RESEARCHING CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS:
THE TRANSGRESSION OF A RADICAL EDUCATOR
ACROSS THREE CONTINENTS

by

Marion Thomson

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Graduate Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

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This study addresses the topic of class consciousness and the radical educator. Using the theory of revolutionary critical pedagogy and Marxist humanism I examine the impact of formative experience and class consciousness on my own radical praxis across three continents.

The methodology of auto/biography is used to interrogate my own life history. I excavate my own formative experience in Scotland, Canada and my radical praxis as a human rights educator in Ghana West Africa. The study is particularly interested in the possibility of a radical educator transgressing across race, whiteness and gender while working in Ghana, West Africa.

Chapter One begins by discussing the theory of revolutionary critical pedagogy, Marxist humanism and theories of the self. Chapter Two assesses the methodology of auto/biography, research methods and an introduction to formative experience. Chapter Three, Four and Five contain excavation sites from Scotland, Canada and Ghana with accompanying analysis. Chapter Six concludes with a summary of research findings.
Acknowledgements

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On Formative Experience and Praxis

Introduction

Part One: On Formative Experience

The Importance of Formative Experience and Class Consciousness

Historical Memory and Class Consciousness

A Working Class Epistemology: Socialism and Marxist Humanism

Finding Theory and Organic Intellectuals

Part Two: On Radical Praxis

A Pedagogy Born in Struggle and Freedom

Class Consciousness and Solidarity: Transgression as a Human Being, and Socialist Educator

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An auto/biography of the collective self

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CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy, Class Consciousness, Marxist Humanism, and the Collective Self

Introduction

My thesis reflects upon the development of my own class consciousness through an excavation of the collective self in Scotland, Canada, and Ghana, West Africa. The excavation begins in memories of childhood and community and culminates in a popular education project in Ghana during 1996-2002. I want to examine how my own formative experience interacting with various social contexts, systems, and relationships was shaped into an anti-capitalist consciousness. The shaping of my class consciousness, agency, collective self, and role as a radical educator is also a central concern. I examine this relationship through the lenses of revolutionary critical pedagogy, class consciousness, anti-racism, gender, and critical whiteness theory.

I interrogate my own formative experience and work as a radical educator (working from a revolutionary critical pedagogical perspective) through the methodology of a collective auto/biography and an excavation of the collective self. This work examines my own agency and coming to class and gender consciousness through my struggles at a young age. It will then examine my developing consciousness through race in later years owing to social, geographical and historical context.

My collective self is a culmination of relations in and through the structures of capitalism, in society’s institutions, in and through family memories, in social action and in and
through my work, and relations as a radical educator. My becoming through resistance to capital and a Marxist humanism is also a recurring theme in this thesis.

My research questions reflect on a radical educator’s class consciousness, formative experience and how this influences transgression and practice through a philosophy of praxis. The primary question is:

1. How did my formative experience open me up to transgression as a radical educator?

Secondary questions are:

2. How did my formative experience inform my class consciousness and socialist vision?

3. What does this class conscious focus bring to my work across race, class, and gender in Ghana, and to revolutionary critical pedagogy more generally?

I believe my own formative experience in a working class Scottish community with a rich history and community culture influenced my work, political perspective, and philosophical alignment as a radical educator. The theory of revolutionary critical pedagogy affirmed my political and social perspective providing a backdrop for my thesis study. My thesis is a highly political subject deriving from my own evolution to class consciousness (and subsequently to gender and an anti-racist consciousness). My subsequent role as a radical educator is a continuation of a Marxist humanism - to share my humanity with others and together to build a more human ‘just and equal’ world against capital. This specific journey led me to West Africa, where I had an opportunity to work in class solidarity with Africans across and against race and whiteness, creating a collective and human spirit that has enriched my life and soul. This journey strengthened my dedication to commit white suicide and align my humanity with dispossessed
and racialized communities (McLaren & Munoz, 2005b). I reflect on my evolution of how and why I became involved as a radical educator in Ghana through and in my struggle to create a critical, class conscious response to racism.

I begin my thesis study discussing the theory of revolutionary critical pedagogy and how it’s pertinent to my research. Afterwards I discuss the research problem and how I came to study this particular set of questions. I reviewed literature that illuminates my research questions and raises other questions associated with current theory and my area of research. Chapter Two elaborates on research methodology including auto/biography, life history and the investigation of the collective self through an adaptation of the method of currere and auto-ethnographic exercises. My use of auto/biography has also been adapted to suit my excavation as a sociological auto/biography and life history. I look at ways my own agency and formative experience were formed through society’s structures and the social relations of capital. The use of excavation has been adapted from a post structuralist method, using the terminology of a construction site (Fine, 2000). In this sense I built my data and theory by extracting, dissecting, and analyzing my own history and experience from a Marxist theoretical perspective. Chapter Three includes elements of my own autobiographical data from Scotland examining my own formative experience and excavation sites relating to childhood, work life, education, and working class culture. Chapter Four follows my life experiences and coming to consciousness through work life, theory, social and political activism in Canada and Britain. Chapter Five focuses on my radical education practice in Ghana and my own transgression across race, class and gender with and through learners. Chapter Six discusses major findings of my thesis and contributions to class consciousness, human rights education and revolutionary critical pedagogy through a Marxist humanist lens.
Chapter One begins a discussion on the main tenets of revolutionary critical pedagogy grounded in the critical theory of Marx (1846, 1858, 1888); Gramsci (1971) and Freire (1972). Education is viewed as a political entity centred on the social relations of capitalism and reflecting systemic oppression of race, gender and class oppression in the wider society. As my thesis question deals with my own praxis in Ghana it is necessary to discuss racism, white supremacy and class theory on my work as a radical educator and through excavating my own formative experience. I believe my ability to transgress from a class conscious praxis is also a result of a wider definition of self, a collective self seeking my own and others freedom as an unfinished being. Paulo Freire’s (1998) work is featured in this inquiry alongside more liberal notions of the individual self and post structural perspectives of multiple selves. It is also necessary to engage in a preliminary discussion of what it is to be human, as a human being in capitalism. Is it possible? I introduce the main theory of a Marxist humanism which guides revolutionary critical pedagogy and also later surfaces in my discussion of a critical human rights education and praxis which evolved in my work as a radical educator in Ghana.

\textit{Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy}

As a prerequisite to this chapter it is useful to situate revolutionary critical pedagogy within the wider theories of adult education and critical pedagogy.

\textit{Definitions of Adult Learning}

\textit{Critical pedagogy}

There are many different types of critical pedagogies ranging from more liberal forms of critical pedagogy to radical critical pedagogy There is critical pedagogy based in the academy while other theorists emphasize a critical pedagogy which occurs between teachers and students.
in the classroom. Some theorists reject class struggle and centre studies on critical
multiculturalism or critical race theory. Another field of critical educators rely on popular
education and its roots in Latin America. The term critical aligns the form with a critique of the
traditional status quo and relations of power through differing lenses (Brookfield, 2005;
McLaren, 2006).

**Popular education**

Popular education theory primarily stems from the writings of Freire and an education for
the masses of ‘popular’ poor people rooted in their world and interests. It is an education which
highlights a reading of the world, through literacy and social justice education. The ultimate aim
is social change, and for Freire this was rooted in socialism and liberation theology.

Consequently, there are many interpretations and practices of Freire’s work. Some
practitioners focus on popular methods of education as a bag of tools minus a political
component. Also, there are popular educators who do not necessarily focus on the poor as the
learner group (Crowther, Martin, & Shaw, 1999; Kane, 2001).

**Transformative learning**

Transformative learning has many differing interpretations. Based on the work of
Mezirow (1978) the field has grown to include adult educators from varying traditions. The
underlying theme throughout is a shift in consciousness among learners ranging from critical
reflection on an individual or a collective basis. Learning is a process to alter our way of being in
the world. It is a shift which realizes our locations intertwine and nurtures our respect for other
life forms and the environment. Transformative learning realizes awareness of our bodies and
promotes alternative versions for living through social justice, peace and personal joy
(O'Sullivan, 2002; Schugurensky, 2002).

**Adult education**
In adult education there are both liberal and radical traditions. A liberal focus concerns ideas of learning for pleasure, and lifelong learning focused on individual learning and personal growth. This tendency is largely based in the context of middle class assumptions and value systems devoid of working class, women’s or racialized perspectives (Thompson, 1995).

The radical education perspective is based on a social justice paradigm, aimed at learning with a social purpose to transform relations of power. This has been described as ‘really useful knowledge’ for working class communities and oppressed groups to collectively learn and act to change society (Johnson, 1979; Thompson, 1995).

**Revolutionary critical pedagogy**
Revolutionary critical pedagogy is based in an unequivocal revolutionary perspective against capitalism distinguishing its roots from more domesticated forms of critical pedagogy. The key concepts of imperialism, neo liberalism and capitalism are the basis of critique centred on Marxist theory. The vision is socialist separating revolutionary theory from a social justice paradigm which revolves around redistribution of wealth without fundamentally changing the social relations of production and the capital labour relation. Pedagogy is dialogic based in anti-capitalist critique. It is overtly political and collective (McLaren, 2006).

**Dehumanization and Capitalism**
Revolutionary critical pedagogy claims people are separated from their ability to become *human* in a capitalist society that is founded on inequality, violence, and oppression. Emphasis is
placed on destruction of class society and the capital labour relation to change this. Workers need to rekindle relations of solidarity with others as the exploitative social relations of capitalism prevent unity across racialized and gendered class relations, capitalizing on difference. People are alienated from their existence to create as their labour power creates value for someone else, the dominant class (Allman, 1999; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005a). Power relations and a dominant ideology commodify and alienate human existence in market relations. As Gindin and Panitch (2000) comment “capitalism is the wrong dream”.

Instead of worshipping individual rights tied to the needs of the market and exchange, an alternative pedagogy supports collective views of rights and responsibilities advancing a more humane and caring society (Allman, 2001). My work in human rights education using radical education methods, discussed in Chapter Five, provided opportunities to create this culture and pedagogy. Revolutionary critical pedagogy is a radical theory dedicated to the creation of educational spaces that critique forces of oppression and inequality while exposing capitalism’s heart as dialectically opposed to humanization (McLaren, 2006). These spaces need to expose the exploitation of the capital labour relation and counter this tendency by nurturing new social and human relations (Allman, 2001).

**The Capital-Labour Contradiction and a Worker’s Pedagogy**

The historical link between capital and labour reflects the motor of history as one of exploitation and class struggle (Marx & Engels, 1888). Marxism and class analysis is the central theory of political economy guiding revolutionary critical pedagogy. My political worldview has evolved with Marxist theory providing the political, economic and social theory to explain inequality and the capital system as I perceived and experienced it in Scotland. Marxism also developed my political commitment and guide to activism in later years. Revolutionary Critical
Pedagogy was also a natural fit from family and community socialization where an alternative socialist worldview influenced a working class political culture and collective memory in Fife’s coalfields during the period between the two world wars. This memory lodged in my family’s critical consciousness was a response to capitalist oppression, a living memory shared and passed onto me. Family oral history was a powerful tool in forming my class consciousness, collective self and critical identity. Chapter Three investigates my formative experience and the influence of family and community on my own social and political development in later years. It is my belief that I was socialized to be critically and politically aware, to be class conscious.

The internal contradiction of capitalism between production and exchange of goods ensures the working class are divorced from the means of production and their interests are diametrically opposed to those of the owners of the means of production, the capitalist class (Marx & Engels, 1846). Henceforth the need to maintain a hegemonic grip on a gendered, racialized working class unable to politically organize around class is a major task of capital to maintain its lifespan.

Capital needs to continue, reproduce and differentiate gendered and racialized social relations as a necessary exploitative and divisive way of appropriating an increasing rate of profit (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005a). The founding focus of Marx’s work was to investigate the relationship between a political economy of capital and labour which dialectically inverts the possibility of revolutionary praxis towards a socialist society (Marx, 1858). Likewise, a main impetus of revolutionary critical pedagogy is to expose the internal contradictions of capitalism through building a critical class conscious educational and political movement of working class communities. Central to this theory are the leadership and formation of organic intellectuals (Gramsci, 1971, McLaren et al., 2005b). Gramsci’s theory is explored later in this chapter.
My preceding Scottish research (Thomson, 1992) found political parties engaged working class communities through an interrogating praxis (also see Jim Crowther, 1999; Ian MacDougall, 1981, Stuart MacIntyre, 1980). These parties forged an educational movement of community organic intellectuals successful in organizing against capital and the local gentry. Working class communities learned from and in political action creating a critical culture and class consciousness. Throughout my study I refer to my Master’s thesis as this research provided examples of a radical movement of working class struggle which influenced my own development. It highlighted how my own class consciousness and radical praxis was activated in and through these community memories during my Master’s research. How did this experience become critical theory and educational practice years after?

As a cautionary note to focusing on social identities alone, Allman (2001) explains the need to focus on the exploitative relation itself (capitalism) rather than the result of the relation itself (identity politics). The focus on social identities is useful to examine ways power relations work in society through ideology, language and culture. Post modernism provides opportunities to question the ways social power is manifest in our everyday lives and relationships. However, a historical and materialist analysis of the essence of inequality within capitalism is also helpful.

Allman cites examples in history whereby organic intellectuals struggled against class exploitation, dehumanization, racism, and gender oppression crossing the threshold of consciousness and praxis fulfilling their historic destiny “why throughout history some human beings have critically intervened to challenge and change history” (2001, p. 3). My focus on race and gender intersects with class analysis flowing from the capitalist mode of production (Arnot, 2002). It is the labour relation within the capitalist mode of production itself, which creates gender and racial oppression and identity (Davis, 1990; McLaren & Munoz, 2005b).
**Marx, Gramsci and Freire and Their Relation to Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy**


Karl Marx and his theory of political economy and capitalism set the stage for Antonio Gramsci and his theory on proletarian culture, hegemony and need for political, educational and agitational work among the Italian working class during the 1930s. Gramsci (1971) and Lenin (1961) provide Marxist theory with the complexity of working class organization, culture and the dynamics of forming and engaging revolutionary working class political parties during the 20th century. Lenin learnt from his own philosophy of praxis building the first socialist society based on Marxism. He was paramount in the preparatory struggle building a political and educational movement among the working people and peasantry of Russia before seizing revolutionary power (Holst, 2010).

Gramsci learnt from his own political experience organizing as a communist in the factory council movement in Italy. He was influential as a leading executive member of the Italian Communist Party immersed in political struggle against the fascist movement. A major thrust of this work centred in Turin organizing factory workers. Worker’s committees engaged in
political, educational and cultural work in a counter hegemonic struggle. These embryonic cells alikened to Soviets in pre-revolutionary Russia, offered opportunities to engage in political discussion and critique whilst building skills in organizing against capital hegemony, to build socialism (Holst, 2010; Mayo, 1999).

My Master’s thesis studied a similar historical context where organic intellectuals in Fife were by-products of John Mc Lean’s socialist labour college in Glasgow, attending classes in Marxist theory as community political activists (MacDougall, 1981). John Mc Lean was a leader of the Clydeside shop stewards movement among Glasgow shipyard workers, similar to the Gramscian factory council movement in Turin. Mc Lean, also a revolutionary socialist, believed in the alliance of political, educational and cultural work among workers building a socialist movement against capital before a full scale revolution (also see Kenefick, 2007; MacIntyre, 1980). Communist and socialist parties led this movement among Fife miners creating pit committees in the collieries. In Turin and Fife these workers movements were also heavily influenced by the third international of communist parties based in Moscow (Holst 2010; MacDougall 1981).

Paulo Freire (1972) created a philosophy and pedagogy of education which is based in the liberation of Brazil’s working class and peasant communities against the forces of class domination and imperialism. Freire made sense to me as I struggled with understanding an education that dealt with re-reading the world, understanding colonialism, the colonized mind and how the oppressed internalize their oppression (also see Cabral, 1970; Fanon, 1965; Memmi, 1967). Freire included an educational humanist pedagogy encouraging conscientization and a pedagogy of freedom with the oppressed of the world.
Revolutionary critical pedagogy is grounded in a historical and materialist questioning of our present society’s ability to provide the social, cultural, educational and human necessities to fulfill our lives. Marx and Engels believed all societies are based on the premise “that the production of the means to support human life and next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structures” (Engels, 1892/1977, p. 141). In revolutionary critical pedagogy human history is discussed as class history and how racial, ethnic, and gendered relations have been conditioned and experienced according to the dialectic of class struggle. Learning focuses on an examination of dominant ideology and systemic inequality which prevent our humanity from becoming (Scatamburlo D’Annibale, 2009).

During my formative years I was raised to question things and not to believe everything I was told by the mass media, at school and also from politicians, to develop critical thought. However, it was my entry into further education as an adult where I found theory to explain my world, my gut feelings of inequality and to develop a counter ideology. During Chapter Four I explore finding theory and further education in my transformative journey as a radical educator and organic intellectual.

*Consciousness, humanity and social change*

Marx and Engels (1846) discuss how capitalist relations are viewed as natural creating a major barrier to the development of workers class consciousness. This is experienced as an ontological process whereby the ability of human beings to be human is prevented (see discussion in pp. 38-41). Humanity is based on the ability of human beings to labour and create while creating a consciousness which can liberate humankind from a society according to wants, where inequality and economic power ensures only a few benefit from capital. Capitalism has evolved with the capacity and ability to produce the technical and scientific base to provide for
all humanity to a society according to needs (Marx & Engels, 1846). However, it cannot provide
the necessary social relations of production to accomplish this. Capitalism needs capital and
labour in opposing relationships to survive, sustaining class antagonism and dehumanization
inadvertently. In capitalism the need to labour for someone else, the capitalist class prevents the
working classes freedom to create and control the products of their own labour, fetishizing
human labour into a commodity (McLaren, 2000). Therefore, the capital-labour relationship
prevents humanity being realized by striving to maintain control over the worker’s being and
economic power. The capitalist system itself stands diametrically opposed to humanity. Marx
and Engels (1888) believed a new society based on socialism is the only basis for these new
social relations to be created.

Capitalism creates an alienated self as workers become separated from the creative
process of their labour - as another object in the production process. In a sense workers become
things - to create the wealth and profit for others. As a result workers are not consciously in the
world living to their full potential (Marx, 1858). Relations of production and reproduction create
feelings of alienation and define relations between people as individuals and groups (the sexual,
racial and global division of labour). Racism and sexism become systems and ideologies of
oppression which separate and oppress social identities negating people’s humanity (Allman,
2001). Through critical education projects alienation is examined not as an individual problem
but as a social phenomenon. Oppressive relations are unveiled and reflective spaces nurture
people’s ability to be in their world as critically conscious human beings. (This aspect of being
and the formation of a collective self is addressed later in this chapter).

Visioning how to build a socialist society is therefore an important element in
revolutionary critical pedagogy. Developing the necessary learning relationships to achieve and
role model this change also becomes a pedagogical issue in Freire and Gramsci’s theory. In my role as a radical educator I have designed educational spaces and curriculum whereby learners explore how to build an alternative society based on critical humanist principles and by a living of collective human rights principles and ethics. I believe I was able to internalize and model these principles as a way of life, encouraging learners to cross borders, to transgress (Freire, 1998; Giroux, 2005; hooks, 1994). Chapter Five explores this process through my radical praxis designing a human rights education program in Ghana with Action for Young People, (AYP). In Chapter Six I summarize and theoretically connect Marxist humanism, class consciousness, human rights education and critical revolutionary pedagogy from my excavation work in this thesis.

Antonio Gramsci and His Influence on Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy:

Building an Alternative Culture

Gramsci’s ideas (1971) centred on a historical materialist analysis of capitalism. In an effort to launch this critique Gramsci focused on developing an alternative culture rooted in a workers proletarian hegemony. Counter cultural work was necessary before the revolution and a priority of political, agitational, and educational work. Gramsci highlighted the need for a cadre of class conscious workers to be with the people as organic intellectuals exposing the dynamics of capitalism.

Organic intellectuals work to create and encourage alternative sources of power whereby working people experience democratic governance, as in the factory council movement in Turin discussed earlier. Cultural and educational work has more impact when workers also use their learning to build new relationships, sharing power, through organizing and in social and political action. Workers learn organizational and political skills while building new and more equitable
forms of governance (Gramsci also discussed the phenomenon of organic intellectuals in every class but working class intellectuals are more likely to form a dialectic unity with the people while acting as counter hegemonic agents against capitalism). Gramsci believed local forms of power wherever possible can build a counter hegemonic movement explained as a war of position and movement at specific stages of societal development (Mayo, 2010).

_A culture of agency_

Dominant ideology succeeds in reinforcing the hierarchy of knowledge, culture, and expertise in society through a technical division of labour and role of classical theory and culture. The dominant worldview throughout history has been through the ideas of primarily white European elite males reflecting bourgeois culture in the interests of maintaining economic, social, and political power (McLaren & Munoz, 2005b). These ideas limit working class subjectivity affecting their agency and ability to confront capital. Gramsci supported a proletarian cultural movement nurturing the role of the people to create their own cultural forms and critical consciousness, while also building collective sources of political and social power. A proletarian cultural movement was paramount to acknowledge the epistemology of workers, to humanize and collectivize their experience whilst building a counter hegemony for a future socialist society. This was also to be accompanied by political support and leadership of organic intellectuals and the progressive organs of the revolutionary socialist and communist party in a united front, or workers historical bloc (Gramsci, 1971; Holst, 2010; Mayo, 2004, 2010).

It was crucial to work against common sense notions which reflect everyday experience reinforcing dominant and oppressive ideologies estranged from workers humanity. The ideology of capitalism works against working class solidarity in divisive oppressive ways reinforcing racism, sexism and white supremacy infiltrating working class consciousness. However
sometimes common sense can accommodate and at times resist capital relations. Gramsci highlights the dialectical nature of common sense and consent of workers (Hill, 2010). Allman discusses Gramsci’s ideas that all people are philosophers in that they hold some conceptions of the world. However common sense is fragmented due to the limitations and contradictions of our lived relations. Ideologies (in the bad sense) may draw upon these fragments offering partial explanations, but they do so with a coherence capable of organizing people and cementing the hegemony of a particular group (Allman, 2001, p. 112; also see Gramsci, 1971, pp. 197-198, 324-325, 404-405).

Through my own auto/biography I discussed ways I was affected by educational and cultural programs that challenged common sense and dominant ideas and whereby I as an educator, with learners, experienced resistance and transgression in questioning capital relations. I examined the example of the Ghanaian popular education program with Action for Young People (AYP). The latter program focused on developing dialogic learning, critical analysis, popular theatre, and arts based methods to probe and dismantle dominant ideologies exposing systems of oppression. During my Master’s I learnt of a similar popular theatre movement in my own Scottish community to challenge capitalist relations. In Ghana the project youth developed popular forms of theatre from their own local history and traditional forms of development theatre. The group designed performances that challenged oppressive relations and broader economic and political questions related to colonialism and globalization. Learners and community audiences deconstructed everyday experience engaging in critical analysis and naming human rights abuses on their own terms.
**Paulo Freire and His Influence on Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy**

*Freire and pedagogy*

Paulo Freire (1972) discusses the particular relationship between oppression, education, liberation and imperialism. He describes the fear of freedom whereby the poor become so conditioned to living in subjugation; it becomes normalized as a way of life. The implications of finding freedom and developing alternative ways of seeing and acting in the world are so different that they are denied.

Freire spent his life exploring a pedagogy of freedom whereby education can provide space for learners to transgress by reading and acting in their world (1972, 1994, 1998). Praxis is a process to become literate in a wider critical sense. The role of education explores opportunities to become more human, in and through learning relationships and the vital role educator’s play in this process. Freirian education embodies the desire and hope for a more equitable society rooted in the foundations of Marxism, liberation theology and socialism (McLaren, 2000). Education is the platform for people to experience and prepare for this society-to liberate themselves from oppressive relationships and systems which prevent human development as individuals and as human beings.

*Freire and the role of the educator*

Freire (1994) espoused the centrality of the educator’s values in nurturing an inclusive and dialogic learning experience. Educators had to display and feel their humanity with and through such characteristics as humility, love, respect, and courage while possessing a social critical consciousness to push students beyond their limits. Middle and upper class educators have to commit class suicide to be at one with the people and work freely in communion with the people (such an example would be Che Guevara and Paulo Freire, as cited in McLaren, 2000).
Freire uses class suicide to highlight the severity of an educator’s deeply rooted ethical, moral and philosophical commitment to the struggle of the oppressed. Class suicide would not only require a material change in circumstance but more importantly a deep human and ontological commitment to revolutionary change, to socialism. It is the latter which Freire accentuated in class suicide.

The ability of the educator to question and mobilize students in a dynamic dialogue presumes a non hierarchal relationship between learners and educator. Freire (1972), however, is a proponent of the directive role of the educator facilitating learners to redeem their own agency and historical subjectivity. Freire suggests courage is required, a courage to generate other acts of freedom. One cannot free another through generosity but through a social love reflected in a social commitment to finding freedom and liberation. This requires new relationships between learners and educators, a fusing of the both, educators as learners and learners as educators engaged in praxis. Throughout my excavation of the Ghanaian data I explored my own experience of social love through my own educational praxis. Through critical humanism and class consciousness I was able to transgress and find solidarity through my role as radical educator and also in and through social activism across race and gender. These concepts are examined in Chapters Three, Four and Five.

**Neo-Marxist Influences**

In the following section I will discuss the foundations of new Marxism which grew from the Frankfurt School and the New Sociology of Education. I will draw on the major theorists Louis Althusser (1971), Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976), and Paul Willis (1977). The revision of Marx, Engels and Lenin’s theory began as an effort to veer theory from concerns relating to a perceived economic determinism. I feel these concerns should also be situated in a
specific historical context where Marxism is viewed as a living science. Marx and Engels created a critique and understanding of capitalism as a new economic and political system which could set humankind on a new path to scientific and technological advancement. However, the nexus and contradiction of this new system was it also created new and more exploitative relations of production.

Later, Lenin developed his own understanding of capitalism through the writings of Marx and Engels. He added his own particular theory related to the political struggle to build a socialist society against imperialism and finance capital. Lenin was key to providing a strategic insight into the construction of a revolutionary movement - for a protracted period before and after the October revolution. Gramsci learnt from Lenin’s praxis, adapting his theory to the Italian context, hence Gramsci’s terminology of a war of position and a war of movement. Gramsci expanded Marxist theory to include theories of ideology, intellectualism, culture, hegemony and class consciousness to build a proletarian working class political movement. His interest in civil society was also a reflection of questioning why socialist revolutions had failed after the Russian revolution. He believed in the increasing role of state encroachment and control of civil society. Civil society was not distinct from the capitalist state, but part of it (Holst, 2010). Neo- Marxist theory is based on a selection of Gramsci’s founding ideas of cultural theory, ideology and hegemony but extracted from Gramsci’s political and proletarian base (Hill 2010; McLaren, Fischman, Serra, & Antelo, 2005b).

**Louis Althusser**

Althusser grounded his theory in the relationship between society’s base and superstructure, how the state plays a role in maintaining capitalist relations through repressive and ideological means. He referred to the ideological state apparatus (ISA) and the repressive
state apparatus (RSA). Gramsci (1971) also maintained at no one time is a society dominated by only one tendency but most societies have elements of the two, however, emphasis depends on the relaxation of the state and the dialectic of social action and resistance to capitalism. Gramsci referred to the hegemony of the dominant capitalist class through various means focusing on the role of ideology, culture, state institutions, civil society, and the military in supporting and maintaining control of economic, social, cultural and political power. Gramsci also recognized at different periods there are tensions in this relationship as the working class organizes and creates its own sense of oppression and capitalism, from common sense to good sense.

Althusser’s ISA comprises of systems of law, religion, education, family, politics, unions, communication and culture. Repressive state apparatus are represented by the military, government administration, police, courts and prison systems (Cole, 2008, p. 30). Althusser (1971) made a distinction between the major historical ISA being religion but with the advancement of capitalism this role has shifted to the educational system as no other ISA requires compulsory attendance by the mass of population 8 hours a day, 5 days a week. Althusser’s focus on the school system and ISA had a distinct effect on the growth of theory relating to ideology, Gramsci and critical pedagogy. Neo Marxist theorists began to focus on the mechanisms of capitalist ideology and culture in maintaining hegemony and power. The repercussion was a lesser emphasis on the political economy of capitalism and a proletarian hegemony asserting workers subjectivity and class consciousness. A later evolution of revolutionary critical pedagogy returned to a renewed emphasis on dialectical materialism, classical Marxism and working class agency (Allman, 1999, 2001).
**Bowles and Gintis**

During the 1970s the New Sociology of Education became concerned with the production of knowledge (Young, 1971). Emphasis lay in the construction of hidden meanings around schooling practices and curriculum. Sam Bowles and Herbert Gintis’s work “Schooling in Capitalist America” (1976) became a pioneering work within this milieu shifting the paradigm to a radical Marxist position. Bowles and Gintis drew comparisons between the social relations of education and production. The social relations of schooling mirror the workplace relations in capitalism through the discipline of the workplace, developing the types of personal demeanor and life skills necessary for the self image and social class identifications necessary for job adequacy.

Internal mechanisms which control standards such as grades, electives and tests also mirror work relations whereby workers undergo systems of quality control. Relationships between school administrators, teachers, students and their work reflect a hierarchical division of labour similar to the workplace. Students lack of input into curriculum content, methodology or the administration/running of the school correlate to processes akin to alienation in the workplace. On the opposite end Bowles and Gintis highlight the contradictory views of some working class parents favouring more discipline in schools as an effect of their own experience under excessive surveillance in hierarchal workplaces. These processes are referred to as the *correspondence principle* (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, pp. 13, 47-48, 130-133, 143).

Critiques of Bowles and Gintis have cited their work as being too economic determinist and fatalistic (Apple, 1979, 1982; Giroux, 1981, 1983; Sarup, 1978). Sarup argues that Bowles and Gintis have everything determined and that there is no room for resistance or change. Meanwhile Rikowski (1997) discusses the fatalism of Bowles and Gintis’s work centred on the
economic base determining a superstructure. How is there room in this model for class resistance or struggle? Rikowski also feels there is not enough discussion related to the foundations of socialism and the new society for the future. This gap led some theorists, such as Willis, to create theories of how students resist but from a limited perspective. Paul Willis (1977) theorized about the male working class shop floor culture being replicated in the school classrooms. Male pupils would find ways to resist the dominant school respectable culture by fooling around in the classroom and school. Some of this behaviour could also reinforce regressive forms of racism and sexism through cultural rebellion.

**Feminist critiques**

Feminists have argued critical pedagogy and Marxist theory is produced by men. Through the exclusion of women having access to resources and the separation of public and private spheres, men have generally created theory which does not speak to the majority of women as unwaged housewives, or as women working double jobs. Luke (1992) relates these gendered processes as a cultural socialization assigning competitive rationality to men and collaborative nurturance to women. In education studies critical pedagogy has failed to include the role of the family, and specifically mothering in shaping, reproducing or contesting gender identities (as well as class and race) in schools (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989).

Reproductive theory is viewed as focusing on the Marxist romanticization of an industrial male working class suffering alienation. Women working in the public sphere, or at home are hidden from history and absent from the alienation discourse. Weiler is skeptical about the revolutionary leader and organic intellectual in critical pedagogy as a male construct. The revolutionary, existing solely within the public world is “a vision which discounts the world of personal relationships or of everyday life-the world of women” (2001, p. 76). Subsequently
Gramsci (1971) is critiqued as ignoring the existence of the female intellect through his unintended aphorism that “all men are intellectuals” (Weiler, 2001).

Hartmann (1995), from a Marxist feminist perspective, urges critical theory to feature more feminist scholarship which exposes the partnership between capitalism and patriarchy whilst also widening analysis to highlight how women are also affected by capital relations, alienation and marginalization in political and private life.

Contemporary African American feminists Angela Davis and bell hooks also profess critical theory needs to be reconfigured to focus on gender, race and class (Davis, 1998; hooks, 1984, 1989). hooks challenges feminist scholars to widen analysis from a gender oppression which is a reflection of white middle class women dominating the field. She is also critical of a theory which is dense linguistically and theoretically and therefore inaccessible to the majority of women.

Theory, like feminism, is for everybody, and people practice theorizing without ever knowing/possessing the term. (hooks 1994, p. 62)

Davis’s work is firmly lodged in her own political struggle as a communist, community activist, and academic. Davis (1998) is wary of the term Black feminist as essentialist highlighting the various viewpoints within the Black women’s movement. The foundations of a struggle of Afro-American women is building a “revolutionary, multi-racial women’s movement that seriously addresses the main issues affecting poor and working class women” (1990, p. 7). Davis engages in critiques of everyday life and the influence of capitalism on our own intimate relationships, personal health, crime, housework and in education, rather than only political life. An important component of Davis’s more recent work includes reinforcing the need for a collective aesthetic education against capitalism. Art is crucial to the educational and political
struggle “to be a sensitizer and a catalyst, propelling people toward involvement in organized movements seeking to effect radical social change” (Davis, 1990, p. 200).

**Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy in an Age of Neo-Liberalism**

Just as Marx theorized capitalism is a man made system then so indeed is neo-liberalism.

Over one and a half centuries earlier the idea of a liberal economic system to free capital from the grips of the monarchy was based on a philosophy of a natural order. The economic system ensured the articulation of a private and public realm as the best use of resources and a greater well being. There was an acceptance society had a moral duty to look after those less fortunate while creating an economy which encouraged entrepreneurship. The terminology of neo-liberalism is disguised in the sale of technological advancement and globalization while justifying the absolute power of the market. The founding philosophical principle is freedom from constraint, from governments, citizens, social movements, unions, ideologies or the common good. McLaren discusses the philosophy of Austrian professor Fredrich Von Hayek, a founding theorist of neo-liberalism:

As a philosophical naturalist Hayek reveled in whatever transpired outside the conscious attempt at social control; he abhorred what he believed to be the human engineering aspects of market intervention. Market ruthlessness was seen as the aggregate intervention of consumer choices, and in Hayek’s view it was more important to protect the spontaneity of the market – despite its often delirious effect on the poor-than it was to protect individuals or groups from the shameful effects of market justice. (2005, p. 81)

Cole suggests the global movement of capital should be viewed as a cumulative process linked to the history of imperialism and colonialism. Neo-liberalism refers to a system of corporate domination supporting state enforcement of an unregulated market. This system also actively engages in the oppression of non market forces and anti-market policies while
destroying public services and social subsidies in favour of privatization. The social safety net is destroyed encouraging increasing concessions to the corporate sector and the invasion of the market into all aspects of life-private and public. The concepts of community and the common good are replaced by consumerism (Cole, 2008; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005a). The society becomes less human as our priorities change for the market and the poor have to pay their way as the public sector lifts subsidies on childcare, drugs, healthcare, education, recreation, culture and public services such as waste management and sanitation (Cole, 2008; also see Hall, 2002; Miles, 2002).

Neo-liberalism becomes an ahistoric system where multi national corporations are viewed as exerting too much global power and control. Corporations and governments are somehow cut off from the roots of capital accumulation and finance capital as Lenin theorized over imperialism. However, in Europe and North America the role of the state actively organizes to maintain and expand neo-liberalism through such bodies as the G8, G20 and the European Union (McLaren, 2005).

My own experience working in Ghana brought this realization home as neo-liberalism affects peoples daily lives. The value of life becomes recognized as another commodity. Basic necessities and life sources of water and primary healthcare become market commodities owing to user fees. Meanwhile environmental health concerns climax as the challenge of providing waste and sanitation services for poor communities reach epidemic proportions. Only those communities who can pay receive service.

In education neo liberalism has contributed to increased privatization of schools and their services. Curriculum has become more compartmentalized and standardized and suffered more controls in curriculum content verging to a more conservative focus. Increasingly the ethics of
education and a liberal conception of schooling for a better society has been replaced by competition and a conveyor belt system of delivery, testing, delivery and accreditation (McLaren, 2005).

My own research question lodged in revolutionary critical pedagogy disrupts the neoliberal discourse by revisiting the historical materialist and dialectical framework of early Marxism, where class struggle is the central driving force of history. My framework investigates class consciousness as an anti thesis of the drive for profit, the realization of a collective self and collective struggle against capital and dehumanization. The study of my own life, my own class consciousness centres on my family and community history against capital, against class oppression, against imperialism as a Scottish and British subject. This examination contradicts the ethos of neo liberalism and capital as I believe I was reared through the ethics and mores of a collective humanity.

**Race, Whiteness and Class**

*Whiteness Theory*

Historically the concept of whiteness was introduced through colonialism and the Spanish conquest of the New World. It was later reinforced with the triangular slave trade between Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America and the United States. As Schiller states the “construction of race is the product of particular relations of domination in particular places, periods of time and social locations” (1997, p. 449).

Similarly the construction of race was accompanied by the social construct of whiteness adjusting according to time, geography and social context (Allen, 1994; Ignatiev, 1995). McLaren et al. (2005a, 2005b) link the emergence of whiteness in the Southern United States
plantation economy within the nexus of slavery and colonialism and the white aristocratic planter class. In order to justify and further exploit the African and aboriginal population, whiteness, and the white race, were constructed in opposition to all other peoples legitimizing a class and colour hierarchy in the plantation and colonial economy. The white indentured labourer in the earlier stages of slavery began to fraternalize and identify with the slave and other poor peoples of the Americas. Subsequently the white planter class encouraged and rewarded the white poor to identify with whiteness. They bestowed additional privileges (monies) to disidentify with class (and the other racialized subjects) and ally with the white elite. These processes succeeded in subduing class allegiances among working class whites and others, instead eliciting a false sense of cultural belonging as working class Europeans whose culture had been lost (Hamilton, 1996). Throughout history this process became entrenched and normal as an ideological phenomenon and an affinity to whiteness:

Whiteness is not a pregiven unified ideological formation but is a multifaceted collective phenomenon resulting from the relationship between the self and ideological discourses which are constructed out of the surrounding local and global cultural terrain. (McLaren in Clark & O’Donnell, 1999, p. 35)

In response whiteness is described by Marable as a “power relationship, a statement of authority, a social construct which is perpetuated by systems of privilege, the consolidation of property and status” (1996, p. 6). Alternatively Winant describes whiteness as “a political and cultural identity based on socioeconomic status, religious affiliation, ideologies of individualism, opportunity, citizenship, and nationalism” (1997, p. 48).

McLaren (1999) posits whiteness cannot be rearticulated or adjusted to a more acceptable humane whiteness (as Winant, 1996, pronounces) but instead has to be eradicated. This stems from the conception of whiteness as situated from a position of power and privilege in relation to
marginalized groups. Racial constructs are created and used to legitimize white supremacy through ideological boundaries which reinforce and value whiteness as ‘the norm’ while ‘other’ racial and ethnic groups are denigrated and discriminated against (Benedict, 1968; Miles, 1989).

**Race**

In essence all peoples, including whites, are raced according to relationships with one another- relationships caught in conceptions and power relations according to race, class and gender. Schiller advocates the eradication of the concept of race is a necessary step. Race is a construction that is lived, structuring society and the daily experiences, possibilities, perceptions, and identity of each individual: it is not about people socially defined as Black or of colour. “To the extent that race structures society, all people are raced, and there is no Blackness without the construction of whiteness, no Indian without a white man, no mulatto without a system of deciding who is truly white” (1997, p. 449).

The term racism has been discussed from various perspectives and ideological positions. My thesis discusses various theories associated with race as a social, economic, ideological and political construct (Anthias & Davis, 1992; McLaren, 1999, 2000, 2005a, 2005b; Miles, 1989; Omni & Winant, 1986; Sivananandan,1990; Sleeter & McLaren,1995; Solomos, 1989). In this sense there is no one race, as anthropological studies have determined. There exists as much differentiation within one race as among and between other racial groups (Jacoby & Glauberman, 1995). Racial categories have been historically constructed and legislated by predominantly white elite groups as colonial and imperial systems to justify white supremacy asserting power over other groups. These definitions are fluid according to social, political and economic needs at different periods of history and appropriated and promulgated by the state, state bodies and concepts of nationalism (Hall, 1978; Gilroy, 1987).
Race and ethnicity

Some theorists have also placed emphasis on the role of ethnicity among racial groups which can also be used to select and oppress certain ethnicities during history. Ethnicity in its most broadest sense can mean belonging to a particular group and sharing its conditions of existence. Ethnic resources can be economic, territorial, cultural, and linguistic ( Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1992).

In different social and historical contexts, a process of re-labeling or redesignation may occur. For example immigrants from South Asia can be defined as ethnic, racial or religious groups, using the terms Pakistani, Black or Muslim: Jews in different contexts can be constructed as a primarily religious ethnic or national group. Therefore groups that have been called or have called themselves national at one point, or in one territory, have become ethnic or racial in other contexts ( Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1992). Examples of various ethnic groups who have been racialized and othered are Irish, Jews, Southern Europeans, travelling peoples, and more recently ‘asylum seekers’ and Eastern European immigrants (Ignatiev, 1995; Sivanandan, 1988).

Between racial groups there can also be processes of horizontal racism highlighting Fanon’s discussion of the effects of colonialism and the colonized mind (1963, 1967). Targeted racial groups discriminate against one another and internalize the theories of whiteness as desired values and assimilation (i.e., values and civilization of a white supremacist, elite Eurocentric culture).

Recent theories have preferred to use the terminology of racialization to describe processes where human beings are racialized once born in society throughout their life cycle and as racial and ethnic groupings. Miles (1989) uses the term to refer to instances “where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological
characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectivities” (p. 75). Racism occurs when these categories are imbued with a negative connotation.

Racialization also intercepts with other processes of socialization and oppression according to such categories as class, gender, ability and sexuality. There are processes of contestation, resistance and negotiation among these concepts requiring an interrogation of intersecting relationships and analysis (Hill Collins, 1991).

**Exploring my whiteness and racism**

I agree with the concepts set forth in Noel Ignatiev (1995, 1996, 2002) and Peter McLaren (1999, 2005a, 2005b) which maintains there is no deconstructing whiteness – it has to be destroyed. As racism is created by the white supremacist system and the concept of the white race the only option to end racism is to destroy race theory and practice of whiteness.

My thesis research examined racism and whiteness as I reflected on my own agency as a Scottish/Canadian working class woman in three continents accompanied by memories of childhood in Scotland. I also reflected on my experience as a domestic worker in Canada, working across class and gender. As an activist I worked with other immigrant and racialized women struggling against racism, immigration laws and unfair working conditions.

The latter part of my life I worked in Ghana, West Africa, as a radical educator. I examined my transgression across race and my role as educator, curriculum developer and activist with a young people’s non-governmental organization (NGO) Action for Young People (AYP).
**Class Consciousness**

Class consciousness is necessary for working class people to ally across class and against capital. Therefore, white working class people must also question and commit suicide against their whiteness (McLaren, 2005a, 2005b). An interesting introspection throughout my thesis was the intersection between class, race and gender, when and how did this happen? Through my excavation of the collective self I attempted to reflect on this conscientization. bell hooks supports the dialectic juxtaposition of autobiography and critical consciousness to examine ways this sort of transgression operates. hooks reflects: “I am grateful to the many women and men who dare to create theory from the location of pain and struggle, who courageously expose wounds to give us their experience to teach and guide, as a means to chart new theoretical journeys. Their work is liberatory” (1994, p. 74).

In essence it is the white working class who plays a pivotal role in social justice and anti-racist work- in any anti-capitalist movement. The capitalist system has relied on the white working class identifying with whiteness (racism) rather than class to sustain the power of the ruling class. Their identification with whiteness and fear of race has prevented the white working class from building alliances across race (Allen, 1994). Meanwhile racialized communities fear of whiteness and racism has made it difficult to form coalitions across race and class. Ignatiev (2002) discusses Theodore Allen’s theory of race and white supremacy by acknowledging this fact:

White supremacy grounded in the privileges of white skin was the Achilles’ heel of American radicalism. He (Allen) argues that at each turning point in US history and especially at moments when revolutionary change seemed possible the rulers had been able to ride out the storm by appealing to the race sentiments of the white majority. (p. 293)
The white race is constructed in opposition to various peoples; therefore in order to deconstruct the white race—it has to be destroyed. Ignatiev (2002) refers to this process of resistance: “To be a race traitor … is to protest as loudly when you receive ‘privileges’ and get the biggest piece of cake as you would if you got the smallest piece” (p. 300).

Lopez explains the process whereby we are not born white. Yes our colour maybe white, but it is the behaviours, mores, ideas and values that we learn, make us white. By virtue of the social context in which one finds one self to be sure but also by virtue of the choices one makes (1996, p. 190).

The choices we make to other people of colour as different from and lesser than oneself implicate our social world, our ability to live our humanity and reinforce and legitimize individual acts of racism. However we must also be careful not to individualize the system of racism and white privilege (Jensen, 2005). These conscious and unconscious acts secure the continuation of white supremacy, systemic racism, imperialism, colonialism and an unequal global economy. Racism and white supremacy are manifestations of the systems of capitalism, racism, imperialism and white supremacy and need to be challenged at a systemic level, and globally, to end class and race oppression.

McLaren and Farahmandpur (2005a) bring up some relevant critique of liberal theories of whiteness. The concept of whiteness and not white people needs to be articulated within capitalist relations and the struggle to end racism. It is not to focus on individualized admissions of guilt or an invisible knapsack of privilege as discussed by Peggy McIntosh (1989). The focus on white guilt alone can dissect whiteness in isolation of the larger political project. On the discussion of white studies McLaren raises the point “The intricacies of white hegemony is
exceedingly important, provided that such studies also are part of a larger anti racist and anti capitalist project dedicated to the abolition of the white race” (2005a, p. 142).

During my excavation of the collective self I attempted to position my own understandings of racism within the contexts of my life. The awareness of racism and class consciousness opened me up to humanity, to becoming more fully human. The intersection of class consciousness raised my awareness of solidarity with racialized communities throughout my life’s journey. These pivotal events were analyzed through a revolutionary praxis to understand more deeply the fragility and permanence of borders in our lives.

**Building alliances**

As challenging whiteness becomes an act of resistance there must also be an acknowledgement to critique racism as a continuous system of oppression which is played out everyday in social institutions, systems, ideology, and personal/social relations. If white people are to truly give up their whiteness this entails a serious commitment for living anti-racism in daily life. Lopez feels white people must recognize and accept the personal and social consequences of breaking out a white identity embarking on a daily process of choosing against whiteness (1996, p. 193). Only through these sentiments can true solidarity, trust, and alliances be built. This willingness to expose and bequeath power has been a major stumbling block for white people to break free from the white oppressor (Jensen, 2005).

The ability to work through race issues builds a new humanity and deeper social consciousness between peoples. I reflected on this process through the study of my collective self where I have worked with racialized communities to end class oppression and also in anti racist struggles against police brutality, immigration policy, Apartheid, the Gulf War and against racist curriculum at university. The AYP project was also an exceptional awakening for me. I
worked in racial solidarity through and in an education program whilst living in Ghana through social relations of solidarity.

**The Study of the Collective Self and Marxist Humanism**

*Freire’s Ideas of Being and Humanity From the Pedagogy of Freedom*

Paulo Freire’s work on popular education provides an educational pedagogy for working with the ‘popular’ classes, his most famous work being “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” (1972). Freire’s work on the philosophy and ethics of education supported the study of my evolving collective self through and in my thesis research. This section begins by incorporating Freire’s fundamental premise human beings, as a species, are in effect unfinished in search for their humanity. Linked with this idea Freire’s work has a collective foundation in finding freedom, with other oppressed people, encapsulated in “I cannot be unless you are” (Freire, 1972). Freire was concerned about the social conditions which inhibit humanity from becoming, based on a class analysis of capitalism and the oppressed in Brazil. After discussing this aspect I turn to a discussion of ontology, of ethics and being. Further interrogation directed my discussion to consider the possibility of subjectivity and human beings dialectical engagement with the world.

*Unfinishedness and Finding ‘Humanity’*

Contrary to the dominant liberal worldview which believes individuals are the centre of being existing in the world as atomized selves, Freire shares a collective and dialectical view of humans being in and with their world (1998). Essentially the struggle to be human ensures our vocation to be in this world as a conscious being. Through a human responsibility to others we navigate and act in and to our world as a search to fulfill our human-ness as a lifelong vocation. Freire goes on to discuss the situation which prevents some humans from realizing their
unfinishedness, of becoming: “The difference between the unfinished that does not know anything of such a condition and the unfinished who socio-historically has arrived at the point of becoming conscious of the condition and unfinishedness” (1998, p. 54).

This discussion became pertinent throughout my thesis as I struggled with theoretical works that pertain to my own sense of collective self - a self that existed because of others in social relations with others. These relations entail corresponding and inter-related quests for meaning and existence and in struggle with and against inhumanness. My thesis examined this process of becoming at pivotal stages of my life where I became conscious of this journey, towards a meaning of a life, in duty to others- to experience solidarity. Freire discusses his own search:

I perceive that the construction of my presence in the world which is a construction involving others and is subject to genetic factors that I have inherited and to socio-cultural and historical factors, is nonetheless a presence whose construction has much to do with myself. (1998, p. 54)

Freire refers to these experiences as conscious struggles, involving choice, ethics, action and responsibility that create conditions to assert agency and subjectivity. As I reflected on my life experiences I articulated these critical moments which I believe made me who I am as a collective self and as a working class woman (also see Pinar, 1976, and Chapter Two of this thesis).

Ethics and Being

As human beings we can initiate or be recipients of action immersed in our own history. We can make history, or be impacted by specific forces and contexts of history. We are agents of our history in both contexts. These events and situations include political, social, and moral choices how we want to be and how we act with others in this world (Hill, 2010). Education
provides opportunities for an examination of our ethical responsibility as human beings. It is in the condition of becoming that we find our being. Freire does not profess a puritanical moral education but an education which will instill a hope for becoming, for pronouncing our unfinishedness and how we want to strive to be better human beings as collective selves. If we do not realize our unfinishedness then we are in effect domesticated (1998).

Freire (1998) discusses the self as an ethical being truly connected to others, as only possible with others, bound in a search for freedom and humanity. His concept of self straddles the gulf between the concept of the liberal individual self who may be impacted by others but essentially a separate self. Freire’s use of the self has a much deeper meaning, a life long search for a connectedness, “comparing, evaluating, intervening, deciding, taking new directions” (p. 38). This is an acknowledgment of an ethical being working with and through unfinishedness. Freire cites this as a permanent process of search with a search for knowledge at its core questioning our world and our action in the world:

In other words my presence in the world is not so much of someone who is merely adapting to something ‘external’ but someone who is inserted as if belonging essentially to it. It’s the position of one who struggles to become the subject and maker of history and not simply a passive, disconnected object. (pp. 55-56)

As a working class woman from a small town in Scotland I excavated experiences and memories of situations where the right to be was denied to myself, as working class and female, and also my working class community through the common oppression we faced with poverty, employers and the forces of capital. By realizing this memory of a collective history, a collective violation, I became aware of my ethical being as an intrinsic universal sense of solidarity for working class people historically and across continents and time. Freire discusses this as a “kind of knowledge that becomes solidarity, becomes a being with” (1998, p. 72). This was a history of
possibility where working class communities fought back to achieve a humanity, a collective being as mining families and communities.

I believed change was possible from an early age, socialized into a role, as part of a collective being, not to accept domestication but to struggle for social justice. On reflection this was a moral stand for what is morally acceptable and ethical as collective humanity, not as atomized individuals but as something bigger and international or universal. In essence I was reared to be dialectical – to work with the tensions of oppression and being in the world while striving to achieve a better more equal socialist society.

The movement of inquiry must be directed towards humanization-the people’s historical vocation. The pursuit of humanity, however, cannot be carried out in isolation of individualism but only in fellowship and solidarity therefore it cannot unfold in the antagonistic relations between oppressors and oppressed. No one can be authentically human while he prevents others from being so. (Freire, 1972, p. 66)

**Marxist Humanism, the Collective Self and a Marxist Ontology**

Paula Allman (2001) believes social consciousness cannot be isolated from social being as it is grounded in materialist relations in and with the world. She discusses how Marx related the two through ontology (theory of being) and a revolutionary theory of knowledge (epistemology). My thesis and self excavation examined the development of my collective self, class consciousness, and agency during and in these historical processes.

The discussion of the self from a revolutionary Marxist perspective entails the opposite starting point to liberal notions of the philosophical rationalized individual subject. Revolutionary Marxists base their ideal of an embodied self exerting their agency with and through structures of society and in social relations but not as an individual self (Scatamburlo D’Annibale, 2009). The self is created in social relations and change according to the historical
conditions and social context of capitalism. Marx discussed this process as embodied selfhood, through consciousness, in materialist circumstances but also as a sensuous being, conditioned by the material and historical mode of production of which he/she has little control (hooks (1989) also uses this term to describe the self of Black African-Americans).

However, the ability of humans to act on history and change the oppressive and inhuman conditions of capitalism speaks to the movement and agency of a collective self in and against inhumanity. These ideas remain contentious for the liberal notion of the freedom and autonomy of the liberal subject which Marx critiqued in the Grundrisse and which neglects the specific, malleable determinants of the self. From a Marxist viewpoint there is also a need for basic necessities to be realized before humans can make history, as a basis of the human condition, a human essence. In the German ideology he comments

The first premise of all human history is that “men must be in a position to live” in order to make history. But life involves before everything else certain basic necessities - food, a habitation, clothing, and many other things. (Marx 1978, p. 156)

A Marxist Humanism: Human Nature and a Marxist Ontology

Norman Geras (1983) discusses Marx’s ideas on human nature. During my own thesis research the usefulness of exploring the relationship between ontology, epistemology and class consciousness was helpful. As ontology focuses on the process and praxis of human being it is necessary to question the nature of human nature, which if it exists, influences human being. Geras explains Marx’s ideas are based on human nature as primarily made in society. The mode of production throughout history has reproduced the mode of life (p. 64). This entails how humans produce and reproduce their means of subsistence, what they produce, their sexual relations and how each person can develop individually. Humans also realize human nature
collectively through language, culture and communication with other’s (pp. 69-72). Marx was opposed to the liberal notion of a human essence, a universal intrinsic nature of individuals, whether in transcendental terms (for example Christian) or in naturalistic (for example Hobbesian) terms (p. 50).

My own usage of the term ontology relates to Marx and human nature. Ontology is a way of being in the world which encapsulates the social relations and mode of production shaping my own consciousness of being. We live in a capitalist society, which negates, commodifies, and denies my working class being and class consciousness (as opposed to the promotion of an individual being). As I struggle against the capitalization of my being, against class relations, this will in turn affect my consciousness (Allman 2001).

The ability of a proletarian class consciousness to be conscious of these processes is discussed by George Lukas’s (1971). Lukas stresses the importance of the dialectical method of thinking which influences the practice or action of the proletariat, between object and subject. The working class develops a ‘proletarian standpoint’; its own point of view. Lukas stresses:

Thought and existence…are aspects of one and the same real historical and dialectical process. Man must be able to comprehend the present as a becoming. He can do this by seeing in it the tendencies out of whose dialectical opposition he can MAKE the future. (p. 164)

A working class epistemology is based on Marx’s theory that owing to the specific class relations of capitalism, the working class whose labour is central to capitalism, has a unique insight into the system. The working class has a different viewpoint than the capitalist, according to Marx, as knowledge is based in the active engagement with social and natural reality. Therefore it is not only a different form or content of knowledge but a different relationship to knowledge which is based in an active process of demystifying bourgeois class relations,
ideology and knowledge. According to feminist scholar Tanesini (1999): “The unique perspective of the proletariat in the capitalist system is privileged from an epistemic viewpoint because the working class plays a crucial economic function in preserving the system while it has no vested interest in its continuation” (p. 141). Lukasc refers to this process as standpoint theory as described above.

Feminists have also built on Marxist theory by promoting standpoint theory to highlight women’s way of knowing (Hartstock, 1983; Smith, 1981). Hill Collins also developed standpoint theory to explain Afro-centric ways of knowing and post colonial identities (1991).

Lukasc (1971) further discusses his view of the class nature of becoming:

But it must never be forgotten: only the practical class consciousness of the proletariat possesses the ability to transform things. Every contemplative, purely cognitive stance leads ultimately to a divided relationship to its object. (pp. 205-206)

Marxist humanism highlights the centrality of a collective self at the core of being immersed in our everyday practice. This humanism also becomes the central tenet of praxis and a theory of revolutionary change. Change is based on an understanding of human and societal development as struggle lodged in class and capitalist oppression at an individual, collective, societal and structural level. Therefore Marxism and humanism are compatible theories for the realization of a collective self and for the eradication of inhumanity, class and the exploitation of labour (McLaren, 2006).

I use the term Marxist humanism openly and at distance from a school of thought which is more critical of the practice of socialism and the realization of a Marxist humanism, specifically in Eastern European countries (Sher, 1978), contains contributions of Yugoslavian
philosophers discussing Marxist humanism). This critique is not the focus of my present work but an interesting and needed discussion.

In order “to realize the emancipatory facets of the self, in relation to their world the relationship between humanism and a revolutionary praxis is needed” (Scatamburlo D’Annibale, 2009, p. 31).

**An introduction to the collective self and Marxist humanism**

My thesis focus on a collective self could be comparable, I feel, to Freire’s notion of an unfinished self becoming, or within revolutionary praxis of a class conscious self. In both of these concepts this self is not experienced or viewed as separate from being, but a collective being in and through the social relations of capitalism. Being and self are one made through collective process and socialization. The class conscious coherent self moves in and through the social and historical context as a real agentic historical agent. Scatamburlo D’Annibale cites Peter McLaren’s concern about some strands of post modernism failing to account for the dialectics of agency and praxis as “undermining the very notion of human agency and capacities of self-reflection, self-determination, and self-making” (Scatamburlo D’Annibale, 2009, p. 33).

This quote highlights the efficacy of a collective self intertwined in the struggle for freedom, freedom for the oppressed intertwined with the acquisition, agency, and realization of the collective self through a revolutionary praxis. Other theories of the self primarily discuss an individual’s tension overcoming inner struggle.

It is now pertinent to enter a brief discussion of other theories which speak to the search and inner struggle for the self. Over the past few hundred years this struggle has been documented in literary and historical forms through autobiography, and through ethical,
psychological and philosophical inquiry. Here I wish to discuss the theory of liberalism and the individual self, feminism and the feminist self and Marxist Humanism and the collective self.

**Liberalism and the individual self**

During the past few hundred years autobiography and the writing of the self have focused on the memoirs of an elite white male population reminiscing over their life in an effort to find their soul (Cosslett, Lury, & Summerfield, 2000). In this sense a search for the self focuses on an interior introspection. Through this process a chosen few in society sought to find salvation in their life story. Their view of self was a privileged positioning in society, an ordained selfhood whereby they were chosen to lead, born to an elite self, which acted in the world with other elites to maintain order and the status quo, for other selves similar to them. Post structural theory discusses how individualized notions of selfhood became formalized through the coming of modernity and changes in ideological and social structures. The demise of religious structures and feudal relations created more environmental opportunities for the development of individual choice and selfhood. Before modernity selves were understood through interlocking systems of kinship and family (Cosslett et al., 2000).

The liberal notion of selfhood starts to evolve with capitalism through the ideology of the free market and a political philosophy of democracy, rationality and free choice of individuals to prosper in society. There are no direct references to a class structure but instead a movement of individuals making choices to enact their selfhood. In this model there is no direct relationship between history and the present through social positioning of individuals in groups, classes, or gender and racial structural relations of power. The group or various social identities are secondary to the actual psychological and intellectual make up of individuals choosing their life options and circumstance. Each individual has their own personal story and their own writing of
the self. In reality the majority of individuals who explore or write about their selfhood are in fact the upper classes of society doing great things and asserting their own intellectual, economic, and political power over the vast majority in society.

In this sense the liberal self is an exclusionary classification which invites an introspection to those sectors of society who choose to write, document their own history and life story. The majority of society are not believed to enact their selfhood through historical and social agency but to be acted upon by the most economically, politically and socially powerful in society. The struggle of individual selfhood is placed against abusive excesses of bureaucracy and control of the individual thwarting psychological, creative and sometimes social development by limiting the freedom and choice of individuals to enact selfhood. The dilemma becomes not being able to find yourself in society, of lacking opportunity for self discovery and expression.

In contrast bell hooks discusses the processes of Black women’s voices being silenced and suppressed owing to the system of white supremacy. She believes “Black women struggle to recover their collective Black voice which colonialism attempted to destroy” (1989, p. 31). An embodied self which recognizes a collective history past and present becomes an ideological and political resistance for the Black community as discussed by hooks. I believe a similar collective self of working class communities is also a serious threat to capitalism as I examined throughout my thesis work. Concurrently, I explored the collective self of critical race feminists and an emphasis on different and multiple selves raised by post modern feminists.

Multiple selves and feminist post structuralist theory

In post structural theory emphasis is placed on the self of multiple social identities competing and interacting to define a self. According to context a white, female, heterosexual,
mother, able-bodied, elderly self could be an identity and self at any one time. Therefore competing subject positions can be interrogated as struggling for power through discourse, cultural formations, difference, and deconstruction. Post structural theory is helpful to investigate ways the axes of oppression and domination can exist alongside class and influence the individual subject. Post structural theory also provides opportunities to explore ways social, economic and political power is structured and enacted in and through culture, ideology and language reinforcing systems of racial, gender, ability and class power. Ledwith (2010) proposes a post structural feminism which speaks to difference alongside an analysis of globalization offers great opportunities for critical education.

Power is also examined through the lenses and metaphor of the margins in relation to the centre. The centre represents universality - identities of domination, white, male, heterosexual and able bodied subjects. The margins represent the voices and experiences of the colonized subjects or selves. Post structuralist autobiography moves from history to an understanding of the part played by language and discourse in the constitution of subjectivity. The self in biography is only partly represented as the self that speaks, that has been identified coming to voice. Selves are fragmented and examined in relation to other selves and identities. Post structuralist feminists also link the social context to structures of domination and relations of power or patterns of historical oppression (Ledwith, 2010).

Hill Collins draws our attention to the use of terminology and language which can individualize oppression and identity, “softening and disempowering political resistance and collective power through an acknowledgement of similar struggle and history” (1998, p. 129). Hill Collins advocates our introspection includes examining colonialism and imperialism as systems which influenced the subjectivities of the colonized. Anti-colonial working class and
female subjectivities were constructed as part of a collective struggle opposed to being subsumed by capital.

A post structural self is also examined through the process of voice, in textual and narrative exploration as individual - multiple selves. Ledwith (2010) proposes a study which engages with personal autonomy but also as a “precursor of critical, collective autonomy, thus bridging the individual and the collective” (Doyal & Gough, 1991). Marginalized groups need to create their own subjectivities based on their own experience. In this sense their epistemology is one grounded in difference (Luke & Gore, 1992). There cannot be one strategy or universal pedagogy of empowerment, humanism and emancipation but many. An interesting question could be is it possible to have multiple selves? How does the prioritization of selves occur and take precedence at any one time? Is this possible?

Post structural feminists view a sharing of identities across one or the same identity within difference and are open to many meanings of identity. An emphasis is placed on naming or choosing one’s identity and coming to voice (as a self) through narrative, loose definitions of power and textual discourse. Subsequently, writing one’s biography can be a textual introspection of the psychological multiple or individual self or as Ledwith (2010) suggests a contextual social situation of the self at a local, national or global level.

**The Black feminist self**

Contributions by Black feminist writers have been critical of the mainstream feminist movement as being only representative of white middle class women at the centre of theory and analysis. They also criticize the mainstream movement for marginalizing and excluding racialized women’s issues in their work and theory (Boyce Davies, 2008; Angela Davis, 1981; Patricia Hill Collins, 1990; bell hooks, 1981). I am interested in Black women’s definition of self
which is not represented within the dominant theoretical analysis of oppression and experience, a
definition which critiques an individualized liberal notion of self or alternately multiple sites of
selfhood. Henceforth writers such as Hill Collins and hooks have begun a dialogue to craft a
theoretical framework which speaks to the specific experience of self, history and African
American women. Some Black feminists also question an essentializing feature of the
terminology Black feminism, as not all Black women share the same experience or articulation
of gender/class or racial oppression. Carole Boyce Davies (2008) raises the issue of some Black
feminist theory as being situated only in the context of the US and simultaneously speaking for
all Black women irrespective of other geopolitical contexts. Davies also alludes to some of this
theorizing being from an imperialist standpoint within the US context.

Takywaa Manuh (2007), a Ghanaian academic and activist places gender theory in the
real lives of African women (and men), as do hooks and Davis. Manuh also discusses the
tensions of activism and theory, finding the time, resources, and space to develop theory from an
emerging and critical practice which is located in the politics and economics of the neo
imperialist South. Manuh challenges the North to question assumptions of what is theory and the
way theory, and knowledge are produced. She believes knowledge (and theory) production is
reflective of global power relations and a hierarchy of Northern perspectives over Southern
perspectives, and through race, gender and class relations.

In this sense, the term Black feminism needs to be interrogated, as do all gender and
feminist frameworks. I realize these shortcomings in my present work. In future studies of
radical pedagogy sources of theory and knowledge need to also be situated in gender, class and
race perspectives from the voices and experience of the Global South, respecting the varying
perspectives which prevail.
Hill Collins locates the specific oppression and experience of African-American women in their history of slavery steeped in West African history, culture, community and tradition. In the US these traditions were subject to punishment by the ruling white aristocracy and planter class (Diop, 1974). A worldview was crafted to question and analyze, as a resistance to oppression lodged in historical and contemporary intersections of race, class and gender. “Black women have been central in sustaining and reinforcing these histories through a transformative Afro centric worldview” (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 10). Black women’s particular relation to white women as their domestic workers, as insiders /outsiders has also impacted the Black female consciousness in the US according to Hill Collins. It is necessary for African American women to define themselves according to their own experience of race/gender and class and quotes bell hooks to rest her case “Oppressed people resist by identifying themselves as subjects, by defining their reality, shaping their new identity, naming their history, telling their story” (hooks 1989, p. 43).

Hill Collins then goes on to discuss the necessity of self definition for both individual and group empowerment, as African American women. The articulation of self is experienced through a common experience of gender and race oppression and an intersectionality of oppressions. This assumes an experience is the same based on Black identity irrespective of other factors such as -history-geographical context, class, sexuality, age, and ability. In these discussions there is no reference to coming to consciousness or experiencing oneself in relation to others with others other than racial and gender identity. Angela Davis is critical of an African-American women-ness, as a natural essence to self discover, and questions a unity of gender and race devoid of political commitment and analysis. She questions if African-American women-
ness would include Republican African-Americans who are against affirmative action? (as cited in Brookfield, 2005, p. 335).

Collective self to Hill Collins is with community, the Black female community, the nation and the world.

The issue of the journey from internalized oppression to the ‘free mind’ of a self defined Afro centric feminist consciousness is a prominent theme in the works of Black women writers exploration of the self in relationship with an intimate other, with the community, nation and the world. (1990, p. 104)

Hill Collins concludes with an interesting perspective on Black women’s self, not as an autonomous self, separating the self from others. Instead self is in the “context of family and community”. This association with the African American community, accountable to the community aids African American women develop more “fully human less objectified selves” (1990, p. 105).

Boyce Davies critiques Hill Collins for focusing on the work of US Black female intellectuals as a marker against white female intellectuals. She believes this is at the expense of lodging theory into practice and praxis - a self in activism and with working class women, from varied racial/ ethnic/ geopolitical backgrounds.

The subject of the address is white women, with a US definition of naturalized, essentialized race as marker, which thus allows her to develop what she calls ‘standpoint epistemology’, that is, that US Black women as a group all see the world from a particular angle. It is only logical that the logic will turn in on itself in her formulation of Afrocentric feminism. (Boyce Davies, 2008, p. 13)

Boyce Davies is an author of a biographical work of Claudia Jones, born in Trinidad, raised in the US and later becoming a communist activist with the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA). Jones was deported during the McCarthy era and lived her remaining
years as an active communist in London, England. Boyce Davies is interested in the life of Jones as she remains relatively unknown in the US, yet she was a prolific writer, educator, activist and working class organizer for the most of her life. Jones is buried in Highgate cemetery in London beside Karl Marx according to her wishes. Jones’s life seems to have been a vivid example of a Black woman communist with a class conscious, anti imperialist political perspective based also in her experience as a Black woman in race but not only in race. Joy James also discussed Jones in her writings on Black feminism in an effort to radicalize perspectives.

Black feminist writings often pay insufficient attention to state repression and the conflictual ideologies and divergent practices (from liberal to revolutionary) found within Black feminisms” (James in Shadowboxing, p. 78). Also, “The revolutionary remains on the margin more so than any form of (Black) feminism. (cited in Boyce Davies, 2008, p. 16)

How does this example impact the writing of a collective or multiple self? For Jones her commitment was to anti-racism, anti-imperialism and anti-capitalist struggle for a socialist society. This was the basis of her work, her activism and politics- again a universalism - lodged in a class conscious Marxist humanism and a collective view of self as a working class Black woman, born in Trinidad, raised and exiled from the USA and living her life in England. Hence I empathize with Claudia Jones’s life, across race and continents, based in a wider version of self, in a class conscious praxis, linked with others, bound to others struggling against injustice wherever situated across race, gender, borders, and continents.

The following chapters entail a discussion of a wider definition of self contemplating Marxist, feminist and post structural theories. Such an inquiry includes my own reworking of a more social self, an agentic communal self, anchored in a Marxist dialectical, materialist, and collective self across class. This collective self is across race and gender according to the larger unifying class relationship to capital.
The following section includes additional exploration of Marxist and post structuralist ideas of multiple selves.

**Marxist learnings from a post structuralist self**

One should not assume a massive and primal condition of domination, a binary structure with dominators on one side and “dominated” on the other, but rather a multi form production of relations of domination. (Foucault, 1980, p. 142)

In this quote Foucault discusses the multi faceted nature of domination and power happening in various sites as opposed to a revolutionary Marxist humanist position which recognizes the ultimate source of power and domination as the labour capital relation under capitalism. Post structuralism is critical of the grand narrative of Marxism by focusing on local knowledge’s and multiple truths and identification. Marxists believe a lesser emphasis on the labour capital relation, international and global sources of exploitation, and historical forces of oppression fails to locate all oppressions as systemic and dialectically linked to a political, economic and social framework of capital. Therefore a collective response to inhumanity and capitalist oppression is negated. Marxists believe only through a collective and communal corporeal being can a true negation of capital be recognized (Allman, 2001; Cole, 2008; Freire, 1972; Gramsci, 1971; Marx & Engels, 1888; McLaren et al., 2005a, 2006, 2009).

In capitalism there are contradictory forces which delay the forging of a collective self. Such systems centre on the capitalist relations of production and resulting alienation of workers. Meanwhile the system is reinforced through the ideology and systemic reproduction of individualism, commodification, and fetishization of life and being. In contrast to a more human society based on human need and collective well being, economic social and political development has cultivated forms of inhumanity. In this sense the search and actualization of
collective selves is the driving force of history towards a Marxist humanism or as Freire advocates an innate human spirit to being - to becoming class conscious and finding freedom in our collectivity. McLaren (2006) refers to this process as finding a coherent self, a self or identity that individuals have to live and act in struggle to create. This is a lifelong rather than a static project of class actualization.

In post structuralist theory universal concepts such as a Marxist humanism are posited as an ideal of male, European and Western ideas of rationality on other peoples. However throughout recent history some third world struggles of the post war era all drew upon emancipatory elements of universalism, solidarity and a collective self in liberation struggles and remain crucial in many parts of the world still struggling for emancipation (Ahmed, 1997; Kang, 1992). Many of these liberation struggles drew on Marxist and anti-colonial theories which united working class and peasant movements against colonialism, capitalism and imperialism. Theorists from the third world advanced Marxist theory to build working class and peasant movements to suit their specific context and history (i.e., Maurice Bishop, Amilcar Cabral, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Kwame Nkrumah, Thomas Sankara and Mao-Tse Tung). The ways Marxist theory is applied varies in each historical and social context. This is not the basis of my thesis but an interesting juxtaposition of the successes and variations of Marxist theory applied to political practice. An additional focus could centre on documenting the historical contributions of female political leaders involved in liberation movements, anti-colonial struggles, and Marxist revolutions (Boyce Davies, 2008; Kollontai, 1977; Rowbotham, 1973; Weiler, 2001).

Scatamburlo D’Annibale (2009) comments on the need for a universal socialist focus to counter capitalism as a universal system. The emphasis on difference, local identities, knowledges and local action can create special interest groups and can prevent groups from
seeing the common ground in their work and experience. However, there is interesting work on border crossing and building alliances across difference. Ledwith (2010) talks about an inner-outer movement linking people in alliance as she merges Gramscian and post structural theory. Ledwith believes an introspection of selective histories, of specific groups or individual small stories and narrative can supplement analysis of patterns or movements in history. (Foucault has also provided an interesting study of history, knowledge and power). The idea of an increased diversity of marginalized voices struggling for voice and equality is also a powerful tool to supplement Marxist theory. Living examples of how race, class, gender, white supremacy and patriarchy impact lives and widen the trajectory and axes of class are necessary tools against oppression. There also needs to be an acknowledgement of social/historical/ political and economic forces which affect us all locally and globally as capitalist modes and relations of production (Cole, 2008).

McLaren commends the advances post-modernism has brought to Marxist debate,

It has made impressive changes in helping educators map the hidden trajectories of power within the processes of representation (especially the political optics of the mass media), has offered up a veritable cornucopia of research tools for the analysis of identity and has helped uncover ways in which the universal narratives are based on masculinist and heteronormative practices of exclusion. (2005a, p. 20)

In this chapter I have attempted to provide an overview of the influential theorists in revolutionary critical pedagogy and described how the radical educator needs to understand the system of capitalism in order to build a radical praxis. The works of Gramsci, Marx and Freire provide us with a political, economic, social and pedagogical theory to begin this work. Gramsci in particular invokes us to study organizational, ideological, cultural and educational theory to build a counter hegemonic movement of organic intellectuals and critical proletarian workers.
These theorists also link revolutionary critical pedagogy to a historic struggle of working class communities to find their freedom and collective humanity, as a human struggle against inhumanity, capitalism, racism and white supremacy. Chapter Five links my thesis question to my radical praxis creating and engaging in a collective and critical human rights education. While I discuss the tensions of post structural theory I also realize the advantages of opening up critical pedagogy and Marxism to an appreciation of different ways power is manifest in society. The discussion of power and representation, multiple identities, ideology, culture and discourse support an enriched sociological and educational inquiry.

In closing this chapter, I would like to reinforce the perspective of Barbara Merrill regarding the use of biographical methods to research popular education and empower the subjects of research. Merrill reminds us “Biographies are a powerful tool for illustrating the dialectical processes in people’s lives and thus, through reflection and empowerment, have the potential to enable people to take collective action against the structures that oppress them. The challenge is to develop a research of possibility and hope” (Merrill, 2005, p. 143). My thesis highlights how a dialectical auto/biography immersed in a sociological and historical context can support working class agency. It also shines light on the significance of ordinary peoples’ lives in making theory while acting in and on history. An auto/biographic method explores the formation and contradictions of class consciousness whilst confronting internally and externally the oppressive systems of capitalism, racism, white supremacy and gender.
CHAPTER TWO:
RESEARCH METHODS

The Formative Development of a Radical Educator

Introduction

In this chapter I address my research question and describe the research methodology used to excavate my life experience and coming to consciousness. In order to understand my own formative experience I journeyed to specific times and places in my life history where I believe events, social systems, influential people, and my awareness of capitalism impacted on my own class consciousness and development as a collective self. The following chapters discuss how my ongoing resistance, agency, and worldview contributed, if at all, to my role and transgression as a radical educator lodged firmly in a revolutionary critical pedagogy.

My perspective is based on Marxist theory of a class conscious self seeking solidarity with other working class communities in an effort to build an alternative society against capital. Therefore the centrality of class is prevalent in my research alongside my developing gender and racial consciousness (as a critical (white) anti-racist against white supremacy). In the first section I revisit my research question and how I arrived at this enquiry. In the second section emphasis is placed on the research methods I used to highlight my question based in a critical auto/biography of a class conscious collective self from a Marxist humanist perspective (Mustafa Eryaman et al., 2009; Paulo Freire, 1972, 1998; Robert Graham, 1991; Karl Marx, 1858; Peter McLaren, 2000, 2005, 2006; Barbara Merrill, 2005; Thomas Merton, 1998; Valerie Scatamburlo D’Annibale, 2009; Liz Stanley, 1992; Charles Wright Mills, 1972). This was supplemented by an adaptation of the method of currere (William Pinar, 1976) and auto ethnography (Heewon Chang, 2008).
Beginnings:
Scotland, My Master’s Research and My Journey to Ghana

On my life journey to understand my own working class experience, my Master’s research involved an oral history project located in my own Scottish community. The life stories of Scottish activists and community members came alive in my own consciousness as memories resurrected through political and historical events that were responsible for our present working class reality. As I listened to their life stories I realized my place in history was also part of these stories. My life would also be in reaction and action to that historical moment listening to, making sense of, and analyzing these community activist’s experiences. I wanted to fulfill my responsibility as a human being and take these learning’s into the present. Through my own agency and action I would face the future as these mining families had the past.

On reflection these stories, these real people, were etched in my memory and were released in my work as curriculum developer and radical educator in Ghana. I had purposely put these stories into action in another context, continent and time. Therefore, the study of my collective self and my developing class consciousness through a Marxist humanist lens became a focus of my PhD research study. My own life history and inability to access spaces where I could articulate, explore, question, validate, and reflect on working class experience led me on this educational journey as a Marxist, radical educator and organic intellectual and also to academia. Academia provided time, space and resources to develop my ideas while the experience of listening to and dialoguing with more liberal and conservative ideologies buttressed my developing Marxist humanism. Informal learning opportunities in communities and workplaces are also necessary as reflective and creative spaces to heal, analyze and assert working class agency. During excavation I examined how these learning experiences contributed to my class
consciousness, onto-formative struggle, and transgression across three continents and different social contexts.

Deb Hill believes the premise of Gramsci’s work was challenging the alienating and specific form of subjectivity fashioned by capital and professes the struggle against capital must be seen as an onto-formative struggle. This struggle is manifest in the process of grasping powers of the self, given the dispossession of these powers under capitalism (Hill, 2010, p. 6). As I reflected on my own such onto-formative experience and struggles to become (Freire, 1998) in Scotland, Canada and Ghana I was able to engage in a theoretical discussion on the collective self, Marxist humanism, class consciousness, racism and gender.

My Master’s research (Thomson, 1992) was my first academic attempt to document working class experience through a comparative and historical study of class consciousness. This oral history project examined the political and radical education movement among organic intellectuals within Scottish mining communities, particularly during the 1920s. These community intellectuals were mostly miners and leading members of the Socialist Labour Party or Communist Party, and the miners union. This was a similar political and educational relationship Gramsci had with the factory council movement in Turin, Italy. Social activism extended to the community among families/wives/children and other workers in collective and individual attempts to humanize their world through an alternative and proletarian counter hegemonic culture. Social movements were rooted in and expressive of the strong participatory working class culture offering educational and agitational opportunities to question and build on class experience. These were intergenerational and worked across gender. Children and young people became politicized developing a critical consciousness of and in their world. As Joe (a
pseudonym), an elder community member reflected on children in mining communities during the interwar years:

> Children at that time became very very political as well. The children were involved just as they are in Lebanon and Jerusalem. It’s hard to imagine that kind o’atmosphere if yaeve no seen it. Children took part in aw kinds o’ demonstrations. (Thomson, 1992, p. 182)

A politicized working class culture and worldview was born out of everyday struggles – in social action- against the mine owners, landed gentry, reformist political parties, police, and government agencies. The community gained experience through everyday practical lessons in politics and class relations offering opportunities to question, reflect, build on, and celebrate working class knowledge and experience both informally and formally. Examples of youth activism from my Master’s research contributed to my desire and belief of creating counter hegemonic projects with young people, which is discussed during excavation work in Chapters Three, Four and Five of this thesis. During excavation I constantly analyzed if there is a link between my own formative experience as a young person and the development of my class consciousness. Many of the Master’s research participants confirmed their agency as youth activists was instrumental in coming to consciousness, a class consciousness, committed to a more human world, a world free of capitalism.

> My education work has been an attempt to recreate similar counter-hegemonic spaces to nurture an emergence of organic intellectuals, similar to these courageous and spirited human beings.

> The concept of organic intellectual was developed by Gramsci following his perception that mass consciousness was contradictory and in need of counter-hegemonic inquiry. A new type of organic intellectual would act as a facilitator to this process. An organic intellectual was
expressive of and embedded in working class life, able to question emergent patterns of thought and action as they emerged. This process was an effort to transform spontaneous consciousness into critical consciousness creating a revolutionary subjectivity and agency among working class communities into a socialist movement (McLaren, Fischman, Serra, & Antelo, 2005b).

My own work, as an organic intellectual, has been an attempt and reaction to my own lack of such educational and reflective spaces in my youth. I struggled with many similar ideas questioning the inequality and oppressive systems in society but within the family setting where such political discussions were welcomed. However my community peers did not necessarily want to discuss such serious topics. In my excavation I discuss the importance of learning spaces in formalizing my own theory and agency as a working class intellectual.

**My Own Family Memories**

My Master’s community research provided examples of a formative experience based on everyday knowledge and community memory. Counter cultural movements and social justice struggles from the interwar period became very personal owing to my family’s involvement as activists during the miners strike and General Strike of 1926. These critical struggles were revived in my grandparent’s stories passing on history and community memory to a child and teenager eager to learn about real history - not the official history of kings and queens or Empire - I was learning at school. My grandfather was a miner with two children during the 1926 General Strike afterwards losing his job relocating to the linoleum factory. Gran would often recite the memory of hardship (repaying one year’s rent lost during the strike) and the comfort of family and community on Den Road, one of the famous community streets in Kirkcaldy. My gran, originally from Partick in Glasgow, worked as a shop girl after joining her two sisters in Kirkcaldy (where she met my granddad before the Strike). Gran had also been a part of the rent
strike movement in Glasgow whereby women were instrumental in promoting and supporting the withdrawal of unjust rent collection of greedy landlords.

Gran’s two sisters were also political. One sister was the first women to run for council as a socialist labour party candidate. My great Aunt Chrissie was an organizer/courier during the General Strike travelling from town to town with strike communications. After the strike Aunt Chrissie and her husband could not find work anywhere in the locality owing to their political activity and were forced to set sail for Canada. While in Canada Aunt Chrissie was an active member of the Communist Party in Northern Ontario and later in Sarnia.

The local dynamics of social and class conflict highlighted the importance and necessity of a collective working class agency through politics, history, and community resistance to oppressive conditions. Radical education became a powerful force when situated in history alongside political and social movements as possibility – through practical lessons in politics examining, confronting (and adapting) to a developing mode of capital relations and accompanying mode of resistance and education. Resistance was rooted in a collective spirit, a respect for humanity and a belief and hope in our own universal agency. Working class communities and organic intellectuals created cultural and educational spaces to collectively humanize. Communities provided space to create, learn, and educate while changing history and inequity through questioning, theoretical analysis, and examining everyday social struggle locally and internationally.

My own family background nurtured me as a political and social activist and provided informal examples whereby working class communities acted on injustice. My family modelled this community spirit, caring for married women fleeing violent husbands, supporting striking families, and offering help to anyone in distress. I wanted to be a social and political activist and
therefore needed to explore social, political, and economic theory. This interest would later fuel and develop my role as a radical educator. I vividly remember community elders, during my Master’s research, proudly explaining to me, as teenagers they emulated working class agitators who played this role. I saw myself in their story, as an organic intellectual, without finding the words to name it. My PhD research continues this historical link through my own life journey, across time, contexts and continents.

**Ghana**

From 1996-2002 I worked on developing a radical education project with a young people’s NGO Action for Young People (AYP) in Ghana, West Africa. AYP grew out of the Human Rights Project (HRP) and my Canadian volunteer placement from 1996-2002. The project was based on a radical education/popular theatre methodology examining human rights principles and the Ghanaian Constitution. The core group of approximately 15 poor, working class youth received more intensive training in popular education, popular theatre, and deeper social-political analysis. This core group has been successful implementing their own human rights education programs up to the present day. They continue to develop and perform popular theatre events and workshops in schools, communities throughout the media in Accra and via documentary film and web link to Canada.

The AYP program was an attempt to engage Ghanaian youth in a deepening dialogue on a critical human rights and the Ghanaian Constitution (The concept of a critical human rights versus a liberal human rights education is discussed in Chapter Five). The AYP program was based on examining everyday working class experience - their own common sense. Through my research I examined my own reflections on this formative experience of the AYP program. How did my class consciousness influence my work across race, class, and gender in Ghana and to
revolutionary critical pedagogy more generally? How was my class consciousness strengthened through AYP and the social, historical, and political context of Ghana?

I had originally chosen Ghana because of the rich social and political history. It was the first African country to gain independence from the Colonial British in 1958 after an effective anti colonial struggle waged by Ghanaian exiles, intellectuals, and a coalition of various political parties. Ghana’s first elected president was Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, one of the founding thinkers on Pan Africanism and African socialism who was then leader of the Ghana Convention Peoples Party. Nkrumah was also influenced by other influential Pan-Africanists – Gamal Abdel Nasser, Thomas Sankara, Julius Nyerere, and Patrice Lumumba. Nkrumah developed an African theory of socialism and conscientization and the legacy of Nkrumah proved interesting for me. Working and living in Ghana was a way to explore socialist history and anti colonialism in the collective memory of Ghanaians. It was also an opportunity to solidify my own political work and learn about struggles in the South from a class, gender, race and anti-colonial perspective.

In Ghana, I literally threw myself into my volunteer work with little theoretical background in radical education apart from my Master’s research and one weekend workshop on popular education in Toronto. I had a varied experience in community, union organizing, and adult education which probably contributed to my suitability for this specific placement in social justice solidarity work. After a year or so in Accra I began to create and mediate my educational journey with my Ghanaian journalist colleague and the youth participants. Many hours were spent between 1998 and 2002 reflecting on our practice. *We made the road by walking*, as Paulo Freire reflects with Myles Horton (1990). Through collaborative reflection and evaluation sessions with AYP and through dialogue with my Ghanaian colleague Atta we reviewed and altered the program as necessary. What did we need to change? What new direction do we need
to go in? What additional theory do we need as requested by group needs and our own observations? We built the program fluidly as we learnt from it, in our own praxis. I treasure these moments immersed in our work. We were learning collaboratively and organically with AYP youth in and through our own praxis. I/We was/were informally constructing theory from our practice and on reflection from our own histories. We were/I was making and acting on our collective self/ves.

**Working on Three Continents**

Chapter Five examines my own ontological experience and practice as a radical educator—the development of my collective self—where I was gifted to experience a special kindred spirit, a Marxist Humanism which provided an experience of a deepening democracy and sense of historical agency. I interrogate the experiences, struggles, and learnings where I with others transgressed traditional boundaries of educator/learner creating communion and class consciousness across race and gender in varying contexts.

What was it about my background and formative experience that opened me up to this transgression? How did I become class conscious? How did this formative consciousness create a solidarity with others in struggle against oppression in Scotland, Canada and Ghana? What is it about history, political, economic, social and cultural contexts that created these conditions and environment? How did my experience from Scotland impact on my experience in Canada and then Ghana and how did all three contexts influence one another through my experience and other’s histories—my collective self, my Marxist Humanism?
Knowing Your History

The Power of Memory, Collective Self and Marxist Humanism

The power of knowing one’s history and interpreting the past sets the stage for creating ideas and action for future. My own linkage with the past was always strong owing to the relationship with my grandparents. I was fascinated by the past and also by the way story and history was brought alive over cups of tea. On recollection, my first job at 15 years of age was situated close to my grandparents’ home in a neighbouring town. For 5 years, between the influential age of 15 and 20 years, I would have lunch with my grandparents listening to their political and historical commentary. I was encouraged to learn about this past, to be brave, critical, open, and learn new things. This linkage with my family and community past made me strong and independent, as a young working class woman, developing my critical thinking skills. I wanted to be a community leader, to do great things (for others) and not be held back because of my gender or class. The primary role of working class people making history (and social wealth by working for others) was drilled into my memory - my sense of collective self - through grandparents and parents: stories of coal owners, landed gentry, factory owners, unions, community activists, and political activists in the area.

I learnt of many—real and local—great men and women who dedicated their lives and family to the betterment of working class communities in past and present. My work as a radical educator is to fuel this link with other working class communities through revolutionary critical pedagogy.
The Concept of Class Consciousness, Ideology and the Role of the Radical Educator

In theoretical discussions of radical education programs the ideology of the educator and critical class consciousness is crucial for the following reasons:

1. What class and capital perspective do they bring to the program that frames the questioning/enquiry process?

2. How does the radical educator steer the group towards topical and critical debate if they do not have a grounding in, and experience of struggle against the oppressive relations of capitalism and particularly class analysis? (Apple, 1979; Kane, 2001)

Popular education methodology makes reference to the pivotal role of the educator but sometimes remains vague over what that means politically, critically, and ideologically. Liam Kane discusses how he is “increasingly convinced of the urgency to recognize explicitly that the practice of popular education is inevitably influenced by the ideological orientation of the educator” (2001, p. 84). This concern also troubled Gramsci and is a basis for his theory on the need for a new type of intellectual, an organic intellectual who is committed to fight capital while engaging the proletariat in counter hegemonic struggle for a socialist society. In this sense ideology as an educator must be grounded in anti-capitalism through a race, gender and Marxist economic and class analysis.

Freire (1994) references the humanistic aspects of the educator to establish a conducive learning relationship equalizing roles of learner and educator but what about class analysis? If popular means of the people, for the working class and dispossessed peoples then what is required for this ideological framework? Most talk about an anti-oppression framework but I
would argue class analysis is central to unifying divergence of class across race/gender/age/sexuality/ability, and other forms of oppression (also see McLaren, 2005).

The main relationship which dispossesses people is the capital labour relationship. This truism needs to be the central focus of the revolutionary educator. To interrogate class one has to know class analysis, one has to instinctively feel it. Class is about relationship as well as theory. Therefore the concept of organic intellectual is useful to study ways of nurturing educator activists and intellectuals from working class communities (Gramsci, 1971; Lenin, 1961). This is an interesting question of my thesis and one rarely studied: how does one become an organic intellectual? I believe there are varying factors: a questioning of capitalism and its oppressive relations, and a dialectical inquiry into the social relations of capitalism. From this process arises a commitment to struggle and an awareness of historical agency. There is also the recognition of the need for a collective struggle against capital and political, social and educational work to engage with other working class communities in solidarity. It is the latter recognition which incited me, as an organic intellectual to educational work. The radical educator must also possess a vision and therefore a strategy which might enable other’s to engage in social justice work. It is vital “the radical educator possesses a vision and subjective desire to create a more just world” (Allman, 1995, p. 18).

Working Across Race

Also pivotal in this research is my own racial consciousness – how and when did I recognize racism. How did I become anti-racist? How did I/do I disown my whiteness and the system of white supremacy? As I review the past I can witness this painful process of recognizing racism, fighting racism and being different from other white people, for my views and activism. On reflection I was refusing to accept racism through a class analysis; resisting the
history and practice of white supremacy, at a personal, local, and global level as a deformation of humanity.

I grew up in a small working class community in Scotland where, in my childhood, the only outsiders were two families of second generation Italian business owners and a family with one adopted multi racial child, younger than me - everyone else was white. In my teenage years Asian families bought small convenience stores in the town as the Cooperative stores closed, but there were no family children of my age. So how did this impact my concept of race, of white supremacy and whiteness? In Scotland there is a long history of anti-British sentiment sometimes reverberating in extreme Scottish Nationalism and also racism (Arshad, 1999). However, our family was cautious of Scottish Nationalism and loathed the empire, royalty and the union jack. There were sympathies to Scotland being colonized by the English monarchy/elite and church a few centuries earlier accompanied by the loss of language (Gaelic) and culture.

The construction of nationalism in my own experience represented the influence of the British state in constructing the concept of nation by differentiating between groups of people according to class and racialization. Who is a British subject? This was also most evident through political discourse and also through interpretations of British history as Empire. Meanwhile, Scottish Nationalism as a political party was equated with business interests and the upper classes attempting to incite nationalistic sentiments against an intrusive ‘big’ government in England. The Scottish Nationalists specifically sought financial control of the oil revenues from North Sea Oil during the 1970s and 1980s and used nationalism as a rallying call for their own class interests. On the other extreme was the Scottish Nationalism immersed in a working class history; a romantic yet bloody image of the clan wars, of poor Scottish crofters against the
English and Scottish monarchy. These resemble similar instances of national liberation struggles against colonial and imperial powers or a domestic elite acting as neo colonial agents. However, on the opposite end of the scale nationalism can be used as an ideological justification to oppress or discriminate against ethnic or racial groups of people. This was the type of racist nationalism I resisted alongside the Scottish Nationalists representing the upper class and business interests.

I knew whiteness in reality—in everyday experience in a white supremacist culture—but in contrast viewed racialized people and stereotypes on television, films and in books. My formal and informal learning by family was not to disrespect or ridicule any racialized community. I especially remember my parent’s disapproval of the vanity and emptiness of local people who on return from living or visiting South Africa (during Apartheid) would boast of having coloured servants and house help, - having racial power over a people. How could one be proud of having coloured house servants to do your work in a land that is theirs? My parents believed Africa belonged to the Africans and we—as white immigrants had no right to be over there maintaining the system of Apartheid. (This is also to be realistic about the contradictions in consciousness and ways we have to consistently fight racism and white supremacy, everyday, as it’s so overwhelming in our society.)

I also remember seeing only people who looked like me—white—yet I felt I was different. I was more open to new things around me - encouraged to read between the lines and to be open in meeting people, not jumping to assumptions or stereotypes. Parents and my siblings were introducing me to various racialized representations of culture/history/music/films/geography at an early age. The dominant culture was more closed, but I sought out friends and people who were open and questioning the mainstream viewpoints and representations of culture/ideas/history/politics, and society. I was also critical at an early age thinking this imperial
history is not a true history. I was not interested in wars and military conquest but always the why?

At school our teachers reinforced the dominant elite worldview through curricula, to align with the Empire in representations of history, classical literature, and geography. Lesson content supported Empire through depictions of war and civilization, a racism done to other peoples and countries by killing and oppressing people. At home we would be encouraged to question why? My mother and father would shout at the television newscasters/ politicians and their interpretations of history and current affairs. We, as children were reminded not to believe everything the TV or teacher says.

In this sense I was not raised as many of my class mates and friends to believe in the British victory in great wars, or religious segregation against Irish catholics. (also see Anthias and Yuval Davis (1992) and a discussion on British racism against the Irish and also the historic relationship between the British state, nationalism and religion). In retrospect some of my peers were socialized to believe in white supremacy and the power of their own whiteness, irrespective of their working class roots (Although I also realize anti-racism has contradictions and is never pure). So I would be raised by the school system, by my peers and societies dominant white supremacist culture but would always question it as it felt exclusive, untrue and morally wrong.

In my thesis work I examined this socialization and my own agency to fight racism. How did my anti racism (and class consciousness) lead me to Ghana and affect my work and life in Ghana and afterwards? How did this journey impact my own Marxist humanism? How did I, as a class conscious white person, work in solidarity with my Ghanaian brothers and sisters?
Research Methods

To document my own experience I plan to draw on ideas from Paulo Freire (1972, 1998), Robert Graham (1991), Barbara Merrill (2005), William Pinar and Madeleine Grumet (1976), and Liz Stanley (1992) using auto/biographical approaches to examine the development of my being and collective self working from a Marxist humanist and revolutionary perspective. I also draw on Heewon Chang (2008) and auto ethnographic writing exercises to supplement my excavation work. Before I discuss these authors’ work it is necessary to situate my methodology in the larger biographical research literature.

**Life History, Autobiography and Auto/biography: A Literature Review**

There is a need to adopt more biographical approaches for the everyday struggles of ordinary people to record the dialectics of agency and structure while researching emancipatory approaches to popular education. (Merrill, 2005, p. 135)

Life history and biographic methods yield a vivid picture of the past by documenting lives and feelings of community members who would otherwise be absent from history. Indeed this is the power of the method and its social and democratic potential (Portelli, 1997, p. 58). Every person has a distinct history, a different story to tell through their own interpretation of life experience and social contexts. The process of reminiscing is less about particular events but more the meaning behind the story. An opportunity exists for working class communities to document their life and provide a much needed other view and window to working class agency, experience, and analysis. Biographical methods reflect a need for a more human method of research. We can get closer to how living human beings navigate through their world, how they express and gain understanding of the world as human subjects. Individuals cannot be divorced
from the collective cultural, historical, social, and political moment (Plummer, 2001, pp. 1-2). This highlights the links between historical context and the making of biographical lives. There is a need to examine the agency of individuals (and limits of agency) and how conscious (and unconscious) agency affects life history responding to changing social contexts.

Biographical methods are important to generate new ideas on how people understand the world and act on it. Life history from a post structural perspective opens up different dimensions of history: how different groups can experience the same historical moment in different contexts through various social identities of class/race and gender. A Marxist perspective would examine the social and historical context making the self and social identity through a dialectical and materialist analysis. A central focus would be how forces of history through class struggle, the social relations of capitalism and mode of production are responsible for how individuals, social identity and the self are made (Hill, 2010). An examination of one’s life influences and formative experience can also highlight how actions of past generations can shape and form a basis for current action (Bertaux, 1981).

It is now pertinent to discuss several auto/biographical methods to understand how lives interact with social structures and historical contexts. I as the researcher and subject need to gain access to the inner workings of my own interactions with history affecting the wider society.

**Auto/Biography**

There are vivid examples in history where the role of auto/biography has been used as an agentic exercise by radical activists in shaping and acting on social history such as W. E. Du Bois (1968), Angela Davis (1974), Frederick Douglas (1988), Emma Goldman (1970), John MacLean (1978), and William Gallacher (1968). However, through feudalism and capitalism
class position ensured the upper class and religious clergy had access to reading and writing. Subsequently, auto/biography has been largely dominated by white upper class males depicting their own lives and memoirs as a medium for artistic and creative venture. There was little concern for a social, collective or critical commentary.

In social science research and history autobiographic forms have been a marginal method. Concerns arise over the focus on individual memory and recollection of life and events. The author’s control of the process in selection and documentation is viewed as unscientific (Stanley, 1992). Biography has more credibility as an interviewer questions the subject collecting a more realistic and objective view of the past. However, can any recollection of the past reflect a true picture of events? Or are secondary sources written at the time of the event more a reliable source? I would surmise secondary sources are also open to bias and interpretation in the present, no less than one’s subjective view of reflecting and extracting from the past. Paul Thompson discusses the interpretation of history and the role of the historians judgement in selection of past events and the fact “reality is complex and many sided”. He then goes on:

It is quite easy for a historian to give most of his attention and quotations to those social leaders he admires, without giving any direct opinion of his own. Since the nature of most existing records is to reflect the standpoint of authority, it is not surprising that the judgement of history has more often than not vindicated the wisdom of the powers that be. (Thompson, 1976, p. 5)

The past like the present is subject to negotiated meanings of what happened- by those going through history as participants and those observing or writing about the past-extracted from the experience. This leads to various factors and causes become contested. Can history ever be only one perspective as the dominant ideology is taught in schools and the mainstream literature, held up as the truth by those in power?
How important are relationships between individuals and social structures in defining historical change? How do individuals move through history? Pru Chamberlayne (1993) views this dilemma as an open ended ontological one: who is the subject with agency? Do auto/biographies make society? Or are auto/biographies merely made by it? Eric Hosbawm, a renowned British Marxist historian, describes this as a dialectical process through writing his own autobiography amidst the events of the 20th century:

In one sense this book is: not world history illustrated by the experiences of an individual, but world history shaping that experience, or rather offering a shifting but always limited set of choices from which to adapt Karl Marx’s phrase, “men [sic] make [their lives], but they do not make [them] just as they please, they do not make [them] under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past” and, one might add, by the world around them. (2002, p. xiii)

Robert Graham and Writing the Self

Graham (1991) refers to Dewey’s concern with writing the self based on Hegel’s ideas of man [sic] having an organic relation with empirical consciousness. Objects of knowledge are “embraced by a larger living whole, the universal consciousness” (Zendler, 1960, p. 60). Graham makes the analogy that knowledge creation in writing the self is a fluid process and socially constructed (1991, p. 11). Graham explores the work of Harding (1937, 1962) and the concept of language as a medium whereby humans make sense of their world. Autobiography is a means to acquire and explore “the very process of learning itself” (1991, p. 12). Autobiography becomes a life searching exercise searching for one’s meaning in the world.

Graham brings to the fore a similar concern as Pinar (1976) of the temporal dimension of autobiography, concerned with the past, but from the perspective of the present, assisting the writer in predicting the future. He therefore questions if there is ever any authenticity of a genuine autobiographical act seeing one’s life as a whole (1991, p. 33). He goes onto remind us
past life is being re-arranged in the present (Pinar consciously alerts us to this through the currere method). The particular challenge of rewriting one’s history in the present is a concern as facts are being selected into relationships in perhaps a different way as were first experienced or even possessing new meanings in the present.

In recent decades links with autobiography and life history in the social sciences support an understanding into the condition of specific groups in society, to bring marginalized voices into the research agenda (also see Morgan, 1978; Oakley, 1981). Graham discusses the writing of the self as a reflection of history and an individual centred society, a late product of civilization or arguably capitalism itself (1991, pp. 27-28).

**Autobiography and Anthropology: Mead and Dewey**

Graham discusses how anthropology is concerned with autobiography as a reading of the self and the way it provides opportunity for a second reading of experience after one has lived it and experienced it. He believes “the second reading is truer as it adds consciousness to the raw contingencies of experience to interpretation” (1991, p. 28). Mead the anthropologist discussed the self as essentially a social structure arising in social experience (influencing the development of Dewey’s work around self actualization in education according to Graham). However, this process arises through the group one lives with or is socialized and is influenced by ritual, group norms, the way of life, and the culture of the group. These are local influences on the self, as opposed to societal and structural which create the self through capitalist class relations according to Marxism. Graham goes on to discuss the influence of anthropology and Mead “The social groups or communities to which we belong ultimately create the conditions in which ourselves may develop and the possibilities for self realization be achieved” (p. 53).
Mead’s later work on the nature of reflective thinking is a major contributor to the development of the autobiographic self. Dewey’s ongoing concern with reflection in education correlated with Mead’s work and its relation to educational theory (culminating in Dewey’s concept of consummatory experience, as cited in Graham, 1991). We construct “a fictional representation of ourselves through autobiography and enter into a process of self selection of which experiences are important. In this way the self realization is a creative endeavor and autobiography is an aesthetic of self realization” (Graham, 1991, p. 67).

**Sociological Autobiography and the Auto/Biography**

While reading through various auto/biographical methods I was drawn to those theories lodged in collective biography, sociology and Marxist humanism. One of the founding sociologists to shed light on the relationship between biography and social structure was Charles Wright Mills (1972). The use of autobiography and excavation provided an intimate look at how social, political, economic structures, and individual/collective socialization shaped me as a collective self. However, contemporary sociological biography has lacked a major focus on working class individuals who have a political commitment to their work.

Before Mills, sociology viewed society as the shaping force of individuals, as did Marx. Three interesting positions I wish to discuss are the sociological autobiography of Thomas Merton in White Riley (1998), the feminist auto/biography of Liz Stanley (1992) and the autobiographical writing of curriculum theorist William Pinar (1976) and Madeleine Grumet.

The difference between biography and autobiography are false according to Liz Stanley. Reconstruction of a biographical subject is not possible as the biographer cannot recover the past as it was experienced and understood in that moment. The post structuralist view believes the
biographer is also socially located-raced/classed, and gendered and reflects a partial view of ‘the life story’- no more value free than the auto/biographer. Hence Stanley refers to auto/biography implying a biographical study but from the perspective of oneself as a biographer, no less valid. The shifting of a socializing biography and epistemology decentres the subject as she relates to society while also examining the unique sense of each individual’s agency. Biographical methods need to be more critical and analytical investigating ways individuals locate themselves in the political process and social relations of power in society. Stanley explains the intellectual as auto/biographer needs to examine “how she understands what she understands” (1992, p. 178). I interpret this from a Marxist position as how relations of power and ideology intersect in social relationships and structures of capitalism to shape those understandings.

Stanley specifically centres her theory on a feminist perspective differentiating auto/biography as a sociological and intellectual exercise whereby the biographer interrogates her own life history, through an accountable reflexivity. In this sense biography is recognized as a process, not an end in itself. Stanley says “this biographic process is firmly lodged within and is symbolically related to ‘the intellectual biography’ of the biographer” (1992, p. 177).

Discussions and interrogation of power relations in personal and social relations are also central to the understanding of life processes and experience. Stanley’s ideas of auto/biography are distinct from traditional method of autobiography where the subject is usually interviewed or supported by another person or a biographer. Working with a biographer can impede Stanley’s auto/biographical process as the interviewer will have their own ideas, questions and planned journey. Stanley purposely frames auto/biography “as a biography only changing the position of the self as interviewer/writer” (1992, p. 177).
A sociological autobiography “utilizes sociological perspectives, ideas, concepts, findings and analytical procedures to construct and interpret one’s own history within the larger history of one’s times” (Merton, 1988, p. 18). The auto/biographer serves a dual role as participant and observer in her life: having unlimited and privileged access to life data – to their own inner experience in ways an outside biographer cannot enter. The role of auto/biographer, according to Stanley, can provide an introspection and retrospection in ways no biographer can elicit. I believe to enter into this method researchers particularly require a disciplined, critical, analytical, and reflexive approach to create a sociology of scientific knowledge.

The auto/biographer needs to be aware of the need to question memory, “to probe one’s ideas beneath the surface, and strip away layers of meaning - through a reverse archaeology” (Stanley, 1992, p. 177). This entails stripping away layers of information, experience and knowledge investigating what is, and what could be. During this process the auto/biographer in effect adds more layers to the analysis. It requires a self examination that does not halt at the obvious but wishes to deepen the analysis. Usually this role is bequeathed to the biographer as an outsider with a benefit of distance to observe and probe. Sociological auto/biography combines the role of insider/outsider consciously. From my own Marxist perspective this also requires a historical materialist and dialectical analysis of the excavation material. These layers need to be situated within the wider social, economic and political relations of capitalism and the ways ideology intersects with class consciousness at different stages of my life.

**Autobiography and Curriculum Theory:**

*William Pinar, Madeleine Grumet and Currere*

This segment highlights some of the key ideas of William Pinar and Madeleine Grumet’s method of *currere*. Aspects of this method proved to be a useful tool as I examined my own past
experience in my thesis work, “to look at myself as data” (Pinar 1976, p. 17). The meaning of currere is to run the course. Pinar describes his interpretation of this metaphor:

The track around which I run may be inalterably forced but the rate at which I run, the quality of my running, my sensual-intellectual-emotional experience of moving bodily through space and time: all these are my own creations: they are my own responsibilities. (1976, p. vii)

Although currere depends heavily on psychological/psychoanalytic theory I have chosen to use the methods and aspects of this theory which align with my own Marxist humanist, materialist, dialectical, and critical realist perspective. A Marxist perspective questions the premise each individual self has power over their own creation. I focused more on how history and my collective self was determined by external forces such as class/gender/race, and specific time and historical contexts which shaped that experience as a collective/individual experience. This is not to argue each individual has a degree of agency but that how much of the self can be detracted from the experience and history of our environment, and others around us. In my own particular development I believe the notion of a collective self is more appropriate. I have grown and been influenced with others - I am with them not apart experiencing them and growing as a self but becoming them (also see Freire, 1976). Therefore the method of currere has been adapted for this inquiry.

Currere has been designed as a tool for teachers to question their work and why they have become a teacher. Pinar believes the answers are in one’s past and present, and one’s images for the future. In order to excavate these we need to dialogue with the world. He states “the environment is our land – the thesis of our dialectic” (1976, p. viii). He then goes on to say, “The dialectic is the basis of educational experience, between objectivity and the encounter in the
world experienced in inner temporality and subjectivity, the judgment drawn from the encounter” (p. 40).

Pinar discusses a critique of autobiography as being inept at really capturing the past. Instead it selects and records the present perspective of the past, the perspective of the storyteller (in a way similar to Graham). Its truth lies in its fictions. According to currere, the method and autobiographies become metaphors for student’s experience (1976, p. 74).

The emphasis lies in the learning of the subject herself - not in us learning about the subject. Our insights are subservient to his/hers. “He/she provides the experience and collects the data. He/she reviews it, ascertains its significance and chooses the appropriate application of its results” (Pinar, 1976, p. 84).

Pinar promotes currere as a form to become more fully human; like Freire he raises the question: How do you become? (1976). However, Pinar does reinforce his work is fundamentally individual but lodged in Freire’s concept of unfinishedness, “Currere systematically attempts to reveal individual life history and the historical moment. Because its motive and aim are at base humanization, I see it as consonant with Freirian pedagogy” (Pinar, 1976, p. 106).

I would question if an individualized focus could be equated with Freire’s founding epistemology and ontology of a collective and social self. The latter is impacted by and acting on forces of oppression and inhumanity through conscientization of class inequality and social, political and economic relations of power.

**Currere: The method**

In short currere is the running, the experience of our lives. Pinar refers to the evolution of life as a synthesis of cognitive and psychosocial development (1976, p. 18). Further in this
chapter he refers to the method prescripting the social meaning of our lives. My emphasis was placed on the social meaning and how one’s experience is lodged and woven in the materialist, historical, social, economic and political context of society. Rather than discuss a fictitious history of one’s life experienced in the past, present and future I consciously dissected the collective self (from a Marxist humanist perspective rather than from a cognitive or psycho/social development perspective) in relation to each context and the influences which made me and others in each specific context. I cannot be understood as an individual but as part of the collective at each selective past I choose to examine. I cannot describe this experience as a “self-report” (Pinar, 1976, p. 34), distorting the forces of oppression which work to heighten or destroy my collective self. A collective self is dialectically opposed to the liberal concept of self and also to the wider neo-liberal capitalist and imperialist dominant ideology of individualism, consumerism and a commodified and fetishized driven self.

Pinar (1976) discusses currere as a dialogue of each person with the world, similar to a Freirian concept of reflecting and reading the world. “His [sic] idiosyncratic history and genetic make up with his situation, its place, people, artifacts, ideas that we call educational experience” (p. 34).

The method of currere has four stages of inquiry into individual experience described in the following section. I further explain how I chose to use the method in my collective self excavation.

1. Regressive

During this stage Pinar encourages the researcher to return to the past as if it were a journey. One enters the past as it was lived. He encourages one not to totally be there but to observe what one sees and record, as if you are taking a photograph. As Pinar’s
concern is educational experience the focus is on school and educational experiences. As my focus is class consciousness and Marxist humanism this was my major lens during formative experience, my early years – my ‘search’ focus.

During the regressive stage one examines the physical aspect of what one sees, the buildings, the environment, related artifacts, (individuals) teachers, (informal educators). Pinar suggests the recording of responses from the present on what is observed, specifically returning to your earliest memory experience, to whenever one can reach. One has to enter the venue/classroom and watch yourself, your teachers, your classmates: record what you see. It is important not to interpret but to record observations (Pinar, 1976, pp. 56-58).

2. Progressive

Pinar encourages the researcher student to reach a meditative state and think of the future, of tomorrow, next week, next month, year, few years. Bring your focus to educational experience (class consciousness and related lenses). Allow your mind to work freely. Record what you see for as long as possible. Again take a ‘photograph’ of what you see.

3. Analytical

Here, one leaves the regressive and progressive photos and now enters the biographic present. This entails your present responses and analysis to the past and future. To begin one takes a photo of the present, detaches oneself from it and explains what you see.
4. Synthetical

In this last stage, you look at oneself in the mirror and question what one sees. In your own voice think about what the meaning of the present is. Ask, is this following my own ontological evolution/movement where I want to be? Through this process the “researcher leaves his [sic] laboratory and enters himself. He takes on the subjects role and performs experiments on himself” (Pinar, 1976, p. 61).

Pinar’s method of currere was used to support my excavation. As I reiterated earlier, I focused on places and events which impacted my consciousness. The impact of political and social systems on my being and coming to consciousness was extracted in chronological order and also in a series of events. Throughout I placed memory and experience in social, political, economic, and historical perspective across three continents, across time. Currere was therefore adapted from its psycho-social roots to suit a Marxist analysis.

The additional concern with the collective self versus the individual self brings a different lens for investigating auto/biography. Instead of looking inward to sculpt my inner self and the effect life has had on my psycho/social development, my collective autobiography also looked outwards at the impact of my own agency on the world. My agency is a result of my engagement with the world (capitalism) and how I make sense of this world through my own class consciousness and as a living corporeal being collectively with others. I questioned how acting dialectically in the world affected my consciousness and also how I lived and acted through others. I am repeating and changing, reliving the history of my own community, using my own aunts/uncles/grandparents/father/mother as historical subjects for dealing with similar oppression and inequity in a different socio-historical context. Coming to consciousness as they did. This is also an interesting aspect of collective autobiography bringing to voice and attention the cycle of
history, the universal aspect of history—of class across continents. It’s my belief that I became a collective self of and through the struggles in Scotland, Canada and Ghana. As I transgressed and opened my humanity to experience the memory and the collective self of others, their history, ancestors/families/community oppression. I chose not to focus on the individual self and identity politics as I believe this can frame oppression in secular and divisive ways, preventing a unified struggle against capitalism and our own collective being and humanity.

It is an ethical and class conscious humanity that will ultimately bring us closer to our own freedom as being human. Becoming our own collective and class conscious self as a human race is our ability to link the destructive and suicidal relations of capitalism across history and continents – to live through our historical agency internally through an ethics, morality and being relating to Marxist humanism.

**Auto Ethnography as Method: The Contribution of Heewon Chang**

In an effort to excavate relevant data to respond to my research question I drew on the ideas of an auto ethnographic method and the various exercises suggested by Heewon Chang (2008). By looking at the self through experience, Chang believes we gain insight as to how the self is made in and through cultural influences and encounters with others. I adapted Chang’s methods on how to illicit memory through concrete writing examples supporting my ability to pry open relevant data from my own life history.

Chang draws from an anthropological perspective in exploring the self and the surrounding environment. During the next section Chang’s contributions to supporting my research methodology are described. My excavation study adapted an auto ethnographic method for the purpose of soliciting life history data.
Chang, culture and the self

Chang centres her method in the sphere of culture and the interactions of the self with others (2008, p. 23). She believes the self is defined in varied ways according to ones culture: in her case, non-western and Native American collective definitions of the self (p. 25). The self is a relational being existing in and outside of culture. Self becomes mirrored in others, and others become an extension of self (p. 27).

Chang is interested in these processes from a cross cultural perspective. An anthropological view of culture focuses on the beliefs, values and way of life of a society or social group. The social construction of culture comes from growing up with others in a social context. It also means a common heritage, specific traditions, artifacts, icons and ways of informing gender identity and behaviour (Thompson, 2002, p. 13). Chang focuses specifically on the context of culture and how the self is related to:

1. others of similarity (friends to self)
2. others of difference (strangers to self)
3. others of opposition (enemies to self). (p. 29)

Chang believes these processes are not fixed but change according to varying experiences and social contexts.

My approach differed from Chang as I did not seek a cultural analysis. Instead, I used Chang’s method to focus on the social, historical, and onto formative process involved in my own coming to class consciousness through a Marxist humanism. Chang’s methodology provided writing exercises to solicit data from my life experience to investigate the process of class consciousness and to research my own philosophy of praxis. This entailed studying my
resistance and interactions with capitalism. It also encompassed researching my own agentic self, building and engaging in collective projects for social justice against capital. I highlighted these as unconscious processes such as individual resistance as a school student or as a female teenager against gender roles and also as conscious experiences in social, political, and educational activism in Scotland, Canada and Ghana. Although there are variances and similarities of experience and learning in each geographical and social context, I believe these flow from the overarching ways capital has structured itself in each historical and contemporary epoch.

Through my thesis research I drew on the similarities of collective resistance across each continent and also specific nuances which highlighted differences in social consciousness and radical praxis. I drew a pattern whereby the self, a collective self, works through the dichotomy of capitalist oppression from a Marxist humanist framework, through and in an overarching class struggle.

Chang (2008) believes understanding others is a way to understand one’s self. Understanding others’ self narratives, comparing and contrasting brings difference to light and helps us to better understand our self, through a web of self and others. “Whether seeing self through others or against others, the study of self-narratives through self-reflection is beneficial to cultural understanding” (p. 34).

The making of the self is a continual process one which Chang believes auto ethnography can explore and document. My own approach drew on a definition of a collective self interacting and made with and through other selves in struggle, a historical struggle passed on by our own ancestors against class oppression in a social political and economic context.
Chang tries to distinguish auto ethnography from other forms of self narrative by accentuating the emphasis on not merely a narration of the self but engaging the self in a wider social and cultural context (2008, pp. 41-42). Chang refers to Ellis and Bochner (2000) and the many variations cited in use of auto ethnography.

They (Ellis and Bochner) observe that “[a]utoethonographers vary in their emphasis in the research process (graphy), on culture (ethno) and on self (auto) and that “[d]ifferent exemplars of autoethnography fall at different places along the continuum of each of these three axes. (2008, p. 48)

Chang also goes on “I argue that auto ethnography should be ethnographic in its methodological orientation, cultural in its interpretative orientation, and autobiographical in its content orientation” (2008, p. 48). In my research I differed from Chang as I used my auto/biographical data with a different critical, analytical and interpretative framework to detect the formation of class consciousness and a philosophy of praxis replacing Chang’s emphasis on cultural understanding and the self.

Research and Writing: Collecting the Data

My Excavation Through the Currere Method

Through a mixture of the method currere and auto/biography I returned to specific sites of my collective self to examine a specific research area. Currere is a method designed for teachers to explore their professional life and motivation to teach. In this sense it is very specific about dissecting and visualizing classroom practice as well as the teacher’s own inner self awareness and drive to teach. I changed emphasis and focused on visualizing and photographing specific sites of formative experience in Scotland, Canada and Ghana. First I had to list the most important memories of childhood and teenage years. I began by visualizing the street I grew up in, the surrounding landscape, play areas, school, friends and Markinch High Street. Next, I
focused on places I would frequent as a teenager such as community hall dances, nightclubs and social spaces. I would journey back as Pinar requests, and start to write what I see, as if taking a photograph. I would also try to listen to what was said, through conversations with friends, family and teachers.

I followed the same process for Ghana and my radical praxis. I first of all listed important memories and then visited each site, my first house, the market, my first job and the office, workshop sites, and my first meetings with Action for Young People. I also visualized AYP residential workshop throughout Ghana. I visited the popular theatre events held in various halls, schools, and public venues. I would see AYP on stage and hear the scenes, the audience shouting, and see myself sitting in the audience.

After recording my photos of the past it was important to leave the photo for a few days or so before returning to analyze each picture. My lenses for analysis were class consciousness, Marxist humanism and revolutionary critical pedagogy. It was necessary for me to look at ways I was becoming aware of social issues, of capitalism, class, race and gender oppression -through my own experience and also my interactions with institutions, social mores, competing ideologies, and school teachers. What was I learning in each scene about myself as a working class woman and also about other people around me? How was I starting to raise political questions and themes and how was I resisting injustice or what I deemed as inequality and unfair treatment? How was I reacting to world events and current national and international politics I viewed on television or I read about? How did I become active in political and social issues from a young age? How did I stand up for my rights and the rights of others in each photo, through my words, my actions or through my silence and resistance? How did I resist consciously or unconsciously?
As Pinar highlights I had to perform experiments on myself, but also on my social world and context casting a historical lens at each scene, how did I get here? What were the social and historical influences which made me react a certain way or brought me to this photo?

Heewon Chang’s use of auto ethnographic writing exercises were a useful accompanying tool to currere, supporting a more detailed and systematic method for recording important influences and events in my life experience. I adapted Chang’s method to suit my research interests and describe these in the next section.

Using Auto-Ethnography Exercises to Illicit Memory and Reflection

Ethnography values the memory and story of informant’s lives, however in auto ethnography the major story and data is drawn from your own memory. Chang provided an array of written and visual exercises to unravel memory and provide data to examine my past. In the following section Chang’s exercises are briefly described providing concrete examples of how I used this research methodology.

By the time I began to engage in Chang’s data I had collected substantial written descriptive data, with some analysis and interpretation. However Chang’s method helped me to discipline my study and find correlation between different sites and contexts. I will describe this process through the use of Chang’s exercises.

Developing a timeline

I created an autobiographical timeline which highlighted memorable events and experiences in my life. As my main study was class consciousness I tried to sort events into this framework. Therefore I recalled an assortment of experiences and events and then analyzed through a class conscious lens, selecting and discarding material. I also sifted through the data
from an anti-racist racist and gender lens to further classify data and build on analysis. As my thesis would be divided into experience in three continents I began to trace my experience in chronological fashion during childhood and specific memories.

I focused on further education reminiscing on specific classes and teachers which I feel impacted me in some way. I documented further education classes in Canada at Ryerson, University of Toronto and OISE and in England at Fircroft and London Polytechnic. This timeline helped me develop awareness of my exposure to theory and how this influenced the growth of my political activism and praxis. I developed another timeline regarding work life. I chronologically documented influential workmates and how I learnt worker activism at each site. I also extracted social and cultural influences from childhood in Scotland to Canada and Ghana. I would write about specific experiences which highlighted a social awareness of class, race, whiteness, and gender.

I began to notice a pattern of how specific relationships of solidarity with influential individuals encouraged my future praxis as an organic intellectual. This was later reinforced through Chang's exercise on naming and interrogating why influential people or mentors in your life were important. Chang also suggests ideas of eliciting border crossing experiences through this exercise, referring to a more selective thematic timeline (2008, pp. 72-73).

The border crossing exercise substantiated my most influential mentors were part of this border crossing exchange. Relationships across age, race, language, countries, sexuality, educational background, and gender were key to learning and coming to consciousness, pushing me to look at different perspectives and test my own theory. It also supported my linking with similar perspectives yet journeying from worlds apart. By examining the connecting and
common threads of these mentoring and relationships of solidarity I could see patterns of a collective humanity searching for an everlasting freedom and peace.

**Inventory of the self-writing exercise**

This exercise is an attempt to gather ideas whilst evaluating and organizing data. You can collect random memories then through multi layering of data decide what’s useful for your research area. Phifer (2002) suggests lists be made of people who have been important to you in your life or perhaps mentors. Through this exercise I also began to dissect why these people were important and at what stages in my life as discussed above. What was the social context of these relationships? (Chang, 2008, p. 76).

**Rituals and celebrations**

I drew on an exercise whereby I explored my past consciousness and specific rituals or celebrations which were important to my socialization - through family, school, community and the world of work. I would then analyze why they were important and the intricacies of each event. Specifically I recalled Thursday evening visits to my aunts and Sunday afternoon visits to my gran’s. New Year’s celebrations were also an important part of our Scottish working class culture. In my family the annual pigeon club dinner and dances were also an annual ritual. As I recalled each memory I would write descriptions of the physical space, the people I could remember and what each person brought to the group. I looked at discussions, processes and rituals happening and exactly what I could see and hear. What common things did we do on each occasion, the preparation for the event as well as the actual event. I wrote descriptively about each event then returned to dissect what was actually happening from a class, gender and race perspective. How did I learn about gender roles, about the working class and perspectives on the
world through these events and rituals? What did I learn through listening to conversations, what was important? What did I learn through what was not said but displayed?

**Visualizing self**

Chang explains the power of visual image to enapture complex texts. She suggests the creation of kinship diagrams or/and free drawing exercises to help stir memories and unpack the image through writing. I used this exercise to draw a family tree and realized the rich history of my family at specific periods of history, through the activism of the Fife community, and as immigrants in another country, as activists and humanitarians. I also recalled my gran’s living room where we used to visit every weekend as a child. Drawing this image helped me think about the conversations and ritual which used to fill these visits. Gran making cups of tea, granddad opening up his home brew beer and then the reminiscing of past local historical events in Kirkcaldy. There would also be discussion over recent political affairs.

This is where I learnt the power of history, how ordinary people like my grandparents make history. I knew of struggles to achieve social programs such as school meals and health care for working class communities. There were also fond memories of the cooperative stores where foodstuffs, school clothing, shoes, baked goods and furniture were sold at non profit prices. Through these visits I learnt the power of sharing stories. I shared and participated in making community knowledge and history for future generations like me. I learnt of place, of home and belonging. My grandparents’ home was a place relishing in the goodness of home made food, growing your own vegetables and making your own beer, learning to be self sufficient yet depending on one another’s neighbours. I heard of stories of rogues in the community and the criminal elements in the housing schemes as well as the employers, managers and supervisors who did not respect community members.
I also used this method to draw a map of my childhood neighbourhood and the street games we would play. I would remember the houses of neighbourhood friends and influential adults in the area whom I would look up to and why. It made me reflect on the values and mores I was being socialized into by elders in the community and also by other children. I also remembered the working class conservatives and the neighbours who were sometimes more cruel to the kids. There was an unspoken elitism from some of the community, about the way we would dress and talk, as if our working class accent and spoken English were not proper enough.

I drew a visual map of my neighbourhood in Accra. It made me travel back to the noises and the community characters and street sellers. It also took me back to the smells of the street and chop bars, of smoked fish, kenkey and charcoal or kerosene at the night market. I could smell the sea at La and Jamestown. I could also remember the sweet smell of fresh perfumed babies and their parents dressed in their finest clothes for church or a wedding, funeral or outdooring. Alternatively, I also remembered the smells from the inadequate sanitation facilities especially in the poorer neighbourhoods. It made me remember the liveliness of the street and the ingenuity of working class life struggling to get by and of course the children on the streets running errands and working as sellers. So many busy people in such small spaces. This exercise alerted me to the physical lay out of Accra’s poor neighbourhoods and lack of city planning. It highlighted Fanon’s description of the compartmentalized world, the world of the expats, whites and rich and the world of the colonized poor. Chang believes this exercise can help you discover and affirm your geographic self and place based identity aiding an interpretation of your evolution and development over time.

I used this exercise to chronologically and visually document my travel and residency in various countries since leaving Scotland. It reminded me how my travel and exile from family
and friends supported my development in theory and praxis as I reflected on my life in other countries. I learnt from new friends, the community, political, and social context of each country. I also had a comparative map to examine my own coming to consciousness in each country.

**Personal values and preferences**

In this exercise I had to list five of the most important values I was raised with, and then prioritize them according to importance. Chang’s emphasis was on cultural values while I focused on social and political values. A shortened version of key sayings were; Always respect elders; Treat everyone equally; You are no better than anyone else, never look down at people; Think independently; Be critical; Stand up for what you believe in, even if it means you maybe unpopular; Education education education will help you better your life; Travel and learn; Always support striking workers; Never cross a picket line; Never vote conservative or liberal; Never live above your means; Help people; Laugh at yourself; Be polite; Socialism will come around in the future; To be rich is a crime; There will always be workers in struggle (with the rich).

This exercise was very helpful in exploring formative experience and how I was socialized. It also supported the secondary data of Rafeek’s study on socialist childhood (2008). I appreciated a historical analysis of how values and ethics are timeless.

**Interpretation and analysis of data**

At the latter part of my excavation and auto-biographical writing I had mounds of material to collate. To answer my research questions I had to sift through, classify, and sort data to integrate my life stories. I had to continually review my research questions while retaining any data which came close to an answer or the direction of the answer as a hunch. I also researched
secondary sources specifically on Scottish, Fife and socialist history, to explain my gran and dad’s context. Did their formative experience inform my socialist consciousness and collective self? Secondary sources, some oral histories, reaffirmed my hunches and also the memory of my gran, mum, and dad. I searched for keywords popping up in the data and any profound messages I needed to interpret, dig deeper and explore. I was also analyzing and writing simultaneously.

I needed to reread my literature review and theory to develop a framework and method to explain my life experience. It was necessary to place class consciousness in perspective through my life stories and also highlight transgression in radical praxis with Ghana. Through this process it became clear to me the heightened importance of my historical data. This also directed me to reread my Master’s thesis which focused on the same time period and helped me investigate class consciousness in Fife mining communities.

My PhD research was becoming more linked to my Master’s as I tried to chart my own coming to consciousness, also in Fife, during my formative experience, decades later, but again diverging to Canada and Ghana. However, I also brought an introspective dynamic of race and whiteness in Ghana and a developing sisterhood and solidarity across race and continents in Canada as a domestic worker. I realized how influential Gramsci’s theory of organic intellectuals was to my radical praxis in Ghana.

Chang stresses the difference between auto ethnographic data analysis and interpretation distinguishing the final product from self-narrative and autobiographical writings that concentrate on storytelling (2008, p. 126).
My excavation

In the following chapters my excavation provides insight into the conditions which contributed to my transgression as a radical educator. Through my own excavation I look at ways family, peers, societies structures and capitalist social relations influenced the growth of my collective self and class consciousness. I also look at ways external influences such as theory contributed to my own analysis and subsequent agency, as a coherent self and organic intellectual. My excavation in Ghana is an evolutionary journey from past formative experience and is reflective of my epistemological and ontological journey to collectively make sense of and change capitalist relations of race, class, white supremacy and gender through radical praxis.

In Chapter Three this journey begins with my history and formative experience in Fife, Scotland. I enter into the world of my childhood and family experience in a small paper making town. My own family history is excavated through the memory of grandparents and parents struggles. Afterwards I discuss the influences of school and teenage years. Chapter Four includes my travel to Canada where I worked as a domestic and became active in community and labour struggles. My excavation continues through exposing experiences of informal and formal learning as a political activist and academic. In Chapter Five I investigate my role as a radical educator and as a class conscious, human being in Ghana. I excavate my experience designing a radical education program and also the impact of the collective learning process, and AYP on my own consciousness. The impact of a critical human rights education in finding freedom and a common humanity is also a central theme in this chapter. Was I able to transgress across race, class and gender in Ghana?
CHAPTER THREE: ANALYSIS

Excavating a Collective Self and Formative Experience

Setting the Historical Context: Scotland and Learning Class

The study of my formative experience in Scotland and my Master’s research highlighted how the learning and praxis of organic intellectuals through/in radical education programs in one historical moment could be transferred to contemporary spaces in a different context (my own “praxis” in Ghana in Chapter Five). Suoranta and Moisio describe Gramsci’s interpretation of organic intellectuals as being of working class origin, participating in everyday community life, helping to create and support a counter hegemony that undermines the existing capitalist relations. There is also a conscious effort to self reflect on an organic intellectuals role so as not to be above the people but to be at one with the working class (Suoranta & Moisio, 2009, p. 77). Furthermore, it is necessary to broaden our lens of an organic intellectual and consciously include women and racialized working class intellectuals in this category (Davis, 1974; Weiler, 2001).

This historical materialist position through the excavation of my collective self, highlights the continuity of a Marxist education project lodged in the dialectic of history/humanism from the 1920s in Scotland. “In certain periods of history and social contexts with varying other factors there have been successes whereby working class people enacted a conscious attempt to negate the relations of capitalism and alienation through a collective struggle to be human” (Boughton, 2005, p. 100).
By examining my collective self and exposing similarities and differences between each continent and historical context I reflected on the possibility of a commonality of the feeling and real oppression of class, a questioning of class relations systemically and in our human being. Class in contemporary society has been explained as another identity (along with race/gender/sexuality/age/ability/body size and other identities) and “not as the overarching relation of capitalism which shapes identities- how we live our lives and what our limitations as a human race have become” (Ebert, 2008). By failing to link our humanity and what we have in common, our struggles become divided and the hegemonic grip of capital become stronger (Mayo, 2004).

Discussing the impact of historical, political, economic and societal contexts on the development and conscientization of an educator’s class consciousness sheds light on the relationship between the educators revolutionary praxis and formative experience. It can also lead discussions on the importance of radical education and politically strategic questions similar to Gramsci, Freire, Marx discussed in the literature review. This entails creating a counter hegemonic culture while building political and organizing skills among working class communities. Educational and cultural spaces provide an opportunity to grow oppositional and class consciousness. Martin refers to building popular education programs whereby “community learners can build their capacity to reassert social purpose and collective solidarity” (1999, p. 7).

The specific historical context of the inter war years are also a main thrust of the preceding section as my gran, dad and mum gained their own formative experience through this period. During this period Fife was immersed in a radical political culture and historical context which nurtured transgression while connecting the human spirit through critical practice through the community. This forged a desire for a collective humanity and shaping of an ideal of a new
different society based on radical change for equality and erosion of the capitalist system. I believe I am a product of this.

Excavation Begins

Pseudonyms

During my excavation work in the following chapters I have chosen to use pseudonyms for my aunts (Chrissy, Agnes, Jean), my hometown (Markinch), my grandparents street (Den Road) in order to respect the privacy of my family in Scotland.

On discussion with the NGO I worked with in Ghana, we have chosen to use pseudonyms to also respect the group identity (Action for Young People- AYP) and also individual AYP members cited in the thesis.

There are also pseudonyms used for Fife community members cited from my Master’s research.

Scotland

The following verse is a family heirloom saved from the interwar period and political agitation by the radical parties in Fife. The title of the song is “Labours Hymn” to accompany the hymn tune “Abide with me” and is written by A. B., from Methil. There are 8 verses and I include verses 6-8 below.

Verse 6
Rise in your thousands, banish life’s dull care
Health, wealth and wisdom mutually we’ll share:
Work for the day dawn, chase night shades away
When idleness and selfishness will all be swept away
Verse 7
Toilers unite, the end is coming fast
The system is dead, its glory now is past
When all shall be each the one common plea
Then love, truth and justice will abide with me

Verse 8
Then raise up the banner whose colour is red
And show to the world old feuds are now dead
A new day is dawning, when right will be might
And people will worship the new born light.

(Labour hymn pamphlet from my father, passed on by my gran)

In my Master’s I explored Metcalfe’s study of Australian mining communities where he
draws some interesting parallels with Scottish mining communities. Metcalfe believes the class
struggle is internalized, reacting on events, work, and interpersonal relationships. It is a
dialectical relationship whereby the self is constantly reacting to social relations, and vice versa.
Another distinction Metcalfe makes is that this relation was exacerbated in mining communities
as working conditions were so harsh. “Capitalists have historically treated miners as
commodities, and miners in turn have internalized this impression” (as cited in Thomson, 1992,
p. 30). Metcalfe stresses “Miners often forced by heat to work nearly or completely naked
thereby evoking the contrast between savage and civilized” (1988, p. 65).

Also during my Master’s research community members discussed the discriminatory
treatment of miner’s families. For example, Eck explains

It wis built intae yaer education, yae wur jist a miner. Miner’s that went tae
Burntisland, tae the swimming pools, intae the forties wur segregated afore they
went in, a special hoor fur thum. I suppose yae can imagine without pit baths yae
wur only washin doon tae yaer waist. If folk wur seein the miners backs, some
widnae even wash the coal dust aff their backs. It wis bad luck. (Thomson, 1992, p. 141)

In Fife we can witness a tight knit community where each family relied on one another and neighbours’ benevolence. Families needed support in childrearing, in acquiring the basic necessities of life, and also in social activity to share in the pain, and the joy in creating a community culture away from the hardships of mining and domestic work. This community culture of resistance and survival was also supported by political activity of socialist and communist parties, and a belief in a socialist alternative. Boughton believes there has been a serious omission in education history from the first half of the 20th century whereby an international communist movement developed a network of party schools in such working class communities as Fife “seeking to teach its members and supporters how to build a more just world” (2005, p. 100).

In this chapter I discuss my own formative experience from Scotland and Canada. I believe the formation of my own worldview and basic ethical and moral framework of who I am began at an early age and was reinforced by my early work life as a teenager and young adult. I learnt of class relations growing up in a small Scottish town which was basically one big council housing estate of poor working class communities surrounded by a fringe of private housing and a small middle class (similar to Rafeek, 2008).

There was no escaping class, you were surrounded by smaller and bigger working class communities throughout Fife. It was not until I came to Canada as a domestic worker did I ever live in close proximity to middle class people. As a domestic I was in the homes of middle class Canadians, immersed in a middle class culture and affluence I had only watched on television. In the beginning I was very uncomfortable as I was not sure how to behave or interact in this
culture. But, by observing the cues and my new environment I learnt to play the roles expected of me.

During this chapter I revisit my early experience of class relations and working class culture, in school, in my parents’ and grandparents’ homes, and participating in the wider community culture. I also address my struggles and experiences of finding humanity as a collective, class conscious self. Freire discusses his own similar sentiments as a conscious being in this world dedicating his own life to search for an inner humanity and sense of being while being responsible in this journey. Throughout his life he wanted to fulfill his human-ness, by collectively creating a better more human society (Freire, 1998).

First of all I examine the social context of Fife in general and zoom in on my own childhood and town environment. I realized I was also heavily influenced by the bigger town of my dad’s birth and the influence of my gran on my own social and political development. So in this sense I had to also revisit the social and historical context of Scotland in the 1920s, from Glasgow where gran was born to Kirkcaldy where my dad was born. I also refer to secondary sources and my Master’s study for this background information (Kenefick, 2007; MacDougall, 1981; MacIntyre, 1980; Rafeek, 2008; Thomson, 1992).

The Story Begins….

The 1920s were tumultuous times for Fife as the county was a hybrid of coal mining communities stretching from the coastal collieries of Methil, Wemyss, Leven, Dysart and Kirkcaldy to the central pits of Balgonie and West Fife coalfields of Kinglassie, Bowhill, Cowdenbeath, Dunfermline, Kelty and Comrie. Coal was the source of employment for male
workers at the early part of the 20th century and began to dwindle after the pits were nationalized after the Second World War.

Before this, coalmining was first worked by the church and then taken over by the big landowners in the area. Not only did they own the land but the people as well, in relations of serfdom. For part of the year the serfs would work the land and off season would have to go down the pit to hew coal. This job was expected of women, children and men and entire families were owned and bonded to the landowner, like slaves, and would be returned to the landowner if indeed they tried to escape (I wondered if this memory of serfdom lives on in the community and was a contributing factor to critical consciousness in the community’s development). The Emancipation Act was not passed until 1774, but was not sufficient in prohibiting the system of serfdom until 1799. The system of serfdom ensured the gentry always had a reliable and cheap source of labour to work the mines (Brister, 1972; MacIntyre, 1980, p. 51). Nearer the coastal communities there would be a mixture of fishermen, dockers and agricultural workers owing to the nature of the seasons and availability of food and crops and what the landowner determined.

As the need for coal and energy increased through the advent of British industrial capitalism so did the need for a transportation network to ship the coal hence the growth of the railway system throughout Fife and prominent harbours in Methil, Leven and Kirkcaldy in central Fife. The railway workers union also became a powerful force of industrial unionism during the earlier part of the 20th century.

Working class families depended on the mine owners, railway owners, gentry and factory owners for housing until the construction of government housing after the Second World War. In fact housing and overcrowding was a major social and health issue in Scotland and responsible for major outbreaks of tuberculosis and contagious disease not unknown in third world countries
today. There was no real coordinated development of these towns with adequate planning and recreational facilities. In Fife’s mining communities workers families had no choice but to live close to work, inhaling dangerous dust and fumes while also reflecting the coal owner and factory owners priorities. As the Royal Commission on Scottish housing describes:

The ‘Miners Row’ of inferior class is often a dreary and featureless place with houses, dismal in themselves, arranged in monotonous lines ... The open spaces are encumbered with washhouses, privies etc., often out of repair, and in wet weather get churned up into a morass of semi-liquid mud, with little in the way of solidly constructed road or footpath. (HMSO, 1918, as cited in MacIntyre, 1980, p. 50)

While living in Accra, Ghana I observed similar circumstances; In Accra’s poor communities an unplanned, outdated open sewer system and lack of government sanitation services caused community health problems such as the spread of cholera and malaria. Problems of overcrowding also exacerbate the easy transmission of sickness such as tuberculosis.

MacIntyre reminds us in Fife mining communities several *bings* (coal waste heaps) were frequently left smouldering contributing noxious fumes to the surrounding communities. Houses were all single storey, with two rooms or only one room. Overcrowding was severe and ten residents in one house was not uncommon. Dry closet toilets, water and laundry facilities were all communal and drainage was open while ash pits were used for refuse (1980, p. 50).

The sight of winding machinery or smoke stack chimneys had an overwhelming presence in Fife’s landscape surrounded by small mining terraced houses or the council housing estates. Andrew Metcalfe also found a similar pattern among coal mining families in Australia

It was the employers decision to open and close mines, lay off workers, lower output and regulate wages. Companies located mines according to financial and geological factors while also forcibly choosing the natural environment where workers would live. (1988, pp. 27-28)
The demise of Scottish coalfields began during the 1950s and finally ended with the miners strike in 1984/85. Fife has witnessed great changes in demographics and industrial patterns – from coal to linoleum, microelectronics, open cast mining, textiles and paper making. Now the county is centred mainly on service industries with some of the highest unemployment rates in the UK.

Fife has been steeped in the history of Scottish trade unionism and political radicalism since the industrialization of the county. The miners’ union especially was responsible for social and political development in the area advocating for major social change and progress of working class communities. To this day Fife has some of the best social benefits and services in Scotland which owe a lot to the early activism of the NUM (the National Union of Mineworkers), Cooperative Movement, and political left parties of the inter war period (the Independent Labour Party, the Socialist Labour Party and the Communist Party).

Rafeek’s study of communist women during the inter war years describes the influence of the communist and socialist parties in struggles for housing, education, parish benefits and excessive police brutality. He cites Lochgelly town council as an example whereby communists won seats and were also members of the Fife Education Authority. “They used their influence to restrict the use of corporal punishment in schools, provision of better school meals, and institutionalized May Day as a school holiday” (Rafeek, 2008, p. 42). The work of Nujam (1988), MacIntyre (1980) and MacDougall (1981) also reinforce the influential role of the miners union and communist parties in the social advances of Fife mining communities.
My Family and Historical Context

The excavation of my formative experience until my late teens focused on a few geographical sites in Fife, Markinch, Glenrothes and Kirkcaldy and my gran’s birthplace of Glasgow, Scotland.

I was born in Markinch, a small paper making town in central Fife. I lived with my parents in Markinch until departing for Canada in my late teens. My mother’s family originated from the surrounding mining villages in West Fife. Mum lived in Markinch from childhood until her death in the early 1990s. Surrounding Markinch is a multitude of small villages and bigger towns reminiscent of Fife’s industrial past: Kirkcaldy, Leven, Methilhill, Cardenden, Bowhill, Cowdenbeath, Lochgelly, Dunfermline and a newer urban development of Glenrothes (a new town built for the opening of a super-pit, the Rothes Pit). The latter Rothes pit closed after a few years owing to the specific geography of the pit and problems of flooding in coal seams. Glenrothes was a home for migrants from all over Scotland, particularly an overflow population from the demolition of Glasgow’s major working class housing sites. Glenrothes is close to Markinch and features as the site of my secondary schooling days. I spent more time in the bigger and more historic town of Kirkcaldy. A lack of public transport and money also inhibited movement to other parts of Fife.

Kirkcaldy is a major influence in my own development as my father and my grandparents lived here. I also entered the work force with my first job in Kirkcaldy and ventured to the town’s nightclubs in my teenage years.

Glasgow is featured relating to my gran’s socialization as a young woman before she migrated to Kirkcaldy with her sisters in her late teens. Glasgow was a hotbed of political activity at the beginning of the 20th century. My gran was born around 1900 in Partick in the
parish of Govan in Glasgow. I feel gran’s history is wrapped in my own consciousness and I was very interested to delve deeper into this throughout my excavation.

**Excavating the Environment and Class Context**

*Layout of Excavation:*

*Markinch, Capitalism, and Class*

Throughout my excavation I drew on the research from my Master’s relating to class consciousness and the influence of socialist and communist politics in Fife mining communities. The findings of my Master’s research concluded that formative experience and the impact of community institutions, political culture, and family were instrumental for the development of contradictory and critical class consciousness in later years. Young people also develop basic cognitive and intellectual skills during childhood and adolescence which are correlated with a social analysis to interpret and act on real life situations in adult life (Thomson, 1992, p. 144; also see Connell, 1982). My Master’s research heightened my interest in formative experience supporting the development of a critical consciousness in early life. My PhD is a continuation of this work through an auto-biographical study of my own formative experience and how I came to class consciousness and a radical praxis in later life. My own class consciousness and agency becomes the study of research.

Throughout this chapter, and my PhD thesis, I focused on the social-economic and political influences of my childhood and teenage years and the collective self and memory of my parents and grandparents. I am interested if their influences and worldviews were crucial in the development of my own class consciousness. Rafeek (2008) in his study of Scottish communist women also found respondents reiterated the crucial role one or both parents played in the growth of their own oppositional consciousness.
Following this I examined the development of my own mores and socialist ethics during work life and various experiences from family, peers and community which highlighted the growth of my worldview. Exile and travel are also a common theme in this exploration of political and social development in Canada and England and are also featured in Chapter Five as I examine radical praxis in Ghana (also see Mayo, 2004, for a discussion on Paulo Freire’s exile and his theoretical development)

The latter part of this section looks at the impact of finding theory in academia. Further education supported my own political and class consciousness as an affirmation of my own Marxist and socialist values, a central theme of this thesis.

Markinch

As I reflect on childhood experience I realize the smallness of my world, a few streets and surrounding countryside of my village Markinch.

Picturing Markinch as I write is like a throwback to the industrial revolution and British capitalism at its finest. Markinch was built at first in a picturesque valley. At the centre is the River Leven generating much needed power for capital (and dumping sites for waste). The earlier textile factories of the nineteenth century were all built along the river. A railway station and big bridge over the valley, the viaduct, was also built to transport goods to the nearby ports for trade. The houses in the valley, the earliest mill owned housing, also reflected the mill owners mansion on the hill and semi detached housing of the middle class managerial class. The workers were housed in small terraced housing. Housing reflected the class relations in the factory – straight out of Dickens. (Reflective writing, February 2007)
Our house lay in the west end area of the village – a village made up of approximately 90% council (social) housing at the time of my childhood. My world consisted of the street and nearby wooded areas on the perimeters of the village, land and estates owned by the local gentry. The professionals lived on a couple of streets segregated from the council estates and in another world. It was highly unlikely the estate children would have friends from the middle class as in teenage years those children would usually be streamed into the higher high school classes or bussed to other private schools in two separate worlds. The middle class children would also frequent a different social life than the working class children. They would be driven around in parents’ cars to friends or to various other leisure pursuits which required extra finances. Our parents did not have the money, interest or resources to participate in similar leisure activities. My parents both worked. Our social life was playing with one another on the streets, hills and in the woods surrounding the village in our little street gang.

In this sense class was physical, where you lived and who your social contacts would be, your social capital. It was that obvious from an early age. The physical presence of the paper mill chimney hanging over the town’s landscape reminded each family of the dominant power relation in the village. In my Master’s research an elderly miner Pete talks about the vestiges of industrial capitalism on the landscape of his village Methil in Fife.

The tall pitch rose above the mass of dirty brick buildings and gantry structures like a phallic symbol of dominating authority. The Lord Wemyss owned the brickworks, the rolling stock, the houses and throughout the farms round his land. It is said he inherited this land from Robert The Bruce against the English. The pits have gone but there is nothing more durable than a landlord. (Thomson, 1992, p. 79)

In my small papermaking town, most parents and grandparents relied on the mill for work and livelihood and family lives revolved around the shift system of dad and mum’s work. As
Metcalfe discusses Australian mining communities “home time was proletarian time, which revolved around shift work determining when families could meet, go to sleep or be awake and even when a couple could make love” (1988, p. 33).

As a child our family home revolved around my dad’s shifts and his necessary role as main breadwinner for a working class family living from week to week on store credit, with little savings.

The High Street shops were dominated by the Cooperative Store, a drapers store (clothes store), a furniture store, a shoe store, a butchers, a bakery and grocery store. There was also an intricate credit system intact where families could buy groceries or goods on credit as living from wage check to wage check was not easy. Every year families were paid back a dividend whereby the co-op stores profit was shared to the community. Some families would save their divvy each year for special things, school uniforms, shoes, furniture and other items. As a child we had to run errands to the co-op store and cite the family store credit number to buy the goods for our parents. I still remember it to this day. There was also a small shop owner at the other end of town who would give our family credit. (Reflective writing, February 2007)

**Schooling in Markinch**

Markinch was the centre of my life until secondary school. Mum was the school cleaner for a few years and I remember feeling proud of how important she was in keeping our classroom clean. As a child I would walk to the school by myself and run home for lunches as we lived 5 minutes away. Primary school was about studying hard and trying to win a prize each school year although we were not so competitive as kids. Our school work was done to the best of our ability and we never had much homework. At home there were no extra books, only those supplied for school homework and any prize books my siblings won for being a good student.
remember making my parents proud as I won student prizes nearly every year as 1st, 2nd, or 3rd. (There were three prizes awarded annually for each class in Primary School). Prizes would usually be the ownership of the middle class kids (usually the boys) in the village but somehow my family siblings, the working class kids, won on most occasions. I surmise this was a result of our parent’s valuing education and schooling and encouraging us all to study hard. It also eludes to my mother’s role in pushing education onto her own daughter’s consciousness challenging gender and class roles in school (Arnot, 2002; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989). We developed an interest in learning about the world around us, as our parents were. Further education was valued as a ticket to a way out of poverty and enhancing life choices. It was also a chance to exert educational influence and social power on the future of our community.

Meanwhile both my parents left school at 14 years and never returned, straight into the world of work, which I discuss later in the chapter. Education was about streaming the poorer kids, those most unable to pass exams or write comprehension tests and short stories. However, my imagination was never short of a story encouraged by my parents through an oral tradition full of wit and creativity. This storytelling was also our way of passing on memory, historical stories of my aunts/uncles/grandparents, and our community history (similar to Ghanaian oral culture in Chapters Four and Five). I now realize how much of these stories were also documenting working class experience and political commentary. Freire refers to our presence in the world as being an induction into other’s experience, our ancestors before us (1998, p. 54). In this sense we are finding our way to belong, to become a subject and maker of history. I feel my family were socializing me into this process of becoming and being in the world, as their ancestors had.
Secondary school was in the adjoining town of Glenrothes where I entered the B stream, while my fellow students in the A stream were being groomed for high school. I never really wanted to be in the A class as this was with the more affluent students and I perceived the more conservative kids. Most of my friends were also in the B or E stream so I did not want to be segregated from them. Secondary school felt like the military both in appearance and structure, and in the ways most teachers worked with students. My resistance to being treated as a number with no voice or rights was to rebel against teacher authority as a working class resistance I could not name. The children most needing support in the school system were those from the poorer working class backgrounds. They were also the majority of students most targeted for punishment, and in turn, also inverted the label of deviant, acting up in class or being classroom jokers. Willis (1977) refers to this as a process of resistance that occurs as a glorification of masculinity by working class male students. Mc Robbie (1978) also researches similar processes of femininity and working class girls resistance in schools. Marxist reproduction theory believes schools are instrumental in reproducing the social relations of capitalism through curriculum, school administration and through the pedagogy of teaching itself and the actual practice of schooling (Apple, 1979, 1982a; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Young & Whitty, 1977).

Bowles and Gintis (1976) believe working class students are streamed into working class jobs through the practice of schooling. Through the grading system, testing and acquisition of relevant life and job skills students are streamed into vocational, clerical and technical courses whilst the academic streams continue schooling for professional jobs and universities (also see Anyon, 2006; Livingstone, 1987, 1999, 2003).
Students also learn class relations in school as teachers and administrators reinforce a class bias through everyday curricula and classroom teaching. My description of school relations feeling like the military also reinforces this theory as working class students were kept under surveillance and controlled to learn their class position and who ruled. (Upper class students can also experience a rigid disciplinary structure of schooling but to acquire the skills and values to rule, to reinforce their class position as the dominant class). Louis Althusser (1971), a founding theorist on reproduction theory discussed how the state plays a deliberate controlling feature in capitalism through direct and subtle ways. The states ideological and repressive apparatus perpetuates an ideology and worldview which favours capital and is contrary to working class culture, experience and knowledge (Willis 1977). Tom Steele refers to the work of E. P. Thompson as he eludes to the historical nature of education and social control in industrial capitalism:

In most areas throughout the nineteenth century the educated universe was so saturated with class responses that it demanded an active rejection and disposal of the language, customs and traditions of received popular culture…and this entailed too often, a repression or denial of the validity of the life experience of the pupils as expressed in uncouth dialect, or in traditional forms. Hence education and received experience were at odds with each other. (Thompson, 1968a, as cited in Steele 1999, p. 96)

During schooling, I felt my own working class experience was contrary to the curricula and less valued. There was no space to talk about your own history, family and community. It was as if your life outside was invisible to the school. You left this working class experience, who you are, at the gate every morning on arrival. School in this sense became an alienating experience for many working class students and they were anxious to get out and enter the world of work, where a wage, or role as a parent, would compensate for long awaited recognition and respect.
Throughout secondary school most of my lessons were a traditional format, teacher led, with hardly any small group work or room for expression or student input. There was corporal punishment and sometimes verbal and physical abuse by teachers. I especially felt this oppression in physical education class.

Cross country running was like army drill and torture as if the teacher relished in the kids’ pain. It felt as if the teachers really had contempt and scorn for working class kids, like they were trying to punish us for being poor, to civilize us- the way we talked, our ways, our working class culture and popular culture. It was against my humane collective sensitive values and I began to fight it in my second year of school. (Reflective writing, June 2007)

As I was always a chunkier frame than the rest of the kids this accentuated my humiliation, dressing in gym shorts when it was sub zero temperatures. I was subversive even then as after discussing my discomfort and humiliation, my mum, also a subversive, wrote notes for me to skip gym class, which was usually the last two periods of the day. I told my mum I would start to write the notes, easing her chores, copying her writing and she agreed. However, the gym teacher became suspicious of the notes and ordered me to get ready for gym in which case I flatly refused. The teacher sent me to the principal’s office. The principal then asked me to sit while she looked for my file, a scene which still re-appears in the forefront of my consciousness as the principal uttered these words: “Oh yes, your dad’s a manual worker” (Reflective writing, June 2007).

The headteacher sent me home with a letter of expulsion asking my dad to report to the school. Dad’s recollection of this meeting will be discussed later in this chapter. This experience disillusioned me in school and I coasted the remaining years.
I took my time walking to class and was always late. I took a long time getting settled—finding a pencil and my books and escaped into teenage fashion and music. I would continually draw and design pictures as I gazed out the classroom window. I went through the motions. No one really gave me a chance at school, any inkling or encouragement that I was capable of university or doing anything different with my life. My brother was the one encouraged to go to university. (Reflective writing, June 2007)

**Teenage years and resistance**

I was also resisting gender as well as class in teenage years (McRobbie, 1978). This centred around a rejection of traditional female roles. Teenage women were objectified and expected to be submissive to young men. Their preoccupation revolved around finding a boyfriend in preparation for marriage. I resisted being commodified into a product for consumer goods, clothes, make up, and a character centered on pleasing young men. I wanted more in life, to learn and travel and live as an independent woman. I can remember always wanting to talk about serious things, current affairs, politics and history and not finding any receptive male or female counterparts. Politics and social issues were always a topic of discussion in my family house so I was socialized to believe such things were a priority, even for young people. Not all my friends, especially the young women showed so much interest in current affairs and what was happening in the world. According to Luke (1992) I was rejecting a cultural socialization of gender which isolated women from politics and the public sphere.

In Rafeek’s study of communist women in Scotland a similar experience was referenced by female interviewees as they felt different than their peers through their socialist perspectives and way of looking at current events and history at school. The interviewees also indicated the influences of parent’s socialist beliefs were contrary to the school and mainstream, sometimes
isolating the children’s behaviour and views. Rose Kerrigan gives an example of this contradiction:

I was 11 when the war broke out, my father was anti-war and we went to war to save “Little Belgium”, which had been invaded by the Germans. My dad said that wasn’t true; the war was imminent because Germany needed to expand markets and she had no outlet like we had; we had colonies and all that, specifically India, so they started the war. Well when I told my mates at school this, Oh! They called me pro-German and god knows what and I was really hounded. (Rose Kerrigan, July 1995 interview, as cited in Rafeek, 2008, p. 38)

Similarly, I was told of a contrasting view of war and Empire from a young age formulating a clear alternative working class perspective similar to my family. I interrogate this factor later in the chapter. As creative expression was so important throughout my life I had varied interests which singled me out from my classmates. I was open to music from other countries across race and ethnicity. My favourite music was soul music, motown and funk as a teenager, first introduced by my elder sister. There had always been a fringe sector of Scottish teenage culture which followed Black American culture. bell hooks (1992) raises the challenge for such white folks:

While it has become “cool” for white folks to hang out with Black people and express pleasure in Black culture, most white people do not feel that this pleasure should be linked to unlearning racism. Indeed there is often the desire to enhance one’s status in the context of “whiteness” even as one appropriates Black culture. (p. 17)

I felt not all white teenagers shared the same interest or opposition to the struggle against white racism. In my own case an appreciation of Black music also extended to an admiration for the Black resistance movement. This was accentuated by such reminiscent images as the Black power athletes and clenched Black fists during the Olympic games and of course Mohammed Ali and his critique of US imperialism as he resisted fighting in Vietnam. Our family admired his

outspoken opposition to American militarism, racism and war and appreciated his humour and
candidness on British talk shows.

I had an openness about exploring race, or specifically unlearning whiteness which was all around me. I appreciated various forms of music, specifically Black music which was available to me, but not as a “cultural tourist” under capitalism, where whiteness appropriates cultural difference as an ethnic and exotic commodity (hooks, 1992, p. 17). The rhythms and lyrics spoke to me, specifically from the civil rights struggles: Marvin Gaye’s “Inner City Blues”, “Mercy Mercy Me”; Diana Ross’s “Reach Out and Touch”; James Brown’s “ I’m Black and I’m Proud; Don and Marcia’s, “Young Gifted and Black” and of course Funkadelics “One Nation Under a Groove”. I appreciated this music as I watched Black Americans protest on the TV news. I wanted to identify with the struggle of Black Americans and racism, as a working class poor person also struggling against oppression. Although I never had a discourse of what racism was, I knew it was inhumane and morally wrong and somehow reflective of systemic discrimination against working class people in another country (at this time Fife was mostly white communities). I didn’t fit into white mainstream culture as it felt too exclusionary, racist and somehow arrogant and nationalistic. In this sense I was engaging in mediating my own meanings of race, divesting from my own whiteness and the system of white supremacy. hooks discusses ways white youth from the reactionary right seek contact with dark Others to affirm white power. In contrast, hooks also discusses white youth who seek to move beyond whiteness: “Critical of white imperialism and ‘into’ difference they desire cultural spaces where boundaries can be transgressed, where new and alternative relations can be formed” (hooks, 1992, p. 37).

Therefore in agreement with hooks, I, as a young white working class woman was not transgressing boundaries to stay the same, to reassert white domination. I was exerting my own
agency to resist whiteness and racism. hooks describes the process through the example of a young working class white woman Traci, in the old version of the film ‘hairspray’ by John Waters. Traci’s longing and desire for contact with Black culture, through music and dance, is coupled with the recognition of the culture’s value and her own struggle for justice.

When Traci says she wants to be Black, Blackness becomes a metaphor for freedom, and end to boundaries. Blackness is vital not because it represents the “primitive” but because it invites engagement in a revolutionary ethos that dares to challenge and disrupt the status quo. Traci shifts her positionality to stand in solidarity with Black people. She is concerned about her freedom and sees her liberation linked to Black liberation and an effort to end racist domination. (1992, p. 37)

Therefore, along with bell hooks work, I concur with Mc Carthy and Dimitriadis (2000) that “the meanings and practice of race are constantly contested” (cited in Eryaman 2009, p. 198).

Exploring literature and the historical legacy of racism and whiteness has surfaced an ongoing pattern of working class whites allying with elite whites asserting their own racial power, irrespective of class oppression and similarities across class and race. McLaren (1999) discusses the plantation economy in the Southern US where a working class whiteness elicited a false sense of cultural belonging with colonialism and the white aristocratic class. He believes this system is now entrenched and normal as an ideological phenomenon.

I cannot remember ever feeling an allegiance to the white upper class irrespective of race; instead as a teenager I was drawn to the music, culture and politics of struggling racialized poor people against wealth, power and injustice as I saw it, but did not have the names or theories to explain this as racism. This was not a case of voyeurism, cultural appropriation and what bell hooks (1992) terms “eating and consuming the other”, but a genuine appreciation and respect for Black culture in teenage years. I felt an alliance and affinity against white nationalism and empire in the British and Scottish context (exemplified by Paul Gilroy’s astute 1987 work,
“There ain’t no Black in the union jack”). I also felt there was no working class in the Union Jack as I had heard stories of war and death whereby ordinary working class men from the Fife villages died fighting for the Empire and Nation under the same flag. The Union Jack, for me, represented a symbol of white supremacy (and British nationalism) which recruited working class white soldiers to conquer colonial peoples. This socialization will reappear when I talk about socialization of ethics reflecting socialism and an anti racist consciousness.

A Radical History:
Community and Family Memory

While researching social history sources on Fife I reviewed the work of William Kenefick (2007) and “Red Scotland”. He refers to the labour, social and political struggles during the 20th century period which cover the experience and environment of my grandparents and parents, in Glasgow and also in Fife. The predominant view of Scottish working class and leftist social movements espouses that the centre of radical political consciousness was in Glasgow with the Red Clyde shop stewards movement. However, Kenefick argues that the radical thinkers and industrial workers in East Scotland, in Aberdeen, Dundee and particularly in the Fife and Lothian coal mining communities made a “much more significant contribution to the development of Scottish left radicalism than hitherto recognized” (p. 7).

Kenefick’s study provided a backdrop and grounding to my excavation as I have always felt part of this tradition, yet never lived in times and a historical context which validated my own socialization. My grandparents, great grandparents and parents had lived in a historical context which relished in, supported and grew activism and left politics. It was common to be a communist or to be a member of a socialist political party, or to vote for a communist councillor and parliamentary MP. Communists were people you knew and admired for their politics and
humanism, for their commitment to working class communities and injustice at home and abroad (also see MacIntyre, 1980, Thomson, 1992).

Therefore Kenefick reinforces, for me, the role of historical and ancestral memory in socialization through childhood and formative experience. Today the historical context of my reality from my grandparents and parents has changed, to the right, and the political, social and cultural contexts which nurtured radicalism are virtually gone. Also both parents and grandparents lived through attempts at expanding and defending empire and were required to enlist in two world wars resulting in a vehement anti-imperialism and pacifist beliefs.

Therefore what were the major impacts in forming my own class consciousness and an anti-imperial/anti racist consciousness? I surmise a major influence must have been family memory and an oral political tradition. The following part of Chapter Three interrogates my family memory and draws on Kenefick’s findings, my own Master’s research and a study by Neil Rafeek, an oral history of communist women in Scotland during the earlier part of the 20th century (2008). Rafeek has a chapter entitled “Becoming a Militant: Socialist politicization from childhood, 1914-44” which proves an interesting comparative study to reference in this section and also exploring the development of ethics and a Marxist humanism later.

**Community and Family Memory**

As I mentioned frequently my parents and grandparents influenced the growth of my own political consciousness as both instilled a deep sense of humanist and socialist values in childhood. Freire refers to a similar process where he asserts his “own presence in the world is also a result of inherited genetic factors as well as socio-cultural and historical factors” (1998, p. 54). Rafeek’s study also reinforces the key role of parents passing on a socialist consciousness.
“Many different factors led women to join radical and revolutionary politics and the Communist Party at its inception in Scotland in January 1921. Influences such as family, religion and socialism were decisive in their decision to become communists and were more pivotal than their work relations” (Rafeek, 2008, p. 25). On reflection influential socialist women were pivotal in my own politicization as they were primarily responsible for the socialization of the young reinforcing the work of Walkerdine and Lucey (1989).

I focus on the development of ethics later in this chapter but beforehand want to situate my parents and grandparents in historical memory. My father’s mother was a big influence on passing on memory to me, specifically during my teenage years. I was drawn to her strength of character and ability to draw on events in history and make the past real, exciting, and of purpose. In fact, in an interview with my father he mentioned the most direct influence on my politics, in his opinion, was my gran, and the way she impacted her history onto me, through lectures in dates and stories. He said he could never have done that, but my gran could (Conversation with my dad, October, 2009).

I had no doubt the importance of history in making or breaking working class communities’ economic and social struggle in education, housing, and health. Gran had been raised primarily by her father and elder sister’s as her mother died at an early age. She had five sisters and one brother who spent their childhoods by Dumbarton in the Vale of Leven area and also in Partick, Glasgow. Gran moved to Kirkcaldy to join her two sisters as a teenager meeting my grandfather in a Den Road shop where she worked.

As I try to imagine the world of gran’s formative years I draw on secondary sources which research the history of the early 20th century in Scotland. In Rafeek’s work there is
specific mention of the Vale of Leven as being a communist stronghold during the interwar years:

There was a strong concentration of women workers in the Vale and no predominant skilled male working class-class culture in the community. Thus family ties were stronger, resulting in a greater social identity and awareness that politicized people ... The CP in the Vale of Leven mobilized people to fight for improved housing and sanitary provisions. There was a close working relationship most of the time at the local level with the ILP (Independent Labour Party) and the Labour Party. (2008, p. 44)

My gran spoke of impoverished living conditions as a child and also her involvement in the rent strikes in Partick, Glasgow. Partick was an area of Glasgow alongside the famous shipyards of Govan and Clydebank where John MacLean, the Marxist Educator and founder of the syndicalist shop stewards movement and Scottish Labour College was active. Partick and Govan were among some of the poorest housing areas of Scotland, where private landlords attempted to increase rental fees. This incited a series of political community events and demonstrations across Scotland opposing undue hardship brought on poor families. An oral testimony of Jenny Hislop in Communist Women highlights these activities when she moved to Clydebank on marriage. Rafeek describes this incident:

Neighbours asked them to support the strike by paying only the standard rent and not the increase. The women were central to organizing opposition to the increases and played a cat and mouse game with the bailiffs-changing nameplates on doors or getting other people to answer the knock of the authorities. Armed with a big bell Jenny Hyslop would go down the street announcing the arrival of an eviction squad. The people in the neighbourhood would huddle around enmasse to stop evictions taking place. (2008, p. 34)

Gran told me similar stories discussing the physical layout of tenements with communal wash houses and drying areas in the backyard. The community women and children would hang out the tenement windows and shout slogans or warning signals as the bailiff arrived to evict a
family. Political meetings would also be held in the backyards to mobilize and organize the tenants. Such stories showed me the power of organization and solidarity among working class communities and the strength of a matriarchal culture. My grans’ sisters were all strong women raised in this political and radical culture. Hearing these family stories convinced me of a different type of society I wished to return to. It also taught me about working class women’s leadership and history hidden in the mainstream media, official history sources and school curriculum. These working class women were my role models based in my own reality. It was a different concept of womanhood than a white middle class or upper class ideal (Arnot, 2001; hooks, 1989; Thompson, 1995).

These humanist values, this solidarity, was not taught by political parties but was a community and class response to oppression. Scatamburlo-D’Annibale (2009) talks about these concepts in relation to revolutionary critical pedagogy. The struggle against a specific capitalized and commodified life form influences our social being and our struggle to be human. Revolutionary Marxist-humanism must be at the centre of this project.

By knowing my own family and community history gave me hope this humanism is indeed possible. Their history was grounded in a caring collective struggle and way of life, for the common good of the community. Capital’s efforts to dehumanize miners and their families were resisted communally.

My gran moved to Kirkcaldy to join her sisters roundabout 1920 give or take a few years either way. All lived in the Sinclairstown/Pathead area of Kirkcaldy a socialist and communist stronghold during the early part of this century (Kenefick, 2007; MacDougall, 1981). My father speaks of Kirkcaldy being an awful place, always having political meetings at the public parks and in the streets, especially in his own neighbourhood of Pathead, during the 1930s (Interview,
October 23, 2009). Kenefick comments of an earlier period before the First World War, between 1910-1914.

Indeed the available evidence points to Fife as being something of a radical left hotspot, and Kirkcaldy one of the most radical towns in Fife. Of the twenty eight strikes recorded for Fife over the period 1910-1914, sixteen took place in Kirkcaldy … The worker’s of Kirkcaldy certainly approved of direct action. (2007, p. 126)

Meanwhile my granddad was born into a family of miners and entered the pit at 14 years of age only to serve in the war a few years later in the infantry. It is likely his family was involved in the strike waves of 1910-1914, although granddad was not so overtly political as gran. His strongest political sentiments were against royalty, empire and the Union Jack. I surmise this stemmed from his horrific experiences during the First World War fighting as a teenager in the trenches of Europe. My father believes granddad never really recovered from his wartime experiences as the family had to console him as he suffered traumatic memories and panic attacks (Interview October 23, 2009). Today this would be recognized as post traumatic stress with various military supports to soldiers and families returning from the theatre of war. Such supports were not available in this war and young working class men were used as fodder in the battlefields of Europe. Therefore it is not surprising granddad became a ferocious anti-monarchist. He displayed anger at the loss of working class youth (and possibly his own loss of youth) from Fife’s small villages owing to imperial ventures. The National Military Service Act was introduced in January 1916, and imposed conscription upon single men aged 18 to 41 years old. However, due to low enrolment the government had to turn attention to married men in May 1916. “The Scottish Trade Union Congress passed an anti conscription resolution by sixty-six votes to forty-six in January 1916 but once it became law workers were left with little choice” (Kenefick, 2007, p. 147).
A similar disdain for empire was conveyed by my dad after his own experiences as a sailor during the Second World War. Dad was also called up to join the forces following a similar conscription drive. It is also ironic dad turned 18 during the war. Granddad was 14-16 years old when the war started while dad was 14 when the Second World War started (Dad received a conscription notice from the government 3 weeks after his 18th birthday when the letter arrived to his home).

Dad was more vicious and political at his critique of empire than granddad, having been influenced by the critical consciousness of my gran’s side of the family. He was outspoken about the British and Americans exploiting war for territorial and capital gain at the expense of working class people in the home countries, socialist countries on the Eastern front, and the poor communities in the colonial South.

These facets of my parents and gran’s consciousness highlight for me the ability of working class people to theorize on their own experience and international politics. Davis talks about ordinary people theorizing in their everyday lives (as cited in Brookfield, 2005, p. 336). In some sense spaces to critique and engage in political discussion were more accessible in my parent’s formative years, within family and community and there was a lesser encroachment on working class culture and knowledge. Children attended school until 14 years and there was less influence of mass media and technological means to disseminate bourgeois ideologies.

Therefore I find Gregory Martin’s words useful for describing my families consciousness as proletarian consciousness, a more informed context of common sense or spontaneous class consciousness: “In the real-world struggles of real-world victims, proletarian ideas are built on an extended questioning of “the way things are” as well as theories and ideas from outside an individuals existing belief system” (2009, p. 85). Hartmann (1995) would also urge us to broaden
our concept of proletarian to include a questioning of how patriarchy and capitalism shape the way things are for the female (and male) proletariat.

I learnt from my family to question, observe, and analyze not only real life experience but also other people’s ideas, especially those from state authorities and the media. As I also discuss in my Ghana excavation, my parents reinforced I should learn and listen to Ghanaians and value local knowledge and history. I should not venture to Africa as a know all white colonial as past history demonstrates. Their consciousness was proletarian in the ways they questioned the status quo, were open to ideas from outside, and also their sense of history as working class people. They had a clear worldview of class oppression as a local, national and international system of exploitation (Although it was also not clearly theorized, this was also a class analysis that realized racial oppression, colonialism and womens’ oppression).

In this sense our family ideas about war and empire were usually counter to other children as I was growing up. I don’t think we ever displayed a Union Jack or any memorabilia of the royal family in the house during our childhood. During my Master’s research one female interviewee Maisie from Methil, a village 6 miles from Markinch, talked about her experience of school and childhood during the Second World War. Maisie’s school lessons were in contradiction to her real life experience and memory as passed on by her elders (as I also felt). Maisie explains in the local dialect:

I wis at primary skael during the Second World War an we got it pumped intae yae who wonderful Winston Churchill wis, an he wis getting aw this cover fur the war, which the man obviously dun a good job. But, if yae find yaer granddad and yir uncles the gather, yae got the pit language..who they hated that man, and aboot ma granddad been so angry that they were soldiers wi guns at Denbeath bridge durin the General Strike (in 1926) and it wis Winston Churchill that put them there. (Thomson, 1992, p. 92)
Maisie’s experience reinforces the oral histories of Communist Women in Rafeek’s study (2008), specifically Rose Kerrigan mentioned earlier. In school working class children received a very different perspective of the imperialist war efforts in favour of the British Empire and not the mining communities, as in the 1926 General Strike. It raises the dilemma of working class children’s experience of school- of receiving contrary messages of history and politics, from a white elite, patriarchal perspective reproducing the hegemony of the capitalist class and the social relations of capitalism denying the history and experience of working class struggle. Cultural hegemony exists through the school system as part of the capitalist ideological apparatus. The state uses cultural, social and political means to make pervasive the goals and interests of the dominant class (Althusser, 1971; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Gramsci, 1971).

The war did provide opportunities for my dad to travel as his assignments on convoy ships took him regularly to Canada, the USA, and Eastern European countries delivering much needed food stuffs and supplies to the Eastern front. He received a medal from the Soviet Union for his role in the convoys and also a letter from the British government asking him not to wear the Soviet medal or British medals together. My dad decided to wear only the Soviet medal in solidarity with working class people (Interview, October 23, 2009). This also speaks to my father’s proletarian class consciousness as described by Martin (2009).

During my Master’s research some community members spoke of their experiences at war, specifically one elderly gentleman Andy. I think his sentiments echo my own father’s.

The war broke oot in 1939. They needed the poor man then yae see, the man wi’ nae brains. He can stop a bullet. I fought fir this country and I don’t know why. But I fought fir it and I dinnae own one square foot o’ the ground and I fought and bled all over the world for it. (Thomson, 1992, p. 93)
He later talks about the effects on his own mining village Bowhill (8 miles from Markinch) and how war opened up his horizons and consciousness through travel.

> The wee boys fae au the wee villages hadnae seen aunythin, Kirkcaldy wis oor limit. I never went tae Edinburgh till I wis seventeen. I didnae hae the money tae tak me there. But wance we’d been oot in the wild world there I’d been tae France, Germany, The Phillipines, Malaysia, Burma. I said Andy yaell have tae dae sumthin aboot this sir. The thing that made me really political wis the war … when I saw the injustices o’ the war … I mean I wid say the British are the biggest barbarians and thugs in the world. (Thomson, 1992, p. 93)

From the experiences of war granddad went to work in the pit until a few years after the 1926 General Strike. The General Strike was a huge event in the life of my grandparents, on reflection, because of the poverty and hardship that the strike ensued in mining communities and the onslaught of the coal owners and capitalist class to disempower the miners union and radical left political parties rooted in these communities (also see Thomson, 1992, on the parallels between the 1926 and the 1984/1985 Miners Strike). My gran and her sisters were political activists during the 1926 General Strike and this event was especially important in their own critical and class consciousness. Family memory has conveyed the important role my Aunt Chrissie played as a communications messenger for the strike committee going back and forth on a motor cycle to neighbouring villages. She delivered communications bulletins from the trades council and also accompanied speakers to various villages and towns.

> For a period of 11 days the workers of Fife controlled all transport and distribution of goods in Fife. Nothing moved unless the Councils of Action, run by the local trade union councils gave permission to move. John Mac Arthur, an East Fife miner in the book *Militant Miners* (MacDougall, 1981) speaks about his own experience as a communist activist throughout his life and during the 1926 strike. He describes the Communist Party as being the most active party in Fife having prepared various committees beforehand to organize for a protruded dispute.
The workers strike centre was in the co-operative hall with workers defence committees to warden off attacks by the police (rising to a force of 700 men during the strike in Methil alone). An international class prisoners aid committee was set up to support legal fees for any workers arrested and allowances for families requiring relief. There was also a campaign to have strikers families covered by the local parish council if they found themselves destitute. Communal feeding areas were set up as soup kitchens in mining villages throughout Fife. Daily strike bulletins were distributed to communicate the strike activities throughout Fife and Scotland (Burns, 1926).

These examples highlight the efficacy of Gramsci’s theories on the role and need for organic intellectuals creating a working class counter cultural and political movement to assert workers own agency and create organizational resistance to capitalism. In Fife, communities engaged in popular theatre performances, community parades, sing songs, and dances while also creating newspapers, political cartoons, poetry, and writing which reflected working class reality and resistance (also see Joe Corrie’s play about the 1926 General Strike entitled “In time of strife”; additional oral testimony in MacDougall, 1981, and Thomson, 1992).

Organic intellectuals, as a collective entity, become organically linked within the working class throughout everyday life in factories, community life and culture. These working class intellectuals situate social activity within specific and local class struggles while building skills and new types of working and relating to one another. Women’s participation and leadership were also crucial for the development and sustainability of a community activism against capitalism highlighting Weiler’s (2001) concern Gramscian theory needs to be inclusive of female organic intellectuals, such as my gran, mum and great aunt. Organic intellectuals serve as role models opening up horizons of their class while building possibilities for socialist power in
the future. Their work centres on not only resisting and defeating forms of cultural domination but politically organizing and facilitating activities whose focus is to end all forms of exploitation as the focal point to socialist transformation (McLaren, Fischman, Serra & Antelo 2005b). Gramsci’s theory centred on his political work and praxis as a Communist Party leader. He was also part of an international communist movement similar to the communist activists and organic intellectuals in Fife during the interwar years. Claudia Jones a leading Black communist in the United States was also influenced by communist agitators and speakers in Harlem, New York during the 1930s (as cited in Boyce Davies, 2008).

During the 1920s working class experience created opportunities for building a collective humanity in community organizing and resistance, an element which is scarce in the present. Boughton (1999) stresses the point efforts by Communist Party schools and activism, as in Fife Scotland, Australia and even with Gramsci in Turin, were indeed part of a bigger international communist movement coordinated by Comintern, the international communist party body in Moscow. In contrast, social and political activism today revolves around an already deeply divided community still struggling with racism, sexism, and identity politics around consumption and individualism in avoidance of confronting class relations nationally and internationally. This reflects a current imbalance in world politics whereby an absence of an international communist and socialist body to support a collective working class resistance strengthens capitalist hegemony and neo liberalism. It also highlights the need for a broad based socialist movement which works with and against the global oppressions of race, gender, class and imperialism.

My gran went through the General Strike as a miner’s wife with two children, my dad being a toddler at the time. Gran was active in the Co-Operative Women’s Guild and the Labour Party, which in Fife, at this time, would have been the Independent Labour Party or the Socialist
Labour Party (both parties having socialist tendencies and sympathies for communist ideas and the Communist Party, see Kenefick, 2007; Rafeek 2008). Gran never ceased telling me about the hardship of the General Strike and the sabotage of the trade union leaders who left the miners alone to fight their strike. Coal owners locked the miners out for a further 6 months after the General Strike ended. Gran had to live on the parish and also pay back one year’s rent. Aunt Chrissie’s husband did not get his job back, or any other job in the area because of his wife’s politics, as the family was *blacklisted*.

She later became an active communist in Canada, until her death—frequently travelling over the border to support communist events such as the Scotsboro boys and the Trial of the Rosenbergs. She was also active in the northern mining town of Elliot Lake shortly after arriving in Canada trying to organize free milk for primary school kids. Aunt Chrissie’s now elderly children joked with me about their experiences being *dragged* to all sorts of political meetings during childhood. (Conversation with family in Canada, 1991)

It is also interesting, across the border in the United States, Claudia Jones was also involved in the Scotsboro boys campaign as described in her own words:

> I was like millions of negro people, and white progressives and people stirred by this heinous frame up. I was impressed by the communist speakers who explained the reasons for this brutal crime against young Negro boys and who related the Scottsboro case to the struggle of the Ethiopian people against fascism, and Mussolini’s invasion. (as cited in Boyce Davies, 2008, p. 220)

Jones was later jailed for her communist activity and beliefs during the Mc Carthy era. She spent 13 months in prison and on release was exiled from the US, spending the remainder of her life in London (Boyce Davies, 2008). My Aunt Chrissie faced a similar fate, not forcibly exiled from Scotland by the state, but inadvertently forced to leave through the families inability to find work due to her communist activity and beliefs.
Gran’s other sisters and their husbands were also members or sympathizers of the Communist Party. In this backdrop, political commentary was a natural topic of conversation every time I visited gran’s house as a young child, with my dad and later as a teenager on my own. This highly political culture was as natural as breathing to my gran and also inherited by my father, who then influenced me. On reflection I had double influence from gran and dad and also from my mother (although I have little historical record in memory or in documentation of my mum’s family). However I lacked their historical context. They lived in a working class community culture carved out of their own oppression and struggles against factory and mine owners. They also had to struggle against the ideals of the war and the British Empire while escaping the infiltration of the mass media, public education until 16 years and an encroaching bourgeois ideology. It is now pertinent to explore my own socialization and formative experience and influences which made me who I am.

I have excavated my experience and analysis which explains the formation of my collective values, socialist vision and a Marxist humanism. An interesting study to start this conversation entails the work of Neil Rafeek and an oral history of Scottish communist women’s formative experience as children in the Socialist Sunday School movement. Solidarity is also a key theme in finding or acting on my humanist and collectivist ethics. My experiences with workers in solidarity and with influential peers in learning is a focus of this chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR:
THE COLLECTIVE SELF AND BECOMING

Learning a Marxist Humanism:
The Formative Development of a Socialist Ethic

In this section I explore the memories of my formative experience and the development of my collective consciousness, as a moral collective self bound in my service and responsibility to others. How did I learn to respect and work for the better of others? Growing up in a small working class community with a strong sense of family and social history provided a collective ethos at the centre of my being and my coming to class consciousness. I believe this social and political environment enabled my moral and social development and a crucial foundation for my political analysis and Marxist/socialist beliefs. It may even have been an indication of my future vocation as a radical educator, someone able to transgress. This background enabled me to develop an open class consciousness across difference in solidarity with working class communities wherever I find my self bound in other’s efforts to become.

To research this area I categorized my excavation into two sections:

1. A social education of the collective self

2. Humanist education struggling against capital and realizing class

A Social Education of the Collective Self

Scottish Communist Women: Oral Histories and the Study of Neil Rafeek

Neil Rafeek’s (2008) oral history work “Scottish Communist Women” provides a rich insight into the lives and socialization of radical politics during the interwar years in Scotland. The study is a useful comparative study for my own and in retrospect my gran’s life experience.
One particular chapter “Growing Up Socialist” examines formative experience and socialist childhood believing community based groups, family influences and left wing organizations helped young women develop politically.

Of particular interest to Rafeek are the children’s socialist organizations set up at the beginning of the 20th century in Scotland. The most influential in Rafeek’s study was the Socialist Sunday School movement, with branches mainly in the central industrial belt of Scotland in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Fife. The aim of these organizations was to educate working class children in the ideals of socialism to counter the growing influence of the church. During this period Sunday schools were supported by all major left wing parties as well as the Women’s Guilds of the Co-Operative Society. In Fife the Proletarian (socialist) Sunday school used the songbook of the International Workers of the World (IWW). These organizations were active in both my gran’s childhood neighbourhood of Clydeside in Glasgow, father’s neighbourhood of Pathead, Kirkcaldy and also my mother’s families neighbourhood in Cowdenbeath, West Fife (Rafeek, 2008). Although I cannot make a direct correlation between my family being directly involved in these organizations, the Socialist Sunday Schools community influences could have affected other young people in the area. My gran was also active in the Co-Operative Women’s Guild that supported the movement.

Rafeek’s study brings testimony of 20 women which I have studied and categorized into specific themes and patterns of socialization. I concluded that both my excavation, my Master’s research, and Rafeek's work reinforce the childhood influence of a socialist political culture within the family and community carried over into adulthood. The most radical community members within my Master’s research sample stressed their political development (a radical
praxis) began way back in childhood and adolescence, none began in adulthood (Thomson, 1992).

During my own excavation I found similar patterns of socialization and socialist moral/ethical values within my own political development as formulated by Rafeek. Although I did not have the exposure to socialist children’s organizations, I had the history and influence of class conscious family and community adults who experienced first hand this community political culture offering an alternative world view.

Throughout this section I reference Rafeek’s (2008) work and begin with a summary of his research on communist women’s influences in childhood. I also return to this theme in Chapter Five.

**Qualities of Formative Experience and a Socialist Childhood**

**Socialist values of Rafeek’s (2008) study**

1. Socialist beliefs have roots in childhood (p. 25)
2. Child not subservient to officialdom (p. 40)
3. Child does not accept things: Analyzes everything (p. 40)
4. Child rejects existing standards (p. 27)
5. Ethics of opposition displayed as children (p. 53)
6. Child displays independence and not bow down to others (p. 29)
7. Child feels different, as part of minority as communist, with different beliefs (p. 29)
8. Child opposed to traditional religious beliefs (p. 29)

10. Importance of parent’s beliefs modeling socialism (p. 38)

11. Importance of Communist Party role models and women in communist work (p. 40)

12. Importance of May Day holiday and communist children organizing events for workers and internationalism in schools. (p. 41)

These values serve as a useful comparative study to my own formative experience. I believe this is the beginning of an important conversation on working class childhood. How is the development of an embryonic class consciousness in childhood influenced by the socialization of socialist ethics in the family?

**Importance of independent thought and education**

As far back as I can remember my parents always encouraged their siblings to think about the world we live in, our environment and surroundings and to question traditional assumptions. Angela Davis also stresses the important role her parents played in encouraging a critical young woman “to think critically about our social environment ..not to assume that the appearances in our lives constituted ultimate realities” (1998, p. 17). We were also encouraged to be responsible for our own behaviour while some of my friends would have stringent rules about where they go and what time to be at home. My mother and father guided us to judge what was appropriate: such as the time to go home, usually when it was dark, or for meal times. We all managed our sense of ethics from our parent’s flexibility and guidance to be socially responsible to those around us, our family and community. If we made mistakes we were given explanations and sometimes disciplined. But, generally, we had more freedom to learn through our mistakes
by making our own choices and suffering the consequences. We were encouraged to think critically even if this meant being different from the status quo.

My critical thinking as a teenager also challenged my father’s role as the patriarchal head of the house. This would especially surface over the rules of television choice and having to defer to my father’s wishes of sports viewing or horse racing at weekends. It was usually my dad’s shift system which upset the house routines as mum and the siblings had to change their routine accordingly.

I feel my parents independence nurtured my own self confidence and space within myself to develop my own humanity, my own exploration of ideas, of experiences which spoke to others, and to the feelings of justice and injustice which pervaded my childhood and teenage years. Within my own little world of school and the bigger world explored through the television, books, and the musical media I saw many injustices which disturbed me. This human and ethical space within encouraged my openness to explore the bigger world without and to tread a different journey than my peers in a small town. My parents prepared me for this through their own acknowledgement of the class-capital contradiction and their own humanity, which was also inherited from their own parents. We were supported to develop our own sense of character, and to develop a confidence of character, to push the limits of caring, sharing, and creative thought. Only in our strength within can we give out a sense of purpose, of unfinishedness, of a collective self.

During an interview with my mum in 1991 for my Master’s research I asked what values are important for young people, she reiterated this point

Yae have tae encourage the young anes tae get on in skael cause that’ll aw help thum in later life. They could carry on wi ‘further education an’that, an’get
degrees an that ... Because through time they’ll make it harder fur working class folk tae get intae universities. Long ago it wis jist folk wi’ money cause they had tae pay ... Education is a very important thing fur yaer family ... if they have brains tae go onto further education, cause it makes thum think then. They see whits gawn on’ everythin’. They think fur themsels ... no aboot whit some politician tells thum ... Sum o’thum couldnae care less ... They’ve nae sense o’ responsibility. (Interview, March 29, 1991)

Angela Davis discusses a similar socialization to value education: “I learned very early to value education and its liberatory potential…Education and liberation were always bound together” (1998, p. 316).

However, such a confident and critical attitude also brought me in conflict with school authorities, especially as a teenager. It also created a more critical teenager to patriarchal authority as I highlighted earlier. The school institutionalization became more repressive for us working class kids. Later in this chapter, I discuss socialization and schooling for capitalist relations in my own upbringing and how I and my own family confronted this dichotomy.

**Importance of creativity**

In our quest to experience our world and share with others creativity was always sought in our daily life. My father would bring us old papers from work to draw on and mum would make sure we always had crayons and pencils. At Christmas we were sure to get some artistic present or perhaps a book. Books were not bought or readily available in the house owing to the lack of extra resources but we all joined the library as did my parents. My mum was employed as the library cleaner which infatuated me as I accompanied her to work pretending to be the librarian. I had the entire library to myself for a few hours and could relish in many worlds of books and colour pictures. I felt so special in those library days.
Toys were made by us; we had to use our imaginations to build things like slingshots, swings and wagons. There was one family bike passed onto all kids, from sister to brother to sister. Most of our play was discovering nature in nearby woods and running around the block as a gang of working class kids, fighting, arguing and enjoying. (Reflective writing, June 2007)

My dad also reinforced the following point of my reflective writing:

My older siblings would look out for me but I could also hold my own and challenged the older kids from an early age. (Interview with Dad, October 23, 2009)

My ability to imagine has always given me a sense of hope as I believe another world is possible. It was not difficult for me to imagine a more equal world in the future and also to imagine the past injustices of history conveyed in my parents and grandparents stories. Another world for me was not the same but to cite again Gindin and Panitch (2000), “capitalism is [was] the wrong dream”. In my formative years I would describe this as a society where everyone is equal and receives similar wages, where no one is above one another and was clearly a dream with no classes. Budd Hall discusses the importance of building utopias and alternative visions for a new society and quotes Julius Nyerere, the first president of Tanzania. Hall reminds us of Nyere’s goal for the first World Assembly of Adult Education in 1976. “He noted that the first goal of adult education was to convince people of the possibility of change. All other goals can come if we believe that change is possible” (2002, p. 45).

As a child an adult creativity armed me with the ability to connect with community through dance, song, art, music and culture, not inhibited by tradition but to connect and feel others, to imagine this better world with others. This emotion and empathy is not a translated
liberal self with others, but a collective self with and through other working class people in their experience, in solidarity and hope for a better world.

**Finding Solidarity**

Max Weber (1946), a conflict theorist, was interested in the concept of solidarity from the perspective of different status or interest groups in society competing for power. In this process status groups build their own boundaries of exclusion to other groups. Emile Durkheim (1933) took a different perspective by basing solidarity on functionalism where each individual in society has a special function in the social order. Solidarity is about each individual finding their cohesion and role in the bigger society. Durkheim refers to a development of a new type of solidarity as industrialized society becomes more complex. Individuals became more dependent on one another’s skills and abilities through the division of labour developing an organic solidarity. Before industrialized society individuals performed similar tasks in a mechanical solidarity.

Gaztambide-Fernandez (2010) discusses solidarity from a curriculum theorist and poststructuralist perspective through the concept of a creative solidarity. He begins through the foundation of examining discursive practices and the ways power is manifest through relations, structures and the individual. Creating solidarity in curriculum work examines the ways power is manifest in language and how we relate to one another in space. This also requires us to challenge our personal selves through a deep autobiographical reflection. Through this process of self reflection we challenge who we think we are while recognizing the difference of others by transgressing our own boundaries. In this sense there is no core human essence binding a class solidarity. Instead Gaztambide-Fernandez explains, “Creative solidarity cannot begin from the notion of a core humanity as such a view by default excludes and operates on a rejection of
difference a priori of all encounters”. He then offers us the idea of solidarity as “a political project that might yield visions of what is possible; a language of imagination”… a verb that “assumes relationship: it assumes a state of being as well as an action, or state of being toward another being” (2010, p. 87).

My own definition of solidarity stems from a Marxist perspective whereby in capitalism the two opposing classes - the capitalist class and the working class, forge a solidarity within each class based in diametrically opposing interests and class antagonism (Marx & Engels, 1888). I am particularly interested in the relationship between working class solidarity and the development of class consciousness throughout my excavation. Solidarity is a being with as identified by Freire, a feeling of humanity towards inhumanity, a feeling of being with those who are oppressed by capitalism (1998. p. 72). It is based on a universalist view of humanity, a Marxian notion of human nature which posits a dialectical relation between biology and human agency grounded in the social relations of production (Geras, 1983). Thus every society bases social relations around the way it produces the means of existence. McLaren et al. believe there is a universal human will and desire intertwined bio socially – a social and historical character to human nature (2005b, p. 292).

I have felt solidarity at different stages of my life, in Scotland, Canada, and Ghana. As a teenager during my first job as a bank clerk the workers protested my dismissal, specifically the women workers across gender. This was the first time in my life a group of people stood up for me, in solidarity. I had just celebrated my sixteenth birthday and adult workers stood by my side defending my rights as a worker. This was a very emotional and uplifting experience- to share that bond of collectively fighting something which was unjust, especially when it’s your particular situation others are defending. This was workers’ solidarity.
As a domestic worker I experienced the same feelings of solidarity with the domestic workers within the organization Intercede. As female visa workers we fought for better working conditions and recognition as Canadian workers. As working class women and mostly racialized women domestic work was devalued and marginalized. We demonstrated for changes in immigration law which served a racist and classist state function maintaining domestic workers as guest workers in precarious and sometimes exploitative and dangerous, unprotected work.

In Ghana I also felt this solidarity as a facilitator/learner in the AYP human rights learning program. I tried to link my own struggles, white working class and female struggles against capital, racism and injustice with the experiences of Black working class Ghanaian men and women, youth and adults. As I worked my way through validating my ideas and experience with AYP there was also a deep sense of solidarity as we exposed our histories, dreams, conflicts and disagreements. We shared in the similarities of our struggles as well as recognizing the differences. I call this a pedagogical solidarity. The latter process links to recent Marxist humanist work, which professes both philosophical theorizing and social activism should be dialectically intertwined (Martin, 2009). McLaren and Farahmandpur (2000) refer to this as “praxis orientated pedagogy” (as cited in Eryaman, 2009, p. 93).

**A Political and Collective Culture**

In a Marxist humanist centred pedagogy, I could connect through culture and creativity questioning my own and learners’ history and peoples’ experiences of pain and struggle. We also examined and celebrated examples of working class agency. If we can participate in a collective making of culture and shared experience of struggle, making something together, how could we as a people not do this for a more democratic, egalitarian and just society? Schugurensky highlights the importance of collective projects to gain strength in challenging dominant
ideologies in shaping a better world (2002). Davis also reinforces “the most transformative art is created, and experienced, collectively” (as cited in Brookfield, 2005, p. 346).

My interest in the power of a working class culture which has a political component and project at its core was heightened during my Master’s research of Fife mining communities. Miner’s families relished this aspect of a collective culture reflecting and activating their political and social struggles. Politics involved the local communities and unions, both in agitation over union issues and also in representation of local activists as political candidates. Mary talked about the amount of local groups involved in entertainment during the 1920s, Pete talks about the Miners Gala parade where the participants would highlight political themes. Joe talks about the local elections and changes in participation and form of political culture. An important issue is most social life was centred from the miners union, socialist and communist parties, the co-operative society and workplace groups. Working class communities and families were participants and makers of culture.

**Mary**: I think the place wis much better in theydays than it is now fur entertainment. Television wisnae there cause that has ruined the social life o’ the community. I remember goin tae the pictures (movie theatre), a lot of the coal queen dances and all night balls at the institute (miner’s union hall).

The social life was unreal for sport and leisure. We had chess champions, badminton, cycling clubs, and the bowling green. We had a cricket club, four or five different fitbau (soccer) teams. A lot o’ social concerts, arts and crafts, the pubs, first aiders, brass bands, silver bands and the pipe bands. Noo we hiv a population o’ six thousand. In the 20’s there wis twelve thousand people aw livin in the raws (miners terraced housing built and owned by the coalowner).

**Pete**: Yae hid parades, I’v got a photograph. They’d dress up in fancy dress and get some prizes.... like my mum wis dressed as Gladstone’s baby (Prime Minister Gladstone), two lassies wur dressed up as flower girls, and Tommy wis dressed as the coal owner. Some women dressed as ordinary miners and the coal owners wur using whips on them. There wis dancing at night

**Joe**: People don’t go tae meetins like they used too. I’ve seen the old miner’s welfare open fae seven tae midnight wi wan speaker contestin anither in the
election..and the hall wis full. Naebudy goes tae political meetins noo … Its cause they sit in the hoose and watch political discussions on the telly, and it’s never really dawned on thum, they’ve been denied the opportunity tae participate and ask the questions. The reconstruction o’ local authorities has made it worse, takin the discussions further an further away fae the people. Remoteness is being increased and that’s no a good thing fur democracy. (Thomson, 1992, pp. 177-183)

This highlights the ingenuity of the mining communities to build political satire into popular community events and parades across generations. As cited earlier, Davis believes in the important function of an explicit political art which serves as a catalyst to working class agency (Brookfield, 2005). It also reinforces Gramsci’s theory of creating a strong proletarian culture to counter capitalism while creating a working class epistemology which nurtured working class resistance (1971). This type of community culture and need to create and enjoy with others was passed onto me by my parents. We were expected to go out and play everyday with the neighbourhood kids only reporting home for meals. There was no television until evening.

We were happy to go out and play as there were little toys in the house and the coal fire was saved until night time. Sometimes it was warmer outside running around than in the house. This environment shaped our own creativity as children. We participated together in making our own little worlds, using our imagination, nature, and whatever materials were available to us- creating our own epistemology as kids. We did not rely on anyone or anything to entertain us. We learnt from everything and everyone around us. This childhood was not one of consumption and waiting to be entertained with gadgets, toys and technology. It was very real, simple and practical using the environment and countryside to explore together as kids and also as families on weekends. So much of my childhood was spent outdoors. My father’s shifts sometimes meant he was sleeping during the day requiring a afternoon nap on the couch. Our childhood revolved around dads shifts. We respected this as we knew dads work was our bread and butter. (Reflective writing, June 2006)
Our childhood also involved listening to heated family and community discussions over local and international politics and union issues during times of strikes and electioneering. My parents periodically discussed their own arguments with other community members over politics, whether in the local shops, at work or frequently in the pubs. Usually these centred around my parents beliefs being more radical than the townspeople such as supporting strikers when public opinion was against unions and critiquing the Labour Party for being too soft. Sometimes my mum would shock people as she could hold a good political debate with any man in the village. So I also learnt working class women talk about politics and care about social and political issues.

Every day my parents would discuss articles of disagreement in the local and national newspapers. We informally learnt working class people have to be politically active as we bare the brunt of government and business decisions. We were linked to the past through these discussions and in the future expected to make our own political contribution for the greater good. It was considered your obligation.

These concerns would also bubble over into my parent’s membership in the union and local clubs. I specifically remember the pigeon club and bowling club annual dinner and dances. The kids would accompany our parents dressed in our best clothes and polished shoes. A big treat would be packets of crisps and a coca cola and of course the cakes and tea at dinner. The Thomson bairns (children) were always on the dance floor from beginning to the end of the evening only stopping for a drink of lemonade. Our parents encouraged us to get up on the floor and dance. We felt so free and liberated. To this day my sister and I have no shyness or qualms about dancing and expressing ourselves to music wherever we may be. Dance and music have remained an important expression of our working class culture against and across class in
popular and global music forms (Interview with my sister, October, 2009). During social events people of all ages: elderly people, couples, teenagers, and children all danced together. There would also be sing songs of popular tunes at these events, highlighting the need for active participation in working class social events. Dancing for us was a way to let loose of the hardships of working class life, as a working class community.

The dancing or club culture was celebrated as the main preoccupation of young men and women in working class communities, referred to as the working class marriage market by elders in my Master’s research. It’s a natural evolution from school to the dancing to marriage—one I would rebel against and eventually abandon as I ventured to Canada to be a domestic worker. My parents, especially my mum encouraged my feminine self through these teenage years, as if sometimes she was reliving her youth through me. There were no sermons about my role, my encounters with young men, or young women I was to some extent left to be responsible and find my own way. On reflection this points to a trust and freedom I had as a teenager and young adult.

As a young woman I was independent and headstrong if something did not feel right or respectful I would not do it, even if this meant being unpopular or being singled out. With gender I was feeling like a “thing” or object – it was all so pointless, being tapped on the shoulder for a dance by some young man on the dance floor. Then no conversation with the male partner. I did not want to feel like a thing, an object, so I would ignore some of these advances and dance by myself, or with my friends. Everything was music and fashion and I was more interested in politics, news, different types of music and travel to other Scottish cities. In my late teens I started to organize buses, 30 - 40 seater buses to dance clubs in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Ayr, and Dundee as a way to meet more different people. After this phase I realized it was time to move on as most of my friends at home were starting to go steady or marry, and I was outgrowing the club scene. I
wanted to learn and live other places, I was outgrowing the gender role in my own working class community. (Reflective writing, October 2008)

Adolescent women are brought up with the belief they will experience several courtships, or boyfriends, and live life to the fullest by enjoying the dancing during teenage years (Arnot, 2002; McRobbie, 1978). As a young woman enters her twenties social pressures encourage her to be going steady (having a serious boyfriend). Following this going steady stage for a year or so, a young woman becomes married and a wife. In a year or so she then becomes a mother. This also signifies a contradictory working class respectability I was informally socialized into as a young woman- not to engage in or think of sexual relations until a serious steady relationship. There was little discussion in school or curriculum of encouraging young women’s independence, through further education or career choice.

However there was similar pressure on young working class men: to be married, having a few more girlfriends, (to establish his male bravado) and becoming a breadwinner and father entering adulthood in his late teens or early twenties. Young married couples would stay with their in-laws until council housing became available on the waiting list. Such a strict demarcation of gender roles reflected the industrial working class and the sexual division of labour of mining communities and one industry towns. These roles also became more fluid as micro electronics industries and free zones opened in Fife employing more women. Presently high unemployment, teenage pregnancy and access to state benefits also affect gender roles, living arrangements and marriage between young couples.

Through my early socialization as a young woman I became strong and assertive so there was a lesser chance of being in an abusive relationship. Yet I also witnessed violence in the club scene and on the night buses. It was not uncommon for fights to break out at the weekend as
young men displayed their male bravado and allegiance to various village territory by gang membership. This would include physical fights, glasses and bottles being smashed and sometimes knives being used in fights. I was always quick on my feet to run for the exit and had no interest in being a voyeur. There were also female fights on the dance floor and quite often in the female toilets. These too could get quite violent, again I would be first to exit. As a young person you have to learn to be strong and assert your personal space as there were no shortage of bullies, male and female.

In the community, as a young girl, I remember domestic disputes with neighbours and my friends’ parents.

The domestic violence scenes I remember as a young teenager usually happened on Saturday nights after a night out. My mum and dad on their way home from the pub around 10 pm, would bring home a friends mum, who was crying, after her husband had been shouting at her on the doorstep and hit her. My dad intervened and brought Mrs. White home and mum made her a cup of tea and talked to her until she was ready to leave. This happened a few times. Eventually Mrs. White left her husband around 10 years later. Then there was another Saturday night episode with another community member, at least three times dad would bring Mrs. Anderson into the house and make her a cup of tea. He would also go and talk to Mr. Anderson and ask him to control himself. From this I learnt not all men are violent and my parents were supportive of women in the community by their modeling and interventions. (Reflective writing, June 2007)

**Importance of Strong Female Role Models**

Growing up I had important role models which would influence my future political and social development. Especially true were strong women role models including my own mum, grandmother, her sisters, my aunties, my sister and other working class community women. My
mum encouraged me to step outside what was expected of me as a young working class woman. She encouraged me to design my own road and journey into the future, to be free and independent and most of all to get an education. She also did not hold us back in our own self expression through art/storytelling/clothing style and had an incredible sense of humour and a huge heart showing empathy for our neighbours, striking families and other kids. Mum’s sister’s were also strong women and I fondly remember weekly visits to an aunt’s house where all would gather and rekindle family memories with such a dry wit and aliveness - so animated, comical, and loud, everyone shouting at one another. Visits would be arranged according to the shifts of husbands so the sisters could relish in each other’s company and countless cups of tea. These gendered spaces supported women’s ways of knowing and the creation of an alternative working class women’s consciousness. Hartstock (1983) and Smith (1981) were among the early feminists to develop ideas regarding gendered spaces and women’s standpoint theory based on the Marxist theory of Lukasc (as cited in Tanesini, 1999).

Gran was also a big role model for me exemplifying a strength of character born of her historical and social experience.

Gran’s ways were so gentle, yet so firm and strong. She was a great human being with a big heart and soul - a depth to her character even I as a child felt. Gran never spoke bad about people, would never gossip and was always helping neighbours. I remember people visiting the house, knocking on the side door ... opening the door and shouting Maise. The auld anes would always get a hearing of their story, Tess and Maggie next door for anything they need or favour they would ask. Mrs. Drylie used to drop by every Wednesday for the Salvation Army and Co-Operative meeting and gran would put on her best coat and gloves and away they went down the Gallatown. I also remember gran always buying things from the door to door salesman, feeling sorry for them and helping them out.
Grandad would complain “why do we need this?”. Gran would answer “the poor man has to make some living.” (Reflective writing, October 2008)

**The Importance of Being a Collective and Solidarity**

Three important values I learnt at a young age were:

1. To stand up for your beliefs and help others in need
2. To voice your support for others struggling or for what’s right.
3. To speak out if you saw injustice.

We were poor kids growing up in Markinch and there was no stigma about sharing our resources, passing on old clothes, toys, and furniture to others. We would regularly do *turns* for somebody in need, odd jobs or run errands, to carry any heavy bags or to give up my seat for an elderly person. Everyone knew each other and each other’s family, so there was a sense of community and a wider notion of family. On the street you were taught to greet people and say hello, to be polite and respectful to elders. If any elder asked you to do something you were expected to help out for no reward but out of kindness. I was always running errands for neighbours and it was considered rude to receive any reward. Sometimes the elders would offer you money, but, in the back of your head, you would hear your parents telling you not to accept. My parents also modeled a humanity supporting elderly neighbours and family so it was difficult to be any other way. My siblings took turns helping one of our elderly great-uncles, delivering mum’s ready cooked meals for him everyday. On Thursdays we would also go grocery shopping for our Uncle. My reward was a beautiful fresh ginger bread baked by his daughter in law.

These values instilled a sense of being, living as a bigger family and a community and how you, as a child and adult, were accountable to many people. In fact if you fell off the rails so
to speak, it was not uncommon for an elder to correct you or directly go to your parents. Rarely did the townspeople rely on police but solved most disputes within the community. This highlights the community’s response to building alternative relations to the individualist logic of capital, building relations of community resistance through collectively supporting one another as working class families helping the more vulnerable sections of the community: the elderly, sick, children and disabled. The school authorities also received their share of community response from parents about excessive modes of punishment. This was accentuated when teachers did not reflect, or openly condemned, the values and experience of the working class community. Teachers were not town residents and were viewed as outsiders intensifying erupting contradictions in working class experience and parent values in the community. There were also parents who supported more discipline in schools and felt it was necessary to keep children, sometimes their own, under control (as discussed by Bowles and Gintis in the Literature Review). Also, not all community members would socialize their children to help the elderly and to be respectful. In retrospect, working class values and socialization practices are not homogenous. I am highlighting my own experience and selective memory of events realizing there will always be contradictions. This is living experience.

Rikowski writes of a the need for collective response as working class communities:

We require a politics of human resistance. This is a politics aimed at resisting the reduction of our personhoods to labour power (human-capital), thus resisting the capitalization of humanity. This politics also has a truly negative side: the slaying of the contradictions that screw-up, bamboozle and depress us. However only collectively can these contradictions constituting personhood (and society: there is no individual/society duality) be abolished. (as cited in Rikowski &McLaren, 2009, p. 88)

In Markinch most residents worked in the paper mill so any dispute at the mill would quickly involve the whole community. My dad was union shop steward for many years and was
involved in workplace and community struggles. Surrounding Markinch was mining villages and many townspeople worked in the pits during the earlier part of my life. Hence the miner’s union had frequent disputes and days of strikes. Our family always supported strikers; we would donate to striker’s funds and donate groceries. My mum had monies deducted from her wages during the strikes as she was a member of a progressive public sector union. She also used to give some money and groceries to neighbours who were on strike.

During one strike Markinch had a miner who scabbed. My mum and dad stopped talking to this person and some people in the town would even cross the street and not pass him. It’s hard to explain but this is an automatic given, an instinct to stand in support of striking workers. (Reflective writing, February, 2007)

Freire describes this internal logic, a class instinct as “a kind of knowledge that becomes solidarity a being with” (1998, p. 72). In local historical memory the mine owners actively campaigned to break strikes by soliciting scabs in past labour disputes. Any miner who decided to put his own needs above those of the community and union was viewed as a traitor to the betterment of the community and would experience repercussions of isolation from that community. Given entire towns and villages had one employer, the mine, and one union, the decision to go against the entire community by returning to work was seen as inhuman and immoral. Joe Corrie wrote a very successful play about the dilemma of strikebreaking and scabbing during the 1926 General Strike entitled “In Time of Strife”. The following is an excerpt from Act Two. Jennys’ mum (Jean) and dad (Jock) find out Wull (Jennys’ boyfriend) has scabbed and they discuss the news in their livingroom:

**Jock:** Its no her to blame ava’, he wants to make a wheen a pounds and slip off to Canada, I saw that was in his mind last nicht when he was in here..
Jean: Jenny has been speakin aboot Canada tae

Jock: Ay, a fine thing that would be, a dauchter o’ mine gaun to Canada on blood money. Jean if he ever comes aboot this hoose again I’ll leave him deid on that floor.

(from “In Time O’ Strife: A Play in Three Acts by Joe Corrie, 1926, p. 30)

In Act Three this scene highlights the community sentiments by Jenny, the girlfriend of Wull, a miner who went back to work (a scab). He argues his intentions were to save money to immigrate to Canada.

Wull goes to Jennys’ house, the next day, to ask her to leave for Canada with him:

Wull: I thoucht I was daein’richt Jenny. I thoucht the men would make a start if somebody took the lead

Jenny: And you stabbed them in the back; the neebirs you hae lived wi’a’ your days, the men you hae kept company wi’, the men you hae sported wi’…ye traitor

Later in the conversation….

Wull: We can be happy yet Jenny

Jenny: It’s ower late Wull

Wull: The strike’ll soon be forgotten

Jenny: Aye but you failed me, failed us a’, that can never be forgotten

(from “In Time O’ Strife: A Play in Three Acts by Joe Corrie, 1926, p. 65)
During my Master’s thesis one respondent summed up this heritage of solidarity as follows:

I hope the young anes nooadays will continue that..a sense of social responsibility. Yaer living in this world wi’other people. I hope I’ve passed that on tae my kids. I hope the mining community I wis brought up in disnae die. I hope it’s a social community and yae can care aboot what happens. (Thomson, 1992, p. 193)

A Humanist Education: Struggling Against Capital

Growing Up Socialist

During childhood there was family support for socialist societies in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and Cuba. These sentiments were most readily displayed as my parents shouted at the television when news reporters retorted anti-soviet and anti-communist sentiments during such events as the war in Vietnam, events in Eastern Europe and Cuba, and anti-colonial struggles in Northern Ireland, Nicaragua, El Salvador and South Africa. My family were anti establishment and against militarism of the capitalist state and policing during labour disputes and urban struggles of inner city youth. Mum would tell me how her dad longed to live in a communist society and wished he had been born later in years to realize this. Therefore my socialization to critical consciousness reinforced Marx’s theory that a major barrier to the development of worker’s class consciousness is the viewpoint capitalist relations are natural. Dad would remind me on occasion the tide would turn and socialism was inevitable - everything was a cycle from rightist politics back to leftist politics. Socialism and capitalism were explained as poles apart and a rich heritage of Scottish and Fife history. There was also a sense of internationalism - to working people all over the world, as a sense of a natural solidarity one must live up to during ones lifetime as the reason to be.
One incident I particularly remember is being with one of my best male friends with his dad, driving in their car. I cannot remember exactly what started the discussion.

I said society had to change. I wanted to live in a society where everyone was equal. We should not have rich and poor and I promoted an ideal of a communist society. I was only 15 years old. Ian’s dad was very shocked at my political stance. He said it will never be and it’s not right to have everyone equal, it’s just not possible. I challenged Mr. Davis saying it’s my belief and that’s what I will work towards. On reflection to be a communist was a positive role model in our house. We had a communist local councillor living on our street whom the community respected and consistently elected for more than 30 years. His expenses were always the lowest on the council, and he was a very humble man fighting for the Markinch community. Mum and dad admired the humanity and honesty of local communist politicians and trade unionists. They voted for Britain’s longest standing communist MP from West Fife, parliamentary MP Willie Gallagher. (Reflective writing, June 2007)

On reading Rafeek’s work (2008) I was also impressed by similar stories from Scottish communist women reflecting on their formative experience to radicalism. The Communist Party had created young peoples’ organizations to influence community youth and promote their roles selling the party newspaper “The Daily Worker”. Young people were also impacted by local communist activists. The disposition of a friend’s parents or person who was well known in the community could shape the outlook of young people. Isa Porte talks about her experience in Cambuslang:

The old man Andy Mackie, wasn’t an intellectual. He was an old miner who had worked hard all his life and (was) a really down to earth man who did all the knocking (at) doors, chalking (on) the pavement, speaking. He did everything, he was a one man Communist Party. He was totally honest, respected by everyone who knew him, even his enemies. That had a big effect on me. (Rafeek, 2008, p. 40)
Meanwhile, the response of my friend’s dad whom I thought was politically left was surprising to me and I began to notice my political views, aligned with socialism and communism, were a more radical left view. Contemporary labour politics espoused a democratic mode of socialism, without mentioning the socialist word too often (reflecting the different social and political context of active communist and socialist parties in Rafeek’s work and my Master’s respondents from the earlier part of the 20th century).

I was also developing firmer political beliefs, being more confident about my socialist worldview. In this sense my own childhood socialization must have been solidly in favour of a socialist alternative to advance the interests of working class people. There was no other way to learn this apart from family and community. This is also what made me different from my peers, especially as a young woman, a clear political analysis, interest and stance. During my Master’s research I heard of similar stories from community elders growing up during the interwar period in Fife.

There wis a lot o’ people in the area that tended tae be members o’ the Communist Party or sympathetic tae the ideas o’ the Communist Party, and they certainly found root no jist in the community but in the pits themselves. Some o’ thum became councillors in Fife County Council which took it onto the political field. People joined the Communist Party in these areas by example, because they saw these people tryin tae dae something. It wis personal contact and personal influence. Yae were surrounded by that aw the time. Yae wur bound tae admire people that wur daein maest o’ the positive things in yer area. (Thomson, 1992, p. 197)

Boughton (1997, 2005) mentions similar organic intellectuals in the Australian working class communist movement as do the Scottish studies of MacDougall (1981) and MacIntyre (1980).

Another vivid memory of my early socialist leanings was an interview for the civil service at 16 years of age in Edinburgh. One of the first questions asked was where would you
like to travel to, if you had three choices in the world? I openly answered China, Cuba and the
Soviet Union. On return home my parents asked me about the interview and the type of
questions I was asked. I told them about my travel question and response. My mum and dad
laughed saying your not going to get that job Marion. They were right.

Against School and Capital Authority

In an earlier part of this chapter I mentioned my resistance to school and authority. My
dad summed it up as I was anti-authority and anti-teacher (Interview, October 23, 2009). On
reflection my reactions were a product of my socialization, my independent working class,
female character which was not afraid to resist and stand up for injustice wherever it reared its
head. Secondary School was my direct contact with attempts to civilize working class kids and in
a way to break us and demonstrate workplace relations. There were little democratic attempts to
include the students in classroom curriculum, in school activities or school governance. Our
parents were also kept out the school as partners or as important influential stakeholders. The
school authorities displayed and encouraged a distant and parochial relationship with working
class parents.

Again, this emphasizes the work of Bowles and Gintis (1976) emphasizing schools as the
primary preparation ground for children to learn the social relations of capital before entering the
workplace. The mission of the school was to get us, the working class kids, through 4 years of
behaviour and capitalist moral management and somehow to get us through or just pass exams.
There were preconceived assumptions about the learning capabilities of working class kids
which eventually turned me off secondary school and I did not achieve my academic best.
Whereas at primary school, a more liberal, free and intimate form of education, not based on
exams and rote learning supported my success and growth as a scholar.
My reaction to school and authority resembles my work life and feelings which erupt over unfair treatment, authoritarian management styles, workplace harassment and violations of my human rights as a working class woman. I was learning the social relations of capitalism (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). As a teenager I could not articulate this, but felt the unjust power relations of the school, as similar capital workplace relations. But, I had supportive and sensitive parents who could see the same injustice, the systemic issues and not blame me, as an individual. They stuck by me 100% as my dad mentioned my secondary school experience in a recent interview

I didnae see it until yae were a teenager. Yae were awfy at Glenrothes. I was cried uptae the schael. I forget the woman’s name. I had tae go and defend yae, tae take yaer part. I went and created a fuss. It wis nae bother. She was blaming yaer mither and fether for the problem, yaer behaviour.

It was the parent’s fault, a parenting problem. I told them it was yaer nature and whit dae yae want me tae dae? Do yae want me tae hammer her? Is that what yae want? No no Mr Thomson the headmistress said. All the time they wanted me tae put my foot down and control yae. (Interview, October 23, 2009)

My dad stresses the role of the school trying to control the parents of working class kids by blaming their parenting skills, as if their leniency and lack of skill was creating me - the problem. Dad confronted the headmistress as he outright asked “Do they want him to physically punish me? Hammer it intae me?” I felt this harsh control by school authorities through the way other kids were treated and humiliated. Some were ridiculed in front of the other students, a traumatizing experience and in effect, an institutionalized form of torture. I also felt their pain and humiliation and perhaps this contributed to my own sense of class consciousness. However, through my family socialization I was able to deflect the blaming and put this in a systems
perspective of the school and class (as my parents did). I had the awareness the school was trying to control me and them inadvertently as working class parents. This incident also reflects the important role my mother played in subverting gender and class roles in the school by allying with and fuelling my subversion while I wrote notes and skipped classes. It reinforces the need for more research regarding the role of parenting and mothering on the socialization of gender, class and race and the formation of a critical consciousness (Connell, 1982, 1993; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989).

Although my schooling and academic credentials have provided me with additional economic status from my working class background to a middle class income bracket, my roots and being, my cultural capital still remain thoroughly working class. hooks (1994) talks about class being more than money. It shapes your attitudes, values, social relations, and the biases which shape the way knowledge is constructed (p. 178). My reactions and feelings of and to injustice stem from my own ways of looking at and acting on the world, as a working class woman. It’s the basis of who I am: my history, social relations, and experiences of class. It is my person, my being and the connection and comfort I feel to other working class communities no matter where I am. It grounds me in history and reality and gives my life purpose in living with humility. It’s home in a literal sense.

Also I still feel, to some degree, the effects of a class bias owing to a strong working class identity and oppositional worldview. I had to find coping and alternative strategies, in school and in work situations, to somehow acclimatize to an upper and middle class bias. bell hooks discusses this dilemma as a Black working class woman, a student and professor in university:

We were encouraged, as many students are today, to betray our class origins. ....
I encourage students to reject the notion that they must choose between experiences. They must believe they can inhabit comfortably two different worlds, but they must make each space one of comfort. They must creatively invent ways to cross borders. They must believe in their capacity to alter the bourgeois settings they enter. (hooks, 1994, pp.182-183)

**Learning Work Relations and Capitalism**

During my teenage years I had some work experience doing a Sunday paper round, working in an egg factory, as a weekend waitress at a local restaurant, doing some farm work (potato picking) before I entered my first full time job as a bank clerk just before my sixteenth birthday. I recall a couple of resistance episodes in a few of these jobs which reflected the development of a militant worldview. My dad recalled the restaurant episode during a recent interview:

Do you remember the Chinese restaurant? They told Carol: “next week you come back, Marion no come back!” You argued with them about the wages. They did not pay you enough, what you deserved owing to the calculation of hours worked and hourly rate. You were arguing wages and labour conditions with bosses at 14 years or 15 years! (Interview, October 23, 2009)

I cannot imagine how I had the confidence to confront the restaurant owner about my wages unless I had been socialized to do so. We did not learn union rights at school but I must have informally learnt from my parents listening to their conversations with other community and family members. There were also so many lessons from watching the television news and my parent’s reactions to the conservative newscasters. I would hear the official view, from the media, employers, and government officials then my parent’s response supporting the union view. There were also occasions where my parents felt the union was not representing the rights of the workers so I learnt labour leaders could also have politically diverse opinions.
Class Relations at the Bank

My parents were quite happy for me to follow in my sister’s footsteps as a bank clerk and made some enquiries about vacancies at the local branch. After I received my O Level report I was interviewed and offered a job at Kirkcaldy, 8 miles from Markinch, in my gran’s neighbourhood. This fact became very important to my future political development as I spent nearly every lunchtime with my grandparents for 5 years, listening to gran’s stories, herstory. Freire refers to this process as inheriting history, an active construction we do with others through a subliminal process (Freire, 1998, p. 54).

This was ironic, my dad’s neighbourhood near the Gallatown. This part of my life allowed me to reconnect with my roots as I spent everyday at lunch with my grandparents, my dad’s mum and dad for 5 years. These lunch hours were invaluable for anchoring me in my past and educating me on my own working class history and my father’s roots. (Reflective writing, June 2007)

My bank job as a junior clerk was a 3-month apprenticeship and probation period. I tried to do my best and was so enthralled at my new sense of adulthood and responsibility. Receiving a pay cheque was a huge incentive to work and feeling like an adult with some power. I was always a responsible hard worker trying to help my colleagues as much as possible. The majority of staff were women in clerical positions with a male assistant accountant, a male accountant and male manager. The accountant had challenges with a spirited rebellious and independent working class woman, and my popularity with the staff and the customers. He heard I was trying to organize the female tellers into the union. I was in trouble. (Reflective writing, October 2008)

The majority of customers also appreciated my ways, especially the government wage workers who would weekly cash their cheques as maintenance workers, cleaners, and janitors, similar to my own mum. I made them so comfortable in the bank system which conveyed a sense
of class code. The ways I would greet the workers and chit chat about everyday things, tell a joke or two, made the workers feel at ease. Also, just my working class accent alone created a responsive environment. It was such an upper class thing going to the bank in the past. The poor and working class went to the bank with benevolence. The working class man with his cloth cap in his hand, bowing his head to the rich (Somehow this was an unwritten cultural code of class and capital, again showing who ruled). There were also the business owners, the middle and upper class that would fraternize with the manager and accountant.

Some would really look down on you, the lowly bank clerk and working class girl with the thick accent and strange clothes. I would never give them any more respect than the government workers and some perceived this. However, for the first time in my life I was talking to middle class and upper class people on a first name basis and some were really nice to me. I treated everyone the same, the little old school cleaner or the big businessman. (Reflective writing, October 2008)

I learnt of the need for workers to organize, to defend their rights in the workplace, while also learning the need to contribute and to be a hard worker.

Mum worked as a cleaner while we were growing up, at the school and local library. Dad worked at the paper mill as long as I can remember. I have always had tremendous respect for working people as without the workers there would be no wealth. My parents always made me aware of the power of withdrawing your labour when injustice needs to be contested and the worst crime for any working class person is to cross a picket line and scab against other workers. There were clear allegiances to be drawn at work and at my first job perhaps the accountant drew this conclusion. At the end of my probationary period I was to be let go. The female staff at the bank lodged a complaint with the manager.
However, my parents supported my struggle with capitalist authority, and this time in workplace relations. Dad arranged an interview with the bank manager about my dismissal. As a union steward he was familiar with labour law and grievance procedures.

My father met with the bank manager and in no uncertain terms called the union card – if you go through with dismissing my daughter we will take the case to an industrial tribunal. Yes I learnt another subtle lesson in class power and agency from my dad. (Reflective writing, June 2006)

Allman and Wallis (2005) write that Marx’s theory of social consciousness cannot be isolated from the social being who is grounded in material relations in and with the world. Marx related the two – ontology (theory of being) and a revolutionary theory of knowledge (epistemology). Radical education involves the simultaneous transformation of our experience of being (ontology) and our experience of knowing and thinking (epistemology).

During my teenage years I had already begun to form a clear working class outlook and view on the world. My relation to knowledge, analysis and theory was based on an active engagement and dialectical understanding of my social reality.

Michael Apple (2003) reminds us “only some knowledge and ways of organizing it get declared to be legitimate or “official”. ..the result of conflicts and compromises within the state and between the state and civil society” (p. 7). Apple also refers to the individualist perspective of knowledge as being a possession, an object as something one acquires. This perspective differs from a sociology of knowledge which looks at ways knowledge is created and produced in political, social and cultural processes in society.

I have brought my working class worldview and being into adulthood irrespective of my middle class income level. hooks (2000) also discusses the silence of class in her book “where
we stand, class matters”. She also describes her own experience of class bias in universities as a Black working class female student:

Demands that individuals from class backgrounds deemed undesirable surrender all vestiges of their past create psychic turmoil. Rewarded if we choose to assimilate, estranged if we choose to maintain those aspects of who we were, some were all too often seen are outsiders. (1994, p. 182)

Class consciousness, class struggle or working class identity are not named, valued or identified. Instead we are all to be consumers and individuals within a hegemonic neo-liberal conservative agenda to support and entrench a global capitalism. Lee comments on this point:

Capitalism works against the interests of those that it claims to liberate through the promise of the best life possible, defined mainly through high levels of consumption and the accumulation of wealth. (2009, p. 145)

My family socialization worked against this ideology in favour of a more humane system, espousing collective humanist values similar to hooks as a Black working class child in the Southern United States:

I am thankful to have been raised in this nation by poor rural grandparents who farmed, who were in many ways self-sufficient, by parents who were working class and proud of their capacity to work hard and well. They taught me to honour labour, whether paid or unpaid, to love the poor, to learn from them for all they have to teach us about survival. They taught me that to be poor was no cause for shame, that ones dignity and integrity of being could never be determined by money, by market values. (2000, p. 164)

*Learning in Social Action: The Colonized Domestic Worker*

Allman (2001) describes how organic intellectuals throughout history have changed the course of history, acting on history as if it were their historical destiny. I felt this agency. I am not assuming my own self importance in this statement but reiterating the deep sense of commitment to a higher being, a collective humanity. In order to explore this further I wanted to
experience solidarity with other working class communities outside Scotland to be more human by learning from others struggles across race and gender. On reflection I was also trying to break away from whiteness, in order to disown whiteness and be a race traitor (Ignatiev, 1999).

Development opportunities were becoming scarce as a single working class woman in Markinch. By my late teens I began to scan the weekly newspapers looking for job opportunities. In the weekly local newspaper I would see an advertisement for live in au-pairs, nannies or babysitters in Canada. My family had a Canadian connection: my great aunt Chrissie, Jean and Mary had immigrated to Ontario years back. Maybe Canada would be a good idea for me. The agency, situated in Edinburgh, placed ads in the small town newspapers for young woman wanting to escape the small villages. A similar sentiment had been raised by respondents in my Master’s research. Young working class men went to war to get out the villages while young working class women went to the city for domestic service work. Now this Edinburgh agency was glamorizing the work by calling it an au-pair or nanny work. I would find out the true story across the ocean. I sent in my application and a letter arrived to attend an interview.

It was an office on Frederick Street and a middle class woman interviewed me to see if I was domestic enough for the position, a respectable working class female who knew her position in life. I didn’t know the same process was happening in Jamaica and the Philippines. However, racialized women would be scrutinized intensely for civility and even trained in preparation to be proper domestics under the mores of Canadian society. I, as a white woman, did not experience this same scrutiny or degradation. The process from the margins had more barriers to jump than we empire women in a white supremacist immigration system. (Reflective writing, October 2008)
Beforehand, I enquired about immigrating to Canada but I could never secure enough points in the normal process which discriminates against working class women through financial status, skill, profession, sponsorship, and also lack of higher education. A domestic ticket was the only way, I as a working class woman could work and live in Canada on a work visa.

I received notification of my successful interview and a photo of my new family in Canada: the fancy big house and children, a world apart from the housing scheme and my roots in Markinch. I also remember my dad’s reaction to my decision to go to Canada as a domestic. He was angry and reacted by condemning the idea “going to Canada to be someone else’s slave.” However, my mum stood by me and assured me that I should go, if I felt it was the right thing to do. It was a few weeks until my dad and I spoke about my decision. I had never lived alone, never been on an airplane and was moving to Canada alone at 20 years old with two cases of possessions.

Arriving at Toronto airport I was scared on the plane and crying over leaving everything familiar behind. What would my new family, as the agency called it, look like? What if some stranger tried to pick me up? Would they recognize me and vice versa? I recognized the kids from the photo and off we went in the huge car, a Cadillac, along the 401, to Waterloo. I remember thinking how brown and dry the grass looked, all the snow and so much space!!

I could already tell the young girl was playing power games with her parents. I was uncomfortable with the kids in the back seat. These people now decided if I stayed or left Canada, if I had a home and if I got paid. It makes me think how vulnerable this work is, of those films about young women from poor families lured here by the sex trade and human trafficking. (Reflective writing, October 2008)
Once I arrived in Canada I would learn of my sisters’ struggles from the Caribbean and the Philippines and my eyes were open to racism and injustice. Before I knew of discrimination and racism in history but never had theory to name it as a systemic issue. Living in small town Scotland, I did not know how racism works and manifests itself in ourselves and in society as the system of white supremacy. I needed an explanation of why we have racism and its roots of oppression.

On arrival in Canada I was oh so innocent, yet so worldly, without knowing. Somehow I had been given a template, the map of my socialization to navigate through this puzzle of life. This framework was the substance of what is necessary for sound judgment, independence of thought and respect for humanity. I had also inherited what Howard Zinn names “moral outrage” against injustice and inequity in whatever form it rears its head. (Reflective writing, October 2008)

This moral outrage opened me up to transgression as a domestic worker in solidarity, across race, class and gender with other domestics from the Philippines and Caribbean. I felt an affinity with my sister domestic workers and a consciousness as a white person who was choosing to stand against racism and injustice against whiteness (Lopez, 1996).

During my 5 years as a live-in domestic worker I gained such a political education, not only about class and gender, having to work for middle class women as their maid, but also about race, through my domestic sister’s struggles against unruly employers, immigration, police, media and systemic Canadian racism. After attending an evening course at Ryerson I was referred to a domestic’s organization fighting for the rights of domestic workers, Intercede. I became involved, leafleting, picketing and attending many media events to shame the immigration policy and landed immigrant status/work visa system of Canada. This was an invaluable lesson in organizing and learning in social action affecting my political, social and
education development ever since (also see Foley, 1999). My experience reinforces Gramscian theory whereby cultural and educational work has a greater impact when workers use their learning in political and social action building new relationships and sharing power. Through organizing in social and political action workers learn political skills while building new relationships in solidarity crossing their own borders (Giroux, 2005; Gramsci, 1971).

My first job turned out to be like an episode in *Upstairs Downstairs*, a British television program which explores the exploitative relationships of domestic help in upper class Britain at the turn of the 20th century. The upper class family lived upstairs and all the servants and poor domestic help lived downstairs in another world. This is how I felt in my first 3 months of Canadian life, living in the basement of a Waterloo home distant from home and my own working class culture of respect and humility. My experience was also accentuated by a trip to Florida three weeks after my arrival, to Disneyworld where I would spend hours on end in a hotel room with the kids, day and night, while the parents lived the high life. My eyes were also opened at the racial divide and racialized division of labour in Florida, mostly African Americans doing menial work. I felt this was a throwback to slavery and it upset me, no one else noticed. It was as if it was normal: whites owning and ruling the colour line. I was the problem in noticing it and worrying about it. I kept my sanity in those early days by writing letters to my parents every Sunday but also by hiding some of the horrible experiences, not to disturb them. I wanted to also prove my own independence and spirit and show them I could make something of Canada.

This first employer fired me in my third month after finding out I had been looking for another job. She gave me 20 minutes to pack all my things and leave her house in the suburbs of
Waterloo. I had been in Canada for 3 months at the height of winter and had just turned 20 years old.

Afterwards, I took this employer to the Labour Board demanding my wages for unfair dismissal as she stopped my wage cheque. Even then, alone and before I joined the domestic worker’s organization Intercede, I was fighting for my rights. This makes me think of my ancestors’ early days in Canada.

Welcome to Canada, to exploitation, to cruelty, to work visa life, to people I felt had no morals, a mixed up society. Canada would become something different for me - to create this space where I could think and do things on my own - who knows the boundaries which exist - which I could push. Was I beyond my years? Was I an old soul in a young body? Did this also reflect the stories of my ancestors, my Aunt Chrissie, the immigrants facing all the hardships in the mining towns of Northern Ontario? They were a poor Fife mining family just over a year’s strike in Kirkcaldy sailing the Atlantic for the cold climate of Northern Ontario. It must have taken them a while to build their own networks, to also fight for their rights and dignity as working class immigrants. I could not give up, what was I to go back to? (Reflective writing, March 2009)

As I reflect after 3 months, my eyes had already been opened to new things and I was excited about Canada full of courage and hope for the future. After Waterloo I went onto work with families in Hamilton and Toronto who respected domestic workers important role supporting their children, household chores and the family. They also respected worker’s rights to time off and good working and living conditions. On the other end of the spectrum I also worked for troublesome employers in Montreal and Toronto before receiving my landed papers 5 years after entering Canada.
In one placement there was an especially troubling case of sexual harassment towards one of my friends as she visited me over a weekend. The female employer had gone away for a few days leaving the husband at home to make advances to my friend. It became evident how vulnerable female domestics can be in someone else’s home. In Intercede meetings I also learnt how race is also sexualized in our society as racialized women can be more at risk as domestic workers. During our Intercede meetings this issue was raised as a serious one by some domestics complaining to immigration lawyers about sexual and racial harassment and the need to shift jobs, jeopardizing their immigration status.

Domestic work ensues a sub-servient relationship between the domestic and the employer. A domestic lives with the employer and is reliant on the employer for immigration status for shelter, food, wages and for citizenship. It is an opportunity for an unequal power and abusive relationship to occur between employer, kids, family and husband versus the domestic across race, class, gender, age and sexuality. I learnt how to clean houses very well, other people’s houses. I learnt how to see what I did not want to see and sometimes to be what I did not expect to be. I was children’s stand by parent, friend and console while also being a social worker and console to the employer, the mum. Patricia Hill Collins discusses this phenomenon in relation to Black domestic workers in the American South who were working for white affluent families and living a double life in an alien white culture (1990). I also had an insiders’ look at how people live, in another culture, with a different set of beliefs. I also witnessed intimately the fragility of family life and relationships. Was I ready for this role at 20 years old? Domestic work is more, way more, than cleaning houses.

As I reflect I played a heavy role in the development of many kids especially in their moral education. Maybe this is when I realized I had a calling to teach as I witnessed the difference I could make in kids’ lives. Parents would tell me so.
Kids are really sponges and see the world for what it is—they ask the right questions and have an intuition of what’s right and wrong, especially if they are encouraged to develop this sense of judgment. They can also lose this sense if it’s not nurtured, encouraged or supported. I would nurture their independence and encourage them to reach out and support others in need and always to be considerate of others' feelings. I could be talked into anything if there was a good rationale and kids respected me for that. I passed on what I had learnt in my own socialization, a moral and ethical development which encourages a social humanism. (Reflective writing, October, 2008)

Domestic work as women’s work also plays a major role in the social reproduction of labour power for capitalism. Through women’s role in the family and home they play a major role in socializing the young, looking after the elderly, making sure that workers within the family are capable of being ready for delivering labour power to capital everyday. In this sense, women play a vital role not only in reproducing a future labour force but also by producing this as unpaid labour within the home. The domestic worker is therefore part of this super exploitation (Kollontai, 1977).

Claudia Jones was involved in the domestic worker’s struggle in the US, as an organizer for the Communist Party between the 1930s-1950s. She was critical of the trade union movement minimizing the racist dimension of Black women’s superexploitation as domestic workers:

The lot of the domestic worker is one of unbearable misery. Usually she has no definition of tasks in the household where she works….It is incumbent on the trade unions to accomplish the task of organizing exploited domestic workers, the majority of whom are Negro women.( as cited in Boyce Davies, 2008, pp. 44-45)

This highlights the historical, global, class, race, and gender implications of domestic work as women’s work and it’s transnational nature under capitalism (It also draws attention to racism within the trade union movement).
It was during an evening course in sociology at Ryerson, I learned of feminism and the social reproduction theory. Ryerson was one of the few colleges which would accept me into an evening course as a visa worker. I had been advocating among my friends that domestics need to be unionized, so was so happy to learn about Intercede. I attended the Sunday meetings every month to learn about other domestic’s situations and a lawyer would attend regularly to answer any questions on our rights. We also did various campaigns to highlight the plight of domestic workers in Canada, particularly Toronto. These included leafleting outside Honest Ed’s about changes needed in immigration policy and demonstrating for changes in labour law outside the Ministry of Labour and Department of Immigration on University Avenue. On a couple of occasions we demonstrated against deportations of domestic workers and embarrassed the Minister of Immigration at public engagements.

Intercede was a great organization believing in grass roots organizing, building democracy and mobilizing immigrant working class women across race, ethnicity and class (it was also a school for deepening democracy and building citizenship; see Schugurensky, 2002). There was an intricate system of organizing, a phone tree set up whereby domestics would call other domestics to remind them of meetings or to mobilize for specific events. We would also meet regularly at the offices to make placards for our demonstrations, stuff envelopes and co-write articles for newsletters and public articles.

I was one of the two white European women who regularly attended the meetings whilst the majority of women were from the Philippines and the Caribbean. This was so new for me, to be with women from various working class backgrounds and viewpoints across race. I realized solidarity across race in Intercede, an experience I would find hard to duplicate until I worked and lived in Ghana many years later. It was here too I realized my humanity meant taking sides. I was to be
different than most white people who chose not to see racism or to play out their own racial privilege.

The women of Intercede had a great impact on my own leadership development and also my development as a woman’s activist questioning the nature of woman’s work and the unpaid nature of domestic work. This led me to a Marxist analysis of the sexual division of labour and the capitalist patriarchal structure. (Reflective writing, October 2008)

This experience raises the ability of Intercede to provide an environment whereby learning was ignited, “where sparks were flying”. Schugurensky (2002) discusses this aspect of assimilative learning and uses Horton’s speech about the experience of the citizen schools movement at Highlander to highlight this:

It’s a much bigger experience than anything you’ve had before as an individual. It’s bigger than your organization and it’s qualitatively different, not just more of the same. I want the struggle for social and economic justice to get big and become so dynamic that the atmosphere in which you are working is so charged that sparks are darting around very fast, and they explode and create other sparks and it’s almost perpetual motion. Learning jumps from person to person with no visible explanation of how it happened. (Horton 1998, p. 108, as cited in Schugurensky, 2002, p. 72)

On a work visa, I was not allowed to change families without reporting to immigration. They have the jurisdiction to send you home at any time irrespective of how bad an employment situation maybe. Similar situations still happen to this day with domestics and agricultural guest workers. My experience with Intercede resembles Robert Jensen’s discussion about confronting his whiteness and becoming angry to change, to be anti-racist

And it doesn’t feel good, in part because to be fully human is to seek communion with others not separation from them, and one cannot find that connection under conditions in which unjust power brings unearned privilege. To be fully human is to reject a system that conditions your pleasure in someone else’s pain. (2005, p. xx)
bell hooks talks about her own journey to find theory:

I came to theory because I was hurting—the pain within me was so intense that I could not go on living. I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend—to grasp what was happening around and within me. Most importantly, I wanted to make the hurt go away. I saw in theory then a location for healing. (1994, p. 59)

Finding theory for me was a way to answer questions of injustice and like hooks I wanted to comprehend what has happening around and within me. It was also pivotal for the development of my own radical, critical theory leading me to my vocation as a radical educator. I concluded this was a vocation necessary to fulfill my becoming and to support working class communities to realize and struggle against the injustices of capitalism and to work towards a more egalitarian society. On reflection I was always seeking answers observing situations which upset and angered me, on television, in the news and in everyday class relations at school and the workplace.

At first this led me to seek out others who wanted to talk politics and were angry like me. As a teenager I was somehow isolated because of political interest especially among young women my age. I found a few people like me, usually young men who also wanted to leave and travel, to find their way. On recollection one such friend was also gay and eventually had to leave the area to find community he could be supported in. My parents supported my friendships and would make all feel really welcome in our house. This was a sign my parents were open to difference. Another example was my parents shouting at the television when the pro-life movement would advocate against abortion and women’s right to choose. My dad was adamant about a woman’s right to choose as she carries the child for 9 months.
These consistent radical politics for working class parents in my youth were not the norm. However, both parent’s had no post secondary schooling apart from their own formative experience influences, and self education. Therefore I wanted to find theory to answer why things were how they were. I was impatient with the world as it was. I wanted to make an impact in my life and early on chose an alternative option to my peers from the village. My parents encouraged my move to Canada as a first step in this realization, in finding theory.

No one on either side of our family, at that time, had gone onto further education, except my own brother, 4 years my elder. So to enter into higher education was a big step for the women in my family and my mum was ecstatic about my pursuits.

I was and am driven, maybe because I have a responsibility to my family, to help working class communities. We are so absent from academia, as teachers, as theorists or as students. How many working class kids and females from Markinch have a Masters or PhD? My parents and grandparents were denied this, so I am going in their memory. I want to make the most of my education for others like me, for our communities, our youth and our world and my sisters and brothers in other countries. I have to take advantage of every minute, to sacrifice for a responsibility and a privilege that should be a right. (Reflective writing, June 2009)

McLaren et al. speak of a committed intellectual as “someone who is not only interested in resisting and defeating forms of cultural domination but rather someone for whom the ends of all forms of exploitation is the focal point of his or her commitment to transform the world in liberation” (2005b, p. 277). Davis also speaks of this commitment as a life long vocation to advance emancipatory theory and practice. She describes this as a historic purpose “of a tradition
of struggle..connected with a collective effort to bring about radical social change” (as cited in 

In Canada I met other immigrants with whom I could openly discuss my political beliefs. 
A few friends encouraged me to return to school. Perhaps they realized, maybe even better than I 
did, my ability to complete a university course. As a domestic finding free time for school was 
not easy and finding an institution to admit a visa worker was also a challenge. I began at 
Ryerson with continuing education programs in psychology, sociology and women’s studies 
thriving in the classroom environment and excited about my exposure to theory and academia. I 
was surprised and elated other people actually wanted to hear my opinion and commended me 
for it, me, a working class woman from a small town in rural Scotland studying in a big city 
polytechnic. Little did I know I could be a scholar after being discouraged from a higher course 
in secondary school. My confidence in academia started to grow and a supportive professor at 
Ryerson encouraged my radical beliefs and my need to express my ideas through experiential 
ways, not in the strictest academic sense.

The seriousness and commitment to my studies has set me apart from other students in 
academia as I feel a political, ethical and social need to find theory. A major turning point in my 
life was an acceptance to a residential adult education college in Birmingham England, an 
affiliated college to Ruskin College at Oxford and the Trade Union Congress in the UK. Tom 
Steele discusses the history of working class radical education in Britain, of which “Fircroft was 

Equipped with my new found self confidence in higher education at Ryerson I applied to 
Fircroft through a magazine ad I found in a Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament magazine in 
Toronto. I visited the UK for an interview and 3 months later I was a resident student of Fircroft
College. I studied with another 60 adult learners from all over the country ranging in age from 22-65 years and from varied trade union, immigrant and community backgrounds.

This type of program is necessary, and rare, for working class adults to reflect on working class experience and to assert their own agency afterwards in communities, workplaces and universities throughout Britain. We studied a combined program of politics, sociology, economics, peace studies and history. However, the richest learning’s were with students studying theory and holding our own discussion groups. These evening sessions were similar to a study circle and our own self-directed learning. Our study circle fulfilled the goals of critical pedagogy and collaborative learning’s in the process of testing the quality and value of learning “by trying to make sense of it to other people – their peers” (Brufee, 1981, as cited in Eryaman, 2009, p. 73). Students realize their responsibility for self-and collective education (Gadotti, 1994, as cited in Eryaman, 2009). In fact, these informal and intense learning relationships were formative in my own political and academic development in ways no classroom can or could ever suffice. I expressed and built my collective self through study and relationship similar to my learning relationships with Action for Young People (AYP) in Ghana 15 years or so later.

I was Flossy the tea lady, getting the cups of tea ready for our night time discussions over radical theory and politics. We would meet in alternate rooms and take turns supplying the digestive biscuits. This small group was serious about our studies and probably the most political creatures of that year. Outside of Fircroft, we were involved with the Irish community meetings, the 1984/85 National Miners Strike visiting the picket line and the Miner’s Union (NUM) strike centre in Maerdy, South Wales. The striking miners also came to Fircroft as speakers and stayed overnight. We were learning by the book and in action. (Reflective writing, October 2008)
Those Fircroft days were quite isolated in retrospect. We became very close, a small group of students living and learning together - a unique, living community, living breathing and learning politics. For me this was a time of collectively finding theory and Marxism. We treaded unknown ground in politics, in friendship, as collective selves in our belief in social change. For some working class people at Fircroft this was a unique space to grow, a hotbed of questioning by adults of all ages, experiences and different walks of life. We were building alternative relations to capitalism and building community (Allman, 2001; hooks, 2003).

In retrospect where would I be without this opportunity? No university would accept me with just O Levels (leaving school with equivalent of Canadian Grade 12). Fircroft was the springboard for me, an opportunity that paved the way for me to be here doing my PhD research. Fircroft gave me the room, space and confidence to develop my ideas and writing. It was so hard to write my first essay as I struggled with punctuation, grammar and ways to express my ideas in a middle class and academic format. I did not have an appropriate cultural capital to feel confident on first entering higher education, especially my first degree at London Polytechnic and then the University of Toronto. Shugurensky elaborates on the importance of such critical collective spaces as Fircroft for marginalized communities:

Transformative learning theory requires supportive relationships and a supportive environment that encourages a sense of personal efficacy. Given that growth in personal efficacy is dependant on broader relationships of power, significant changes are more likely to occur through a collective political-pedagogical process that aims simultaneously at increasing both critical reflection and social justice. (2002, p. 73)

Pursuing a Degree at London Polytechnic and the University of Toronto

I was attracted to London Poly and women’s studies by the writings of Anne Marie Wolpe and Annette Kuhn, Feminism and Materialism (1978). Wolpe’s writings on girls and schooling through a materialist race, class and gender
perspective excited me. This book was a great read for me and a catalyst to women’s studies at London Poly. (Reflective writing, October 2008)

London Polytechnic was a venue to expand my feminist theory. I was also introduced to social history as I wanted to learn from working class history and social struggles against capital. So, at London Polytechnic and the University of Toronto I studied labour history and the history of socialist countries gaining an insight into historical materialist analysis. This developed my own views about historical agency and the importance of oral history to document working class experience. I became disillusioned in humanities class with time spent on reading the classics, stories and theories of white bourgeois men who had no resemblance to working people’s lives or theory which explained working class experience. Ian Martin brings in the ideas of Jane Thompson and the selection of what is considered knowledge.

Like all educational orthodoxies, this process of epistemological filtering of what is worth knowing and learning is, as Jane Thompson (1997) remarks, almost invariably a “highly particular (dead, white, male, middle class and European) selection of knowledge and culture confirmed as truth”.

I was also beginning to question white supremacy and a racist view of history. Brookfield (2005) reminds us, ideologies are hard to catch since they are tightly:

embedded in language, social habits and cultural forms that combine to shape the way we think about the world. Ideologies appear as common sense, as givens, rather than as beliefs that are deliberately skewed to support the interests of a powerful minority ... affirming political control in the hands of the white, rich and powerful. (as cited in Sauranta and Moisio, 2009, p. 58)

In educational theory I became angry at the deficit model of working class children explained through their lack of cultural and linguistic capital. The failure of working class
children was explained by their parent’s culture and not the system of schooling itself reinforcing class bias in education (also see hooks, 1994).

I would leave that class so angry at the teachings. I was also quite shy and would never put my hand up and question like I would now. I was in shell shock from Fircroft which sheltered me a bit from the pretentiousness of academia and middle class world of class bias. In Fircroft most subjects would end up with a political bias through questioning from the students but here there were no questions. We were duplicating what the professor said. Some students were there for different reasons and from different backgrounds, experience and worldviews. (Reflective writing, October 2008)

My second year at the University of Toronto was also a culture shock as there was a more affluent and prestigious student population studied there. I also felt theory was less radical and critical and contained a heightened emphasis on a more conservative and liberal ideology. Did the majority of students and professors realize my reality: how hard it was for working class students to make it this far?

After completing my degree I began to study for my Master’s and engaged in one of the most gratifying areas of research in my life. I decided to give back to my community and test my perception of Fife’s radical culture inherited through my gran and family memories. This emerged as a pattern in my research and radical praxis in Ghana.

**Graduate studies**

My Master’s research led me back to Scotland to study the effects of two major industrial disputes, the 1926 General Strike and the 1984/85 National Miners Strike on two Fife mining communities during the inter-war period. I chose an oral history project to examine this question. I researched a library collection of letters from a miner’s activist and Communist Party member,
David Proudfoot during the 1920s and 1930s. I also interviewed approximately 30 elderly community members to elicit more background on the radical political culture in Fife. This project was a life changing experience as I felt in touch with this culture and the stories of an older Fife, as if I had been there through the voice and experience of my grandparents and parents.

My Master’s also raised the issue of making real organic intellectuals visible during this period: self educated miners, community activists, and also a more wider read and schooled community of activists influenced by John McLean’s Marxist labour college. From this study I felt a hope such a culture could be resurrected if not collectively, then by individuals as organic intellectuals in specific times and contexts, opening up educational and counter-cultural spaces. Crowther (1999) believes the labour college movement during the 1920s provided the only successful large scale attempt to involve working class people in adult education in Scotland (also see Bryant, 1984). However, Crowther also mentions it could have been more effective if it was community based and not focused primarily at the point of the production (p. 32).

My Master’s research reaffirmed I was dedicated to following in these elders’ footsteps in whatever way I could as a radical educator with a clear class consciousness. I was struck at the articulation of class conscious theory and practice by the miners I interviewed. Although expressed in unfamiliar terms, there was no disdain or shame about naming class or class struggle, or capitalism or imperialism as the system which oppresses working class communities. It was clear in those days working class culture mocked and made every attempt to expose this dialectic with wit and creativity.

It was a rich cultural heritage where working class communities were creators and participants in and through culture, a proletarian culture similar to Gramsci’s (1971) theory,
where a collective way of being was paramount to protect the standards and rights of all the working class community.

This research brought me to my current PhD project which is trying to explore how this community context has been passed onto me and informed my class consciousness and socialist vision. It also brings me to an exploration of how this class conscious focus has influenced my work as a radical educator across race, class, and gender in Ghana, and to revolutionary critical pedagogy more generally.

I have made conscious efforts to use every opportunity, to reincarnate this collective experience in Fife with other working class communities in various contexts, for instance through my work with the Intercede community, as a union activist and also by working in Ghana with Action for Young People (AYP). I also examine the ways my experiences in Canada and Ghana contributed to my radical praxis.

My experience with Action for Young People in Ghana nurtured a special relationship which reincarnated the memory of my Master’s subjects and provided another possibility of my own transgression.

The following chapter excavates my experience as a radical educator in Ghana with Action for Young People (AYP). During Chapter Five I first set the scene by describing the social context of my work in Ghana. Afterwards, I go on to describe the AYP education program over a period of approximately 6 years. In an effort to understand the conditions which led to transgression I provide an insight into curriculum design while providing examples of the learning pedagogy and a radical praxis. By providing a road map of the AYP program we gain an understanding of the conditions and the social relations of capitalism, which contributed to my transgression in the Ghana program.
Through the radical learning pedagogy, curriculum content and the role of a political and humanist focus an environment was created for possible transgression. The specific collective making of the program through the learners and educators experience synthesized a transformative process. Therefore, for me, transgression happens throughout the program as collective process, confronting and changing the social relations of capitalism, through the learning of new knowledge, the relationships between all involved and the openness and human skills achieved to reach across and break boundaries. It is an ongoing collective process, a synthesis and combustion of the learners and the radical educator and their collective humanity (and process of becoming) which supports this change. Therefore emphasis is placed on external factors and experiences on my collective self as opposed to an inner individual search for transgression.

By focusing on a collective self and formative experience in previous chapters my social vision and Marxist humanism have been described. Through Chapter Five the excavation of a radical praxis supplements previous chapters by providing insight into my own agency which evolved from formative experience. As discussed earlier, Allman and Wallis (2005) believe the radical educators skills combined with their radical ontology and epistemology is central to program and curriculum design, curriculum content, pedagogy, social vision, and their political commitment to social change.

During the next chapter I provide observations of program design and AYP evaluation feedback as too often we discuss radical theories of education without an accompanying vision of the practice. Therefore the following section provides an example of how a radical education program was built through solidarity and transgression. It is also necessary to examine the collaborative relationships which emerged as learners and educators engaged in new relations to
knowledge and new forms of collective being. The following excavation offers glimpses into these processes.
CHAPTER FIVE:
RADICAL PRAXIS IN GHANA WITH
ACTION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Introduction

We now need to reclaim and reassert a radical approach to biographical research which stresses the collectivity rather than the individuality of social life. (Merrill, 2005, p. 138)

This quotation from Barbara Merrill reinforces the basis of my research and excavation.

Over a period of 6 years, I worked in Ghana with a group of young people and a smaller group of adults through a popular education program, first with the Human Rights Project, then with a young peoples group called Action for Young People (AYP).

As a white woman in Africa my own learning and work with AYP placed class analysis at the centre of race and gender theory. I did not become engulfed in feelings of personal privilege and white guilt, but analyzed my whiteness in the context of white supremacy and the international capitalist system. McLaren reminds white people to “locate white hegemony as part of a larger anti racist and anti capitalist project dedicated to the abolition of the white race” (2005a, p. 142). The reader may question how I, as a white woman, can theorize about class and race in Ghana. I would respond by acknowledging my theorizing pertains to my own history and formative experience and how I make sense of my world, through and with others as a collective self, in struggle, and no more. For me this was always centred on the class relation to capitalism whilst also realizing racism is also a system of exploitation which stems from capitalism, colonialism and imperialism. I feel the potential and ability of ordinary working class people,
like myself, to assert their own agency can be achieved by developing class conscious programs
in alliance with other working class peoples across boundaries.

Clark and O’Donnell (1999) remind us the attention focused on race and the problem of
whiteness (which does not analyze white supremacy and racism as systemic to imperialism and
capitalism) diminishes the attention necessary for forging interracial allegiances especially across
working class communities (see also Sivanandan, 1990). My work in Ghana was focused on
achieving this solidarity from my experience as a white working class educator and activist and
not on my own preoccupation with white identity. This was a challenging and at times messy
process of learning, for myself and AYP, as we tread across boundaries, questioning our
experience and history. The learning process was guided by an openness and inquisition which
carried us over the bumps and provided an energy, spirit and nourishment to climb the hills. I
explore these experiences in the excavation of my radical education praxis in Ghana.

Freire refers to a liberatory education for oppressed communities consisting of
opportunities to read their own world. He believed in a living acting subject engaged in a lifelong
search for connectedness (Freire, 1972, 1998). Darder refers to Freire illuminating our
understanding of not only what it means to be a critical educator but what it means to live a
critical life and the need to live and love in the present (2003, p. 499). During my own life
education has always reinforced this process as I analyzed my own environment in order to use
my own power and agency. I brought this education and experience with me to Ghana.

**Why Ghana?**

After finishing my Master’s degree in Toronto I tried to find ways to integrate my
political activism and education work. I found little space for transformative curriculum as
critical questioning of power, class, race, gender, and global power relations seemed too radical for programming.

During community radical education events I felt alienated on two fronts. I was alienated by the class allegiance of the middle class educator and I felt alienated by the middle class participants, who were predominantly white and did not represent working class communities I wished to work with. I felt the analysis of change was never examined in depth although there was a general assumption about the need for social change. I was also disturbed by an identity politics which placed each social identities oppression in competition. Allman, McLaren, and Rikowski (2005) mention the limits of identity politics and social stratification in social theory and activism. “When we use such classifications we become box people. The result is a masking of the existence of the capitalist class and system at the base of our educational work and analysis” (p. 136). We need to constantly remind ourselves, radical education has different interpretations owing to the ideology, politics, power and the role of the educator.

It is a fundamental principle that for education to be authentically ‘popular’ it should have a political commitment in favour of the ‘oppressed’. In practice, however, the concept of political commitment—as well as that of the ‘oppressed’—has proved to be vague and open to many ideological interpretations. (Kane, 2005, p. 33)

Based on my education experience I wanted to create a critical, radical, political, and educational program which spoke to the reality of working class communities, both in language, theory and culture. I also wanted to encourage an environment where varied political analysis and ideological viewpoints would be presented and analyzed.
**Going South**

After finishing graduate studies I decided to apply for a volunteer position with one of the more progressive development agencies working in alliance with southern Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs). I use the term South in the context of the Global South. I wondered how class analysis *works* in a southern context of international capitalism, racism and a new but old globalized system of exploitation.

I can remember going for the interview on Richmond Street and being very nervous. My first choice of job at this time was as a popular educator with garment workers in Jamaica. However after I was accepted for the position, the assignment was cancelled and I received several possible opportunities in Belize, Vanuatu and Ghana. I did my homework on Ghana and I was greatly interested in the history of the anti colonial struggle. Ghana was the first country in Africa, and the British Commonwealth, to gain independence. It was also the first country on the African continent to elect a socialist government led by Kwame Nkrumah and the Convention Peoples Party. Nkrumah was an avid Pan Africanist and a leading theoretician and intellectual. I chose Ghana on that chilly December in 1995 and was given a departure date of January 29, 1996. (Reflective writing, March 2008)

I was eager to learn about the history of Ghanaians and had no intention of going to *educate* Africans (the ruling preconceived notion of development and white racism). I wanted to learn, on the ground, about the way the imperial system could provide affirmative action for Europeans, and white elites, an advantage which has secured systems of colonization, imperialism and racism for centuries (McLaren & Munoz, 2005b, p. 185). I also wanted to share my own experiences in solidarity with Ghanaians.

Before travelling to Ghana I attended an orientation session with other volunteers about to travel south. I was curious about the motivation of most, particularly white middle class...
volunteers who positioned their work as if they would be going to save the South with their Northern expertise, skills and knowledge. I found this a troubling discussion with little political or social analysis. I asked myself: How would these volunteers work with Southern communities breaking down barriers of race and class if I feel alienated from their viewpoints as a white working class woman in the North?

One has to consistently reflect on power in Ghana, as a visitor from the North, as a white person, and as a working class woman. I was keenly aware of the role white people have played in colonial history as colonial elites and also as white working class subjects gaining access to middle class status owing to white skin privilege and racial hierarchy. Kwame Nkrumah (1964) refers to Africa’s colonial and racist past:

The history of Africa as presented by European scholars has been encumbered by malicious myths. It was even denied that we were a historical people. It was said that whereas other continents had shaped history, and determined its course, Africa had stood still, held down by inertia; that Africa was only propelled into history by European contact. African history was therefore presented as an extension of European history. (The Europeans) began to present African culture and society as being so rudimentary and primitive that colonialism was a duty of Christianity and civilization. (p. 62)

Class had a different dimension in Ghana. I now had class and other social power over most Ghanaians, due to immigration, profession, citizenship and whiteness. I also had less class power than upper class and upper middle class Ghanaians, whose opulence and exhibit of wealth was vividly stark in the midst of such adverse poverty. As a radical educator there was a need to shoulder the courage to question and problematize the intensification of class antagonisms, the reproduction of the sexual and racial division of labour, and the stubborn persistence of institutional racism and the new imperialism (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005a). On my first drive from the Accra airport I can recall the new but similar realities of class and race in Ghana.
I remember thinking it was very dark as there were no streetlights or even electricity in some areas of the city. Then we would hit the streetlights in Cantomens where some of the rich people live, Ghanaians along with some expats. There were huge houses, bigger than I ever saw in Toronto, with gated communities, big walls and watchmen at the front of the house. Some even had uniformed private security firms guarding their castles. Soon we were to arrive in darkness again and a more dimly lit area of town in La, where I was to live for the next 5 years. Driving close to La I saw the street sellers at the side of the road selling kenkey and fish, or egg and bread and their small kerosene burners in tin cans lighting up the roadside. My Ghanaian colleague would be peeping and peeping his horn as we made our way through the busy streets of people and kids. We fought for a piece of road from the tro-tro’s taking people home from work in town to La or Burma Camp or Palm Wine junction. The drivers mate called the destination and people would run to jump on the back of the tro-tro. We wound our way through the laneways and passed the market and I was so happy I was living in a community and not a gated zone. (Reflective writing, October 2008)

There was a period of acclimatization, getting used to the heat and humidity at the end of February. My employer expected volunteers to take the anti-malarial drug larium for our first 3-month stay in Ghana. However, after 2 weeks or so I decided to go off the drug as the side effects were too drastic. I was unable to sleep and had vivid dreams. I also talked to some volunteers who had been on the drug and still experienced malaria while the locals explained to me malaria was like the flu – a doctor's visit to receive medication like any other sickness. Again, this is not to downplay the seriousness of malaria but only to highlight the fear of Africa lodged in a white hegemonic culture and disdain for native knowledge systems. The social function of whiteness is “social control, a practice which has colonial origins through the continued ferocious assault on aboriginal peoples and tribal customs, laws, knowledge systems, and institutions ” (McLaren & Munoz, 2005b, p. 189). Hall, Dei, and Rosenberg believe in
resurrecting the power of indigenous knowledges: “We need to call for locally defined models of sustainability which will prevail the lived realities of local peoples with all their social, cultural, political, spiritual, moral and ecological goals and aspirations” (as cited in Hall, 2002, p. 45).

Nkrumah also expands on white supremacist hegemony and the use of science and anthropology to promote colonial conquest in Africa:

...as cited in Hall, 2002, p. 45).

Even if we were no longer, on the evidence of the shape of our skulls, regarded as the missing link, unblessed with the arts of good government, material and spiritual progress, we were still regarded as representing the infancy of mankind. Our highly sophisticated culture was said to be simple and paralysed by inertia, and we had to be encumbered with tutelage. And this tutelage, it was thought, could only be implemented if we were first subjugated politically. (1962, p. 63)

This scientific and cultural racism was also resurrected with a group of Toronto youth whom I worked with in Ghana in 2005. Before the group travelled to Ghana, there were so many visits to the doctor for injections and stories conveyed about the dangers of Africa. The youth did not know what to believe and were becoming scared and apprehensive. In the video of this project “Two Cities Connect” (2008) youth discussed this explaining “They make you think that once you step into Africa you’re going to die”. The medical profession makes profit from scientific racism maintaining Africa is a dangerous place and there’s a drastic need of all sorts of precautionary medicine to make your journey, otherwise you may never come back, you may die (also see Portelli & Campbell Stephens, 2009, p. 48, on science and systemic racism). This medical racism reinforces the fear of Africa, and the assumption everyone is dying from so many diseases as the television and media like to portray. However, when I arrived in Accra, I met people fit and healthy as in Toronto. Of course, there are challenges with healthcare owing to the stringent policies of the IMF and World Bank deregulating and privatizing medicare while lowering standards, specifically for the poorer sections of society. And, there are also real
problems relating to class and poverty and lack of an adequate and nutritious diet (as there are in Canada and Scotland).

**Class Consciousness in Ghana**

*How I Saw and Felt Class in Ghana*

While in Ghana I learnt of ways class manifests itself in the Global South among Black Africans. I constantly questioned the role of history and colonialism against class consciousness. I also learnt of ethnic groups co-existing with one another but sometimes in history also divided and at odds. One of my biggest learning was related to the vestiges of colonialism and the opulence of the Ghanaian upper class which displayed wealth and status for everyone to revere and fear. I found it hard to believe and sometimes accept. The gap between rich and poor is huge so the display of wealth somehow acts like a signifier, a reminder of who rules and who is important. Miles (2002) refers to this disparity and class polarization as “*obscene*” (p. 27).

Displays of class would be similar to elite rule and Scotland during the 1920s, clear demarcations of physical class, where one stayed, how one interacted socially, and the hiring of all sorts of hired help to maintain class status and power; house helps, drivers, gardeners, and cooks. The working class maid or service girl in Ghana is a recurring theme of exploitation and sexual harassment in mainstream Ghana films. The parochial systems of class ensured an upper class Ghanaian received preferential service wherever he or she ventured in Ghanaian society. There were also a group of expats, white and Lebanese in particular, who would expect this same class status, many working in business or as government representatives in foreign service. So this was an interesting phenomenon, a domestic Ghanaian upper class and an ex-pat or foreign business upper class sharing the same class position and sometimes the same cultural tastes.
It was really obvious who had the economic, political or social power in Ghana, according to race, whiteness, and class. The rich were schooled at private elite schools and many travel overseas for postsecondary education. They would also have the best medical care at private facilities or travel to other countries for required services. It was always much easier for the Ghanaian rich to travel and obtain visas through the power of capital and the passport, a plus in the South. Franz Fanon speaks about the colonial world as a compartmentalized world, in racial terms, of whites as colonists and natives as colonized:

The colonists sector is a sector built to last, all stone and steel. It’s a sector of lights and paved roads. The colonists' feet can never be glimpsed, except perhaps in the sea, but then you can never get close enough. They are protected by solid shoes in a sector where the streets are clean and smooth, without a pothole, without a stone. The colonists sector is a white folks sector, a sector of foreigners. (1963, p. 4)

Fanon’s description can be compared to Ghana today, to a world of whiteness and expats. However, I feel this description also can be attached to class divisions and the Ghanaian elite also living in a compartmentalized world, one which was easy for me to visualize. This could be a result of my own class consciousness, anti racism and critical whiteness and an exposure to anti-colonial and anti-racist political and economic analysis before my work in Ghana. (Wealth is more hidden in North America or Scotland, and there is very little social mixing of rich and poor. This also highlights Fanon’s earlier reference to compartmentalized worlds).
Privatization:
A Class and Global Issue:
The Injury of Being Poor

In the Global South the privatization of public services and introduction of user fees does not affect the rich as they source the best services money can buy, at home or overseas. However for the poor there are dire consequences. In Ghana, the public sector has received less funding through World Bank/IMF trade restrictions and through economic policy such as Structural Adjustment. Most people cannot afford to pay for health care and education and receive the worst dilapidated service. While I stayed in Ghana I knew of children and family members who died because of the decreasing standard of health care (also see Cole, 2008; Miles, 2002, about the effects of globalization on public services in the South).

In the education sector, children are schooled mainly by rote, in oversized classes sometimes of 60-80 students. I met teachers who were trying their best but who were demotivated by government inability to pay wages or provide lack of supplies and resources. In Ghana, the absence of a large trade union and social movement supporting advocacy for working class living standards is also a problem. The majority of Ghanaians are not unionized but engaged in subsistence farming or as petty traders in the informal sector. The interference of international funders and governments in civil society organizations also disrupts the emergence of social movements dedicated to working class and poor communities’ interests.

McLaren and Farahmandpur (2005a) name this process as a new type of imperialism (neo liberalism and globalization). A dictatorship of the market by the richest nations is imposed on the poorer countries of the South, through trade policies and also more direct forms of military and political intervention.
Imperialist military intervention is primarily disguised as humanitarian aid, or the overthrow of evil rogue states that have become enemies of freedom and democracy and instigation of ethnic conflicts to weaken nations refusing to submit to the rule of the market. The overall goal is world rule through the use of client states and proxy governments rather than permanent occupation. (Azad, 2000, as cited in McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005a, p. 40)

I was reminded how crucial the public sector is for the poor globally - in the South, as it was for the poor in Scotland after the Second World War. Furthermore, public services are crucial to support working class women’s role caring for children, family and the elderly. In Scotland women were in the forefront of community struggles advocating for public services and community welfare as they bore the brunt of an unequal sexual division of labour which reinforced the public/private sphere and women’s primary role as nurturer in society (Beechey, 1978). Scottish trade unions and social movements actively campaigned for increased resources for working class communities in housing, health, and education. Subsequently in the North today there are similar concerns over the inefficiency of the public sector as neo liberal fiscal policy drives efforts to reduce the public sector and contract out services. The social safety net is gradually eroded encouraging increasing concessions to the corporate sector and the invasion of the market into private and public life (Cole 2008).

I was always amazed at the ingenuity of working class and poor communities in Ghana. Daily, ordinary Ghanaians would hustle from dawn to dusk to find essentials for their family. If a family needed extra funds for medication, hospital visits, funerals or school fees extended family and the wider community would pull together the needed resources by contributing required monies and sharing the load. They would also help with any childcare or eldercare for family at hospital or remaining at home cooking meals, doing laundry and visiting. This reminded me of Scotland at the turn of the 20th century as oral history participants discussed during my Master’s
thesis. Gender roles in Ghana have also been affected by the systems of capitalism and colonialism. Poor women (and men) are hostage to international trade policies, political and legal systems imposed on the global South. Throughout Ghana’s recent history, military regimes and non-representative governments have neglected women’s status creating inadequate public policy and dismantling an already scarce public sector (Manuh, 2007). As poverty is exacerbated women and the family bare the burden of family welfare. The particularities of colonialism and the development of the state and civil society pose a particular set of circumstances to investigate women’s issues in the Ghana (Mensah-Kutin et al., 2000). Gender theory is also critiqued as a foreign, western category for African societies and needs to be reconfigured by indigenous knowledge systems in the South (Oyewumi, 1997).

My Master’s research supported my learning and work in Ghana as a radical educator. As I observed and learnt from Ghanaians I reflected on the importance of a strong working class, participatory and oral culture to build a human response to injustice, colonialism and capitalism. I saw how colonialism had failed to conquer the spirit of Ghanaians, just as the collective, socialist, and anti-capitalist culture of Scotland during the 1920s had built a resilience and resistance among Fife communities.

I also saw the worst aspects of capitalism- how it can degrade human beings by unemployment, immizeration and poverty, and the lack of basic infrastructure in urban planning and social development. Limited access to healthcare, education, and housing severely limit the life chances of working class and poor Ghanaians, yet the rich only have to pay for these privately, just as in Fife during the 1920s. Also, I learnt how ordinary Ghanaians pull resources together through an extended family network, similar to mutual associations which were formed by miners unions and women in the Fife community during the 1920s. I saw how the poor bury
the poor, respecting the dead by community traditions of wake keeping and funerals while bringing new life into the world through community mid-wives as they did in Scotland.

I experienced the wit, generosity, humility and creativity of working class Ghanaians bringing me home to my formative experience in Fife. I realized place and belonging are in the struggling and loving heart through generations, history and context. The oral culture and sense of history in Ghana resonated in me and beckoned me to my Master's research applying theory to praxis and praxis to theory. The linkages to socialism and Kwame Nkrumah spoke to me as did the words of Fife’s organic intellectuals, socialists, and communists. Ghana’s past efforts at building socialism were an inspiration to see and an example for a better future as were my Master’s oral testimonies. The names of Africa’s brightest and bravest freedom fighters, such as: Dubois, Lumumba, Machel, Nyrere, Yaa Asantewaa, Padmore and Sankara also remain in memory through the names of streets, libraries, education, and cultural centres in Accra. Liberation lived in Ghana for me.

Learning In and Through Culture

Throughout Ghana a communal culture draws on the basic elements of being each others keeper, a central tenet to acting on one’s humanism and extending the human spirit to others. On reflection, this aspect of Ghanaian culture supported the development of the popular education program and a collective understanding of basic human rights for all, particularly for the working class and poor (see also Mayo, 2004; Steele, 1999, and the need to place popular education in each historical, social and cultural context). Nkrumah (1963) describes the theoretical basis of African communalism as similar to socialist ideals:

This theoretical basis expressed itself on the social level in terms of institutions such as the clan, underlining the initial equality of all and the responsibility of
...many for one. No sectional interest could be regarded as supreme: nor did legislative and executive power aid the interests of any particular group. The welfare of the people was supreme. (p. 69)

However, with the advent of neo-colonialism and neo-liberalism, the gap between the rich and poor in Ghana is huge and eroding the communal culture.

In contrast in my local area there were compound houses for working class, poor and middle class Ghanaians, small bungalows renting rooms or family homes where extended family members would reside. There would always be a multitude of street sellers, on the street and between traffic. The sellers will prop up their stalls in regular places or wonder through the street to sell wares on a clip board, on their arm, or on a large bowl on their heads. Women would concentrate on fruits, vegetables and sometimes trinkets. Men would sell shoes, fish, watches, fruits also sometimes, and DVDs/CDs as far as my memory goes.

It was surprising how the society, especially the elite, accepted abject poverty making me look back at my own history. During the 1920s in Scotland the poor depended on low standard employer-owned housing. Sanitary conditions were atrocious forcing ill health, early death, malnourishment, and disease among Scotland’s poor. As an international class conscious volunteer, I was questioning my and other’s role as volunteers from the Northern hemisphere; Are we supporting the empowerment of ordinary Ghanaians to take charge of their own society and development? I felt in a precarious position: What am I working with Ghanaians to change? What inequalities? I had to question myself: Are we volunteers similar to 20th century neo-colonial servants?

I had an international class perspective so drew on global and historical forces to make sense of what I was seeing and analyzing (Kane asks similar questions of radical educators,
2001, 2005). I also had a small group of friends to bounce my observations off, two Ghanaian working class males and one white Canadian working class women, also a volunteer. These discussions were crucial for my own development and understanding of Ghana and also for the educational work with AYP. Deb Hill (2005) explains Gramsci’s insistence on knowing one’s history and interpreting this in an analytical understanding of the present. Future actions or one’s agency depended on this process of historical reasoning or as Crowther (1999) comments “inserting us into making history”.

Finding a Group of Organic Intellectuals

Working and living in Ghana was a very enriching experience for me. As a Marxist I felt the spirit and compassion of working class and poor Ghanaians. It was a deep feeling of true working class solidarity (Freire, 1972, p. 66; Martin 1999, p. 7). Particularly important was a bond of friendship and comradery that was formed early on with two of my male Ghanaian friends and a white Canadian working class female who was also a volunteer.

The following words about each friend are based on notes from my diary, using pseudonyms.

Adam: To understand the nuances of Ghanaian culture and life I would bring up everyday observations with Adam, and then have him help me understand the situations from the perspective of people on the street. By getting to know the street level perceptions, many of which I could totally relate to, I was more confident in designing the work and also in daily interactions with Ghanaians. Mayo talks about Freire’s work in other countries and his need to learn from varied contexts, similar to my work in Ghana. “Freire argued one must seek political engagement in the ‘borrowed’ context accepting the new context with all its cultural attributes and without making disparaging value judgements about it. One had to re-learn (in new contexts).” (2004, p. 48)
**Atta** was my colleague and friend in education, politics, history, social issues and of course music. Atta was a journalist with much insight and knowledge about Ghana and international politics. He was instrumental in co-making the AYP program through our joint analysis and constant reflection on the work. Atta also had a background on African issues and history and I had so many lessons from him. He had a socialist perspective and our friendship and intellectual relationship was invaluable for my life then and now. Without Atta the AYP program would surely not have evolved and I would not have evolved so richly through a radical praxis. We engaged in action through the design, facilitation and constant reflection of the AYP program.

**Margaret**’s comradeship in Ghana helped me struggle through the dilemma of working for the international NGO sector. As white women we shared our challenges working through gender, race, whiteness and class in Ghana. Her support kept me sane when in times I despised everything white and obruni and how difficult it can become as an outsider in Ghana. We both had a passion and love for Ghana and relished in the richness, knowledge, history and culture of the people. As a white person in Ghana - the attention of race, of being obruni, the name calling the minute you walk outside can in itself be a stressor. Sometimes we would talk about the feeling of being in a fishbowl and being judged and stereotyped as white women, all white women, or all white people as opposed to the white supremacist culture and system. That was on one of our not so good days.

Most white people in Ghana (and elsewhere) remain intentionally unaware of racism (both institutional and their own) so they can avoid dealing with it. Margie and I chose to deal with it against our whiteness. We were also aware we had the privilege of *choosing whiteness* as an option, as being white allows us to. Racialized communities do not have these same choices in a white supremacist capitalist system. As white anti racist racist women our friendship became
invaluable as most associations with other white people became very difficult and traumatizing in Ghana. Theologian James Cone in “A Black Theology of Liberation” elaborates on the only option for white anti racist racists

It will be necessary for them to destroy their whiteness by becoming members of an oppressed community. Whites will be free only when they become new persons, when their white being has passed away and they are created anew in Black being. When this happens they are no longer white but free. (1986, p. 97)

The importance of these three relationships, with Adam, Atta and Margie were crucial to the development of AYP and on my own coming to consciousness and being in Ghana. My three comrades supported my reflection, my questioning, challenging me to always think about my own theory. These special relationships developed my humanity as all spoke to me, and felt me from the centre of my being, my Marxist humanism.

**Designing Curriculum**

**In the Beginning:**

*From the Human Rights Project to AYP*

On arrival in Ghana as a volunteer in 1996, I worked with a Ghanaian NGO for 2 years supporting a civic education project on voter education and human rights. During this period I helped the organization by writing reports and co-designing workshops for government, union, media and community delegates throughout the regional capitals of Ghana. Afterwards I focused on continuing human rights education work with young people, designing manuals and educational tools with a funding agency, NGOs, community youth and the Ghana Education Service. As a result of this work the Human Rights Project (HRP) was formed to test the materials and also to explore possibilities of developing more substantive work with young
people in Accra. Atta and I formed our collaborative work at this point during my second year in Ghana.

We piloted the program with a group of adults from various NGOs and government agencies working with youth, education, civic education and the unions. We also solicited young people from our own communities. Our recruitment began by asking street sellers or other community adults, of any young people who maybe interested in human rights. We also asked for youth recruits who maybe a bit troublesome resisting in school or out of school youth, and youth who showed some sort of leadership or interest in education. We, Atta and I, purposely did not want youth who are already leaders. We wanted to begin the project with a representative sample of community youth to test the accessibility of the educational materials.

After youth volunteers were found, Atta and Adam explained the program to the youth and their parents in the local languages, without my presence. I stayed away from recruitment as having a white person involved only complicates the process. Community member’s can have high expectations of remuneration, paid work and possibility of travel overseas associated with white development workers involvement in community projects.

I designed curriculum for the first program and co-facilitated a pilot group consisting of ten youth and approximately six adults with Atta. Afterwards, we evaluated the program and agreed adults and youth should be trained separately as the power differential prevented the youth from fully participating and expressing their ideas. There was also adult resistance to human rights issues and it became clear adults needed more intensive work to deal with their own oppressor within. We felt integrated youth and adult training may divert us from working with young people’s experience of human rights issues which was our main priority.
The funder was satisfied with our assessment and with other funders support Atta and I continued to build the Human Rights Project (HRP) over the next 4 years. My role was mainly in curriculum design and also co-facilitation of the human rights education program. This entailed the following components:
THE HUMAN RIGHTS PROJECT

Course Outline

Part One: Introduction to human rights, popular education and social justice education
Introduction to popular theatre with practicum designing and organizing community theatre events
Graduates from this program: Approximately 70 graduates (3 cycles)
Community events: Approximately 30 events
Duration: Approximately 12 Day’s analysis: 6-8 community events
4 months program

Part Two
Facilitation Skills and deeper analysis
4 months
(2 cycles) - 50 graduates

Part Three
More community theatre events
(2 cycles- 30 graduates)
3-4 months: (20 events)

Part Four
Popular education methodology
12 graduates (1 week)

Youth Leadership Program: Capacity Building for AYP

A leadership and capacity building program emerged as a need to sustain the program in a youth based leadership and management model. Building AYP as a young people’s organization became an important phase with a core group of dedicated youth. This entailed
inclusion and training in: Interviewing and selection skills for future program candidates
(designed with AYP youth): Program management skills; logistics, accounting and budgeting;
mentoring and on the job shadowing with managers: Leadership building workshops; building
democratic leadership, active listening, communication and conflict resolution skills:
Practicum’s working with other children’s rights, human rights and women’s NGOs:
Fundraising skills; Composing funding proposals and building relationships with funders.

Program Design

In the early days of my stay in Ghana after observing human rights education for 2 years
it became apparent there was a need for a young peoples’ program. In Accra, I wanted to learn
about the specific experience of poor young people forced to work as petty traders as a way of
supporting family income and their own payment of school fees. Poor children and their families
were being ostracized and humiliated by authorities as traders were abused by police, the
municipal authorities, and school administrators. Students were sent home from school until fees
were paid, some for a few years or indefinitely.

The larger society did not have the functioning civil and governmental authorities to
challenge these human rights abuses, especially among poor youth. In fact, the governing bodies
were sometimes perpetrators of abuse (police/justice system/inadequate health facilities/non
functioning government departments/military). The AYP education program utilized the new
Ghanaian Constitution to explain everyday abuses of human rights and to encourage an active
citizenship whereby learners could hold the Ghana Commission for Human Rights and
Administrative (CHRAJ) and the larger society accountable as the populace filed complaints of
abuse. Efforts to popularize human rights through a critical lens can provide a necessary
framework and alternative against unjust social, political and economic realities. Human rights
can also ensure the basic human rights are respected for the development of ordinary Ghanaians access and the right to food, water, shelter, healthcare, education and safety. Racial, sexual, religious, gender, ethnic and economic discrimination are also important tenets of human rights principles which guarantee equality and justice in society as human beings. In African societies:

Rights are viewed by them not as a fence to protect the individual from the community but rather as rules living together in community. Equally more characteristic of African than European thinking is the view that poverty and economic marginalization are as great a threat to human dignity as violations of civil rights and therefore must be at the core of the human rights agenda. (Martin, Jitter, & Ige, 1997, p. 442)

My work in Ghana reinforced this view and I disregarded Western views and conceptions prioritizing individual rights and a sole focus on legal education. By reflecting on our radical education praxis we consciously placed a radical ontology at the centre of programming. We questioned the very concept of human being as a collective entity. Paula Allman and John Wallis believe:

A radical ontology is both critical and hopeful because it requires us to analyze being with criteria derived from a concretely-based vision of becoming. Concretely based visions are not utopian. They are derived from evidence of what some people, through struggle, manage to achieve even in oppressive circumstances. (2005, p. 20)

It was in this context Atta and I began our human rights work. We both came to realize through similar political viewpoints the implications of global and local political, economic, social and cultural systems which contributed to human rights violations in Ghana. We needed to design a critical human rights program which interrogated these systems within a critique of what it means to be a human being within the social relations of capitalism, very different from traditional human rights training programs which blamed individuals for violating the rights of others. Perhaps a relevant radical education approach could begin to fill this vacuum.
Atta and I struck a chord with our critique of politics – social issues and wit. We began to quickly mesh our ideas and discussed contents for a youth /children’s rights program and the accompanying manuals I had started to design.

We both agreed human rights work was focusing on adults and leaving out youth- a vibrant sector of society who were developing a very vibrant youth culture at this particular time. We thought we could capitalize on this particular moment where youth are questioning society but have no venue. We could build this dynamism into an education program through a critical human rights lens (also see Andropoulous & Claude, 1997; Selby, 1990).

The concept of a critical human rights program using a radical pedagogy was a conscious departure from the Western model of individual rights and responsibilities. The latter hegemonic discourse draws attention to a pathologized individual abstracted from any social context. Therefore a critical revolutionary response is to “develop the struggle for the acceptance of a communal and collective response of rights and responsibilities” (Allman, 2001, p. 239).

Subverting Popular Culture Through Theatre

From Scotland to Ghana:
Methods Past and Present in Popular Theatre

Ghana’s Concert Party

It seemed young people wanted to voice their opinions but few avenues were there to access. Youth and children’s NGOs worked from a parochial, patronizing perspective whereby adults would speak for (and disempower) young people. Meanwhile where young people were involved in NGOs, they were not representative of working class or poor youth, but from a more affluent background. The culture and educational work of most NGOs presented ideas and
concepts in a formal exclusionary context with no participatory processes to engage youth. Atta and I wanted to subvert these processes.

During this period, of the late 1990s, a thriving youth culture was emerging focused on lyrical forms similar to hip hop, but in a Ghanaian version called hip life. Young artists, many poor youth, cleverly designed satirical pieces on the political and social situation in Ghana while there were also elements which drew on older forms of Ghanaian musical styles of hi-life. These forms were cross generational and quite ingenious at merging historical and contemporary culture. Atta, AYP and I drew on this vibrant youth culture in our work (also see Mayo, 2004; Steele, 1999, highlighting our ability to draw on a specific cultural context for popular education programs).

During my second year in Ghana I also learnt of Ghanaian popular theatre through concert party. This cultural form dated back to the 1920s and included comic show vaudeville style performances. This form evolved into a development theatre and musical troupe who travelled the rural and city regions of Ghana (Barber, Collins, & Ricard, 1997; Cole, 2001). From colonialism through independence to present-day Ghana, concert parties have undergone constant formation, readily incorporating new audiences, venues, formats and styles. Audiences from 1900 to 1930 were generally coastal Africans with some degree of formal Western-style education. But after 1930, concert parties became increasingly accessible to inland working classes and rural populations, with affordable prices and convenient local venues such as open air cinema halls and large family compounds (Cole, 2001, p. 1).

Today concert party is popularized by television as live theatre and audience presentations are beamed into homes and chop bars throughout the poor communities of Accra every weekend from the National Theatre. I watched these shows and was enthralled by the
forms appeal. The audience would join actors on stage while placing cedi bank notes of appreciation on the player’s foreheads. Subsequently, on Sunday afternoons as I walked around my community families of all ages would be laughing and shouting watching concert party shows glued to their televisions.

In our first year of the Human Rights Project Atta, myself and some of the youth learners went to a concert party performance at the National Theatre. I saw scenes depicting regular everyday life of Ghanaians, a poor person’s home, church, chop bar, compound house with extended family, a community celebration such as outdooring (christening) or wedding, discussions at the chiefs house, a street scene, the fetish priest and the shrine. The characters would be family, friends and players in various community roles: priest, minister, domestic servant, goodtime girl at chop bar, community drunkard, family members, chief and often the mimicking of middle class and upper class roles, and colonial roles attributed to outsiders, foreigners, whites or Ghanaians who now live abroad. Performances are enacted in a mixture of local languages.

As I watched the live concert party show, Atta translated to answer my questions and I followed the plot of the story while sharing in the emotional intent of the performance. Audiences laughed, shouted, even cried as they engaged in the story and characters as the drama unfolded. Alternatively they would jump out of their seats when they became agitated shouting their disapproval at a character’s behaviour or dialogue. Subsequently the audience would also dance when music, recorded or live musical artists came on regularly throughout the show. Players would illicit a response by provoking and questioning the audience on their opinion about the character or story, through a monologue or also as part of the role play.
Throughout the performance the players burst into song to reinforce a moral messaging or to highlight the story and the audience would join in. Comedy throughout the show was based on slapstick styles as players would tell jokes, play pranks as a clown sort of figure, with fancy dress and make up. It is also a regular feature to have players switch gender roles in performances, mostly men playing female roles (more so in the early days of concert party, see Cole’s discussion later in this section).

Shows are cleverly designed raising thematic conversation through popular discussion and the richness of local languages. Topics are relevant, accessible and living. Contemporary plays deal with issues which reflect ongoing social problems such as the effects of class polarization, rapid urbanization and globalization i.e.: poverty and unemployment, corruption and nepotism, break down of traditional culture, prostitution, break up of extended family and related issues of divorce, inheritance, orphans, inefficiencies in education and health systems, key role of education and gender and girls education in development (Barber et al., 1997; Cole, 2001).

As a radical educator I wondered how could this popular form be subverted and utilized as a critical form in a radical human rights education. Most concert party plays are not overtly political but they provide an important forum for the discussion of contemporary social issues ordinary Ghanaian face. They also follow in “a tradition of political commentary and social criticism in the form of musical and dramatic satire and masquerades which have long been a feature of West Africa” (Barber et al., 1997, p. 23). Other concert party dramas, from different theatre groups feature on Ghana television regularly but without the live audience participation.

There was also a vaudeville style theme to some of the earlier shows where players would wear minstrel make up. Catherine Cole has also written about the history of Ghana’s
concert party between 1930-1960 raising some pertinent questions about researching concert party from a western perspective. As a North American academic she felt compelled to interrogate the significance of concert party Blackface. Although this particular subject is a priority of research in exploring the history of vaudeville and racism, Cole (2001) critiques the prejudices of western discourse and deconstructive analysis which can ironically end up reinforcing the west’s centrality. She is also dismissive of using western concepts of gender performative theory to examine men routinely playing women’s roles in Ghana’s concert party. In the early days mostly men would be female actors as it was not socially acceptable for women to be part of a travelling troupe. Cole (2001) explains:

> Concert parties happen near the equator in a continent visible to most North Americans only as a dark and enigmatic sign, a place that is mysterious, exotic and ultimately irrelevant. Africa is neither central nor peripheral to contemporary Euro-American gender performance theory; it is completely off the conceptual map. (p. 126)

Handel Kashope Wright, a West African academic from Sierra Leone (2004) similarly critiques the Eurocentric concepts of literacy used in development discourse viewing oral cultures as pre-literate and less evolved. Wright goes on, “The hegemony of literacy and the blindness of the literate world to the limits of literacy and the strengths of orality” (p. 157).

Wright proposes the establishment of an African cultural studies to counter Eurocentric based paradigms (which also reinforce racist and white supremacist ideologies and imperial globalized political and economic systems). He goes on:

> African cultural studies would reject the hierarchal orality/literacy duality for a consideration of orality in isolation as well as orality in writing and in televisual and electronic literacy, seeing all these forms being intricately linked in the postmodern world. (2004, p. 158)
Wright’s concerns also highlight the power of centering orality to promote performance forms in African educational systems (p. 158). The work of AYP attempted to do this while I was in Ghana using the already established popular concert party format.

**Learning From History in Fife: Joe Corrie and Working Class Theatre**

As I watched these shows I thought of my Master’s research and a famous local playwright in Fife during the interwar years named Joe Corrie. As mentioned in Chapter Three, Corrie was a miner from Bowhill in West Fife (approximately 6 miles from my hometown) who developed popular plays and poems by studying everyday life at the pit and within the community whilst also incorporating his own socialist ideals. Marxist language and analysis were integrated into his theatre pieces.

In a play about the 1926 General Strike entitled “In Time o’ Strife” Corrie develops characters from mining families, who talk about the history of the local mining relations, class conflict and the role of the police, parish councils, government, mine owners, and local conservative forces trying to sabotage the strike. In the same play there are also characters representing local Communist Party members, socialist organizers and miners, union officials. There was also community youth and women sympathetic to socialist ideas. Corrie’s genius was presenting all sides and perspectives on the strike in everyday language and the local dialect. The communities knew Corrie’s own politics and the majority of the community were openly sympathetic to the socialist cause (MacDougall, 1981; MacIntyre, 1980; Thomson, 1992). Russia is frequently mentioned as the vision of a socialist society Fife miner’s and Corrie strived to create. During my Master’s research an elderly miner Archie talked about his memory of working with Corrie at Bowhill pit,
Yae wundered whit he wis thinkin. Yaed be sittin on the pit haed talkin tae each ither and the conversation wid go on aboot different things and the next time yae saw that conversation wis in wan o’Joes plays..He wis pickin the brains o’the men and usin it fur his plays. He wis a man that wis against things that wur bad. He believed in the good things. He wis a man that liked his fellow man and gave his fellow man the right tae think as he saw fit..What he thought he spoke his mind and they had tae take it or leave it. (Thomson, 1992. p. 176)

These dramas would be moulded and performed by a local group of working class community members “The Bowhill Players” in their own dialect at local community halls throughout Fife’s mining communities. Agnes, from Bowhill remembers her role as an actress in the Bowhill Players performing Corries plays in the village hall,

There wis ‘The Poacher”, “The Best Laid Schemes”, “The Price O’Coal”. Some o’the audience wur cryin just like it wis a real story. It wis so well put over. Thats how well we wur taught tae dae it. (Thomson, 1992, p. 176)

Corrie injected and subverted popular music and audience participation into his shows. In effect he promoted the creation of a proletarian culture in mining communities similar to Gramsci (1971). “Marxism stood for the cultivation of the universal potential of humanity, for how the majority, the will of the proletariat would be stamped onto history … progressively humanized by this process of counter cultural struggle” (Hill, 2005, p. 52).

Through my Master’s research I became impressed at the impact of this cultural and locally created form as community members reminisced with such delight the crux of Corrie’s message by repeating lines from the performances. Corrie incited the players and audience to mimic and role play politicians and the local gentry on stage exposing class relations. The community was proud as Corrie respected the local dialect and life and put the people on stage, establishing a working class epistemology, as concert party had in Ghana. This validated the importance of their experience, knowledge and strife. It led to reflective social and political
debate, lodged in a class dialectic and forging for some a catalyst to class consciousness and social action. Hill believes Gramsci was convinced of the reclamation of social power by the proletariat was only achievable by conscious thought and creative cultural endeavour. Hence he was adamant of the need for a proletarian culture where working class people realized they were producers of history and culture. For Gramsci, according to Hill, “A revolutionary outlook was generated from mankind’s renewed consciousness of its own self creative capacity” (2005, p. 71).

It is striking how history repeats itself across time and continent through working class communities. They strive to create humanistic cultural forms to work through and address an alienation and dehumanization of capital. This is a reflection of dialectics, contradictions in societal development and the central dynamic of Marxist historical materialism and class struggle. Hill cites Gramsci’s ensuing attempt to highlight a dialectical rejuvenation of culture through “The historicization and politicization of everyday language and practice as an onto-formative educational endeavour directed against fetishizing practices that conditioned and restricted human being” (2005, p. 101).

In light of the continued existence of the ‘wealth of orality’ in Africa an interesting juxtaposition would be a paradigm which places African cultural studies at the center (Wright, 2004, p. 156). We could learn of the ways an eroding communalism and African indigenous culture/s continues to create humanistic cultural forms to counter imperialism, colonialism and authoritarian governments. An interesting comparative study would be the orality of working class communities, such as in Fife, at the turn of the 20th century.
**Learning From Ghana and Scotland:**

**Integrating Theatre and History for Social Change**

In Accra, during our first human rights workshop, Atta and I discussed the ways we could somehow work with the concert party concept from a human rights perspective using a strictly youth culture/issue focus. We could incorporate drama and role play as a mode of learning during the program. Youth could adopt the popular theatre form, incorporating their everyday experience of oppression in the design and analysis of social reality through a critical human rights lens. AYP could then stage a human rights concert party as an advocacy and action part of the program through community learning events engaging the audience in participatory reflective discussion circles afterwards.

**Adopting Playfulness Through a Working Class Culture**

Both Ghana and Scotland promote a similar sense of satire and humour embedded in working class cultural forms such as popular theatre and music. In Ghanaian life I felt exposed to opportunities to connect with people: to be free, to strike up a conversation and touch one another with dialogue and wit. Somehow, there was more of a popular critical edge amongst the working class communities through popular media than in Canada. Ghanaian radio stations try to include the local working class population in current political and social issues through regular phone in programs and controversial critical guest speakers (a multitude of radio stations were beginning to thrive during the start of my stay in Ghana). Last but not least, I could also empathize with Ghanaians love for soccer and the many football games of Ghana’s national team the Black Stars, a popular conversational piece in taxi cabs. In Scotland soccer was at the centre of working class communities’ social life as each town supported a local team and also the bigger regional Fife teams. We were raised on watching national soccer events and supporting
Scotland as Ghana is dedicated to the Black Stars. As a young woman I was as much part of the audience as anyone else in my family and my mum was the biggest football critic in the house.

I found a respect of one another in everyday life, while being in taxis and on the street. People would have the time to greet one another, ask of one another’s families especially among working class communities. Nkrumah, in his book “Consciencism” talks about a need to revive Africa values through a ‘philosophical conscientism’ which centred on African traditional values of communalism before colonial conquest. Nkrumah’s insights echo my experience in Ghana:

The traditional face of Africa includes an attitude towards man which can only be described, in its social manifestation, as being socialist. This arises from the fact that man is regarded in Africa as primarily a spiritual being, a being endowed originally with a certain inward dignity, integrity and value. It stands refreshingly opposed to the Christian idea of the original sin and degradation of man. (1963, p. 68)

However, my intent is not to romanticize African communal culture as perfection. There are instances of misuse of power and nepotism in the practice of communalism. Ghanaian NGOs have been at the forefront of fighting harmful cultural practices which are gender based. Contradictions of communalism and gender relations of power have evolved in differing historical and social contexts (Manuh, 2007; Tsikata, 2001). Wright (2004) discusses the ideal versus the practice:

Contradictions in communalism appear as more powerful groups and individuals in contemporary society can justify oppression of minorities and usurp individual rights, discrediting communalism as it’s meant to be. (p. 205, Note #21)

Again, my experience in Ghana was reminiscent of my socialization in a small town, a community memory passed on and a way of social interaction akin to an experience of communalism. An interesting comparative and historical study of one of Scotland’s socialist popular theatre companies is the 7:84 company by Maria DiCenzo (1996). The company name
was cleverly derived from a statistic published in the Economist in 1966, indicating 7% of the population owned 84% of the capital wealth. Originally based in the North of England, a Scottish member of the company, Elizabeth MacLennan recalls why they moved to Scotland, highlighting similar experience I share between feelings of familiarity with Scotland and Ghana:

Scotland is distinguished by its socialist, egalitarian tradition, its labour history, its cultural cohesion and energetic participation in argument and contemporary issues. Within its separate educational, legal and religious systems is a strong but not chauvinist sense of cultural identity. Culture and politics are not dirty words. (Interview with Elizabeth MacLennan, 1990, p. 43, cited in DiCenzo, 1996, p. 86)

Later in the same book, Di Cenzo (1996) discusses the success of 7:84’s play, “The Cheviot”, about the Highland clearances by colonial authorities, expropriating the farmers and people from the land. She cites the particular communal village and tribal system of governance and culture provided the foundation for the receptiveness of popular and socialist theatre.

In some sense through living in Ghana and working with AYP I bridged a gap. Salaam discusses this context of working across boundaries: “Somehow race has been accepted as a humungous moat that can’t be bridged” (2002, p. 264). However, this is not to downplay the everyday reality of working through and confronting the white supremacist system manifest through colonialism, imperialism and ideology and ways your own consciousness can be contradictory. There were some real experiences which tested me and surfaced the underlying history of racism in Ghana.

I visited a photocopy shop to fax some papers to Canada. The telephone lines in Ghana can be quite unpredictable so you have to be very patient with the process. I was in the shop for approximately 15 minutes with a female and male worker. Afterwards, the lady worker presented me with a huge bill. I questioned the price as in Ghana bartering is a way of life. I was not paying for minutes which were not used owing to lack of connection. I then gave the lady all the money in my
possession, hoping an increase in price would suffice and proceeded to leave the shop. The lady requested the security guard lock the door and not let me leave, grabbing my arm. I was kept in the shop for another 30 minutes or so. Each new customer entering the shop was told the story with a commentary of how white people come here and think they can do what you want. Finally a customer persuaded the lady to let me go. It demonstrated the fragility of racism and a perceived tolerance in Ghana. (Reflective writing, November 2000)

This incident, for me, displayed hidden tensions of the history of racism and colonialism in Ghana. It reminded me how the colonial and neo colonial system favours whites and other foreign workers to be rude and disrespectful to Ghanaians. I had to examine this incident as an important learning of racism in my experience. As a practical lesson I would work out a price before receiving a service in future to avoid any misunderstanding or feelings of racism. It was an emotional experience as I felt isolated, misunderstood, judged, fragile and vulnerable even scared for my own security, real or imagined. It highlighted racial tensions in everyday practice.

It also made me think of what racialized communities go through in Canada. Racist ideologies and systems criminalize racialized people. Police arbitrarily stop and search individuals as in the case of racial profiling. It made me think of new immigrants in Canada who may not speak English at any airport or government encounter.

I also did not speak a Ghanaian local language so had no idea what was being said between spectators and workers in the store. (Reflective writing, November 2000)

The experience highlighted the contradictions of a community and society. Not every experience will be the same. The vestiges of a colonial past and the present realities of a new globalization reinforce the dehumanization, domination and oppression working class and poor
people face on a daily basis. This is likely to surface in everyday experience and relationships providing opportunities for us to learn.

Our own daily experiences in capitalism need an ongoing social analysis and individual reflection. Racism manifests itself in our being and ideological processes, through the oppressor and the oppressed (Freire, 1972). It is the recognition of the social, political and economic systems which create these manifestations which need to be contested, accompanied by our own introspection (McLaren, 2005a, 2005b). By working through the dialectics of class, race and gender, I picked myself up again and continued my commitment to building respectful relationships within Ghana.

**Traditional Culture and Collective Culture**

During my time in Ghana I was also exposed to aspects of traditional culture which were very new to me. As I attempted to build an open, collective self I chose to observe and respect this new environment as traditional culture drew on the power of ancestral heritage and a rich oral culture (similar to my formative experience in Scotland). There is great respect for the power of the elders, to pass on history while developing ethics and morality through the teachings of proverbs and ethnic heritage. Wane, in an exploration of African women and spirituality reinforces this “By acknowledging my ancestors, I gain their strength. I also stand tall because in the words of a Yoruba proverb, ‘I stand on the backs of those who came before me’” (Vanzant, 1993, as cited in Wane, 2002, p. 135).

Through this oral culture the nurturing of a sense of what’s rights and wrong or a collective morality is produced as a way of socializing the community. The ethos is each community member looks after the well-being of everyone, not as individualized atoms but
through their own responsibility to the whole community group. Elders also have power in resolving disputes through an internal resolution system based on a determination of the well-being of the community or extended family. The traditional resolution process can compliment the justice system and can also be at odds with the system depending on the specific context and history. These aspects of traditional culture highlight the existence of some aspects of communalism as discussed previously by Kwame Nkrumah (1963). However, aspects of a communal culture are being eroded, especially among the younger generations. Although access to technology, such as the internet, is still difficult according to financial constraints and access to resources, the further issue becomes the type of information and knowledge which predominates on the internet. Does this new technology reproduce a European and capitalist cultural hegemony? Wright (2004) responds by promoting an African cultural studies to interrogate an African identity through such avenues as the internet. He stresses “culture is always fluid, subject to change and susceptible to outside influences. Hegemony and its contingent problems exist also within African societies and traditional culture” (Wright, 2004, p. 116).

The advancement of a critical human rights education in the AYP program, I believe, owes a partial success to the specific positive reinforcement of collective values and traditional culture. My ability to respect a collective culture is also a sign of my own socialization, formative experience and values which I was raised with in Scotland. In a sense I fitted Ghanaian collective values, rooted in the well-being of the community, or the common good, more than the mainstream North American individualism I experienced. I believe these aspects contributed to my radical praxis in Ghana.
During the AYP program I also negotiated curriculum design with AYP. I constantly tried to pass on skills of design and participatory processes throughout the program. I believed in the dialectical process and the creation of a collective leadership through learning democracy within the methodology and critical human rights content of the AYP program. Through their own learning and action these organic intellectuals would create further processes and actions of social change in Ghana (Allman, 1999, 2001; Gramsci, 1971). Suaranta and Moisio in Education for Liberation discuss the central idea in revolutionary critical pedagogy is for learners to learn freedom through creating collective social expertise, a sense of solidarity and critical learning (2009, p. 73). Allman and Wallis (2005) comment:

Realistic radical education aims to prepare people, who will go on to prepare others, to transform their social relations at all levels. (p. 19)

Many foreign NGOs became very critical of traditional culture, as a backward force to development in Ghana without fully understanding context and collective aspects. Meanwhile, the history of colonialism reflects foreign intervention in national development whereby the collective social and economic rights, livelihoods, land rights, gender rights, and culture of indigenous populations were violated and destroyed. Presently, international NGOs and governments support particular governments, multi-national corporations, and political parties in the South who sanction such violations (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005a). Allman states this preoccupation with individual rights is the nexus of the capitalist system and neo-liberalism. “It is only through a rethinking and recreation of communal concepts of democracy that genuine human rights will be achievable through socialism” (Allman, 2001, p. xvii). Ken Osborne posits the contradiction of capitalism and creation of social inequality determines there can never be democracy within this system (as cited in Portelli & Solomon, 2001, p. 55).
Working class Ghanaians highlighted access to basic human rights viewed through a class, race and gender as a paramount focus of AYP’s education program. How does a society decide who and how basic human rights are a priority through social, economic and political power? Who already has access to these rights and why? These questions would also be examined from a historical context. My role was to provide the environment and curriculum framework for the group to also interrogate those dehumanizing customary practices which contradicted the rights of Ghanaians, particularly young people and women, through a gender, class, race, sexuality and ability lens. It was not my role to make judgment or pass on facts or knowledge about Ghanaian society as a Northerner. In this sense I concur with Manuh (2007), the curriculum and pedagogy of the program was structured in a way that the content and framework of the program “must be rooted in the concerns of African based women and men in order to make the theoretical contributions correspond to our (their) experience” (p. 140)

**Incorporating a Class Focus in Program Design**

In a recent AYP evaluation participants Seth and Kofi spoke about the crucial role a class centred curriculum played in the success of the program. Seth and Kofi talked about the first thoughts they had about the program;

Seth: Coming from Jamestown - the program talked about class and poverty and how this related to my background and experience and explained things for me. Talking about how the society and class system makes things how they are and I am not to blame - the historical and societal dynamics of class and poverty. I was beginning to understand why things are how they are.”

Kofi also explains: For me class was it. This explained my life and provided much needed analysis.” (Program evaluation, January 2008)
Gramsci thought a new type of literacy was necessary, a dialectical methodology and mode of thought which accentuated the class nature of society, one in which the social was consequently politicized (Hill, 2005, p. 13). The opportunity to craft a critical class centred educational program owed much to its non-formal nature. As a community based program, we had a freedom and flexibility to design and build a responsive critical and creative human rights education program, to start from scratch (also see Mayo, 2004). In essence the dominant discourse on human rights, the liberal concept of individual rights was subverted to explore a collective concept incorporating the African Declaration of Human Rights and the Ghanaian Constitution as the main legal texts. The implication of Western concepts of individual human rights being imposed on Southern governments were also a topic of discussion. These discussions also supported an international class and anti-capitalist, anti-racist critique of bourgeois human rights discourse.

**Learning and Popularizing Human Rights**

During interrogation of human rights concepts, the group started to question the political usage of human rights to maintain power for specific groups. In this discussion analysis would begin with a historical introspection of class, gender, race and global discrimination based on North/South relations, colonialism and imperialism (McLaren & Farahmandpour, 2005a). It was hoped participants would learn the historicity of concepts such as the law, government, and systems of power and inadvertently also look at ways working class people have challenged human rights, labour rights and social inequality to assert their collective humanity. History is made by people, by ordinary people. This reinforces hooks’ theory of an embodied self discussed earlier which recognizes “a collective history past and present becoming an ideological and political resistance for the Black community” (1989, p. 30).
The liberal bourgeois (and contradictory) concept of human rights is used by dominant powers and governments to legitimize war, civil conflict, and support repressive regimes. This human rights perspective was examined as a way to actually infringe on the rights of working class communities and poor countries. Rights in this context play a contradictory role masking the true meaning, as never really being accessible working class communities but individualized and removed from historical forces, to be granted by governments and constitutions to citizens. These concepts are also co-opted by the bourgeois state and used to justify military conquest, in the fight for freedom and democracy (McLaren & Farahamandpur, 2005a). The AYP curriculum instilled the realization working class communities have always asserted their own agency to struggle for their rights towards a more equal society, some in revolution (Allman, 2001). Vernon Galloway (1999) discusses the history of the Adult Learning Project (ALP) in Edinburgh, Scotland founded on the principles of Freire and popular education. He states the centrality of a political relation to knowledge creation and curriculum content, and the educator’s crucial role:

> It is the task of the educator to expose the constructions of power inherent in every form of established knowledge. For Freire, therefore the politicization of knowledge is at the heart of the whole approach of the radical educator and the epistemology of any given subject presents an opportunity to explore the nature and purpose of its construction. (p. 231)

Human rights as a legal concept was questioned in the program - who makes the law and why? Is there a history behind the law? How is the law applied everyday to working class communities? What’s the reality of making law work by questioning issues of access to make the law applicable? We highlighted how existing knowledges can be examined, recreated and made into something new as a collective enterprise, changing working class peoples relation to hegemonic knowledge as a given.
Gregory Martin proves “a praxis oriented pedagogy revolves around reflection and knowledge creation arising from the struggle over contradictions that come up in the various realms of human practice” (2009, p. 90). In this sense, my own formative experience and politicization struggling and analyzing the contradictions of capital provided the foundation to create a praxis oriented pedagogy as a radical educator, as Allman and Willis discussed earlier, a concretely based vision. I was able to craft the curriculum and learning environment creating conditions for other working class learners to reflect on their own social consciousness and struggles against capitalism. As a group we were also able to build a collective knowledge around a critical human rights ideology which spoke to the reality of working class Ghanaians.

The AYP program aimed to popularize law, by making legal terms understandable in everyday language, using scenarios people could relate to and ultimately to challenge the law and make it work for working class communities as active citizens. Tools were designed to popularize human rights through designing a manual based on cartoon scenarios. After observing community situations of young people in Accra I began discussions with Atta, Adam and young people regarding manual scenarios and cartoons. As a creative person Ghana gave me the opportunity to develop my art skills and promote visual learning tools among learners. In turn, AYP grew their own group of artists developing materials for community use and animation. As a radical educator a primary focus of the program was to develop leadership skills and independence within AYP. These skills were not only organizing and political skills but enabling skills as educators and animators to realize the power of arts based and popular education methods.

At the beginning of an evaluation workshop AYP talked about their entry into the program and the importance of working class youth discussing human rights. It was something
lawyers do and they were now doing it. Isaac mentioned this made the group feel the program was very important. Now they also understood human rights and were talking about the constitution. They even had a book about the Ghanaian Constitution. Isaac and his friend felt the book was like a treasure;

they would hide it in their room and read it. Later they talked about human rights at home sharing with their families in the communal house. People started to listen and the youth felt big as they had never seen anything like that before-the drawings and cartoons related to everyday issues they see. They also realized this new information gave the youth power and influence – even over adults. (AYP evaluation: Reflection, December 2007)

At first I realized efforts to popularize the law would not be an easy task. Another way I tried to achieve this was through the incorporation of local languages. Designing and facilitating a workshop for children’s rights in Wa, I designed an exercise whereby the learners would take the shortened version of the Convention for the Rights of the Child and translate the basic tenets into their own local language. Participants now felt, moulded, and understood these concepts, many for the first time after attending so many workshops on child rights by Non Governmental Agencies and government ministries. In this way the community could appropriate and mediate a critical human rights paradigm into their work and community outreach programs.

Through time, AYP programs would be centred on local languages and I could leave facilitation to AYP in Accra and Southern Ghana communities. I became most involved at the trainer of trainer sessions with AYP developing a critical space for radical analysis and radical education skills. In popular theatre work AYP would also rely on their own local languages which caused a huge difference in impact. Language is a class issue in Ghana inherited from colonialism. English remains the key language in schooling, especially as one continues onto
higher education. As most working class Ghanaians do not access post secondary education and do not have the means for private instruction in English, the middle and upper classes have access to English language and the perceived (and real) academic and social prestige associated with this. The AYP program consciously chose to use local languages as the centre of programming for working class and poor communities.

In order to really include the heart and emotion in learning, and embody learning local languages are vital at the centre of programming. This recognition also disempowers the Global Northerner and reinforces indigenous knowledge over the dominant power of race, white supremacy, language, and class in the dominant paradigm of colonialism and present day development work. It also allows Ghanaians to mould and develop theory according to their own history and experience.

My role as an educator from the North, white and working class who could only speak English, the language of colonialism was also named and discussed as a collective group of learners. Wright discusses a similar process of colonization occurring through the education system where literacy replaces orality and erases the special gifts and indigenous power of the oral form in African culture (Wright, 2004, p. 206, Note# 15). During AYP programming curriculum content focused on the vestiges of racism, history and colonialism and the attempted use of the English language to control Ghanaians through the destruction of indigenous culture and languages. Class, race and gender systems of power were also manifest through the English language, the education system and neo-colonial systems of government.

The primary aspect of the learning program was to develop real dialogue, analytical skills and theoretical explanations for everyday injustice. Through the process of learning participants would internalize the radical education method and the need for radical social change to redress
social inequality. As radical educators our role was pivotal in creating the open environment to pry open learner’s ideas and support their coming to consciousness, to voice, analyze and name the oppression they experience on a daily level. Our role was also to challenge learner’s ideas in listening to and debating other’s ideas in the group, recognizing there are different ways to look at a problem, through the dominant ideology and common sense beliefs.

My role, as a radical educator was to push the analytical skills of the group, widening their horizons to not only look at their own local experience but to look at problems in a global perspective. Ledwith links the importance of reflective enquiry which questions power in the context of personal/political and local/global dynamics (2010). In Ghana, this was not always easy as learners would have deep rooted sets of values, especially on gender and the natural inequality of the sexes. Religious scripture (traditional and christian) would be deconstructed examining perceptions of women as lesser beings described as demons and witches. Race, white supremacy and colonialism would also be discussed through language, culture and perceptions of good, beauty and whiteness and evil associated with Black and African. The need to place these perceptions and values in the overarching social relations of the political, historical and economic systems of colonialism, white supremacy, capitalism and globalization was also the next stage of this demystification.

In the beginning, resistance from some of the learners was viewed as these new ideas were strange and subversive for Ghanaians. Learners were suspicious of these as foreign ideas and resisted challenging their own values and ways of looking at the world. Ledwith (2010) highlights the usefulness of postmodernism to encourage learners to look internally at their self (personal) whilst also looking outwards at social contexts (political) creating critical processes
which spur social action locally and globally. At first, this process was difficult for AYP, specifically on gender analysis.

Atta co-facilitated the workshops and challenged the introspection of learner’s ways of thinking. Gradually the group became more comfortable with the process. They began to trust my role as an educator, as white, working class, and female, entrusting my intent was not imposing an idea, or answer, on the group. A radical praxis was supporting a dialectical way of thinking, of systemizing learners and educator’s thought and analysis for a better world as an onto-formative endeavour.

Dialogue provided tools to read the world, historically, with the lenses of critical consciousness, anti-capitalism, race, class and gender analysis and an active subjectivity. History, ideas and society are made by humans, by the people. Hill explains dialectical thinking is a way to expose things are not always what they seem, but to break through the fetishizing ways human beings are alienated from their own capacity to be human, to develop a self-consciousness, a class consciousness “that is to the significance of our comprehension of our own ‘productive capacity’ or ‘onto-formative nature ’ (Hill, 2010, p .14; also see Lukasc in Chapter One). The AYP program was based on encouraging a political, economic and social dialogue, a dialectical way of looking at the world and learners experience, developing a philosophy of praxis. Deb Hill (2010) discusses this process while researching Marx’s influence on Gramsci’s philosophy of praxis.

Put simply, the ‘ideological’ is identified with the ‘pathological’ within Marx’s writing. It is equivalent to ‘that which corrodes our capacity for ‘self-determination’- and does so precisely because it has assumed various institutionalized and fetishized forms. When viewed in this way, dialectic thinking is ideological-materialist critique that concomitantly enables future practice. It permits us to posit for ourselves new modes of self, social and material practice. (p. 14)
Three members of AYP’s core group entered university during the program and became frustrated at the teaching methods used and an absence of real dialogue or content which engaged a working class reality and social analysis. They became dissatisfied with the more traditional banking type of education as referred by Freire, where the teacher deposits knowledge into the heads of students (1972). They also questioned the process and meaning of academic study. Kofi comments:

University learning was by the book. In the AYP program we learn much more and it has really made me think deeply about things, to analyze them. You do not get that at university. I know more than university students. The AYP program was the only place I heard discussions of power and change. I became really interested in international politics: How Ghana is affected by the North and vice versa: How the local affects the national and then affects the global. We learnt how we need to examine and find out about the root of all problems.

AYP members Giftey and Seth comment:

Giftey: When I got to Legon I was bored at lectures with 200 people, having to listen to 2-hour lectures it was terrible.

Seth: The program opened my mind because of the methodology and things being taught in school were made clearer. I understand the subjects and topics better based on the analysis of issues provided in the AYP program. (AYP evaluation, December 2007)

These quotes also signify the importance of analysis in the AYP program and the ability of working class learners to now theorize on the world. The group was now reading their own world and learning for freedom (Freire, 1976, 1987). This also highlights elements of the reproduction thesis where schools and universities are sites of class antagonism, whereby
competing interests are at work in masking the existing social relations of capitalism as normal (Althusser 1971; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). In the context of public schooling there are power relations that control at any given moment in time.

It also signifies impatience with the content of learning at university. Seth commented he wanted to be with the AYP program as he saw things going on in the community and the AYP program helped him to now name them (AYP evaluation, December 2007). This is also similar to my own impatience with university learning as I wanted to find theory as I wanted to heal the pain, as hooks also stresses (1994). The additional factor which surprised the university graduates within AYP were the skills they learnt through the program’s methodology and pedagogy. They were building many skills through collective learning; becoming good debaters in group learning; able to handle conflict in group situations; beginning to question and listen to one another; and learning collectively to build knowledge from their own ideas and experience as working class young people. We must not forget the AYP program was a comfortable venue for working class youth unlike university where they faced class discrimination and bias from an upper class dominance of university academic and campus life. Also within the AYP program the freedom to converse and express oneself in the local languages meant learning became embodied. Giftey comments on her silence in school:

Choosing your language is best for me in AYP. You feel freer. In English sometimes I am afraid of making mistakes. It’s different here than in the formal system. In formal schooling they laugh at what you say if you can’t speak English well. (AYP evaluation, December 2007)
Another factor is the action component of the AYP program. Youth learners became community educators through the popular theatre events and their facilitation roles at community workshops. Education became action, very different from university learning they experienced.

During the AYP program each topic would be studied in small groups through arts based methods allowing space and time to explore, reflect, feel and think about each issue. Davis believes an adult education program centred on developing a political consciousness should entail participants writing songs, producing plays, filming dramatized vignettes of oppression, painting murals, rapping - using every aesthetic avenue to create the “strong bonds between art and the struggle for Black liberation” (1990, p. 200). Consequently, in Ghana, very little time was spent lecturing but instead questions would be posed to the group during discussion and through drama and artistic presentations. We would help the group think about what and how they think the way they do (Kane, 2001). We also encouraged participatory research with young workers and elderly women within learners own working class communities. Youth interviewers formulated relevant questions and played an important role boosting the communities’ confidence validating their experience and struggle. Later AYP thematically organized and documented data organizing findings into small cartoon books. These books validated localized working class knowledge and built AYP skills of research and documentation.

Working class communities were shown the importance of history and how the community can theorize about their experience if opportunities and spaces exist to share community knowledge. Gaztambide-Fernandez cites Freire and Gramsci’s ideas that intellectual activity is not just the activity of some but all individuals engage in some intellectual - cerebral elaboration in their interaction with their world and others (2004, p. x). This also validates the crucial role of revolutionary critical pedagogy and the radical educator in creating an educational
environment and space for reflection. Pedagogy and curriculum need a guiding radical theory and knowledge base to validate working class knowledge which incites agency among learners as historical subjects (Allman, 2001). In a project evaluation AYP commented how oral history alerted young people to the patterns in history and similarities of issues of power across age, gender and relationships over time (AYP evaluation, December 2007). Hill (2005) comments on Gramsci’s description of history as drama which draws attention to the power of oral history. “History is seen as actors in interaction with other actors within a specific cultural and historical milieu. It is an analogy that actually forces us to humanize and contextualize the drama” (p. 173).

AYP learnt how to dissect working class community knowledge and to re-use and re-present this data and experience into cultural and educational programs - bringing it back to the community where it started for synthesis. Community history was also re-used in popular theatre performances back in the communities where the seed was planted. People would see themselves and their stories on stage as the mining communities in Fife Scotland did through Joe Corries plays through a working class epistemology (Thomson, 1992).

**Developing Popular Theatre With AYP**

While researching resources to supplement my volunteer work in Ghana, I found a useful popular education manual designed for development workers working in communities overseas (CUSO 1985). In the manual I found an exercise using the method of stop theatre and statues as visual learning tools to explore political, social economic analysis and oppression in the South. These drama exercises were adapted from a community women’s drama group, ‘Sistren’ in Jamaica. During my early work we used these exercises in Accra and we witnessed how this dynamic participatory drama form fitted the Ghanaian culture. Therefore it was through my own educational praxis popular theatre was used as a pedagogical tool to work collectively through
political and social analysis (in contrast to emphasis on the psychological aspects of oppression and individual behaviour of the oppressor and oppressed).

My journey to popular theatre work was through my Master’s research, Joe Corrie and worker’s theatre in Fife; observing Ghanaian youth in the human rights learning program and watching the Ghanaian concert party on television. Afterwards, I learnt of the influence of Augusto Boal and his work *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1985) and *Games for Actors and Non Actors* (2002). Boal has been influential in developing the concepts of legislative theatre and forum theatre. These forms incorporate audience participation as spect-actors in the drama process providing solutions to the problems depicted while changing behaviour of the actors (Boal, 2002). I also learnt of Ghana’s concert party as part of a West African popular theatre genre as described by Barber, Collins, and Ricard in their book “West African Popular Theatre” (1997). As Barber explains in the Introduction:

There is a real sense in which colonial coastal West Africa was one cultural zone, in which local exchanges and parallel developments were at least as important as the relationship between any one colony and its “metropolitan center”. Popular theatres and musical groups from Ghana and Nigeria regularly toured each other’s countries from the first decades of the century. (p. xvii)

Designing a popular theatre production also took lots of skill and planning work. The group would analyze and dissect a topical community issue from a class/gender/age perspective finding factors which contribute to the root of the problem. How does this issue play out in everyday community experience? What kind of things do we want the audience to think about? Through this dialogical process the group would argue back and forth on questions, ideas and themes to be portrayed. They would also reflect on the possible effects of the performance - audience perceptions and contradictions which may not be clearly scripted, or questioned, resulting in an undesired effect. All aspects would have to be tried and tested through lots of
debate with a great deal of laughter, argument and tension throughout the process. The group built their analytical and social skills while developing democracy and a collective solidarity. Galloway (1999) describes this process:

It is also about broader social, educational and cultural relationships with other students in the group. Working with others in dialogue demands these new ways of being and new forms of behaviour. These must be learned. Skills like active listening, paraphrasing, critical thinking and personal expression are essential for building new ways of relating to others. The combination of transparent teaching methodology and dialogical relationship building is the key to democratizing the culture of the classroom and turning it into a setting where real transformations can occur … where creative responses to the challenges of the world outside may be imagined and tested. (pp. 235-236)

Paula Allman talks about the need to develop transformative education projects which foster modes of democracy and entice a collective will. “This type of truly felt will or commitment to alternative values can never be built by social engineering, but transformed social relations created within transformative projects at whatever level or of whatever scope can support such change” (1999, p. 133).

The concert party influence on my work in Ghana guided me to more contemporary theory of popular theatre, for instance Augusto Boal. However, I realize the use of the word popular can be misleading in theatre work as it is in education work. It can be a term to describe a set of participatory theatre tools without reference to content, form, pedagogy and the target audience. Handel Wright discusses a similar confusion in terminology in trying to examine theatre modes in Sierra Leone. He uses the works of Mwansa (1985), Eskamp (1989) and Kidd (1979), Kidd and Rashid (1984) to clarify differences in populist and popular theatre. Popular theatre can be distinguished by its content and commitment to social change as its primary goal appealing to a wide audience. Populist theatre appeals to a wide audience but through its mode of entertainment value as the primary goal. Wright feels there is a challenge with using either clear
cut terminology to describe theatre in Sierra Leone and opts for using popular theatre acknowledging it entails a mixture of populist forms also (Wright, 2004, p. 204, Note# 14). I tend to concur with Wright in describing AYP’s popular theatre work.

Our adoption of the concert party method was to capture a need for theatre as a political, educational, analytical and agitational tool. I also find useful the term political popular theatre used by Di Cenzo in her study of the Scottish theatre company 7:84 (1996). Wright discusses a populist form while Di Cenzo highlights the importance of developing popular forms of entertainment in popular political theatre. This maximizes participation of the audience, as we did in Ghana. Di Cenzo elaborates:

What is significant about popular entertainment forms is that they are participatory; they encourage and often depend on the direct involvement and feedback of the audience. This was an important factor in the work of groups trying to maximize the socially interactive potential of theatre (often in the hope of organizing or mobilizing people), rather than simply presenting politically conscious plays to audiences. The post production discussions with audiences were conducted for the same reasons. There is an important difference between playing “at” people, and playing “with” and “for” them. (1996, p. 51)

Cole believes the West African travelling theatre and concert party is considered popular as its sociological roots are rooted in the working class and agricultural sectors. They are popular as they are well liked and they draw upon the everyday popular culture of West Africa through slang expressions, political slogans, traditional folklore, western vaudeville and musical riffs from the African Diaspora (2002, p. 2).

Through the AYP program popular theatre evolved from the groups interpretations of how to use the genre, accompanied by their own history of popular forms of entertainment, community performance/theatre and traditional culture. As this form does not depend on text or a written script, engagement in the design and performance itself was wide open to all members of
the group. The accessibility of popular theatre and use of local languages meant the chasm which usually appears between working class communities and the theatre performers on stage is eliminated. Audience and players interact.

After each popular theatre performance AYP, the players, would go into small discussion groups with the audience and discuss social issues from the drama. AYP framed these discussions from a human rights perspective and a class/gender perspective also. The audience donated their perspectives on the issue and performance which became incorporated in future drama design. AYP in this sense were the feeder group from the community, as catalysts and filters, further theorizing the social issue from a race/class/gender perspective and reinventing the drama, through a deeper analysis back to the community. The play could be adapted numerous times owing to the feedback or change in context. AYP realized as a group the power of fluidity and being responsive to the community and their new relationship to knowledge. They treated knowledge as an object, subjected to collective critical scrutiny to be considered, rejected or transformed (Allman, 2001, p. 173).

I remember watching performances, usually sitting at the back of the audience so as not to draw attention to my presence. AYP would be tremendous at remembering their parts and cues while consistently adding new lines such as local names and places to highlight familiarity between the AYP players, the story and the audience. I would help organize the room, moving chairs and benches for small group discussions. I was amazed at the theatre form’s ability to engage the audience in discussion, sometimes challenging the players in their oppressor roles just enacted. AYP members would be ready switch roles as this happened on many occasions demonstrating the impact of the performance. The room would be buzzing and usually very loud
which could cause a problem with hearing audience input. We would act quickly and move a
group to another spot.

**Working Through Controversy and Change**

AYP performed in school halls, classrooms, playgrounds and under trees, staging outside
performances at a time of day which guaranteed shade to escape the heat. In the schools and
communities we designed performances and discussion on these human rights issues: gender
equity; violence in the home and community and sexual harassment, gender and education; child
labour; aids; abortion; access to education and children sent home for not paying fees; user fees
and the public sector, poverty and access to basic rights and health; corruption; unemployment,
labour conditions and union rights; traditional practices which harm or infringe on human rights
specifically gender based practices and tribal/gender/class/ability discrimination. These dramas
were controversial at times.

In at least three schools AYP performances were halted. In one school the children
refused physical punishment with the cane, by telling the teacher it was against their rights (*to be
human*). A pattern emerged whereby students became empowered and challenged school
authorities on discipline issues (this happened in a few classes in the same and different schools).
The children began to look forward to our regular visits as they wanted to be entertained and saw
themselves and their lives in the content of these performances. AYP provided the collective
forum for the young people to speak out about some of these issues which the society did not
want to address. As Wright (2004) proposes, an African cultural studies in school curriculum
could create opportunities for critical engagement in construction and deconstruction and foster
student’s African identity.
It should be a system which engages both the larger African project and the projects of individual students, teachers, and administrators and so on (whether the latter conforms to, dissents from, or are simply different from the African project). In other words it should make space within an African project of possibility for individual projects of possibility. Like Wittig (quoted in De Lauretis 1988), who argues for both a class consciousness and an individual subjectivity, I am arguing for an educational system that makes space for the simultaneous development of an African consciousness and identity, and an individual subjectivity. (p. 116)

During AYP school events, no teachers or adults were allowed in the young people’s discussion groups. Atta and other project adults would walk around the audience in the hope of engaging the teachers in discussion of the themes. In most schools the teachers actually left the room when the performance started. Students also began to identify AYP players in their communities (shouting their stage names) and would continue to question players about their character and the human rights issues displayed in the plots. AYP became role models in their own communities through performances. We also drew on the audiences for future recruits to the AYP training program.

In Northern Ghana we designed a theatre event on domestic violence playing to an audience of community adults and secondary school students. A few weeks afterwards, we learnt the village women formed a group to organize around domestic violence and pressurized the local chief to attend to the issue with men in the village. The women also sought support from the Commission for Human Rights Administrative Justice, whom we identified as a community support during the performance.

Sometimes finding community and institutional resistance to human rights work was disconcerting. During audience discussions, particularly among adults, human rights issues were diverted by the belief human rights was a foreign influence conflicting with traditions and “how we do things in Ghana”. Wright (2004) raises a similar problem of how popular theatre work in
Africa could: “engender vigorous interrogation of the status quo” while exploring contemporary social justice issues. Conversely this very prospect could make it unattractive to the government and conservative gatekeepers (p. 123).

AYP would become exasperated at these references concerning my involvement in the program and again centering their work, AYP work, with me, with whiteness. As Wright highlights new ideas could be considered suspicious by conservative forces as a fear of progressive social change. It is also a way of personalizing resistance in educational practice.

Through a collective group discussion resistance was rationalized by AYP as a social and individual reaction to maintaining power, being an oppressor, resisting change, and also a denial of finding freedom. In community and AYP workshops (during the early days), Atta would lead this discussion in local languages so learners could also say what’s on their mind, without fear of insulting me, the foreigner. The topic of human rights being a foreign negative influence could also be a genuine rejection of western conceptions of individual rights which conflicted with collective conceptions of rights and responsibilities, as found in African traditional culture.

I would have to expect this criticism, as a white person in Ghana, given the history of colonialism and racist development policies. I would be viewed as part of this system until Ghanaians could believe otherwise through my actions, ideas and ways of being. By confronting and discussing white supremacy, capitalism and racism with AYP I was/we were attempting to build new social relations to capitalism as an onto-formative endeavour.

Astrid von Kotze described her work in popular education and popular theatre with South African community’s pre and post apartheid:

There was a great emphasis on process as we worked in what I came to call ‘construction sites of knowledge’: production processes reminiscent of drama
workshops that demanded collectivity, connectedness, creativity and criticality. Drawing on different perspectives, participants analyzed strategies and rehearsed arguments, made sense of the South African situation by contextualising the local struggle within larger socio-political, economic and environmental developments, constructed new meanings and understanding and formulated clear ideas and suggestions that would inform future action. (2005, p. 15)

As facilitators AYP also willingly de-expertised their roles as actors/actresses and educators with community members as organic intellectuals. Allman speaks of Gramsci’s ideas on such a process. “Knowledge becomes so well integrated and assimilated that it becomes located within our subjectivities and thus in addition to being known it is felt or subjectively experienced as a type of ‘lived compassion’ and commitment” (2001, p. 170).

So far in this chapter, I have attempted to provide a synopsis of the cultural context in which the AYP program was designed and executed in Accra. I drew on my own experiences designing the program based on my history, experience, political ideology, theory and background in class consciousness. In the following sections I examine the influence of this work on my own formative experience, Marxist humanism and collective self reflected in developing the moral and ethical fiber of the AYP program. I believe my collective and humanist self bound in a revolutionary love contributed to my ability to transgress across race and class in Ghana (McLaren, 2000). Without this social love, trust, courage, humility, and openness my own collective self would not have achieved this transgression. I needed others, like minded collective selves, to work with and open up my humanity and spirit.

**Building a Collective Self Through a Collective Humanity**

In Ghana, the social, cultural and learning context of the work, and the specific group of individuals from AYP, provided an opportunity for me to learn more about my collective self and a collective humanity. In my own lifetime I have only experienced this sense of collective
solidarity, as explained before on a few occasions. However, the bond and relationship which grew from AYP was special given the long duration of the program and the coming to consciousness I - we experienced as a group building collective solidarity through finding our humanness within our collective being. Over a period of 4 years, AYP taught me about living as a collective, theorizing and practicing- a radical Marxist humanism- with a group of people similarly committed to a collective humanity and a better world for working class people. A vivid memory will always be our sense of questioning one another about our ideas and analysis, taking the time to process our thoughts and reflect, as process in Ghana respected. It meant disagreeing and feeling discomfort on difficult issues but agreeing with the collective in principle, as educators and learners, youth and adults, and a white woman working with Ghanaians. Ghana and AYP taught me to trust in the openness of a collective process across race and gender as a working class community. AYP taught me to be free and collectively name discomfort and fear across race.

In Ghana consensus is practiced in life, through extended family decisions, through community consultations and in AYP work. At first I was impatient with the time a group would take to reach consensus. I was still closed from North America. I was not used to a group participating sometimes with silence, and also the effort required to facilitate process in another country and culture. I had to learn this, and AYP were open as human beings understanding my need for learning. They were patient with me. I also had to work in a collective which sought equality. I \\We had to raise uncomfortable questions about our own assumptions and behaviour and ways we can reinforce dominant power relations through our ideas and actions. I was conscious of the role of language, education and theory as a colonizing force and the need for Ghanaians to develop their own theory and leadership through their learning praxis (Oyewumi,
1997; Manuh, 2007). I especially had to be sensitive to class, race, whiteness and outsider status. I had to be careful not to dominate in a collective and also to consciously refuse power which was unconsciously given to me as a westerner, as a white middle class woman- in theory and practice.

AYP taught me solidarity is selfless through their willingness and openness to confront inhumanity in our being and in our society. This is not an easy task and caused dissention in the group, especially in the beginning as individuals tried to assert their own power over the collective. Atta’s and my role as program facilitators was to surface and name this struggle with power and leadership in the group, working through the nuances. Atta, my co-facilitator, taught me to trust in process and wait for a group to find peace through the storm.

AYP taught me to work through collective tension and not be afraid, to have courage. On one occasion, a conflict was brewing in the group. Atta and I were not sure of the source. We held a 2-day conflict resolution workshop with AYP, negotiating curriculum which would guide the group through a process and hopefully name the problem. This was not easy for me as program leader, I, or Atta, could be the problem. Some AYP members felt a need to know where their work was going and what the future would hold. There was a request for a more decisive role for AYP in program leadership. Others in the group wanted a more evolutionary approach on sharing leadership and AYP’s development. It was also discussed as a historical problem of colonialism, as AYP’s wish not to have a westerner, (I inverted this could mean me as a white woman), repeat the pattern of a colonial leading the Ghanaians. Painful at first for me to hear, but on reflection the next day, Atta and I recognized this as a sign of the programs effectiveness. AYP now had the ability to name this as a historic problem of governance, of the white supremacist system and colonialism. They saw the need for a new type of politics, an indigenous
and collective leadership model of young people’s activism in Ghana. Atta and I had planned for my exit as a natural phase of program leadership but the groups development facilitated this process. Davis warns of the pattern of reproducing racial politics in social movements, highlighting how “it will be imperative for whites to accept the leadership of Black people” (as cited in Brookfield, 2005, p. 342).

Learning to live collectively is challenging to individual and social power and to the social relations of capitalism. Working in a collective takes work, discomfort, fear, courage, at times pain, dialogue, error and practice to demonstrate what power really means and what relationship is or could be. AYP also taught me struggle and joy are a necessary partner in education and in action. We shared many happy moments designing dramas where I would try and role play, at social nights, joking, telling stories, sharing memories, listening to music, playing music, debating, and dancing. Those moments are gifts to treasure. Uncomfortable, messy, emotional but necessary moments of crossing difficult boundaries are also special and spirited gifts to cherish and build a collective humanity, to work in communion with others (hooks, 2003).

Campbell-Stevens believes the importance of the I and the collective are paramount:

Being part of a collective defines me as an individual. I am because of all those relationships which have socialized, culturalized, educated and hurt me. I am who I am because of everyone, as the concept of Ubuntu states – a person is a person through other persons. (as cited in Portelli & Campbell-Stevens, 2009, p. 23)

Developing a Way of Life and Reinforcing Values and Ethics

Peter McLaren discusses the primary value of love as the foundation for revolutionary praxis citing the example of Che Guevarra and Freire in their work to liberate humankind,
Love for Freire, always stipulates a political project since a love for humankind that remains disconnected from a liberatory politics does a profound disservice to its object. It is possible to love only by virtue of the reciprocal presence of others. Whereas authentic love opens up the self to the other, narcissistic love culminates in a self dissolving spiral by refusing the Other (through consuming the Other) who stands at the door of self understanding …. Anchored in narratives of transgression and dissent, love becomes the foundation of hope.” (McLaren, 2000, pp. 171-172)

I was drawn to the work of a radical educator through my political convictions committed to the liberation and struggle of working class people. This drive stems from my love, an armed love, for humanity and abhorrence of injustice, exploitation and oppression (Darder, 2003, p. 498; Freire, 1972, pp. 70-71). Now, in solidarity, I continue to assert my own agency in struggle as my grandparents and community have before me.

**Working Through Gender and Violence**

During the human rights training program there were heated discussions over gender roles in society and in relationships. We discussed, visualized and role played the influences of film and advertising on demeaning images of women and men. Also, by drafting relationship constitutions we looked at expectations of each gender in relationships and how this can lead to imbalances of power and the cycle of violence. Young women became angry as the oppressed asserting their rights and young men became angry at the women naming their oppression. At first, it was not easy facilitating this process as I, as a feminist from outside, was bringing foreign ideas to corrupt the young women.

Atta and I would have many reflection sessions planning how to work through gender. In the textbooks gender work was primarily done in separate programs with only women. Also in other existing programs gender awareness was discussed superficially and with little opportunity to realize in depth individual bias and behaviour, especially male conceptions of gender and
heterosexuality enmeshed in systemic structures of capitalism and patriarchy. We looked at ways of designing an integrated program where each gender group would interrogate gender through drama and creative exercises. Through this process using all the senses, learners could fit into the roles, questioning the assumptions, ideology, and the systemic issues which keep gender roles fixed in society and then question why. We opted for joint training although it was a more difficult option to facilitate. Young men and young women together worked through their own roles in perpetuating gender inequity and facing the structural and historical issues which sanction and feed on gender oppression. It was important to work through this sensitization and analytical process together in relationship.

We continued gender programming with role plays of relationship violence. Through the deconstruction process young women questioned male power and expectations of females leading to violence and abusive relationships. The men reacted feeling their power as men was being taken away (by the program) and I as the female facilitator, taking a feminist approach, was unjustly favouring the women. Atta interjected in the facilitation holding a men only session reinforcing their anger is a natural and emotional reaction to their value systems of gender roles. Atta and I would explain to the entire group, curriculum and facilitation challenged male power and socialization. Through the popular education methodology anger is a typical response during the first stages of the learning process, of conscientization. We had a similar discussion with the young women as they were angry at the male reaction and the process of naming their oppression as young women for the first time. Atta explained these concepts in the local languages; the language the group feel and understand their whole being with and through.

The program and the methodology became a venue to voice these ideas for the first time for both men and women. This was not easy work, but ideologically challenging for a female
educator to work through. It was a rewarding experience as the program opened up possibilities of building new relations between young men and women. We all observed the changes in attitudes and the new found leadership of the young stronger AYP women and the new sensitive leadership of the young men. From then on gender equity became ingrained in the program.

During the education program and popular theatre design we worked through popular attitudes to violence as acceptable punishment for stubborn children, reinforced by biblical references *to spare the rod and spoil the child*. Meanwhile women’s *bad* behaviour was also referenced through biblical references requiring punishment if they do not listen to or fulfill their role as wife to their husband in cooking, childrearing, or sexual roles. (Note: These explanations are not only Ghanaian, but international). Therefore we had to be careful in theatre design to represent reality in a way that was educative and provocative but not to glorify or sensationalize violence. We made a conscious effort never to show physical violence, but to somehow depict the severity of the problem leading to the actual violence; (threat) or we depicted a scene where a conversation about the violence was discussed.

I also remember heated discussion on possible solutions or the positive action which needed to be portrayed - through non violence. The group worked through each scenario advising and suggesting options to players on stage, referring to the constitution of Ghana, the relevant government agencies to contact to report violence or seek support (such as the Women and Juvenile Unit of the Ghana Police Service (WAJU), the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ and various women and children’s NGOs). As gender violence became a priority for the group AYP received further specialized training from a gender based violence network of NGOs. We also canvassed community NGOs who could support community women and children and invited them to local performances. AYP facilitators would alert the
NGO if someone disclosed during the small group discussions referring them for further support. However, networking and building NGO partnerships is difficult. Funders conditions and fixed program indicators and priorities can deter coordination of development work. This inhibits strategic, long term planning and coordination of the field work. Manuh discusses these challenges as some Ghanaian NGOs, and government departments, lack a holistic focus on responding to gender work and women’s problems at the grass roots (Manuh, 2007; also see Tsikata, 2001).

In the beginning another challenge became preparing AYP to play gender roles on stage. Due to gender conditioning some of the young men could exaggerate the violence and we would have to switch players accordingly. AYP and the facilitators would work collectively on these switches and try and explain the contradictions to players.

Again this highlighted the special bonding that took place within AYP and also within me, building new ways of being as a collective and exploring how to build alternative relations to capitalism within the program and praxis itself. One must be guided and nourished by and with other like minded people as allies along the way. Marxist humanism and Freire’s idea of unfinished human beings show us the fragility of human consciousness and *being in* capitalism. However an alternative collective approach to humanist ethics and values provide the raw material to transgress through a collective self. Unfinished *beings* continually strive to be more human while reaching their core essence, a lifelong search for connectedness (Freire, 1998, p. 38).

A revolutionary critical pedagogy strives to create the foundation for a new type of humanity—a humanity which seeks real social change and justice for working class people. Learning programs must confront the barriers to social change by exposing this inner struggle
with *being* and the exterior struggle against the social, economic and political relations of capitalism. It is a struggle between domesticated education under capitalism and a liberatory education towards socialism (Allman, 1999; Freire, 1972). According to Allman:

> If educators are not encouraging people to question (to see their reality as a problem), to challenge and change their reality, then they must be enabling them to accept it, adapt to it and engage in its reproduction, unless, of course their approach enables those with whom they work to see the latter as a tactic linked to the former. Educators must make a political choice between domestication and liberation and, in making that choice, be clear about whose interests they are serving. (1999, p. 91)

As incomplete human beings transgression strives to model a new humanity within and build a more humane world without for all working class people. I was always very conscious as a radical educator and socialist I could not talk about this new society without living it, being it, to the best of my ability as this new person right now (and not wait for the coming of the revolution). We must experience a better *being* as an alternative before we can build it, to build hope this new *being* and social humanity is indeed possible. We should live everyday by the value and guiding ethic of Freire “I cannot be unless you are” (1972). As a child in Scotland I was socialized by these principles without reading Freire or Marx or any other radical theory.

*The Promise of a Critical Human Rights Lens*

The overarching lens of a critical human rights provided a basis to both extract and include a humanist code of behavioural and attitudinal practices which would envisage a new type of human being. In this sense it was not only a commitment to our own way of *being* but to an alternative relation to be against the social relations of capitalism. Human rights ideology was taken from the legalistic realm to the human realm and to a vision of collective social change. I
concluded a critical class conscious human rights education is a powerful vehicle to build class consciousness and a living Marxist humanism (also see Andropolous et al., 1997).

As a class conscious radical educator I deliberately tried to invert humanity into curriculum and the educational environment. I was aware my own values and experience could support, motivate or deter the development of the learner’s humanity, their inner selves and transgression (Kane, 2001, 2005). Therefore in this section I discuss the importance of a radical educator

1. modeling humanist values
2. creating a space and curriculum for learners to feel humanity
3. creating a dialogue on values for humanity and transgression

Modelling and the Radical Educator

During my Master’s research project I heard of socialist and communist activists whom young people looked aspired to be – to be working class agitators fighting for working class communities. These individuals displayed a set of collective and human values which set them apart from the wider community, as organic and committed intellectuals – to be respected. They also put others before themselves in everyday situations as a new way of being in a new society (Thomson, 1992). The AYP program provided an opportunity to nurture a similar humanity - to live and promote proletarian values with a collective of working class people - which would reach our inner humanity.

The program offered an opportunity for myself and AYP to live a different reality through our praxis, to push the limits of our onto-formative self by reading capitalism dialectically, rereading our own experience and praxis through the contradictions of the social
relations of capitalism. This space could provide us, the learner’s and facilitators, with an opportunity to go against capitalism’s commodification of being, our own alienated being. AYP collectively provided me with a need to explore and internalize this new collective experience by living as a better person, and by working towards building a new society to experience this life as it’s meant to be (Allman, 1999, 2001; Darder, 2002; Gramsci, 1971; Hill, 2005; McLaren, 2000, 2005, 2005b).

Deb Hill (2010) emphasizes the “Marxist-Gramscian philosophy of praxis epitomized a truly morally defiant epistemology and practice” (p. 17). I feel we achieved this in and through the AYP program and discuss this more in the concluding chapter.

Through the wider Ghanaian cultural context I felt prepared, freed up for this journey-to enter into a deeper discussion with my collective self and to collectively build a practice ground for freedom (Galloway, 1999). During the design of the program this process began through an introspection of my own class consciousness, values and humanity. I also reflected on my Master’s thesis and the socialist movement which nurtured organic intellectuals and radical activists in Fife and my own theoretical journey as a working class woman. How can I incorporate these radical education learning’s as pedagogy into a human rights education program for working class communities in Ghana?. What values and ethics are important for a new type of humanity? How can these types of values be nurtured into pedagogy and curriculum throughout the program, and also in modeling the behaviour as a radical educator and organic intellectual?

I was very conscious the success of the program depended on the radical educator’s authenticity, transparency, courage, and love for humanity. Learners need to feel comfortable to take risks, to try on different behaviour and live the new values therefore the openness, honesty,
support and humility displayed by the educator are crucial to creating a respectful and encouraging environment. As the learners are working class, the educators Marxist humanism and class consciousness will be tested by modeling respectful relationships across class, race and gender. This means being open to critique and examination of the oppressor within, as I was forced to confront on several occasions as described earlier in this chapter.

The behaviour and values of the radical educator will affect the learner’s ability to test the new values while providing the raw material through curricula of whether learners can gain courage, reach within and live their new humanity. I could not react at this critique as if it was personal, but had to listen attentively with sensitivity exploring my own actions and thoughts to explore if, infact, I was reinforcing the social relations of capitalism. We, both I and AYP are full of contradictions as everyday we have to face the bombardment of capitalist relations as if they are natural. Everyday we have to consciously work on ridding ourselves of fetishizing ideologies and practices which we unconsciously internalize. As Freire and Marx remind us we are unfinished beings living as inhumanity in capitalism. AYP provided me with the feedback and opportunity to work on this by exposing my imperfections across race, class and gender.

**Working Through Whiteness, White Supremacy and Racism**

On one occasion in Ghana I facilitated and designed a popular education program for human rights with Ghanaian NGO personnel and white Canadian volunteers. The workshop was going well until I challenged the white learners to question their own racial power and whiteness in Ghana. We looked at social, economic and political power and how racism operates in Ghana through development work, global trade, financial structures and everyday social life. The white learners became extremely angry at being pushed and questioned on their own participation in upholding racism and white supremacy in their own work. A few learners also chose to sabotage
the program for the remainder of the workshop denying their own whiteness. I realized most white people feel this discussion is off limits. I thought, maybe naively, white people would be more open to discussing racism while working and living as development volunteers in Africa. I was wrong.

The next day, I tried to have an honest, yet difficult, conversation with some of the Canadian volunteers, but they felt I acted unfairly by exposing them, (their whiteness) in a group of Ghanaian locals they have to work with. They may have felt disempowered, of their whiteness and class, and this caused resistance, hurt and anger. Perhaps they felt racism and human rights would be more easy to learn with a white facilitator, an assumed ally in whiteness.

As I reflected, I could have alerted the Canadian group beforehand on the possible discomfort and anger they may feel on the subject area of white supremacy. I did try to do this at the beginning of the morning’s program on racism, but it became clear during the day’s proceedings the group of white learners were in shock. The group had not experienced an integrated anti-racism training with Ghanaians or an anti-racist, radical education pedagogy which challenges the ideology of white supremacy dialogically. They may have never also experienced a white anti racist radical educator. My colleague, a female AYP facilitator was also taken aback by the resistance of the Canadians and had never experienced overt racist hostility by a group in an educational environment, or in Ghana, before. We talked openly and reflected on this experience as it upset us both. I was grateful, and felt a sense of healing through my sister’s support and solidarity.

My own transgression would reveal my humility and sincerity towards social justice and socialism across race. McLaren raises this as a point in the book ‘Becoming and Unbecoming White”. “To choose Blackness or brownness as a way of politically disidentifying with white
privilege and instead identifying and participating in the struggles of non-white peoples is an act of transgression, a treacherous act that reveals a fidelity to the struggle for justice (1999, p. 43). (However this is ‘choosing’ from a racial social identity and white privilege perspective and not as a unified class consciousness across race).

**Working With and Through Love**

AYP spoke about an aura within, a special power they feel as a result of the program. It projects as a genuineness and natural love for people which radiates from within, a social love. Peter McLaren (2000) discusses this love in relation to the work of Paulo Freire and Che Guevarra. Love is necessary for the work of radical education and the creation of dialogue with working people. I believe this is a love which evolved through the collective process of the AYP program and dialogical methodology. Freire (1972) discusses this subject,

Dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of a profound love, for the world and for people. The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and recreation is not possible without love. Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself. (pp. 70-71)

In my own field notes I reflected on a AYP discussion from the evaluation workshop. Salom brought up an intense feeling of depth to this change process.

Salom was really surprised at the depth of his own transformation and his ability to get on with different people. He feels people gravitate towards him and his aura. He has developed a love for other peoples, (a humanity?) other’s can tap into and feel. He described this like he feels like a magnet. (Reflective writing, January 2008)

My co facilitator, Atta, believes a special way of being was developed in the program through practicing a real democracy encouraging agency and subjectivity. As radical educators
we encouraged passionate debate, argument and different points of view. I had to demonstrate and practice a directive facilitation which was open and democratic and not dogmatize (Kane 2005, p. 35). Atta comments,

As subjects in the program we initiate and follow moving with the action. We are the focus of learning and are not being acted on as objects. As objects you cannot do anything you are pushed into things. We have internalised the democracy. You are like this with everyone. It’s what you do. It makes you think about how society, practices and politics are democratic or not. (AYP Evaluation, December 2007)

Mayo describes the process of a democratizing pedagogy through an educator posing questions and problematizing the issues therefore through egalitarian learning relations knowledge itself is democratized (Mayo, 2004, p. 55). As a class conscious educator I was aware working class people have rare opportunities to really voice their opinions in political forums or in educational spaces, through a working class reality and subjectivity. Therefore a key value in creating the program was to allow this expression to happen and to create lots of space for dialogue/argument/discussion (Mayo, 2004).

However, this is not to ignore the directive role of the educator in designing the program with specific goals, values, and curriculum to plan the educational event. Freire did not advocate a neutral or a passive facilitator but a radical educator who has a clear political alignment with the oppressed subsequently accepting responsibility to actively direct the pedagogical process (McLaren, 2000, p. 151). Wright believes teachers should acknowledge the real power they have in the classroom following the advice of Shor and Freire (1987):

To be authoritative without being authoritarian, and using their discretion to intervene or at least challenge students when they come up with sexist, racist, or
tribalist answers to problematic situations. The notion of empowering students should not come at the expense of teacher's denial of their ethical and pedagogical responsibilities in the classroom. (as cited in Wright, 2004, p. 121)

During the AYP program we also needed to pry open the hidden injuries of class (Sennett & Cobb, 1972), gender oppression and racism, to give expression to the pain, sorrow, and degradation of the oppressed and wretched of the earth (Fanon, 1965) as well as to their dreams of social change (Scatamburlo D’Annibale, 2009). Giftey and Esther talked about this during a AYP evaluation on the program methodology

You are given freedom to say what’s on your mind, certain things you have never said before and you could not say in the house. You did not need to worry about disappointing anyone with your ideas/views. I could talk and talk in the program. The atmosphere was there to talk, to share what I know. I learnt for change. I had to share, to hear what other people have to say. (AYP Evaluation, December 2007)

I had to model human rights values. A similar pattern emerged with AYP promoting a collective responsibility about their own values and behaviour, an internalization of human rights. Esther discusses “I had to talk and live it. We kept each other in check” (AYP Evaluation, January 2008).

Creating a Space and Curriculum for Humanity

Through such activities as developing constitutions for relationships, our learning environment, schools, and our families we questioned our own humanity and alternative values we wish to strive towards. These exercises were also reflective of my own wish to seek more egalitarian relations –towards a new society, starting right now within AYP and in my own life. I did not separate my educational life from my own personal and political life. As a radical
educator I need to be sensitive to not dominate conversations with my own ideas or my own political solutions to a problem. My role was to present the information to the group, through dialogue, questions and provocation whilst the group theorizes on their own. Otherwise my role becomes that of a demagogue and one whereby I reinforce the dominant relationships between educators and learners passing on facts and answers. Wright warns us against the danger of: “the imposition of teachers perspectives and personal project on students since this could lead to what I call ‘righteous oppression’ of students; a type of oppression which, despite its perceived progressiveness, ends up alienating students” (2004, p. 121).

In this sense educators can reinforce the social relations of capitalism by suppressing the creation of a collective working class knowledge. I had faith and courage the group would chart their journey opting for the best solutions for a more egalitarian human society. Shugurensky reminds us to promote the type of society we want and the type of individual we need (2002, p. 63).

Darder discusses a key component of learning for freedom “When I speak of serious education I am also speaking about happiness. I cannot understand how it is possible to have an education through which we believe studying is something difficult, impossible to be done and exclusively painful” (2002, p. x). The AYP group spoke about the program bringing them peace, a space where they could think through their ideas, selves and share with others. Kwame’s father asked him why he wanted to continue the program after the first year as his best friend left the program.

My best friend was upset at me and could not understand. My father asked me what is the problem between us. I told him the program brings me happiness and has showed me peace and equality. I want to stay with it. (AYP Evaluation, January 2008)
This reinforces Allman’s idea about the importance of experiencing an authentic humanized self, feeling the difference and committing oneself to this type of relationship and human being (1999, p. 104). As a radical educator I encouraged a process of probing the group to think spiritually about their journey in life, to feel and act with all their senses morally and ethically (Newman, 2005, 2006). This would also mean standing up and speaking out when their ideas may go against the status quo- to be unpopular at times and isolated. The group realized their ideas may not be accepted easily in the society and may need some sensitive introduction between family and friends.

Cafui talked about the creative methodology providing opportunities to internalize and question the status quo.

The method made us think and analyze what’s around us, for example the drama on widowhood rights- by seeing it, you feel it and by being it, acting it, it frees the imagination, you can think of anything. It shows things can be learnt and unlearnt. It makes you produce action and express your own lives and other community people’s lives. You gain a new identity. You are not the same in the community. You are recreating yourself. (AYP evaluation, January 2008)

Goldstein celebrates hooks idea of learning and teaching to transgress. Goldstein explains this as “a movement against and beyond current boundaries. It is that movement that makes education the practice of freedom” (Goldstein in conversation with David Selby, 2000, p. 396). I believe this expresses the reality of the AYP group experiencing alternative relations to capitalism. They experienced tension on leaving the program, re-entering the social relations of capitalism which causes conflict and pain within the new found collective human self (Allman, 2001).
Salom talks about a tremendous sense of humour and playfulness which was inverted throughout the AYP program:

I laugh a lot on this program. It’s fun coming on the tro- tro (mini van). We are so excited. We wonder what’s going to happen as we are together again. Going home we are more solemn and there’s not so much talking. Once we stop at Sankara, and people start to leave us the sadness starts, then Jamestown. We all go quietly. It’s within us, when we leave AYP memories come and we feel happy. We have our own language and nick names for everyone. (Evaluation, January 2008)

**Giving and Getting Back Humanity: It’s All About Relationships**

During the AYP project I realized the crucial role of building humanity through relationship in learning and *being*. As a class conscious educator and Marxist humanist I value relationships which are sincere and centred in a respect and open recognition of not only each other but centred in solidarity with other people struggling against oppression. I experience my real self, my collective self with others open to the centre of their *being*, their humanness. This self emanates from my own political world view and class consciousness. My collective self and *being* will always be contested by the social relations and systems of capitalism. I feel perceived and judged as a (class conscious) problem and challenge to the system while alienated selves resist my humanity as they fear their own freedom (see Freire in Chapter One). Transformative learning is concerned with such shifts in consciousness that alter our way of being in the world, and how we can live with one another by respecting our social and self locations, and by respecting our earth in peace and through the principles of equality and social justice (O’Sullivan, 2001).
The AYP program was designed to challenge not only learner’s ideas developing class, race and gender analysis but also to explore the possibilities of building other ways of being, class conscious collective selves in a collective process as a community of learners (also see Allman, 2001 on developing a collective will). If the program had an impact on the collective self of learners the group would have a measurement of how they wanted to be – an alternative way of relating to others – of giving and getting back humanity- of experiencing transgression.

On reflection, the AYP program was the first time I worked across race as a collective group through an intensive education program for a considerable length of time. I gained an introspection into the repercussions of historical racism and colonialism on a people, and how whiteness and the white supremacist system directly works against solidarity between racialized and white communities. I was further convinced of the ways class intersects with racism and gender to further exploit peoples. I was challenged to work in ways I had never worked before, creating an education program which strived to work across borders, not superficially, but across the inhumanity of capitalism and imperialism in a Southern context from the theory, the heart and from everyday experience. Perhaps I had theoretical experience but I did not have an intricate understanding of how peoples experience and lives are shaped in the South through white supremacy and imperialism.

I also shared my own ideas and experience of class from a Northern working class and female perspective, a novel experience for Ghanaians who rarely hear this perspective. It was not easy at first to share, test and reflect on my theory and experience of whiteness, white supremacy, gender, class and capitalism through the collective space AYP created in Ghana.

I learnt from listening to AYP and also through observing my world around me while I was in Ghana. I learnt to be more humble as the inequalities in Ghana are so harsh. I learnt to be
patient and understanding as the living conditions complicated AYP’s life and sometimes their participation in the program owing to financial and family stressors. I cannot speak for AYP on their own transgression. However, I have extracted possible signs of this process from their evaluations as a way of reflecting on my own transgression in the program, and how this process played out from the years 2002 until present.

During the years 1998-2002, I worked with AYP on a continuous basis as a radical educator. The group ranged in age from 14-19 years when they began the program. I remember how quiet the women were at first, listening attentively and writing so many notes while the group talked. Some could not even make eye contact with the males in the group. Some women were shy to act at first but after the first week or so their real talent emerged as new female leaders of Ghana. Young men were more confident, and some a bit too confident, thinking they already knew about human rights, but after gender training we saw transformation. They became sensitive and powerful young men working for gender equity. Once we started the training, linking the local to the global the group started to engage with a wider perspective of global social justice- realizing learning and struggle is a life journey.

Learners had few, if any, opportunities to collectively discuss theories of class, gender, racism, heterosexuality, homophobia, capitalism, colonialism and globalization (while realizing that working class people can understand the issues on the ground through their own everyday experiences as my excavation demonstrates in previous chapters). The group had few options of learning formally in any other way except lecture, nothing experiential, so by sharing discussion or through role play, drawing, poetry, rap, or music learning became different and enjoyable. Program youth also had rarely discussed political issues, linking the local with the global, with
elders or with one another. Most had a rare opportunity to present their ideas in a group or in a public place.

At the start of the program AYP were a group of ordinary working class youth with many hidden talents and an interest in the community around them. During each new intake at the orientation session AYP specified to new learners they would need a serious commitment to complete the program. This process was described by AYP as *a new way of life* committing yourself to individual and social change.

Through the program Atta and I, and AYP themselves, would see transformation begin, the group became more vocal and excited about the content. We would discover hidden talents through acting, singing, writing, music, public speaking, facilitating and also in organizing events and helping with finance and accounts. Through the second part of the program we observed the theoretical development of each member, in class, in race, in gender, in domestic violence, in children’s rights. We saw the passion (see Allman, 2001, on the transgression of an intellectual class solidarity into passion).

When I returned to Canada in 2002, AYP was a unique group of conscious, dedicated young people who could affect the social justice struggle in Ghana. However it was not until I returned to Accra on another project during 2005, I felt the deep connection and uniqueness of AYP. The group had grown and worked in various community, national and international projects to create change in Ghana. I especially connected with AYP and realized through their work and learning a special type of *collective being* had been nourished and I was experiencing my own special collective self because of this. (It could also be an intense signal of the isolation of this part of my being in a Canadian cultural context since 2002). Therefore for this section I extract excerpts from the AYP evaluation in 2007-2008 and also my own reflective writing to
explore my own transgression through and with AYP related to their observations of relationships.

*The Difference: Relations in and out of the Social Relations of Capitalism*

The success of neo-liberalism and capitalism to atomize and alienate individuals prevents encounters whereby working class communities can critique capitalist systems and institutions. Subsequently exploitative relations are maintained and working class communities are negated from a collective struggle to assert their rights. Real challenges of working across race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and age remain as social identities and the real divisions caused by capital succeed in overcoming a class consciousness.

In Ghana the collective traditional culture and periphery encounter of capitalism made a critical human rights discussion easier but nevertheless real barriers to creating a unitary class consciousness across ethnicity, gender, age, sexuality and a colonized consciousness still remain. The AYP program created the opportunity and space to work across these relations, in mind and in reality. However, when learners left the program they felt different and isolated because of their worldview and attitudes/behaviours towards other’s. On a discussion with AYP Esther and Dorcas explained this dilemma:

Outside the program you will not get anyone to support your new ideas, what you say, because it’s not the same outside. On the program people have solidarity with one another even though we may have different ideas on something there will be no attack on you. We still support each other’s ideas. It’s hard to get people sometimes to think with you as your ideas are so different, your human rights. (AYP evaluation, January 2008)
I had similar experiences as my class consciousness and anti-capitalist ideas have not been the mainstream. I always had family support and a few close friends with a similar political outlook, but also felt isolated at times in my life. My access to different ideas, radical theories and books in academia also provided solace as my life followed a different path than my peers in Markinch. Perhaps this is also why I opted to leave small town Scotland in search of kindred spirits. Salom brings up an interesting analysis on how some group members opted out the program in the earlier stages.

When we created a common environment we changed, it boosted our confidence, interest and morale. We got new skills and information. It changed our life. Maybe this was too difficult for some people, the new behaviour, looking inside oneself. The process is not about adjustment. It’s about change. We transformed. (AYP evaluation, January 2008)

Schugurensky addresses these factors of an assimilative process of learning for transformation,

A learner can get stalled at any phase of the process but particularly at the beginning (because there is a threat to a long-established sense of order) and later when a new awareness calls for commitment and action that imply certain degree of uncertainty and risk. (2002, p. 69)

Kofi and Seth discuss a result of the AYP program “The program made me build on my spirit, to be creative. I could always see my community, Jamestown and my experience in everything, in the pattern of the program. It has opened my mind. I learnt new skills and new things. It was really a turning point in my life” (AYP evaluation, January, 2008).
Support and Solidarity

Through the AYP program I was able to experience a special, deep connection to other human beings. During the program evaluation AYP also brought up similar feelings of bonding with the group. Giftey expressed this in a poignant way, so touching and from the heart.

Here, we made friends with people. We maintain a close connection that’s different. We are close, it’s a bonding, something special, and a connection you don’t even have with your family. I never really had close friends before. Here we discuss our personal lives too. Out there you cannot be close friends with guys easy. Here it’s free. The method of education, the activities creates change. You have to change the person throughout, allow them to analyze and think through the issues as human beings- not as a teacher analyzes things and deposits in the learners. (AYP Evaluation, January 2008)

Learning a critical human rights through a common lens and understanding supported AYP’s growth as individuals and also as a group. They developed a common identity and unity of purpose, a deeper meaning to their life through a commitment to equality and social justice. By internalizing human rights principles they became role models to the wider community building feelings of hope for their own future. AYP also became my role models of the way I wanted society to be. I wanted to experience my real collective self, my humanity, in communion with AYP. This seemed similar to my Master’s research and the organic intellectuals in Fife, Scotland during the 1920s. Esther comments,

Here our relationships are different. On the program people have the urge to support to each other, to resolve their problems based on training, with common thinking there’s more understanding. We have been brought together with the same purpose. It can be like leading another life. What makes you different? People are curious … they ask that …. (AYP evaluation, January 2008)
Building an Alternative Through Peace and Hope

Finding ones purpose in life can bring feelings of peace, love, hope and a commitment to the journey ahead. This is how I felt once I found theory to answer my questions about capitalism and inequality, once I understood my own links to the past and how I can assert my own historical agency (Hill, 2005, pp. 105-107, 115). I also realized I can affect change by my role as a radical educator as I experienced in Ghana. As AYP members shared their dedication to human rights and social justice my belief in the ability to transgress through learning and a class conscious political project was fulfilled. Cafui shares her epiphany of the AYP program with a similar sentiment,

The education method really worked for me. I did not know you can learn like this… the environment peaceful, conducive. I liked it and thought why can’t we live like this? ..violence free, listening to different ideas, learning to respect each other. It shows things can be learnt and unlearnt. You gain a new identity … you are recreating yourself. (AYP Evaluation, December 2007)

In the final chapter I conclude my study on my own excavation across three continents. What were the factors which alluded to my own class consciousness and ability to transgress as a radical educator in Ghana? I also discuss the crucial role class consciousness and political ideology plays through the praxis of a radical educator and how it impacts on the development of learners class consciousness.
CHAPTER SIX:  
CONCLUSION  

On Formative Experience and Praxis  

Introduction  

In this concluding chapter, I summarize the main findings of my thesis by revisiting my primary question:  

1. How did my formative experience open me up to transgression as a radical educator?  

and my secondary ones:  

2. How did my formative experience inform my class consciousness and socialist vision?  

3. What does this class conscious focus bring to my work across race, class, and gender in Ghana, and to revolutionary critical pedagogy more generally?  

My remarks are divided into two parts. Part One will focus on findings regarding the importance and impact of formative experience on my own class consciousness while Part Two will hone in on class consciousness and my educational praxis. I will illuminate how my findings and methodology regarding an auto/biography of the collective self have provided a unique insight into the making of a collective and socialist, humanist collective self. It was also an excavation which highlighted a working class female perspective across three continents straddling the tensions of race, imperialism and whiteness.
Part One:  
On Formative Experience

The Importance of Formative Experience and Class Consciousness

Reflecting on my Master’s research I concluded the importance of formative experience as a contributing factor in heightened class consciousness in later years. A number of research participants had lucid memories of class struggle in schools, in the mining communities and wider community political scene. Research participants began to question and analyze their environments from a political and social perspective as children. This was also linked to the wider politicized working class culture and historical context of class relations and capitalism.

Presently, changes in capital organization and social relations have resulted in an increasing bourgeois encroachment on the socialization of the young. The ruling neo liberal ideology raises the individual consumer as paramount depoliticizing a class analysis of society. Working class organizations, political parties and critical education programs which challenge capital and offer a collective vision of an alternative, socialist ideal have dwindled and the socialization of a class conscious youth remains a challenge. In my own case this vacuum was filled by childhood socialization by socialist family influences.

My Master’s concluded how important formative experience was in relation to radical politics in adulthood subsequently I became interested in class consciousness and childhood. As I became involved in my Master’s interviews I felt an affinity to elderly community members, particularly the more radical elements whom it became evident had been socialists or communists from an early age. They described teenage experience as identifying with communist, socialist and working class agitators. Children and young people were raised in a
political culture, to care about the struggles of working class communities as they participated in social action. Harsh conditions and a radical social unionism determined this.

Somehow I felt although I was approximately 60 years apart from their childhood experience I had been similarly socialized to oppose capitalism. This affinity drove me to my present research topic excavating my own collective self to answer ‘why me?’ Why did I become a socialist at an early age, in the present historical context which undermines class consciousness? The influences of my family modeling an ethical moral humanity guided me to resist the trappings and worship of a worldview which revolved around individualism and capitalism. I was also closely connected to history and the example of a collective struggle which was intergenerational.

I feel there is a wealth of unanswered questions in the area of class consciousness, childhood and formative experience which we do not fully understand as a society (see Connell 1982, 1993; Rafeek, 2008). How do we learn about class and capitalism as children? Hence my own PhD thesis has filled part of this void through my own excavation and analysis of class consciousness.

Growing up in a small paper making town and living in close proximity to neighbouring villages brought a sense of working class identity, a sense of belonging to a community of like minded people struggling to make ends meet. It also meant the local history was part of me as political parties and social organizations had initiated and left a legacy of disputes with mine owners, conservative politicians, prime ministers, and also electoral politics which strongly favoured socialism. Since my family influences were anchored in this movement and socialist beliefs I became the past as did my other siblings. It did not mean all working class families
followed the same path; that is another timely research study on the formative experience of class and historical consciousness.

I was keenly interested in my local history as I wanted changes and better things for working class people, the community around me. This reflects a moral purpose in my life at an early age. Perhaps class was easier for me to understand as I was raised in a small town. Many vestiges of the landed gentry and industrial past were still visible in the villages contrasting with poverty and working class families trying hard to raise children and hold their own in industrial disputes.

Undoubtedly, too, the legacy of left politics in my local area affected my ability to know other arguments, other ways of looking at social issues, in the wider community debate and also within my own family. A critical consciousness was evident in my own moral development as a youngster, my questioning of the way things were and a family who encouraged me to be critical and stand up for my beliefs. Through my excavation I found class consciousness was developing in me as a teenager, struggling against capital’s attempts to control and dehumanize me. I felt at odds with the school, within employer-worker relations, with gender roles, a racist whiteness and British nationalism (which reinforced Empire) and a capitalist culture that detached itself from my own collective humanism and working class experience.

My collective and socialist self had been nurtured through my parents, grandparents and wider community culture and history passed onto me. My parents’ working class solidarity had also been role modeled through their own interactions and political discussions with community members and family members. We were not raised to be consuming individuals but to live our lives with a social purpose, bound in others’ struggles historically, locally and internationally. This highlights the power of family socialization and passing on an ethical and moral code to
children which nurtures empathy, compassion and a sense of working class history and solidarity. It also positions children and young people as already analyzing their worlds, reading their world from an early age, making sense of what they see around them. As I was exposed to political discussion and class critique throughout family life I had begun to also see and name injustice, on an individual level and also in society’s institutions.

I also think my path to a Marxist humanism began with a strong ethical socialization: to be the best human being possible and to stand up for any infringement on my own and other’s humanity. Humanity was a collective concept bound in others freedom and oppression. An ethical self can lead to a wider political questioning of an alternative society which is more human. For me, as my parents also, this was a socialist society where people would not be exploited for economic gain and would share in the fruits of their labour through a better caring society prioritizing the public good. Through standing up in opposition to the ruling hegemony in younger life I was isolated. I had developed an ‘awkwardness’ (Crowther et al., 1999), a ‘deviance’ (Newman, 2005, 2006) and a ‘moral outrage’ (Zinn, 1994; Zinn, 2004, as cited in Ellis & Mueller, 2004).

As a confident, questioning and creative spirit I was a challenge to the dominance and authority of the social relations of capital. I was also a challenge to a working class aligning their being with the oppressor within. A young person espousing the latter does call into question the adults’ morality, class positioning and ethics. However, I always had the support and courage of my parents, as family and also as working class intellectuals and Marxist humanists. Their support and socialist beliefs made me awkward, confident and stubborn in my struggle against oppression eventually leading me to political agitation, Marxism and revolutionary critical pedagogy. The latter exemplifies how important adult support is for young people’s development
as they become isolated and targeted for their working class outlook and Marxist humanism. A strong social and familial support is necessary to defend young people’s political and social development as they critique and struggle against capital.

**Historical Memory and Class Consciousness**

Through my research and excavation I realized the importance of acknowledging and respecting the role of history in making the present society. We inherit the past.

I was cognizant of my own family’s role in making history through local labour struggles and engagement in community and political organizing. I knew their efforts contributed to the social context of today of which I should be thankful. Therefore I believed ordinary working class communities made history, made revolutions and built new societies on a local and international scale. My ancestors were responsible for providing me with certain rights and social benefits, public education, housing, libraries and decent living wages, especially in my grandparents and parents generation. They fought long and hard for the right to organize and be in unions as well as join political parties which were socialist, communist and anti capitalist. My great aunt had to leave the area because of her radical politics.

This link to history connected me, in solidarity, to a bigger social history and movement of working class people, a universal agency. I learnt of the common struggles in history against capital, mine owners and the local gentry and imperialist wars. My family history was of working people who had never entered university or higher education, had never owned a house, had never been managers or professionals but had an innate sense of historical purpose and working class knowledge one cannot read in books (as Martin, 2009, refers to a proletarian consciousness). They were self educated, principled, morally courageous and proud.
My own family historical memory and my Master’s oral history project made me aware of my own historical agency and need to struggle against capital oppression, to live a critical life (Darder, 2002, 2003). A historical class perspective is a powerful tool against oppression unifying an international working class experience of dehumanization, pain and injustice. It brings us together in unity, in the present, not breaking us apart in claiming our own separate historical struggles.

A working class historical memory has been steadily eroded through the demise of working class cultural forms based on an oral tradition. As my Masters’ research highlighted communities used to relish in their own cultural forms as makers, participants and consumers of their own meaning making immersed in working class experience. Bourgeois cultural forms disempower a working class epistemology while weakening a working class interpretation and dissemination of a critical and radical history (in Ghana there is a stronger presence of working class cultural forms owing to the prominence of an oral culture, but today this is also threatened by new technologies, trade policies and globalized media forms).

During the interwar years a strong critical working class culture was the nexus of community reflection, knowledge dissemination, and a community form of being, a radical ontology, working through the oppressive dynamics of capital collectively as a class. This community culture also flowed into the political movement - through community and local authority politics in education, justice, public works, housing, all very important areas to improve the quality of life for working people. Young people were also influenced by these social and political movements. Meanwhile, in schools today, young people are taught bourgeois interpretations of history in a vacuum, depriving their working class identity across boundaries.
A move to core curriculum of facts and standardized testing decreases the will and availability of a much needed creative critical space to investigate working class history (Apple, 2006).

Lack of radical education space to create, theorize, analyze and participate in historical production is concerning. Historical production has been hegemonized through a media and neo-liberal academic agenda which does not elicit participation through a living memory, but is further and further away from the mass of people who create working class experience. The ability to reflect on and interpret our own and our ancestor’s historical experience enables the human/working class experience of making history.

My parents instilled in me the notion of history as being cyclical and the power of working class people to change and challenge history, in favour of socialism - as an ontological endeavour. I had roots and a sense of belonging, a strength in character. Neil Rafeek’s (2008) oral history study reinforced this process for me as communist women reiterated the same impetus for their socialist activism at a young age. Again it demonstrates the power of formative experience, and the choices one makes, the moral choices, to live your life to the fullest-collectively.

This historical grounding provided me with substance and a humility which opened me up to transgression and a historical materialist analysis, a dialectical view of history and humankind. It also led me to the vocation of a radical educator acting on history through critical analysis for class consciousness, creating spaces for working class people to examine, research and document history. Documentation can provide a catalyst for a younger generation to validate community experience and make links with other working class communities across race and gender locally or globally. It provides opportunity to re-dress an imbalanced history whilst eliciting a response for ordinary people to struggle and see themselves as makers of the future.
A Working Class Epistemology: Socialism and Marxist Humanism

In the last section I discussed the importance of working class history in cultivating class consciousness. I also believe class consciousness and Marxist humanism are nourished and developed from a working class perspective and collective humanism in formative experience. In my own excavation it became apparent my worldview stemmed from this foundation in early life. During childhood my main source of learning about my world were my parent/peers, extended family and to a lesser extent the school. My foundation was centred on a working class lens to political debate and world events. As television was only viewed sporadically for evening viewing and children’s programs with an occasional movie, my main source of information and understanding were my community, environment and family. As no family had attended higher education there was no introduction to classical theory, or academia except for the odd books (no theory) available from the library.

Therefore I viewed the world through the lens of a working class youngster with highly critical and radical views of society and politics inherited from my parents. They encouraged me to be proud of being working class, naming it, and also to respect and seek working class knowledge as a primary lens in understanding my own self, my collective self. Working class culture and ways of knowing were paramount. We were also socialized to respect a living humanism of working people born in their own struggle against capital and expressed in a collective class consciousness and identity. As a working class child I was encouraged to think critically irrespective of the trouble it created in school, in the workplace and sometimes in the larger society. I was nurtured not to believe everything I was taught but always to question things, irrespective of someone’s social status as a teacher or professional. In this sense I was to seek out my own being (ontology) and epistemology based in my own working class experience.
and history. This contributed to my own search for analysis creating my own theory from experience.

Later I would use theory, found in books, which spoke to my working class experience and critique traditional, elitist and classical forms of academic theories which excluded me as a working class woman. Through my strong foundation I was able to find and test theory, to quench my thirst for knowledge and rekindle the imbalance of bourgeois ideology and ways of knowing which disempower and quash young people’s sense of being and growth in state educational institutions. Paula Allman and John Wallis (2005) discuss this relationship between a radical ontology and radical epistemology, proposing the latter cannot be achieved without the former. I believe this is a major learning from my own excavation and quote Allman and Wallis to reinforce this:

A radical epistemology is impossible to achieve or even ‘think’ in the absence of a radical ontology. However to formulate a radical epistemology we need to employ different theoretical ‘tools’. As with developing a radical ontology, we must critique present theories of knowledge and the consequent ways in which teachers and learners relate to knowledge and, of course, propose the necessary radical transformations. (p. 20)

A working class epistemology clears the course for working class people to find their own ontological being, to nourish the mind, spirit and soul and stop the blame and alienation we feel under the yolk of capital. It also helps us escape the pathological negativity borne by working class communities for poverty, racism, gender and all oppressions. It is also a necessity to nurture an alternative type of society where working class experience and knowledge are the foundation, the basis and starting point of what it is to be human, to a real civilization and higher state of being.
My own working class epistemology from childhood elevated my Marxist humanism and ability to transgress across boundaries in solidarity with all working class people, learning from their experience. Throughout my excavation this was demonstrated in work relations, especially through Intercede as a domestic worker, as a female bank employee and later during my work as union shop steward and social activist.

Intercede played a pivotal role in the development of my gender, race and class consciousness as it was the first time I worked in solidarity with racialized women. Our joint action as domestic workers and immigrant working class women was a very special experience in collective struggle. As an organization Intercede tried to encourage the democratic participation and social activism of domestic workers by recognizing and building on their experience and previous advocacy from their home countries. We gained organizing experience and leadership skills. We achieved real victories extending our status as visa workers and most importantly achieving landed immigrant status for domestic workers. These social and political experiences contributed to my class consciousness and finding a solidarity in sisterhood.

My sense of class consciousness across boundaries means class is centred in my work and activism when it’s not popular or encouraged to do so. Class, as hooks (2000) discusses is the uncomfortable and hidden truism in our society, and in the silence of social and political movements. Yet it is always there, at the centre of capitalism's nexus and a necessary part of my solidarity work and activism.

A working class epistemology also guided my life into academia believing in my own power of reasoning and holding strong on my worldview. As a radical educator this has formed the basis for designing programs with a working class bias grounded in the experience of
working class communities. It also paved the way for the growth of my capacity as a working class intellectual, an organic intellectual.

**Finding Theory and Organic Intellectuals**

As I grew older and started to question power relations and bigger analytical questions I wanted answers. There were so many injustices I questioned in my own working class community and also internationally as I watched political and social events unfold on the news everyday. I wanted to know why things were how they were. I needed to find answers and explanations in books and higher education to stretch my mind and hopefully to contribute to build a better more equal society, to represent my own community in theory. Finding theory became solace for me as I began to learn of Marxist theory which spoke to and explained my own experience of class oppression. Marxism provided a theory and space where I was reassured I was not the problem where I could read radical theory to explain and reinforce my own class theory and historical perspective. I was also exposed to the root of bourgeois ideology as hegemonic reinforcing class, race and gender oppression. Allman and Wallis (2005) remind us of the foundations of education:

> Whether acknowledged or not, all forms of education rest on some theory, or at least assumptions of what it means to be a human being, an ontology. They also rest on a theory of the origin and nature of knowledge, an epistemology, which produces in its adherents the acceptance of a particular relation to knowledge. (p. 20)

The dominant bourgeois epistemology denigrated my class experience and identity devaluing working class contributions to humankind and academia. bell hooks discusses this in relation to her first women’s studies class at Stanford, where white women professors talked about women, the norm was materially privileged white women. hooks goes on,
It was both a matter of personal and intellectual integrity for me to challenge this biased assumption. By challenging I refused to be complicit in the erasure of Black and/or working class women of all ethnicities…The gain was that I was honouring the experience of poor and working class women in my own family, in that very community that had encouraged and supported me in my efforts to be better educated. Even though my intervention was not wholeheartedly welcomed, it created a context for critical thinking, for dialectical exchange. (1994, pp. 183-184)

hooks speaks to my experience, as a Scottish working class woman, as a traitor to whiteness and in solidarity with working class women of all ethnicities. I have been that same woman in classrooms, workplaces, unions, political parties and social movements asking those same questions of class and race. I especially relate to the homage to women in my family and community whose shoulders I stand on and am supported by to enter academia. It was important for me to find theory in order to make sense of my historical, political, social and ethical journey, to find connectedness, direction and purpose in life as a collective self. I wanted to know how others before me had made sense of this world, of class oppression and had acted on history and in history to change things. Theory was about finding freedom (hooks 1994).

My excavation reiterated the growth process of an organic intellectual from the formative experience of a working class child in Scotland- the questioning and critical character formation of a confident girl. She was observant, caring, empathetic, compassionate, creative and loved life. Her respect for others made her aware of others pain and her place in the bigger world. I grew up admiring activists and historical figures who fought for working class people for humanity. I wanted to be like these people fighting for freedom, the highest expression of one's life, not material gain but human gain.

In my teenage years I started to assert my activist self in the workplace and later exploring political parties within the radical tradition. I became disillusioned with authoritarian
and dogmatic activism, far removed from working class communities but individuals seeking power or popularity. Their language and approach did not speak to me and I started to realize in union work and community organizing I could have some influence with my ideas and perspectives, and later my radical pedagogy. There was a need for my perspective and authenticity as a working class woman, as a working class organic intellectual. Finding theory strengthened these convictions by illuminating patterns in history and economic exploitation. I could explain these in ways which spoke to working class people, by popularizing language and concepts, anchoring pedagogy in a critical working class experience. Hence I found my vocation as a radical educator.

Organic intellectuals exist outside of university in working class communities creating opportunities and spaces to fulfill their passion and build political skills, intellectual and social power among other working class communities. Organic intellectuals are crucial to any real radical movement for fundamental social, political and revolutionary change. It is their involvement in educational and agitational struggles which build and support the necessary political and historical agency to change the society. I believe this also becomes an ethical and moral struggle - to be more fully human. It is this ethical journey, a radical ontology, that lays the foundation for the growth or birth of an organic intellectual, not vice versa and one part which is crucial and absent from the discussion of the efficacy and ideological importance of a radical educator (as discussed previously by Allman & Wallis, 2005). Ethics and moral purpose drive one’s political beliefs and alignment to which type of society one wants as an alternative (Pike, as cited in Goldstein & Selby, 2004: also see Portelli, 2009). Which side is one on? Liberation or domestication? Freedom or more bondage? The next section deals with specific learning’s on transgression and praxis also relevant to the latter discussion.
Part Two:

On Radical Praxis

A Pedagogy Born in Struggle and Freedom

I came to revolutionary critical pedagogy seeking a political education which named the overarching social relations of capitalism as the impetus for a liberatory education. My radical politics born and inherited from my family resonated with an overtly political and radical response to education recognizing the need for social revolution to erase the economic capital-labour relation. The radical educator needs to expose this dichotomy while providing educational opportunities to build a political and social movement, a new society based on a socialist alternative. In this sense a radical educator has no choice but to be political, as a socialist collective being, modeling the new type of society through relationships with learners and an embedded respect, a Marxist humanism, with working class people.

In my own excavation I remain convinced of the link between politics, revolution and education, the need for and importance of organic intellectuals as radical educators. Within this perspective lies the commitment and practice of historical radical figures such as Antonio Gramsci and Paulo Freire. As Peter McLaren (2000) also stipulates a similar human being who espoused this spirit, an organic intellectual and socialist revolutionary committed to the freedom of working class and poor peoples was Che Guevara. Although Guevara’s roots as a middle class Argentinean maybe questioned, Guevara dedicated his life to finding freedom and embracing a collective humanity. Through a radical and political praxis with the peasants and the poor Guevara committed class suicide as a leader of the guerilla movement in the Sierra Maestra and through his dedication and praxis in the Cuban Revolution and liberation movements of Africa and South America.
However, I also believe in my own Master’s research and in my own family, I learnt of similar great human beings engaged in political and educational work during the interwar years in the mining communities of Fife. People, who out of political and social activism carried out educational and cultural work in efforts to conscientize working class communities about their own oppression in a wider national; and international political struggle for socialism. Through educational, political and cultural programs organic intellectuals tried to create and activate their own radical ontology, epistemology and agency against capitalism and dehumanization.

I feel wherever there is injustice class conscious working class intellectuals will try to create cultural and educational forums to counter their own alienation, to seek solidarity with working class communities across boundaries. Success will depend on the support, avenues and social spaces available to access and promote critical consciousness among working class communities, inclusive of all ethnicities, women and men, all abilities, differing sexualities and the elderly and younger community members. These open but critical working class spaces are necessary for other organic intellectuals to grow. During the interwar years these spaces were more available as working class cultural spaces were promulgated through socialist political parties, unions and the wider community cultural spaces. Today these spaces remain few and far between so pose a real challenge for this growth of a counter pedagogy.

An organic intellectual is closer to the people and works in the community supporting local people in political, social and cultural life and creating conditions for all to reach humanity. They are not detached from humanity but part of the community in a Marxist humanist, educational, cultural and political movement. The latter functions and roles are inseparable as I learnt from my excavation and study of Fife’s organic intellectuals during the interwar period. I also learnt from my own experience for a white organic intellectual or radical educator questions
of whiteness and racism are crucial to fulfilling this role to be authentic and fulfill your ontological role, to be with, truly with, racialized communities and also white communities who wish to disown whiteness. Claudia Jones highlights her own challenges, as a Black woman, working with racism in the US and British Communist parties. Jones cites the racial tensions within Marxist theory and praxis by communists and organic intellectuals (Boyce Davies, 2008).

An organic intellectual has a duty to be the best human being possible and live on and fall off the edge, finding freedom and able to transgress. They require an openness and humility to make mistakes and learn from their praxis as dialectical contradictory human beings continually fighting alienation and commodification of being in capitalism. This entails continually confronting the oppressor within and the oppressor without through a clear class analysis of capitalism, racism, imperialism, patriarchy and white supremacy. It entails a great deal of hard work, especially in the form of constant, critical self-scrutiny (Davis, 1998). We have to think deeply about our own assumptions, objectives and rationales and explain these clearly to learners (Allman & Wallis, 2005, p. 23).

Class Consciousness and Solidarity:
Transgression as a Human Being, and Socialist Educator

My class consciousness provided a foundation to analyze the world, making sense of capitalism as a system, and how the ensuing social relations of capitalism are manifest through a sexual and racial division of labour. Gender construction and the regulation of heterosexuality as the real and norm of sexuality is also systemized and reinforced by the overarching capitalist system which strives to maintain the sanctity of heterosexuality, sexism, patriarchy and the family as a reproductive unit. Racism was also analyzed from the perspective of the capitalist system and imperialism but first of all from my own Marxist humanist being. It was later I began
to realize the systemic features of white supremacy and my own implications in this system and my choice to disown whiteness through Marxism and socialism. Before I went to Ghana I had engaged with theories of racism, imperialism and white supremacy and had participated in anti-racist activism in Toronto and overseas for many years. In this sense I had prepared for the ways I would encounter racism in the South, mentally and theoretically but not embodied this experience.

These systems intertwined affect our ability to unify, to overcome capital, through a recognition of each and every struggle as interrelated and necessary, as our own struggle, as a working class community, as a collective self. I also had local examples, embryonic examples of socialism, through the local community, from the unions, primarily the miners union to shape the lives of local people around a socialist alternative, not some ideal far away, but one in Fife. In this sense, socialism was steeped in our local indigenous knowledge system. In my own case passed on from generations nurtured as a way of being—a Marxist humanism, a collective self. This local reality, in laywomen’s terms brought me to university and college where I could access theories, of all persuasions, to support my own reasoning. My radical politics, epistemology and ontology are what brought me to theory. In this sense, I had an embryonic foundation of a collective socialist self but needed space, time, resources and other organic intellectuals to reflect on my experience and ideas.

Access to books and libraries also alerted me to the fact socialism was no accident, as social history books documented liberation struggles and revolutions. My exposure to resources through academia exposed me to the global history of class and the agency of working class communities in striving for a collective humanity and different society. I became connected to these collective histories through finding books in academia. This was an experience of healing
as I found answers and solace that my own beliefs are part of a bigger historical movement, of a collective humanity. My own family and the Fife mining communities had also been part of this as I found books which identified my radical community history. I was history. Finding theory was empowering for me.

During my radical praxis and journey as a political and social activist, I have felt there is not enough focus on whiteness, racism and imperialism in the socialist and political agenda. There is also a less obtrusive, but just as dangerous, ideological and moral attack on human being through individualism, consumerism and the overall domination (dictatorship) of the free [sic] market. Throughout my thesis, I placed this as a tension which could be challenged in a renewal and review of a political and ethical curricula in radical education work (i.e., Allman 1999, 2001; Cole, 2008; Crowther et al., 1999; Darder, 2002, 2003; Eryaman, 2009; Galloway, 2005; Hill, 2005, 2010; hooks, 1994, 2000; Kane, 2001; McLaren, 2000, 2005b, 2006; Scatamburlo D’Annibale, 2009). In some sense this could be a revitalization of curriculum and pedagogy through political analysis, a radical ontology and epistemology of which revolutionary critical pedagogy is a beginning to this process.

Marxist humanism was a necessary component of my being and consciousness guiding my radical praxis and also my vocation as a living, caring, loving human being in everyday life. A Marxist humanism provided the ethical and moral base for my own sense of collectivity- of being with others- of a collective self. It provided the substance, the food for my values and ethics of how I wanted to build radical education and reflective spaces for working people. In essence it is a political, ethical, and moral human being engaging with and struggling with the forces of oppression which brings me to my radical praxis.
It is my experience in struggle and collective memory which brings me to a being which seeks to find freedom in relationship, through and with other working class people, in everyday experience, through and in radical praxis, radical education praxis. This past experience forced me to take sides, to find freedom, to act to protect it and to fight for it. We find solidarity and purpose in living, when we take a moral stand and act against injustice. Only then are we able to contemplate unity and transgression as human beings and radical educators, in politics, in community, and in our relationships with one another through our radical education praxis.

A Critical Human Rights Education

During my investigation of praxis in Ghana, I discussed my transgression through and in the AYP human rights education program. I believe a critical collective human rights as opposed to the liberal individualistic conception, can be a powerful tool to explore what in effect to be human consists of.

Human rights provides a safe space, a theory, to open up contradictions of human being in capitalism, and how this process is opposed through the exploitative and oppressive relations which flow from the social relations of capitalism. A critical human rights education provides an opportunity to look at what is humanity theoretically exposing capitalism and oppression. An education for critical human rights also provides a space to create a pedagogy for humanity confronting class and oppression across boundaries through social and learning relations within the classroom.

Class relations and a system, based on the maximization of profit has no real concern for the being of humans but is intent of finding ways to exploit and maximize labour power through the class, racial and gendered division of labour. These systems require ideological sanctioning
hence capitalist hegemony lives in our everyday value systems, how we treat one another and how we interact, as players, in an exploitative system. Our human value and worth are diminished by a hierarchy of various social identities, power relations, and systems of oppression flowing from the social, political and economic relations of capitalism. Capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, neo-liberalism and globalization have maintained and embedded institutions and systems in the social fabric of society to ensure power and control remain in the hands of the most wealthy, corporate, white male elite. Capitalism dehumanizes people and benefits from this dehumanization and commodification of human being.

The Ghana AYP program provided us with a space and curriculum to expose the bankruptcy of human rights under capitalism. What have we as a society become? Capitalist relations are enmeshed in a demeaning system of consumer capitalism and through obscene poverty and obscene wealth. Capital relations result in emotional, psychological and moral violence to our being as a humanity, and to the vast majority of the world’s working class and poor.

It is especially necessary and timely for radical education spaces to engage in a moral, dialectical and ethical discussion on a critical human rights analysis. Humanity has lost its meaning and relevance in capitalism. The practice and theory of human rights has become commodified in an individualistic framework. Meanwhile neo liberalism and the capitalist state react to civic and public concerns of inequality through creating constitutions which remain saturated in liberal discourse with no intent of social change, but only in granting individual rights and challenges on a legal basis. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) conditions of debt contracts have also co-opted human rights by insisting new independent republics in the South create civic institutions and constitutions to appease or maintain a liberal
democratic appropriation of human rights disconnected from the social, economic and collective realm. This discourse and legal system is distant from the real needs of working class people as challenges to rights become a legalistic preoccupation, a hegemonic discourse.

It is within this backdrop great opportunity exists to critique bourgeois conceptions of human rights and human being. A radical praxis can engage working class communities in an essential moral dialogue over being in capitalism through alienation, exploitation and global imperialism. It also becomes an area to explore the collective concepts of rights and responsibilities, the ‘I’ and ‘we’ questions. It provided space in Ghana, for me, to engage in discussions over class and solidarity, colonialism, racism, whiteness and white supremacy. It provided a space for uncomfortable but necessary discussion, being challenged on whiteness and racism, but allowing the group, learners and me as a radical educator to be open and be vulnerable.

The discussion was framed on a collective and critical human rights lens based on exposing and challenging the systems of capitalism and white supremacy. We questioned how we are implicated in this system. How do I and the learners engage everyday against a system which is upheld by racism and white supremacy, by a negation of the existence of white supremacy as a political, economic and social system, as human beings, as collective selves? A critical humanist framework investigating collective human rights provided the common ground for this discussion. The dialogue centred on a common collective humanity and our unfinishedness, wishing to become more fully human as a group, as beings, as a lifelong vocation. This was also a major factor in transgression, being able to practice our humanity collectively in the program, preparing and hoping for a collective society where we could be sometime in the future. A critical human rights program based in a radical revolutionary critical
pedagogy prepared us for this collective process of becoming and is the essence of transgression. An individual does not transgress alone but through the shared process of finding freedom in our theory, action and being, with others, even within the limited confines of radical praxis within capitalism. This taste of freedom, a collective freedom is the fuel for struggle in the future, the essence of what it is to be human, a collective solidarity.

Human rights education provided a learning environment to live these new relations as there meant to be, outside the legalistic realm but in the learning and experimental realm, laying bare our socialization of discrimination, colonization and the oppressor within. This entailed exposing years of socialization and ideological conditioning thrust upon our consciousness and being through the domination and power of class, race and white supremacy, internalized colonialism, patriarchy, homophobia, ageism and ableism. We tested our moral and ethical fabric of a collective self, a human being. These ethical and moral journeys nurture a human solidarity which is especially difficult to achieve in the social relations of capitalism, as they are forged in an inner struggle and external practice of who we are, how we want to be – as a collective self and a collective humanity. Ultimately the very political, economic and social foundations of the society need to change to fulfill human needs and be rid of the capital system’s drive for profit, which is in contradiction to humanity. It is also a collective challenge to maintain this ethical and moral purpose within the social relations of capitalism which constantly attempt to destroy this collective morality, a working class centred ontology and epistemology across boundaries.

I believe there is great opportunity to collectivize human rights and provide learning spaces to transgress across human being, to feel, question, discuss, argue and relish in each other’s journey together in a collective solidarity for a better world. An arts based curriculum supported this process as together we created and shared emotions and ideas about our
experiences, critique and how we want to be, and in what type of society we want to be in. By questioning our moral and human fabric through drama, drawing and creative writing we opened up the feelings and wounds of oppression, the depth of our damage as working class communities, collective/individual selves and human beings. We connected in ways and depths not possible through dialogue alone.

Popular theatre provided a venue for ingenuity and creativity on difficult questions. Communities watched social justice presentations based on everyday living, examples of gender oppression, class oppression, elder abuse, labour issues, police brutality and the role of government and the authorities in supporting communities. Visual presentations of difficult conversations supported the creation of a dialogue and working through the problem. In many cases the popular theatre performances were the springboard for further social and political activism, or further education, just as in Scotland during the 1920s. Also in Ghana there had always been an oral and cultural tradition of drama. We subverted this cultural form and changed the content inverting in a radical praxis and educational program. It highlights the importance of the arts to present an idea/scenario and begin a discussion and also to present a visual form for reflection in the analytic process. Through the popular format the audience would also participate, sometimes on stage, highlighting their ability to change the story. However the AYP program was not advocating individual behaviour change but a wider social and political change for the solution exposing the cooptation of the human rights agenda by neo liberalism. Also through the creative process, the AYP players developed strong bonds in a collective endeavor, forging an identity in the quest for justice through new more egalitarian relations with each other and with their worlds. They engaged in building a loving collective relationship bound in their
search for freedom through passion, laughter, uncontrolled playfulness and the utmost respect for themselves and a collective humanity. I was so lucky to have been part of this.

The radical educator is crucial to guide and encourage this praxis. They must also be open to a collective moral and ethical journey with the learners, to model it and live it in the social relations of the learning environment and also in their life. They must be a human being, living, laughing, loving and caring but also exemplify their own vulnerability and shortcomings on a journey to become. A radical educator requires a social and political analysis which exposes the inhumanity of capitalism and to be unwavering about the obscenity of social relations which flow from this. This will also require a constant reflection on the nuances of capitalist hegemony, engaging in theory making and collaborative work with other organic intellectuals. Capitalism consistently shifts and attempts to dress itself in new clothes but is desperate to maintain power at whatever cost.

A radical educator must be a social and political activist outside of the learning environment, acting on their agentic function to a collective humanity, a collective self struggling with others in a collective solidarity to become. The personal is political, the individual is the collective. The ‘I’ is the ‘we’.

New Learnings and Contributions to Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy

An auto/biography of the collective self

The methodology of auto/biography provided a rare insight into the ways capital influences the consciousness and agency of a working class woman. It provided an opportunity to view how the structures and social relations of capital acted on being, across three continents, and how a collective class consciousness made sense of these. Through a life history and an
excavation of events, social struggles and theoretical formations we gained insight into theory
making and agency. As readers of auto/biography we travel through the journey of making life
and social history and visualize how my collective self became a subject inverted into history
(Crowther, 1999). Auto/biography brings history alive and provided examples of how
collectively lives and history are made.

Auto/biography democratizes research by bringing working class experience and theory
into academia. This becomes especially useful when experience is analyzed through a social,
political and historical perspective and not as narrative alone. Auto/biography can also provide
opportunity to build agency by learning from our struggles in organizations, unions and social
movements. It helps build a theory of agency. The political life of Black communist Claudia
Jones, compiled by Carole Boyce Davies was an example and inspiration for my own
auto/biographical work. Davies writes:“The autobiographical “I” is used in this case, as is often
done by those involved politically, to represent a larger cause, to express a community’s

The theory of a collective self provides a needed exploration of the dimensions of
subjectivity and selfhood in Marxist humanism and revolutionary critical pedagogy. A collective
self can contribute to the ethical transformation necessary, as a class conscious transgression and
guide to social relations we want to be, towards a radical ontology.

**Radical praxis through a radical ontology and radical epistemology**

I believe my thesis research contributes to revolutionary critical pedagogy by
demonstrating the link between a radical ontology and radical epistemology. It was my struggle
to be which brought me to a radical praxis and a radical epistemology. I have found it impossible
to separate the two in my work as a radical educator. Knowledge creation was experienced as a
collective attempt to humanize, to understand and problematize experience through a dialectical enquiry and questioning. My own radical praxis was a continuation of my struggle against the dehumanization of capital.

Through my excavation I realized the AYP program’s foundation forged this theoretical link between a living radical ontology and epistemology embedding relations of change and humanity in curriculum and pedagogy. A critical human rights education provided the bridge between my human being, agency and class consciousness. By looking at the world dialectically a Marxist humanism and critical human rights made sense as a living working theory for working class learners.

**Organic intellectuals**

I also believe my excavation sheds light on the revival of the role of organic intellectuals in revolutionary critical pedagogy, linking history and Gramsci’s theory and practice as a political organizer. It brings intellectualism out of academia and grounds theories of working class agency, intellectuals, political knowledge and culture back to working class communities where it began. My research also challenges us to think of ways of encouraging and supporting working class intellectuals as they struggle in social movements and in academia challenging capitalist hegemony. Perhaps the concept of an organic and committed intellectual leading a radical praxis is timely clearly establishing the political component of radical education work and the necessity of relating ones life to social change. My thesis also situates organic intellectuals in history, through the lives of activists from the twenties and in my own family memories. I also reincarnated these learning’s to another context and time in Ghana.
A glimpse of new social relations

This thesis also contributes to revolutionary critical pedagogy by documenting glimpses of humanity found in new social relations created in a collective learning and ontological praxis. Too often we document our ideas and theory and fail to provide a blueprint or practical example of what a radical praxis looks or feels like.

We/I learnt of the very real ways AYP’s collective work impacted social relations between the group. It provided me with an opportunity of how I want to be. Experiencing a new humanity, even ‘a glimpse’ as Allman and Wallis (1995) suggest, can instill hope another world is possible through a radical educational and political project to counter capitalism.

Childhood and class consciousness

My own formative experience demonstrated a developing critical consciousness in a young working class female in rural Scotland. Revolutionary critical pedagogy can be applied to childhood experience opening up opportunities for a questioning of young peoples humanity and social and ethical foundation. Too often we do not allow young people to share their radical visions, analysis or experiences of inequality. We do not learn from their observations and experiences of capitalism. My thesis highlights the crucial importance of family and elder support for critical working class consciousness and the need to name class to affirm working class experience as early as possible, in childhood.

My learning displays a questioning of capitalism in primary school, in my neighbourhood and town sharing in the struggles of my elders as a working class humanist caring for others. This was a vivid learning for me, excavating a collective self demonstrated at such a young age. It made me value the ethics I was raised with and the importance of my family on my own development and political and social consciousness.
I also began to understand my life has evolved as a commitment to live a better life, with and through other’s.

**A critical human rights pedagogy**

This study has reinforced my commitment to a radical praxis and a further development of a critical human rights pedagogy and educational curriculum. A critical human rights education integrated with revolutionary critical pedagogy provides the foundation for a radical ontology necessary to support class consciousness and historical agency.

It also provides the framework for experiencing an alternative to capitalism through building social relations of learning which support a collective humanity and ontology across boundaries of race and gender among working class communities.

**Future Questions**

- Further documentation of working class experience through auto/biographical and auto/ethnographic methods. I am interested in continuing a historical perspective to all my work as I am a product and agent of history. I am indebted to history for who I am.

- Further research to strengthen my current work would relate to working class childhood and the formation of an oppositional critical consciousness. How and when does this happen? A further necessary dimension is the study of the intersection of an oppositional, gender and race consciousness.

- Another area of study could entail an inquiry into what makes an organic intellectual by studying patterns in history and social/political contexts which support(ed) such individuals or ‘movements’. How does one become an organic intellectual?
It would also be advantageous to research the particular formation and praxis of female organic intellectuals across continents and at different historical periods.

- A study which investigates the relation between a radical ontology, epistemology and a radical educator’s class consciousness is also a necessary link to this research.

- There is also a need to create and link theories of critical education and radical praxis, across the boundaries of the Global South and Global North.

- I would also be interested in studying the effects of critical education and theoretical spaces for working class communities, as Fircroft College established in this study. How do these spaces affect the radical lives of working class subjects who studied there?

Hopefully my current research will be useful to others in their search for a radical pedagogy and most of all to working class people in their continuous struggle.
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