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Thinking Beyond Borders: Critical Pedagogy in a Neoliberal Economy

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THINKING BEYOND BORDERS:

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN A NEOLIBERAL ECONOMY

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PIM 70

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CLC: Course-linked capstone

TBB: Thinking Beyond Borders

GGY: Global Gap Year

PL: Program Leader

POL: Presentation of Learning Example Presentation of Learning

NGO: Non-governmental Organization

ABSTRACT

The aim of the capstone is to explore the role of critical pedagogy as a transformative philosophy for critical consciousness by examining the Freireian methodologies of the organization Thinking Beyond Borders. TBB is a 'gap-year' program designed for youth to study international development in 8 countries over 8 months with the goal of questioning assumptions. With the ideological hegemony of classical neoliberal economics increasing inequality through globalization, alternative educational paradigms that promote critical and creative thinking are needed. What can be done within education to cultivate citizens capable of mitigating and transcending the homogenizing tendencies of globalization, nurturing a 'global consciousness'? Can a 'gap-year' program significantly shift the consciousness of its' participants to the point of life-long engagement in pressing global issues?

I reflected on the experience of privileged young Americans striving to become conscious global citizens and proactive agents of change. Methods included participant observation (reflecting on my observations throughout the year as program leader), trace measures (using the student's media projects and blog posts to understand the development in their thinking), and content analysis (examining the curriculum and organizational structure). Findings illustrate that students' meta-cognitive skills increased throughout the program, supporting the need for critical pedagogy as a tool for self-actualization and social justice.

PREFACE

My background is in working with low-income youth of color and marginalized populations in a strengths-based and social justice methodology. Yet after working for World Learning's CONTACT (conflict transformation across cultures) program and hearing the repeated theme that people of color are tired of educating the privileged I realized I wanted to shift my focus to experiment with white privilege work. Thus far in my research and work I have concentrated on the subaltern and disempowered, but what would it be like to work with rich white Americans (my own demographic)?

Growing up in the San Francisco Bay Area I was steeped in identity politics, but steadily grew an interest in examining class relations and the increasingly globalized economic system. I was preoccupied with questions such as, "How can we transform the superstructure? How could we develop social change agents to combat postmodern imperialism? How could I inspire an ideology of justice through global citizenship?" This curiosity to explore the potentials of education as a subversive force led me to become a Program Leader with Thinking Beyond Borders.

INTRODUCTION

The course-linked capstone is in the context of my practicum as International Educator, Program Leader for the non-profit gap year Thinking Beyond Borders (TBB). TBB is an educational program providing 17-20 year-olds a curriculum based in experiential learning and critical pedagogy. Their mission is to empower and inspire students to address global issues by critically examining their assumptions. Participants of the Global Gap Year (GGY) study international development in 8 countries over 8 months continually asking the questions, "What is development?" and "How do I become a proactive agent of change?"

My role in TBB was as Program Leader, where I facilitated a social justice curriculum for 11 upper-class American high school graduates. The goal was to inspire critical consciousness in our students, and for them to learn how to translate learning into action to become proactive agents of change. They did this by asking questions such as "Who am I? Is everyone in the world interconnected? What do we assume about ourselves and others? Who is responsible to develop whom?".

The aim of the paper is to explore the role of critical pedagogy as a transformative philosophy for critical consciousness by examining the Freireian methodologies of the organization Thinking Beyond Borders. What is the role of critical pedagogy in transforming America's upper-class youth[1] into conscious global citizens?

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[1] Though many people exist with dual roles simultaneously as oppressor and oppressed, TBB's demographic is mostly in the oppressor category. For example, as an able-bodied upper-middle class Caucasian adult of one of the most powerful nations in the world I am an oppressor. Yet as a female atheist resisting categorization in sexuality, I am oppressed. "Dehumanization…marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it" (Freire, 1970, p. 2). The task for everyone then is restoring our humanity. The question is, how?

CONTEXT: GLOBALIZATION & THE NEOLIBERAL ECONOMY

Relations of subjection, suffering dispossession and contempt for human dignity and the sanctity of life are at the center of social existence. Emotional dislocation, moral sickness and individual helplessness remain ubiquitous features of our time (McLaren, 1995, p. 1).

My undergraduate college application essay question asked, "What is the most pressing issue of our time?" I wrote about globalization. Ten years later, with the escalation of injustice, exploitation, and oppression (albeit in more subtle and solicitous forms), it is even more necessary to scrutinize the global processes that are taking place. With democracy being used as justification for war and occupation, and increasingly open markets expanding the gap between the rich and poor, structural, cultural, and direct violence is increasing. Embedded in these conflicts are issues ranging from environmental destruction, cultural homogenization for a monoculture based on Western assumptions, agricultural patenting and corporate monopolies, to growing sectarianism, government corruption, and public health crises. We need to develop the capacity to think critically and laterally across disciplines to see the interconnectedness of the issues we face in order to address them creatively. UCLA's Professor in Urban Schooling Peter McLaren asserts that,

> The reality and promise of democracy in the United States has been invalidated by the ascendancy of new postmodern institutionalizations of brutality and the proliferation of new sinister structures of domination (1995, p. 1).

In thinking about how to conceptualize and carry out an education that gives rise to young people who are able to think creatively and across disciplines, a few key question need to be asked. What do the processes of globalization have to do with

creating leaders for the next generation? How do these processes affect young people? What forces are shaping their consciousness?

Seen as the New Imperialism[2], globalization is based on neoliberal economics comprised of flawed theories ungrounded in empirical reality. According to SIT Graduate Institute's economics professor Kote-Nikoi in a lecture on February 23rd, 2011, globalization is not just the integration of economies across the globe but more importantly, it is:

1. The homogenization of cultures

2. The elimination of difference (beyond culture)

3. The creation of universal rules of the game

All designed to enhance the global search for profits. McLaren (1995) contends, "the social, the cultural and the human has been subsumed within capitol" (p. 2). Critical pedagogue Ira Shor agrees, writing that the status quo of a neoliberal economic system encourages "values, actions, speech, and institutional practices reflecting racism, sexism, class hierarchy, homophobia, militarism, excessive consumerism, self-reliant individualism, environmental waste, the elite monopoly on the mass media, the bureaucratic control of institutions like schools and colleges, and the fascination with the rich and powerful cultivated by the dominant media" (1995, p. 130).

How do we create citizens who can "disrupt, contest, and transform media apparatuses so that they no longer have the power to infantilize the population and continue to create passive, fearful, paranoid, and apolitical social subjects" (McLaren,

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[2] According to Kote-Nikoi (personal communication, February 23, 2011), globalization as we are experiencing it is the latest manifestation of a very old phenomenon (though it has unique characteristics). The three manifestations include the Roman Empire, the European Colonial Experience-British, Spanish & Dutch Empires, and the Current Era.

1995, p. 9)? Living in an increasingly global society that faces the immense challenges of poverty, environmental destruction, decreased public health, and social oppression, individuals often feel ill-equipped to face these serious conflicts and create proactive change. As inheritors and oft-times unconscious perpetrators of these issues, America's elite should be engaged in the humanization process through proactive change. According to Robin Pendoley, co-founder and CEO of Thinking Beyond Borders, proactive change is action through dynamic understanding of communities and global issues (TBB website, 2012). This dynamic understanding begins with education that engages communities through experiential learning and critical thought. TBB believes that proactive agents of change can be nurtured through critical pedagogy, which has the power to create 'global citizens' capable of combating xenophobia, paternalism, neo-imperialism, historical amnesia, and apathy.

> What educators need to realize is that a New World Order cannot be realistically achieved without creating a new moral order at home first…one that refuses to challenge the received truths or accepted conventions that have provoked the current crisis of history and identity (McLaren, 1995, p. 9).

LITERATURE REVIEW

IDEOLOGY: THE GLOBALIZATION OF EDUCATION AND CONSCIOUSNESS

> If you want real social change, it makes no sense to focus on the institutions; they will rise again from the ashes, in another form. What you need to do is attack the ideologies (N. Kote-Nikoi, personal communication, February 23rd, 2011).

The economic system reflects the ontology of any given society. Free-market corporate capitalist values of profit and individuality shape the meaning-making process for what it means to be human in capitalist societies. A society based on neoclassical economics means believing in social alienation, economic inequality, and economic and cultural exploitation (Marx, 1867; Stiglitz, 2002). "Our advanced technological society is rapidly making objects of most of us and subtly programming us into conformity to the logic of the system" (Shaull, in Freire, 1970, p. 31). If social relations, production relations, and ownership of capital are transformed, what it means to be human—human values—will transform, from absolute profitability to whatever communities may choose. What if our primary vocation was liberation and the process of humanization? For educational theorist Paulo Freire (1970), "liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men upon their world in order to transform it" (p. 66). These are the processes taking place through critical pedagogy "in a search for new ways of being and knowing" (Shor 1995, p. 54).

> The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back (Keynes, 1936, p. 383).

The prevailing economy reflects societal values, which are reproduced through education. Shaull (in Freire, 1970) contends, "There is no neutral educational process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes 'the practice of freedom', the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world" (p. 32). What are the correlations between educational ideology and prevailing economic systems? President Johnson's domestic spending programs of the 1960's saw a slew of experimental pedagogy and the founding of radical institutions[3]. The era of 3rd world structural adjustment in the 1980's meant more testing and traditional content in the U.S. Today's neoliberal free market corresponds to the privatization of America's schools, and increased standardized testing[4].

> The prevailing referents around which the notion of public citizenry is currently constructed have been steered in the ominous direction of the social logic of production and consumption. Buyers are beginning culturally to merge with their commodities while human agency is becoming absorbed into the social ethics of the marketplace (McLaren, 1995, p. 1).

As Kote-Nikoi points out, it is the theoretical foundations; the ideas that give rise to the institutions that bind us. If change is needed in this increasingly integrated global economy, one must look to where ideas are formed. What can be done within education to cultivate citizens capable of mitigating and transcending the homogenizing tendencies of globalization, nurturing a 'global consciousness'?

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[3] Including Antioch, Naropa, Friends World Program (Global College), The School for International Training (SIT Graduate Institute), and The New School among others.

[4] Such as Bush's 'No Child Left Behind Act'.

The difficulty lies, not in the new ideas, but in escaping the old ones…it is ideas, not vested interests, which are dangerous for good or evil (Keynes, 1936, preface & p. 384).

Education has long been identified as a method of assimilation (Dewey, 1916; Reidy, 2001; Strouse, 1987), serving to obviate thinking (Freire, 1970). It is an effective way to uphold the power structures of the status quo (McLaren, 2005), where "each generation is socialized into the life of the nation" (Shor, 1992). Today, this convention is the intellectual hegemony of free market fundamentalists, the neoliberal doctrine. Shor (1992) argues that "passive curricula help prepare students for life in undemocratic institutions…for the authoritarian work world and political system they will join" (p. 19). It serves the ideological intent to indoctrinate students to adapt to the world of oppression (Freire, 1970). Yet education can also be a means of liberation (Freire, 2000) and social change (Dewey, 1916; Steiner, 1997).

We need to say no to the neoliberal fatalism that we are witnessing…informed by the ethics of the market, an ethics in which a minority makes the most profits against the lives of the majority. In other words, those who cannot compete, die. This is a perverse ethics that, in fact, lacks ethics. I insist on saying that I continue to be human…I embrace history as possibility [where] we can demystify the evil in this perverse fatalism that characterizes the neoliberal discourse" (Freire, 1999, p. 26).

How can education prepare students to interact with the processes and forces of globalization? What types of pedagogies can be utilized to cultivate the 'global consciousness' that is needed to address the world's pressing issues? How does a 'global consciousness' relate to an identity of resistance against the homogeneity of the free trade regime? How can education develop our identities as social beings and world citizens whose future depends on cooperation, peace, ecology, and equality (Shor, 1992)? Freire (1987) begins to answer these questions by writing, "as conscious human beings, we can

discover how we are conditioned by the dominant ideology. We can gain distance on our

moment of existence…we can struggle to become free precisely because we can know

we are not free!" (p. 13).

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND 'GLOBAL CONSCIOUSNESS'

> The conventional view serves to protect us from the painful job of thinking (Galbraith, 1968).

Harvard's educational researchers Boix-Mansilla and Gardner (In Suarez-Orozco, 2007) define 'global consciousness' as the result of interdisciplinary lessons where students are at the center of the debate, which require them to investigate "real life forces shaping the planet" (p. 21). This in turn nurtures a "grounded understanding of the meaning and processes of globalization and how it directly relates to their lives" (ibid). 'Global consciousness' is grounded in Freire's (2000) critical pedagogy[5], which places education within its own context, connecting knowledge to power and the existing structures of class struggle, developing a consciousness of freedom, and being able to engage in constructive action for social transformation. The three main dimensions to Freire's conception of critical consciousness include:

1. Critical self-awareness

2. Reflecting on the totality of existing situations

3. Limit-actions to transcend the limit-situations in order toward humanization

He defines critical consciousness as "a kind of reading the world rigorously…of reading how society works. It is to better understand the problem of interests, the question of power…a deeper reading of reality" (1985, p. 9). Critical pedagogy "takes the life situation of the learner as its starting point and the raising of consciousness and the overcoming of obstacles as its goals" (ibid). The Wikipedia definition of critical consciousness is,

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[5] Described by Ira Shor in his work *Empowering Education* as "Habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which go beneath surface…to understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse" (1992, p. 129).

Achieving an in-depth understanding of the world, allowing for the perception and exposure of social and political contradictions. Critical consciousness also includes taking action against the oppressive elements in one's life that are illuminated by that understanding.

Conscientization means breaking through prevailing mythologies to reach new levels of awareness – in particular, awareness of oppression, being an "object" of others' will rather than a self-determining "subject." The process of conscientization involves identifying contradictions in experience through dialogue and becoming part of the process of changing the world.

Students not only gain the power to critique, but to act on their conditions because "a deepened consciousness of their own situation leads people to apprehend that situation as an historical reality susceptible of transformation" (Freire, 1970, p. 85). Boix-Mansilla and Gardener explain that the goal is "to engage students affectively in a reflection about their role as key actors in a dynamic, often uneven, matrix of economic and cultural exchanges" (In Suarez-Orozco, 2007, p. 21).

The aim of many study abroad programs and experiential education models inspired by the work of Freire is to cultivate the 'global citizen', one who has this consciousness of self, contextualized within the world. Though amorphous, the term is currently en vogue with the increasing transnationalism in education[6] preparing students for the challenges of globalization. Within education, 'global citizenship' encompasses multicultural education, peace education, human rights education, and international education, with emphasis on the themes of economic integration, environmental stewardship, cultural encounters, governance and citizenship (ibid). Among many definitions, the 'global citizen' is aware of the existing structures and interrelated global systems. They have the capacity to translate ideas into action, theory into practice. They

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[6] Whether through study abroad programs of Northerners to the South, or 'Brain Drain' of the South to the North.

have respect for fellow humanity regardless of race, creed, sex, class, or religion, beyond the barriers of nationality.

Yet is this burgeoning class of 'global citizens' actually engaging in the decolonizing movement aimed at honoring alternate discourses and other ways of knowing? Or is 'global citizenship' the newest form of 'cultural currency' with the mission of preparing new generations for the internationally-mobile workforce in the increasingly competitive and interconnected global marketplace? McLaren (1999) insists that rather than educating for the workforce, we must "make liberation and the abolition of human suffering the goal of the educative enterprise itself" (p. 5).

A major critique of study abroad programs that purportedly develop 'global citizens' is that they are a continuation of the orthodoxy through different means[7]. Their programs focus on white elites acting as saviors, do-gooders and modern-day missionaries through global education across borders, where the world is their classroom (Illich, 1968). While upper-middle class students fill their resumes with study abroad experiences, Third World elites are educated at ivy league Western schools, indoctrinated with neoclassical thinking and occupying positions in institutions such as the World Bank that uphold the status quo (N. Kote-Nikoi, personal communication, February 23rd, 2011). The question arises whether global citizenship education is preparing students for critical consciousness or to be managers of globalization. While education across borders for all people of the world has the potential for inspiring revolutionary thinking, it must first address the ideological flaws within its own structure.

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[7] Rather than the traditional means of colonization, i.e. (in colloquial terms), rape, pillage, kill, convert.

METHODOLOGY

As Program Leader I facilitated the critical inquiry process of the students, co-leading seminars and site-visits, and having one-on-one mentor meetings throughout the year. Thus I reflected on my own participant observation with regards to the existing literature on critical pedagogy, connecting empowerment models to organizational practice. I explored the role of critical pedagogy in transforming 11 privileged white Americans into conscious 'global citizens' over 8 months in 8 countries through participant observation (reflecting on my observations throughout the year), trace measures (using the student's media projects and blog posts to understand the development in their thinking), and content analysis (examining the curriculum and organizational structure).

After completing the program I processed my own experience honing in on where the obstacles and frustrations lay to student's development towards critical consciousness. This assessment is based on almost daily debriefs with my co-leaders and weekly check-ins with the U.S.-based staff on the subject. I read the student blogs to better understand their perception of the program, drawing out key comments that highlight transformational moments. I also examined the organization's website.

The design is compliant with human subject research policies. Organizational and student consent was given, and the students are quoted anonymously. While participant observation shows my perspective of the effect of critical pedagogy on students, their blogs and projects highlight student thinking throughout the program, how the curriculum was affecting them. The information on TBB's website helps frame the organization's mission and philosophy with what I experienced "in the field". These three methods

aided me in subsequently considering the role critical pedagogy plays in Thinking

Beyond Border's study abroad curriculum in the context of a neoliberal global economy

and consumer culture.

LIMITATIONS

Limitations to the capstone include not using my students as direct research subjects, but reflecting on the experience post-practicum. It was important for me as a first-time teacher to not have the students feel like research subjects when they were already vulnerable in the learning process. I also soon realized that systematic research during the practicum was not feasible with the demands of the job. This limited my methods to participant-observation, my personal experience and reflections, and trace methods, student products that were created for various purposes throughout the year including 'media projects', 'presentations of learning', and blog posts. Perhaps richer data could have come from a series of student surveys or interviews, but the program was demanding not only on the PLs, but the students as well. Already included throughout their eight months were numerous evaluation forms they had to fill out, feedback they had to give, seminar readings, service-learning work, and projects they had to complete. It is possible that the data gathered through those methods during the program would have suffered due to the students being overwhelmed; therefore I am comfortable with my decision to analyze retrospectively using the available data.

I also specifically encouraged critical consciousness throughout the year, with critical perception of oppressive realities as my tacit agenda, so I am perhaps biased in looking for moments of awareness and realization. I wanted the students to understand the multiple forms of oppression, and to engage in the praxis[8] of their pursuit for liberation. I had particular hopes of critical pedagogy being transformative to raise awareness-levels of the students about global issues and their own roles in them – that the

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[8] Praxis being the reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.

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exploitative relationship is a dialectical one (I have because they have not, etc.). Thus it is possible that my bias skewed the data.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION: TBB'S GLOBAL GAP YEAR

Awareness is about deconstructing what we assume to be self-evident, and leaving us open to seeing the world and ourselves as if for the first time (TBB student in the U.S., 2012).

Table 1: Itinerary, 2011-2012
Sep 7 - Sep 19: Costa Rica – Orientation
Sep 20 - Oct 26: Ecuador – Natural Resources and the Environment
Oct 27 - Nov 2: Peru – Cuzco and Inca Trail
Nov 4 - Dec 17: China – Education
Dec 18 - Dec 26: Cambodia – Phnom Penh and Angkor Watt
Dec 27 - Feb 10: India – Sustainable Agriculture
Feb 10 - Feb 16: India – Taj Mahal and Delhi
Feb 18 - Mar 28: South Africa – Public Health and HIV/AIDS
Mar 29 - Apr 4: South Africa – Addo Safari
Apr 6 - May 6: USA – Culmination and Graduation

TBB is a response to what is lacking in educational systems – developing critical consciousness. Their goal is to create proactive agents of change, emerging leaders who understand the interrelatedness, challenges, and potentials of pressing global issues in order to better address them. The organization believes in systems-thinking, understanding the correlations between fields by studying power, agency, and history. The Global Gap year is designed for students to explore international development through global service-learning and academic study. According to Pendoley, by developing emotional and intellectual understanding of communities and the issues they face daily, students internalize the true human cost of development challenges (personal communication May, 2011). The GGY is what Richard Shaull (in Freire, 1970) writes of Freire's work, designed to be "a process of reflection which is set in a thoroughly historical context, which is carried on in the midst of a struggle to create a new social order and thus represents a new unity of theory and *praxis*" (pgs. 29, 30).

I chose to work with TBB because it is different from most organizations in its field. They hire leaders who hold master's degrees in international development or education with experience studying, teaching, and working abroad. It is on the cutting edge of education, not easily falling into what is traditionally thought of as "gap year" or "study abroad" because of its' intentionality and commitment to self-actualization and social justice. Policies that also distinguish the program include zero tolerance for alcohol (except at designated 'cultural events' approved and chaperoned by the PLs), and no sexual relations with local communities (to avoid miscommunication and varying cultural expectations). These guidelines greatly affect the type of relationship students develop in each community. Another aspect that makes TBB stand out is that the program ends with a significant portion in the U.S. for reflection and integration back into one's home-community. Additionally, there are site-visits to the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and other development headquarters and NGO's whose policies have affected the communities visited around the globe. The caliber of curriculum TBB offers and integrity of their mission is unmatched[9]. It was also an opportunity for me to engage in white privilege work, as the student demographic of the GGY is predominantly upper-class Caucasian Americans[10].

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[9] Though TBB is excellent, there is room for improvement. The program greatly depends on the goals of the PLs who facilitate the program. The curriculum is based on a Freireian philosophy, yet a PL who is not committed to the ideas of social justice and critical consciousness could run a program without deliberately cultivating those ideas in students. Each PL brings their particular preoccupation, so it is crucial to the integrity of the program that they are chosen carefully, which is up to the U.S. staff, consisting almost exclusively of white males.

[10] This is due to the prohibitively high cost of the program (around $40,000 for the year). Founded in 2007, it ran its first group during the economic recession, and has not grown according to its business plan. The goal is to be able to operate on student tuition, hoping to provide 1 full scholarship for every 3 full-paying students. Enrollment is not as high enough for this to happen, so TBB is awarding partial scholarships to allow more students to participate, meaning the student demographics are narrow, mainly upper middle class white Americans, with a few exceptions (R. Pendoley, personal communication, August, 2011).

The demographics of the student-body greatly affect how they interact with the curriculum. The majority of TBB students are from affluent white suburban areas of the U.S. in two-parent households who attended private college preparatory schools and are headed to ivy-league or liberal arts colleges[11]. As Shor puts it in describing his own classroom, "they are not marginalized peasants from an underdeveloped nation; they are assertive aspiring individualists seeking buying power in a runaway consumer society whose government and elite dominate world affairs – and them. They express a self-assertion that is in tune with the power, affluence, and aggression of the nation and economy they belong to" (1995, p. 61).

The pedagogical model of TBB is one of critical inquiry grounded in the work of Freire, who writes that, "knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (1970, p. 70). TBB believes that growth occurs in the spaces of cognitive dissonance, where a student's preconceived notions clash with their experiences. Critical theorist Franz Fanon (1952) describes cognitive dissonance as an extremely uncomfortable feeling created when people hold a strong belief yet are presented with evidence that works against it. The program provides a learning situation that is experiential[12], involving a constant unveiling of reality. TBB's philosophy also resonates with Susan Finley's (2008) description of McLaren's revolutionary pedagogy:

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[11] To participate in TBB one must be deferred to a college, though most students reapplied during TBB.

[12] Aligned with Kolb's Experiential Learning Model (1975), the cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

- Resists heterogeneity in discourses and representations of history, culture, and politics that ignore the tensions and contradictions lived through raced and gendered difference
- Names and gives voice to nonparticipants in the power structures derived from world capitalism and colonialist practices
- Contests various assaults on protections for the poor, for women, and for people of color
- Challenges the assumptions and ideologies enacted in schooling and attempts to refashion a politics of education to the larger universal values of social democracy
- Offers a provisional glimpse of a new society freed from the bondage of the past
- Creates narrative spaces set against the subjectification of everyday experience and gives rise to an empowered way of being by recognizing and naming, in an uncompromising critique, the everyday signifiers of power and practices of concealment that typically prevent self-knowledge and by discouraging naming the tensions and contradictions wrought by capitalist colonialist practices
- Directly confronts differentiated totalities of contemporary society and their historical imbrications in the world system of global capitalism by engagement in revolutionary transformation

The GGY consists of four main components: home-stays, service-learning, mentoring, and seminars. The core goal is to encourage students to develop their meta-cognitive skills. During staff training, Pendoley invited us to "get away from the silos of thought", to question our own assumptions about how the world works, and critically dig into our beliefs. To identify one's own underlying assumptions we must master meta-cognition, to see our relationship to the bigger picture. This is the last thing our brains learn how to do developmentally (if intentional about it). It must be practiced, strengthening the electrical pathways of our brains by drawing bridges across domains. The development of meta-cognitive skills is supported by a curriculum consisting of dialogic problem-posing around key interdisciplinary themes rather than narrow content. According to Freire, problem-posing education is where "men and women develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world not as static reality but as a reality in the process of transformation" (1970, p. 12). It is an education in which the problems of human beings are posed in their relations with the world (ibid).

TBB curriculum supports the break-down of oppressive ideologies such as self-reliance and individualism. The alienation from each other through values of individualism or via technology is countered through experiencing different types of community, and a low-tech policy. Through the program students discuss the different values that are emphasized in the communities vis-à-vis the U.S. The curriculum challenges students to engage in discussions of power in critical and liberating ways, where they have the ability to deconstruct colonial and hegemonic paradigms. A large part of that process is demythologizing. Freire (1970) lists a few of the prominent myths we focused on throughout the year:

> The myth that the oppressive order is a "free society"; the myth that all persons are free to work where they wish, that if they don't like their boss they can leave him and look for another job; the myth that this order respects human rights and is therefore worthy of esteem; the myth that anyone who is industrious can become an entrepreneur–worse yet, the myth that the street vendor is as much an entrepreneur as the owner of a large factory; the myth of the universal right of education, when of all the…children who enter primary schools only a tiny fraction ever reach the university; the myth of the equality of all individuals…; the myth of the heroism of the oppressor classes as defenders of "Western Christian civilization" against "materialist barbarism"; the myth of the charity and generosity of the elites, when what they really do as a class is to foster selective "good deeds"…; the myth that the dominant elites, "recognizing their duties", promote the advancement of the people, so that the people, in a gesture of gratitude, should accept the words of the elites and be conformed to them; the myth that rebellion is a sin against God; the myth of private property as fundamental to personal human development (so long as oppressors are the only true human beings); the myth of the industriousness of the oppressors and the laziness and dishonesty of the oppressed, as well as the myth of the natural inferiority of the latter and the superiority of the former (p. 140).
> Freire contends that "the role of the problem-posing educator is to create; together

with the students, the conditions under which knowledge at the level of the *doxa* is superseded by true knowledge, at the level of the *logos*" (1970, p. 81), where the orthodoxy is examined through discourse. In short, problem-posing education sets demythologizing reality as its main task. Yet the question remains, how is this done?

EMPOWERING EDUCATION

TBB's is a student-centered curriculum offering self-development in a

cooperative and critical process, designed to be empowering. Empowering education is

"the exploration of subject matter in its social context with critical themes and bodies of

knowledge integrated into student language and experience" (Shor, 1995, p. 144). The

program embodies Shor's 10 values for empowering pedagogy:

Participatory	Problem-posing	Multicultural	Desocializing	Researching
Affective	Interdisciplinary	Dialogic	Democratic	Situated

Table 2: 10 Principles of TBB

1. The primary responsibility of teachers is to learn from the students about what they need to grow
2. Teach students to learn.
3. The teaching-learning relationship is triangular (student/teacher/subject)
4. Humility in teaching is fundamental. It is almost never about the teacher.
5. Learning is an intellectual, social, cultural, and emotional process. We have to do all of these things to learn well.
6. Learning and teaching is neither linear nor immediate. ("Understanding" is a continuous process of experiencing, learning, and reflecting, as in David Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle.)
7. Learners and teachers can only start where they are.
8. Consciousness is key.
9. Expect greatness and believe in their and your capacity to achieve it. (If something is not great, don't be afraid to say it).
10. Celebrate every win, no matter how big or small, every time.

The program also aligns with DiBenedetto's Model of Youth Empowerment

(1992), which is comprised of three parts:

Intellectual Challenge: education, analysis, voice
Emotional Nurturance: safety, appreciation, diversity, expression
Shared Power: non-authoritarian, exercised, action

Intellectual challenges are mostly embedded in the seminars and seminar

readings. It is there that students explore topics relevant to their service-learning projects

and the core country. They practice skills of analysis and using their voice through discussion in and outside of seminars. Emotional nurturance occurs through mentor relationships with the PLs, where a rapport is developed over the course of the year. Each PL is paired with 2-6 mentees, depending on group dynamics, with whom they meet individually a few times a month focusing on developing the students' goals. Much nurturance also comes from peers and home-stay families. Throughout the program there is team-building and appreciation exercises to build community. Expression is encouraged particularly through the media projects. It is there that students can delve into topics they are curious about and use their medium of choice to share their explorations and inquiries with a wider audience. Media projects have included creating shadow puppet shows, podcasts, stop-motion animation, RSA-like animation, photography exhibits, spoken word poetry, comic books, children's books, and videos.

> Only through communication can human life hold meaning. The teacher's thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the student's thinking. The teacher cannot think for her students, nor can she impose her thought on them. Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about reality, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication. If it is true that thought has meaning only when generated by action upon the world, the subordination of students to teachers becomes impossible (Freire, 1970, p. 75).

Shared power is a key tenet in TBB. It is a student-driven process, where students are encouraged to take ownership of their own learning. This happens through a seminar format where the PL is a facilitator, not an authoritarian teacher. We engage in mutual learning in which students and PLs are jointly responsible for a process in which all grow, becoming 'critical co-investigators'. As long as safety wasn't compromised (and our local partner organizations agreed), students could change the curriculum, methods, content, and activities according to their learning needs. The flexibility in curriculum also

extends to the PLs. Though there is an itinerary, curriculum guide and syllabus, the PLs

can choose and are encouraged to shift any of it to further the group's learning. For

example, we added a trip to Udaipur to show a different side of India (because the

students had only experienced what they considered to be a depressing urban

environment with little history left in its buildings). We added a tranquil trip to a bird

sanctuary at dawn, floating in small barges and having lunch with village women when

the group was overwhelmed with urban grime, to restore a connection to the land. We

created our own seminars such as the one where a PL posed as a college student who held

certain beliefs, and the students had to argue their own perspective (grounded in the

reading) against the PLs' seemingly sound logic, preparing them for voicing their

perspectives in a college classroom and beyond, filled with conventional and powerful

views. Each day was made of choices such as these. What will push the students'

learning but allow them to emotionally respond to each situation? What will provide the

best environment for learning? It was a delicate and ever-changing balance of keeping

each student on the edge of what they could handle, asking the most we could of them at

all times while keeping them not necessarily comfortable, but safe[13].

    Seminars are structured as an ongoing dialogue[14]. "Provided with the proper tools

for [a dialogical encounter with others], the individual can gradually perceive personal

and social reality as well as the contradictions in it, become conscious of his or her own

perception of that reality, and deal critically with it" (Shaull, in Freire, 1970, p. 30).

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[13] It is a paradox and part of the problem of power that we attempt to address that so much intentionality and at least a few resources are available for programs like TBB for this demographic while the majority of the world's population hardly has access to a meaningful education.

[14] Freire's definition of dialogue is "the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world" (1970, p. 88).

Students are invited to re-perceive self and society through in-depth discussions with their peers and PLs around a series of questions throughout the year. Yet dialogue is not just a method, but has epistemological significance. Freire (1995) writes, "I engage in dialogue because I recognize the social and not merely the individualistic character of the process of knowing" (p. 379).

TBB education is purposeful, not meant to be a progression of thought, but to explore concepts. 'Essential questions' steer the experience in each country while 'guiding questions' provide structure for each seminar within the country. An essential question might be "Why are so many nations failing to effectively address HIV/AIDS and protect public health?" while a guiding question might be "Why is it often difficult for post-colonial governments to create the infrastructure needed to protect public health?"

Table 3: Example Curriculum

Ecuador: Natural Resources and the Environment

Essential Question: *What does it mean to be "environmentally-responsible"?*

Guiding Questions:

Sem 1: *How do societies impact the environment?*
Sem 2: *How do societies become environmentally destructive?*
Sem 3: *What is development?*
Sem 4: *Where will the resources come from as the global economy continues to grow?*
Sem 5: *What does it mean to "manage" resources?*
Sem 6: *How inconvenient is the truth?*
Sem 7: *Can humans be proactive actors in the natural environment?*
Sem 8: *What role does gender play in environmental responsibility?*
Sem 9: *What is "environmental justice"?*
Sem 10: *How does society change?*

Each seminar has objectives and a purpose, in addition to the guiding question. Seminars consist of a rotating and flexible design using fishbowls, debates, lectures, role-plays, group-work, and student presentations. Special emphasis is placed on examining root causes, historical circumstances and context, and observing current realities around the particular issue. Seminars end with posing a journal question for personal reflection. There are no grades, but one-one one mentor meetings on the student's social, academic, and personal growth. Articles, books, videos, podcasts, RSA animates and Ted talks are assigned to prepare for each seminar, though they are not mandatory. TBB encourages students to engage in learning, but does not dictate how or place a hierarchical value on one type of learning over another. TBB also addresses the false dichotomy of the Enlightenment around the Cartesian mind/body split. Learning is cognitive and affective, not confined to a classroom, but a life-long process.

Alienation of disciplines is countered through an interdisciplinary approach. The overarching questions of TBB are "How can I be a proactive agent of change?" and "What is development?" These questions are explored throughout the year through five different lenses in five different 'core' countries (specifically revisiting them in every seminar 3 and 10 respectively)[15]: The Environment and Natural Resources in Ecuador; Education in China; Sustainable Agriculture in India; Public Health in South Africa; and Social Justice in the U.S.

As a process open to student initiatives, further themes were generated through mutual interest of the students and PLs that spanned the year. They included examining

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[15] Though we traveled to eight countries, Costa Rica was 'Orientation', and Peru, Cambodia, (the Delhi & Agra portion of India, and Addo portion of South Africa) were 'enrichment weeks' where students had a less intense schedule, read books, and reflected on their previous service-learning experiences, visiting historical sites.

the relationship between poverty and structural violence, the role of compassion in self-development and addressing global issues, and dispelling the myth of the American Dream. Additionally, in each core country the students are required to complete a media project (the first two in groups, the last two either in a group or solo) to explore a question of their choosing. Between core countries students read an enrichment week book describing the journey of an agent of change to provide an example of someone translating learning into action and to get an understanding of the challenges they faced. At the end of the program students complete a Presentation of Learning, where they convey to an audience what they learned on TBB. Most of the POLs took the form of a final media project[16].

Table 4: Goals

Goals for the PLs:

- Help expand a key set of skills
- Challenge students with points of *cognitive dissonance*
- Facilitate the students' *empowerment*
- Provide a framework
- Create a scaffold upon which students can step upon to *think critically*.

Goals for the students & PLs:

- Build the capacity to ask questions and then ask a *better set of questions*
- Get to the *underlying issues* and *root causes*
- Take into account the *historical sociopolitical contexts*
- Constantly ask why they see things through particular *lenses*
- *Think differently* about the things around them
- Challenge their *core assumptions*
- *Own* their own learning attached with emotions and meaning
- Pursue a *deeper level* of understanding
- Know that *interconnectedness* of issues is a fundamental part of understanding.

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[16] See Figure 1

FINDINGS: STUDENT VOICES

What does it mean to be human? What can humans tolerate? What potential does every human have? (TBB student in India, January, 2012).

My experience shows that critical pedagogy is an intense, all-consuming, and transformative philosophy for liberation. Through student blogs, one can assess the type of thinking they are doing, the type of questions they are asking, and the relevance of their development to becoming proactive agents of change, equipped to address critical global issues. By analyzing student behavior and perceptions, one can determine the effects of critical pedagogy. This student explains how TBB has led them to constantly question their assumptions:

> The more people I meet, the more ideas I come in contact with, and then by default, the more I question my own ideas or pre-conceived notions. I think that is why some of the things here have been difficult for me. I have literally started to question everything: why is it that the world finds itself in its current predicament today? Why was I born in a wealthy home when my friends in Nicaragua received clean, potable water for the first time in their lives about a week ago? And development? Well, lets just say I have no idea what that's all about. Development changes from person to person, place to place, and the more you look at it, the more complicated and convoluted it gets. It's difficult because the more answers I seek, the more questions I find. And lets be honest, I've never been the most patient type of guy. But, I am learning that patience is of utmost importance. When working with others, when trying to reforest what seems to be all of Ecuador in 5 weeks, when teaching 15-year-old Chinese students about American culture and the English language, patience is necessary. And for that realization, I say thank you, TBB (TBB student in China, 2011).

As a facilitator of critical pedagogy, one of the most interesting tasks was becoming familiar with the ever-changing cognitive and affective levels of each student in order to design their academic, social, and personal development. What experience would promote privileged students to become allies in the struggle for liberation? What impedes change? A huge part of my year was dedicated to investigating their perception of reality, and then imagining ways with my coworkers to awaken their curiosity about

'unveiling the world'. What factors are blocking their commitment to social justice issues? How could we counteract the apathy present in some, and illuminate paths of solidarity for those who are interested? How can systematic oppression become a reality that the students care to address? What does it take to make the present situations of people around the world involving inequality and poverty more concrete, engendering committed involvement and social responsibility? Would spending more time in slums humanize the world's poor to them? Could we figure out a way for them to have their home-stay families in the townships in South Africa instead of with white families? Would it be better for them to have racial and class diversity in the group (instead of a homogenous group of the elite) to personalize the struggles among their peers? Would a PL who used to be homeless or is a person of color concretize issues? Can we do factory tours in China to offset the middle class aspirations they're experiencing with their home-stays? Can the curriculum include more about prisoners? Should we bring in more personal stories, in the forms of books, movies, and speakers to inspire their passion? How can we demonstrate that being a proactive agent of change means intentionality in everyday choices, and can be empowering and gratifying? What examples of people doing this are there around us?

One of my favorite student blog posts shows how deeply the TBB experience had infiltrated her mind. It conveys the dialogue that students are encouraged to have, not only internally, but also with their peers, PLs, local NGO partners, home-stay families, U.S. families, and community-members back home. Having recently read the TBB-assigned work of Paul Farmer, Amartya Sen, Paulo Freire, and Vandana Shiva, this student writes,

"Eat your vegetables. Starving children in Africa would love those vegetables."

As a child, my parents did not subject me to this nutritional logic…But now…I'm in South Africa…staying in the town of Plettenberg Bay…spending my days observing a home-based care health worker at a nearby clinic.

South Africa is one of sub-Saharan Africa's wealthiest nations…nice cafes, and over-priced boutiques…Oh, and there's a slum just outside of town-a hillside cluttered with tin shacks packed too close together. Just blocks from the beautiful, pool-equipped houses like the one I am staying in… are one-room dwellings, some without electricity and most sheltering many more people than their size would suggest…

But when I have extra food…I don't give it to those people…Here's invented development expert Paulartya Freirshiva, M.D., PhD, Human, to ask me why.

Paulartya Freirshiva: Why?
     Me: Well, it's too much work.
Paulartya Freirshiva: Really?
     Me: No, not really…But if I go around giving some people things, everyone will expect the same.
Paulartya: So?
     Me: So, I don't want to be treated like just some rich tourist.
Paulartya: But you are some rich tourist.
     Me: But I came here to learn, not to dispense things to beggars. I don't want to feel like I'm only being seen as a fountain of money.
Paulartya: So now your feelings count for more than the malnourished citizens of Plett.
     Me: Wow, Paulartya, none of my other imaginary friends are this rude.
Paulartya: So now my rudeness is a bigger problem then global starvation.
     Me: I do want to help people. But spending my spare money on loaves of bread won't really make a difference.
Paulartya: Why not?
     Me: There are too many people. Hunger is a huge problem in the world, especially since it leaves people more vulnerable to infectious diseases, but spending my allowance on it won't even make a dent.
Paulartya: What if you spend your college fund on it?
     Me: I can't-I need that money.
Paulartya: So now your education is more important than thousands of starv-
     Me: Shh! I get the point.
Paulartya: You've got a pretty big college fund, and you seem to understand the damage that persistent hunger can do to a community. So what's the reason that's holding you back? Why not become a one-woman charity?
     Me: Because this isn't the type of problem that can be solved by charity.
Paulartya: Now we're getting somewhere.

I'm going to dismiss Paulartya Freirshiva, M.D., PhD, Human (his name is a mishmash of a bunch of the authors we've been studying).

I could give the people of Plett's poorer townships some food, and so could most of us. But with huge unemployment rates (upwards of 70% in some cases), increasing incidence of HIV, and embedded racism (Guess how many of the residents of Plett's mansions are white? Guess how many of the shack-dwellers aren't?), it's hard to escape the conclusion that deeper change is needed. To move towards that deeper change, we need to ask some questions, such as:
What caused the huge inequality in South Africa, and what forces perpetuate it?
Why do basically nice people ignore the suffering of their basically nice neighbors? And more.

Once we find the answers to those questions, we have to ask still more questions. If colonialism leading to imperialism leading to institutional racism (apartheid) was one of the key causes behind today's persistent wealth gap, why don't today's white South Africans do more to redress past grievances (or if they do, why aren't these efforts working?)?

Why do basically nice Americans ignore the suffering of basically nice Africans?

And then we have to ask ourselves,
Why does such huge racial inequality persist even in the United States, and what institutions reinforce it?
Why do so many basically nice rich Americans ignore or even worsen the suffering of basically nice poor Americans?

Could it turn out that neither "I'm not in Africa" nor "It's not my fault the people there don't have food" really begin to explain the persistence of global hunger and other forms of inequality?

If so, it's no wonder simple charity won't do the trick. To top things off, once we've gotten that far, we have to figure out how to fix all these problems. We can start by becoming informed about the modern world (hey, that's why I need my college fund!). But education can only take us so far, and the globe's issues are going to be tough to tackle. Sometimes I wish Paulartya Freirshiva could do it for us (TBB student in South Africa, March, 2012).

The blog entry shows a student questioning the existing and conventional American logic around the issue of finishing one's food. The line of questioning and reasoning that the student is using, going from an issue that arose out of being reflective in the experiential learning process, to questions that are raised because of that initial

issue, shows that TBB's goals of questioning assumptions and getting students to ask a *better* set of questions is indeed happening. The student adeptly balances multiple lines of reasoning to grapple with the logic from different authors, questions raised in seminars, home-culture, and their immediate experience. The student ends the entry with stating that once all of these questions are addressed, one then needs to set about the task of initiating change. Additionally, they do it with humor, a valuable intercultural quality.

Did TBB transform the students into proactive agents of change? It depends on how one measures, and the definition of a proactive agent of change. If one looks at their cognitive levels of analysis and abilities to identify social constructs, then yes. Participant-observation and trace measures show that the students are on a spectrum of becoming proactive agents of change. While some are confused, some hostile and resistant (conflating the exercise of asking questions to being a liberal and resistant to an active curriculum after years of passive schooling), some comfortable with the conventional view (and position of benefitting from existing power structures that critical pedagogy examines), and some upset with their self-perceived slow rate of growth in changing the world (wanting to be compassionate and effective change-makers), all of them have the ability to think critically. "TBB has taught me to incessantly question my every thought and feeling" (TBB student in South Africa, March, 2012). Through the intentional practice of critical consciousness and meta-cognition, each one has a new or improved skill-set centered around questioning their assumptions. "I embarked on this trip truly believing I'd be doing good. I don't pretend to still believe this" (ibid).

If the measure is whether they have translated learning into action, then it is more ambiguous. Yet one student contends that "thinking can be a form of action. It is when

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we stop thinking that we are truly inactive in this world" (TBB student in South Africa, March, 2012). This contention is partially aligned with Freire, that "the struggle to be more fully human has already begun in the authentic struggle to transform the situation" (1970, p. 45), meaning first critically recognizing the causes of oppression. Yet he also says that "to affirm that men and women are persons and as persons should be free, and yet to do nothing tangible to make this affirmation a reality, is a farce" (p. 48).

Part of the complexity in answering the question of pro-activity is the timeframe involved. I observed behaviors over a period of eight months. I had most trouble reconciling TBB principle 7[17] (Learners and teachers can only start where they are) and principle 9 (Expect greatness and believe in their and your capacity to achieve it). How could I expect greatness from the students when their behavior time and again told me to have low expectations? On a regular basis I saw that the students had the ability to speak at a high level on a subject, could examine root causes and get to the underlying issues, but were not ready to act upon them. They were or became aware of many realities of the world, yet continually behaved in a way that reinforced their superiority. For example, they could commit to the idea of being inter-culturally sensitive, but then dance mockingly on the steps of a mosque in a Muslim neighborhood during prayer time with fake beards on (this after many student-led conversations about what is appropriate behavior, etc). Or, they could speak at length about the injustices of the way their Indian home-stay families treated their servants, and then trash their own hotel rooms in the U.S. for the Latina maids to clean (again, after months of speaking passionately about the ills of structural violence and the ways our personal actions affect others). The students had conflicting cognitive, behavioral and affective levels, which is part of growing up,

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[17] See Table 2

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beginning to think about subjectivity, and wrestling with what that means. Yet I always felt that they could be pushed to do better, and that a large part of my job was to role-model how one could live their values, or provide examples of others doing so in a myriad of ways.

One of my concerns remains that the students are not committed to social justice, that the habits that formed from years of operating in a consumer culture will once again take precedence in their lives. They have a varying sense of responsibility toward contributing to the social good. Freire writes of this phenomenon, that "discovering himself to be an oppressor may cause considerable anguish, but it does not necessarily lead to solidarity with the oppressed" (1970, p. 47). Despite living in varying class conditions, making relations across class boundaries, reading and discussing the effects of globalization, poverty and oppression are not internalized enough to be prominent concerns. Many still find the task of becoming proactive agents of change too daunting[18]. As upper-class Caucasian Americans, living the status quo and being passive is comfortable and easy. As Freire points out, "intervention would contradict the class interests of the perceiver" (1970, p. 50). TBB has enhanced their critical thinking skills – they can critique the "grand narratives of Western European thought" (McLaren, 1995, p. 15), but they might use the experience to be witty and sharp on international issues while still living the norm and upholding current class relations[19].

What we encountered was a particular stage in their development – the emergence

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[18] This was particularly the case in India when reading about the austerity of Gandhi's commitments. For some students, imagining a different way of life, without the oppressive relationships that support their lifestyle, is seen as a "profound violation of their individual rights" (Freire, 1970, p. 55). They exhibit Freire's 'possessive consciousness'; possessive of the way of life they inherited, even when recognizing the suffering it entails for others.

[19] This is something I am guilty of as well.

of critical consciousness. Though they practiced their awareness skills and exercised their debating skills throughout the program, critical interventions – responding "not just at the intellectual level, but at the level of action" (Freire, 1970, p. 94), would perhaps come later[20]. I was most frustrated with my deep-seated belief in the students' capacity to achieve greatness and my lack of patience in allowing them to achieve it in their own time. Those eight months were the beginning of a gradual process to becoming proactive agents of change. As Shor reminds us, "educational life inside transitional structures is experimental, demanding, changeable, stimulating, and gradually desocializing. Years of traditional socialization cannot be overcome at once" (1995, p. 260). It is Freire's conviction that "students, as they are increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge" (1970, p. 79). They could very well need time to contemplate their TBB experience, or more time in other counter-structures to translate learning into action against social amnesia and the oppressive elements of reality. What is undoubted is that they have the necessary tools to do so.

According to students, TBB transformed them, mostly around gaining critical consciousness. They have learned to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions. Because of TBB, they are now in a process of determining their relationship to pro-activity, their own agency, and making intentional choices to change themselves and the world around them. This student reflects on their sense of entitlement and individual exceptionalism prior to TBB:

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[20] The idea of patience in the facilitator for this developmental stage and the role of love in facilitating youth programs are expanded on in my 'student-choice' Reflective Practice Question paper entitled 'A Love Ethic'.

I came to realize my own personal growth, not even three months gone abroad. My priorities in life have drastically changed from the ones I obtained a year ago. The programs I was willing to use as a pretty accessory to my college apps, the belief that I was somehow DESERVING over many others to attend prestigious universities, my biggest worry in life for my own personal future, but not for the future of the world, both ideologically and physically (TBB student in China, November, 2012).

Yet some students *are* implementing changes, some personal, some interpersonal changes, and others transforming their communities[21]. Though each student responded differently to the TBB experience, the process is something that cannot be retracted. Though they can choose to not act to transform their world, they will know that they are making a conscious choice not to act, and that that in itself has a specific impact (supporting the status quo). Never again can they be unaware on some level of their own conditions and the conditions of the world, their own actions, and their effects on the world. In short, through participating in TBB, the students are aware of their own subjectivity. One student explains the realization of their own abilities:

> This morning, we had seminar 10, the last seminar of any given core-country, which asks the question "How can we affect change?" These seminars are usually met with a lot of, *uh, shoot, okay; still don't know*…kind of thoughts. I've left this seminar in previous countries often once again realizing, I don't have the capacity to CHANGE the world. Today though, I left with a much different frame of mind. I still don't believe that I alone have the capacity to change the world, but I realize I have the capacity to analyze institutions and their practices and come up with a different way of doing things (TBB student in South Africa, March, 2012).

My proudest moment was in Washington D.C. when we visited multiple

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[21] They are implementing changes that transform the concrete situation which begets oppression, including personal choices of how and what to eat and wear (exploring raw, vegetarian, vegan, local and sustainable options like CSA's and cutting down on consumerism in general), practicing kindness and compassion, habits of relating to family (doing dishes, cooking, cleaning, having meaningful conversations, showing gratitude), finding alternate news sources, engaging with communities outside of suburbia (volunteering or working at youth empowerment centers), going to alternative colleges that emphasize interdisciplinary methods, historical context and situated analysis, going to ivy league colleges but with the intent on doing things their own way (studying power at a center of power while interning in the community to stay grounded), voting in their first presidential election, and more.

international development organizations. The students demonstrated that their minds could "carry the weight of serious intellectual work, whose thought and feeling can entertain transforming self and society" (Shor, 1995, p. 26). They engaged in debates with the world's leading development experts, challenging the assumptions of mature CEO's and PhD's, and quite adeptly identified the fallacies in their theoretical foundations. The so-called experts were stunned into silence, often tongue-tied, unable to answer the student's questions. Our students were shocked not so much with what they encountered in the power centers of D.C. and New York (having developed a healthy dose of cynicism throughout the year), but with their own new ability to engage in a debate of this level with world actors. It was a powerful realization that they could now have informed conversations with the adult world. Lack of specific knowledge of a topic didn't matter so much as the ability to identify core assumptions, and the ability to ask a better set of questions. They were confident in those skills, and knew that they could learn more about certain topics if need be. One student explains how TBB affected their view on roles and responsibilities surrounding global issues:

> The world is a complex place…However, it isn't enough to just admit it's complex, I believe there is a certain responsibility – shared among us capable to do so – to work towards untangling some of it. By this, I mean mentally untangling it, for ourselves. In no way do I mean that it is our job to stick our hands into a web and force the strings of it into a nice ball of yarn. Doing exactly this is detrimental to societies, especially in terms of development (yes, I am a student on Thinking Beyond Borders...) I just mean....we all have to start acknowledging the ugly and carefully think about the role we might possibly be able to play in alleviating it (TBB student in India, February, 2012).

This means that through all our struggles of the year (indeed *because* of all our struggles), critical pedagogy has shown the potential to be a powerful antidote to our ahistorical society. Most often one cannot be forced into accountability for the state of

our world or to engage in the process of liberation, but invited. TBB invites the students, and they are empowered to envision their role as change-makers. The intentionality of the program contributed to the potent students that appeared at graduation in Washington D.C. who had a new ability to 'read the world' and make critical interventions.

> Instantly, all of us made a connection. Over the summer, part of our required reading was *Half The Sky*, a book that walks its readers through the issues and prevalence of women's oppression. Essentially, it was the ultimate TBB experience....Connecting one of the parts of the book with something right before our eyes. On this trip, we've read quite a bit...and it's little moments like this when you are glad you did. It's one thing to read about a drug addicted 16 year old prostitute, and its quite another to see one live at...work. Let's just say, I've never been so embarrassed to be white. It really was only pig like white men that were molesting these prostitutes....The fact that we could be identified visually in any way shape or form as similar made me feel ill. Sometimes, you learn a lesson at work or in a seminar. Other times, you learn one at a club...some time in the early morning (TBB student in Cambodia, December, 2012).

This student shows how the TBB readings paired with experiential intercultural learning provided them with a powerful learning moment that shapes how they view themselves in relation to others. Another student highlights how they are digging behind the surface to gain a greater understanding of the current socio-political situation, questioning false dichotomies:

> China celebrates its diversity, but with the primary goal of projecting an image of harmony that may or may not serve the best interests of the minorities themselves, who often struggle to preserve their traditional ways. Then you have to wonder, what are 'traditional ways' anyhow, and why must the choice be between 'preserving' or 'exterminating' them, as opposed to letting cultures grow and change on their own? But in such an increasingly connected world, filled with societal pressures and misconceptions, what does 'on their own' even mean? (TBB student in China, December, 2012).

McLaren urges that what is needed in education is 'radical imagination' (2005). A proponent of critical social theory and education for liberation, McLaren warns that critical pedagogy is "simply one step along a protracted transformative journey that must

engage the omnipresent realities of globalization" (2005, p. 23). Radical critical

pedagogy is the step forward in the current setting of schools as "holding pens where

students exercise their everyday consciousness, assert their private interest, articulate

their practical intentions, and dream their secret lives within given capitalist social

relations and objective forms of thought that emerge from categories of bourgeois social

economy, which themselves are bound up with the structural characteristics of stages of

development" (ibid). Freire's critical pedagogy can be liberating not only for the

oppressed, but for the oppressors as well. My concern is that students of the bourgeoisie

must intentionally place themselves in situations that continue to invite them to exercise

critical consciousness[22]. Otherwise, their personal aspirations that were formed in the

neoliberal capitalist political economy will continue to be their main concern.

Even those experiential education programs with concrete pedagogical possibilities

such as Thinking Beyond Borders (those based on critical pedagogy) suffer from their

own entwinement in the capitalist political economy. Operating on student tuition, the

student demographic remains aimed at the upper-middle class (R. Pendoley, personal

communication, May, 2011). Additionally, they are held back by the hypocrisy present in

many struggling non-profits, teaching issues of social justice while underpaying their

employees. McLaren argues for *radical* critical pedagogy, one step further beyond the

critical pedagogy of today that "has collapsed in to an ethical licentiousness and a

complacent relativism that has displaced the struggle against capitalist exploitation with

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[22] This is supported by the students' reaction to reading Freire, whom the majority decided used 'obscuring
language'. Though they accepted the idea of 'false generosity', were able to critique charity from that point
forward and distinguish humanitarianism from humanism, their distance from oppression as a lived reality
allowed them to cast off Freire's writing as academic jargon unimportant to their lives. Some were 'put off'
by the implications of the work. If they accepted Freire, they would have to accept their role as oppressors,
an understanding that would shake their very foundations. Throughout the year this 'shaking' is exactly
what happened for some, yet the question remains whether the students will continue the process once
outside of this particular counter-structure.

its emphasis on multiplicity of interpersonal forms of oppression" (2005, p. 33). McLaren uses the term radical with its original sense of the word – change at the root. Until a different business plan/organizational structure is envisioned and enacted, these organizations remain shackled to the system they are aiming to transform. Their theory of change is tied to emerging leaders of the elite, potentially powerful citizens who could choose whether or not to uphold the status quo.

Perhaps the entire model needs to be revisited. Since the publishing of Freire's seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, there have been numerous followers (such as Apple, McLaren and Shor), but also a few critics. These critics mainly reside among 'Third World' activists, who contend that Freire's model of empowerment is based on Western assumptions that undermine indigenous knowledge systems and promote the Western model of global development to the detriment of the commons (Apffel-Marglin, 2005). They argue that he is preoccupied with literacy, undervaluing the contributions of oral-based societies and insinuating that literacy is necessary for empowerment. His model is also based on individualism (the individual as the basic social unit for consciousness-raising rather than community-centered or intergenerational), with critical reflection as the only approach to knowledge. What about societies with different worldviews, for whom the individual, liberation, and consciousness has a different meaning, where emancipation from oppressed conditions happens through revitalizing local traditions for community renewal? Yet even with the critiques, TBB's model seems effective, perhaps precisely because its demographic is a Western, individualist, and literate one. Though it is worthwhile to remember that it is possible that the emancipated individual might be the exact entity that is dependent on the consumer lifestyle that needs

to be countered for a socially-just society. At least the students now have the ability to have a critical encounter with Freire, the empowerment model, and can enter into the debate.

Figure 1: Example Presentation of Learning

These five pages show the storyboard for one student's POL. The project in its entirety was a stop-motion animation made from cut-out pieces of paper, watercolors, and hundreds of photos. Here are a few illustrations and explanations about them:

Illuminating Poverty Explained

As my final project is laden with meaning I've decided to explain it here. Watch the video in my last post first :)

I created this presentation to visually illustrate how poverty is not just about not having food and other basics of life. There are so many other emotional layers to it. I decided to use an art form I call an "emotional landscape" which is art that depicts the underlying emotions of a situation. It is often very abstract.

The first scene represents health, inspired by my time spent in South African clinics. The winged symbol at the top is called a caduceus and used in the United States to represent medicine. The caduceus represents the medicine, nutrition, and nourishment the baby needs to survive. When it isn't there, the baby dies.
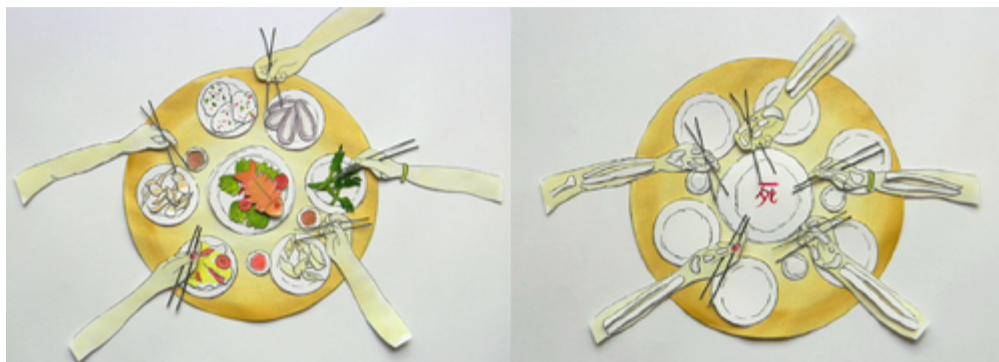

The second scene represents mainly subsistence, but also family, abundance, community, and togetherness. It was inspired by the nearly spiritual connection the Chinese often feel toward food. The meaning here is clear. When you do not have the material items to sustain yourself, you die. The Chinese character on the plate in the first sequence means life and the one in the second sequence means death.
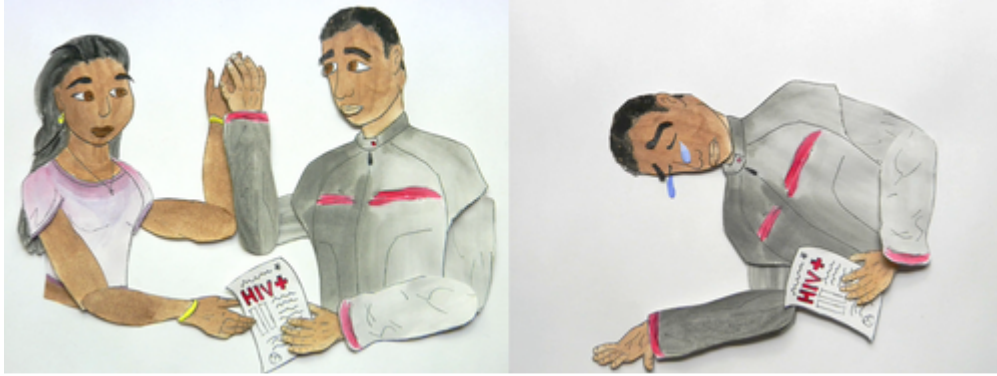
This scene represents namely compassion, but also support, community, and love. It was inspired by a beautiful couple I met in one of the townships near Plett. Even after discovering her boyfriend was HIV+ the woman stayed with her boyfriend and nursed him back to health. They are still together years later.

So many times when someone tells their lover that they have HIV, the partner rejects and leaves them to fend for them self, such as the girl in the second sequence. She is upset because now her boyfriend might be too sick to work and bring in money, they cannot have an intimate relationship without condoms, and it is implied that he cheated on her since she does not think she has HIV. The pain she leaves him with is unbearable.
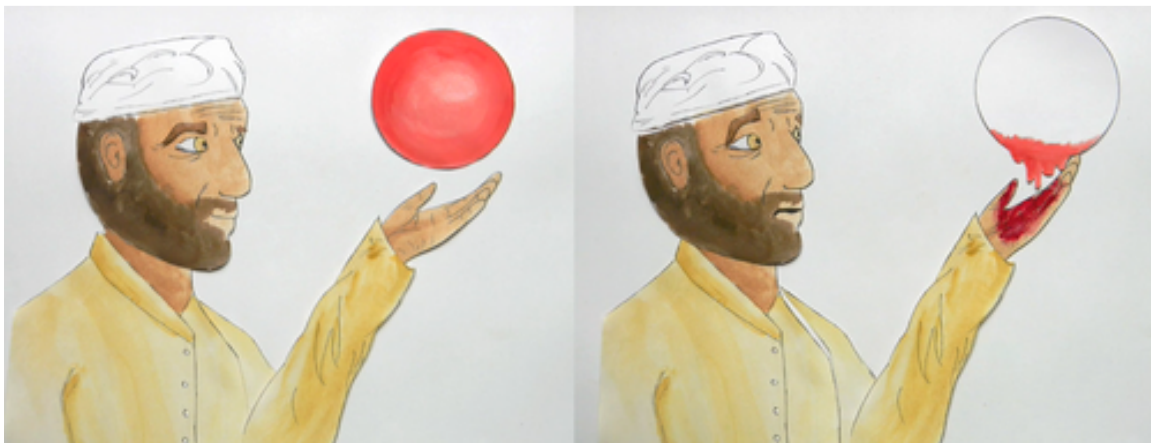
This is definitely the most abstract scene in my opinion. It represents the Muslim man's spirituality. It is his devotion to his religion and his connection with the world. Here he prays to Mecca as the sun rises, so the sun represents his connection. When that melts away, he is left connected to nothing and therefore utterly alone, utterly lost. This was inspired by all of the men I saw praying at so many mosques in India.
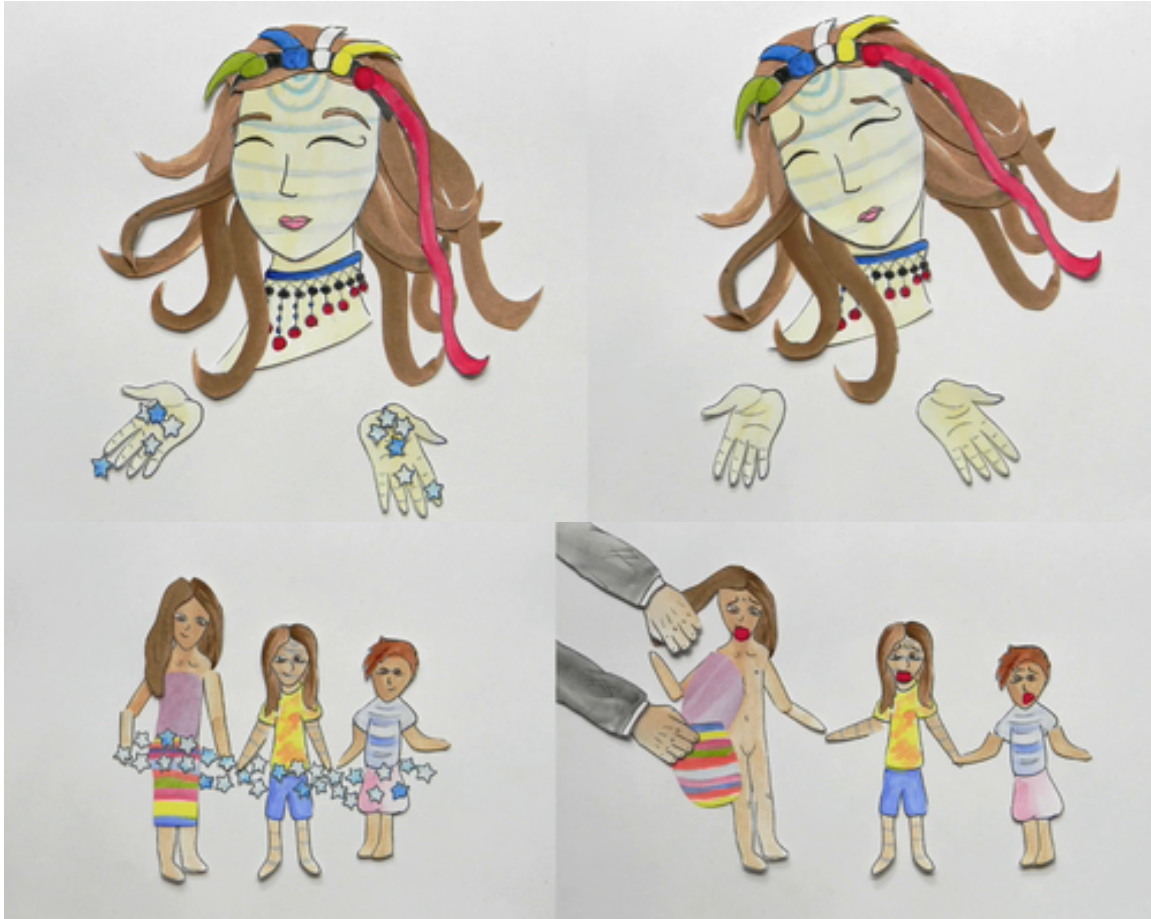
This scene represents security, safety, and a mother's connection to her children. The mother at the top releases from her hands security and safety for her children. The stars represent this safety. They encircle the children to protect them from the dangers of the world.

The next sequence shows what happens when security is not there. The mother cannot provide security for her children and mourns that. As a result, her children are ravaged by horrors of the world such as human trafficking.

This scene was inspired by the loving and wonderful people of Los Naranjos, the Tsa'chilas. In my eyes they live the least poverty-stricken lifestyle I have ever experienced. I internally cry out at even the thought of this becoming a part of their life. God bless them all and may they never feel poverty in any form.

And the final scene represents identity. This Indian woman dances and creates henna trails behind her to express herself. She is an individual. She has an identity. But then chains of oppression shackle her (each chain says "oppression" in Hindi on it). They cover her and she loses herself. She can no longer express herself and she no longer knows who she is.

This scene was inspired by the joy dancing brought many woman in my village in India (but only behind closed doors of course! how indecent!) and by how much my homestay sister loved to do henna for her sister's wedding. Without those joys, I think they may feel empty and lost.

So what I want people to take away from this is that there is a lot more to poverty and development than just addressing basic needs. Development is giving people the tools they need to live the life they have reason to value. And if that is true, then I am very sure that the type of life people strive for all around the world does not simply include bottles of water and care packages. It includes good health, subsistence, support, spirituality, security, and identity.

My hope is that I can be an agent of change by inspiring people to question not only their assumptions about poverty and development, but also what they value personally. Not everything that makes life worth living can be bought with money. We know this. We've heard it a million times, but have we, as Americans, really internalized it? Before TBB I really hadn't. I don't think I valued a lot of human connections and emotions that illuminate life to its brightest. But I do now.

I signed up for this experience because I wanted to learn how to develop the world. As we circled the globe I felt myself learning so much from the kindness of my homestay families, from the endless challenges and amazing potential of working in a group, and from our thought provoking seminars (even if I did fall asleep a few times). From it all I rose with the ability to question my assumptions. I think TBB gave me the tools I need to live the life I have reason to value. and if this is true then I guess the point of TBB isn't to develop the world, its to develop us. Thank you. (TBB student in the U.S., May, 2012).

CONCLUSION: CREATIVE IMAGINING

Shor emphasizes that there shouldn't be a fixed curriculum, only general paradigms for critical consciousness and models of problem-posing (1992). Critical pedagogy is not only a type of curriculum, but a way of experiencing ourselves and our world. It creates those with the capacities to contribute to contemporary movements of the heterodoxy, encouraging local responses of 'global citizens' to strengthen community towards sustainable development. An array of educational traditions, ways of knowing and meaning-making, should be supported in our world with the intent of raising generations of humans in all of their cultural diversity. Yet there is acute need for the skills of situated analysis. Additionally, rather than disparate, disaggregated subjects examined through a microscope, the educational paradigm needs to shift to an approach where synthesis is valued: understanding the *relationships* between subjects, disciplines, students and teachers. As a social anthropologist who believes in diverse epistemologies, I disagree that any one method is universally needed to effect change. Yet critical pedagogy is a powerful tool in which to enact social change, a discourse leading away from inequality, particularly if we constantly question our assumptions, including those underlining the empowerment model. What is clear is that the humanizing process (the goal of critical pedagogy) is necessary.

Princeton's Professor Emeritus of International Law Richard Falk argues that national loyalty is diminishing under globalization in favor of more immediate circles of community (1994). I contend that this is a particular response to globalization that comes from 'global consciousness'. With increasing awareness of the devastating effects of the free trade regime, people are at once 'global citizens' and local community members.

Identity is shifting to what sociologist Victor Roudometof (2005) calls the 'glocal', thinking globally by understanding globalization, and acting locally, towards a community-oriented and community-controlled social economy. Like many movements, communitarianism is a values-based sociopolitical movement. Yet it is the types of values emphasized that matter – that of community[23].

In looking forward to strengthening existing movements of resistance and in forging new ones, one must stretch beyond dualist thinking to creative imagining. As the noted peaceworker Johan Galtung puts it,

> the Western world tends to think in dualist terms. If socialism is wrong, then privatization is the solution, and vice versa. There is no in-between (social democrat), no both-and (the now rapidly disappearing Japanese option) no neither-nor (the green, local economy option). Or better still, in this author's view: combining [a] the local option for production for basic needs, with [b] the social democrat mix for very much of what the country needs, with [c] the Japanese option for export, all three in a flexible, eclectic combination (1998, p. 58).

It is this creative imagining that has the potential to spread from below, from the margins to the center, from a few to many voices. When there is dissent with the hegemony of cultural values under the current form of capitalism – absolute profitability – there is room for creativity. When young people are encouraged to think critically and understand systems of oppression, there is room to create different cultural values. When we turn learning into action with historic analysis grounded in observation and empirical reality rather than status quo normativity, it is then when transformation occurs.

Though Thinking Beyond Borders exemplifies only one manifestation of creating leaders in social justice through education, imagine if gap years – whose ontological and historical vocation is for its participants to become more fully human through perceiving

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[23] This idea is expanded on in my final paper for SIT Graduate Institute's 'Globalization' class entitled 'Ideology to Praxis: Nurturing a Global Consciousness'.

the world of oppression and expelling its myths – were the new form of an American rite

of passage[24] into adulthood…

> At first I thought Thinking Beyond Borders meant thinking beyond our national borders, beyond the idea of the nation-state in our globalized world, thinking about others around the world, but after awhile I began to realize that it meant thinking beyond the borders of our mind (TBB student at graduation in the U.S., May 2012).

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[24] This imagining would need to concretely address issues of accessibility. And of course, would be a better imagining if it were about a*ll* education, not just a year-long program.

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