

ENSINO, SAÚDE E AMBIENTE

Critical Pedagogy and Educational Research in the U.S. and Brazil: An International Teaching-Research Collaboration

Pedagogia Crítica e Pesquisa em Educação nos EUA e no Brasil: uma Colaboração Internacional de Ensino e Pesquisa

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Palavras-chave:

pedagogia crítica; Paulo Freire; pesquisa transnacional; projeto colaborativo; seminário dialógico.

RESUMO: Este texto apresenta resultados parciais de projeto colaborativo internacional que tem como pilar a filosofia de Paulo Freire. Constitui-se como relatório descritivo e registro de questões individuais e coletivas sobre os objetivos do projeto em relação aos seus resultados e implicações. O projeto foi desenvolvido como uma parceria internacional entre três pesquisadoras de três universidades diferentes: Universidade Tiradentes (Aracaju, Brasil), a Universidade de Massachusetts Boston (Massachusetts, EUA) e Molloy College (New York, EUA). As perspectivas da curiosidade epistemológica de Freire (2019) e da consciência crítica (1967) fundamentam nossa discussão, pois este artigo tem como objetivo apresentar os resultados do Seminário Dialógico Internacional como parte integrante do projeto. As vozes dos participantes (docentes e discentes) serão tomadas aqui com a intenção de tecer laços entre elas, iluminando os resultados desta colaboração de ensino e pesquisa além-fronteiras. Nosso trabalho diz sobre a importância de espaços dialógicos transnacionais e locais para o ensino e a pesquisa, apresentando a maneira como temos realizado o projeto nessa parceria. As interseções de nossas visões de mundo e nossas vivências nos permitem ver o quanto ainda precisa ser feito para descortinar a injustiça social local e globalmente e, às vezes, em nossas próprias práticas como pesquisadoras e educadoras. No entanto, nosso trabalho também oferece esperança e possibilidade, pois vemos o poder da curiosidade epistemológica e do diálogo para desenvolver uma consciência crítica fortalecida. Nessa perspectiva, o trabalho de Freire e suas contribuições para a mudança social permanecem atuais e relevantes.

As Epistemologias Freireanas

Keywords: critical pedagogy; Paulo Freire; transnational research; collaborative project; dialogical seminar.

ABSTRACT: This text presents partial results of an international collaborative project, which has Paulo Freire's philosophy as a pillar. This article is both a descriptive report and also a register of individual and collective questions about the intentions of the project in relation to its outcomes and implications. The project was developed as an international partnership between three researchers from three different universities, Tiradentes University (Aracaju, Brazil), the University of Massachusetts Boston (Massachusetts, USA), and Molloy College (New York, USA). The perspectives of Freire's epistemological curiosity (2019) and critical awareness (1967) provide the foundation for our discussion, as this article aims to present the results of the International Dialogical Seminar as an integral part of the project. The voices of the participants (teachers and students) will be the focus with the intention to weave links between them, shedding light on the results of this collaboration of teaching and research across borders. Our work speaks to the importance of transnational and local dialogic spaces for teaching and researching as we have been doing in this work together. The intersections of our worldviews and lifeworlds enable us to see how much more needs to be done to ferret out social injustice locally and globally, and sometimes in our own practices as researchers and educators. Yet, our work also offers hope and possibility as we see the power of epistemological curiosity and dialogue in bringing about strengthened critical consciousness. Freire's work for and contributions to social change remains current and relevant.

This text presents partial results of an international collaborative project, which has Paulo Freire's philosophy as a pillar. The project was developed as an international partnership between three researchers from three different universities, Tiradentes University (Aracaju, Brazil), the University of Massachusetts Boston (Massachusetts, USA), and Molloy College (New York, USA). The goal of the project was to provide doctoral and graduate students with transnational, hands-on learning about educational philosophy and research methods while also allowing faculty from the U.S. and Brazil an opportunity to collaborate on transnational research about education and critical pedagogy. The project, then, had two mutually supporting components: 1) a dialogic international graduate seminar, and 2) collaborative international research fieldwork.

This article is both a descriptive report and a register of individual and collective questions about the intentions of the project in relation to its outcomes and implications. In the sections that follow, we illustrate Freire's presence in the project, pointing out Freire's presence in throughout the project to point out Freire's lasting presence in some of today's educational contexts, as well as its implications for future research and teaching. The perspectives of Freire's epistemological curiosity (2019) and critical awareness (1967) provide the foundation for our discussion, as this article aims to present the results of the International Dialogical Seminar (hereafter: "Seminar") as an integral part of the project. The voices of the participants (teachers and students) will be the focus with the intention to weave links

As Epistemologias Freireanas

between them, shedding light on the results of this collaboration of teaching and research across borders.

THE DIALOGIC INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE SEMINAR

The collaborative teaching component of this project took place over a 5-week period during the 2019 academic year. The Seminar at each of the collaborating sites had a slightly different focus related to the goals of each university and the associated programs in which the Seminar courses were housed. However, all three Seminar groups shared a focus on critical contemporary issues in urban, the history of critical pedagogy with Paulo Freire and his contributions at its center, and qualitative research methods in education in the U.S. and Brazil. Across the three sites, Seminar participants were doctoral students or advanced graduate students. In the U.S. classes, all students were also in-service educators (i.e., teachers and administrators) or community advocates. In Brazil, the students were from different disciplinary areas, such as Social Work, History, Pedagogy, among others, working as teachers in Federal Technical Education, basic education and higher education. Course modality was either face-to-face or hybrid in-person/online, with 4 synchronous two-hour zoom sessions during which all three Seminar groups engaged in dialogue around common issues related to the scope of the project. For common texts, students in all three groups read *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to those who Dare Teach* (Freire, 1993) and “Critical pedagogy and the purpose of educational research in an age of ‘alternative facts’” (Kress, 2019). Students in the U.S. also read excerpts from texts by bell hooks (1994), Antonia Darder (2017), and Henry Giroux (1988) (scholars who have extended Freire’s work to the U.S. education context), and they watched various media texts including the film *The Day that Lasted 21 Years* (Tavarez, 2012), a documentary about the role of the U.S. government in the Brazilian military coup of 1964, which led to Freire’s eventual exile. Finally, U.S. students interviewed female scholars of critical pedagogy to learn about their lives, the intentionality and purposes of their work, and explore additional positionalities (i.e. gender, race) for moving critical pedagogy forward as a discipline in the future.

COLLABORATIVE INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH FIELDWORK

The research portion of the project was three-fold. Data were collected from: 1) the weekly Seminar class sessions and student assignments, 2) numerous site visits in two

As Epistemologias Freireanas

metropolitan areas in the U.S. (Boston and New York City) and one metropolitan area in Brazil (Aracaju), and 3) researcher reflections and dialogues during post-fieldwork. Each research activity and corresponding data set is described below.

1. Seminar professors recorded and transcribed the Dialogic International Seminar sessions in all three settings, including the three-way international Zoom dialogue sessions. Professors also collected artifacts, which included student papers, discussion board posts, FlipGrid video diaries, and post-class activities including scholarly collaborations that were outgrowths of the class (e.g., conference proposals and publication initiatives).
2. In each of the three settings, the researchers conducted several site visits to local educational organizations (schools, universities, community-based settings and/or activist spaces). The researchers also conducted individual interviews with educational leaders, students and educators in each setting. The fieldwork and data collection consisted of the following activities at each site:
 - A. The researchers toured the various sites and participated in interviews with school leaders and/or teachers.
 - B. The researchers took photographs of the sites they visited, and audio recorded interviews with key people. At some sites, they also collected artifacts (i.e. pamphlets, reports) that were given to them at the site location.
 - C. The researchers shared and compared data across classrooms and research sites. They explored how critical pedagogy informed teaching, learning and researching practices in the various locations and considered the ways local practices and particular contexts of each site might inform critical pedagogy as philosophy and practice.

In the next section we detail some of the emerging findings and implications of the project.

OUTCOMES: OUR TAKE-WITHS (NOT TAKE-AWAYS)

Our transnational teaching-research project bore witness to the ways in which Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy of epistemological curiosity, dialogue, and *conscientização* remains a vital, if not current, methodology and philosophy and through which teachers and learners

As Epistemologias Freireanas

name their realities and implement actions to push back against the ever-rising injustices in the current moment of human history. Moreover, we witnessed the ways Freire's work continues to pedagogically inform, guide and inspire various learning and teaching communities in three different geopolitical spaces: Aracaju (Brazil), New York City/Long Island (NY), and Boston (MA). This transnational collaboration was based on applying some of the particularities of Freire's critical pedagogy to its design and implementation (i.e. respecting local struggles and acknowledging that the teaching and learning communities we visited *already* existed before and *not* as a result of this study). In addition, we each incorporated dimensions of Freire's philosophy in our own classroom pedagogies and research practices with graduate students, including facilitating student-centered group work and experiential teaching and learning activities.

We describe this section of outcomes as our "take-withs" rather than "take-aways," which reflects our shared commitment to disrupting colonial forms of research that extract knowledge resources from participants and communities and put them on display in the "knowledge museum" of the academy. Instead, we take-with us what we learned from these experiences: additional awareness of ourselves in relation to those with whom we have learned throughout the duration of this project; a heightened sense of responsibility to others who invited us into their teaching and learning communities and to the social and natural world we share; and a recognition that what we learned from our participation in this work must also be brought to bear on our future actions as educators, researchers, and global citizens. For the ease of our readers, we present our take-withs in alignment with the three-fold purposes identified in the project description above; however, it should be noted that at no time were these three foci of our research separate from each other. They overlap and entwine, informing each other at touch-points like the weave of a textile, creating a tapestry of shared activities that we and our students and community colleagues necessarily experienced in different ways.

INTERNATIONAL DIALOGIC SEMINAR TAKE-WITHS

The students in both countries and all three classes expressed their epistemological curiosities in a few common areas as they dialogued together and also individually in their independent reflections and assignments. In the dialogic classroom experience, students were

As Epistemologias Freireanas

interested in the differences in the sociopolitical contexts as well as the organization of schools in the respective countries. In particular, the students were curious about how race and socio-economics played a part in access to education as well as how the different sociopolitical contexts in which they lived contributed to differences in experiences for k-12 students. Some of the themes that emerged were related to the relationship between public and private education in both nations and how in both Brazil and the U.S. race and class contributed to the stratification of k-12 and post-secondary education access, albeit in different ways. Students also discussed standards, accountability, and government policy pertaining to curriculum and assessment and how such centralized policy disproportionately advantages and disadvantages different student populations and their communities across race and class lines. In the remainder of this section, for the ease of our readers, we present the experiences of the students at the three universities in separate sections so that their experiences can be viewed as unique because of the students' different cultural backgrounds and the different contexts where the students live and work. Yet, they also shared similarities, particularly around the role of dialogue and epistemological curiosity in their learning.

TRADENTES UNIVERSITY, ARACAJU, BRAZIL

In Aracaju, there were 9 (nine) students enrolled in the discipline. All of them read the mandatory texts, documented their readings, and produced scientific articles that made it possible to participate in academic conferences and other scholarly events. It is significant to mention that some of them came from the licensure program for teacher education, others got the bachelor's degree, but all of them had some experience or had been teaching for some time. We describe three of their profiles here in order to present their perceptions about the Dialogical Seminar, representing the areas mentioned.

One of them is a civil servant with a background in the area of technology, who is working as teacher. Like many teachers in Brazil, he knew of Paulo Freire and his written works, but he did not study or incorporate Freire's philosophy into his teaching practice. For him, having the opportunity to hear and talk about education in Brazil and the United States allowed for reflection on the importance of conducting research that deals with education, public policies, and the uses and advances of digital technologies. Another student has a degree in both areas, licensure and bachelor. She also holds a master's degree in education, but she was not teaching at the time of this project, because she was enrolled in and was dedicating her time

As Epistemologias Freireanas

to completing the doctoral program in education. She reported planning classes that would lead students to reflect on aspects related to the subjects they taught, but she did not mention having her pedagogical practice informed by critical pedagogy. Learning of similarities between the two nations, especially about the devaluation of teachers, was impacting for her. Furthermore, her participation in the Seminar's dialogues informed her about the lived experiences of teachers in other contexts and helped her to demystify her previous knowledge about how education is socially regarded in the United States. The graduate student in History has a master's degree in education with an emphasis on the history of education and teacher professionalization in Brazil. His research focuses on teacher training. His historical perception of significant processes that took place in Brazil allowed him to make important connections between Paulo Freire and Brazilian politics and some of the strategic actions Freire took in the Northeast of Brazil. For him, with regard to virtual interaction, the transnational knowledge exchange facilitated by the Seminar was significant for reflecting on gender, race, social inequality and critical pedagogy, in addition to verifying the points of convergence between themes and research objects. Students and researchers alike saw how transnational teaching and learning can effectively contribute to the development of educational practices that promote the autonomy of individuals in Brazil and in other nations.

In addition, we noticed the ways in which some of our students' perceptions of the world were broadened based on the dialogue among them. According to Freire (1967), perceiving and reflecting on the world, becoming an agent who promotes social change is not an easy task, since it demands that the individual starts this action at the individual level. The development of awareness has been constituted in this internal movement, and, as a result, becomes the driving force for the transformation of oneself, which then also has the possibility of generating this same effect in the other.

As Epistemologias Freireanas

MOLLOY COLLEGE, NEW YORK, USA

The students in New York consisted of 6 doctoral students. Three students were not enrolled in the Seminar and participated voluntarily and at their convenience because of their interest in the topic area. Two of these students attended only the first session, while the third participant, a Brazilian woman who immigrated to the United States in her youth, attended all sessions but did not complete the Seminar's assignments. The other three students who were enrolled in the course and fully participated in all class sessions and course activities were as follows: one Guyanese-American woman and two white men who reflected throughout the Seminar's discussions and assignments the ways in which whiteness does not hold a monolithic meaning. One of the men is a first generation Greek-American and identifies strongly as Greek. His ethnicity informs his epistemology, and he sometimes used Greek words to express his meaning-making of the Seminar content and experiences. Each student expressed emerging sociopolitical awareness, or *conscientização*, in different ways depending on who they were, where they worked, and their degree of prior exposure to the ideas they engaged with in the Seminar. All of them identified as social justice educators, but the degree to which they had thus far integrated critical pedagogy into their roles as educators varied.

As examples, one student who was a music educator felt his beliefs about education were affirmed by the curriculum and discussions in the course, but he also wrestled with what it meant for him to teach critically in a field dominated by white Western European norms (i.e. classical music) and in relation to his own upbringing and preferences as a learner who enjoyed listening to and giving lectures. He specifically noted how he needed to reconcile his predilection toward "banking" education and, in his words, "set his ego aside" to create more student-centered and empowering experiences for students. The Guyanese-American student who worked in a school founded on principles of critical pedagogy was emboldened to more deeply interrogate her own practices as an educator who previously felt that empowering students meant "teaching them the rules of the game [of school] and how to play it" so they could be successful. While she had already strongly identified with critical pedagogy at the start of the Seminar, in her final reflection, she had settled into a place where she expected more of herself as someone who could contribute to dismantling oppressive educational structures that uphold coloniality and institutional racism. The third New York student who also identifies as Greek was a high school social studies teacher in an affluent Catholic school. For him, the course added dimension to his understanding of U.S. history and the role of the

As Epistemologias Freireanas

U.S. in the plight of other nations in the world, and specifically in Brazil. His emerging transnational awareness led him to reflect on neoliberal globalization and the perpetual destruction and exploitation of colonized peoples and lower income workers. As someone who worked with mostly white, affluent students, he began to explore how Catholicism and Ancient Greek principles of *agapē* (humanistic and altruistic love) might serve as levers to open up dialogue about social inequality and what it means to become critically conscious when someone identifies as part of the oppressor class.

For all three students, the dialogues with the students in Boston and Aracaju were pivotal to their new awareness. In addition, each of them interviewed a female critical pedagogy scholar (Dr. Juliet Hess, Dr. dorothy vaandering, and Dr. Melissa Winchell) to gain perspectives on the field of critical pedagogy and its future directions. They created Storyjumper digital picture books based on these interviews. In each case, their interviews yielded a wealth of scholarly points of view from the women interviewed. The interviewees also recommended readings written by women and people of color who have been bringing Freire's philosophy into education and research for decades but have often gone unrecognized. They walked away from that experience with a heightened awareness of the need to intentionally foreground the voices of people of color and women and upend the white, male dominance of academic scholarship, even in a so-called "social justice" field like critical pedagogy.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, USA

The four doctoral students in the Boston-based Seminar were all female: one Ghanaian-Liberian womxn and Boston Public Schools (BPS)-contracted social worker and doula; a Black Caribbean American-born BPS administrator and mother; a Colombian-born Latina immigrant and bilingual BPS school administrator; and one white woman, mother, and founder of an education non-profit organization providing BPS with civic engagement education. Prior to this Seminar, all four students had completed foundational coursework about philosophies in education, including Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). In addition, the four students had already been leading race-conscious social justice work within each of their professional settings. Their own racialized, classed and gendered experiences throughout their personal educational journeys were central to their reckoning with unequal schooling processes, their collective examination of Freire's work, and the

As Epistemologias Freireanas

extent to which Freire speaks to their gendered and raced positionalities and experiences within spaces of contemporary urban education in the U.S (and Brazil).

Boston students were longing for a more finely granulated and collectivized account of Freire and the community of collaborators who most likely were central to his worldwide success and creation of his iteration of critical pedagogy as a global epistemology that educators and students continue to learn about and implement today. Boston Seminar students questioned: who did Freire work and collaborate with to articulate and document his philosophy? On whose experiences is his philosophy hinged? What other social contradictions other than the oppressor-oppressed dichotomy does Freire make visible? How did (and do) Black, Brown, Indigenous, women, working poor, elder and young people benefit from his vision and action? On whose labor does Freire's legacy stand?

After the second synchronous Seminar meeting with their New York and Aracaju colleagues, Boston students acknowledged Freire's dedication to naming solutions to the problems of systemic oppression and subordination as direct results of hierarchized processes in education. They recognized his methodology of *conscientização* as a multi-faceted set of solutions. But Boston Seminarists wished that Freire had spent more time with naming and acknowledging people's specific racialized, classed, and gendered turmoils in their everyday lives and wondered, in what ways might Freire's methodology of *conscientização* have been different if he had, perhaps as a witness, dwelled in the details of people's difficult life circumstances that have always ignited their struggles against and liberation movements from white supremacist capitalist patriarchy?

In between synchronous dialogic online meetings, Boston students gathered many additional questions about Brazil's socio-political contexts which led to the rise and popularity of Freire. Moreover, they thought about the ways in which critical pedagogy is linked to and taken up today by Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPoC), women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) educators and thinkers in Brazil. For example, how do BIPoC students and teachers in Brazil read, support and identify with Freire's narrative? What are some of the push-backs and critiques that gender-fluid educators raise about Freire's philosophy of methodology? How do race and class overlap and feed into education policy and teaching and learning spaces in Brazil? In what ways does critical pedagogy-centered education in Brazil acknowledge and develop racial literacies among students? What presence do Indigenous communities maintain throughout the reproduction and legitimization of critical pedagogy in Brazil? Aside from Freire, who are other Brazilian

As Epistemologias Freireanas

critical pedagogy scholars the world should know about? Who are Brazil's Black and feminist critical pedagogy educators and scholars, then and now? Students raised similar questions about Freirean educators and activists in the U.S.

The transnationality of this project decentralized Freire's presence and voice in critical pedagogy as a globalized and hegemonic body of knowledge. In particular, Brazilian hosts and collaborators introduced a few critical Afro-Brazilian pedagogues and feminists who have been under-recognized (if at all) in the United States, particularly: Nilma Lino Gomes, Djamila Ribeiro, Beatriz Nascimento, Maria Carolina de Jesus, Conceição Evaristo, Sueli Carneiro, Carla Akotirene, Thula by Oliveria Pires, Petronilha Beatriz Gonçalves e Silva, Lélia Gonzales. Informed by a more racial consciousness of and curiosity about critical pedagogy, this final set of questions encouraged all four Boston students to pursue identifying some of the under-acknowledged BIPoC critical pedagogy scholars in the U.S. whose contributions to critical pedagogy as an epistemology are not as widely acknowledged (i.e. cited) and celebrated as Freire. As a result, students sought out Dr. Antonia Darder, Dr. Marvin Lynn, Dr. Janaki Natarajan, and Dr. Kimberly Parker, and reached out to each with an invitation to participate in a personal interview about their theoretical and experiential groundings, the intentionality of their praxes, and the future of Critical Pedagogy. Together, students developed the interview protocol to be used for each interview. At the end, each student compiled the results of her interview into an online digital picture book (application used: Storyjumper) and shared these with their colleagues in New York and Aracaju.

Similar to how bell hooks expressed her acquaintance with Freire's work, students "came to Freire thirsty, dying of thirst" because they, too, were looking for "how to break the hold of the status quo" (1994, p. 50) in their teaching and learning lifeworlds. The Boston group was critical of Freire throughout their intentional search for acknowledgement of race, racism, class struggle, and misogyny in his narratives and how these systems perpetuate people's subordination, exploitation and oppression. As a result, students were hesitant to accept the water from Freire's well to quench their thirst. They did not believe that his "work as water that contains some dirt" (hooks, 1994, p. 50) could satisfy their thirst. To be clear, their refusal to anchor their raced and gendered analyses of Freire's articulation of critical pedagogy do not amplify a final conclusion around the insufficiency of Freire's work; rather, students detailed the ways in which Freire's critical pedagogy falls short of being politically aligned with the struggles of women, and BiPoC women, specifically. And because Freire's critical pedagogy towards people's *conscientização* has not shaken loose the grounds of status

As Epistemologias Freireanas

quo, students argued that Paulo Freire's popularity among critical educators has remained unscathed (one student commented: "everyone loves Paulo").

Regarding the process experienced by the students from Boston, we can affirm, together with Freire (1967) that, to the extent that the ability to capture suggestions and give answers to them and the questions that arise from them, there is an increase in the "power of dialogue, not only with the other [...], but as your world [...]". In this way, "Your interests and concerns now extend to broader spheres than to the simple vital sphere" (p. 59)

TAKE-WITHS FROM THE COLLECTIVE SEMINAR EXPERIENCES

Despite the entire planning process for the execution of the project, the discussions, during the moments shared between the three groups, proved to be rich as the students brought their own experiences with and curiosities about the educational system of each country, generated dialogued classes, and brought opportunities for knowledge production. In this perspective, it is necessary, above all, and there goes one of these indispensable knowledges, which the learner, at the very beginning of his formative experience, assuming himself as the subject of his knowledge production, is definitely convinced that teaching is not transferring knowledge, but to create possibilities for its production or construction. (Freire, 2019, p. 24)

Therefore, being attentive to the singularities of the experiences of the individuals involved in the educational process is imperative in order to guide them to the understanding that their education also depends on the critical awareness of the contexts that surround them. Likewise, it is important to consider the points of tension. This awareness produces the possibility of offering an education that prepares them for the challenges of life. Seminar students identified questions about each other's' educational systems based on their previous, lived knowledge, and as a direct consequence of this action, their awareness process was expanded, as evidenced in the quotes below:

I have a curiosity regarding educational policy and research on inclusion related to students with disabilities, thinking about the infrastructure, the physical spaces, the access, the learning of these students, as well as the requirements and teacher training that teachers need to have. Is this something that is still being discussed a lot in the USA? Or is this a well solved problem?

(Tiradentes University Student 1)

All of my classes are co-taught. And at my school, we purposefully over-recruit for students with disabilities, because research shows that Black and Latino students are over-referred for special education services. So, part of the work that we do as a staff, which I think is very Freirean, is

As Epistemologias Freireanas

interrogate our own bias and leverage our capacity as individual teachers in co-taught rooms to give the most access and opportunity to often an overwhelmingly diverse group of needs.

(Molloy College Student 1)

We emphasize that the educational-critical practice presented by Freire (2019) is based on the individual's curiosity and autonomy of learning to name the world. For Freire, it is a factor that triggers the development of thoughts, becoming essential in one's integral formation process because "the exercise of curiosity calls on imagination, intuition, emotions, the ability to conjecture, to compare, in the search for profiling the object or finding its reason for being" (Freire, 2019, p. 85). Once knowing is the object of conscious criticism, acquired through a methodology, it will approach the object's cognoscibility, thus becoming an epistemological curiosity. As Freire (2019) explains,

For me, the difference and in the 'distance' between ingenuity and criticality, between the knowledge of pure experience and what results from methodically rigorous procedures, there is a rupture, but also an overcoming. The overcoming and not the rupture occurs to the extent that naive curiosity, while still being curiosity, on the contrary, continuing to be curiosity, is criticized. When criticizing himself, and consequently becoming, I allow myself to repeat, epistemological curiosity, methodically 'becoming more rigorous' in its approach to the object, connotes its findings reach greater accuracy. (pp. 32-33)

In this light, Freire (1967) understands the teacher-student relationship such that one learns with the other through engaging in a "dialogical process", which characterizes this relationship as a way for people to understand the world in a constant process of learning and reflecting on their conditions of being a participant in the world. The students in this project were exposed to texts written by Freire, as well as some that elaborated on his philosophy, with each class in its cultural contexts. In the synchronous classes, moments of dialogue were promoted, and they were driven by epistemological curiosity. In one of the sessions, one of the Brazilian students questioned whether the research of students immersed in the American contexts incorporated some aspects of Freirean thought. A U.S. student responded, "I want to explore the development of critical consciousness in a group of Latino students. As of now I'm looking into a participatory action research (PAR) model, so I want to do participatory action research with my students." (Molloy College Student 2). This answer led one of the students at Tiradentes University to express the following reflection:

It was interesting to know what each one is researching, with topics on educational research, equality in the school environment, critical pedagogy and how they value Paulo Freire. Another important aspect in the discussions is the relationship of how they work with Paulo Freire being a

As Epistemologias Freireanas

point of connection as we were studying the works of this author. I realized that we have a lot in common regarding Education.

(Tiradentes University Student 2)

For Saul and Saul (2016), educators who participate in teacher development training based on Freire's pedagogy have the possibility to build new knowledge, in addition to developing a significant or: socially aware? willingness to take up practices referenced in the concept of permanent training. With this they have an opportunity to realize that learning occurs in relationship with others and continuously throughout life. This process leads them to break with the myth of knowledge neutrality (status quo), thus transforming teachers and learners together into critical educators who curiously engage in searching for knowledge about themselves and the world, hence promoting social and epistemological encounters that can potentially lead them towards solidarity, reflection and action in a world that needs to be transformed and humanized.

In other words, by understanding social structures as devices of domination and violence (Freire, 1967) that not only surround them but that also impact people's daily lives in their cultural contexts, there is an opportunity to understand these structures more broadly. Assuming a position of self-reflection thus expands to a reflection about time and space without frontiers, yielding awareness that we live in globalized times. Such awareness emerges from a liberating education.

When carrying out the readings proposed by the disciplines, talking about them with the authors, and discussing about them with each other, driven by epistemological curiosity, the students involved in this project expanded their awareness of "the Other" when they realized that systemic forms of oppression operate in different layers, but many of them do not differ entirely from one society to another. As an example, issues of race and skin color between the two countries, the United States and Brazil, were often taken as the object of students' reflections, based on aspects that oppress them:

But I think if you go back to the conversations we had with the students in Brazil, they talked about that class and race were really the same grouping. So maybe he didn't feel he needed to specifically address race because by talking about the class, it was already implied. I don't know. I don't know what his thinking was, but they did indicate that basically that Blacks in Brazil were also the poorest in Brazil.

(UMass Boston Student 2)

Well, when I think of critical pedagogy, if you take the race factor out, which I know is hard to do, but I think if you empower youth, they can change the world. And that's how I see critical pedagogy, is to empower youth to give them a voice. And race may or may not be their personal

As Epistemologias Freireanas

motivator if what drives them is their lived experience. But when you look at the world that we're dealing in right now in this country, I don't care what color the child is, anything that anybody is willing to do to get involved and get this country in a better place than we are now I think is important and race is obviously a huge issue with what's problematic in this country.

(UMass Boston Student 3)

When taking the freedom to conjecture and compare, Seminar students exercised their critical thinking in a dialogical process of perception and reflection, without losing “[...] the recognition of the value of emotions, sensitivity, affectivity, intuition or divination.” (Freire, 2019, p. 45). Once the subject is aware of their participation in the world, they will have the ability to act, thus transforming their social environment and ceasing to be a spectator by being critical and active, with education being a primary factor in this process. Therefore, education constitutes an essential part so that the processes of social transformation are consolidated and acted upon under the perspective of guaranteeing the social rights of others (Costa & Accioly, 2017). By participating in a collaborative teaching and research initiative that involved doctoral students in transnational and practical learning, participants were provided with an experience that allowed them to explore Paulo Freire's philosophy and legacy in the USA and Brazil, while learning to conduct education research.

CONCLUSION: RESEARCHER REFLECTIONS

This transnational teaching-research project confirms the numerous ways that Freire's philosophy and pedagogy continues to speak to and hold the current historical moment, which is marked by the intensification of human and national crises that leave undeniable footprints on education systems around the world. The transnational-ness (multiple perspectives, not U.S.-centric, positionalities, lived histories driven) of this project also made us attentive to some of the limitations, or perhaps “blind spots,” of Freire's work.

While the critical pedagogue learns to and is prepared to see, trace, and name manifestations and instances of structural inequalities and the ways these are written into people's daily lives, it remains extremely difficult, at times emotionally and physically impossible to always bear witness to (i.e., to tell) the harm these inequalities can do and have certainly done, through the constant endangerment of economic disinvestment and political de-prioritization of people's lives. Witnessing human despair many times over again also does something to the witness's mind and body as they, too, absorb trauma and violence over long periods of time, in some cases a professional lifetime. What does Freire tell us about

As Epistemologias Freireanas

how critical pedagogy must also help us, researchers, process and struggle against the horrors in the world, and not limit our scholarly work to only name and document them? In what ways does, or must, bearing witness to people's lives under the reigns of injustice change, and require us to move our critically pedagogical practices from serving descriptive purposes to seeking collaborative curiosity, igniting critical inquiry, and participating in liberation? What are we to do with the physiological manifestations (our emotions of rage and love, and everything in between) that are also re/produced by this work?

The aspects we mentioned here both push against and corroborate that Freire's work for and contributions to social change remains current and relevant. This project, too, prioritized a linking together of researchers, educators and students through socially conscious transnational education (teaching and learning) by reading the word and the world through critical thinking and epistemological curiosity. Moving forward, we recognize there is much work to be done to position critical pedagogy in a future that is (finally) made aware of needing to be engaging via igniting solidarity work and direct action with Black Lives Matter around the world, #MeToo, people's rights to their land and sovereignty, including having access to running, potable water. This requires some deep introspection and difficult realizations about ways we have been complicit in perpetuating inequalities even while working to fight against them while subscribing to Freire's philosophy. Our work also speaks to the importance of transnational and local dialogic spaces for teaching and researching as we have been doing in this work together. The intersections of our worldviews and lifeworlds enables us to see how much more needs to be done to ferret out social injustice locally and globally, and sometimes in our own practices as researchers and educators. Yet, our work also offers hope and possibility as we see the power of epistemological curiosity and dialogue in bringing about strengthened critical consciousness. Looking forward, then, we need to take the next step toward direct action yielding real, material(ized) results.

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As Epistemologias Freireanas

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