

ANTONIO GRAMSCI AND FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE: ORGANIC ETHNOGRAPHERS OF KNOWLEDGE IN WORKERS' CENTRES.

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Introduction

Transnational migrants are seeking work on a mass scale in the contemporary global economy. In the US, the state sanctions the legal migration of some migrants who have documentation of their special skills, which are rewarded with high pay in the labour market. Suarez-Orozco (2001) describes these migrants as being at the top of an hour-glass shape distribution of new arrivals. At the bottom of the hour-glass are the mass of workers with general skills who seek a foothold in the economy by doing whatever work they can for pay. These migrants fit Antonio Gramsci's description of subaltern (Green, 2002), since employers of the dominant social group—mostly small business and home owners—may marginalize them in order to extract their labour (Valenzuela and Theodore, 2006). Post-Fordist colonial capitalism presents this contradiction: immigrants arriving to work have considerable physical mobility yet, due to their exploitation, must struggle for agency, power and social mobility. A central goal of curricula for new adult immigrants is to develop their capacity for reflective praxis in order to enhance their solidarity, organizing and sustainability in a new environment. Curriculum inquiry based on Gramsci's critical perspective can advance this emergent subaltern need.

“Funds of knowledge” (Gonzalez et al., 1995) developed by subaltern migrants reflect good sense but also common sense. Promotion of subaltern common sense, however, may constrain their agency, with consequent effects on praxis and power. A reading of Gramsci compels a critique of common sense developed through spontaneous funds of knowledge by organic intellectual immigrants. In the US there is a ready supply of migrant Latina/o workers who are suspended between expectations that they work hard and their disposability because of their “illegality” as citizens (De Genova, 2005). Challenging hegemonic characterizations of Latino immigrants as homogenous and without skills (Jimenez et al., 1999), educational scholars working in literacy have developed approaches that they describe as “funds of knowledge”, which emphasize the creation of social knowledge through meaning-making networks, cultural practices and activity.

A critical assumption in our work is that educational institutions have stripped away the view of working-class minority students as emerging from households rich in social and intellectual resources. Rather than focusing on the knowledge these students bring to school and using it as a foundation for learning, the emphasis has been on what these students lack in terms of the forms of language and knowledge sanctioned by the schools (Gonzalez et al., 1995: 445).

Their curriculum inquiry approach to confronting this deficit discourse begins with the community, specifically households, initiating a dialogic process of uncovering funds of knowledge and applying these funds to classroom teaching for immigrant children. Themes reflected in a funds of knowledge approach include: *confianza* or mutual trust (Gonzalez and Moll, 2002), flexibility, “thick” or multistranded-ness (Moll et al., 1992), and zones of comfort for experimental learning (Velez-Ibanez and Greenberg, 1992). A funds of knowledge approach employs culturally relevant social processes to enhance the work and life trajectories of educational participants. Newly arrived subaltern adults

stand to benefit from this approach given its emphasis on a critique of knowledge-creation by participants.

I seek to contrast Gramsci's epistemology with the position of culture in funds of knowledge ethnography and examine the role of organic intellectuals in this (Notebook 4, Note 49, in Buttigieg, 1996). Both spontaneity and judgment are social phenomena that figure strongly in Gramsci's world view; these qualities need to be interrogated for their application in a funds of knowledge approach and as capacities in the organization of curriculum. My goal is to promote a conversation between scholars of Gramsci, adult literacy and participants in workers' centres through participatory action research, in order to consider how Gramsci's philosophy of praxis and the creation of hegemony may inspire a model of adult, informal learning, critical curriculum (Schubert, 1996) that would influence the development of funds of knowledge in participants and result in social change. I first describe the manifestation of funds of knowledge in workers' centres, then how Gramsci's thought affects this process by proposing ways in which organic intellectuals in the workers' centres may act as ethnographers of knowledge.

Workers' Centres as Sites of Cultural Development and Critical Capacity

Workers' centres—community-based organizations created and led by immigrant workers—are a social formation of the masses to organize migrants for economic stability and social justice (Fine, 2005). Through their efforts to resist accommodation to the dominant economic hegemony, these centres play a role, along with social movement organizations, in the creation of what Gramsci described as an historical bloc for social change. Workers' centres reflect a social history of organizing in specific communities and foster subaltern leaders who take up roles in agency, discourse and reflective praxis.

The need is pressing. Subaltern migrants suffer health inequities stemming from their racial and ethnic status (Krieger and Davey Smith, 2004; Krieger et al., 2005; Murray,

2003). Worse, the work that Latina/o workers do in the United States often results in death (Zanoni, 2006). Currently we are conducting a pilot project to see how an informal learning session called a “charla”, also described as a chat or conversation, led by Francisco Montalvo, Jr., a native Spanish-speaking labour faculty member and worker leaders, may use problem-solving to promote discussion, reflection and action to prevent injury and illness at work.

I argue that Gonzalez and Moll’s concept of funds of knowledge in workers’ centres is a powerful approach that encourages the on-going discovery of cultural practices in US Latina/os when inspired by the critical pedagogy of Antonio Gramsci. The funds of knowledge approach was originally presented as an inquiry method for study groups, led by university researchers, for teachers of immigrant Latina/o children to explore household funds of knowledge and to create curriculum for students with this knowledge. To apply this approach to immigrant adults in the community, I focus on a critique of spontaneous funds of knowledge, and the potential of the workers’ centres to replicate or re-establish the social networks/funds of knowledge of migrating Latina/os.

Funds of knowledge were first described in Latino immigrant communities that developed over generations in the US. Workers’ centres are a contemporary movement in areas where new immigrants live and seek work; the centres play a role in uncovering and creating social networks of migrants from diverse locations who share compatible cultural perspectives, repertoires of practice (Gutierrez and Rogoff, 2003) and literacies. Instead of focusing on the child as part of a dense social community engaged in school learning, I propose that the Latina/o peer leader and educator serves as an organic intellectual who utilizes and creates funds of knowledge to critique social conditions and to create social change through informal learning (Livingstone, 2001). This Gramscian critical pedagogy curriculum model proposes that organic intellectuals work to criticize the conception of the world in which they participate, form good sense from common sense and create persuasive discourse through the praxis of workers at the centres (Zanoni, 2006).

Describing the links and relationships here between Gramsci’s view of adult learning and a funds of knowledge perspective shows how *confianza* or mutual trust is created and maintained, how praxis is the basis of funds of knowledge in action and how literacies (Hornberger, 2004) are formed as tools for social development. Participatory action research is a practical meaning-making approach; it honours the role that participant thought and action play in creating knowledge which, through reflection and display by researchers, reaches wider communities of interest. Gramsci’s epistemology may be most directly stated as the philosophy of praxis, the recursive thought and action utilized in this research design. The workers’ centre is the locus with the potential, through learning and inquiry, to synthesize funds of knowledge with a Gramscian commitment to criticizing spontaneous funds of knowledge. This process, promoted by intentional curriculum, seeks to affect worker decision-making about health and safety, to create contracts and codes of conduct for relations with individual employers, and to create public policy for the community or state (Table 1 below).

Table 1: Interaction between Gramsci, Funds of Knowledge and Workers’ Centres

	Funds of Knowledge	Workers’ Centres	Antonio Gramsci
Unit	Child’s Household	Workers’ Social network	Mass-subaltern
Inquiry	Study groups	Participatory Action Research	Critique Conception Common/Good sense
Reflection	Teachers	Worker Leaders	Organic Intellectual
Impact	School curriculum	Agency Social/market policy	Thought and action (praxis)

Funds of Knowledge

Luis Moll and colleagues created an approach to curriculum development which they called “funds of knowledge”. Coming from Latina/o culture themselves, they created

their educational inquiry inspired by the socio-historical approach of Lev Vygotsky (Trueba, 1999). Opposing the hegemonic and colonial view that Latina/os offer few skills, knowledge or capacities beyond physical labour, they sought to describe and understand how knowledge is historically and socially created and used by Latina/o culture. I would describe their project as participatory action research in that they asked teachers to conduct this inquiry into households in order then to use the knowledge to create curriculum (Foley, Levinson and Hurtig, 2000–01; Gonzalez et al., 1995). While the work was originally done in Arizona, the funds of knowledge project inspired a women’s oral history inquiry into the funds of knowledge of a Puerto Rican family to inspire curriculum development (Olmedo, 1997), and a curriculum design project with middle school students and teachers in Australia (Hattam, 2007) which adapted key elements of the approach.

As described in recent work, elements of a funds of knowledge approach include: 1) the household as the primary unit of analysis, 2) teachers developing a strong relationship with families, 3) ethnographic methods of inquiry and 4) school and university partnerships to reflect and create programs. I deconstruct these elements of funds of knowledge to show that recognizing and utilizing spontaneous knowledge can be enhanced by Gramsci’s call for critique of subaltern conceptions of the world rooted in common sense.

The household as the primary unit of analysis and the process of developing strong relationships with families may be merged into the first key element of the funds of knowledge approach. For Velez-Ibanez and Greenberg (1992: 326) households express a unique learning environment that supports the skill and knowledge acquisition of children:

A major characteristic of the transmission of funds of knowledge is that multiple household domains provide children with a zone of comfort that is familiar yet experimental, where error is not dealt with punitively and where self-esteem is not endangered.

In their Redesigning Pedagogies in the North (RPiN) project, Robert Hattam and his colleagues (see <http://www.unisa.edu.au/hawkeinstitute/cslplc/rpin/default.asp>) extend their inquiry into what they describe as the “lifeworld” of students, taking their primary unit as the student, his or her household relationships and significant relationships outside the family and household. Regarding workers’ centres, a similar elasticity of definition is in order to consider the lifeworld or household of the adult immigrant, consisting of close family if nearby, but also other personal relationships that may be useful, important and part of a mutual exchange. In Chicago, as elsewhere in the US, many Mexican immigrants have organized home-town associations which provide tangible links with households and families in Mexico. It may be useful to explore how these associations function in terms of reciprocal relations and the development of social networks for workers in the US, and in generating meaning to support migration and transition, such as the symbolic nationalism described by Pallares (2005). Often the associations develop construction and social projects in the home-town in Mexico. While there is potential for solidarity, there may also be divisions along class or legal status lines among participants.

In a practical sense, workers’ centres may foster the development of new funds of knowledge that immigrant workers can use for their survival and growth in the US. Curriculum inquiry should consider how knowledge is created and used by new immigrants, and for those who settle and establish themselves in a particular community. Olmedo (1997: 570) supports this idea when she states that, “[w]hen families and communities are removed from their geographic roots, as is the case in migration experiences, members are challenged to expand the funds of knowledge so that they are functional in the new environment”. A Gramscian viewpoint sees household knowledge as one foundation of common sense that also contributes to the development of culture (Allman, 2002; Coben, 2002; Crehan, 2002). Gramsci recognized the importance of culture as an extension of household common sense creating a subaltern conception of the world. He sought to harness the potential of critique in the world of expression at

large in the development of good sense but also in the conversations workers had at home or with their friends. The result of this critique of culture is the recognition of the individual and groups' historical value (Gramsci in Hoare and Mathews, 1997).

Ethnographic methods of inquiry must be challenged in the face of the post-colonial criticism that colonizers often conducted immersion inquiry in order better to subjugate indigenous people. Responding to this problem, De Genova (2005: 24) presents a useful dialogic approach to ethnographic research and methods in his work with migrants in Chicago:

Thus understood, intersubjective dialogue directed toward an interrogation of the wider sociopolitical world potentially enables an ethnographic account to emerge from the critically engaged collaboration of people who are becoming conscious, together, of their own roles in the production and reproduction of their social realities and the making of their own histories.

Moll and his colleagues' intention is to treat Latina/o households and networks as autonomous, integral and powerful. One essential aspect of the ethnographic approach is the trust or *confianza* that many researchers describe as necessary and generative of the inquiry. Trust is important because communication in relationships and the authentic disclosure of viewpoints and practices often only happen when participants have confidence that the researcher will honour, represent and use their relationship and the knowledge created through it with respect. Organic intellectuals hold the trust of their comrades. This trust may be the defining bond that maintains the social relation when the tension and friction necessarily created by critique threatens to end the process of developing good sense leading to praxis.

Confianza is also the defining concept of the funds of knowledge approach. Gonzalez and colleagues (1995: 447; also see Moll et al., 1992) state:

A key characteristic of these exchanges is their reciprocity. As Velez-Ibanez (1988) has observed, reciprocity represents an “attempt to establish a social relationship on an enduring basis. Whether symmetrical or asymmetrical, the exchange expresses and symbolizes human social interdependence” (p. 142). That is, reciprocal practices establish serious obligations based on the assumption of *confianza* (mutual trust), which is reestablished or confirmed with each exchange, and they lead to the development of long-term relationships.

Olmedo (1997) describes *confianza* in terms of the development of *la sociedad* with the Puerto Rican families she studied; *la sociedad* was a type of mutual aid/credit association that served practical material needs by lending money to its members, but also expressed personal and social relationships between them and their families. This reciprocity and *confianza* reverberates with Gramsci’s insights into the process of organic intellectuals feeling, understanding and knowing in their effort to educate, lead and direct praxis.

A Gramscian view supports the need for ethnography among workers’ centre participants in researchers’ tasks of uncovering and developing organic relations with workers. Ursula Apitzsch (2002: 303) wrote about multicultural communities to emphasize how often immigrant positions are created in response to the dominant hegemony and its view and use of the migrants in that society:

On the contrary, it must mean learning how people in a certain determined social and historical context develop their culture in a double dialogue with “the other” and with their own tradition, and in this way construct their culture for themselves, involving “the other” in this process at the same time. Only in this way—reconstructing the self-reflexivity on any culture in modern societies—does one get to learn what it means to transform, reform and thus develop one’s own culture.

Gramsci’s attitude to the meaning-making of workers is centred on how they participate in their conception of the world, and how social hegemony creates both this conception and the parameters of their participation. I argue that his interpretation is required to

lead research participants to critique and challenge both the spontaneous nature of knowledge created in the social network, and how they see themselves, their world and their possibilities for action.

Participatory, critical ethnographic inquiry with the goal of mutual education of all participants reverberates with Gramsci's conception of organic intellectuals. In educational inquiry, Enrique Trueba engaged Latina/os in critical relationship and his approach is contrasted with that of John Ogbu who theorized the status of "involuntary" minorities (Foley, 2005). Trueba is concerned with the impact of dominance on the lives and learning of Latina/o students and their families. He encouraged teachers to reflect on their "ideological clarity" in order to critique and address the hegemonic assumptions they may make when preparing for and teaching Latina/o children (Exposito and Favela, 2003). Describing the critical ethnography that he proposes, Trueba (1999: 129) states:

They become "critical" only when their goal, ultimate purpose, direction, and expected outcomes are the praxis of the ethnographer, that is, a praxis of equity, a commitment for life to pursue equity and to struggle for the liberation of all humankind through ethnographic research.

Anderson (1989) begins and Foley (2002) continues the conversation about critical ethnography in education that is central to the funds of knowledge approach. The validity of analysis and findings of openly ideological ethnographic inquiry, including Gramsci's perspective, has been challenged, but practitioners may use activities such as triangulation or a focus on the catalytic character of the praxis to address this concern (Lather, 1986). One starting point is to understand that research participants' views are formed through the working of social hegemony (acknowledging Gramsci's thesis) and that critical self-reflexivity should then be a central objective of the work. Anderson (1989: 255) says:

Reflexivity in critical ethnography, then, involves a dialectical process among (a) the researcher's constructs, (b) the informant's commonsense constructions, (c) the research data, (d) the researcher's ideological biases, and (e) the structural and historical forces that informed the social construction under study.

Anderson describes a conversation in the field of critical ethnography as encouraging a holistic view in the interpretation of inquiry and increasing the involvement of participants by creating narratives and promoting collaboration with them. Foley (2002) presents reflexivity as a complex and nuanced process in critical ethnography. Describing himself as motivated by the social justice struggle of the 1960s in the US, Foley recounts how many Marxist theorists, including Gramsci, created the theoretical foundations of critical ethnography as they learned to practice it.

The ethnographic concept of reflexivity parallels Gramsci's concern for spontaneous knowledge stratifying and fossilizing historically-derived common sense. While the need for validation promotes self-reflection, Gramsci's need for critique drives the challenge of spontaneous knowledge. Critical ethnography is founded on a perspective of social justice; who better than organic intellectual ethnographers of knowledge to lead critical praxis? Critical ethnography is a means of thought and reflection for organic intellectuals in workers' centres.

Autoethnography is presented through the interpretive lens of autobiography by foregrounding the researcher's personal history and experience related to the phenomenon. Intertextuality is presented as the postmodern analysis of text and discourse, where the reader is meant to synthesis the meaning of the inquiry by sensing multiple voices, images and concepts. Foley shows that creating and merging strands of reflexivity in critical ethnography is evident in the work of mature practitioners. The distinction for Gramsci is that self-reflection must affect the social group and direct agency.

The element of school and university partnerships in funds of knowledge may be related to the process of developing partnership such as participatory action research between participants of workers' centres and researchers. For Gramsci, the interaction is framed by the development of organic intellectuals who participate and are challenged through the process of reflecting on and interpreting the inquiry. Gramsci's definition of knowledge through praxis is a primary focus. In terms of the outcomes of inquiry, Patti Later (1986) proposed a standard of catalytic validity: Ideological qualitative research may be evaluated by judging how well the inquiry stimulates or catalyses the experience of participants to reach the knowledge or goals that they seek. Taking on the spontaneous common sense of workers' centre members is one of the tasks necessary to disrupting ossified world views and promoting reflective action. Funds of knowledge applied to workers' centres may be useful if the inquiry achieves or enhances the capacity and development of the worker-participants in ways that generate meaning in the shifts, positions and discipline required to move towards social justice.

Antonio Gramsci and Funds of Knowledge

Gramsci's epistemology relates to the connection between who has knowledge, its social creation and how it will be used. To begin, Gramsci creates a strong connection in the interaction between intellectuals, the masses, and their shared thoughts and feelings. This connection is the trust that enables the knowledge to lead the intellectuals and masses to action. In Notebook 4, note 33, in the passage discussing the move from *knowing* to *understanding* to *feeling*, he states:

The popular element "feels" but does not understand or know. The intellectual element "knows" but does not understand and, above all, does not feel...The error of the intellectual consists in believing that one can *know* without understanding and, above all, without feeling, or being impassioned: in other words, that the intellectual can be an intellectual if he is distinct and detached from the people. One cannot make history-politics without passion, that is, without being emotionally tied to the people, without feeling the rudimentary passions of the people, understanding them, and hence explaining [and

justifying] them in the specific historical situation and linking them dialectically to the laws of history, that is, to a scientifically elaborated superior conception of the world: namely, “knowledge” (Gramsci in Buttigieg, 1996: 173).

In this note, Gramsci describes how the masses and intellectuals experience life and produce knowledge together. Feeling and thinking are linked, and an intellectual not organic to a community must experience the feelings of the masses in order to create knowledge with them. This knowledge is related not to disciplines or professions but specifically to the place of the masses in history and the struggle for socialism. Intellectuals emerge from the masses and show their organic relation to the masses by directly experiencing and knowing their feelings and passions. Gramsci describes their passions as rudimentary, defined as at root or at the base, not as a lower level of sophistication. For Gramsci, knowledge has a purpose and the role of the intellectual is to form and reflect this purpose to the masses through action. The organic intellectual understands the passion that motivates an action and offers the masses recursive reflection based on a recognition of compassion, consequence and experience; the goal is to critique common sense based on spontaneity.

In contrast to this, let us consider Velez-Ibanez and Greenberg’s (1992: 314) definition of funds of knowledge as developed by Moll and colleagues:

The best way to explain what we mean by funds of knowledge is to relate them to Wolf’s (1966) discussion of household economy. Wolf distinguishes several funds that households must juggle: caloric funds, funds of rent, replacement funds, ceremonial funds, social funds. Entailed in these are wider sets of activities requiring specific strategic bodies of essential information that households need to maintain their well-being. If we define such funds as those bodies of knowledge of strategic importance to households, then we may ask such pertinent questions as How were such assemblages historically formed? How variable are they? How are they transformed as they move from one context to another? How are they learned and transmitted? How are they socially distributed?

Emphasis may be placed on the strategic importance of the funds and the consideration that, beyond the economic and survival motivations for participants, historical relationships and analysis may feature in the funds' development. Moll et al. (1992: 133) state: "We use the term 'funds of knowledge' to refer to these historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being". While emphasizing the instrumental value of the funds by noting the historic and cultural basis of the knowledge, we have a link to Gramsci's conception and an opening for the application to curriculum of community change if the household looks beyond its primary needs. Household knowledge undergoes a process of critique based on what the group decides to pass on and what to ignore. Gramsci's critique of spontaneous common sense fits well here with the distinction that his organic intellectual would seek to develop knowledge that challenges the social and material order of dominance.

Benedetto Fontana (2000: 306), reflected on this same note and states: "The merely abstract knowledge of the intellectual becomes life and politics when linked to the experiential and passionate feelings of the people. At the same time, the feeling-passion of the people acquires the character of knowledge". Fontana emphasizes that the synthesis of social locations and domains of experience is an important relationship that Gramsci highlights and which encourages our pursuit of curriculum based on funds of knowledge. Angelo Broccoli (1972) describes this process as connective tissue for the dialectical work that must be undertaken as part of establishing this knowledge. This process makes communication possible between diverse groups struggling for knowledge, reflecting Apitzsch's thesis.

This link between knowing, understanding and feeling is the essential emotional bond in the social group that holds workers together even when their common sense conceptions of the world are being challenged or shattered. Trust, *confianza*, keeps them connected during the times of tension and anger when new ideas can emerge, take shape and be tested through praxis.

Gramsci valued culture and an understanding of how hegemony relates to cultural development and social change. He describes culture in two quotes from Notebook 1, note 43, “Types of periodicals”:

Therefore, the premise of “an organic diffusion from a homogeneous centre of a homogeneous way of thinking and acting” is not sufficient. The same ray of light passes through different prisms and yields different refractions of light: in order to have the same refraction, one must make a whole series of adjustments to the individual prisms. Patient and systematic “repetition” is the fundamental methodological principle. But not a mechanical, material repetition: the adaptation of each basic concept to diverse peculiarities, presenting and re-presenting it in all its positive aspects and in its traditional negations, always ordering each partial aspect in the totality. Finding the real identity underneath the apparent differentiation and contradiction and finding the substantial diversity underneath the apparent identity is the most essential quality of the critic of ideas and of the historian of social development. The educational-formative work that a homogeneous cultural centre performs, the elaboration of a critical consciousness that it promotes and favors on a particular historical base which contains the material premises for this elaboration, cannot be limited to the simple theoretical enunciation of “clear” methodological principles: that would be a pure “enlightenment” action. The work required is complex and must be articulated and graduated: there has to be a combination of deduction and induction, identification and distinction, positive demonstration and the destruction of the old. Not in the abstract but concretely: on the basis of the real (Gramsci in Buttigieg, 1992: 128).

The image of prisms is engaging particularly because of their light, beauty, but also in their ability to focus light’s energy in order to create heat and fire. Gramsci talks about the role of the intellectual and also the function of the “homogeneous centre”, which in our case stands for the workers’ centre. Gramsci is saying that organic intellectuals work to organize and order the experiences of the masses in concrete and real ways, not mechanically but through their profound local experience and knowledge. This discipline and support for critical thinking and reflection may offer the space needed for immigrant workers to pause and reflect in solidarity as they confront the overwhelming

force of the dominant hegemony in an effort to destroy certain concepts and create new ones in the harsh realities of the competitive marketplace.

A little later, in that same Notebook 1, note 43, Gramsci writes:

By intellectuals, one must understand not [only] those ranks commonly referred to by this terms, but generally the whole social mass that exercises an organizational function in the broad sense whether it be in the field of production, or culture, or political administration: they correspond to the non commissioned and junior officers in the army (and also to some field officers excluding the general staff in the narrowest sense of the term). To analyze the social functions of the intellectuals, one must investigate and examine their psychological attitude toward the broad classes which they bring into contact in various fields: do they have a “paternalistic” attitude toward manual workers? or do they “believe” that they are an organic expression of them? do they have a “servile” attitude toward the ruling classes or do they believe that they themselves are leaders, an integral part of the ruling classes (Gramsci in Buttigieg, 1992: 133).

Here Gramsci again addresses the affective domain and states that intellectuals are leaders of the culture. Intellectuals are an organic expression of the masses and should see themselves and act as leaders in the cultural organization of workers’ centres. Members of the workers’ centres see themselves as belonging to the same class in their efforts to find work, and their struggles for just treatment at work and to resist racism and exploitation brought about by their subaltern condition.

In his pre-prison essay, “Socialism and Culture”, Gramsci defines culture in this way:

Culture is something quite different. It is organization, discipline of one’s inner self, a coming to terms with one’s own personality; it is the attainment of a higher awareness with the aid of which one succeeds in understanding one’s own historical value, one’s own function in life, one’s own rights and obligations (Gramsci, 1977: 11).

While divergent from most ethnographers' view of culture, we can see here Gramsci's focus on personal mental development for the purpose of understanding and acting on one's place in history. In the following paragraphs he continues by saying:

Consciousness of a self which is opposed to others, which is differentiated and, once having set itself a goal, can judge facts and events other than in themselves or for themselves but also in so far as they tend to drive history forward or backward. To know oneself means to be oneself, to be master of oneself, to distinguish oneself, to free oneself from a state of chaos, to exist as an element of order—but of one's own order and one's own discipline in striving for an ideal. And we cannot be successful in this unless we also know others, their history, the successive efforts they have made to be what they are, to create the civilization they have created and which we seek to replace with our own. In other words, we must form some idea of nature and its laws in order to come to know the laws governing the mind. And we must learn all of this without losing sight of the ultimate aim: to know oneself better through others and to know others better through oneself (Gramsci, 1977: 13).

Here, Gramsci says that understanding culture begins with knowing ourselves and others in a dialogic process. We cannot hope to understand and affect workplace injury and illness prevention unless we understand the history of the meaning of health and safety for the diverse participants of workers' centres, and struggle with organic intellectual leaders to form this recognition and propose ideals that will lead and guide participants to new action and knowledge. Worker leaders may not hope to organize workers' centre participants without listening to them and understanding their struggles to establish themselves in a new community, and how they see the world, their work and their range of choices in considering action.

“Spontaneity” was an important concern for Gramsci, particularly in the context of the humanistic educational philosophy promoted in Italy by Fascist education minister Giovanni Gentile, who adopted the views of Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce. Gramsci critiqued spontaneity and the assumptions underlying its deployment related to the individual and action; it is useful for us to consider spontaneity as a rationale for

romantic conceptions of developing funds of knowledge. For me, it seems useful to analyse and critique funds of knowledge in the light of what Gramsci says about spontaneity. In Notebook 3, note 48, “Past and present”, he states:

In this regard, a fundamental theoretical question arises: can modern theory be in opposition to the “spontaneous” sentiments of the masses? (“Spontaneous” in the sense that they are not due to the systematic educational activity of an already conscious leadership but have been formed through everyday experience in the light of “common sense,” that is, the traditional popular conception of the world: what is very tritely called “instinct,” which is itself a rudimentary and basic historical acquisition.) (Gramsci in Buttigieg, 1996: 48).

It is clear that the subaltern person develops a conception of the world and that the resulting funds of knowledge are the goal of inquiry for teachers and school staff working with Latina/o students. By highlighting the process of the spontaneous emergence, Gramsci directs us to challenge the sanctity of this origin of knowledge, and to be clear about critiquing the social dialogue that results in the valuing, use and development of this knowledge into something that is passed on in the social group to become a fund.

Taken at face value, funds of knowledge, according to Gramsci, must be criticized because they are fundamentally based on common sense. We may judge their formation as reflecting the level of consciousness of the leaders and their functional social utility. Funds need not be unitary, exclusive and mutually exclusive; they should be interrogated and evaluated according to their use and the nature of the educational process in which they were learned.

Gramsci offers an image of spontaneity in Notebook 1, note 123, “Search the exact historical organ...”: “‘Spontaneity’ is one of these involutions: one almost imagines that a child’s brain is like a ball of thread which the teacher helps to unwind” (Gramsci in Buttigieg, 1992: 211). He asks us to consider how natural or already present this knowledge is, or to ask if it simply appeared. Earlier in Notebook 3, Note 48, he states:

This element of “spontaneity” was not neglected, much less disdained: it was *educated*, it was given a direction, it was cleansed of everything extraneous that could contaminate it, in order to unify it by means of modern theory but in a living, historically effective manner (Gramsci in Buttigieg, 1996: 50, emphasis in original).

Consider Gramsci’s distinction between the spontaneous and the educated: There is an ironic tension in what Gonzalez et al. are after in funds of knowledge; they seek authentic traditional experience considered deficit by an educational system that values dominant forms of knowledge and seeks to inculcate dominant values that reproduce the material exploitation of subaltern Latina/os. Having established the need for critique, I believe that Gramsci also shows us how the organic intellectual can lead a social group through the development of praxis for good sense. Gramsci does not support this subjugation but asks if this traditional knowledge is inherently valuable, or is it just spontaneous without being critical? As part of an intellectual conversation, I propose that we recognize and consider gradations, disruptions or discontinuities in the practice of funds of knowledge based on critical consciousness.

Gramsci describes the standards and criteria of judgment useful for creating curriculum responsive to needs of workers’ centre participants for social change. He talks about how generations educate and what is needed to pass on the torch of leadership. In Notebook 1, note 123, Gramsci continues, after presenting his ball of thread image, to say:

In reality, every generation educates, that is, it forms the new generation, and education is a struggle against the instincts linked to rudimentary biological functions, a struggle against nature, to dominate it and to create the man who is “in touch” with his times. It is forgotten that from the time he starts “to see and to touch,” perhaps a few days after birth, the child accumulates sensations and images which multiply themselves and become complex with the acquisition of language. “Spontaneity,” if analyzed, becomes increasingly problematical. Furthermore, “school,” that is direct educational activity, is only a fraction of the life of a student who comes into contact with both human society and the *societas rerum*, and from

these “extra-scholastic” sources develops standards of judgment of far greater importance than is commonly believed (Gramsci in Buttigieg, 1992: 211).

Thus Gramsci describes how personal household knowledge develops and is affected, first by the families’ social needs and then by the dominant educational system. Generations that develop funds of knowledge are intimately connected to children and families; the funds provide them with not only support but also standards of judgment as a way to continue and enhance their lives. This process exists, too, for those who are not part of school but go on to develop their own curriculum of life (Schubert, 1986), often through the “school of hard knocks.” Olmedo (1999) also initiated and supported such a process with Latinas who were constructing oral histories and narratives. They made choices and reflected on their lives based on what they believed would have value and relevance for the next generations. Gramsci’s reflection on standards of judgment relates to how we criticize the very conception of the world that the family provides, an aspect of critical pedagogy (Schubert, 1996).

Indexing Gramsci’s voice, educators such as Entwistle argue that Gramsci promotes conservative values in schooling by emphasizing discipline, rigour and organization, which are supposed to be conservative values and world views. Focusing on standards does not mean seeking a resonance with projects such as No Child Left Behind in the US. From Gramsci’s perspective, there is a political agenda towards which praxis may be directed and leaders may need to respond to efforts related to political action. Gramsci was intent on social revolution resulting from the formation of the historical bloc (Borg, Buttigieg and Mayo, 2002), that is, coalitions of groups and organizations that will ultimately bring about social justice. This process is in no way related to the reproduction of disparity that is the hallmark of conservative approaches to education.

In Notebook 4, note 18, “The technique of thinking”, Gramsci describes his vision:

I think that I have noted elsewhere the importance of the *techniques* of thinking in the construction of a pedagogical program; 4 here, again, one cannot make a comparison between the technique of thinking and the old rhetorics...The technique of thought will certainly not produce a great philosophy, but it will provide a criteria of judgment, and it will correct the deformities of the modes of thinking of common sense. It would be interesting to compare the *technique* of common sense –i.e. of the philosophy of the man on the street—with the technique of the most advanced modern thought (Gramsci in Buttigieg, 1996: 160, emphasis in original).

Gramsci makes this point very clearly: developing criteria of judgment is essential in the process of moving from common sense to good sense and, in the same way, critiquing funds of knowledge. He offers a starting point for curriculum inquiry, synthesizing his critical approach with the ethnographic funds of knowledge approach for the use of leadership development in workers' centres.

Gramsci-Inspired Organic Ethnographers of Knowledge

The funds of knowledge approach inspired by Gramsci challenges us to create inquiry that develops the capacity of participants to be critically reflective about their cultural practices and possibilities for praxis. An organic ethnography of knowledge represents the synthesis of these perspectives and is explored here utilizing a curriculum development matrix based on William Pinar's *currere* (1994) and William Doll's (1993) postmodern proposal. The model critical curriculum inspired by Gramsci for peer educators is described at three levels: the personal, the commune and "collective man", representing curriculum spaces organized around Gramscian themes that function interactively (Zanoni, 2006). Learning activities can be planned for each level. Curriculum participants reflect various knowledge and skills with these themes, and while they may lead at some moments, in others they may be questioning, learning or challenging

Knowledge

Gramsci values knowledge, which he equates with the facility to understand the history of subaltern domination. Knowledge is not neutral or universal but socially constructed for specific purposes—in Gramsci’s view, for the critical development and praxis of organic subaltern intellectuals. Buttigieg (1994: 130) comments on Gramsci’s approach to knowledge:

Gramsci’s originality manifests itself best in his inquiry, in this antidogmatic critical procedures, in the flexibility of his theoretical reflections, in his detailed attention to the historical specificity and the material particularity of every phenomenon he analyzes, and, above all, in the way in which in this work the pursuit of knowledge and the political struggle for social transformation converge into a single praxis. These Gramscian traits can be brought into relief and their significance assessed only through careful, patient analyses of the integral text of the prison notebooks.

Salamini (1974: 374) emphasizes Gramsci’s use of knowledge:

To speak of *social origin* of knowledge is simply making an empirical observation; in contrast, *social determination* of knowledge implies a critical posture toward it. More specifically, the social origin of knowledge emphasizes the relationship between knowledge and the totality of the social structure—presupposedly homogeneous—without any consideration of class structure and class conflict; social determination of knowledge emphasizes the relationship of knowledge and class structure, thus ultimately debunking its ideological pretensions and relativizing the validity of science and objectivity (emphasis in original).

Along with Gramsci, I clarify this distinction through curriculum to enhance the critical capacities of organic ethnographers of knowledge to create and communicate their experience.

Gramsci is prescient in acknowledging the core premise of the funds of knowledge approach when he states that every generation educates its young and this process is, at first, a struggle against the rudimentary biological forces in humans, then is carried to the socially constructed level of the conception of the world. In Gramsci's view, one important starting point for the organic intellectuals is a critical approach to the rudimentary, instinctual, common sense or traditional concept of the world.

At the personal space of the proposed curriculum matrix, Pinar's *currere* focuses on the progressive/regressive process of reflection on learning in life with questions such as: what learning do I need? How will this learning propel my life in the future? How have the learning experiences in my life brought me to the place I am today? Doll's postmodern perspective presents the idea of rigour in curriculum inquiry that Gramsci valued in his high expectations of the organic intellectual and conscious leader. A Gramscian organic ethnography of knowledge expands the family-household unit of analysis to include the worker in transnational spaces. This unit is constructed around the close relationships the workers have or will develop through social interaction, the family living with them in their current home, and their family or social network of origin in the place they were born or have lived—all based on the development of strong, reciprocal contacts. The workers participating in curriculum activities create maps of these social networks and identify the funds of knowledge that exist in these relationships.

Culture and Spontaneity

Developing reflective ethnography skills in participants is another curriculum objective. This will provide curriculum participants with the necessary tools to criticize the

traditional conception of the world that they have grown up with and which circulates in their social networks. One essential task of the funds of knowledge approach is to challenge the binary of dominant culture/subaltern culture that Gonzalez and his colleagues initially presented. It is well recognized that that in the US the dominant culture subjugates newly arrived Latina/os. However, listening to Gramsci, one should not accept a subaltern cultural perspective at face value as authentic, true and outside the workings of hegemony. The subaltern culture, too, must be examined and criticized in order to discover which values are mere reactions to dominant hegemony and which might propel group agency, fostering good sense and enabling social change. Gonzalez and Moll (2002) share insights into the potential of this ethnographic process with their example of the teacher study groups they led during their inquiry; in these groups, participants talked about their relationships with families, how to make meaning of the interactions, and their roles in the process of analysing and creating knowledge.

The concept of culture has been elaborated and well defined in recent educational inquiries by Gutierrez and Rogoff (2003) and Gutierrez and Correa-Chavez (2006). Their contribution is to criticize a hegemonic view of monolithic subaltern culture and to discuss the concept of people's participation in cultural practices that are local, specific, hybrid and based on history (Gutierrez and Correa-Chavez, 2006). They recognize the social dynamic of milieu addressed in the funds of knowledge approach and are careful to challenge interpretations that over-generalize predictions of individuals' behaviour based on participant observation in immigrant communities.

Their challenge to dominant scientific methods that essentialize immigrant characteristics is to develop a viewpoint and methods that can recognize a balance and dialogue between individuals, their identities and practices, and the culture in which they participate that reflects struggle and solidarity. Gutierrez and Rogoff (2003: 22) state:

A cultural-historical approach assumes that individual development and disposition must be understood in (not separate from) cultural and historical context. In other words, we talk about patterns of people's approaches to given situations without reducing the explanation to a claim that they do what they do *because* they are migrant farm workers or English-language learners. We attend to individuals' linguistic and cultural-historical repertoires as well as to their contributions to practices that connect with other activities in which they commonly engage (emphasis in original).

Repertoires of practice for immigrant workers participating in workers' centres would also include developing skills as organic ethnographers of knowledge and describing, as Gramsci proposes, the extent to which the individuals explore and adopt this approach in their organizing work and how they would criticize spontaneity. Gonzalez and Moll (2002) reinforce this point by focusing, theoretically and methodologically, on understanding how research participants use their resources, particularly funds of knowledge, to form and sustain their lives.

Gramsci's repeated use of the term "rudimentary" bears examination; meanings of rudimentary include initial, elementary, primitive, embryonic, vestigial or incipient. Gramsci chose not to judge biological instincts or conceptions of the world as inherently flawed and useless, but rather as a starting point for an organic ethnography of knowledge that would lead to higher and more refined praxis. Here, his vision of the organic intellectual seeking the good sense identity lying beneath apparent diversion and seeing substantial diversity below the surface of unity is a fruitful pursuit in reflexive thinking.

The level of the commune follows in the curriculum matrix, where Pinar's *currere* proposes the analytical process, while Doll's postmodern perspective suggests relations and recursion. Gramsci leads our thinking in describing the importance of the process of moving in directions of feeling, understanding and knowing for organic ethnographers

of knowledge. Gramsci highlights the synthesis of the affective and cognitive domains in an iterative process between organic ethnographers and their participants. For Gonzalez et al., the essential and perhaps defining feature of social networks as a conduit of knowledge is *confianza* or mutual trust, which is the emotional current surrounding the praxis of reciprocity. *Confianza* is simultaneously the entry into and result of the functioning of these networks, and Gramsci's insight resonates harmoniously with their inquiry.

Here, organic ethnographers of knowledge would propose and debate together their critical analysis of the functioning of their social networks of reciprocity in order to propose new actions in the forging of a new path as a social group. Leaders of workers' centres describe the process of creating group norms of behaviour in neighbourhoods where day-labourers gather to seek work. Their presence, as workers legitimately seeking work and offering valuable service to the community while upholding these norms, challenges stereotypical representations of workers as drunken and dirty "illegals" by dominant group residents and neighbours. They would benefit from examining Apitzsch's (2002; also Mayo, 1995) description of subaltern culture in multicultural settings as a double mirror reflecting their cultural practices developing in response to the pressure of hegemonic formation. Analysis, recursion and relations may be promoted through curriculum activities that feature Gramsci's consideration of deduction and induction, identification and distinction, destruction of the old along with positive demonstration. Curriculum questions may include: how have I identified with our cultural practices and where has this identification brought us? How might I consider my distinction from the cultural practices and what use might distinction be in enhancing the power and knowledge of our social network?

Judgment

At the level of "collective man", Gramsci proposes the importance of criteria of judgment and standards of judgment as a means by which to criticize and recreate the

distorted thought processes associated with common sense, most particularly the subaltern concept of the world formed through the deficit views ascribed to workers by the dominant culture. Gramsci does not tell us what these criteria or standards of judgment are, but a starting point would surely be a deconstruction and recognition of the subjugated knowledges (Foucault, 2003) learned by the curriculum participants as their history. Gonzalez and colleagues (1995: 469) add this reflection:

The dialogue of the ethnographic interview can provide a foundation for the development of critical consciousness. The discourse that the interview sparks highlights the theoretical assertion that knowledge is not found but constructed, and that it is constructed in and through discourse.

Buttigieg (1986: 15) also links Gramsci and Foucault when he states, “[f]urthermore, the politics of Gramsci’s work, in effect, rearranges the traditional relationship between scholarship—i.e. the system for the production of knowledge—and ‘truth’ in a manner that directly threatens what Foucault calls the regime of truth”.

Gramsci, at the most inclusive level, demands consideration of history-politics and organic ethnographers of knowledge should strive to provide systematic education through conscious leadership. This consciousness education directs, cleanses, unifies and is historically-effective. Organic ethnographers of knowledge may consider their definitions and actions in terms of the concepts that Gramsci presents as part of a dialogic review of their impact and effectiveness.

Pinar’s *currere* proposes synthesis in this space and Doll’s postmodern perspective suggests richness. Organic ethnographers of knowledge are supported in partnerships with researchers and organizations to promote the skills and capacities of immigrant adult learners. This space offers the possibility of expressing Lather’s (1986) concept of catalytic validity, where openly ideological inquiry is valid in the way that it promotes the reflection, development and self-identified goals of organic ethnographers of

knowledge. Gramsci offers a recursive insight in asking these intellectuals to interrogate their attitude to their role and function. Acknowledging their organizational function, he asks them to consider whether they are truly organic, or paternalistic in their approach to the commune? Do they truly lead, or are they servile? This process seems to return to the personal but may also present an opening for the development of new leaders, new organic ethnographers of knowledge, to begin their reflective inquiry and for a shift to the new generation, interrogating the ever-changing relations, *confianza* and reciprocity expressed in response to the global economy.

Conclusion

Health and safety problem-solving at work is one literacy that is crucial for the survival and progress of immigrant Latina/o and low-wage workers in the United States. All skills and knowledge operate in a framework of workers' conceptions of the world, based mostly on culturally-grounded common sense. Leaders in curriculum, advocating an ethnographic approach to subaltern Latina/o families and their education, use discovery and awareness of culturally-based funds of knowledge as a basis for learning. Gramsci's challenge to this approach with Latina/o adults shows that however valuable these funds of knowledge are, they developed spontaneously and still must be critiqued by organic intellectuals for their elements of common sense that may constrain the agency and praxis of educational participants.

Gramsci's perspective applied to funds of knowledge created in workers' centres is an inspiration to design participatory action research for organic ethnographers of knowledge in these sites of mass migrant formation. The issue of health and safety at work has unique attributes in that related social discourses (Ives, 2004) may address survival, disposability, worker's identity, investments in the future, fairness and an appeal to social justice that may develop persuasive hegemonic circulation.

Participants in workers' centres, led by organic ethnographers of knowledge, will be engaged in a critique of spontaneous funds of knowledge and the development of judgment criteria to guide workers from Gramsci's conception of common sense to good sense in the discovery of agency and the creation of knowledge through praxis. Researchers participating in this process will guide and document a discussion of the triangulation of Gramsci's view of adult learning, repertoires of cultural practices manifested in funds of knowledge, and the value of health and safety as a hegemonic discourse.

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