Surmounting barriers to social justice in U.S. education through critical multicultural, counter-racist, "dialogical interconnecting strategies"

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This Presentation…..

- Is for teacher educators and others committed to preparing students as agents of educational and social equity;

- Offers ideas and concrete practices or "interconnecting dialogical strategies," framed within critical multicultural pedagogy, and drawing on the work of Paulo Freire, Sonia Nieto, and Michel Foucault.

BACKGROUND

- We need to challenge "the necrophilic grip of hegemonic schooling" (Darder, 2015, p. 82)

The current reality in many US schools is a pedagogy of control & surveillance, high stakes testing, no tolerance policies & racism

- A competitive, individualistic, schooling environment

- Too many students are highly controlled, subjected to a basics/drill-and-skill/ teach-to-the-test-curriculum

- Curriculum promotes categorization, standardization, surveillance, cultural, ethnic and linguistic segregation and Whiteness (white privilege & white supremacy) ***

- Emphasis on neo-colonial, monocultural, monolinguistic, Eurocentric and hegemonic curriculum.

# Far from Paulo's Freire's notion of an Emancipatory, Humanistic Pedagogy for Critical Consciousness…..
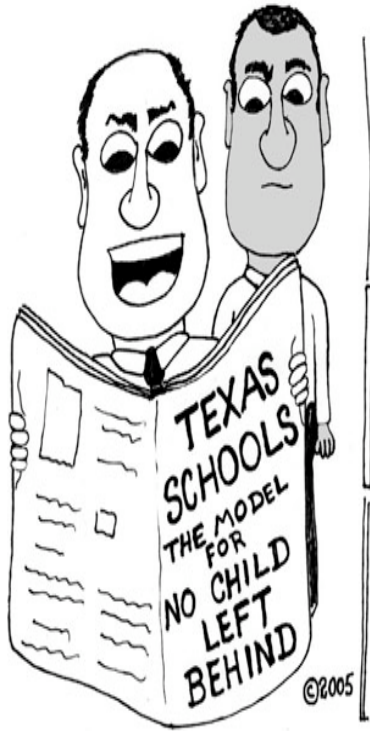
"That's got to be a lot like using Enron as the model for the business community!"

- We spend more on wars and prisons, than on health care or education.
- One half of our taxes go to the military budget, including the school- to-prison pipeline (Alexander, 2010).
- Schools have been re-segregated, and are underfunded, and overcrowded.
- California has the most diverse student population, and the most segregated schools; Minnesota's schools with high percentages of Black, Latino and Native students are doing far worse than largely white schools.

Addressing this context: Preparing teachers to enact "interconnecting dialogical strategies," framed within critical multicultural pedagogy

Model for Developing Critical Cultural Consciousness

Self

Community

School

Wider Society

Global Community
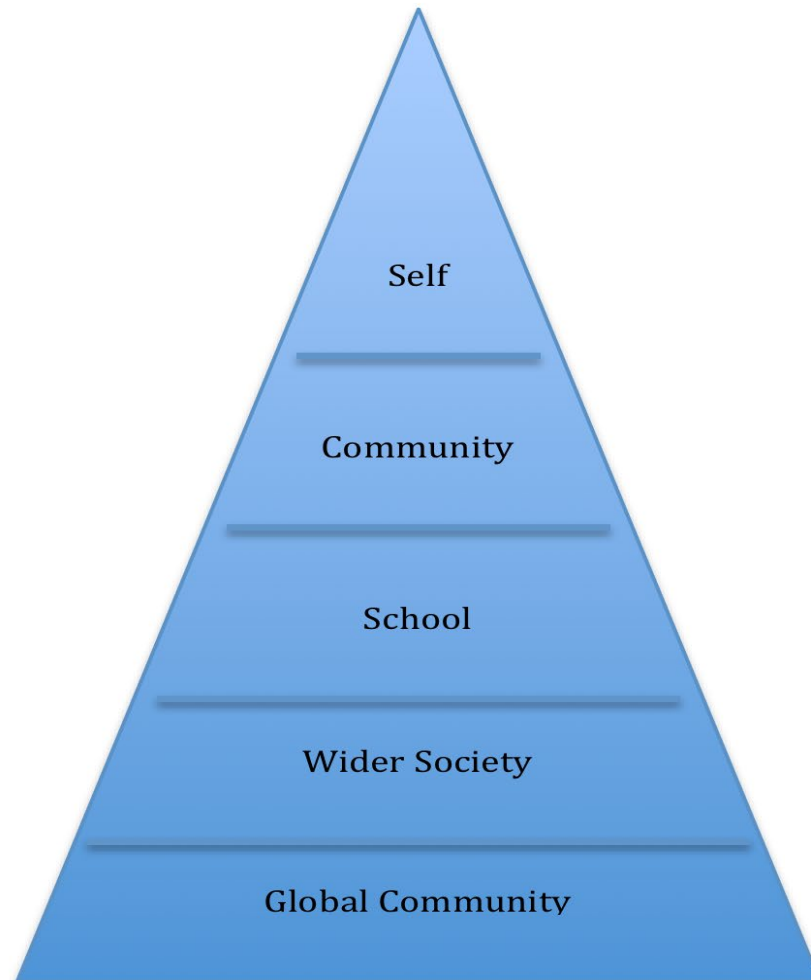
How Can We Gain More Insights Into Our Identities, And How We Think, Feel, Believe And Act In The World?

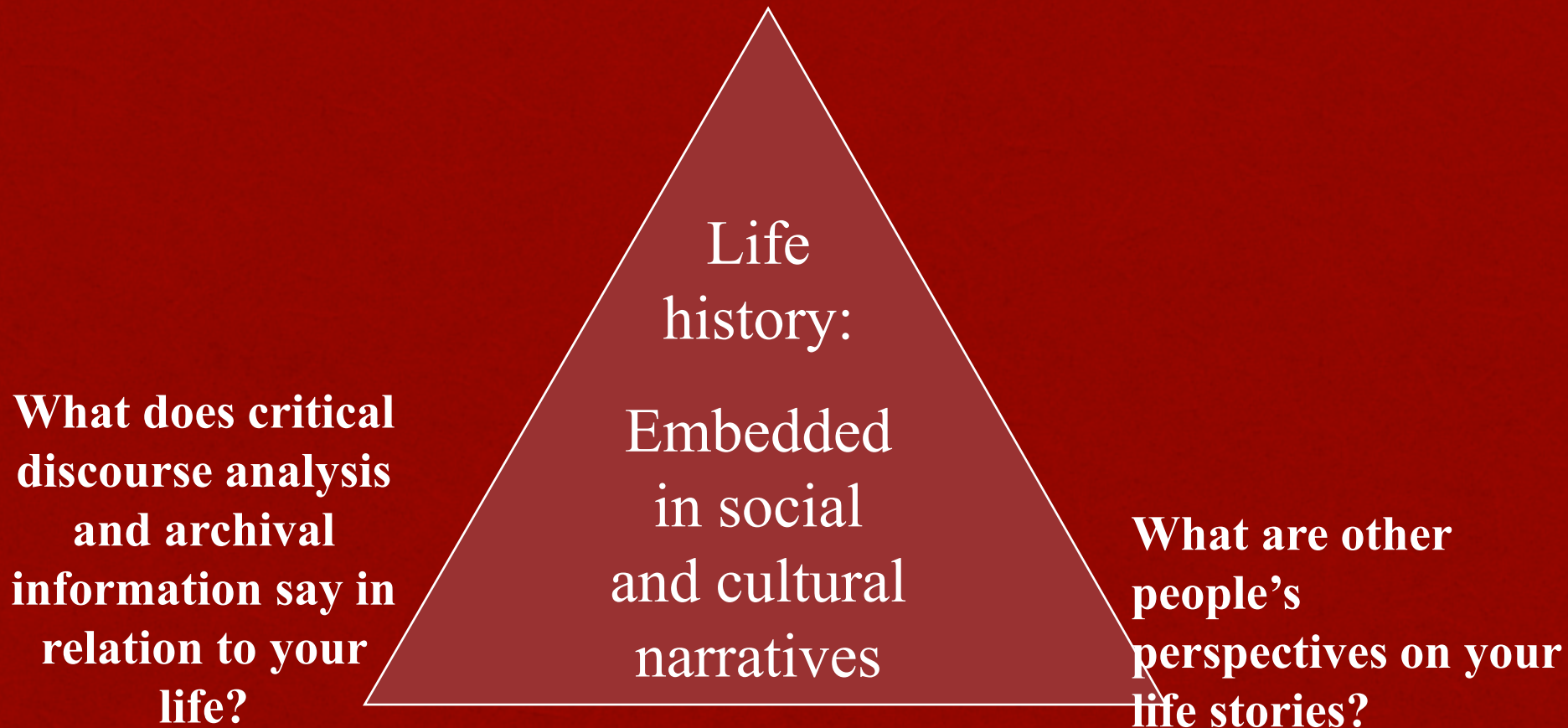- **Where does your identity come from?**

1. The Mask-Focus on Self:

- According to Freire, emancipation arises out of a collective experience; we develop consciousness as we engage in critical pedagogical interactions with others in the world.

- The Mask is **a dialogical interconnecting strategy** asks us to understand better how we have been "designed" as cultural beings during our interactions others early on as well as much later in our lives.

- In the presence of her peers, the pre-service teacher first describes the images and symbols she has placed on the outside of her mask to reflect how she believes others see her. She then describes the images and symbols she has placed on the inside of her mask to reflect how she sees herself.

- Encouraging feedback from her peers, the pre-service teacher then reflects on the dissonance that may or may not exist between the inside and outside of her mask, and what this says about the power of dominant narratives to persuade people to express themselves other than they see themselves, at least in public or dominant institutional spheres.

- Finally, in a dialogical context, the pre-service teacher, reflects on the nature of these dominant narratives, associated with culture, "race," social class, and gender, how they have impacted her identity, and how they given her privilege and/or disadvantage.

E.G. TRANSFORMING THE SELF THROUGH LIFE HISTORIES

What are your life stories as you see them?

Life history:

Embedded in social and cultural narratives

What does critical discourse analysis and archival information say in relation to your life?

What are other people's perspectives on your life stories?

WHAT ROLE DO RACE, RACISM AND WHITENESS PLAY IN HOW WE EXPERIENCE AND INTERPRET PEOPLE AND EVENTS?

- What about social class (economic, social and educational status)?

- What about gender?

- Our sexual preferences?

- Language?

- Whether or not we experience a disability?
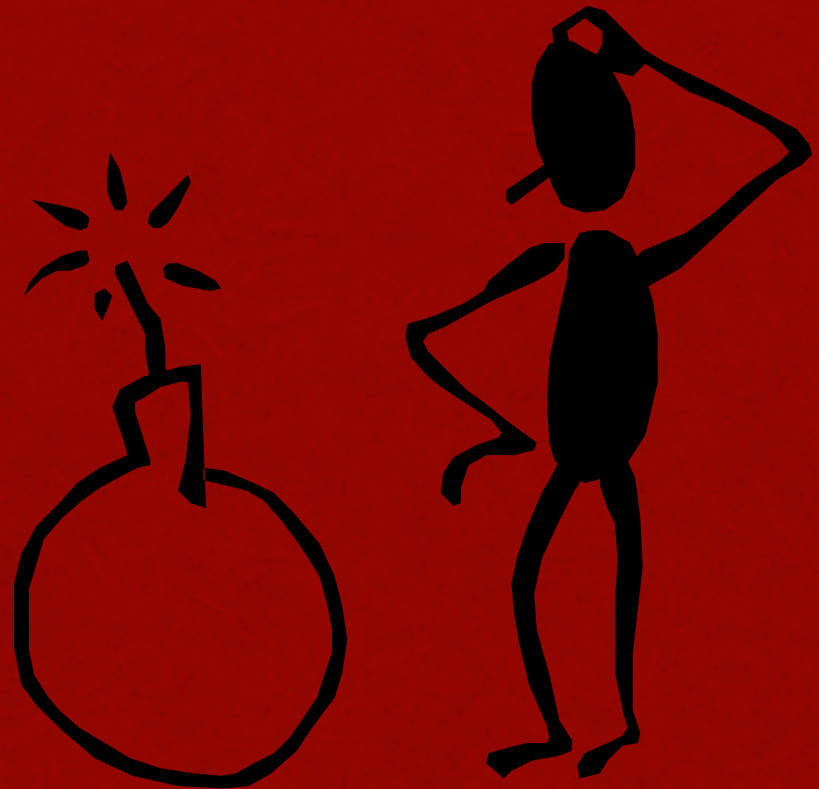
# 2. Literature: Focus on self in relation to students

- Education as a communal and reciprocal process (Freire in Darder, 2015).

- Using literature grounded in lived experience to interrupt stereotypes by exposing monocultural students to the similarities and differences between their lives and those of others they rarely encounter.

- Using these texts laced with emotion and interest to encourage voice, dialogue, and critical consciousness.

3. QUESTION MODEL

1. (Reproductive/hegemonic) How do we fix students so they can be successful in the existing system?

2. (Transformative) How do we transform the schooling system so that students can feel invited and included to engage in critical educational practices for social justice?

3. (Counter-hegemonic) What are the stories that persuade students & faculty to NOT question the inequities in the educational system/to accept the status quo?
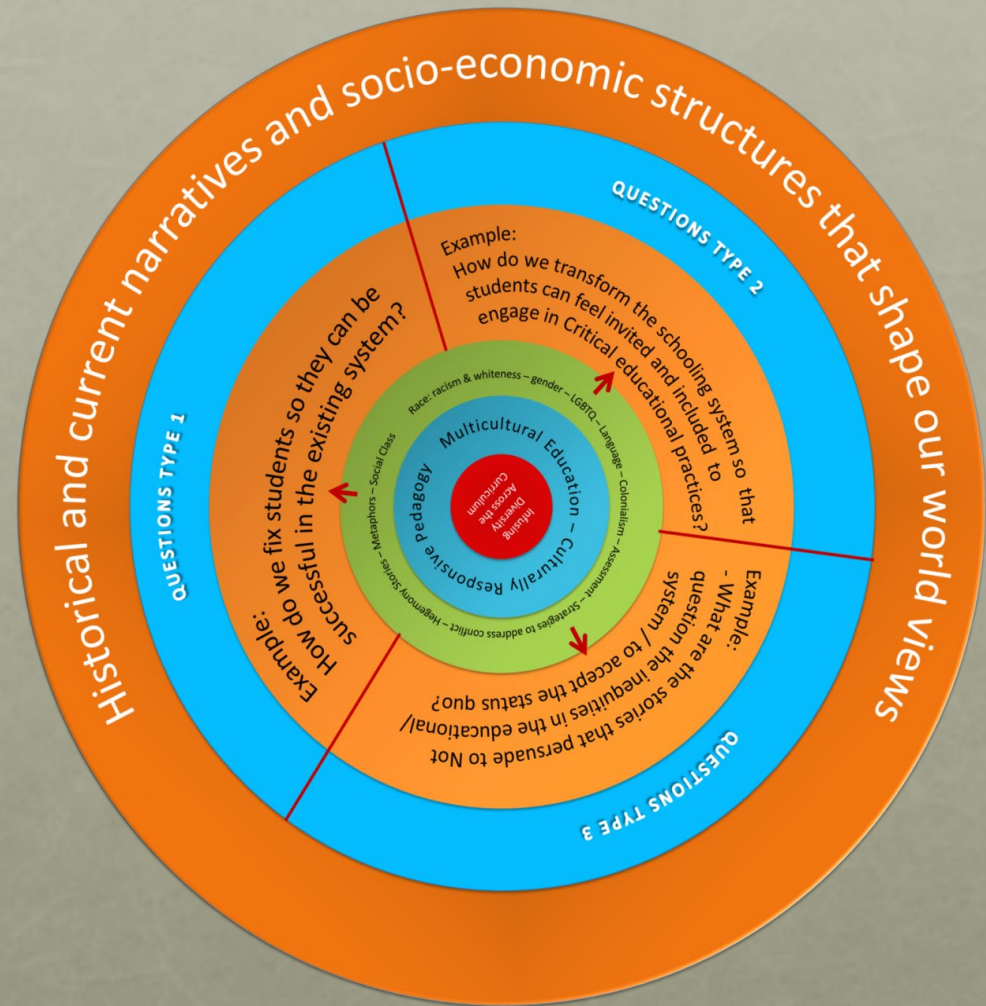
4. Research: Focus on the communities of students and school

- Freire argues that we must develop epistemological curiosity that leads us to active and rigorous investigation of our world.

- In this activity, students research "how multiculturalism is (and is not) implemented in their cross-cultural field sites" by engaging in detailed observation of classrooms and school and interviewing teachers and other school personnel."

- They also research a personal question, and research an article to help them make sense of their findings.

- They map their data onto a map created from Sonia Nieto's (1994) typology of multiculturalism (conservative to critical and emancipatory), and then write a paper from this map.

- The project gives them the opportunity to problematize practice in an ethnically diverse school, to question existing standards and for what and in whose interests these standards were constructed (Freire, 1995), and to address their own educational biases and concerns.

How does standardization impact what I see as normal in school?
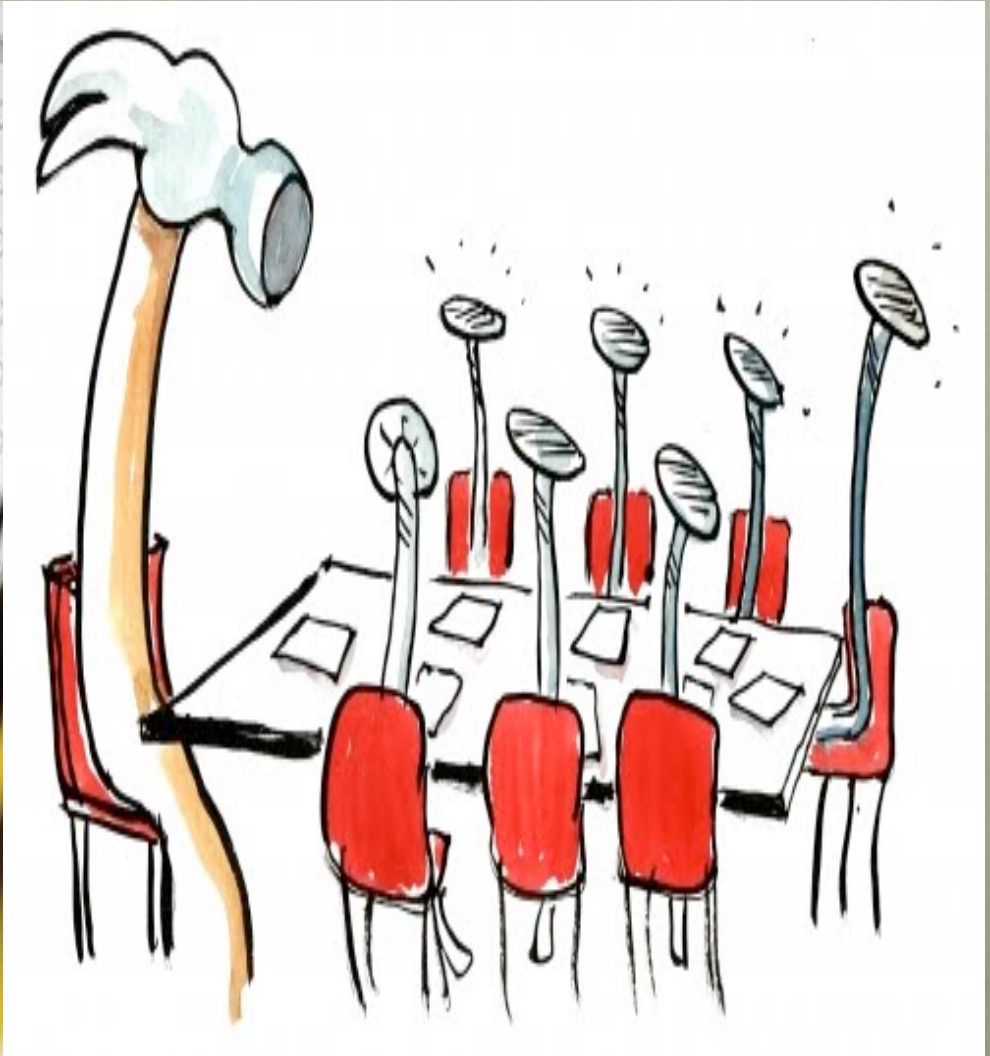
How does the structure of my school contribute to the social control of students?

How is cultural whiteness represented in the classroom?

- **The Picture Perfect Class defined by Whiteness...............**

- **Hands together, eyes forward, desks straight—"model" students**

5. Strategic Interaction: Focus on problematizing dominant, hegemonic, educational narratives

- Democracy is an active, collective human project

- "Apprenticeship Democracy"

- "Critical pedagogy is intentionality towards the world" (Davis, 1981) and may serve as a third space in which apprenticeship democracy is nurtured.

- Strategic Interaction is a critical pedagogical process, based on the Native (American) model of teaching with a circle (Christensen, 2004), and the Quaker model of arriving at solutions by consensus.

- Students sit in a circle and rise when moved to do so to respond to critical questions.

- They "experience breakthroughs that emerge from their rethinking historical and contemporary conditions" (Darder, p.92).

6. Study Abroad: Focus on the communities of students and school in global context

- Study Abroad involves exploring the origins of racism and inequality in the country that colonized and introduced slavery to North America, and were the basis for the wealth of current elites, oligarchs and corporations in both countries.

- Students are paired with a high school student from a very different ethnic background, learn about their student's and their student's family's journey to the U.K, think critically about how educational practices and school structure at a U.K. school reproduce inequities, and visit sites related to slavery and colonialism in England and Paris – including a "slave walk" in Bristol.

7. Educulturalism: Focus on the communities of students and school

- "Educulturalism" is the principle that art and music opens us up to the possibility of engaging with people and issues that cause us discomfort (http:www.educulturalfoundation.org).

- Educultural activities include classroom activities (The Mask is one of them!), and poignant student presentations about their experiences in higher education interspersed with live music, drag shows and choir renditions of amongst other song during benefit for *The Hegemony Project* and the *Breaking Barriers Conference.*

- ***The Hegemony Project** (http://www.thehegemonyproject.org) is* an online community of researchers working together to explore ways to transform education into critical and social action and learn about our respective social justice efforts.

Breaking Barriers Model

CONCLUSION

- **There is a huge need for all of us to surmount barriers to social justice in U.S. education through critical multicultural, counter-racist, "dialogical interconnecting strategies"**

- These strategies need to be offered in for teacher educator professional development

- They include our need to
  - recognize our personal and institutional biases and stereotypes;
  - recognize how we have been shaped by hegemonic discourses;
  - develop research strategies that will help us to better understand the types of the narratives and school practices and structures that we consider normal but reproduce inequities;
  - become better aware of the questions we ask since different kinds of questions lead to related responses
  - ask critical questions and engage in critical practices that will lead to social action for social justice
  - Develop **"dialogical interconnecting strategies" that will support our students and colleagues into becoming social justice oriented, critical multicultural pedagogues**