cooperation is by definition the quintessential global cosmopolitan form of national diplomacy.

### **Cosmopolitan and Local Agendas: Hyper-Globalizers, Skeptics and Transformationists.<sup>3</sup>**

There are at least three different positions or agendas to the limits and possibilities of globalizations and their impact on our lives (see Held et al 1999). There are the *hyper-globalizers* who believe globalization is a singular process encompassing all regions of the world and all aspects of human and planetary life and is the solution to poverty, inequality and all other social ills. Therefore, Thomas Friedman (2005) implied that the quicker we move to make this world a flatter world, the better. This is certainly the dominant view portrayed in the mass media, and is well represented in a number of international organizations such as the World Bank, the Import-Export Bank, the IMF, the World Trade Organization, some sectors of the United Nations, many Western and non-Western governments and is reflected in many OECD reports.

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<sup>3</sup> This section is taken from my article for the European Journal of Education entitled Global Citizenship and the Quest for Human Empowerment, published in September 2015.

At the opposing end are the *skeptics*, who could in their most extreme form, become anti-globalizers. Somewhere in the middle of this pendulum, always struggling to make sense of the limits and possibilities of the new realities, are different varieties of what I could call the *transformationists* who are also fragmented in different interest groups and, by implication, introduce different emphases.

There are several economic reasons that prompted the *hyper-globalizers*, and particularly those connected with corporations, neoliberal governments and some academics, to argue that globalization is a powerful tool to reduce inequalities within and across nations. Looking at the intersections between globalization and egalitarian distribution, Pranab Bardhan, Samuel Bowles and the late Michael Wallerstein argued the following:

The freer flow of information, goods, and capital from the richer to poorer nations should raise productivity and increase the demands for labor in the labor-abundant and technologically lagging nations, inducing tendencies toward convergence of wage rates for equivalent labor throughout the world... Globalization might also induce more competitive products, markets, reducing profit markups -- the discrepancy between prices and marginal costs-- and thus raising real wages. Finally, competition among nation-states and the ability of citizens to compare institutional performance across nations might also provide greater popular accountability for state and para-statal institutions often dominated by elites” (Bardhan, Bowles and Wallerstein, 2006, p. 3).

The symmetrical counterpoint to an economists’ position is built on a critique of globalization as enhancing rather than reducing the power of elites worldwide (within and across nations) and also affecting—some will even argue obliterating—culture and ways of seeing and living for individuals, families and communities who find themselves deeply affected by the changes in the world system. Of great importance is the way these changes are affecting democracies and nation states, particularly the welfare state models. Without entering into the debates of whether or not the multiple processes of globalization

have withered away the nation state, its autonomy and ability to actually control its own territories and policies, it is clear that the skeptics point to the crises of 2008 as another indicator not only of the maliciousness of global processes but also the failure of neoliberalism as an economic model.<sup>4</sup> They argue that the economic debacle resulted from voracious, greedy and irresponsible action of financial capitalism that brought the capitalist world system to the brink of its own dissolution.

One of the key elements for the *skeptics* in condemning globalization is that it has unleashed a wave of inequality worldwide without precedent. In his monumental study, Thomas Piketty argues that “Today, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, inequalities of wealth that had supposedly disappeared are close to regaining or even surpassing their historical highs. The new global economy has brought with it both immense hopes (such as the eradication of poverty) and equally immense inequalities (some individuals are now as wealthy as entire countries)” (Piketty, 2014, p.471). A well-known OECD inequality report shows how countries across the developed world are getting less equal, giving the skeptics much fodder for their criticism.<sup>5</sup>

For skeptics, globalization has been deleterious not only because of the increase in inequality, but also because technological change has generally favored skilled workers. Similarly, as Michael Wallerstein has suggested, there is a decline of unions, which are known to defend income and wages and therefore serve as a barrier to inequality in addition to defending the fundamentals of democracy (Austen-Smith, et al, 2008). Because of the decline of unions, there is a falling minimum wage (one of the key reasons for inequality). There is also a rise in immigration (legal and undocumented), producing a “brain drain” from poor nations towards richer nations. Furthermore,

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4 See my work on neoliberalism in Torres 2009a, and 2009b, and specifically on adult education, Torres 2013c.

5 <http://www.oecd.org/els/soc/dividedwestandwhyinequalitykeepsrising.htm>. A recent newspaper article claims that the 85 richest persons in the world have the same amount of wealth that the poorest half in the world. [http://www.clarin.com/zona/mundo-vez-desigual-riqueza-multimillonarios-dolares\\_0\\_1253874893.html](http://www.clarin.com/zona/mundo-vez-desigual-riqueza-multimillonarios-dolares_0_1253874893.html)

some point to the rise of single-parent families, which are by definition one of the reasons for family impoverishment, which is seen as being one of globalization's adverse impacts. Finally the skeptics will point their finger to the voraciousness of elites who, owing to the presence of neoliberalism, have taken control of governments and international organizations, thus spawning even greater levels of inequality.

Documentation of income over the last thirty years show that top income shares have increased substantially in English speaking countries and in India and China, but not in continental European countries or Japan (Atkinson, Piketty and Sáenz, 2011, p. 3). Newspaper reports, concerning growing inequality in the UK, for instance, show that the top 10% have incomes that are 12 times greater than the bottom 10%, and this is up from eight times greater in 1985. There is no question that the skeptics have powerful arguments to be levelled against the impact of globalization in our lives and still consider the nation-state a lynchpin in articulating responses to globalization, but may not have great expectations for a successful performance of a democratic state.

Moreover, the *skeptics* would argue that democracy has become controlled by a plutocracy. Even scholars who had been traditionally close to neo-conservative positions are seeing that the declining (some would argue vanishing) middle class, considered the backbone of democratic politics, doesn't bode well for the future of democracy per se (Fukuyama, 2012).<sup>6</sup>

The *transformationists* would "argue that sovereignty, state power, and territoriality...stand today in a more complex relationship than in the epoch during which the modern nation-state was being forged" (Lauder, Brown, Dillabough and Halsey, 2006, p. 45).

There are many varieties of transformationists in different venues, pursuing political agendas and aggregated interests. On the left there are the *social democrats* who want to preserve some form of the welfare state and its intervention in the economy, despite the fiscal crises of the state that, they realize, need to be

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<sup>6</sup> [http://jornalggn.com.br/sites/default/files/documentos/fukuyama\\_the\\_future\\_of\\_history.pdf](http://jornalggn.com.br/sites/default/files/documentos/fukuyama_the_future_of_history.pdf)

solved. There are traditional social democratic varieties, mostly in Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and populist social democratic varieties in Latin America and the United States. Here the key element is how the nation-state can control the behavior of the markets, and how it can move beyond the class-conflict model assuming that the state could tax the earnings of capital and transfer the revenue to workers.

This has been studied by Adam Przeworski (2003) in several of his works, and has been advocated by Berkeley University Professor Robert Reich who was Secretary of Labor in the Clinton Administration and is today one of the **éminence grise** of the USA Democratic Party.

On the right, there are the *market liberals* who argue that the state should work around basic principles of privatization and de-regulation. However, they do not go as far as the hyper-globalizers in demolishing the welfare state, undermining the nation-state, or thwarting state interventions in sensitive areas of state policies—mostly connected with capital accumulation and political legitimation. The presence of a *comprador state* helps their merchandizing. Many of these market liberals are truly provincials and occasionally their interest will be at odds with those of multinational corporations. Some could be considered in the theoretical framework of theories of dependency as a national bourgeoisie or comprador bourgeoisie. Against both positions, one finds a group that, for lack of a better term, can be called *authoritarian libertarian*, a segment that could be easily characterized as protectionist or ethno-nationalist. They have proliferated in Europe in the last two decades, but there are representatives of this variety in many continents. Their ultimate goal is to seal national borders, preventing immigrants from coming into their territory, controlling capital influx, and outlawing outsourcing of jobs overseas. In a very authoritarian manner, they want to exercise the full power of the state to control various issues within national borders, from crime to culture to capital accumulation. They are against free trade, and the radical forms of globalization proposed by the hyper-globalizers.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The Freedom Party of Austria (German: Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ), the Italian Lega Nord, VMRO from Bulgaria, the Flemish Vlaams Belang, the Czech Republic OK Strana, Geert Wilders' Party of Freedom, and Marine Le Pen Front National are all examples of this orientation

Finally, I argue that there is another variety that I will call *New Democrats*, who confront capitalism seeking models of equality and equity, with an emphasis on ways in which the capitalist system could be challenged around key elements of class, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual preference, or disability discrimination, to name just a few.

Depending on whether these New Democrats espouse a strong or weak Critical Feminism, Critical Race Theory, Political Race Theory, or any other critical theoretical and political orientations, including Neo-marxism and Socialism for the Twentieth Century, they are usually immersed in domestic, regional, provincial and national oriented politics, and find themselves confronting globalization processes at several levels. They are very prominent and linked to multiculturalist and post-colonial traditions in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Western Europe, and are present within a diversity of orientations in many other regions of the world, from Latin America to Sub-Saharan Africa to the Asian Pacific region. They may overlap with some social-democratic, populist or socialist (or post-socialist) traditions, but by and large they do not pay enough attention to the international developments regarding an emerging democratic cosmopolitanism.

Most varieties of New Democrats fall decisively within one of the ends of the spectrum or pendulum between *cosmopolitanism* and *provincialism*. They are deeply committed and unabashedly *provincial* in the defense of their learning and political communities, and their confrontation and engagement with the many processes of globalization are usually territorially, national, or regionally based. There is one important exception here. Solidarity matters to New Democrats, and international solidarity matters a great deal. While mostly provincial rather than cosmopolitan, New Democrats actively intervene in the national and international arena when they try to prevent wars, lending a hand to people who experienced distressing natural or man-made catastrophes, or struggling to find ways to help the planet by promoting sustainable development.

### **Technocratic Rationality**

In a comparative and cross-cultural research on adult education that I conducted in the eighties and early nineties, I analyzed the role and purposes of adult education policy



by discussing six rationales for policy making. These rationales, when transformed into policy, may take the form of constitutional prescriptions, investment in human capital, political socialization, compensatory legitimation, international pressures, and social movements. Drawing from critical theory and research in adult education in Canada and developing countries, I concluded that, despite the rhetoric underlying a particular policy narrative, the dominant logic among policy makers in adult education is instrumental rationality, and the dominant *weltanschauung* in adult education policy planning is technocratic thinking.

Discussing the notion of instrumental rationality as developed by Weber (2013)—that is, the rule of impersonal economic forces and bureaucratic administration—I have documented how the ideology of the welfare state has resulted in a depoliticization of policy makers' views regarding the social world. While the notion of power is clearly expressed in the narratives of adult education policy makers, they have no conceptual expressions of emancipatory action or heuristic analyses of social action.<sup>3</sup> Let us take policy makers' language as an example. The language of policy makers tends to be technically aseptic and noncontroversial, borrowing conceptual categories from systems theories, human capital theories, and functionalist or neofunctionalist paradigms. Key dimensions in policy formation, such as social class differences, gender, and ethnic or racial discrimination remain subdued in the narratives of policy makers. This is so because the sharper the conceptual categorization of a phenomenon, the more difficult it becomes to set policy that will accommodate multiple interests and incompatible goals within any organization.

With these concerns in mind, and using a political economy of adult education, I studied literacy training, adult basic education, and skill-upgrading programs in Alberta, Canada, in Mexico, and in Cuba, Nicaragua, Granada, and Tanzania. These societies were selected for comparison not only because they represent distinct political and economic experiences but also because all of them have developed innovative and quality programs in adult education. Through a comparison of state-sponsored programs, and an analysis of opinions, aspirations, and expectations of policy makers, teachers, and adult learners, Daniel Schugurensky and I identified three different models of

adult education policy: a “therapeutical model” in Canada, a “recruitment model” in Mexico, and a “forced modernization” model in Tanzania.

Our analytical and empirical research shows that in the Canadian therapeutical model the state is a benefactor, and the problem of poverty and illiteracy are seen either as the result of temporary economic dislocations that may be adjusted through market mechanisms or as the result of individual deficits in skills or attitudes that may be addressed through instructional means. The role of the experts is to determine the nature of the training given to the individuals, who should be integrated into the job market as soon as possible. Teachers are professionals and enjoy great autonomy in the programs. In the Mexican recruitment model the emphasis is on a constant and active attraction of large numbers of learners to adult education programs. The rationale seems to be the incorporation of a disenfranchised clientele into the dominant political model. Teachers are mainly volunteers and follow textbooks designed by central agencies. In this model, the main concern is not the quality of learning but the recruitment and massive control of large numbers of people who otherwise could remain outside the corporatist channels of political participation. Finally, in Tanzania’s forced modernization model the emphasis is placed on capital accumulation through the implementation of modern agricultural techniques and, therefore, on increasing Tanzania’s integration into the world market economy. Such a model is resisted both by women who produce for home consumption and by young males whose main interest in attending adult education programs is to get employment in urban areas and leave the rural enclaves.

The three models show common traits that are surprising considering the diversity of living conditions, state structures and political philosophies in each society. First, all three models are non-participative, where social and political issues and issues that may bring conflict into the operation of adult education services are ignored or perceived exclusively as problems that may be fixed through technical measures. Second, in all three societies, adult education is a clear instrument of the state contributing to capital accumulation and political legitimation practices, neglecting any emancipatory practices that may empower learners or communities. Third, in all three

models, literacy training is irrelevant and marginal, isolated from productive work and skill upgrading programs. Fourth, in the absence of participatory organizational structures and practices, a top-down decision-making system prevails. Despite the operation of three different models of adult education oriented by fairly different political and philosophical values, in all of them there are few opportunities for the learners or community to participate in policy making. Fifth, teachers generally have no training in adult education. In Canada, highly professional teachers trained to work with children and youth have a patronizing and paternalistic attitude regarding adult learners. In Mexico and Tanzania, paraprofessional and poorly trained teachers present high rates of job turnover and absenteeism, which in turn lead to high student dropout rates. Last, there is evidence that in Canada, Mexico, and Tanzania, adult education programs are organized in a two-track system: a more prestigious one that focuses on programs for upgrading skills, and a marginal one that emphasizes adult basic education and literacy training (see Torres, 1989, 1996, Torres & Schugurensky, 1996).

### **Banking Education and the Paulo Freire model**

Traditional models of education built on the power of teachers in the classrooms through a teacher centered pedagogy, and the overwhelming power of educational bureaucracies had been challenged and criticized by Paulo Freire and a host of educational reformers as banking education. Paulo Freire collaborated with UNESCO for a long time, including working from 1987 to 1995 as a jury member of UNESCO's International Literacy Prizes, receiving the 1996 UNESCO Prize for Peace Education.

The metaphor of banking education, based on the idea that students are empty vessels that need to be filled with knowledge is a strong metaphor that calls for changes at several levels. One of the key changes is to recognize that the students that come to our classrooms of all ages, bring with them knowledge and experience, and they can make serious contributions to teaching and learning. Freire posits this in the analogy of the teacher as a student (which is an obvious fact since we continue to learn until our last breath) and the student as a teacher (since they bring questions, analysis or live experiences that enrich, challenge, defy, and even improve upon the instructional design). Authoritarian educational models, as

argued by Freire and a number of pedagogues of liberation, undermine student autonomy and creativity, and reproduce rules and regulations that perpetuate domination, exploitation, and oppression. The alternative that has been suggested is problem-posing education, that confronts the students with questions, and very often their own questions in learning and instruction, rather than “off the shelf” preconceived answers based on instrumental rationality.

For banking education, the teacher is the subject of the pedagogical adventure and the student is the object. Freire’s contribution to understanding education as the act of freedom is an invitation to see the interminable dialectics in the struggle to free ourselves and to free others from constraints to freedom. In and of itself, the struggle for liberation is another form of intervention that can be considered part of the ethics of intervention. Certainly, education as the act of freedom implies a different perspective on local, socially constructed, and generationally transmitted knowledge. It also implies a perspective that challenges normal science and non-participatory planning, constructing a theoretical and methodological perspective that is always suspicious of any scientific relationship as concealing relationships of domination. At the same time, while freedom is still to be conquered, freedom can be conquered because unequal, exploitative relationships are built by human beings and can be changed by human beings (Torres, 2009b, p. 41-42).

The process of conscientisation appears as one of the most important processes of demystification of the ideological practices of the dominant classes. On the one hand, characterizing these practices (e.g., authoritarianism within the school, the separation of manual work and intellectual work, and so forth) as banking education outlines a significant watershed in pedagogical terms. On the other hand, the practice of popular education situates itself as the point of rupture and generator of contradictions and imbalances in the educational system.—The practice of popular education has a crucial importance in undermining the hierarchical ideological-scholastic mechanisms of social reproduction as instruments of the dominant sectors’

The main thesis of my *First Freire* book (Torres, 2014) is that Freire's original experience in Angicos anticipated a grand design for the social transformation of educational systems. As such, it brought together two key concepts that formed the basis of his educational system: *popular culture* as a counter-hegemonic project and *popular education*, more particularly, what was later called *citizen schools* or *public popular education* (O'Cadiz and Torres, 1994; O'Cadiz, Torres and Wong, 1998; Torres 1998a, 1998b).

Any traditional definition of a system will present it as “a set of detailed methods, procedures and routines created to carry out a specific activity, perform a duty, or solve a problem” (Business Dictionary.com, 2013).<sup>8</sup> I use the term Paulo Freire System to show that Freire's original attempts were more than simply a pedagogical challenge to the banking education system that was so pervasive in Brazil and Latin America at the time. In challenging the hegemony of banking education, along with its narrative, theoretical foundations, epistemology, and methodology, Freire and his team sought to create a new system that could replace the old one. They viewed banking education as not only as obsolete in terms of the modernization of systems but also as oppressive in gnoseological, epistemological, and political terms.

One could also use the term *Paulo Freire Model*, implying the design of organizational structures to enact a transformation of a given system. All models provide a narrative or coherence for a new architecture—in this case, a new architecture of knowledge—as well as capturing mechanisms to implement this new social and organizational venture.

What I argue in the book is that the original experiences of Freire in the city of Angicos in Rio Grande do Norte, or the previous experiments on literacy training that also took place in the Northeast were attempts to construct this new educational system, or what I have called, for the lack of another term: the *Paulo Freire System*. An important early experience was the one carried out in João Pessoa, Paraíba, in January 1962 when Freire and his team from the University of Recife advised the Campanha de Educação Popular (CEPLAR - Campaign for

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/system.html>

Popular Education) of Paraíba created by college students and professionals trained to work in adult literacy programs.

The experience and spirit of the 1960s implied a most dramatic radicalization of the tensions between those who actually create culture in their everyday lives, the common people, and intellectuals who analyze these processes making proposals for cultural action.

Another concept highlighted in the last years of his life was the *escola cidadã* (citizen schools). The concept of *escola cidadã* is very strongly linked to the movement of popular and communitarian education, which in the 1980s resulted in the movement for a public popular school, as a model to be implemented in various regions of Brazil. The concept of popular education is the most important contribution of Latin American educationists to universal pedagogical thought. The *escola cidadã* is a new type of school that does not simply impart knowledge, but creates and administers knowledge. It is an eco-political and pedagogical project; that is to say, it is an eminently ethical project, an innovative school, constructing meaning while it is intimately connected to the world. In an interview Freire gave to the TV Educadora do Rio de Janeiro, on 19 March 1997 (Paulo Freire archives, São Paulo),<sup>9</sup> he defined *escola cidadã* as a social and political-pedagogical space which becomes a center of rights and responsibilities, a space where citizenship building takes place. This is a public and popular school system, one in which people from all walks of life, but particularly those who are discriminated against and marginalized, find ways to express themselves. They learn about themselves, the world and the cultural domains. Freire's conscientization is a way to work towards new models of social transformation of both social relationships and productive forces in a given society. *Escola cidadã* is a centre of rights and responsibilities, where citizenship is created. It cannot be an *escola cidadã* in itself and for itself: It is an *escola cidadã* insofar as it facilitates the building of citizenship among those who use its space. An *escola cidadã* is a school that is consistent with freedom, and with its formative and liberating discourse. It is a school that is struggling for itself, and for all those who educate and are educated, so that they can be themselves. And because

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<sup>9</sup> Paulo Freire archives (São Paulo).

people cannot be themselves alone alone, an *escola cidadã* is a school of the community, of camaraderie (*companheirismo*). It is a school where knowledge and freedom are produced in common, all together. It is a school that can never permit a kind of cavalier licentiousness and never allow authoritarianism. It is a school that, to the contrary, lives the tense experience of democracy.

The curriculum of the *escola cidadã* constitutes a space for socio-cultural relationships. It is not only a space for knowledge but also a space for debates about human and social relationships; the space of power, of work, and of caring; the space of respectfully living together (*convivência*). This is the link with ethics, with the notion of sustainability<sup>10</sup> (Gadotti, 2008a), with the question of violence. The curriculum and the eco-political and pedagogical project of the school are inseparable realities. The curriculum reveals the political-pedagogical trajectory of the school, its successes and failures. If the school will be ready to facilitate the achievement of the possible dreams and desires of all their members, teachers, employees, students and community, then the curriculum has to be intimately related to the life project of each one of them. That is why the curriculum needs to be constantly evaluated and re-evaluated. The project of an *escola cidadã* is considered, in terms of process and context, an institutional and individual life project.

Education for citizenship is at the same time an education for a sustainable society. *Escola cidadã* and eco-pedagogy underscore the principle that all of us, since we are children, have the fundamental right to dream, to make possible our projects, to invent. As Marx and Freire have argued, we all have the right to decide our own destiny, including the children defended by the distinguished Jewish-Polish educator Janusz Korczak who refused to be set free and stayed with his orphan students when the institution was sent from the Ghetto to Treblinka extermination camp, accepting to die in the Nazi gas chambers jointly with his students.

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10 In this study, Gadotti (2008a) quotes Leonardo Boff: "The category sustainability is central for the ecological cosmos vision and possibly constitutes one of the bases of a new civilization paradigm that searches to harmonize human beings, development and Earth, understood as Gaia'." See [http://www.acervo.paulofreire.org:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/7891/3080/FPF\\_PTPF\\_12\\_077.pdf](http://www.acervo.paulofreire.org:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/7891/3080/FPF_PTPF_12_077.pdf)

Yet, the issue is not to reduce the school and pedagogy today to *tabula rasa* and build from its ashes the ideal *escola cidadã* and eco-pedagogy. We are not talking about an alternative school and pedagogy in the sense that these would have to be constructed separately from today's existing schools and pedagogy.

Rather, this new pedagogical and political model has its starting point in the school we have and the pedagogy we actually practice, in order to dialectically build other possibilities without destroying what already exists. The future is not the annihilation of the past, but its improvement.

### **Global Citizenship Education<sup>11</sup>**

*Cosmopolitan democracy* entails “a model of political organization in which citizens, wherever they are located in the world, have a voice, input, and political representation in international affairs, in parallel with and independent of their own governments” (Archibugi and Held, 1995, 13). From a perspective of cosmopolitan democracy, Richard Falk (2002) delineated five categories of global citizens: (1) the “global reformer” and supporter of supranational government, (2) the elite class of globe trotters engaged in global business activities, (3) individuals committed to global economic and ecological sustainability, (4) supporters of regional governance structures as in the example of the European Union, and (5) transnational activists involved in grassroots organizations fighting for human rights and democracy. Yet one may classify some of the representatives of democratic cosmopolitanism as a global variety of New Democrats.

Global citizenship is a form of intervention in searching for a theory and an agency of implementation because the world is becoming increasingly interdependent and diverse, and its borders more porous (Benhabib, 2005). There is “a deterritorializing of citizenship practices and identities, and of discourses about loyalty and allegiance” (Sassen, 2002, p. 6).

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11 This section draws from my paper entitled *Global Citizenship Education and Global Peace: An Agenda for the Twenty First Century*. Paper presented to the *Second UNESCO Forum on Global Citizenship Education: Building Peaceful and Sustainable Societies – Preparing for post-2015*, UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France, from 28 to 30 January 2015.



A claim in this paper is that any definition and theory of global citizenship as a model of intervention to promote global peace and sustainable development should address what has become the trademark of globalization: cultural diversity. Therefore, global citizenship should rely on a definition of multicultural democratic global citizenship. In addition, to be effective and acceptable worldwide, conceptualizing and implementing global citizenship and education, it is imperative that global citizenship adds value to national citizenship. Yet the expansion of a universalistic claim of world solidarity rests on the concept of cosmopolitan citizenship nested in a model of cosmopolitan democracies.

Global citizenship cannot be seen as an alternative to or a substitution to national citizenship. On the contrary, it is a substantive policy tool to reinforce the robustness of representative and participatory democracies worldwide. Global Citizenship education ultimately seeks to guarantee the social democratic pact on the rights of persons, and not only the rights of property (Bowles and Gintis, 1986; Torres, 1998). Yet there is more. We have learned, after a decade of educational for sustainable development, that we also need to guarantee the rights of the planet. Global citizenship will offer new contributions to expand education for sustainable development worldwide.<sup>12</sup>

The gist of my argument is that global citizenship adds value to national citizenship. Moreover, because the cause of national citizenship could be considered unfinished business or still work in progress, the value added of global citizenship may be another layer of support for a process of transforming citizenship making and citizenship education into models based on principles of liberty and equality for all, including what Seyla Benhabib called the ‘rights of hospitality’ in the Kantian sense (2011, viii).

I see global citizenship as being marked by an understanding of global ties and connections, and a commitment to the

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12 Ministers and heads of delegation attending the UN Climate Change Conference 2014 - COP20 - (1-12 December 2014, Lima, Peru) have adopted The Lima Ministerial Declaration on Education and Awareness-raising. This Declaration calls on governments to include climate change into school curricula and climate awareness into national development and climate change plans.

collective good. Robert Rhoads and Carlos Alberto Torres advanced the idea of “democratic multicultural citizenship” in which education helps students to develop the dispositions and abilities to work across social and cultural differences in a quest for solidarity. They argued that such skills are essential to citizenship in a multicultural, global environment (Rhoads and Torres, 2006).

In an award-winning book, Robert A. Rhoads and Katalin Szelényi (2011) have developed this thesis into another level of complexity and understanding with a focus on the responsibilities of universities. I concur with Rhoads and Szelényi’s position that we should “advance a view of citizenship in which the geographic reference point for one’s sense of rights and responsibilities is broadened, and in some sense, complicated by a more expansive spatial vision and understanding of the world” (Rhoads & Szelényi, 2011, p. 160).

They go on to argue that “...the engagement of individuals as citizens reflects understandings of rights and responsibilities across three basic dimensions of social life: the political (including civic aspects), the economic (including occupational aspects), and the social (including cultural aspects)” (Rhoads and Szelényi, 2011, p. 17). In this vein, Soysal advanced a “postnational” definition of citizenship in which one’s rights and responsibilities are rooted not in the nation-state, but in one’s personhood: “What were previously defined as national rights become entitlements legitimized on the basis of personhood” (Soysal 1994, p. 7).

Other scholars speak of a denationalized definition of citizenship considering new conditions affecting citizenship in novel terms. With the onset of multiple processes of globalization (Torres, 2009a), the position of nation-states in the world and their institutional features have changed. Secondly, these transformations in the nation-state have a parallel effect in the emergence of new actors, including transnational social movements unwilling to respect the traditional levels of political representation in nation-states (Sassen, 2002, p. 4).

### **Are Critical Theory and popular education an answer?**

A few years ago, I was interviewing Freire and I asked him what he would like his legacy to be. He answered that when he died, he would like people to say of him: “Paulo Freire lived, loved, and wanted to know.” \*Torres, 2014, pp. )

In his poetic style, Paulo Freire provided a simple and yet powerful message about the role of critical intellectuals. For Freire, critical intellectuals should live their own ideas passionately, building spaces of deliberation and tolerance in their quest for knowledge and empowerment. They love what they do, and they love those with whom they interact. Love, then, becomes another central element of the political project of intellectuals who are agonizing over producing knowledge for empowerment and liberation. Following Gramsci, critical intellectuals know that common sense always has a nucleus of “good sense.” From this “good sense” that can be distilled from common sense, critical intellectuals can develop a criticism of conventional wisdom, knowledge and practices. In educational policy and planning, this “good sense” could be a starting point for a critique of instrumental rationalization (Torres, 1994c).

The lessons of Critical Social Theory for education are clear, and need to be remembered: Politics and education continually intersect – there is an inherent politicity of education. Power plays a major role in configuring schooling and social reproduction. Social change cannot be simply articulated as social engineering from the calm environment of the research laboratory or the corridors of a ministry building. Social change needs to be forged in negotiations and compromise, but also through struggles in the political system; it needs to be struggled for in the streets with the social movements; it needs to be in the schools struggling against bureaucratic and authoritarian behavior, defying the growing corporatization of educational institutions, particularly in higher education, and striving to implement substantive rationality through communicative dialogue; and it needs to be achieved even in the cozy and joyful environment of our gatherings with our family and friends. Dialogue and reason cannot take vacations if one pursues the dream of social justice education and peace. The original intent of Paulo Freire, his pedagogy of praxis of the 1960s, is still viable and useful in the 21 st century.

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**FROM GOOD VS. EVIL TO RATIONAL VS.  
EMOTIONAL: A DISCUSSION OF BINARIES OF  
KNOWLEDGE AND THOUGHT**

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**ABSTRACT** This paper is a response to a graduate seminar entitled “Postcolonialism, Globalization, and Education.” Using postcolonial and feminist theory, I discuss connections between demographic binaries (male/female, black/white) and epistemological binaries (rational/emotional, objective/subjective). I argue that ingrained binary thinking privileges a particular epistemology, namely one that is Western, patriarchal, and based on rationality and logic, over other ways of thinking and knowing, thus invalidating other knowledges, such as those based on feeling, emoting, and sensing. In rejecting these ways of knowing, we move away from caring, compassion and empathy—all necessary tools for dismantling ills such as racism and sexism. Accessing and validating these alternative ways of knowing might contribute to making our society, our schools, and ourselves more whole, more equal, and more human.

**KEYWORDS** good, evil, man, woman, binaries, feminism

*“Crazy people are not crazy if one accepts their reasoning” -  
Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Of Love and Other Demons*

**Introduction**

Binary ways of thinking pervade our culture, implicating psyches, minds, and language. From “good vs. evil” to fine lines that separate “black and white” issues to Men From Mars and women from Venus (Gray et al, 1992) these omnipresent dualities serve to label, classify, value, and create divisions between individuals in communities both local and global through the assignment of positive and negative values to opposing characteristics. One particularly pernicious effect of these divisions is the privileging of a particular epistemology,

namely one that is Western, patriarchal, and based on rationality and logic, over other ways of thinking and knowing. While there are numerous benefits to structured, rational thought, it also serves the interests of a specific group of people, while silencing others. Equating the logical with the legitimate also invalidates other knowledges, such as those based on feeling, emoting, and sensing. In effect, truth becomes associated with data and proof, and we lose the veracity found in art, narrative, and experience.

Due to our situation within this epistemology, it can be quite difficult to see or accept other ways of knowing. Western epistemology is built into American intuitions, education, and ways of life. To illuminate how some knowledges are privileged over others and the damaging effects of this preference, I will discuss personal experiences as well as analyze excerpts from *What I Learned in Medical School* (Takakuwa et al, 2004), an edited collection of essays written by medical students who identify with non-dominant groups. Their stories address the tensions that arise in a traditionally white, male, heteronormative space that educates and grooms future members of a professional and intellectual elite. The featured voices express discomfort and confusion with an educational system that requires them to think and know in ways that negate their sense of self or conflict with their values. Through their experiences, as they question and struggle with binary thinking and with their assignment to the negative pole, they reveal the damage that comes from suppressing knowledge and also the ways in which our society might heal and progress if we could come to honor all ways of thinking and knowing. I will draw from feminist and postcolonial theory in an attempt to elucidate their, and my, experiences in the context of this current moment in time and place.

### **The Binary**

While categories of race, spirituality, thought, gender, and physicality may seem disparate, I believe that they are in fact deeply connected—all part of a single Binary system that assigns positive or negative values to opposite poles, and accordingly to the individuals identified with each. The recognition of these dualities is not inherently harmful, and many non-Western knowledge systems include philosophies of opposite forces or energies. What is troubling about our conceptions of binaries is the value judgment that always accompanies them. Because one pole must be judged as superior to the other, inferiority



is a necessary result, and disparate ideas and symbols come to be understood as oppositional, rather than complementary. Feminist scholars Yanagisako and Delaney (1995) question visible differences between various incarnations of structural inequality: “If the meanings of ‘male’ and ‘female’ are not...just about natural differences, this prompts us to explore the ways in which these meanings articulate with other inequalities which are supposedly structured by other differences. We need to ask not how these other inequalities are themselves naturalized... but how their distinctiveness from gender is naturalized” (pg. 11). The following chart contains a list of frequently cited binaries. I have ordered them so that by reading vertically, the reader might make connections between each subsequent item in the set.

<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
Good	Evil
God	Devil
Virtuous	Sinful
Male	Female
Heavenly	Earthly
Light	Dark
White	Black
Pristine	Filthy
Of the Mind	Of the Body
Thinking	Feeling
Rational	Emotional
Theoretical	Experiential
Quantitative	Qualitative
Objective	Subjective
Fact	Fiction

With recognition that the above tropes are all pieces of a larger system of subjugation, the pairs that I will focus on here are those at the bottom of the chart that relate directly to knowledge production (thinking/feeling, rational/emotional, theoretical/experiential, quantitative/qualitative, objective/

subjective, fact/fiction). In Western culture, ways of knowing that are coded as positive, like rational, logical, objective, are legitimized; and negatively coded ways of knowing, like emotional, intuitive, experiential are disassociated from truth. The latter are not considered “real”, as they are difficult or impossible to support with evidence and facts (both “positive” types of information). Since emotional, bodily ways of knowing cannot be proven the way that quantitative, objective thought can, they are eliminated from the canon of what is true, real, and worthwhile. In the process, we learn not to listen to our bodies, that the mind trumps the heart, and that what we think is always more pertinent than what we feel. If some sentiment or idea is not logical or explainable, it is not valid; it ought to be ignored or explained away.

Other tropes associated with a privileged rationality are whiteness and masculinity, while femininity and blackness are linked to a disadvantaged subjectivity (Beard, 2015; Lutz, 1995). As a result, “positive” types of knowledge are associated with and privilege those whose physical characteristics are similarly coded. On the other hand, those who are coded as negative—women, non-whites, and non-heterosexuals—are not simply understood to think in invalid ways, they themselves become invalid entities and are positioned as such in cultural hierarchies. As Franz Fanon (2008) writes, “We are the chosen people; look at the color of our skin; others are black or yellow because of their sins.” Here Fanon demonstrates how validating or invalidating judgments of moral value are assigned to individuals based on racial (or gender, or sexual, or...) categorizations as they align with the positive and negative ends of The Binary.

### **Significance**

The adoption and normalization of superior and inferior binaries in the collective psyche and in everyday discourse has severely damaging effects on those with inferior assignments. It has become clear that traditional Western classificatory schemes are stiflingly oppressive, and through protest, organization, and engaged scholarship, their flaws are being exposed. Yanagisako and Delaney (1995) explain that “with the increasing circulation of peoples globally, identities are being fragmented, hyphenated and in conflict, and can no longer be put back together in the same old way. The verities on which identity—whether of gender, sexual orientation, nationality, ethnicity, or religion—

have traditionally been based no longer provide the answers... the explanatory schemes upon which identity was based have been shown not to rest on the bedrock of fact” (pg. 1). They call for a critical examination of the ways in which different types of knowledge and information are classified and subsequently associated with certain human attributes or characteristics that continue to privilege dominant groups and discourses while stifling many voices and delegitimizing certain groups of people in spaces such as courthouses, classrooms, and churches. In addition to severely hindering the ability of these silenced individuals to participate with agency within both personal relationships and their communities, eschewing other truly valuable ways of thinking and knowing harms, fragments, and prevents progress in our society and ourselves.

To move our communities toward wholeness and equality, I believe that we need to access and mobilize negatively coded ways of thinking and knowing. I do not think that policies, institutions, or even revolutions conceptualized through privileged epistemologies alone will lead to improvement or repair. To break through binaries and understand all individuals as valued and valid, we need compassion, empathy, and sensitivity—all irrational and non-objective. It is through careful examination of our epistemologies and their relationship to our identities and our conceptualizations of others that we can begin to shift them to become more inclusive, more humanizing, more fluid. This is work that must be done both in individual minds and hearts, and together as a collective. This paper is the beginning of one such examination.

### **Situating Myself**

As I complete this essay, I am concluding my second year of graduate studies at the University of Minnesota. My work thus far has included explorations into critical theory, critical race theory, postcolonialism, feminist and queer studies, and poststructuralism, among others. These theories and philosophies have helped me to begin to critically examine my own identity and position in global and local systems of inequality and oppression. I was fortunate to have grown up in a suburb of a large liberal and progressive city. As such, my community strove to be inclusive of various types of people and thought, although this was not always the case, and is still not today. My grandmother, a fiercely independent and deeply

thoughtful woman, practiced Transcendental Meditation for decades, as did many others in my family's social circle. As such I was raised in the purview of alternative worldviews and ways of thinking, although I did not actively practice myself. As a Middle Eastern, Jewish, American woman I have found myself at different times to be assigned to the "good" or "bad" ends of binaries, sometimes of the same one. For example, racially I appear white, although I am neither Anglo-Saxon nor Protestant. While I typically enjoy the privilege that comes with being categorized as "white", there are moments where my Arab name, religion, and olive skin and dark eyes code me as non-white. These moments are few and far between, but elicit a very specific, typically negative response in others and contemporarily cause me deep discomfort. To me, these experiences expose the ruse of binary categories, the fluidity amongst the poles, and the folly of assigning positive and negative values to opposite ends. In reality, I, and most others, do not fall at one end of the binary, but rather inhabit the space in between (Anzaldúa, 1987; Fine, 1994). These insights have fostered a deeper understanding not just of how these binary categories affect the ways we understand ourselves and others, but also of how they function within institutions. I will now explore some of the manifestations of binaries in education.

### **Theoretical Framework**

I will use the work of postcolonial and feminist scholars to discuss the ways in which dualities manifest in discourse and practice, and how they consequently damage individuals and communities through suppression of non-dominant ways of knowing and being. I find the conversation between these two schools of thought particularly useful for this application in that each aims to legitimize the voices of a particular disenfranchised group, yet each approaches the work differently. The original aim of feminism was to empower women while legitimizing and centering their voices and experiences. Early feminists argued both that women were not inferior to men in terms of intelligence and intellectualism, and also that female-coded ways of thinking were important indicators of reality and of knowledge. Critics, however, pointed out that this brand of feminism excluded non-white women, in that it represented women as a white, heterosexual, and homogenous group (Narayan, 1997). Over the past three decades, third wave feminist thought has attempted to move past these hindrances. Scholars such as Audre

Lorde and bell hooks have insisted that feminist theory must recognize the heterogeneity of the female experience by taking up issues of race, nation, and sexuality, among others. In her book *Woman, Native, Other* (1989), feminist and postcolonial scholar Trinh Minh-ha invokes Alice Walker, who speaks “of the necessity of learning to discern the true feminist—“for whom racism is inherently an impossibility”—from the white female opportunist—“for whom racism, inasmuch as it assures white privilege, is an accepted way of life” (pg. 83). She thus argues that one cannot be a feminist and a racist, as contemporary feminist theory recognizes that the suppression of any marginalized voice - be it feminine, black, homosexual, disabled—supports the same hierarchy that oppresses women. They argue that one cannot seek to trouble a binary without seeking to trouble The Binary.

Feminist scholars also trouble dominant forms of knowledge more directly. In her essay *The Gender of Theory* (1995), Catherine Lutz explains that feminist scholarship “directly challenges non-feminist scholarship rather than defining itself as simply another specialty working alongside colleagues in a neatly partitioned division of labor over the social body” (p.251) Feminists do not seek acceptance or higher placement within the current hierarchy of knowledge, but attempt to subvert it. These efforts, while not always successful express an acknowledgement of the value of alternative ways of knowing. Accordingly, many feminist scholars push back against objectivism and assume a strongly anti-positivist stance. Positivism stipulates that empirical inquiry is capable of proving the existence of certain natural phenomena and constitutes an authoritative body of knowledge. Positivists also assume that the social and natural worlds can both be accurately described in such a fashion. The feminist rejection of positivism represents an epistemological shift that questions the hegemony of the scientific method as the primary source of knowledge production.

Feminist theorists seek alternative approaches to inquiry not just in terms of the questions asked, but also in terms of the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underlie intellectual investigation. Yanagisako and Delaney (1995) have argued that even basic assumptions about what we assume is “of nature” is not universally so, but rather has been assigned

as such by longstanding cultural forces that support certain hierarchies. The claim that science is somehow distinct from culture naturalizes a hierarchy of knowledge that hinges on the nature/culture binary. In refusing the scientific method as the most apt way to approach academic inquiry, feminist theorists push for the dismantling of a hierarchy of knowledge that is embedded with biases, such as racism and sexism (Harding, 1987). As feminist scholars seek a reinvention and reworking of the body of academic knowledge, an anti-positivist stance allows for the acceptance of a wider range of individuals who are considered knowledge producers, recognition that the social world exists differently for individuals viewing it from different perspectives, and a much broader and complete understanding of what constitutes knowing and being.

Feminism also rejects traditional methods of scientific knowledge-seeking that aim to be value-neutral, dispassionate, and objective (Harding, 1987). This type of inquiry was, and in many disciplines continues to be, the gold standard of empirical research. Yet this approach to research naturalizes the objective researcher, who, again, has typically been white, heterosexual, and male. Feminist theory instead offers an alternative: a legitimization of knowledge-seeking that is passionate, ethically-conscious, and politically motivated. This is among the most important contributions of the theory—a call for scholars to care, ardently, about their work and its implications, and to refuse to apologize for the passion that drives their studies. This assertion in itself represents the acceptance and legitimization of alternative epistemologies and re-centers emotion, passion, compassion, and love. By pointing to the fallacy of “objectivity”, feminists make a strong case for the value of subjectivity and for the ability of a subjective lens to illuminate a reality that is contextual and historically and temporally situated.

Finally, feminist theory insists that research and knowledge production ought to seek to reimagine the world, not simply describe it. In this way, feminism is inherently oriented toward social justice. Feminist scholars critique traditional “scientific” research questions as benefiting those who ask them, typically white, heterosexual males in positions of status or authority. As an alternative, feminists call on scholars to focus on the questions non-dominant groups might want answered—inquiries that focus on how to change current conditions and

emancipate oppressed peoples, rather than on those that seek Truth (Harding, 1987). In a similar vein, Nancy Fraser (2000) calls upon feminist thinkers to push for redistribution of resources alongside a redistribution of recognition; she insists that tangible, material benefits should accompany a reimagining of how we value different voices and viewpoints. Thus research that is actionable, that comes with a motive, and questions that seek to change or transform are legitimated and encouraged by feminist theory.

Postcolonialism similarly attempts to dismantle hierarchies through an examination and denouncement of binaries of colonizer/colonized and self/other. Postcolonial scholars recognize the confusing effects that these binaries have on individuals' hearts and minds. They argue that the colonizers, who are Western and white, impose their own ontologies and subjectivities on the colonized, who are by definition considered "other" in this framework. The colonizers subsequently define their own identities by distancing themselves from those they colonize, yet cannot fully escape their binary opposite. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Homi Bhabha writes that the colonizer is "tethered to, *not* confronted by, this dark reflection, the shadow of colonized man, that splits his presence, distorts his outline, breaches his boundaries, repeats his action at a distance, disturbs and divides the very time of his being. (pg. 44). Bhabha thus argues that the binary poles of self and other are and will always remain tied to each other, that it is impossible to completely divorce either. This reluctant but inevitable connection results in an otherness of the self, disguised as a division of self and other. It is this internal split that causes fractures not just within individual souls, but within entire communities and societies.

Like feminism, postcolonialism seeks a revolutionary re-imagining of the ways knowledges are produced and valued. Bhabha (1994) explains that "a struggle against colonial oppression not only changes the direction of Western history, but challenges its historicist idea of time as a progressive, ordered whole. The analysis of colonial depersonalization not only alienates the Enlightenment idea of 'Man', but challenges the transparency of social reality, as a pre-given image of human knowledge" (pg. 41). A struggle against physical and economic oppression by colonizers thus necessitates a struggle

against their ways of knowing and against their framings of reality, which serve to enable their dominance. In this sense binaries related to epistemology and binaries that assign privilege based on demographic details are tightly intertwined. Yet, in the neocolonial world, the colonizers have found ways to stifle and contain the arguments against them through the use of dominant epistemes. In *The Intimate Enemy* (1983), Ashis Nandy explains that “it is possible today to be anti-colonial in a way which is specified and promoted by the modern world view as ‘Proper’, ‘sane’ and ‘rational’. Even when in opposition, that dissent remains predictable and controlled” (pg. 12). It thus follows that access to non-dominant, subjugated knowledges is required for real progress; attempts at change built on the sanctioned knowledge of the colonizer will only result in a reification or reproduction of the hierarchy that supports him.

Postcolonial scholars further address the explicit use of binaries to maintain a privileged position by dominant groups in the neocolonial world. For example, Edward Said (1978) explains the concept of the “Orient” as a homogeneous and romanticized cultural concept created by the West to describe the East. Because the West created the term, it retains the power to define it; consequently the representations of the Orient produced in the West are inherently framed by dominant epistemological assumptions that devalue the voiceless, othered Orient. Yet while the contributions of Said are both valuable and significant, they do not manage to fully transcend hierarchical binary thinking. While Said is critical of the relationship inherent in the East/West distinction and insists that it is socially constructed, he still relies on these essentialist categories to explain the world.

Yet some postcolonial scholars, especially those who also embrace feminist thought, critique the colonizer/colonized relationship through a refutation of the existence of those categories and a recognition of the fluidity of human identity—that one may be both colonizer and colonized in the same moment. For example, in her essay *Can the Subaltern Speak* (1988), Gayatri Spivak argues that when describing the subaltern, those members of society that exist socially and politically outside the realm of colonial power structures, scholars typically describe a homogeneous population of marginalized people, represented and spoken for by men. She insists that the postcolonial project had not gone far enough,



that while it sought to legitimate the voices of the subaltern, its exclusion of female voices and experiences represented an upholding of the Binary as evidenced by a privileging of male over female. Spivak further asserts that the dominant ontologies imposed by the colonizer are an example of “epistemic violence” in that they represent a “project to constitute the colonial subject as Other” (pg. 24) by destroying or delegitimizing their endemic knowledges; yet she also asserts that “the narrow epistemic violence of imperialism gives us an imperfect allegory of the general violence that is the possibility of an episteme” (pg. 28). She thus recognizes that the colonizer’s imposed ways of knowing do more than constitute self/other, they strengthen all binary categories and cause harm to multiple elements of an individual’s heart and mind.

Other feminist postcolonial scholars interrogate the damaging effects of binary assignments on identity. Nina Asher (2005) describes this work as presenting “useful analyses of... interstitiality and implicatedness...which emerge in cross-cultural particularly in the present-day, global contexts of school and society” (pg. 1080). The usefulness that Asher mentions is significant—these scholars use the questioning social justice narratives of feminism to mobilize the identity work of postcolonialism. For example, as Michelle Fine (1994) contends, we must ask “what is, and is not, ‘happening between,’ within the negotiated relations of whose story is being told, why, to whom, with what interpretation, and whose story is being shadowed, why, for whom, and with what consequence” (pg. 135). Alternatively, Gloria Anzaldúa (1997) argues in support of a “mestiza consciousness,” a multidimensional subjectivity that would honor marginalized voices and push back against hierarchical systems of oppression. This mestiza consciousness is achieved through a process of conscientization that necessitates a critical awareness of one’s positionality and subsequent action to support the repairing of the rifts that divide both the self and society. bell hooks (1989) describes these transgressions past socially constructed boundaries of race, gender, and class “defiant political gesture(s),” and insists that the goal of these activities must be to “stand in political resistance with the oppressed, ready to offer our ways of seeing and theorizing, of making culture, towards that revolutionary effort which seeks to create space where there is unlimited access to the pleasure and power of knowing, where transformation is

possible” (pg. 145). In doing this work, then, it is also important to interrogate what ways of seeing and theorizing underlie both the text of stories and our understandings of them, as we attempt to access alternative understandings that welcome previously silenced voices.

### **Examination**

#### *An Eastern Transgression*

*What I Learned in Medical School* (Takakuwa et al, eds. 2004) features an essay by Akilesh Palanisamy, who grew up in a traditional Indian family. After his first year of medical school, while reflecting on deeper questions about life and reality, he became interested in Ayurveda, the traditional medical system of India. He took an introductory Ayurveda course in Coimbatore, South India, and felt that he had “fallen in love” with the practice, which he committed to incorporating into his practice as a doctor in the U.S. He titled his essay *Seeing with New Eyes*.

*“Ayurvedic reasoning often proceeds from macrocosm to microcosm, relying on an intuitive understanding of the whole to define the parts. Conversely, “Western science usually begins with smaller units and progresses to larger structures, believing that understanding all the parts leads to understanding the whole. This difference reflects the holistic basis of Ayurvedic thinking and, in contrast, the more mechanistic and reductionist Western approach.” (Takakuwa et al, eds. 2004 pg.129)*

*“With them (other medical students in the US), I agree that scientific research is essential, but I also try to point out the limitations of science and explain that it is only one tool we can use to understand the world. I often find it difficult to bridge the gap between these different perspectives, however.” (Takakuwa et al, eds. 2004 pg. 132)*

*“Eventually, I want to integrate the clinical practices of Ayurveda and allopathic medicine. I believe that each represents a different but equally valid way of understanding health and that both have a great deal to contribute to the future of health care.” (Takakuwa et al, eds. 2004, pg. 134)*

Through his travels and access to alternative worldviews, Palanisamy is able to recognize the limits and shortcomings of allopathic (Western) medicine. He focuses on India, a former colony, and acknowledges the lesser place its ways of knowing occupy in the field of medicine. He calls the Indian system “holistic” and the Western system “reductionist,” which reflects the exclusionary nature of the Western canon of knowledge. It is reductionist because it includes and accepts only one way of understanding and one way of validating. This approach often ignores context—it operates under a guise of timelessness that fails to recognize specificity and situation. In addition, the Western knowledge system seeks to reinforce its authority by dismissing Ayurveda as “soft”, “hokey”, or “not real science.”

Palanisamy explains the difficulty in convincing others to look beyond these discourses. He describes his connection with Ayurveda as “falling in love,” an experience clearly related to the subjective, emotional, “negative” end of the Binary, yet also one he feels is essential to legitimate. Perhaps because of his personal connection to and experience with Indian philosophy, he does not see this way of understanding as less valid or valuable, but acknowledges the tension his perspective creates in spaces of Western learning. As Fanon (2008) writes of the colonized: “their metaphysics, or less pretentiously their customs and the agencies to which they refer, were abolished because they were in contradiction with a new civilization that imposed its own” (pg. 90). Thus the tension that Palanisamy expresses can be read as a clash between his love for his family’s ways of knowing and the Western ways of knowing that refuse to acknowledge the former as legitimate. bell hooks (1989) explains that even when marginalized individuals like Palanisamy have access to dominant spaces and language, they must travel to the center to collaborate with their colleagues—the colonizers will not meet them in the margins. Palanisamy’s existence in this centered space and his loyalty to Ayurveda are thus actions, forms of resistance against the institutional knowledge prescribed by the colonizers.

Yet the seeming contention between allopathic medicine and Ayurveda does not seem to bother Palanisamy. Instead, he touts the complementary, rather than oppositional, nature of Binary opposites and asserts that together they are stronger than either is alone. Here he echoes Anzaldúa, who writes that, “at the Confluence of two or more genetic streams, with

chromosomes constantly “crossing over,” this mixture of races, rather than resulting in an inferior being, provides hybrid progeny, a mutable, more malleable species with a rich gene pool. From this racial, ideological, cultural and biological cross-pollination, and “alien” consciousness is presently in the making—a new *mestizo*” (77). Palanisamy is succeeding in living in the in between spaces and recognizing and valuing within himself the “positive” and “negative” binary poles and the productivity their confluence provides.

### **Women’s (health) Care**

Drawing on my own experience in this section, I consider what I learned from a close friend of mine, Luke, who graduated from medical school, after five years of hard work and grueling hours. Throughout that time, we had many opportunities to discuss health, medicine, and what it means to provide care. Below is a brief conversation that I recall vividly.

*After his second year, Luke and his classmates started rotations, a time when they began to think seriously about which specialization they would chose. Around this time, Luke and I had a conversation that has stayed with me. When we were discussing his experience in gynecology and obstetrics, I expressed my strong preference for female physicians, especially in women’s health specialties. I was curious why some of his male friends were pursuing gynecology. Now that 47% of medical students are female (AAMC 2014), shouldn’t there be enough women to fill the positions that treat women exclusively? His response shocked me. “A majority of women, studies show, prefer male obstetricians and gynecologists to female practitioners.” What? How could this be? Of course there are plenty of talented and competent male OB/GYNs, but none of them have lived in female body, and consequently none have experienced, for example, the physicality of the female reproductive system. I spent a long time mulling over this statistic (which, admittedly, I have not been able to confirm), feeling confused and almost betrayed by it. Aren’t we, as women, able enough to care for our own bodies without requiring consult from men? Why do male doctors, because of their gender, have so much more perceived authority female doctors (and what of those individuals who do not identify neatly as either)?*

I think this interaction attests to the naturalization of hierarchies through discourse. Cultural discourses can become so ingrained in our psyches that they become impossible to move beyond without critical thought and radical re-envisioning. My above conversation is an example of how binaries related to gender and to knowledge are one and the same. Men are so strongly associated with rationality, truth, and intelligence, that their gender alone can serve to position their speech and actions favorably (Beard 2015). This is representative of how obdurate the male/female manifestation of the Binary can be. Trinh Minh-Ha (1989) describes the duality concisely: “man thinks, woman feels.” Her pithy sentence shows how rational thought is an inherent element of maleness, while femininity can’t exist without feeling and emotion. The women who prefer the care of male OB/GYNs have internalized these categories. Whether stated directly or not, these discourses shape women to be less intelligent, less capable, and less authoritative than their male counterparts.

These assumptions about women follow them into professional spaces, and are particularly powerful in official sites of knowledge production. For example, of the place of women in academia, Lutz (1995) writes, “to the extent that women are seen as less intelligent, their writing will be seen as less theoretical, no matter how they write” (pg. 259). Minh-Ha (1989) argues similarly that writing is a male-aligned activity, as good writing is clear, impersonal, and rational. Women often receive different feedback than men- they are supposed to write about themselves and their bodies, perhaps in the style of diary entries, because that is how “women writers” are expected to write. Thus the quality of women’s work or of their scholarship doesn’t matter because in light of hegemonic discourses the simple fact that they are female makes them lesser. Consequently, female patients prefer male physicians because the qualities that supposedly make a good physician, objectivity, intelligence, authority, are embodied not in “doctor” but in “man.”

So gender roles are naturalized in the social context of classificatory schemes. Yanagisako and Delaney (1995) write, “the social [is] embedded in the natural, but in a particular version of it” (pg. 5). So social conceptualizations of gender come to be considered part of nature, but the contexts under

which that specific nature was created, and by whom, for whom so often goes unexamined. In *Black Skin, White Masks* Franz Fanon succeeds in troubling male/female duality by invoking natural imagery: “Beware of rhythm, the Mother Earth bond, and that mystic, carnal marriage between man and the cosmos” (pg. 104). And, “Long live the bond between Man and the Earth!” (pg. 106). By articulating the connection between Man (positive) and the Earth, which he describes as the female Mother, he intentionally confuses binary poles in a call for their dismantling. He describes a “carnal” (of the body, feminine, negative) relationship between man (positive) and the cosmos (positive) to trouble belief in the existence of oppositional opposites. By scrambling the Binary, Fanon at once problematizes and mocks it.

### **Objectifying Learning, Intellectualizing Illness**

Kevin Takakuwa’s essay in *What I Learned in Medical School* (2004) describes how he left a career in business to attend medical school to learn how to “medically care” for members of his community. Once at school, he was quickly disillusioned by the lack of care, of any variety, in the medical school environment. In his essay, seven years into prerequisites and medical school courses, he recounts how he grappled with this contradiction.

*“Grant, a new classmate who was bicycling off campus with me during our first month of school, spoke with shameless optimism about the powers of medicine and described medical school as a “privilege” that granted us the ability to indulge in academic pursuits without being bothered by the same day-to-day worries as others—like getting a job or earning a real living. Images flashed at me: consoling a close college friend who had just seroconverted to HIV-positive; then, several years later, standing over his ravaged, lifeless body. I turned my attention back to Grant. He continued on about how our minds would be spared these annoyances so that we could focus on the important “intellectual” challenge ahead. I wondered what happy drug he was taking.” (Takakuwa et al, eds. 2004, pg. 93)*

*“Everyone but me seemed to know the rules of appropriate topics. When I tried to talk about the lack*

*of available tutors, the school's dismissal policies, the possibility of converting from an inherently competitive grading system to a pass/no pass system, or improving the curriculum and teaching, I was ignored, discounted, or attacked." (Takakuwa et al, eds. 2004, pg. 96)*

*"My convictions and morals began to haunt me. I refused to study old exams, a practice I believed was unethical and counterproductive to real understanding. I wanted to learn conceptually, to know the purpose behind the information. But there was no time for this, and there was no efficient way for me to grasp the material. I tried to adapt, altering my strategies iteration after iteration, but to no avail. Every quarter, I struggled to pass. Sometimes I hovered around the class mean, but other times I fell to the lower end of the grading curve. As the quarters ground on, I couldn't avoid hearing the gossip that separated people into categories: smart or dumb." (Takakuwa et al, eds. 2004, pg. 97)*

Takakuwa experiences this Western system of education and knowledge production as painful and confusing. The death of his friend left him with a conceptualization of health and health care as personal, visceral, bodily, and emotional. His fellow student's assertion that medicine was an "intellectual" challenge, which accurately reflected the medical school curriculum, seemed absurd to him. How could he attempt to cure and care from a perspective that was academic and impersonal? And how could he learn to be a good physician when he was not afforded the time to think deeply and to reflect? The role of physicality and emotion in the medical school curriculum is unique given that the content focuses on bodies and ways to cure them. As Takakuwa notices, there is an inherent contradiction in medical classrooms when Western knowledges insist on viewing the body objectively, but the experiences of the patient and the physician are unavoidably subjective, physical, and often, emotional. Darder argues that Western epistemologies ignore the body's ways of knowing and thinking to the severe detriment of students. She writes, "the production of knowledge (in the classroom) is neither engaged nor presented as a historical and collective process, occurring in the flesh and its sensual capacities for experiencing and responding to the world" (pg. 218). She thus explains a disconnection in

the way that knowledge is produced and taught. She argues that knowing is inherently physical, that it cannot be separated from the body, and that strictly objective perspectives obscure many forms of truth. Darder quotes Christopher Beckey: 'The flesh, the material aspect of the body, is seen as a hindrance which must be overcome, negated, and transcended' as if it were not involved in the act of knowing at all" (pg. 218). Takakuwa, aware of essential role of emotion and physicality in learning, is unable to excel in a curriculum that he sees as ineffective, rote, and pointless. There is no place for other types of knowledges, and when he problematizes this, he is "ignored, discounted, or attacked." This response is similar to the cultural invalidation of emotional and subjective knowledges.

As Takakuwa comes to understand medicine as competitive, unfriendly, and impersonal, he loses the impetus to identify as a physician. As Bhabha writes, "the question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a self-fulfilling prophecy—it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image" (pg. 45). Here Takakuwa struggles against that identity and refuses to assume that image. While this results in his inability to succeed within his school, he succeeds in coming to understand the purpose behind the information, in thinking critically, and in reflecting. bell hooks might describe Takakuwa as trying to maintain an oppositional worldview from the margins, a place from which he can look "both from the outside in and from the inside out" (pg. 149). hooks explains that these experiences can be immensely painful, but that in these spaces exist the tools for change, and that by even continuing to exist also in the center, Takakuwa was performing an act of resistance.

### **Oma's Favourites**

In this section, I share a memory from my childhood about my grandmother. When I was a little girl, my parents, my siblings, and I would go frequently to visit my grandmother, Oma, who lived about twenty minutes from us. Below is a memory that has stayed with me.

*Oma's house was a place to play—a garden filled with earthworms and ladybugs, myriad closets and corners for hide and seek, and drawers with "secret" stashes of candy. Part of our*



*play also involved our grandmother. “Oma, what is your favorite color” I would ask while coloring. “Oma, what is your favorite food” at dinner. Oma’s answer to these questions was always the same. “I don’t have favorites.” “Why not?” I would reply. “Because if I pick a favorite, then the rest have to be worse.” As a child these refusals to engage frustrated me. As an adult, I see that maybe Oma was on to something...*

My grandmother in her own way, was refusing to recognize the superiority of one Binary pole. She was asserting the problematic of “better.” She was also, on the smallest scale, disrupting dominant discourses. She was working, in the moments she could, to explain something to her grandchildren, to direct their educations. She was teaching that it is okay to eschew “the demand of identification—that is to be *for* an Other— (which) entails the representation of the subject in the differentiating order of otherness” (Bhabha 1994 pg.45). Oma was by no means a simple person, and many days she couldn’t even stand to be a pleasant one. But Oma thought deeply, and she committed herself to a life of learning both intellectually and spiritually. Sometimes she shared her wisdom with me, I like to think in moments of love. Oma is proof that this work of creating wholeness through compassion and love can be done not just on a large scale, but also in the minutiae of our everyday lives.

### **Treating Obsessive Compulsive Disorder**

Heather Goff is a first-year medical student who has struggled with depression and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) for several years. In her essay in *What I Learned in Medical School* (2004), she discusses the stigma surrounding issues of mental health and how her experiences inform her identity as a student and her future practice as a physician.

*“Why would anyone stop taking their medication, given the severity of OCD symptoms? I’ve asked the same question of other patients. Treatment compliance is always an issue in any type of patient care. In psychiatric care, the problem is compounded by cultural beliefs and the stigma surrounding mental illness. Although intellectually I understand that antidepressants treat brain chemistry in the same way that insulin treats blood glucose chemistry, on an emotional level I have*

*great difficulty coming to terms with taking psychiatric medications. It's one thing to take antibiotics because you get an infection. The infection isn't your fault; it can happen to anyone. But taking medication because you feel "sad" all the time makes you suspect that something is wrong with you, not just your chemicals."* (Takakuwa et al, eds. 2004, pg. 51)

*"Scientists are supposed to look at information with a clear eye and an open mind. As physicians-in-training, we are supposed to listen to patients' problems in that same objective manner. But how do I do that? How can I sit and listen to a depressed patient without remembering some of my own pain? How can I watch a patient with OCD go through a compulsion and not be drawn to my own compulsive behavior?"* (Takakuwa et al, eds. 2004, pg. 52)

Goff struggles to find her identity despite the seeming contradictions that envelop her. At once she is doctor and patient, tasked with and in need of curing. In her writing she navigates these "split-affinities." (Fine, 1994). She also struggles to discern the boundaries of the physical and nontangible aspects of her condition. An infection, for example, though invisible is tangible; it can be separated from the self. A psychiatric disorder, on the other hand, is harder to conceptualize as material and becomes associated with identity. Because of her illness, there is a problem with her mind (the site of objective reasoning) that results in an excessive amount of emotion, which is coded negatively. The juxtaposition of the way she feels and the way she is seen attests to the fact that "these dynamic borders are not only without, they are also within" (Asher, 2002 pg. 86). Goff expresses that the alternative way of knowing that she has attained through her experience with illness may hinder her ability to work as a physician. She is expected to look with a "clear eye" and listen in an "objective manner," but she does not feel that these ways of thinking support or reflect her as an individual. She believes in the worth of emotional, feeling, feminine ways of knowing and thinking, but understands that she is not supposed to draw on her personal experiences in the profession of medicine. Goff is acutely aware of the damage caused by this rift between objective and subjective, between personal and professional.

Catherine Lutz (1995) explains how “the masculine bias of the canon exemplifies a wider process by which hegemonic discourses—especially on gender and race—are established, how “uncomfortable information” is erased from public view” (pg. 250). In Geoff’s case, the realities of her disorder are “uncomfortable”. They are awkward to bring up, even in a medical setting, and they are thus ignored as if they did not exist. Of course they do exist, which causes Geoff to feel silenced, knowing that if she chooses to discuss them she may well be dismissed as “emotional” or “irrational.” These hegemonic labels also entail a dehumanizing process. Since “men” (or people) are defined by their virtue, their rationality, and consequently their whiteness and maleness, labels that pertain to the “negative” binary pole strip those assigned to them of their humanity. A black man is inherently not a man, because a man is not defined by the negative binary pole. Geoff, who is identified as “sick” and “emotional”, also experiences dehumanization through debasement of her ways of thinking and knowing.

Yet feminist intellectual traditions would insist on the validity of Geoff’s yearnings. Feminists would maintain that Geoff *should* incorporate her own experiences and feelings into her practice because they constitute knowledge that is just as valuable as that which she can access through her textbooks. Drawing upon her subjectivities might also allow Geoff to provide care that is more compassionate, personal, and kind. In doing so, Geoff might be able to further conceptualize a notion of care that is more broadly conceived and that might lead to better treatment of her patients.

### **Conclusion**

Western epistemologies codify hierarchies by ranking individuals based on their assignments to positive or negative binary categories, and reinforcing, through cultural discourses, specific versions of truth and reality that support the existence of said hierarchies. In addition to promulgating structural inequality, these categorizations represent false truisms that often manage to avoid examination and analysis, and are reproduced in schools and universities under the guise of “traditional” or “classical” learning and rhetoric. Positive and negative binary assignments, especially as they relate to ways of thinking and knowing, are problematic for several reasons. First, the existence of binaries as they are known and conceptualized is a

deception. Ideological categories such as *subjective* and *objective* are nearly impossible to enact in practice. Even in the “hard” sciences, objectivity can be an illusion. For example, the viewing of the movement of quantum particles is not a truly objective endeavor. Scientists know that their measuring devices cause particles to act in different ways than they do when they are not under observation. Thus knowledge of their nature is inherently influenced by the subjective gaze of the researcher. Similarly, when we seek to understand the nature of a phenomenon like love, it is the passion and subjectivity of poetry and literature that come closest to providing an objective description. So even those things imagined to be most objective or most subjective in fact exist in Anzaldúa’s *mestiza*, in Fine’s *hyphens*, and in Asher’s *interstices* (Anzaldúa, 1987; Asher, 2005; Fine, 1994).

Second, these binary extremes of fact and fiction do not exist, yet they are understood as real because they are defined as material. While thinking and feeling are both immaterial processes, we understand them as concrete because they are defined as located within certain parts of the body. Thinking is done in the head, more specifically in the brain. We can measure it quantitatively. We can see its movement on a screen. Thought then becomes a thing that can claim as it’s opposite another thing, feeling. Feeling is located in the heart, or in the gut. We can explain it through hormones and chemicals, we can see it in expressions and hear it in voices. By materializing the abstract, we constrict its movement. By asserting that thinking and feeling are real and defined, we negate the possibility of an in-between space. By claiming that thinking is superior to feeling, we debase feeling and all of the knowledges associated with it. We create a hierarchy where everything closer to thinking is better, everything closer to feeling is worse, and all of the other binary categories associated with the two, along with the individuals they ensnare, are also assigned progressive values in the hierarchy.

Third, the valuing of one end of the imagined binary over the other, the assertion that objectivity, rationality, and theory are valid ways of knowing while subjectivity, emotionality, and experience are not, preclude us from accessing the tools necessary for recognition and acceptance of other ways of thinking and being. Privileged knowledges allow us to analyze, to compare, and to describe, but delegitimized knowledges allow

us to care, to empathize, to feel. These are the radical ways of knowing ourselves and understanding each other that have the power to break down walls of ideology and to build new connections that honor all ways of knowing as equally valid and equally valuable. Postcolonial feminist scholars assert the value of emotional, affective, and psychic tools in this endeavor (Asher, 2005). But potent discourses that constantly abase and dismiss feeling and emotion protect the reign of rational objectivity as supreme, as better than. Thus the protection of the privileged and the negation of the suppressed go hand in hand. Without the right tools walls cannot be made to crumble, and without access to or awareness of those tools, we might not even recognize that the walls exists.

Lastly, it is important that we recognize the harm that we endure and inflict by ignoring the knowledge that our emotions, our bodies, and our intuitions produce. This harm can be seen in classrooms where students are not taught to think deeply or understand profoundly, in hospital rooms where patients are treated with logic rather than care, and in potentially dangerous situations when rational thinking cannot lead us to make the right choices. The assertion that there is one correct, superior way to know that is universally more useful irrespective of context, creates fractures in our society and divides and categorizes us. Rather than see these differences as complimentary and in harmony, we see them as oppositional and in conflict. This idea is performative in that the action of putting one ideal in opposition to another creates the conflict, and not the other way around. How then, do we heal these rifts and breaks? How can we make ourselves and our communities more whole and more healthy? Perhaps Gloria Anzaldua (1987) says it best: “The future depends on the breaking down of paradigms, it depends on the straddling of two or more cultures. By creating a new mythos—that is, a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the ways we behave—*la mestiza* creates a new consciousness” (pg. 80). So healing will require an examination not just of what we know, but of how and why we know and think. We need to ask ourselves how our epistemologies, as engrained as they are in our culture and our minds, inherently promote some and silence others, while stymieing our collective human quest for understanding and truth. I also believe that we ought to strive for ways of thinking and being that cease to value binary poles, but instead consider

them equal, complementary ends of a vibrant spectrum of difference. If we can move in this direction on both personal and collective levels, we might contribute to making our society and ourselves more whole, more equal, more compassionate, and more human.

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**BEYOND CRITIQUE TO ACADEMIC  
TRANSFORMATION: RECONCEPTUALISING  
RURALITY IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH**

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**ABSTRACT** Critique is taken to mean an analytical examination of a text or a situation whether political or economic or social. Although critique is commonly understood as fault finding and negative judgment, it can also involve merit recognition, and, in the philosophical tradition, it also means a methodical practice of doubt. This reasoned judgment or analysis, value judgment, interpretation or observation is different from the pragmatic imperatives to action, in this case policy action; and in the South African case transformative policy action. Where the academy is concerned there is a radical difference between critiquing the academy and finding practical solutions to endemic problems ingrained not only in the philosophy but in the cyclical practice that drives it and the disciplines that emerge from it. This article takes its cue from the urgent need to go beyond ideologies which are neo-colonial, Eurocentric, abstract or individualist, to a discourse which engages in sustained action beginning with the academy. Since the universities in Africa remain mired in fundamentally Eurocentric views and interpretations, we need to find deep analyses and come out with propositions that have the ability to transcend the battle between scholars and academic paradigms to transformative imperatives that can put pressure and raise the bar for the academy to consider changing its ways.

**KEYWORDS** rurality, transformation, Africa, indigenous knowledge, traditional medicine, patenting



### **Academic Transformation in South Africa**

Following the intensive policy formulation processes occurring in South Africa since 1994, the shift in the agenda in higher education has taken two major trajectories. The first was the expansion of access to previously excluded and marginalized students. The second was the extensive restructuring that followed, beginning in the late 1990s and continuing into the first five years of this decade.

The first is a quantitative achievement which is slowly beginning to change the demographic profile of the institutions of higher learning in South Africa. It is an achievement of its own for which the country can be proud. The achievement of the second was in altering the institutional form of this sector. This was a painful but irreversible exercise which has produced the size and shape of the existing institutions.

In the third episode of the evolution of higher education in South Africa, the time is now right to begin to tackle the content of academic offerings (in the case of teaching and learning); and paradigms of knowledge production (in the case of research); and the quality of our graduates (in the case of both undergraduate and postgraduate training).

The agenda for the transformation of the academic systems demands that attention is paid to the default drive of the academic system itself. Here, Transformation is seen as distinct from Reform and Restructuring in that it draws attention to the basic cultural structures around which our systems of thought have been constructed across all the disciplinary domains, and aspires to change what Howard Richards, citing Charles Taylor, has called the “the constitutive rules” (Odora Hoppers & Richards 2012).

How is the university going to respond in the call to reorganise itself by reorganizing the very institutional form of universities which has not been touched by simply restructuring? Concomitantly, how can the numerical access and quantitative gains be turned into intellectual outcomes that can bring about transformation in the way we think about issues facing society in the twenty first century? How is plurality of insights coming from all systems of knowledge to be brought to bear in the selection of research agenda, research paradigms, and propositions that we make towards the betterment of life and livelihood of all?

### **The South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARCHI)**

The South African Research Chairs Initiative was created by a parliamentary dispensation in 2007 as a strategically focused knowledge and human resource intervention into the South African Higher Education system. Its mandate is to tackle questions such as those outlined above; to advance the frontiers of knowledge, create new research career pathways and stimulate strategic research; and to fast track leadership building through postgraduate training.

It is positioned and funded by the South African Department of Science and Technology and administered by the National Research Foundation, (South Africa's national research funding body). This provides the special context for the transdisciplinary chair I hold, and it is against this background that I explore the issues of transformation raised in this paper.

### **Revisiting UNESCO's 2000 call**

The UNESCO World Conference on Science for the Twenty-First Century and its Declaration established the efforts that should be invested to make science advance in response both to social expectations and to the challenges posed by human and social development. Among other things, it reiterated the commitment to scientific endeavour, especially to finding solutions to problems at the interface between science and society. Especially pertinent to the issue of knowledge systems which goes straight to the strange-hold of the exclusive and detached Eurocentric perspectives that bedevils the academy are the pronouncements contained in Section 3 of the Science Agenda: Framework for Action entitled 'Science in Society and Science for Society'.

The Declaration emphasises that all cultures can contribute scientific knowledge of universal value, and thus that there is a need for a vigorous, informed and constructive intercultural and democratic debate on the production and use of scientific knowledge. It urges the scientific community to open itself to a permanent dialogue with society, especially a dialogue with other forms of knowledge.

It affirms that modern science does not constitute the only form of knowledge, and closer links need to be established with other forms, systems and approaches to knowledge for their mutual enrichment and benefit, in order that better ways

are found to link modern science to the broader heritage of humankind' (Unesco 2000).

### **Implications of the Challenge to the Sciences**

This paper asserts that 'knowledge' and the way it is viewed is at the heart of the decolonial movement in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Coming vividly to mind is Visvanathan's assertion that the most important criteria of developing this new compact and fraternity (I would add, and sorority) among forms of knowledge are cognitive justice, and the right of different forms of knowledge to survive – and survive creatively and sustainably in public. An experiment in cognitive justice therefore, can turn what was a hierarchy among ways of seeing, so embedded in the Western logic, into a circle. The search becomes not just one for equality, but for a method of dialogue.

This fraternity/ sorority at the cognitive level is born only with a method for exploring difference, and providing for reciprocity and empathy. It is therefore not just about respect for the indigenous knowledge systems. It is about understanding of life forms, and of livelihood as a way of life. This cannot be done in the classical academic manner of theory alone.

This SARCHI Chair takes it as its anchoring imperative the belief that what the university needs is reciprocity / mutuality at the epistemological and ontological level. It is cognitive justice as a fraternal, or to use another word, collaborative act that will hold the future of the university (Visvanathan 2000).

This search for reciprocity–of a 'space of coexistence' – is itself an ethical choice that carries some real implications. It implies affirming the richness of the 'Other', regardless of their material poverty. It implies affirming that this is not a matter of quantity but of quality of life, and that all helping is reciprocal, just as learning must be reciprocal. This respect for the "Other" implies acceptance of dissension, of loss and of death, which is translated into life for the Other (Verges 2002).

This is particularly important given current situations in which craftsmen, tribal elements, traditional experts and women are not seen as part of the citizenship of knowledge, and especially when it is still assumed that the history of knowledge

begins with one's entry into the university; in other words into the Western frame of mind!

The development of ecology of knowledges takes it as its starting point the acknowledgement and critique of the fact that modern development tends to privilege scientific knowledge over other forms of knowing. Science tends to hegemonise other forms of knowledge either by museumising them into ghettos, or by treating them as occult or oriental or primitive superstition (Visvathanan 2000).

The objective would thus be precisely to return life to these forms of knowledge and to restore their place in the livelihood of communities so that they can, without coercion, determine the nature and pace of the development they require.

From this point of view, the absence of bicultural experts at the epistemological level has made it next to impossible to break the cycle of hierarchisation of knowledge endemic in the structures of the university, the prejudice of science and the pitfalls of modernisation in general. It has made it difficult to create a systems-level dialogue, to identify and articulate systems difficulties, systems limitations and new possibilities building on combined strategies anchored in multiple knowledge systems (SARCHI Framework and Strategy 2009).

In other words, 'fraternity' cannot be reduced to community-level hosted programmes or summer visits. Local knowledges, tribal knowledges, civilisational knowledges, dying knowledges all need a site, a theatre of encounter which is not patronising, not preservationist, not fundamentalist, but open and playful. The university must encompass not merely dissent and diversity, but it must also tackle the question of violence relating to the "Other" beyond the fence or border (Visvanathan 2000).

### **Talking "Rural" at an epistemological and a cosmological Plane**

All this would not be possible to handle pragmatically without bringing to urgent attention the meaning of the word "RURAL". To begin with, the word "rural" introduces in the mind of most of us who have gone through the education system of the Western type, a strange mixture of disdain and paternalism, as well as, for those who have thought long and

deep, a weird sense of urgency. It is the reality and a truth to be negated, to be forgotten; and yet to be confronted within another paradigm.

“Rural” also brings out the unforgettable image of the square building amidst round huts. To that can be added what Herkovitsh called the “keyhole to the treasure trove” (Herkovitsh 1962) of human existence. Leaving the round huts and going into the square building denotes the first stop on the assimilation pathway. This is the first step in a systematic process of delegitimizing local collectives (Fuller, 1991). It is also the beginning of the curious love-hate relationship with a system so well known to many Africans as one that generates personal development and which turns that personal development into hatred and a denial of the self.

On entry to the system that associates the non-western, the non- “developed” with “bad”, it quickly becomes known to African children that what is relevant for the West, its insights, its values, its tastes and eccentricities alike, become the model for the world: an otherwise local and otherwise provincial perspective is transposed large and writ universal (Taylor 1986). From then on, everything one does, thinks is defined and compared using western norms, leaving all else bundled together as the “other”.

This “other” refers to the cosmologies of Africa, the Native American, Saami from Scandinavia, Asia and Latin America – otherwise known as the “Third World”. In fact we can still recall that it took less than 20 years since President Truman launched the concept of “underdevelopment” in his inaugural speech in 1949 (Sachs 1992), to make two billion people define themselves as such (Illich, 1981). We also recall that with the launching of this concept, all social totalities were minusculed into one single model; all systems of science into one mega science. All development was seen as growth relating to GNP, and in fact to the western self-image of homo-economics.

This reductionist vision of the world determines the academic and military psyche, defines knowledge, and even truth. In its deep commitment to the “scientific”, cosmologies that do not fit into the rational, linear construction are ridiculed and dismissed. These become submerged along with

the knowledges of “other” peoples and that of women (d’Souza 1992). Most of the conceptions of the “rural” and “community”, like the conception of “Third World” that assume it to be a passive, backward and a generally incapable entity, have its roots in this kind of framework.

Having drawn a clear line between who is subject and who is object, those “others” can then be measured, managed or manipulated. Data on them are collated, fragmented, and arranged to fit into categories, language and concepts so confusing that at best it has nothing to do with reality. At worst, it is inconsumable by anyone except a select group of scientific researchers, the “club members”, who submit their findings to authorities ever higher to use it for purposes of control, manipulation, as well as their own professional certification. Value neutrality, preserved by creating this distance between the subject and the object, the observer and the observed, and by fracturing the human self from human knowledge, makes it impossible for already marginalized people suffering from particular aspects of a problem to ever use the fact of this pain as a starting point for participation in a research oriented towards seeking alternative, perhaps liberating frameworks (Weskott 1979, Odora 1993a and 1993b).

It is with this in mind that in my writings, I have joined others who have challenged the world to take Africa and Africans as they are, and not as the West would like it to be. It is also with this in mind that a grassroots empowerment perspective would build on the strength and validity of local, democratic, and participatory knowledges free from external coercion and authoritarianism (Ake 1988)—what has been termed “cognitive justice” (Visvanathan 1997).

Yet, as development practice still attests, the problem is far from resolved, in fact, resolution has barely begun. The attitude to the “rural”, sometimes referred to as “community” in development jargon, still bears, like father, like son, the hallmarks of this subjugative paternalism.

### **Another Look at ‘Rural’**

There are several reasons why greater and respectful, quality attention should be given to ‘rural’. First of all, ‘rural’ is important because it constitutes a numerically significant portion of the

population. In Africa and Asia, rural populations constitute 62% of the total population (UN 2000). Rural inhabitants are important players in ensuring livelihood for a sizeable proportion of people. The food that we consume today can be considered as the ultimate product of invention or development of natural plant resources from various regions of the world over centuries. The development and invention of these foods originated mainly from the indigenous people who reside in rural areas. The significance of health benefits of indigenous food is today being recognized worldwide.

There is also a significant unity in the recognition that rural communities in Africa and other parts of the 'Third World' have profound and detailed knowledge of the ecosystem and species (the natural environment) with which they are in contact. They have also developed effective ways of ensuring that this knowledge and the physical resources of the environment are used sustainably (Williams & Muchena, 1991).

Traditional knowledge used by rural communities is essential to the food security and health of millions of people in the developing world. Moreover, the protection of the land, the use and continuous development by local farmers of local plant varieties, the sharing and diffusion of these varieties, and the knowledge associated with them, play an essential role in sustaining agricultural systems in developing countries (Odora Hoppers 2004).

Rural women for instance, are key holders and mediators of knowledge in the rural areas. They are also the environmental educators of children. By the age of 6 or 7, a child growing up and nurtured in a full cultural and ecological context possesses a repertoire of knowledge about plant, animal, insect life, food systems, and proverbs that contain life codes, which schools scarcely take into full account at point of entry.

To the best of my knowledge, there is no recognition of prior knowledge in assessment systems anywhere that enables indigenous knowledge that children acquire from the community prior to entering educational institutions, and throughout life, to get validation. Instead, curriculum developers in Africa have attempted to disguise their cultural preference behind the mask of internationalization, efficiency, or whatever smokescreen

has been applied to maintain a clearly exogenous and largely Eurocentric worldview and conceptual categories.

In many countries, traditional medicines constitute the base for healthcare for the majority of rural populations. Sometimes this complementary health care system represents the only affordable treatment available to poor people. In “developing countries”, up to 80% of the population depend on traditional medicines to help meet their healthcare need. The role of the 200 000 traditional healers in South Africa who are the first healthcare providers for nearly 70% of the country’s population in rural areas cannot be ignored (Hon T. Msimang, 2004).

Furthermore, knowledge of the healing properties of plants has been the source of many modern medicines, and is at the core of many innovations in the pharmaceutical industry. Weaknesses in systems of benefit-sharing, coupled with exploitative patenting regimes, have allowed the corporate west to derive billions of dollars from the intellectual property of rural people without providing recompense (Posey & Dutfield, 1996; Mugabe 1999). While this continues, we sit discussing this amazing cycle of poverty of rural communities that is seemingly without end.

Rural is therefore more than just an entity that is refractory to the gaze of urbanity. Neither are rural inhabitants simply an immiserized lot, devoid of substance. For that matter, neither can poverty be discussed as if it were a pathology. The exposition of the constructed nature of this poverty and the role of the academy in legitimizing the discourses that deny people will and agency, have to be the centre of focus in effecting a new social contract for the full restoration of dignity to rural communities.

To restore dignity is to tackle some confronting questions. What does it mean, for example, when rural people insist that development should build on what they have? What does it mean when formal education is viewed as an extroverted, exogenous entity, and rural communities seek an education that is grounded? What does it mean when rural communities want education for “self-reliance”? What does participatory democracy mean for the people in rural areas, and what does full and effective citizenship participation in education entail?



Conversely, under what conditions do people, upon whom all manner of denigrating concepts have been heaped (primitive, savage, ignorant etc), become active participants in the Freirean project of 'naming the world'?

Another key question to be faced is that of the role played by power (i.e. power to name, label, categorize, research, diagnose, and determine prognoses,) in entrenching disempowerment and disenfranchisement of rural people. Can the possibility exist for those who have been busy bracketing and taxonomizing those silent majorities under various pretexts, to admit that what they have been doing to 'those people' was to achieve an overkill on a wide disenfranchisement highway that had been long paved by social Darwinism, racist anthropology, Rostovian sociology, the vivisection mandate of the natural sciences, and the Baconian edict?

As it stands, a slow motion standoff is being witnessed in the relationship between rural communities and researchers from formal institutions. Linda T. Smith captures the most poignant expression of this face-off:

...The term "research" itself stirs up in local communities a silence, conjures up bad memories that still offends the deepest sense of our humanity.... It galls non-western societies that western researchers, intellectuals and scientists trained in that tradition can claim to know ALL that there is to know about other societies, on the basis of brief and superficial encounters with those societies. It often appalls indigenous societies that Western science [and researchers trained in that tradition] can desire, extract, and claim ownership of people's way of knowing, and then simultaneously reject those people who created those ideas, and deny them the opportunities to be the creators of their culture and own notions (brackets mine, Smith, 1999:1).

A Roundtable hosted by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (UN-HCHR) and the World Intellectual Property Rights (WIPO) in Geneva, in 1999, noted that apart from the problem of basic attitude of the scientists, Indigenous people all over the world have stated that their medicinal plants and products, arts, crafts, sciences, literature, medicines, music,

heritage, have been made the *subject* of research and eventual commercial exploitation by others, while they are denied not only the financial benefit, but also the respect and official recognition. Contractual agreements made by corporations are concluded with local universities or scientific research institutions. Indigenous or local communities are usually not mentioned in these agreements, and there is never any guarantee, or legal, or moral obligation that they should ever be consulted (Boukedin 1999: 8).

In case you are beginning to wince at the preposterousness of these ungrateful ingrates, place the above against the following hard data backdrop:

1. That academic researchers rarely acknowledge their full source of information from rural communities [as they quite willingly do when they cite their fellow scientists], and that no institutional or profession-based rules exist for affirming rural-based ownership of knowledge;
2. That the annual world market for medicines derived from medicinal plants discovered from indigenous peoples amounted to US\$ 43 billion in 1985 (Posey & Dutfield, 1996, p. 3);
3. That of the 119 drugs developed from higher plants and on the world market today, it is estimated that 74 % were discovered from a pool of traditional herbal medicines (Laird, 1994, p.145-149; Mugabe, 1999, p. 102);
4. That at the beginning of the 1990s, world-wide sales of pharmaceuticals amounted to more than US\$130,000 billion annually;
5. That plant-derived prescription drugs in the US originate from 40 species of which 20 are from the tropics.
6. The 20 species from the tropics generate about US \$4 billion for the economy of the U.S.A (Mugabe *ibid*: 102);
7. That the only payments to the communities (less than 0.001% of the profits) were for the manual labor involved (Posey & Dutfield, cited in Mugabe *ibid*: 103);

Much can therefore be said about attitudes from the scientific community, researchers and the financial and intellectual property “rip-off”. Perhaps we can take a look at how policy and literature have been viewing ‘rural’.

### **As it is in Policy and Literature: the Concept of 'Rural'**

For a term that, in McDonagh's words, 'trips very easily off the tongue', the meaning of rural has proved elusive. Attempts have been made to define it, categorize it, propose alternative definitions to its use, or do away with rural altogether. The slick way to do 'rural' is to indulge in the so-called *peasant model*, by which is meant the over association of rural with agricultural development. Here, 'rural' endures a narrow scale of analysis, and an over-concentration on the effects, rather than the causes of social and economic change. Only in recent years, and this is particularly in a small part of Europe, has there been a shift from looking at rural development as an adjunct of agricultural policy, to seeing it as an area of policy concern of its own (McDonagh 1998).

Even then, this has not translated into any degree of theoretical breakthrough. In Africa as is the case also in many parts of the developing world where research is externally oriented and aimed at gaining endorsement of the North (Hountondji, 2002), assumptions embedded in the definitions of poverty bypass critical terrain by always equating frugal subsistence with poverty. It makes things so much simpler!

Thus rural is equated not only with the peasant, but peasant is closely knit with poverty, which is a good income raiser when peddled on the right bandwagon. Once this point is reached, it is but a short step before rural is equalled to absolute ignorance *à la* social Darwinism, with very little in the grey areas to demarcate realities such as frugal subsistence, which is a way of livelihood. There is also little by way of breaking the rural-equals-poverty equation by, for instance, introducing concepts such as "knowledge rich but economically poor" (Shiva 1997, Gupta 1999).

It is often noted that constructive theorization is not an easy task to undertake within the present distorted set of conceptual and attitudinal tools that populate the scientific landscape. Thus while a theoretical grounding needs to explore the developing experiences of rural places and people due to changing regulations in production, consumption and the new commodification of the countryside, conceptually, discourses on the rural have remained quite comfortable with descriptive terms.

Real business and real money are found in dealing with statistics, hard numeric facts and the policy- relevant information on population, family size, income levels, farm size, farm outputs and the like. There is little ambition towards developing new insights or heightening awareness of the social and cultural marginalization and experiences of rural lifestyles (McDonagh 1998).

In the descriptive approach according to Halfacree (1993), rural is described in relation to its socio-spatial characteristics concentrating on variables that are observable and measurable as for example, land use, employment, and income levels. This approach articulates specific aspects of rural - rather than define the "rural" and is criticised for attempting to fit a definition to what is already intuitively considered to be rural. Such definitions also focus on space, not people, and thereby overlook the obvious truism that it is people, not places that have problems, and that different people in the same area may have different problems. Even if the issue was space, rural cannot be seen as one single space, but rather as a multiplicity of social spaces that overlap the same geographical area, with each social space having its own logic, its own institutions, as well as its network of actors. (McDonagh 1998, p. 49).

One of the most striking things about the rural-urban debate to note of course is the fact that urbanity appears as the 'invisible norm', like the male factor in the institutionalization of gender relations; and has proceeded virtually without comment in relation to rural. In other words, there is not one instance where urban is viewed from the rural lens, plotted, measured or dissected according to rural based norms and values the way the urban norms are imposed on the rural.

### **Framing the discourse and discourse institutionalization**

Postcolonial theorists draw attention to what Rein and Schon have said about the concept of 'framing'. This is the way of selecting, organizing, interpreting and making use of a complex reality to provide guideposts for knowing, analyzing, persuading and acting. A 'frame' is a perspective from which an amorphous, ill-defined problematic situation can be made sense of and acted upon. According to Rein and Schon, embedded in policy frames are the stories, or narratives participants are disposed to tell about the policy situations (Rein & Schon, 1993).

Once a discourse coalition, discourse institutionalization and framing have been achieved, rhetorical persuasion and various rhetorical devices or 'tropes', such as metaphors, metonymy and irony are applied to explain, to inspire public visions and to recommend actions (Thogmorton, 1993).

The role that these formations play in determining the manner and style with which policy issues are created and are made to assume strategic status in the policy arena is, of course, a matter of concern in a context of unequal relations. What would be the next step after critique?

### **Rethinking Thinking**

It has been argued that the intractable problems of modernity cannot be solved within the paradigms of modernity (Odora Hoppers and Richards, 2012). Worth noting is the assertion of Ashis Nandy that the meek do not inherit the earth by meekness alone. They have to have categories, concepts and even defences of the mind with which to turn the West into a reasonably manageable vector within the traditional worldviews still outside the span of modern ideas of universalism. The first concept in such a set is "... suffering... a reality for the millions who have learnt the hard way to live with the West during the past two centuries." (Nandy 1997, p. xiii).

The second concept is Empowerment. Empowerment is the process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy in communities through identification and removal of conditions that reinforce powerlessness. But in this analysis 'empowerment', which is usually more about resuming power (because power is never voluntarily relinquished), Venter's version is instructive. He argues that it is recognized that shifting of power without a clear shift of paradigms of understanding that makes new propositions about the use of that power in a new dispensation, leads to vicarious abuse of power by whoever is holding it – old or new (Venter, 1997). That was what happened when African countries first tasted liberation from colonialism five to six decades ago.

Cooptation, without a shift in authority, power and control, is empty. Transfer of symbolic power has usually been about change of actors without changes in the structures of privilege, power and oppression and an understanding of the attitudes

that sustained those systems, leaving new incumbents behaving ‘just as the masters did’, with new tensions emerging as fellow members from the previously oppressed groups continue to hold expectations of change and socio-cultural justice. We have to change from this notion of liberation to cognitive justice and second-level Indigenisation.

From this perspective, liberation implies contestation and rejection of all forms of domination, including domination over the means of knowledge production and the social power to determine what is valid, or useful knowledge. Cognitive justice is based on the recognition of the plurality of knowledge and expresses the right of the different forms of knowledge to co-exist without duress. Additionally, second-level Indigenisation questions the rules of the game, and proffers alternative or complementary plots to the drama. It engages the paradigmatic frames; the apparatus for value coding; and the constitutive (i.e. not the regulatory) rules of systems.

At last, ‘rural’ can be seen as a bearer of knowledge capital, a player in the development arena and a creator of valuable traditions which it can sustain. At this moment, our role as scholars or as policy workers would extend beyond the obligation to produce objective knowledge alone [in the case of scholars], or blind delivery of policy packages [in the case of policy workers], to becoming critical agents in the identification of a nexus between the development of knowledge and the transformation of societies.

### **New Pragmatic Directions in Postcolonial Theory and Practice**

Universities need to break the current vicious cycle by providing the heuristics, the methodological discipline, and the non-dominative, non-fundamentalist space that this reform strategy needs. Its work goes beyond critique, and combines the ethical and the political, a theory of the “Other” as a form of life.

We need to promote a theory of development that does not end in the disaster of serial displacements that we have seen over the past five or six decades. The university must provide an enabling environment in which the “Other” can articulate its conceptions of an alternative world and its vision of the university in it. Out of this will evolve a theory of the West within the ambit

of an alternative vision of the world. This is not part of an effort to incubate reverse assimilation, reverse hegemony or cultural imperialism. Rather, it is part of a search for co-existence, co-determination and co-operative action on a transnational and trans-societal level. It is time for a rapprochement, an integrative coming together of world views in a way that is not just pluralistic tolerance and respect, but goes beyond that to effect transformation in the sense of emergence of a new synthesis that incorporates the existing diversity of world views (Fatnonwa & Pickett 2002)<sup>1</sup>

The South African Research Initiative's Chair in Development Education affirms that the knowledge paradigm of the future is beginning to develop by reaching out to those excluded. It is a compassionate but strategic evolution through contemplation during which the outer voice of possibility meets the inner voice of disenfranchisement (Odora Hoppers 2009)

Significant and intimate connections are then made between the pain and the creative impulses essential for the transcendence, which then become the very touchstones of healing and creativity.

### **Conclusions: tasks for the university in a reconstituted paradigm**

This essay has argued for the urgent need to go beyond ideologies which are neo-colonial, Eurocentric, abstract or individualist, to a discourse which engages in sustained action beginning with the academy. Since the universities in Africa remain mired in fundamentally Eurocentric views and interpretations, we need to find deep analyses and come out with propositions that have the ability to transcend the battle between scholars and academic paradigms and achieve transformative imperatives that can put pressure and raise the bar for the academy to consider changing its ways.

The task here is not to critique the west without any direction as to where all the evidence gathered should lead us. In my opinion, we have to take Unesco's call seriously on behalf of those who do not have voice, and make sure that the universities take a different and a much more expanded role from the present time. These roles include ensure the verification, validation and legitimation of IKS locally and internationally through sustained dialogue. Scholars must establish a process

for the emancipation of the indigenous voice, with an emphasis on the Commons in Africa and other parts of the world.

The university must address transformation, redress and equity with respect to the political economy of public space and knowledge production. This entails examining the allocation, use and utilisation of public space from an Indigenous Knowledge point of view. 'Public space' refers to the human, financial, infrastructural resources available to public institutions, including the academy, the policy domain and community-based organisations.

The university must weed itself out of the closed loop of existence and initiate a dynamic, two-way, equitable dialogue between the academy the Indigenous knowledge holders: the commons and the grassroots. This should result in the identification of high level priorities from both sectors in research, validation and institutional transformation in relation to knowledge systems.

More widely, the university must create within its strategic objectives a process in which the marginalized have a "presence" and "voice", and cognition goes beyond liberation, and on to emancipation, to injecting and infusing fresh, innovative ideas and propositions for the rest of the world. It is through this affirmation of the multiplicity of worlds, and the recognition that forms of knowledge other than that sanctioned by science exist, that it becomes possible to redefine the relationship between objectivity and representation, and between subject and object (CODESRIA 1998) – the healing moment (Nouwen, 1972) in this long chain of vicarious disenfranchisement.

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**RESEARCH REPORT**  
**RECOVERING MEMORIES OF PEOPLE, CRAFTS AND  
COMMUNITIES – CHALLENGING THE COLONIZATION  
OF A LOST LIFE-WORLD**

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**ABSTRACT** This paper reports on research concerning a specific form of colonization – colonization by globalised industrial mass production. This has replaced a life-world (*lebenswelt*)-characterized by crafts and languages that have become or are increasingly becoming extinct species. Though specific to a locality in Spain, this process of colonization has wider resonance for all those contexts worldwide witnessing the loss of crafts and their related languages through the processes of hegemonic globalisation. People are losing the sense of belonging to a symbolic and geographical territory. Systematic research for recovering this can be considered a generator of experiences and learning. These experiences are related to identity as an element which enables people to understand how individuals establish relationships amongst themselves and with the environment. This identity is always linked to the way through which people understand the territory. At the same time, it is a powerful element for transforming it. An important part of this identity relates to the traditional production system and, within that, the notion of crafts and craftsmen. This is a work in process. The first outcomes of the research are related to some descriptive categories such as: the crafts associated with the River; the use of the River to transport goods and people; the family ties associated to craft; the cosmopolitanism of the people and the changes which this generates; the role of women; and the River as a magical and mysterious place. My educational goal is to use this research to produce adult education materials based on community history, materials that can help communities articulate their identity, as opposed to materials taking an abstract skills-based learning approach.

**RESUMEN** Este texto informa sobre una investigación relativa a una determinada manera de colonización una colonización realizada por la globalización industrial y la producción en

masa sobre un mundo vivo caracterizado por oficios y lenguajes quehan llegado o están llegando a ser especies extinguidas. Las personas están perdiendo el sentido de pertenencia a sus territorios tanto geográficos como simbólicos. Un proceso que permita la recuperación de esto podría ser considerado como generador de experiencias y aprendizajes. Estas experiencias están relacionadas con la identidad como un elemento que permite a las personas establecer relaciones entre ellos y con su entorno. Además, la identidad está siempre ligada a la forma en la que las personas comprenden el territorio y, al mismo tiempo, es un poderoso instrumento de transformación. Una parte importante de esta identidad se encuentra ligada a los sistemas productivos tradicionales y, por ello, a la noción de oficio y de artesano. Este es un trabajo en proceso. Los primeros resultados se encuentran relacionados con categorías descriptivas como: los oficios asociados con el río, los usos del río para transportar personas y mercancías, los lazos familiares asociados a los oficios, el cosmopolitanismo de las personas y los cambios asociados a él, el papel de las mujeres, y el propio río como un lugar mágico y misterioso. Aunque específico de una localidad en España, este proceso de colonización tiene una amplia significación para todas aquellas personas que en un contexto mundial están siendo testigos de la pérdida de los oficios, y sus lenguajes asociados, en el proceso de globalización hegemónica.

**Keywords:** Artisans, Crafts, Globalisation, Popular Education, Social Change

### **Introduction**

The main aim of this paper is to report on a piece of research addressed to recover the memory of the Guadalquivir River where it passes through a village called C., 12 km. from the city of S. in the south of Spain. One of the goals of this research is to know about the river and its influence on people's daily life. This knowledge will be an instrument of learning and teaching addressed not only to the elderly but also to the younger generation, in order to explain what the role of the river was historically, and perhaps still is, for the village. To that end, the research also aspires to create teaching materials addressed to both young people and adults, whether in primary, secondary or adult education schools. Providing community history in these materials challenges a type of skills-focused education that is divorced from authentic community roots.

At the present time, a series of interviews are being carried out in order to reclaim people's experiences in relation to the river.

In this paper, I am focusing on the interviews and specifically on such categories as crafts, trade, and identity, which help us analyse the interviews. In the next section I outline these and other concepts which make up the theoretical framework. I will later present some conclusions.

### **Theoretical Framework**

We are living in a society in an unstoppable process of globalisation. Local identities are confronted by the mainstream of modernisation processes and the pressures to change some traditional ways of life and work for more competitive ways in order to benefit the market. I have previously studied these processes of change in the case of fishing activities (Lucio Villegas, 2006). In this previous research two powerful concepts arose: Social Change and Transition.

Social change can be defined “as the difference observed between the previous and subsequent state of an area of social reality” (Giner, 1985, p. 217). As Rocher (1985) points out, social change means observable changes, which can be verified within short periods in geographical and socio-cultural areas. It is possible to derive some elements from this observation. On the one hand, there is the temporary space. On the other, what would be emphasized is the importance of the physical territory and the culture of the community. Another point is that change goes beyond purely economic aspects and extends to the way people live, their feelings and their relationships. The concept of social change can allow us to consider the loss of cultural identities that communities - and the people living in them - are suffering in relation to their way of life and the production system associated with it.

Godelier (1987) spoke of societies in transition. This occurs when they have growing internal and external difficulties in producing traditional economic and social relations. In the process of transition, other forms of economic and social relationships appear. Transition is also linked to the processes of modernisation. These processes are associated with the massive incorporation of certain changes as, for instance, in the production system when it is considered obsolete. In the modernisation process, crafts and other selected forms of economic trade are expelled and can be relegated to a kind of marginal niche – sometimes devoted to tourism and as

anthropological objects of curiosity. This craftwork, however, is an important part of people's everyday lives. It confirms their identity and is based on their experience derived from their relationships with others and with the surrounding environment.

Experience could be considered as one of the dimensions of adult education. It is, in some ways, the result - and the process - through which an individual organises knowledge and shares it with others. Experience from a Freirean perspective is related to problem-posing education, and it is the source for organising the processes of teaching and learning (Freire, 1970). Sometimes, experience is lost in the 'new' world of business (Sennett, 2000). From a Freirean point of view, such experiences have to be recovered as educational tools (Lucio-Villegas, 2015, Olesen, 1989).

Recovering experiences makes it possible to establish relationships between adult education, identities, work and crafts. According to Gelpi (1990):

The relationships between work and society are not only of economic and social nature. The lack of identity of a community, a country or several countries has consequences concerning the content and the quality of the work. (p. 17)

There is, Gelpi adds, an essential cultural dimension in reflecting on the work. Deriving from this, Gelpi wrote and spoke about the cultures of work, trying to define identities and bonds that people organise around work.

Relationships between artisans and communities are inseparable. In fact, as Sennett states: "in the traditional world of the ancient potter or doctor, it was the community who defined the pattern of good work" (2010, p. 38). In Antonio Gramsci's words:

The artisan produces pieces of furniture, ploughs, knives, peasant's houses, stoves, etc., always in the same way, according to the traditional taste of one village, province or region (In Manacorda, 1976, p. 273, my own translation).

Traditionally, Gramsci added, artisans create their artefacts in a manner that captures the spirit of people. In short, it seems that these relations among culture, identity, and community life are always present in organising a part of the quotidian life of people and the system of production.

Today, the quotidian is homogenised to benefit the large companies that are dictating people's tastes. The work of the artisans is lost, because it is singular and follows guidelines based on the interests of the people, rather than submitting these interests to commercial appeal. This imposition of homogenisation can be seen as a process of colonization by globalised industrial mass production.

It is a fact that the organisation of work has been changed. "The time of production is fragmentary and very diverse and the quality of work varies in regard to the content, the development and the aim" (Gelpi, 2004, p. 111). This new organisation throws out some of the characteristics of the craft and craftsmen's work such as the innovation that introduces changes in the final product; and the creativity to adapt the final result to the taste and necessities of the communities where the artisans work and live.

Sennett (2000) studied changes in people's daily lives produced by this new organisation of work. One such change is the impossibility of coordinating a career, due to constant mobility. People live in a constant state of unpredictability when it comes to organising their own career and lives, in a situation in which their experience is not valued. As Gelpi (2004) stated:

All men [sic] have lacked their history even though it is evident that a part of their work's cultures is not only still alive but is essential for production and identity. (p. 46)

An important point to reflect on is Sennett's argument, relating to the loss of the crafts' pride, that is, in some ways, connected with identity. Artisans are lost in the maelstrom of the new organisation of work, but they are people "devoted to do a job well for its own sake" (Sennett, 2010, p. 32). Doing a good job is the primordial identity of artisans, involving a specific way of organising the work, the learning



and teaching of the work, and life. A job well done means: “curiosity, research and learning from the uncertainty” (Sennett, 2010, p. 66).

The work of artisans challenges us to think about the work itself and about its organisation. It challenges us to learn about both in a very different way from that defined by a ‘Lifelong Learning’ approach to policy-making, characterised by the search for skills, competences and competitiveness in the process of standardising procedures. I shall later present some analytical categories, emerging from the interviews, that can help us in this reflection.

Finally, I refer to culture. Raymond Williams points out that culture, apart from being a very complicated word (1983, p. 87), is a plural word with diverse meanings. It is not possible to talk about culture, but rather about *cultures*, and this diversity is not only related to different countries or historic periods but also to “social and economic groups within a nation” (Williams, 1983, p.89). Culture is a way of life that includes work, intellectual practices or artistic activities, among other things. With this understanding, it is possible to consider the activities performed by artisans as a part of the local cultures that are in danger of disappearing in the mainstream of globalisation processes in the field of production, but not limited to this.

Following Gramsci’s differentiation between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture (see Mayo 2010), low culture, in some ways, could be related to popular culture or folklore in Gramscian terms. Gramsci also referred to ‘national-popular’ (Gramsci, 1974). He also considered that research and education may help people to go from folklore and ‘common sense’ to ‘good sense’,<sup>1</sup> as a path to grasp the world and analyse it (Manacorda, 1976).

This relates to what Raymond Williams called criticism (Welton, 1982): the possibility to think about things beyond collecting data and information without any criteria. For Williams (1983), “criticism in its specialized sense developed towards TASTE (q.v.), cultivation, and later CULTURE (q.v.) and

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1 ‘Common sense’ needs to be distilled of its contradictory elements to become coherent. ‘Common sense’, in Gramsci’s conception, contains elements of ‘good sense’ but is a distorted and fragmentary view of the world. It is a conception of the world which is developed and absorbed uncritically (Borg, Buttigieg & Mayo, 2002; Mayo, 2015).

discrimination (itself a split word, with this positive sense for good or informed judgment, but also a strong negative sense of unreasonable exclusion or unfair treatment of some outside group - cf. RACIAL” (p. 83, capital letters in the original).

It may well be related to Gramsci’s differentiation between ‘common’ and ‘sense’. Moving from common sense to good sense, in Gramscian terminology, means, among other things, that people grasp and use research tools (see, for instance, Manacorda, 1976, pp. 238-244) to enable individuals to break out from or transcend folklore and to achieve knowledge.

In short the emphasis on sharing traditional crafts which have their ramifications for language, with regard to terms used and words having specific connotations, and which are born out of the livelihoods of communities, is connected with a popular education with specific regional or municipal identities. This stands in contrast with the more standardised forms of education imposed across nations by institutions from outside with little regard for contextual differences. The latter constitutes a one size fits all approach geared towards uniformity and homogenisation, although full uniformity and homogenisation never occur in reality, as people resist and transform. The main point, though, is that the learning and sharing of these traditional crafts and skills are part and parcel of the lifeworlds of communities, in this case communities which, through these practices, including pedagogical practices, resist colonization of the lifeworld by the system world of standardisation from outside and afar. The approach is very much on the lines of Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed which entails listening to the words and ideas of community members with a view to creating thematic complexes around which the learning process occurs.

### **Methodology**

In this section I am going to provide a description of the place, some notes about the research team and the research itself, and the methodological tools used.

#### ***Brief description of the context***

C. is a village 12 km from S., the fourth most populated city in Spain. At the present time, C. has 30358 inhabitants (Junta de Andalucía, 2016). The village is now a dormitory town, due to the expansion of the nearest great city. Its history and the history

of its production system and the culture associated with it, is closely linked to the river. In fact, around 800 BC the village was on the mouth of the Guadalquivir River, but today it is situated around 40 km away. Another important historical event related to the river and the history of C. is the so called *Hasekura Expedition*, which in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century brought Japanese people to the village. This event is still celebrated today and some bonds have been created with Japan – specifically with the city of Sendai.

The traditional production system was based on fishing, pottery, the fabrication of bricks, shipbuilding, trade and other things closely related to the river that had defined a cultural identity almost lost today.

At the present time, C., as a dormitory town, has only a few brick factories operating, and a marginal population living from fishing and other related activities.

### ***The project and the Research Team***

The major goal of the project could be defined as that of recovering people's memories about their own territory. This memory should enable young people to know and understand their roots and the history of the place. The memories will be analysed in relation to the Lifeworlds that they represent, and as forms of resistance and affirmation with respect to attempts at colonization by the system worlds, through, for instance, the EU's Lifelong Learning policies measured by standardised procedures. I can also add two more goals: a) To recover and systematise the experiences of people living in the village that are related to the river, and b) To elaborate teaching materials based on this history, that enable both young people and adults at school to reflect on their shared experiences. In the specific case of young people, the project stresses the importance of linking these teaching materials to the history of the place.

The research team is composed of people coming from diverse backgrounds: retired adult education teachers, civil servants working in the City Hall, people coming from Social Movements, and from the university – teachers and students - or the adult education school – also teachers and students. It is important to stress that the diversity of people constituting the research team is, at the same time, a

valuable resource and a disadvantage. Some branches have derived from the original project, and some problems arose during the period of the research. We dealt with these issues thanks to a very slow process of dialogue and thanks to a participatory approach.

### ***Methodological Tools.***

The major methodological tool used has been the interview. At this time, some interviews have been conducted - mainly with men. In the findings I will reflect on this imbalance. Those interviewed were selected by local people taking part in the research team. The main criteria for selection were people who had an ample knowledge of the river, the city and the crafts associated with it. According to these criteria, individuals interviewed were, among others: sailors, fishers, net manufacturers, the owner of a brick factory, and, finally, an older woman with ample knowledge of the river.

Interviews were always audio recorded and, in some cases, video recorded. They were also made by the same person in order to unify questions and discourse. Interviews were transcribed, and then analysed using the categories derived from the theoretical framework, and without using any computer programmes such as Atlasti, Nvivo or similar engines.

### **Findings: The listening**

In analysing the research, the systematising of selected categories, as explained in the theoretical framework, allows us to classify not only the responses in the interviews, but also to organise other diverse materials such as pictures, artefacts, etc.

Deriving from this, it is possible to reflect on the relationship between the river and people's identities. I have called it "the listening phase" because the listening is the first stage in Thematic Research around thematic complexes drawn upon by Freire (1970). In this respect, the research team considered that the first moment of the research must also be the moment for recovering people's stories and memories.

In the next section, I present briefly the first six categories that have been extracted from the analysis of the interviews which were conducted.

### ***The lost words***

In the very beginning of 'The Age of Revolution' (Spanish edition, 2001) the historian Eric Hobsbawm explained how this time of profound changes in western societies can be also remembered for new words that appeared and today are common in our languages. Words such as: industry, railways, working-class, etc.

The traditional crafts in C. have a number of specific words for designating some tasks. For instance, the owner of a brick factory explains the reason for calling the mud "fish".

*[The mud] was shared in boards where it was cut with an 'esteron' [a kind of big box to recover and transport fish] This 'esteron' was the same used to extract the fish from the boats and this is the reason that the mud [extracted from the river] is called "fish".*

These kinds of expressions are being lost. "Will there be things lost with the passing of time?" another person being interviewed wondered.

Thinking in terms of crafts, it is possible to find similar situations. An example could be the word 'barranquero', which referred to the man who knew how to cut, make holes and extract the mud from ravines near the river. The loss of this craft is also the loss of this word. As Saramago (2015) stated, first we lost the people (*people who left the community or died taking the skills with them*) then the craft and finally the word.. The three are intertwined, with the loss of the craft and related words meaning the loss of an important aspect of the people's identities.

On other occasions it is not possible to understand the discourse without explanation.

*'Chupones' are boats, or rather, only one boat, we are going to talk about only one... so one or two, it is like a big steamer and it is ready to suck sand.*

According to Gelpi, (2008) diversity is an broad concept with a lot of meanings, one of which is related to language. We have lost languages and expressions and this means, among other things, that there is a homogenisation of the language which means a homogenisation of thoughts. It is also coherent with Labov's

works (1987) which demonstrate that the use of the language in some specific contexts can also change the language. I shall return to this issue in the conclusion.

### ***Crafts of our fathers***

In traditional societies, crafts are transmitted in familial networks “*that have been transmitted from fathers to sons, you know?*” This process also establishes close relationships between different crafts. “*I started to work as a carpenter with my uncle*” a fisherman explained. Crafts also are a kind of legacy from fathers to sons.

*I was born in a fishing family, in C. My father died when I was young, my mother became a widow with 8 sons. My oldest brother became responsible for the family. We inherited a little fishing boat from my father. Of course my brother started to work in it. I was 11 or 12.*

In these familial conditions the learning of a craft is a lengthy process without entailing the earning of a salary.

*My father took me out [of school] to learn the craft with my uncle, without earning anything and I told my father ‘Dad, I work more than my cousins and much more than everyone but I don’t earn anything.’*

There also was confusion between the role of father and the role of boss - which we can consider different than in our societies: “*I went to work with my father. My father was the master and I was the sailor*”.

Other individuals tried to escape from this situation with specialised training. “*I got a diploma as a second naval mechanic*”. It seems that this enabled people to pull out from under the pressures of family relationships, but it can also be considered as one of the reasons for the death of the village and the birth of the city as I will present in the next section.

To conclude, it is also important to stress that the fact that crafts were linked to family relationships means also the loss of traditional crafts when these bonds are broken.

*Look! There is my son [...] with me is the end [the son is coming] he is an industrial engineer, and doesn't want to know anything about it.*

*No, my sons didn't want to know. They didn't want...*

*So... [sigh]*

*Cosmopolitanism: The death of the village and the birth of the city*

In 'What is Globalisation' (Spanish edition, 1998) Ulrich Beck talks about cosmopolitanism as one of the characteristics of globalisation processes. Cosmopolitanism is related to, among other things, the ease of changing the place of residence, moving from one place to another. In the case of C., cosmopolitanism can be situated between the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, and is related to the construction of an important shipyard in the city of S.

*The Gutierrez Perez neighbourhood was born from this, was it not? This is in relation to economic growth and dormitory towns, right?*

This cosmopolitanism is also related to the accreditation of some skills and competences as valid diplomas for moving to a wider labour market, as we have seen above. "I left the river and went to Cadiz", explained a person who specialised in naval mechanics. One other person said: "I was in Iran, then I was in Israel too, with dredging too, I have been in France and in Morocco". And another one explained "We were in Iran, we were doing works in Argelia, and we were in Israel"

It looks that there was a sort of exodus of craftsmen - mainly affecting the shipyard, but also other places. This could be one of the reasons for the death of the traditional village, and the traditional society - based on a local economy focused on the river - and the birth of a dormitory town where the traditional identity is under threat.

### ***This River that brings us***

In 'The River that brings us' (2003), the Spanish novelist Jose Luis Sampedro tells the history of lumberjacks that transported timber in the Tajo River in the 1950s. For these men the river was their life and the construction of a weir - at that moment one of the biggest in all of Europe - meant the end of their work.

From then on, the timber would be transported by railway or across roads by trucks.

In C., the river has been a motorway with a high volume of people – from C. to the nearest beach of SB at the mouth of the river, or workers from C. to the Island when the rice is harvested.

*People went more comfortably, you know. In those times, not every worker had money, the most important thing was to go to SB, to spend a couple or three days... eh! And then they returned again in the boat. You know how transportation was in the past!*

However, the most important thing was the movement of goods. It can be said, in this regard, that important commerce – mainly centred on salt – was taking place from SB to S. As well, goods and food were transported from S. and C. to the Island. Sometimes commerce and transportation went beyond S. up the river. In fact, some individuals changed their work from fishing to transporting sand or gravel.

*Yes, it was a boat that... in the past there weren't roads to the Island and then it had some little boats to take food and everything they needed in the Island because it was not possible to go by alternative means [than the river] ... it was... I don't know... rice growers managed everything by way of the river.*

### **The Twilight Zone**

When I was a child, there was a TV programme called 'The Twilight Zone'. It was about the unknown - strange things that happened, without explanation, in this world or maybe in others. I have felt that there is a similarity between this idea of the twilight zone and the views of many people about the river. In C., the river is responsible for some contradictory feelings. On the one hand, it was one of the main sources of richness and work: brick, pottery, agriculture, fishing, shipbuilding. But, on the other, people usually turn their backs on the river because it is a mysterious place causing diseases, death,

The Guadalquivir River, when crossing C., has, at least, two main twilight zones.



The first provides the feeling of being on a frontier to the unknown: the marsh.

*Here started a physical border. From here on, down the river it was the marsh [...] of the mosquito diseases.*

There were mosquitoes... people had to work along the river to grow rice and some tourists died because of mosquito bites...they became swollen.

The second is the fear of the river itself - a kind of reverential fear that underlies the prohibition of bathing.

*Sure! Of course, you had a sure beating.... If your father knew that you had gone to the river to have a swim, if a friend [of the father] saw you [bathing and told him] 'I saw your son in the river' the beating was certain.*

Finally, there is a kind of magic and fatalist view of the river as something that it is not possible to control. One instance would be the time when the river overflowed almost every winter

*Here you have your thirty cows in winter and then floods emerged from the river, and when you could get there [to the place where the cows were] there were no more cows.*

### ***In the darkness***

In a previous research study on fishing villages (Lucio Villegas, 2006) I stressed the importance that women play in social and economic activities. It was very strange, in this case, that women were conspicuous by their absence. When I asked for a relative of individuals to be interviewed, none of those singled out were women. I insisted and the response – including responses from people working in a municipal women's centre – was that historically women only worked in olive warehouses and factories in a nearby city called H., on the other side of the river.

But, in reality, there were women who played specific roles in work at the time being studied. On the one hand, they are net manufacturers.

*The nets that were made, they were made by women...  
Then men assembled the nets because women, maybe,*

*put the nets together, piece by piece and then you have to put the 'trallas', put the weight, put the float, and mount them. These things were done by men.*

And they are also involved in the selling of fish,

*I remember that fish were taken to the fish market. We referred to the slaughterhouse in C. as the fish market, where we took the fish to sell. Perhaps you were not able to sell all the fish and some fish were left over. So the women would go out to the streets [to sell fish].*

Whatever the case, there are hitherto few testimonies from women. The most important thing is that they were historically present, and it is now possible to start knowing something more about their role during this period.

### **Conclusions**

A few points emerge from this research.

First of all, one can point to the contradictory feelings that people face with regard to the river. The river is the source of life but, at the same time, it is a dangerous place and would better be avoided. One can dare say that, at times, the production system is cut off from quotidian life. The river is viewed more as an enemy than as a source of work and richness. This view can well explain why the inhabitants abandoned their lives on the river. In investigating these beliefs one can help people to shift from a magical consciousness to a critical one (Freire, 1970) or, to use Gramscian terminology, to move from 'common sense' to 'good sense.' With this view in mind, we are trying to undertake a process of Participatory Research that would hopefully enable people to reflect on these matters.

A second issue is connected with modernisation processes. It seems that some of the most profound changes that the village experienced concern the shift from a rural society to an industrial and urban one. The incorporation of the artisans to work in the shipyard in Seville and in other jobs around the world provided an opportunity for people to obtain more secure jobs, increase their salary and, in economic terms, improve their quality of life. Life in a globalised world has ramifications for community life. In this time of economic crisis, having a job has become one of the most important things in people's lives.

The challenge here is to determine how to preserve a traditional production system while simultaneously guaranteeing both jobs and quality of life. This happens in a globalised world that seems to impinge on the community's life-world in the same way that an overflow of the river does. This is connected to processes of social change that have occurred in the village in the last sixty years. They are, mainly related to industrialisation processes – the construction of a shipyard in the city of S., or the pollution of the river, "*fishing ended when washing machines appeared*" as one person put it.

Culture is closely linked to language. Subordinate culture is reflected, among other things, in language (Diaz Salazar, 1991). If words are lost, we are losing an important part of this popular culture that, in this case, is represented by a specific and technical oral language. But the most important thing here is that these words reside in the collective memory and in the cultural identity of the communities. In preserving these words and the language containing them, one is preserving the creativity of the community and their identity because words express the world of individuals and communities. The question that arises here is: how to preserve orality in a society that always reinforces reading and writing? On the other hand, an official grammar has its set of politics linked to the dominant culture. As Gramsci (in Manacorda, 1976) stated: "Written normative grammar always means an 'election', a cultural direction, so, it always represents a political act of national-cultural policy" (p. 335, quotation marks in the original). To preserve the subaltern language is to confront these hegemonic relations.

The processes of Popular Education have to be rooted in the interest and curiosity of the people and should produce 'really useful knowledge' for individuals and communities. In this case, 'really useful knowledge'<sup>2</sup> concerning history entails knowledge of the community's history and understanding the present by knowing about the past. I think that this may allow people to be situated in their community and society, thus offering pathways for resistance and social transformation, as well as earning a living on their own terms.

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<sup>2</sup> "*Really useful knowledge*" is a term which owes its origin to workers' education in the early nineteenth century, knowledge useful to them in the context of class struggle in contrast to knowledge which suited the capitalist class.

In a society when every procedure is standardised, to safeguard creativity seems to be an important element in guaranteeing people's development. In this sense, this research attempts to recover the creativity that underlies the traditional crafts because it is a creativity that resides in the community too. Crafts are always associated with a community. By recovering and maintaining these traditional crafts, maybe only for leisure, it may be possible to potentiate the traditional knowledge and people's resources. Against the standardisation imposed by a stultifying Lifelong Learning policy-making process, inhibiting the scope of adult education, we have to reconstruct local cultural identities that enable people to become social actors and therefore protagonists of their lives.

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**IN MEMORIAM**

**TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF PAULO FREIRE'S  
DEATH (1997-2017)**

**FREIRE'S RELEVANCE FOR UNDERSTANDING  
COLONIALISM**

**Peter Mayo**

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**ABSTRACT** This article pays tribute to Paulo Freire (1921-1997) on the 20th anniversary of his death (1997-2017). Rather than provide a comprehensive discussion around his ideas from writings spanning around almost thirty years, it focuses on one aspect of his body of work. It is that aspect that closely falls within the purview of this journal: colonialism. The emphasis is on the 'oppressor consciousness' and cultural invasion as they are relevant discussions around colonialism, both in terms of direct colonialism and neo-colonialism. The paper also builds on this theme to address the complex issue of language in postcolonial contexts.

**SUMMARJU** Dan l-artiklu jaghti gieħ lil Paulo Freire (1921-1997) fl-ghoxrin anniversarju mill-mewt tiegħu (1997-2017). Flok jaghti ħarsa komprensiva lejn il-kunċetti ewlenin tiegħu li żviluppa fil-kitbiet f'medda ta' kważi tletin sena, l-artiklu jiffoka fuq aspekk wieħed mix-xogħol ta' Freire. Dan l-aspekk għandu x'jaqsam b'mod dirett mas-sugġett ta' speċjalizzazzjoni ta' din ir-rivista, jigi f'forma ta' l-kolonjalizmu. L-artiklu jillimita ruħu għat-temi tal-'kuxjenza tal-oppressur' (l-oppressur intern) u 'l-invażjoni kulturali' billi juri kif dawn jintrabtu ma' diskussjonijiet dwar kolonjalizmu dirett u neo-kolonjalizmu. Jieħu spunti minn dawn it-temi biex jiżviluppa diskussjoni dwar il-kwistjoni kumplessa tal-lingwa f' kuntesti postkolonjali.

**KEYWORDS** colonialism, neo-colonialism, oppressor consciousness, cultural invasion, language, creole

## **Introduction**

Tuesday 2nd May 2017 marked the twentieth anniversary of the death of Paulo Freire, one of the previous century's most revered political and pedagogical thinkers whose influence continues to be felt in various fields. Freire's impact on pedagogy is well known but his influence is also strong in such areas as health work, social work, community development, cultural studies, communications, theology (Elias, 1994; Leopando, 2017), philosophy, and sociology. Most recently his work has been adopted with regard to analyses of literary classics (Roberts, 2010). Freire's influence in postcolonial studies is evinced by articles published in this journal. Enough has been written and continues to be written about Freire's basic political pedagogical philosophy. I shall therefore refrain from rehearsing the signature concepts involved. This issue also carries an article focusing on a Freirean analysis of 'Banking Education' viewed against the background of wider contemporary politics and policy making in education. As befits this journal, my tribute focuses on one specific aspect of Freire's writings - Colonialism.

The paper is based on the premise that colonialism or neo-colonialism takes many forms and comprises issues concerning a "heterogeneous set" of subaltern "subject positions" (Slemon, 1995, p. 45). Drawing on my own work (Mayo, 1995, 2004), I shall restrict myself, in this short tribute, to the following: (a) the concepts of 'oppressor consciousness' and 'cultural invasion', described in Carlos Alberto Torres' (2014) book on the 'Early Freire' and (b) the very complex issue of language in a post-independence, post-colonial situation.

These issues feature prominently in Freire's body of work and are discussed against contextual backgrounds where *direct* colonialism, in Edward Said's terms (Said, 1993, p.8), neo-colonialism and, to adopt Gramsci's perspective, 'internal-colonialism' make their presence felt, often in crude and exceedingly violent ways. Freire has also been made relevant to analyses of education in a specific situation of 'settler-colonialism' (Silwadi ad Mayo, 2014; Sperlinger, 2015). Elisabeth Lange (1996) discussed the notions of dependency (also analysed by Torres, 2014) and the roles of the colonial traditional / neo-colonial modernizing churches, as opposed to the 'prophetic church, in this context. The key text here is the chapter on these churches in Freire's *The Politics of Education*, translated by and strongly featuring Donaldo Macedo (Freire, 1985). The contrast lies between what Cornell West calls the 'Constantinean Church' (the 'Church of Empire') and the grassroots- oriented 'Prophetic Church' with its basis in Liberation Theology. The latter is a decidedly anti-

colonial theology born out of the most overtly colonised contexts which have moved from being directly colonised to being informally colonised by the superpower that is the USA and multinationals. Given the all pervasive colonial and neo-colonial nature of the different contextual backgrounds to Freire's work,<sup>1</sup> it is hardly surprising that his ideas are frequently presented as being immersed in a postcolonial politics. His is a brand of pedagogical politics for 'decolonising the mind', the first step towards which is that of *verstehen* (understanding) which takes the form of comprehending the nature of oppression and the way ideology operates to render human beings complicit in their own oppression and the oppression of others. The image of the oppressor is internalised by the oppressed (Freire, 1970, p. 30) which prevents the latter from contributing to resolving the oppressor-oppressed dialectical relation. This situation echoes Hegel's Master-Slave dialectic, reinvented dramatically by Samuel Beckett through the characters of Pozzo and Lucky<sup>2</sup> in the existentialist play, *En attendant Godot* (*Waiting for Godot*, in its English version – Beckett, 1956).

### **Divide et Impera**

Those who are oppressed in one context can be oppressors in others. In a colonial context this manifests itself in instances of 'divide and rule', a theme broached by Freire in the additional chapter to his original draft of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.<sup>3</sup>

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1 The difference in colonial control exerted over different countries is one of degree with many of the 'Third World' contexts, with which Freire engaged, being among the hardest hit in terms of colonial legacies, with class and indigeneity intersecting.

2 See Raymond Williams (1968, p. 346) on this.

3 Freire's original intention was to develop a book of three chapters which hold together, with a dialectical streak running through them. This plan changed as a result of the publishers' insistence that Freire should write and add a fourth chapter, in light of Frantz Fanon's and Albert Memmi's insights on colonialism and the work of other thinkers (see Schugurensky 2011 on this). I have always reckoned that the dialectical streak stops at the end of the third chapter as the fourth comes across as an 'add on' where themes like 'divide et impera', 'cultural invasion' itself and 'Unity for Liberation' are thrown in as if 'hanging on a line'. However some of the themes suit the colonial context of the discussion and can, with some imaginative 'piecing together', connect with the earlier ones developed in the first three profound chapters. Relating 'divide and rule' to the 'oppressor within' concept constitutes one example of tracing relations between different themes in the book.



Segmentation on racial/ethnic lines constitutes a key contemporary strategy of divide and rule predicated on the process of internalizing the oppressor's image. This becomes more important in a period of hegemonic globalisation where producers are segregated on ethnic and national lines. This is connected with the notion of the 'oppressor within', a situation evident, for instance, in the perpetration of acts of violence against people constructed as different and whose characteristics do not fall within eurocentric terms of reference.

### **Conquistador Mentality**

This situation applies to Western countries developing their economy on immigrant labour and at the same time being places where fear of and 'competition' against the 'Other' prevail. It also applies to countries such as Paulo Freire's native Brazil with its complex set of racial politics involving whites, positioning themselves as being of European stock, south-east Asians to a limited extent, blacks and indigenous people. The last mentioned are still among the greatest victims of rapacious capitalist speculation in areas such as the Amazon. They are victims of the sort of contemporary atrocities which Eduardo Galeano saw as a continuation of the old 'Conquistador' mindset (Galeano, 2009). Freire's chilling account of and reflection on the wanton killing of a Pataxo Indian, Galdino Jesus dos Santos, in a piece included in the posthumous collection of essays grouped together under the title *Pedagogia da indignação* (Pedagogy of Indignation) (Freire, 2000), highlights the continuation of barbarous racist acts in Brazil. This particular crime is an example of the oppressor consciousness residing within people who use white supremacy as a means of positioning themselves against *alterity*. It gives them that sense of 'positional superiority', to use Said's pervasive term (Said, 1978), that would allow a few of them to kill fellow humans for their sport, like 'flies to wanton boys' in Shakespeare's famous line from *King Lear*.

Violent, racist, sexist, cross-tribal, anthropocentric<sup>4</sup> and homophobic acts are examples of the kinds of behaviour that indicate the presence of the 'oppressor's image' inside the oppressed. Again, this behaviour can be encouraged by a colonial strategy of 'divide and rule' (Freire, 1970, p. 137).

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<sup>4</sup> This includes wanton killing of animals, insects (as in the line from Shakespeare), and birds – a contradiction in the illustrations in Freire's early work (Freire 1993) with their machista images of hunting – the conquest of nature.

One can point, as a relatively recent example, from among the many similar examples throughout history, to the inter-tribal carnage in the 1990s resulting from the Belgian colonial pitting of Tutsis and Hutus against each other in Rwanda.

The situation is exacerbated by the process of what Freire calls 'cultural invasion' – the colonisation of "the mental universe" of the colonized, in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (1981, p. 16) words. This is banking education on a large scale. It was historically characterized by the direct imposition of the 'cultural arbitrary' (cultural interests and choices) of the colonizers in most sites where 'official knowledge' (Apple, 1993) was imparted, schools in particular. The process of 'Anglicisation' in the British colonies is an obvious example. Nowadays, cultural invasion is manifest primarily by that all pervasive type of Western Eurocentric neo-colonialism we call, echoing Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 'hegemonic globalisation', in recognition of the presence of an alternative type of globalisation: 'globalisation from below'.<sup>5</sup> It is also present in the concomitant consumer culture ideology. 'Cultural invasion' was the process by which certain Africans saw themselves as 'Black Europeans' or, in Frantz Fanon's terms, 'Black skins in white masks.' It refers to the situation which has led people from my native country, Malta, to play down the strong Arab element, if not Islamic element, that is part of the country's history, and all this to emphasise the country's purportedly uninterrupted 'Christian lineage' and 'European vocation.' All this can be read as part of a process in which certain formerly directly colonized subjects desire to be identified with and assimilated within the centres of Eurocentric colonial power.

Of course discussions in each of these contexts become more complex when one recognizes hybridization as a feature of postcolonial life, including resistances, assimilation and appropriation. The French term *metissage* is an intriguing concept in this regard (see Tarozzi and Torres, 2016, p. 48).

### **Fear of Freedom**

Echoing Fromm, Freire goes on to maintain that, under these conditions of prescription and cultural invasion/dependency, freedom can become a fearful thing for the oppressed. People

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<sup>5</sup> One must be wary of providing binaries here as the two often intersect, for example: using the tools of hegemonic globalisation such as the internet to get different activists interacting in the build up to such events as a street protest or world social forum.

can be so domesticated that any activity entailing creativity can appear to them to constitute a journey into the unknown. As Freire has argued, creativity involves risk taking (Freire, in Freire and Macedo, 1987, p. 57), with the immediate connotations here being different from those attached to Ulrich Beck's concept of a contemporary 'risk' society. Risk-taking is something in which many formerly oppressed persons are reluctant to indulge having been immersed in the 'culture of silence'. 'Can the country survive as an independent nation?' was the frequently asked question I came across in the build up to the withdrawal of the UK armed forces from Malta in 1979. I often hear the same thought among Scots in light of Brexit and the possibility of another referendum on whether Scotland should remain within the Union (this in a country which has much more natural resources than Malta, the latter currently enjoying a buoyant economy and good standard of living).

The fear of 'liberation' and the unknown is very much part of the colonial form of Banking Education, one of Freire's most famous concepts, echoing Dewey's 'pouring in', where prescription is the order of the day and where the cultures and creative spirits of the colonized are denigrated and constructed as inferior to those of the colonizers and their comprador elites. It is for this reason, to give one example, that the 'New Jewel' Government in revolutionary Grenada insisted on a policy intended to 'Grenadise Grenadians.' This was intended not to develop an insular nationalism but to instil worth and pride among the formerly directly colonized people. (Hickling-Hudson, 1997) It was intended to help people gain the confidence necessary to partake of the development process, and do so in a conscious manner, asking the question: development for whom? This echoes the kind of reflection at the heart of Freire's central pedagogical and philosophical notion of *praxis*. Praxis entails action-reflection for transformative action, the process being not sequential but dialectical (Allman, 1999).

### **The Language Question**

There is of course another aspect of Freire's writings which would be of particular concern to activists/adult educators engaging in postcolonial politics. This is the language issue. Freire argues that not all that pertains to the colonial experience is irrelevant to the new postcolonial context. This point becomes all the more valid when one considers that hybridization is a feature of the colonial power-resistance experience. A Gramscian 'war of position' involving critical appropriation occurs on different

fronts. Freire refers to the knowledge of the colonizer's language as beneficial in the postcolonial situation of such former Portuguese colonies as Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau or São Tome e Principe or Mozambique. For instance, where and when different languages are used by different tribes, the colonial language can serve as a 'lingua franca'.

Of course, the language issue in former direct colonies remains complex, as the colonizing standard language becomes a source of social differentiation between groups and classes, even though, in small states, it serves as a language of international currency, therefore being an economic asset. I would submit, however, that the language needs to be taught differently from the way it was taught under direct colonial conditions. In former British colonies, the emphasis would no longer be placed on 'Anglicisation' and English language teaching as a 'civilising mission,' with its connotation of constructing that which is native/indigenous as 'uncivilised, but on language learning as a liberating experience.

Language education policies would, in a postcolonial context, include teaching/learning the national-popular or tribal languages and literacies which in countries like mine were once referred to as the *volgare* (vulgar language [sic]). Learning the native alongside the colonizing language can well form part of a bicultural education, as advocated by a leading critical pedagogue of Freirean inspiration, Antonia Darder, with regard to Latino and Latina education in the USA (2011). The colonizing language would, from a Freirean perspective, need to be taught in a problematising manner, in which its historical and socio-political roles are addressed; problematising entails learning together how ideology, including colonial ideology, resides in languages – a far cry from the colonial and neo-colonial way of teaching languages till this very day (see discussions around TESOL among immigrants). It also entails learning the role which, in the case of English, the colonising language plays as a hegemonic force (Macedo, Dendrinis and Gounari, 2003). An education predicated on *praxis* entails this approach. Freire (1978) paraphrases Amilcar Cabral when stating "Language is one of culture's most immediate, authentic and concrete expressions" (p. 184) There are echoes here of Marx and Engels' statement in *The German Ideology* to the effect that language is "practical consciousness" which is as old as consciousness itself. (Marx and Engels, 1970, p. 51)

### **National-popular languages**

Giving importance, in the process of praxis, to indigenous languages, and especially national-popular languages, when they exist, becomes key in light of the strong relationship existing between language and consciousness and between language and one's view of the world, as Gramsci argued in the latter case. Freire insisted that the "so-called failure" of his work in Guinea Bissau was the result of the use of Portuguese "as the only vehicle of instruction" throughout the campaign (Freire, in Freire and Macedo, 1987, p.114). Echoing Pierre Bourdieu, he stated that this use renders the coloniser's language a form of 'cultural capital', the vehicle for reproducing the kind of class (and I would add: tribal) stratification associated with the previous colonial order (Freire, in Freire and Macedo, 1987, pp. 110-111). This explains his advocacy of bilingual/cultural language involving the indigenous (Creole in Guinea Bissau's case, although not all sectors of the population have access to this hybrid language) and the colonizers' language. These are to be learnt in a problematising manner and for the purpose of not constraining people to remain at the margins of political life.<sup>6</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Language issues in former direct colonies, as with most postcolonial issues in general, remain complex. Together with and drawing on other writers, Paulo Freire helps us steer a route through this complexity. This is why his ideas continue to inspire writers, educators and countless other cultural workers twenty years after he passed away.

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## **ERNESTO CHE GUEVARA: IN MEMORIAM 50 YEARS ON**

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**ABSTRACT** This article pays tribute to Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara fifty years following his execution in the village of La Higuera in Bolivia and the subsequent exposure of his body at the Ospedal La Virgen de Malta in the city of Vallegrande, also in Bolivia. It reveals the making of this revolutionary, quoting extensively from people like Fidel Castro who were very close to Che. It concludes with the implications of Che’s work for education.

**Keywords** imperialism, education, economics, oppression, liberation

Ernesto Che Guevara was captured at Quebrada del Churo in Bolivia in the afternoon of October 8, 1967 and was shot dead in captivity in the school building at La Higuera on October 9. 2017 is the fiftieth year of his martyrdom for the cause of the oppressed people of Bolivia and the entire population of the global south. How did the world feel about his loss at the time of his death? Let me quote John Gerassi : “On October 9, 1967, the first news of Ernesto Che Guevara’s alleged death reached the United States. The next day, as I was about to enter my classroom at San Francisco State College to teach my course on Nationalism and Revolution in the Third World, I was approached by a nineteen year-old co-ed student. She had tears in her eyes and a “Make Love Not War” button on her breast.” You don’t really believe it, do you?” she asked. “I mean, he couldn’t really be dead, could he ?”

“Naturally, we spent the class period talking about Che, his guerrilla warfare concepts, and his personal commitments.



No one really believed at that time – neither the sixty students in the class, nor I – that he was dead. What was amazing , however , was that no one wanted to believe it.

“To my knowledge there were no conservatives in the class. But there were many liberals and many pacifists , in addition to radicals. And yet to all, even if they disagreed with his tactics, the news of Che’s possible death was very upsetting and very personal. Che had obviously caught their imagination”( Gerassi, 1968, p.1).

Today, fifty years from that date, Che has become an icon, recognized all over the world through Alberto Korda’s photograph, a symbol of the oppressed, persecuted and humiliated. Camilo Guevara , Che’s son, wrote “ October 9— In that poor, little school- house of La Higuera, a small space confines one of the most consequential human beings ever known. A great man patiently waits for death. The order to murder him comes from Washington; the underlings duly obey and with one bullet after another steal the vigor from the guerrilla fighter’s body, a sad and terrible error. He states that, contrary to the executioners’ will, Che became a hardened symbol of resistance, a “symbol of the fight for what is just, of passion, of the necessity of being fully human, multiplied infinitely in the ideals and weapons of those who struggle” ( Preface by Camilo Guevara, in Guevara, 2006, p.7). We can also add that he became a symbol of postcolonial resistance and renewal.

### **Che’s Anti-imperialism**

Fidel Castro delivered a speech in memory of Ernesto Che Guevara at the Plaza de la Revolucion on October 18, 1967. He said,” Tonight we are meeting to try to express, in some degree, our feelings towards him who was one of the closest, the most admired, the most beloved, and without doubt, the most extraordinary of our revolutionary comrades : to express our feelings for him and for the heroes who have fought with him and fallen with him, his internationalist army that has been writing a glorious and never-to-be-effaced historical epic” (Gerassi, 1968, p. 433).

He continued by stating that Che was “filled with a profound spirit of hatred and loathing for imperialism, not only because

his political awareness was already considerably developed, but also because shortly before he had had the opportunity of witnessing the criminal imperialist intervention in Guatemala through the mercenaries who aborted the Revolution in that country. A man like Che did not require elaborate arguments. It was sufficient for him to know that there were men determined to struggle against that situation, arms in hand, it was sufficient for him to know that those men were inspired by genuinely revolutionary and patriotic ideals. That was more than enough. And so, one day at the end of November, 1956, he set out on the expedition toward Cuba with us” (Gerassi, 1968, p.434).

### **Soldier and Doctor**

Fidel reveals how they emerged victorious from the first battle, with Che being both a soldier and doctor among the troops. He states that they came through the second victorious battle, and lauds Che for being not only a soldier but the “most outstanding soldier in that battle”, achieving one of those singular feats for which he became renowned. Castro adds “Our forces continued to develop, and we faced another battle of extraordinary importance at that moment. The situation was difficult.” He states that the information they had was erroneous in many ways as they had to attack, in broad daylight, “at dawn, a strongly defended, well-armed position at the edge of the sea.” The enemy troops were right behind. In that confusing situation, Castro added that they had to call for a supreme effort by the revolutionary troops. “Comrade Juan Almeida had taken on one of the most difficult missions, but one of our flanks remained completely without forces; one of the flanks was left without an attacking force, placing the operation in danger. And at that moment, Che, who was still functioning as our doctor, asked for two or three men, among them one with a machine gun, and in a matter of seconds, rapidly set off to assume the mission of attack from that direction.”

Castro revealed how, on that occasion, Che proved to be not only an outstanding combatant but also an outstanding doctor, attending both the wounded comrades and the wounded enemy soldiers. “After all the weapons had been captured and it became necessary to abandon that position, undertaking a long return march under the harassment of diverse enemy forces, it was necessary for someone to stay behind with the wounded, and Che stayed with the wounded. Aided by a small

group of soldiers, he took care of them, saved their lives and later rejoined the column with them” (in Gerassi, 1968, p.434).

### **The Foreigner in Cuba**

Fidel said that Che’s principal characteristic was his willingness to volunteer instantly for the most dangerous mission. This naturally aroused admiration. This was, according to Castro, enhanced by recognition of the fact that here was a combatant who had not been born in Cuba. Castro acclaimed him as “a man of profound ideas, a man whose mind stirred the dream of struggle in other parts of the continent and who was, nonetheless, so altruistic, so disinterested, so willing to always do the most difficult things, to constantly risk his life... an incomparable leader. Che was from a military point of view, an extraordinarily capable man, extraordinarily courageous, extraordinarily aggressive.” Castro did underline that his Achilles’ heel, as a guerilla, was his possession of an excessively aggressive quality with an absolute contempt for danger ( Fidel Castro, in Gerassi, 1968, p.435).

“The enemy believes,” says Fidel, “it can draw certain conclusions from his death. Che was a master of warfare! He was a virtuoso in the art of guerrilla struggle! And he showed that an infinite number of times. But he showed it especially in two extraordinary deeds.” He points to his role in the invasion of Cuba from the *Granma*, in which Che led a column pursued by thousands of enemy soldiers. This occurred across a flat and absolutely unknown terrain. With Camilo Cienfuegos, Che achieved “an extraordinary military accomplishment.” The second was the “lightning campaign” in the province of Las Villas mounting the now famous and audacious attack on the city of Santa Clara. He entered the city, defended by tanks, artillery, and several thousand infantry, with a column of around three hundred men (Castro, in Gerassi, p.435).

Summing up the revolutionary qualities of Che, Fidel said, “If we wish to express what we expect our revolutionary combatants, our militants, our men to be, we must say without hesitation: ‘Let them be like Che!’ If we wish to express what we want the men of future generations to be, we must say: ‘Let them be like Che!’ If we wish to say how we want our children to be educated, we must say without hesitation: We want them to be educated in Che’s spirit! If we want the model of a man who

does not belong to our time, the model of a man who belongs to the future, I say from the depths of my heart that such a model, without a single stain on his actions, is Che! If we to express what we want our children to be, we must say from our very hearts as ardent revolutionaries : ‘We want them to be like Che!’ (Gerassi,p.441). As a revolutionary general, however, if he was extraordinary, he was equally marvelous in the post-revolution construction of socialism.

### **Cuba’s construction of Socialism**

It is worth quoting from a brilliant researcher, Helen Yaffe, from the London School of Economics, who has done pioneering work investigating Che’s contribution to the construction of socialism in Cuba. She writes, “The problem facing the Cuban Revolution after 1959 was how to increase productive capacity and labour productivity in conditions of underdevelopment and in transition to socialism, without relying on capitalist mechanisms that would undermine the formation of a new consciousness and of social relations integral to socialism. Guevara set out to meet this challenge.” She argues that, far from Che projecting the image of the romantic guerrilla fighter or the idealist dreamer, he was an “intellectual who studied Karl Marx’s *Capital* with scientific rigour.” She reveals that his practical policies derived from three lines of enquiry, namely deep study and knowledge of “Marx’s analysis of the capitalist system; engagement in contemporary socialist political economy debates; recourse to the technological and administrative advances of capitalist corporations.” She argues that Guevara challenged the manner in which Marxism had been interpreted and applied in the Soviet bloc, condemned the USSR’s dogmatism and helped develop an alternative Cuban economic management system. She goes on to state that, by virtue of his systematic critique of the Soviet political economy, he concluded, around 1966, that without a dramatic change in policy, the Soviet Union risks embracing capitalism (Yaffe, 2009, p.2).

She also pointed out that, between 1959 and 1961, Guevara played a central role in driving through the structural changes which transformed Cuba from a semi-colonial underdeveloped country to an independent state being integrated into the socialist bloc. She states that his military, political and economic experiences contributed towards the creation, from 1961 to 1965, of the Budgetary Finance System (BFS) of economic

management through the Ministry of Industries (MININD) ... “The system was the fruit of dynamic interaction between theory and practice, emerging first as a practical measure to solve concrete problems in industry, but gaining a theoretical base as Guevara immersed himself in the study of Marxism, initiating the Great Debate in 1963 about which economic management system was appropriate to Cuba. Based on the productive and managerial techniques of US corporations, the BFS was an economic management system unique to socialism.” (Yaffe, 2009, p.2)

### **The constant learner/educator**

Yaffe also revealed that Guevara’s commitment to constant learning led to education being an intrinsic part of revolutionary formation. He delivered literacy classes and general education among his troops and locals people during non-combat periods. She reveals that he studied “Cuban history, war strategy, and about the Mambisi resistance to Spanish colonists, and then would teach others, reading in groups and discussing the material.” Guevara was well versed in Neruda’s poetry which he shared with young soldiers. Education among the army was formalized in the first days of January 1959; the La Cabana fortress in Havana was transformed into Ciudad Libertad (Freedom City). Che is said to have “invited teachers and other university graduates, members and supporters of the M26J and the Popular Socialist Party (PSP) to provide literacy and political education for his column” (Yaffe, 2009, p. 75). The great Cuban literacy campaign in 1960 culminated from this initiative. Over 300,000 Cubans, including 100,000 students, many in their early teens, travelled across Cuba teaching 700,000 people to read and write.

### **A meteoric exemplary life**

I would also like to quote from Michael Lowy’s classic *The Marxism of Che Guevara*, first published in 1973 and reissued later with an introduction by Peter McLaren, the latter having authored a book comparing Che’s revolutionary ideas with those of Paulo Freire (McLaren, 2000). Lowy says in his introduction, “His life was certainly a quite remarkable one: from the asthmatic medical student in Buenos Aires to the guerrilla commander, from the fighter in the Sierra Maestra to the Chairman of the National Bank of Cuba, and finally, from the Minister of Industries to the *guerrillero* hunted down and killed in Bolivia through the

efforts of the CIA. It was a vivid, meteoric, exemplary life – the life of a man whom Sartre described as ‘the most complete man of his time’, one who can easily be compared to the giants of the Renaissance for the stupendous many-sidedness of his personality: doctor and economist, revolutionary and banker, military theoretician and ambassador, deep political thinker and popular agitator, able to wield the pen and the sub-machine gun with equal skill. The extra-ordinary character of this life, without precedent in the history of the twentieth century, accounts for and illuminates the rise of the Che myth: Che the romantic adventurer, the Red Robin Hood, the Don Quixote of Communism, the new Garibaldi, the Marxist Saint-Juste, the Cid Campeador of the wretched of the earth, the Sir Galahad of the beggars, the secular Christ, the San Ernesto de la Higuera revered by the Bolivian peasants, the Bolshevik devil-with-a-knife-between-his-teeth who haunts the dreams of the rich, the red ‘pyromaniac’ (*Der Spiegel*) kindling braziers of subversion all over the world ..” ( Lowy, 1973, p.7).

Lowy states further, “It is therefore necessary and urgent to suggest the initial outlines of a systematic study of Che’s thought, which is both orthodox Marxist and at the same time fiercely anti-dogmatic; rooted in the fertile soil of the Cuban Revolution and yet bearing a universal message; deeply realistic and yet animated by a powerful prophetic inspiration; scrupulously attentive to the concrete technical problems of financial administration or military tactics, but at the same time preoccupied with the philosophical questions implicit in the communist future; severe, inflexible, intolerant, irreconcilable on the plane of principle, but flexible, versatile, and capable of delicate variation as regards forms of application to a complex and changing reality” (Lowy, 1973, p.9).

With this aim, Lowy proceeds “to show that Guevara’s ideas constitute a coherent whole, and are built on the basic premises of Marxism-Leninism, their philosophical, humanistic, ethical, economic, sociological, political, and military themes all closely linked together.” (Lowy, 1973, p.9) He also wants to show “the relation between Che’s ideas and those of Marx and the different Marxist trends of our time, emphasizing the way in which Che’s ideas seem to me to transcend Stalinism and reformism, and go back to the living resources of revolutionary communism. Finally, I shall try to show how these ideas furnish

an original and stimulating theoretical contribution to Marxist thought, especially as regards three major problems: (1) the human significance of communism (2) the political economy of regimes in transition to socialism (3) the politico-military strategy of the revolution in the Third World.”(Lowy, 1973, p.9).

### ***Revolutionary Solidarity***

It would be appropriate now to reveal Che’s own view of revolutionary solidarity that he expressed in his message to the Tricontinental: “Our every action is a battle cry against imperialism, and a battle hymn for the people’s unity against the global enemy of mankind: the United States of America. Wherever death may surprise us, let it be welcome, provided that this, our battle cry, may have reached some receptive ear and another hand may be extended to wield our weapons and other men be ready to intone the funeral dirge with the staccato singing of machine-guns and new battle cries of war and victory” (Gerassi, 1968, p. 424)

### **Conclusion: anti-imperialist educator par excellence**

Che Guevara, as McLaren (2000) has shown, was the revolutionary, anti-imperialist educator par excellence. He underlined the importance of radical education within revolutionary action. In the tradition of other guerilla fighters cum educators, such as Nicaragua’s Augusto César Sandino, he sought to combine military training and combat with learning. He also regarded basic education, including literacy and health education, as the *sine qua non* of revolutionary activity among troops and the local population in ‘liberated zones’ during revolutionary, anti-imperialist wars. It is ironic that this charismatic figure, who championed revolution through armed struggle and educational efforts – arms, books and the pen – would have his life summarily terminated inside an elementary school in La Higuera where it is believed he asked to speak to the local teacher so that he could indicate to her the misspelled words he spotted on the board of the classroom where he awaited his fate (McLaren, 2000). Selling the poor and destitute short in different ways of life, including their education, constantly irked this Argentinean from Rosario who would champion the cause of the meek, who, he must have felt, should inherit the earth.

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## **CONFERENCE REPORT**

### **'Lifelong Learning in Developing Countries'** **Conference West Bengal, India,** **17-19 February**

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A 2-day International Conference, 'Lifelong Learning in Developing Countries: Issues and Perspectives', was organized by Kalyani University of West Bengal, India, on 17-19 February, 2017. The conference was attended by experts from U.S.A, Denmark, Malta, Norway and India. After the conference, the experts participated in a workshop in which a comprehensive curriculum for an MA in Lifelong Learning, to be offered by Kalyani University, was developed.

The conference was inaugurated by the Kalyani University Vice-Chancellor Prof. Sankar Kumar Ghosh. In his address, he emphasized the need for lifelong learning in India. He urged the participants to incorporate programmes for the superannuated too, since many of them had time and interest for learning an occupation of their choice.

The keynote address was delivered by Prof. Peter Mayo of the University of Malta. Prof Mayo tracked the development of the concept from the broad humanistic concept of lifelong education to the narrowly economic version of lifelong learning being promoted presently. He argued that for lifelong learning to genuinely serve its professed purpose, it needed to be holistic in the sense of being bio-centric in scope and purpose, recuperating the spirit of the old broad humanistic UNESCO literature. He then provided an historical account of this transformation.

Prof. Margaret Ledwith, Emeritus Professor at the University of Cumbria, who could not attend the conference physically, had sent her address which was read out by Prof. Asoke Bhattacharya, a leading member of the Organising Committee. Prof. Ledwith described, in her address, the role of community development which, she maintained, was a form of adult education in the community rooted in the pedagogy of Paulo Freire. Its intention was to bring about change for social justice, for a fair, just and environmentally sustainable future. Arguing that that neo-liberalism was a politics of greed over need, she warned the participants of the danger of neo-liberalism which was polluting the very concept of lifelong learning.

Prof. V.Reghu from Kerala University informed the audience of the successful implementation of primary education in the state of Kerala. He stated that lifelong learning was being successfully implemented there.

The welcome address was delivered by Prof. Prasenjit Deb, Head of the Department of Lifelong Learning and Adult Education at the University of Kalyani.

In the plenary sessions the experts from various countries presented their papers. This included Prof. Anders Holm of the University of Copenhagen, who spoke on Grundtvig's contribution to adult education; and Dr. Synnove Sakura Heggem from Norway, who also spoke on Grundtvig's contribution in the field of lifelong learning. She gave the examples of Grundtvig's heart-rhetorics. Dr.Marilyn Wilhelm from the United States, the founder of Wilhelm International school, spoke about education which provides a healing touch to the community.

Rev. Mette Geil of Denmark spoke of the first folk high school which was established in 1844. It was established with Grundtvig's inspiration and is still continuing its work in the field of lifelong learning. Prof. Brad Busbee, Head of the Department of English of the University of Samford, U.S.A., spoke about Grundtvig's use of Nordic Mythology and its relevance to lifelong learning. Other speakers included Prof. Adi Narayan Reddy, Head of the Department of Adult, Continuing Education and Extension, of S.V.University of Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh.

The workshop that followed was co-ordinated by Prof. Asoke Bhattacharya of Jadavpur University and Prof. Prasenjit Deb, Head of the of the Department of Lifelong Learning and Adult Education of Kalyani University. Prof Peter Mayo, with his vast knowledge and expertise on lifelong learning, guided the coordinators ably throughout the session. A comprehensive curriculum for the MA in Lifelong Learning was the outcome of the workshop.

Around 160 papers were presented in the conference.

The University arranged cultural programmes in the evening and sight-seeing tours at the end of the conference.

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