Introduction

Nine years after first reading *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Freire's wisdom has circled

back to re-inform my current practice as a social justice educator in higher education. I was

originally exposed to his ideas and insights during my Masters in Social Work degree program

where we used his text to understand systems of oppression, the need to cultivate critical

consciousness for personal and professional development, and how Freire's ideas on education

and popular knowledge translate into pedagogy for cultivating intergroup dialogues for social

justice (Freire, 2000). As a white, male, heterosexual, temporarily able-bodied[1] person who is

currently middle class (yet raised working class), Freire's ideas originally served as a light in the

darkness. He provided critical language for experiences that could help me reconcile my own

privileged identities in order to work in solidarity with oppressed communities for social change.

He helped me explore my internalized dominance and re-learn how to be in communion with

community. As Freire (2000) said,

> "These professionals… are in truth more misguided than anything else, they not only
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> could be, but ought to be, reclaimed by the revolution. This reclamation requires… a
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> clear invitation to all who wish to participate in the reconstruction of society" (p. 158).

Freire helped me realize the value and importance of people like me who experience privilege

and want to work for social justice. Freire's work gave me a toolkit to facilitate educational

dialogue embedded in social justice workshops with college students. I would channel Freire

every time I talked about praxis[2] and the cultivation of critical consciousness in dialogue

facilitation, but never returned to Freire beyond my memory of his teachings. Over time, Freire's

work informed curriculum design and facilitation skills divorced from critical self reflection. I

would use Freire to cultivate critical consciousness or praxis with students; however, I did not

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[1] The term "temporarily able-bodied" is sometimes used by people with disabilities as a way to describe
people without disabilities to highlight that some disabilities can be developed over time. This terminology
is also consistent with that used by Adams, Bell & Griffin (2007).
[2] Freire defined praxis as, "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire, 2000, p.
51).

think about the dialectical[3] relationship between his philosophy and pedagogy. I used his pedagogies for praxis with students without engaging myself in praxis related to my job and my passion for social justice education. In this sense, I became one of many professionals who "adulterate[d] his work by reducing it to a method or technique" (Mayo, 2004, p. 5). My reduction of Freire as a useful facilitation method was hardly intentional. In some ways, it was a reflection of my training as a trainer who learned Freire in order to master content and technique. In other ways, it reflected how my passion for social justice education was hijacked by an unconscious belief that efficiency and effectiveness were the primary indicators of my value as a professional.

Growing up in a working class family, having a job, and working hard was a strong value. For me, work was a source of pride and identity. My job performance and relationship with my boss was, and still is, a topic of conversation with my parents and extended family, often including the statement, "as long as your boss is happy with you." Over time, I internalized these messages of needing to please "the boss" by being efficient in curriculum design and effective with workshop evaluation results. This is a great example of how I have internalized messages of inferiority, or what Freire might refer to as having the colonizer within my mind and consciousness (Freire, 2000). However, these internalized messages did not act alone. I felt a sense of urgency to create social change as quickly as possible. My desire to do well professionally colluded with inherited privilege from my whiteness and maleness along with a belief in the necessity of maintaining control. I honestly believed curricular control was necessary to advance students' cultural competence, and consistently produce positive evaluation scores. The truth is a cyclone existed between my white and male dominant identities along with my working class subordinate identity which lulled my critical consciousness to sleep. My intention to support students to wake up from their socialization was

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[3] Throughout his works Freire talks about the dialectical relationship between concepts. Dialectical relationships refer to the interrelated, contradictory yet interdependent relationship between concepts.

good, but my passion for this work blinded me from examining both my own positionality and the way systems of education reinforce control more deeply.

The end result was a facilitation practice that divorced techniques from the broader dialectical ideas, values, and ethics which make these techniques valuable for liberation and social change. For example, using small group dialogue among students became a strategy to speed up their ability to think and share to accomplish the workshop learning outcomes faster. The value of liberatory consciousness raising by providing space for students to voice their experiences was not the primary goal, or even a primary consideration. My goal was to increase educational efficiency in response to existing pressure to teach more content in less time during workshops, and Freire offered ways to do this effectively. I was just another well-intentioned liberal "who claimed to follow Freire's model" even though my "practices were mired in structures of domination" (hooks, 1994, p. 18). It was through re-learning Freire in a deeper way that I was able to re-engage in critical self-reflection on my professional practices.

A Phenomenological Self-Reflection

Returning to Freire nine years later as part of my doctoral course work provided an opportunity to be mentored by Freire in a deeper way. I cultivated this deeper relationship with Freire through his multiple texts which provided a richer conceptual, pedagogical, philosophical and ideological understanding of education for liberation (Freire, 1983, 1993, 1994, 1998, 2000; Friere & Macedo, 1987). Additionally, O'Cadiz, Wong & Torres (1998) offered insight regarding how Freire implemented his ideas as an education administrator in Brazil. As part of a class on Freire's writings, theories, and interpretations, students were invited to read his texts and adopt a conceptual approach to purposefully reflect upon his ideas and apply them to their own practice as an educator. Through the class, I decided to consider the ways in which Freire offers additional insight that is beneficial to the field of social justice education. Specifically, I wanted to explore the ways in which Freire's ideas are present and absent in my professional experiences as a social justice educator within higher education who designs workshop curriculum, facilitates

workshops, and supports paid student facilitators. Throughout my conceptual analysis, I offer my own experiences as a basis for exploration in order to apply a Freirian lens and acknowledge the ways in which I have strayed from critical pedagogical practice or remained true to liberatory education.

Part of this critical self-reflection required me to acknowledge the institutional barriers which contributed to the divide between his ideas and my practice. While my job description aligns well with Freirian ideas, this work exists within larger systems from which social justice educators are not immune. Praxis is not part of my job description, and requires fierce dedication to make it a priority within a university environment. Time to engage in my own praxis competes with workshop requests, project deadlines, supervision meetings, writing reports, and student crises. Budget cuts require departments to do more with less money and staff, double down on essential operations, and emphasize assessment to prove its worth for continued funding. Quantitative assessment of educational outcomes is expected versus qualitative assessment of educational processes. Constantly shifting university priorities compel departments to pivot energy to more urgent initiatives that resolve just in time for another to arise. These tensions are further magnified by existing dominant cultural values that include productivity, efficiency, objectivity, and positivism which permeate educational systems and my own socialization through life. In order to authentically engage in praxis, it is important to understand these institutional forces in addition to my social identities.

In order to critically reflect upon my practice, I will first discuss additional Freirian concepts that enhance my understanding of social justice education. I will then describe experiences from my professional practice and apply these ideas as part of a conceptual analysis. It is my hope that this reflective process serves as a new beginning of a constant cycle of re-learning about myself, my work and Freirian concepts through "a dynamic and dialectical movement between 'doing' and 'reflecting on doing'" (Freire, 1998, p. 43). I believe that social

justice education requires us to be in constant reflection on our practice, ideology, and positionality and how they intersect with one another within social and institutional systems.

Additional Freirian Concepts for Social Justice Education

Pedagogy of the Oppressed is Freire's most well known and cited book. However, Freire's ideas on theory and practice are greatly enriched when further contextualized through his other works. His valuable reflections on class suicide (Freire, 1983), epistemological circling[4] and curiosity (Freire, 1998), educational directivity and "non-neutrality" (Freire, 1993; 1998; Freire & Macedo, 1987), and the relationship between authority and freedom (Freire, 1994; 1998), some of which are discussed in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, are able to be seen, discussed, and integrated in new ways when attending to Freire's wider body of work. An expanded understanding of Freire supports my ability to navigate the various intellectual and emotional challenges of social justice education outlined by Bell, Love, Washington and Weinstein (2007) which include recognizing personal prejudices, negotiating emotions in workshops, personal disclosure, and navigating authority in these educational spaces.

Recognizing Personal Prejudice and Class Suicide

The ability to confront previously unrecognized prejudices can be more richly understood through Freire's discussion of *class suicide*.[5] Class suicide involves the rejection of material comforts and social privileges associated with dominant group status in order to be in authentic solidarity with the oppressed for liberation. As described by Freire (1983),

> "…there will always be those who perceive themselves to be 'captured' by the old
> ideology and who will consciously continue to embrace it; they will fall into the practice of
> undermining, either in a hidden or an open way, the new practice… But there will be
> others who, also perceiving themselves to be captive to the old ideology, will

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[4] The process of questioning reality in order to cultivate knowledge. It is "a means of moving closer by gaining a certain kind of distance" (Roberts, 2000, p. 37).

[5] The concept of "class suicide" was originally used by Amilcar Cabral (a revolutionary leader in Guinea-Bissau) to describe how the petty bourgeoisie might join in the national liberation struggle. Freire held a deep respect for Cabral and discusses the concept in *Pedagogy in Process: Letters to Guinea-Bissau*.

nonetheless attempt to free themselves from it through the new practice to which they

will adhere… They are the ones who 'commit class suicide'" (p. 15).

In order to work for liberation (or "new practice"), social justice educators should attend to our

unrecognized prejudices (or 'old ideology') while freeing ourselves from them. This process

challenges us to see the dialectical relationship between privilege and oppression as dependent

on one another to maintain its existence – that the very comforts and benefits people with

privilege have at some level are possible only as a result of the oppression of others (Freire,

2000). If social justice educators ask students to examine their prejudices and biases in order to

embrace new behaviors that contribute to social change, it would make sense that social justice

educators commit ourselves to a process of acknowledging and unlearning our prejudices to

see the ways in which we also are complicit within systems of domination.

Navigating Emotions, Epistemological Circling and Curiosity

Freire's thinking about epistemological circling and curiosity offers wisdom on walking

with students through difficult emotions that can arise during workshops. Freire (1998) seems

to value emotional responses in the learning process when he states,

"The kind of education that does not recognize the right to express appropriate anger,

against injustice, against disloyalty, against the negation of love, against exploitation,

against violence fails to see the educational role implicit in the expression of these

feelings" (p. 45).

Freire embraces the dialectical relationship between thinking and feeling, recognizing the value

both bring to advancing critical knowledge of one's realities. Epistemological circling embraces

the tenderness of emotional responses to critically reflect on our realities. The exploration of

emotional responses moves students from ingenuity to critical curiosity as they reflect on their

behaviors, thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs which can cultivate deeper understanding and

accountability for their interactions with others in society (Freire, 1998).

Personal Disclosure, Educational Directivity and Non-Neutrality

Modeling our own intellectual and emotional journey through personal disclosure is a powerful way to illustrate the exploratory process in understanding our privilege and oppression for students and show possibilities to make sense of these challenges. However, some educators might view one's role to be neutral and perceive "joining in" with the students to breach this boundary. Freire's writings about the myth of neutrality and educational directivity[6] offer a valuable contribution to understanding this area of competence for social justice education facilitation. Freire clearly states "the very nature of the educational practice – its necessary directive nature, the objectives, the dreams that follow in the practice – do not allow education to be neutral as it is always political" (Freire, 1993, p. 22). Further, Freire states, "I cannot deny or hide my posture, but I also cannot deny others right to reject it…my role as a teacher is to assent the students' right to compare, to choose, to rupture, to decide" (Freire, 1998, p. 68). Freire posits that education, including social justice education, is never neutral; therefore, any belief that social justice educators should be impartial is incongruent with the innately political nature of education. Therefore, Freire encourages educators to embrace their stance and openly discuss the intentionality of one's choices an avoid believing in the ability to value-free. For Freire, personal disclosure is not a question, but an ethical obligation in this practice.

Negotiating Authority and Authoritarianism Versus Freedom

One aspect of negotiating authority issues involves the deconstruction of traditionally hierarchical learning environments in order to create teacher-learner relationships among students and facilitators alike (Bell et al., 2007). Balancing authority and directivity can be hard because of the power dynamics that exist between facilitator / facilitated and staff / student which are present. Additionally, power related to one's social location is important when

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[6] Freire (1998) calls an educator's responsibility to lead the practice of education as their educational directivity.

considering the facilitator's identities and those of the students. Freire's ideas on the dialectical

relationship between freedom and authority are valuable in understanding how to

simultaneously honor freedom and authority without falling into freedom without limits on one

end, or authoritarianism on the other. As Freire (1998) states,

> "Authoritarianism and freedom with no boundaries are ruptures in the tense harmony
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> between authority and freedom…. both authoritarianism and freedom with no boundaries
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> are undisciplined forms of behavior that deny what I am calling the ontological vocation
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> of the human being" (p. 83).[7]

Freire offers us wisdom found in the dialectic between authority and freedom which can be

cultivated in exploring our ontological perspectives on human existence and our role within

learning communities. Freire applauds efforts to actively embrace and recreate teacher-learner

relationships between facilitators and students (Freire, 2000, p. 93). However, these

relationships should not reduce authority at the expense of the facilitators' directivity which

would deny students "the right to know better than they already know…" (Freire, 1994, p. 95).

Therefore, social justice facilitators should find ways to embrace authority and leverage one's

role to cultivate critical knowledge without it morphing into authoritarianism.

Applying Freire to Curriculum Design & Facilitation

Freire's thoughts related to class suicide, epistemological circling and curiosity,

educational directivity and "non-neutrality", and the relationship between authority and freedom

are useful to assist in reflection on how workshop curriculum is designed and facilitated to hold

facilitators accountable for how we enter into and create educational communities as a subject,

and not a mere object, of teaching (Freire, 2000). In order to apply these concepts through

praxis, I offer a series of reflections on my practice that span the lifecycle of a workshop from

inception to implementation. These reflections relate to my theoretical and pedagogical

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[7] Ontology refers to the study of being and existence. In this case, Freire encourages educators to consider what it means to be human and how we believe people ought to exist in the world.

approach, negotiating workshops with faculty, creating workshop curriculum, balancing curricular standardization and flexibility, establishing workshop guidelines, and personal disclosure during workshops. Through reflections of my practice and applying Freirian concepts to explore them, I hope to affirm existing practices or inspire new ideas to move closer to libratory education in my work.

Theoretical & Pedagogical Approach

I have the pleasure of working in a university department where my full-time job is to create and facilitate social justice education workshops for students on campus. My work is an important aspect of our department's mission to cultivate critical consciousness and cultural competence among students. My theoretical approach to workshop curriculum development is grounded in a modified version of Sue's (2001) Multidimensional Model for Developing Cultural Competence which attends to the development of knowledge, attitudes, and skills across different societal levels (individual, professional, organization, and institutional) and multiple social identities and categories. This matrix approach supports a developmental, systemic, and intersectional approach to education which matches our departmental mission that promotes student development of critical consciousness and skills to work for social justice. Additionally, my pedagogical approaches are rooted in a multitude of frameworks (as discussed by Adams, 2007). Social identity development theories are used when drafting workshop curriculum for different student audiences. These theories provide insight to possible needs, challenges, and concerns a student may be wrestling with that can be named or otherwise addressed during workshops. Multicultural education and critical theories inform how content is framed and presented. These theories provide philosophical and political positions, conceptual definitions, and beliefs about power and intergroup relations that anchor curriculum design and facilitation in an understanding of systems of power, privilege and oppression. Intergroup dialogue and intergroup relations programs inform facilitation logistics on suggested ways to group learners to leverage different experiences and promote authentic sharing and exploration for personal

growth and development as individuals and members of a community. Experiential learning activities are used to create a shared experience for reflection and deconstruction through which all students can process an experience and apply learning to their personal lives and unique positionalities. These frameworks ground my curriculum design and facilitation approach in best practices literature within the field.

Knowing my theoretical and pedagogical orientation contributes to my political clarity and educational directivity. Such clarity is required by Freire when he said "defining what needs to be known in order to organize the content of educational activities demands political clarity of everyone involved in any part of the planning" (Freire, 1983, p. 101). Freire knew education is never neutral or apolitical – that all education inherently supports a specific ideology or value set through action and inaction alike. Therefore, educators would do well to know both our values and ideology in order to consciously consider how that aligns with our practice. When applying Freire's ideas about political clarity and educational directivity to my approach to social justice education, I am not uncertain about what informs my practice. I have come to know not only my guiding theoretical and pedagogical frameworks, but embrace the worldview they espouse. What I believe about education and the world are connected to these specific theories and pedagogies that I use which also align with the mission of my department.

Negotiating Workshops with Faculty

Driven by the goal of infusing social justice education across the university curriculum, my department's strategy is to provide transformative curricular and co-curricular educational experiences in order to accomplish our mission. This strategy involves soliciting faculty to invite our department to facilitate a workshop during their class in order to enhance the academic content of their course. After being invited, the first step is to determine the content for the workshop. When brainstorming curriculum, I partner with faculty to discuss what they want their students to learn given the context of the course. In this conversation, we discuss their needs related to my perceptions of what content can be achieved in a sixty- or ninety-minute workshop

experience that can be robust without posing harm to students using social identity development theories and models of cultural competence development as a guide.

To illustrate these ideas, I can share a common experience when working with faculty. When meeting to discuss the design of a workshop, faculty often identify the need for students to understand privilege and suggest doing a privilege walk activity[8]. During these conversations, I dialogue with them about the benefit of such activities when situated in a context of strong community, participant trust, and commitment to long-term explicit conversation on these topics past the end of the workshop. The potential harm that such activities can pose to students if offered outside of such contexts, particularly for students with marginalized social identities, is also discussed. Often these experiences are designed and implemented to educate students with unacknowledged privilege, which can overlook the impact such activities have that force marginalized students to "teach" their privileged peers through their personal stories and experiences without equitable reciprocation or vulnerability. These experiences can recreate an oppressive experience for marginalized students even when done with the best intentions by educators. I also suggest other activities and learning outcomes that can benefit learning about privilege in ways that mitigate risk and maximize learning based on student context. The faculty person and I then continue to reflect upon the needs and benefits of different approaches – sometimes identifying new goals and activities, and other times agreeing that a privilege walk would be a sound choice.

Freire is present in this process as I use epistemological circling as a way to deeply explore the needs of faculty and students alike to propose curriculum that may be beneficial. This conversational process also reflects a commitment to balance the individual authority both the faculty member and I have in our respective subject areas with freedom for the other to shape the design in a truly collaborative exchange. In this way, the process acknowledges the educational directivity that is shared between us. As Freire (1994) says,

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[8] An activity that visually stratifies students based on their privileged or oppressed social identities.

"Educators have the right, even the duty, to teach what seems to them to be fundamental to the space-time in which they find themselves. That right and duty fall to the educator by virtue of the intrinsic 'directivity' of education" (p. 113).

Such exchanges are vital to ensure faculty and myself feel our individual educational directivity is valued, and when coupled together result in stronger partnerships and workshop curriculum. When applying Freire to this example, I am able to see the essence of his ideas come to life. Freire believed in education as a collaborative process such as the one cultivated between another faculty member and myself in order to create an educational experience unique to a specific class. However, a more authentic version of this process would be to invite the students in the class to also participate in the dialogue and inform the content. There are many reasons that may not always happen, such as a perceived lack of time or boundaries between faculty and student; however, it is an idea worth exploring as I continue deeper in my practice.

Creating Workshop Curriculum

I enjoy working with a small group of student social justice facilitators who are employed by my department. After writing the first draft of a workshop curriculum, they provide feedback on curriculum, ideas for experiential activities and simulations, and case study examples. For example, a first-year student workshop was designed after holding two meetings with student social justice facilitators to reflect upon the previous years' curriculum and explore ways to create a new curriculum based on different expectations from faculty partners. After the curriculum was designed and facilitated in classes, weekly meetings would continue with student social justice facilitators to continue evolving the curriculum and activity sequence to make it more impactful. In a second example, a community-based service learning course workshop was designed in partnership with these same student social justice facilitators. They created case studies used in the workshop based on their experiences, which resonated deeper with student participants.

By involving student social justice facilitators in the design process, I have regular, ongoing opportunities to deeply understand their popular knowledge regarding diversity and social justice. I find this an example of respecting "the knowledge of the living experience" vital to the work of progressive educators (Freire, 1994, p. 19). By working with these student facilitators within our department, they understand the department's mission, how workshops contribute to our ideological goals, and are effective at contributing ideas that bridge the gap between community knowledge and classic knowledge in order to cultivate critical knowledge about themselves and society (Gutstein, 2007).

However, a Freirian critique of this process could cite its failure to encourage student participation in curriculum design by those who experience the curriculum themselves. While the process used to create and facilitate workshops is useful and results in positive experiences based on post-workshop evaluations, these workshops might be more impactful if my department implemented a Freirian approach to curriculum design. Specifically, I could implement a re-interpretation of the interdisciplinary project implemented in Sao Paulo, Brazil.[9] If I were to reimagine the first-year student curriculum design process, I could invite first-year students who have experienced this workshop in the fall to be part of a 20-week process across the winter and spring terms to explore their experience as first-year students. The process could begin by completing a study of reality through small group meetings with first-year students. During these meetings, problem-posing methods would be used to position first-year students as co-investigators with department staff (Freire, 2000). Students would be asked to reflect on their experiences talking about diversity and social justice in high school, their beliefs about

[9] During Freire's tenure as Secretary of Education, he restructured the organizational system and invited every school in the city of Sao Paulo to participate in a curriculum reform process called the Interdisciplinary Project. The Interdisciplinary Project began by bringing together teachers, administrators, parents, students, and community members to collaboratively discuss and identify curriculum needs through a series of dialogues he referred to as a study of reality. Then, teachers would identify common topics, called generative themes, which emerged through these dialogues and work in collaborative teams to design curriculum to address these topics. At its core, the Interdisciplinary Project was meant to democratize education by involving others in curriculum design. A detailed description of the project can be found in *Education and Democracy: Paulo Freire, Social Movements and Educational Reform in Sao Paulo*.

diversity and social justice, how these concepts relate to their personal social identities, and finally their fears, hopes, and needs they would have from such a conversations. These reflections could then be shared with my student social justice facilitators to identify generative themes. Additionally, I could work with the student social justice facilitators to reflect upon theoretical and pedagogical considerations impacting first-year students and the development of allyship attitudes and behaviors. I would use this information to design a curriculum guide that incorporates these ideas and share it for further reflection with both the student social justice facilitators and first-year students at the same time to promote an integrated dialogue on the curriculum and what might be most useful. Such a process would be inherently dialogical and allow for students' popular knowledge to be respected and integrated into curriculum, reflect a democratic process of curricular design involving students themselves, and respect the directivity and authority of the department to meet its goals respective of our theoretical and pedagogical needs.

When using Freire to reimagine a curriculum design process, it is both exciting and daunting. Freire's ideas inspire a more meaningful way to educate that mirror the needs and experiences of students which can yield a more impactful experience. However, this process requires time and money by a department that has limited resources. It also requires participation by students who are not used to being given opportunities to meaningfully inform their own educational experience. In these conditions, it is tempting to retreat into my own professional expertise and defend my educational directivity from an authoritarian stance where I know best what the students need. It is for this very reason that reflecting on this process through Freire's ideas is useful – to check my assumptions about what is possible and how that also influences my beliefs about the teacher-student relationship. While inviting student social justice facilitators to design curriculum is laudable and valuable, I must be honest with myself and admit that it is insufficient if I strive to incorporate Freire more authentically into my broader professional practice.

Curricular Standardization & Flexibility

During workshops, all facilitators in my department, including myself, bring a scripted facilitation guide that lists activity sequence, instructions, and dialogue questions that will guide conversation toward specific learning outcomes identified with the faculty. These guides are intended to help facilitators engage students in a focused way that will address the specific goals and content areas for the audience, especially when facilitating different curriculum for different audiences day to day. This approach assists the focus of the workshops and makes explicit the directivity of the educational experience. These facilitation guides are designed to balance the identified needs of the students with the theoretical and pedagogical frameworks that guide our mission so that less experienced facilitators are not pressured to create activities on the fly within a short time span. However, there have been times when other facilitators in my department, specifically student facilitators, have been frustrated with facilitation guides as inhibiting educational creativity and flexibility to meet the needs of the students who are present.

Freire warns against scripts and teacher-centered agendas used to talk at students. He implores educators to talk with students to create the agenda by stating, "just as the educator may not elaborate a program to present to the people, neither may the investigator elaborate 'itineraries' for researching the thematic universe, starting points from which *he* has predetermined" (Freire, 2000, p. 108). This raises an important opportunity to reflect more deeply on Freire's notion of educational directivity and its relationship to authoritarianism. Our facilitation guides are not intended to be used mechanistically and divorced from the educational context, but to make explicit the educational directivity of the curriculum for a specific group of learners in light of their context. If I were to blindly assert that a workshop curriculum is good for anyone without critical reflection on the needs of the students and their context, I think Freire's warning is completely justified. Further, if I were to expect staff facilitators to purely implement the script without promoting their agency to modify it to fit the needs of the students, Freire's warning would again be justified. However, the goal of these facilitation guides is to document a

specific way of being directive towards intended learning outcomes. They exist to assist facilitators to be conscious of specific ideas grounded in theory, not to relegate the facilitator as a mere mouthpiece. Their intended use is to guide facilitators like myself to start the conversation and to adapt the conversation and activities as the workshop progresses to engage the needs of the students. I think a valuable lesson is the importance of discussing the context and purpose of facilitation guides and to make explicit how facilitators are encouraged to adapt them for the needs of the students.

For example, every fall term student facilitators and I implement first-year student workshops and hear a consistent theme from many students that they "already know about diversity" or that they do not need another talk about diversity because "they are adults who should know this already." These sentiments typically come from students who I perceive to be white based on their appearance. The facilitation guide used for this workshop assists in addressing these concerns and other forms of student resistance in ways that encourages facilitators to adapt the curriculum to extend conversation on where these sentiments originate. This approach creates a balance between respecting the sentiment presented by students while maintaining our authority as facilitators with educational directivity of the workshop content. This example highlights how I have strived to balance prescribed large-scale educational directivity with in-the-moment flexibility for specific student contexts that seems to find a balance between the extremes of strictly staying "on script" (authoritarianism) and disregarding the curriculum entirely in favor of what students say they desire (freedom without limits).

It is also useful to consider the reason one might use these facilitation guides in a more rigid fashion than intended. For example, I often worry about how much time is being spent in conversation at the expense of the established curriculum, and recognize this challenge. In my earlier years as a facilitator, I would sacrifice the present in favor of "the script." I believe this phenomenon to be related to my own personal lack of political clarity and confidence in my educational directivity that resulted in an overreliance on "the script." Also, following a script was

a way to avoid facilitating harder conversations that would emerge without certainly of how they might end, even if they are more important at the time. As such, it is important to be aware of, and critically reflect upon, the reasons we choose to follow the script and when we feel compelled to facilitate from the present moment and follow teachable moments. To go "off script" requires a great deal of political clarity, knowledge and respect for the student's popular knowledge and lived experiences, and authenticity of self to effectively navigate the present moment. For me, this tension between being educationally creative in the present and educationally directive with political clarity underscores Freire's ontological and epistemological philosophy about our innately unfinished nature that requires our continued learning, development, and praxis to stay grounded in our work (Freire, 1998).

Creating Guidelines for Workshops

Every workshop I facilitate begins with establishing guidelines for conversation. Guidelines are important because they shape expectations for interactions, establish the desired type of learning climate and can contribute to an atmosphere that is safe and supportive for reflection and exploration (Bell & Griffin, 2007).[10] There are many approaches social justice educators can adopt to establish guidelines. One way is to provide opportunities for students to create their own guidelines, defining them as a group during the creation process. A second way is to provide pre-established guidelines to the students, review them, and ask for any questions, clarifications, additions or modifications. As a rule, most workshops I facilitate are under ninety minutes and in the context of an academic course; therefore, time is short and I find myself distributing handouts with pre-determined guidelines and facilitating a conversation about them before moving forward. I use pre-determined guidelines because I understand the importance of guidelines to frame the learning environment and interactions to be dialogical and one where students hold each other accountable for their contributions.

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[10] Safety should not be mistaken for comfort in this context. It is possible to be physically and psychologically safe while experiencing discomfort for learning.

Using Freire to reflect upon how I use guidelines to teach students in a workshop setting, I realize how I have grown over time. Early in my career, I would use guidelines as a vehicle for controlling the conversation in workshops. Because I was not always confident in myself or sure of my ability to give voice to my views and invite disagreement, guidelines were a way to prevent challenge. In the past, I would share these guidelines and say that if anyone disagreed they would not be welcome to participate. This intention and approach was not Freirian even though I believed it to be justifiable in the name of ensuring responsibility among students.

As I matured in my career, gained confidence in my ability to assert educational directivity, and increased my political clarity, I have found myself using guidelines as an additional tool to build community and invite students to actively participate in the learning experience from the start. By proposing a set of guidelines and inviting students to modify before agreement, I invite students to voice their needs and embrace their freedom to engage one another in ways that work for the needs of the whole community. Instead of using guidelines as a gate keeping device, they are a way to invite students to embrace accountability to one another in the learning community. Used this way, I take a political stance in favor of socially just and inclusive learning spaces while maintaining student's freedom to join in.

Taking time to create and / or discuss a set of guidelines engages multiple themes Freire encourages educators to reflect upon. At its most basic level, establishing guidelines is an act of directivity and non-neutrality on behalf of an educator. This is especially true when using pre-determined guidelines that explicitly name dimensions which are innately value-laden and political. The pre-determined workshop guidelines I use include items such as listening, holding ourselves accountable for what and how things are shared, exploring our emotional reactions, using "I statements" to only claim our own experiences, and recognizing the positional and social power we hold. These dimensions emphasize my values and beliefs that systems of privilege and oppression exist, that deep and empathetic listening can cultivate dialogue, and accountability for the way we participate is needed to recognize our own privilege. Such

directivity is important, and even necessary, in order to address what I as an educator view to be most important to contribute to the mission of my department (Freire, 1994).

On a deeper level, these pre-established guidelines attempt to re-create the relationships between teacher and facilitator. Instead of the traditional relationship between students and faculty as that of learner to teacher, the guidelines aspire to reframe the relationship between "teacher-students" and "student-teachers" (Freire, 2000, p. 93). Such a relationship supports everyone in the workshop to engage in a process where "knowing and re-knowing together [allows us to] begin to learn and to teach together also" (Freire, 1983, p. 39). The first sentence at the top of the pre-established workshop guidelines affirms this idea by stating that all participants are a teacher and a learner about diversity. This first sentence contextualizes the learning environment as one where everyone has popular knowledge and encourages student voices, experiences and feelings to be shared as valuable and necessary to the learning experience. Further, these reframed relationships are vital for shifting the educational experience from a sterile, banking model feel to an emotionally welcoming, democratic, dialogically-oriented learning community (Freire, 2000).

Personal Disclosure

In facilitation, the idea of leveraging one's non-neutrality and political clarity is sometimes referred to as personal discourse. This strategy uses one's own stories and experiences to challenge students' ideas and perceptions for educational purposes. I frequently use this strategy to challenge student narratives about the benefit of being color-blind as a solution to address racism as illustrated in a common exchange I have experienced summarized below.

Student: Isn't talking about race and racism just perpetuating the power these concepts have instead of not making race into a bigger deal since it's made up anyway?

Scott: I agree that race is socially constructed and an arbitrary way to divide people based on the significance 'we' proscribe to racial differences. I also wish we could live in a world that race didn't need to be discussed in these ways, however, based on my

experiences as a white person treated better than people of color, I don't believe we live

in that world. As such, I don't believe that I have the luxury to ignore differences that, if

not discussed, will continue to entrench themselves and perpetuate systems of

oppression against people of color.

This type of exchange where I share my beliefs connected to my lived experiences is valuable

for student learning. This technique humanizes me as a facilitator by dialoguing with students in

ways that names my reality (Freire, 2000, p. 137). Through sharing my personal experience and

belief, I embrace "the role of the progressive educator, which neither can nor ought to be

omitted, in offering her or his 'reading of the world,' is to bring out the fact that there are other

readings of the world" (Freire, 1994, p. 96). To not share of myself would problematically affirm

my own "authoritarian elitism… without ever exposing and offering [myself] to others" (Freire &

Macedo, 1987, p. 40). And yet, every time I share myself with students, it also helps me learn as

well. Each time I share requires me to maintain my own political clarity of my beliefs, and open

myself up to critique by students should they reject my experience. For some educators, this

process is risky; however, it models dialogue and transparency of thinking that can inspire

students' epistemological curiosity, deeper self-reflection, and authenticity (Freire, 1998).

Sometimes sharing my thoughts and experiences can be challenging because of how I

will be (mis)perceived. In another instance, I recall facilitating a student workshop on

interpersonal dialogue in the spring of 2011 when a student asked if I could think of any

politicians who embody a spirit of dialogue. My response was that the political gridlock in the

country did not seem to reflect the embodiment of dialogical practice. I went on to say that

President Obama so far was the only figure that seemed to promote dialogue given his

emphasis on diplomacy over military aggression. I remember immediately following my

comment with a disclaimer that I was not being politically partisan, but that my opinion was

based upon my understanding of philosophical approaches to conflict. I remember making the

disclaimer out of fear of being misperceived as promoting a political agenda that favored one

political party over another on a campus where students have been known to cite discrimination based on political ideology. However, I believe Freire would argue that I was actually taking a political stance aside from partisan politics – a stance in favor of dialogue as a method to engage conflict and difference. Perhaps instead of claiming to be neutral (which educators never are), Freire would have encouraged me to own my stance and use that as a moment to reflect upon why I made a thoughtful choice and the process of discernment used to come to my conclusion. By sharing my stance and why, I could have offered students an opportunity to engage in an authentic dialogue about something in which they had interest, and in turn modeled the topic of dialogue that I was teaching.

I have never heard a social justice educator refer to our work as simply a job. Social justice work tends to be personal, political, and a matter of social, mental, emotional, and physical survival in a world of social inequality and oppression. My relationship to this work, therefore, can never be innately neutral, or as Freire says, "no one can be in the world, with the world, and with others and maintain a posture of neutrality. I cannot be in the world decontextualized" (Freire, 1998, p. 73). Further, my political clarity aligns with Freire that, "it is equally part of right thinking to reject decidedly any and every form of discrimination" (Freire, 1998, p. 41). My position of non-neutrality coupled with personal political clarity leads me to educate in a way that promotes social justice that cultivates and sustains a passion for education.

Closing Thoughts on my Praxis

In my professional experience, I believe that Freire and his broader ideas are under discussed by social justice educators. Freire's many contributions to critical pedagogy can provide a richer way for us to hold one another accountable for how we engage our students, our institutions, and ourselves. I hope through sharing my praxis while applying Freire's many other texts, we might re-center Freire's broader ideas within the field to guide our work. I also

hope to inspire other practitioners to consider answering Freire's invitation to engage in a deeper praxis themselves to re-imagine our own social justice education practices.

A deeper understanding of Freire and his relatively less popular ideas have enriched my capacity to reflect upon my practice and envision new possibilities for the future. More than an educator and theorist of social justice, he was an ethicist and philosopher who cared deeply about the human condition. Freire (1998) stated this clearly in his final text, *Pedagogy of Freedom*:

> "As men and women inserted in and formed by a socio-historical context of relations, we become capable of comparing, evaluating, intervening, deciding, taking new directions, and thereby constituting ourselves as ethical being. It is in our becoming that we constitute our being so. Because the condition of becoming is the condition of being. In addition, it is not possible to imagine the human condition disconnected from the ethical condition" (p. 38-39).

Beyond its importance for effective practice grounded in the realities of the people, Freire understood the value of praxis as part of a vital ethical practice to help us stay grounded in our human values in order that we may actively contribute to the betterment, not the violation, of human society. However, Freire also knew praxis to be a gateway for hope by understanding the struggle we face. "Without a minimum of hope, we cannot so much as start the struggle. But without the struggle, hope, as an ontological need, dissipates" (Freire, 1994, p. 3). Through our constant reflection upon our actions we permit ourselves to continually engage in an ethical struggle to re-imagine a new, different, humane, and socially just world, or to maintain the current systemic forces that dull our intelligence, creativity, and imagination.

The above reflections on my practice as a curriculum designer and facilitator have been thoughtfully made through a Freirian lens; however, Freire states that people who experience privilege should re-examine themselves constantly (Freire, 2000). I would be failing my aspirations for social justice given my prevalence of dominant identities if I failed to reflect upon

the nature of these reflections in relationship to my internalized dominance. Is it possible that my preference for pre-established guidelines reflects a need for dominance? Am I unable to relinquish power in the curricular design process in order to protect my positional power and "expertise" given my privilege as an academic? Have I unknowingly convinced myself that the goal of workshop scalability is noble although it may resemble a tactical form of conquest often used by oppressors? Might my story sharing with students actually be a form of manipulation disguised by empathy? To complicate these questions further, I could add my oppressed identities as a working class person (who has more recently experienced upward mobility) and non-Christian, and explore how those influence my decisions. To what extend might my internalized inferiority from my oppressed identities mitigate or magnify the internalized dominance from my privileged identities? How might this mixture then influence my self-assessment on how well I aspire to follow Freire's wisdom? Freire understands that systems of privilege and oppression are pervasive, even marking the depths of our unconscious minds. As such, Freire (2000) makes clear how this impacts people with privilege who aspire to serve as allies for social justice:

> "…as they cease to be exploiters or indifferent spectators or simply the heirs of exploitation and move to the side of the exploited, they almost always bring with them the marks of their origin: their prejudices and their deformations, which include a lack of confidence in the people's ability to think, to want, and to know" (p. 60).

No matter how well-intended people with privilege are in their work as allies, we are still a socialized product of a world that normalizes systems of oppression – which includes normalizing feelings of internalized dominance and inferiority alike. Even if we complete class suicide with some of our identities, we can never completely shed our privileged status. At best, we must constantly remain vigilant of its ever-present nature along with its impact on our beliefs, perspectives, behaviors, and interactions within societal systems and institutions.

It is entirely valid to critique my analysis and related conclusions to be in collusion with internalized oppressive ideologies as a result of the privileged identities that I hold. It is possible that my analysis unconsciously favors ways that maintain my own status and expertise, indicating a resistance to my own "class suicide." It is possible that although I come from a working class background, my position of privilege as an academic may create an internalized resistance to give up the newly acquired privilege that I have "earned," which may illuminate the challenges I faced early in my career related to control.

At the time of this writing, I believe I have thoughtfully considered these questions and stand by my conclusions. However, I believe that part of a commitment to praxis is to raise a constant, critical lens on my privileged identities to question and thoughtfully reconsider the basis of my beliefs and rationales on a regular basis. My commitment to this reflection must additionally invite loving critique from others in the same way Freire welcomed critique of his internalized sexism in his earlier writings (Freire, 1994). As such, I do not wish to easily dismiss these concerns but state the possibility of my own limited perspective in order to invite other interpretations in the spirit of dialogue. In this way, I wish to state my intention that my analysis and their related conclusions do not end with a metaphorical period to indicate finality, but instead with an ellipsis to indicate the necessity for more reflection that will follow.

Social justice educators interested in Paulo Freire have a wealth of ideas to draw from to engage in their own praxis. The concepts of class suicide, epistemological circling and curiosity, educational directivity and "non-neutrality", and the relationship between authority and freedom are compelling ideas that have much to offer us. Engaging in praxis can be difficult because it may illuminate aspects of oneself that are hard to acknowledge. Adding these concepts make this process no less challenging. Through my own praxis on my theoretical and pedagogical approach, workshop negotiation with faculty, workshop curriculum creation, balance between curricular standardization and flexibility, establishment of workshop guidelines, and personal disclosure during workshops, I have come to realize some ways in which I have adopted

Freirian ideals and practices, but many more ways in which I have struggled. However, it is the struggle that gives me hope as I aspire to do better. While it is difficult to look oneself in the mirror, it is important to know that in addition to the blemishes there is beauty – beauty in our ability to re-imagine education even though we struggle through our dominant and marginalized aspects of self. Freire reminds us that the need for praxis is beyond valuable for professional competence, but part of the struggle for the soul of our practice and the spirit of our communities.

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