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Toward a Transformative Teaching Practice: Criticity, Pedagogy and Praxis

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Abstract: One method to teach a multicultural class: a teacher walks in to a room calls the class to order, steps to the lectern and begins to deliver knowledge. Socially acquired information is disseminated; that gained over years of study and experience. Another view: I walk into a class where my students are sitting quietly at their desks pen and paper at the ready and quietly ask: shall we form a circle? The students agree and after having done so I follow up with a generative (Freire, 1970): what are your current understandings of Diversity? In following the work of Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, bell hooks, and Maxine Greene among others I undertake an auto-critical approach to the classes I teach. It is a given for me that students bring knowledge to the table, my classes become our classes; we engage in dialogue to interrogate our subject matter: culture and schooling in societies. As the classes I teach are designed for future educators we engage our discussions to push pedagogy and transform teaching.

Keywords: Curriculum, Pedagogy, Transformative Teaching, Praxis

Introduction

THIS IS ONE method used to teach a multicultural class: a teacher walks into a room calls the class to order, steps to the lectern and begins to deliver knowledge. Socially acquired information is disseminated; that gained over years of study and experience. Another view: I walk into a class where my students are sitting quietly at their desks pen and paper at the ready and gently ask: shall we form a circle? The students agree and after having done so I follow up with a generative (Freire, 1970) question: what are your current understandings of diversity?

A teacher, I undertake a self-critical approach to the classes I teach; I implement a form of critical pedagogy in the everyday of the classroom experience (Chavez Chavez, 1995). It is a given for me that students bring knowledge to the table, the approach I take toward teaching and learning begins with that understanding; we find each other where we are in the human experience and go from there. I extend this position to include the language I use to write about the experience: my classes become our classes; we (the students and I) engage in dialogue to interrogate our subject matter: cultural diversity and schooling in societies.

Since the courses I teach are designed for future educators we use our discussions to push pedagogy, beyond the utilitarian, to transform teaching. Throughout this paper I will discuss pedagogy, teaching and learning, critical pedagogy and the pedagogy I practice with its implications for teacher education. In following the work of Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, bell hooks, and Maxine Greene among

others I will discuss what it means to me to teach, my critical self reflection over the course of nine months.

Forms of Teaching and Learning

Practicing the Traditional

For students and teachers entering a classroom is never easy. The classroom environment in post industrial schools is dangerous territory. It is a landscape (Marmon-Silko, 2000) where the linguistic and cultural learning experiences are worthwhile for some while for others they serve to marginalize, dehumanize (Freire, 1970) and oppress. Indeed the classroom has been likened to a minefield of sorts by such educators as Joe Kincheloe, Michael Apple, and Shirley Steinberg. The physical place however is empty, devoid of feeling or human emotion, right up to the point where people, those doing the teaching and learning, take up residence.

We come to the classroom to learn, experience, and grow. Yet what is often the case, students and teachers enter with the expectation that the learning process is one where an established system of action and experience will occur. As Freire posits, it is the teachers task to “fill the students (1970)” with a predetermined set of cultural signifiers, socio-cultural norms and empirical knowledge. In this form of teaching the students merely play a receptive or passive role (Bordieu, 1998; Foucault, 1980). They devour whatever the teacher has to offer. This “banking” concept of education (Freire, 1970) opposes any form of free inquiry; students are rewarded not by adding to the learning dynamic sharing their

own epistemic voices and experiences but by repeating verbatim what the teacher offers as the true knowledge of the world.

At risk for the students is whether or not they are held in esteem by their teacher and their peers in relation to the power structure of the classroom (Giroux, 1981, 1983; Kincheloe, 1993, 2004). In traditional education the teacher holds ultimate power and takes an authoritarian stance over what knowledge is valued and whose voice is heard, received and accepted by all involved. Many courageous students get up the nerve to speak their minds and brace themselves for a reaction that experience has taught them they can expect. If they utter what is expected, regurgitate the lesson or lessons of the day they are applauded, rewarded and envied by their teachers and their peers.

But, repetition and regurgitation do not cause reward to happen without cost. In not engaging, interrogating or critiquing what their teachers and peers have to say students give in to authoritarian ideology, (Freire, 1998), the power structure that as Apple, (2000), Giroux (1981) and Žižek (1998) have argued, sublimates itself into our consciousness. We accept it not because we believe in its truth or truths but because we have been trained to accept symbolism (McLuhan, 1967) and status. We accept as given the things of our living, the social structures we see every day and the icons that represent them; what Karel Kosik calls the “pseudo concrete” of our reality (1976).

From birth to death our day to day interactions make normal, massage us into believing and not challenging “the way things are” as reality. We know for instance what the iconic status of “authoritarianism” represents:

Authoritarianism of the minister, of the president, of the general, of the school principal, or of the university professor is the same as the authoritarianism of the worker, of the lieutenant, of the doorman or of the sergeant. Any ten centimeters of power between us easily becomes a thousand meters of power and arbitrary judgment (Freire, 1998, p. 65).

Why then should we engage, challenge, or critique the experiences of the day to day and as a consequence the experiences of schooling in the classroom?

Practice and Critical Consciousness

The classroom does not have to be a mine field where students leave the best of their human experience outside its doors. All free individuals women, men, children and adults, Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender, indeed all marginalized and minoritized

communities should feel free upon crossing its threshold to share and express their views, to engage, interrogate and critique subject matter in ways that support and push their own personal socio-historical and socio-cultural reality.

As free agents we continuously reconceptualize what it means to be a teacher and learner in all classrooms. Merely handing out memes (units of cultural knowledge) of information on ditto sheets or spouting pearls of wisdom does not constitute teaching, and, repeating all that has been said correctly does not constitute learning. Teaching and learning are interrelated dynamic processes; all who engage in the experiences are to some degree affected. How they are affected, whether or not they gain, or grow, in the process is related to the human relationships of teachers and learners, and the transactions that occur, or do not occur, in dialogue (Freire, 1970, 1998).

What for instance does it mean to a student when a teacher states, “get a pen and paper out,” do we signal the beginning of a conversation where students are free to add to the discourse their voice and opinion, or is it an authoritarian prompt; what will be said is considered important enough to record?

Becoming conscious in and of reality or realities has to do with the quality of the emerging relationships, cultivated by the teacher with the students, and the ways they position themselves in the classroom from day one. There is a chasm that must be crossed in conducting class via the seminar or the cultural circle, rather than in rows where the teacher takes up the lectern and dictates information to the students (Hayes, Bahruth & Kessler, 2006; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983; Kincheloe, 2004). The seminar or the cultural circle cannot be the only manifestation of a critically democratic pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983; Kincheloe, 2004). In authoritarianism the seminar and the cultural circle, to the participants, are merely *locus*, where they are, and not *conscientiae* or how they become more fully conscious of the world in internalizing or creating new knowledge.

The teaching dynamic hence serves to position students and teachers as subjects or objects in the learning experience. It is a critical understanding of the subject/object position that for students and teachers foments critical conversation, critical dialogue and what Freire calls *concientização*. In my view, this is a deep understanding of an experience, a socio-historical/socio-cultural reality or a system of ideas. Students know ideas are not only external in origin; they as free agents generate them and moreover can engage in their dissemination.

In relating to and with students to the Freirean notions of subjectivity and critical consciousness I must add the Socratic maxim “know thyself” but push beyond to, as Freire, Gay, hooks and others

have said, teachers must know their students, and know them in ways that penetrate the surface of quotidian experience. It is surprising what students will do when you recognize their human rights and they recognize their innate human freedom. Have you ever been rocked by something a teacher or student said or did in the classroom?

Practice and Critical Existentialism

The things we covet, material and social, in our day to day experiences with the world affect what we are willing to believe and thus how we are ideologized. This, the primal snare, is people grasping for things, things that give them comfort: human/material, or socially acquired capital (Arendt, 1998; Bourdieu, 1993; Žižek, 1998). It is belief and ideology, as we assume them, will affect the ways we are able to act in a society. Consider the following:

Case 1) A person walks into a bar intending to order a drink a fight erupts before him, soon he is engulfed by the contenders, what is he to do?
Case 2) A teacher is given an assignment by an administrator, teach to the test, the en vogue reading program or lesson of the day, what is she to do? We can make an argument that the man must enter the fight, leave the bar or observe the melee. After all he is merely observing, and not in the fight. Similarly we could argue that the teacher is employed by the organization, and therefore must act in accordance with the rules of the organization and do what the administrator wishes. She could also leave the school or she could be in the classroom and deliver the program; merely act as an observer. After all she does not have to take a position.

We do not come into the world lacking agency as Jean Paul Sartre (1957) Hannah Arendt (1998) and Maxine Greene (1998) argue, and as Americans and citizens of the world will recognize, men and women are born free to act. Human beings may take action in the world freely right up to the point where we immerse ourselves in the strictures of society. We ascend the social ladder or are pushed down, made subservient, via the positions allotted to us, as people recognize and make an issue of what they perceive as our race, class, ethnicity, gender, age, or sexual orientation, and those positions we choose to take as we decide for ourselves how to apply the above mentioned markers of culture to ourselves.

This is the human condition (Arendt, 1998) in two pieces: what we inherit, the socio-cultural, as we come into the world and what we adopt, the socio-political, of the systems of rules and governance of our social worlds that ensures or inhibits our freedom.

But, being in the world is not as simple as choosing to act out our inheritance or being human in ways that others will allow. Being human, acting human, and certainly “speaking human,” (Bahruth, 2007) is how we understand and compose, our personal and social identities. Our self and social identity, hence, are affected by 1) geography (where we are born and live out our lives), 2) history (how we are affected by the sum of our living experiences) and 3) how we are formed (by the consequence of our personal and social education in the world).

There are many that would reduce the act of teaching to the utilitarian, helping others to create workers for the social order, or the disciplinarian, funneling children and adults those that resist schooling (colonization) or malfunction in the society (workplace) toward the prison industrial complex. Being a teacher, being human, is understanding that teaching is a human condition and a human process. Those who dare teach (Freire, 1998), soon or late will be faced with a moral decision; we must ask ourselves: are we for humanity?, or are we for industry?

Practicing a Humanizing Pedagogy

Many scholars have answered the Freirean call to humanize Pedagogy. Among them are Gloria Ladson Billings, Henry Giroux, Lilia Bartolome and the recent work of Roberto Bahruth. For Giroux (1983) it is in radical pedagogy that the roles of the ideological and material conditions of society are illuminated. He argues for a radical pedagogy that seeks critical modes of schooling and alternative modes of education to ameliorate political and economic oppression (p. 235). Ladson Billings (1995) positions, what I view as a humanizing pedagogy with her students, culturally relevant teaching; she argues there are three essential criteria: “(a) students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order” (p. 160).

Bartolome (1994) suggests, in a vein similar to Ladson Billings, that a humanizing pedagogy value, “student’s background knowledge, cultures, and life experiences” it should create: “learning contexts where power is shared by students and teachers” (p. 190). It was in recognizing the words of his 4 year old son Stefan that Roberto Bahruth began calling adopting a “humanizing pedagogy” learning how to speak human (R. Bahruth, personal communication, October 20, 2008). Not mere discourse, learning how to speak human is finding ways to connect with our students, other human beings, through our actions in community, “ways of being that represent, kind-

ness, gentleness, peacefulness, a smile, eye contact, all deeply human gestures toward the other.” (Bahruth, 2007, p.9) Bahruth also argues:

Teachers should be human beings first, and the more humane we are with our students, the more effective we will be in helping them come to know what we feel is important. This of course, includes grammatical accuracy but it should not be at the expense of the continuous ontological development of learners and their teachers. We must teach to the heart as well as the head. (2000, p5)

One might expect those engaged in teacher education to understand what the research has been saying all along. As understood in contemporary society teaching teachers about pedagogy, especially a humanizing pedagogy, embraces the full scope of social action. It addresses asymmetrical relations of power (Bartolome, 1994; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983; Kincheloe, 2004). It is teaching as an inherently political action, (Freire, 1970, 1985, 1998; Giroux, 1983; Kincheloe, 2004). It promotes the dialogical relationships between teachers and students (Freire, 1998). It does not neglect the moral and social development of students (Dewey, 1938). And, it is understanding that teaching through and with your humanity is teaching with love (hooks, 1994; Freire, 1997; Fromm, 1956).

Unfortunately, what we encounter in the American Academy, and increasingly abroad, are teacher preparation programs that treat students as if they were merely objects being processed along an assembly line (Dewey, 1944). They are expected to memorize and regurgitate, ontologically light, the latest curricular and instructional methods, standardized lesson plans and content area knowledge, and apply them in their future classrooms. Can we then expect newly minted teachers to act in any way other than what they are taught? During the Nuremberg trials many former Nazi officials maintained that they were just following orders, should we also maintain that teachers just follow orders and teach the prescribed curriculum at all levels of teaching and learning?

Method and Practice

I undertook an auto-critical investigation of the classes I teach at Boise State University. My version of critical reflexivity, considering self and world and ways to make change, coincide with the way Stacy Holman Jones (2005) looks at autoethnography, she writes:

Autoethnography works to hold self and culture together, albeit not in equilibrium or stasis. Autoethnography writes a world in a state of

flux and movement—between story and context, writer and reader, crisis and denouement. It creates charged moments of clarity connection and change. (p.764)

In writing this paper I have been concerned with how to go about reporting who I am as a scholar, my personal theory of the world (Smith, 2004) and the ways I view the research process. In teaching and learning, reading, writing and research I am immersed in the things that I do. I throw my critical eye into the process but I also engage my passion, my love for the experience and my love for humanity. I do not, cannot, feign the objective; I understand as Freire posits that “teaching is a political act” (1970).

To the Freirean project I would therefore add that research, especially ethnographic research in teaching and learning is a political act, as Denzin (2006) argues it is not an innocent practice. It is a call to reinforce the way things are done, obeisance to the status quo, or a call to revolutionize what we do as teachers, researchers and scholars, and as human beings: does the research, writing and teaching process we engage in promote or support change? In conducting this critical self study I am doing several things: I am connecting myself, the autobiographical, to the social and cultural (Ellis, 2004). I am discovering ways to teach my students that go beyond treating them as mere respondents, the objectified subjects of my inquiry. I engage this reading writing research process as an opportunity to change; uncover my blind spots and my strengths as a teacher, researcher and writer.

Practicing Critical Pedagogy

Why Teach

I like to think that I have always been self aware, and more importantly as I grow older that I have always been critically aware of my surroundings, and the personal and social situations in which I find myself. I think this is more me trying to make sense of my past and my current lived social reality. The following three vignettes are windows into my personal experiences that have shaped my identity in teaching and learning. I place them here to provide a glimpse into a few of the events that have pushed/shaped my consciousness:

Notes from the Past

I am sitting in a classroom it’s a hot September day in El Paso. Looking around the room I see the familiar faces; the boys and girls, the white and Hispanic, the rich and the poor. I see my teacher a bit left of center up front, holding a book in her hand, calling

out questions to my classmates, demonstrating things on the board, in control.

I am standing in front of the classroom it's a hot September day in Sacramento. There is the drum of the oscillating fan as it spreads comfort to my students and me. Looking around the room I again see the familiar faces; the boys and the girls, the White, Black, Hispanic, Chicano, Chinese and Mong, the poor, the middle class and the wealthy; most I think are heterosexual, and, one girl that tells her friends she is a lesbian. The book is on the podium, I walk around the room asking questions, poking, prodding, provoking, I am trying to get my students to think about the tougher questions on living and being in the world.

I am back in the classroom, it's once again a hot September day, this time in Las Cruces. Looking around I see my fellow aspirants to humanness who represent the spectrum of the social strata. Books are everywhere. It is evident that some of us read and some don't. All are engaged in the teaching and learning event. It is a happening masterfully crafted by Rudolfo Chavez-Chavez. He is around the room at different points asking questions engaging in dialogue, pushing us beyond the outer limits of our personal experience, out there, to the point of creativity and generation; beyond the theoretical of what we are reading or have read to the point of saturation. It is the collective social energy that is our light, our lens on the world. It illuminates what we knew, what we know and what we will come to know of being in the world.

The preceding three vignettes are events I recall, attitudes from my personal and social past in teaching and learning. I call them events because I drew from them--much as I draw from all the events of my personal lived history--my experience, knowledge and attitude toward teaching and learning; they are points of departure, from my pre-ontological self (Sartre, 1957), I did not come away from them unaffected whether I was the teacher of record in the classroom or took a seat at the side of the students. As the teaching and learning happen I am at once inside the *a priori* social moment, adding to and drawing from the collective understanding. I get pushed, *a posteriori*, from the decisive moment; it is critical reflexivity, my attitude toward revelation that signifies my becoming; the possibility toward fully understanding the experience.

How I Teach

Inciting Critical Consciousness

In the opening days of any course I am given I begin by announcing to my students what they can expect. I use the syllabi I give them to delineate my expectations, the expectations of the University and the

expectations of society as outlined by the state and national standards that govern teacher education; sound familiar? But, I also make a theoretical statement; I let them know who I am as an educator: critical, existentialist and Chicano. It is not easy for me to unmask myself in such a public arena, many students have misperceptions of what it means to be critical--does it mean to criticize?--an existentialist--is it an obscure philosophy, long dead?--or to self identify as Chicano,--does it mean you're Mexican?

I say no to all three of the above questions. The language of criticism does not begin with me. Nor do I elaborate it in my classes along a singular line; instead I use a fusion of the following frameworks: 1) the analysis of power structures, in society (Stephen Lukes, 2005; Michel Foucault, 2000); and how it affects the classroom (Apple, 2001; Giroux, 1981), 2) the construction and reconstruction of a clear pedagogical vision: who I strive to be as a teacher informed by the works of Paulo Freire and Henry Giroux among others, and, 3) who I am as an organic and public intellectual (Gramsci, 1988; Kincheloe, 2004).

Pushing Critical Subjectivity

So, at this point you might be wondering, what is it that happens in the day to day of teaching my classes?

October

I step into the classroom; my students eagerly (?) await the lesson of the day. By now they have become accustomed to how we are teaching the class. They know for example that we begin with the arrangement of the room. We organize ourselves in a circle (Freire, 1970), which is not mere geography. We sit together to discuss, laugh, argue and question all that goes into the daily experience, building it into the cultural circle as we go.

I ask sincerely, how are things going? Some relate to me the personal, others the political and, as is often the case, the latest musings on what it's like to be a student at Boise State. I use these moments to enter the dialogue on the days lesson or lessons; but more importantly to begin where the students are ontologically. Together we build the epistemic dialogue to the point where I or anyone in the group can toss the first seed of consciousness out on the floor, to the center of the culture circle: this is a critical statement or question using what Freire and others call a generative theme. It may be something from our personal history, or our living experience, it may be something simple, anyone can reach for, or something more complex that will take the collective process, considering sharing and reconsidering, to come to an agreement as to what we are seeing.

After some of the daily meanderings, going through what we have to say about our personal lives, I continue pushing the day's lesson by passing around a short newspaper article. The article is a clipping from the Idaho Statesman; describing how a 19 year old boy was recently killed by a Nampa police officer. After reading the article we take turns sharing our initial impressions. A few students talk about how the officers must have been scared going into a predominantly Mexican-American neighborhood. Oh, I say, why should they be afraid?; is the cultural or ethnic makeup of residents in a neighborhood enough to cause fear? And, why? Who should be afraid? This incites further debate about our own cultural understandings of race, class and power.

Others point out that it doesn't matter what kind of neighborhood it is by ethnic makeup or social class. They consider that it must have been the darkness that shook the police officers so much that they felt their lives were in danger and had to shoot. This incites another debate as to standard operating procedures for police officers responding to a domestic disturbance. At this point in the conversation, many of the students are visibly shaken. They shift in their chairs, have blank or puzzled expressions on their faces; they seem to be reaching out for: Where do we go from here?

As they look to me for a response I also shift my gaze, look right back at them and respond by saying that we should break up into groups to discuss the article further. I move around the room listening in and joining the discussions when they ask me to step in. The debates seem to raise the following questions: Who was shot? And, why was he shot? After discussing the issue for about twenty minutes we gather again as a large group in the culture circle. Each of the groups has something different to report. Some consider Race, class, ethnicity or gender, as the mitigating factors that led to the boy being killed by the police officers. All, but one, agree; there should have been more justification and an alternative to shooting a boy who was holding a piece of glass. And the holdout? A person who has a family member that works for a police department.

The point of the above dialogue, is to push to the pedagogical crescendo, compel the students to critically consider the pedagogical seed thrown out on the floor. The seed supports discussion but it is we in the culture circles that enter the human dialogue and human event for growth. The support we call for are someone else's eyes, to share in someone else's experience; it is our shared laughter, joy, disgust and pain that sings to our humanity bringing out our loving spirit.

November

It is a beautiful day in Twin Falls. Today is the first day of a class covering Contemporary Issues in Bilingual Education. We are one hour into the discussion, an hour charged deeply by our getting to know each other. When we began I assumed the discussion would cover minor details of our lives, where we are from, our education, and our hopes for the future. Not today, the students and I are hungry for more. We are all eager to share. I push the critical moment. Someone brings up the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the students ask me what my position is on that piece of legislation.

I reply, what do you know about it? This is not an effort to dodge their question instead it is a moment I use to give a response while pushing clarity using the collective imaginary (Chavez-Chavez, 2005). As the students respond I step across the room to the whiteboard and begin taking down their views and their experiences with NCLB. I follow the flow of discussion adding my view and experiences to theirs. The schema that is created on the board and in our minds incites further dialogue; it makes us feel uncomfortable and angry at what we are seeing. In view of the flow chart and our dialogue NCLB is leaving many children behind. The subject turns to, "we are the teachers in the classroom, what can we do?"

I take this moment to pick up the pace by telling a story sharing my own experiences in schools: I remember a teacher screaming at me for speaking Spanish; I remember the boy who made fun of my shoes and I remember the children the teachers ignored. But then I begin to relate another story, this one about the teachers that asked me what I thought, how I felt and complimented me on the things that I wrote; and the teachers that met my departures from the lessons or the curriculum with guidance, compassion, and autonomy. They recognized my rights as a free human being and supported the ways/directions I wanted to take my learning.

So we go back and forth with the good and bad of our educational- schooling experiences. They finally ask me how I "made it." I mention teachers that supported my learning through their humanity. They met me where I was, my brown face, my stutter, my accent; all that goes into my personal, social and cultural heritage. They related with me on a human level, one where it was not a matter of them coming down to where I was, my socioeconomic position in society, or me coming up to theirs, the sociopolitical. It had to do with their willingness to form a human relationship with me, their student.

My students respond, "How close should/can you get to your students?" I answered with sharing some of my experiences teaching at the high school level and I bring up the excellent literature on the subject I mention: Lilia Bartolome and Beyond the Methods

Fetish, Angela Valenzuela and Subtractive Schooling, Curtis Hayes, Roberto Bahruth & Carolyn Kessler and Literacy Con Cariño, Paulo Freire and Pedagogy of the Oppressed, and bell hooks in Teaching to Transgress, Finally I ask, how is surface knowledge, the simple things you know about a person, useful? I follow up with, a deeper knowledge, that gained from sharing their food, their hunger, and their lives?

Conclusion or: What I Teach

It would be arrogant, even self indulgent to believe that students learn everything I have to teach. It would likewise be self indulgent to believe, that they are always on; attentive to the point where what I have to offer them filters down through the myriad of everyday experience. My point of being a teacher, my point of becoming a better human being, is not about whether I am a good teacher or whether my students are good students. Being a teacher, pedagogy, is about being human; sharing in the life and learning experiences of our students. Together we can analyze critique and reinvent our societies and our world.

In this paper I have chronicled my own research, teaching and learning about what it means to engage a transformative pedagogy. It is my view that we should not conduct scholarship simply to satisfy the requirements of publication or tenure. Every opportunity we have as teacher, researcher and student is an opportunity to learn and to teach, ways to become, what Freire calls, more fully human (1970).

Being human is realizing critical consciousness; knowing the project of the socialization process: how we are shaped and categorized by society; Black or White, Republican or Democrat, Gay or Straight, Woman or Man, young or old. It is the socialization process that reduces humanity to cogs producing the

mass of workers whose labor power becomes the driving force in the industrial machine (Apple, 2001, Arendt, 1998). Furthermore, being human is realizing our humanity, it is in our ability to choose where and how we act, to engage our freedom that promotes social justice.

Why should a student act in a way that is caring toward other human beings, animals or the environment? Is it simply because her/his parents told her/him so? Could it be because society, the church, the rulebook or the dictums of law keep what some call his natural tendency toward evil in check? Or could it also be that he came into the world with propensities and learned to be a caring and loving individual in society from the teachers he encountered; his mothers and fathers, his neighbors and friends? Life grants us a moment, all that we are is shaped by how we engage or don't as part of the group; who our mentors, teachers and friends are; and, the ways the fields of cultural production (Bordieu, 1993) are set to promote and inhibit human agency, subjectivity and creativity.

The teacher, the student and the researcher are not mere icons that must assume their predetermined roles in society. To teach is to learn with and for our students. It implies democratization in the classroom. How else and why else should we continue to think reflect and act out our praxis, (Freire, 1970)? Through a praxis of authority, humility, caring and sharing that ultimately leads to acting against injustice we can help our students to face the moral dilemma and take a stand. Failure to do so will reproduce the inequalities that stem from ignorance. Research in teaching and learning should be about becoming better human beings, that is, we do not moralize or socialize our students for society, we work with our students to understand alternate forms of reality, different ways of being.

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