

Decolonization and the pedagogy of solidarity

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Abstract

The concept of solidarity is often evoked within projects of decolonization. More recently, however, the failure to construct solidary relationships that seriously engage the demands posed by decolonization has provoked scepticism as well as suspicion regarding the viability of solidarity. A consideration of the genealogy as well as the multifarious uses of the concept of solidarity reveals some of the ways in which the concept reinscribes colonial logics and operates to obscure complicity and continued colonization. At the same time, it is possible to articulate a set of parameters for solidary relations through which to imaginatively construct new ways of entering into relations with others. In fact, when informed by the failures of responses such as multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism to the problem of human difference, solidarity remains an important possibility. This article proposes three modes for a pedagogy of solidarity that is committed to decolonization. It argues for the possibilities of relational, transitive, and creative solidarity as a strategy for recasting not only human relations but also the very notion of what it means to be human, as crucial for decolonization.

Keywords: *solidarity, pedagogy, decolonization, cultural analysis*

Introduction

At the beginning of the 21st century, deeply contradictory and paradoxical movements are reconfiguring human relations. On the one hand, global neoliberal capitalism and economic collapse, resource extraction and environmental degradation, and military invasion and expansionism are increasing colonial domination and human suffering across the planet. On the

other, Indigenous resurgence and the advent of Indigenous governance in places like Chiapas and Bolivia, the evolving (re)articulations of the (Un)Occupy Movement, and new diasporic alliances and forms of economic solidarity are pointing to emerging possibilities for reclaiming and redefining human relations. These complex and contradictory movements and shifts are tied in a complex causal knot with increased contact between disparate peoples, sometimes in conflict and other times in collaborative interaction; we live in a world of intensified encounters with difference. Displacement, movement, violence, as well as new modes of entering into direct contact with others characterize these encounters. In this context, we are faced with both the challenge as well as the opportunity of actively rethinking modes for human interaction and recasting *the difference that difference makes*.

The characteristics of this particular moment are neither spontaneous nor natural, but the outcome of complex dynamics of colonization and the resulting diasporas and genocides produced by United States and European imperial expansionism. The “new world view,” instantiated through the “event” of 1492 and its aftermath, persistently imposes particular conceptions of what it means to be human and defines what counts as cultural difference (Wynter, 1995, 2003). White supremacy and hetero-patriarchal order violently enforce colonial modes of human relationality, fabricating subject positions through intersecting and interlocking discursive regimes of gender, race, class, sexuality, and ability, among others. As more and more people come into contact, these subject positions are largely enforced—yet sometimes contested—through the manifold human encounters that are the definitive marker of the complex social world at the turn of the 21st century.

In the context of these changes, educators are called upon to play a central role in constructing the conditions for a different kind of encounter, an encounter that both opposes ongoing colonization and that seeks to heal the social, cultural, and spiritual ravages of colonial history. This call requires abandoning the traditional logics of formal schooling that have defined educational projects over the last two centuries. It also requires moving beyond tired conceptions of individual autonomy and rational consciousness. These conceptions reconstitute the individual as the site of social change and are ultimately based on the same conception of knowledge—and of the human/“Man”—that served as the foundation for justifying slavery, genocide, and wars of conquest (Grande, 2004; Wynter, 1995, 2003). “Reason,” in its multifarious and contradictory manifestations, has so far failed to yield an ethical mode of being that can satisfactorily counter the forces of colonization.

Critical educators committed to decolonization and anti-racist critique must endeavour to imagine what human relations might emerge from current conditions, conditions marked primarily by increased migration and economic, ecological, and political instability. We are called upon to imagine and pursue modes of human relationality that might constitute forms of resistance to, as well as healing from, the colonality of present conditions. This requires a recasting of our day-to-day relations and encounters with difference. “What is at stake,” to quote Judith Butler, “is really rethinking the human as a site of interdependency” (in Taylor, 2008).

It is with these challenges in mind that in this article I offer a vision for *a pedagogy of solidarity* that might begin to point toward new possibilities for an education committed to decolonization and anti-oppressive praxis. While solidarity is often evoked in the context of political projects committed to decolonization, it also provokes scepticism as a concept that can be mobilized to obscure the very dynamics of colonization that set the stage for—and are sometimes reproduced through—solidary relations (see Tuck & Yang, 2012). This is partly because solidarity is seldom theorized and its genealogy, as a concept that evolved within the context of European nation building, largely ignored. This genealogy presents a challenge for the way we both think about and engage in projects of solidarity committed to decolonization. Yet, as I hope to demonstrate in this article, it is also possible to articulate a set of parameters for engaging solidarity pedagogically as a decolonizing strategy.

Failed attempts: From multiculturalism to cosmopolitanism

Educators working within various progressive and social reconstructionist traditions have made several proposals for addressing the challenges of continued colonization. Perhaps the most widespread of these have been the plethora of proposals that have evolved around the notion of multiculturalism. In the United States, the concept of multiculturalism evolved in response to the demands of the Civil Rights movement and the challenges posed by the persistence of racism in the post-Brown era (Banks, 2009). In Canada, multiculturalism was in part an outgrowth of the astute “bi-cultural” response to the conflict between Franco- and Anglo-colonial powers erupting around the “Quebec question,” largely sidelining—and further erasing—the continued colonization of Indigenous people (Day, 2000). While only in Canada has multiculturalism been inscribed into federal policy, in both countries it has become a major force within educational discourses in an attempt to deal with the “problem” of how to educate an increasingly “diverse” population.

The critiques of multiculturalism are not new, and many scholars have pointed to the various limitations of a concept that in its very etymology contains an aged conception of “culture” that cannot but re-inscribe colonial essentialisms (see Goldberg, 1994; Hall, 1992; Walcott, 2003). The very prefix “multi” implies discreet but clear and lasting boundaries between “this” culture and “that” culture or the other that are both conceptually and empirically untenable and that fail to describe the complex lived dynamics of cultural change. As Stuart Hall has famously argued in his essay “Notes on Deconstructing the Popular”: “there are no wholly separate ‘cultures’ paradigmatically attached, in a relation of historical fixity” (1981, p. 238). While Hall was making an argument about social class, it can be extended to ethnicity, race, and any other of the social categories around which cultural claims are usually made.

This is the reason why Canadian multiculturalism, as policy or idea, has been—and must continue to be—critically unsettled. While ostensibly about the valorisation of the cultural diversity that permeates and enriches Canadian society, multiculturalism operates to manage and contain cultural difference. It also turns “diversity” into a commodity to be marketed and sold by

both the state and corporations. To accomplish this, multiculturalism enforces outmoded conceptions of culture that require individuals to embrace narrowly essentialized identifications that have significant—and often negative—political consequences. In other words, multiculturalism demands cultural identities, “effectively *displacing* the political-economic determinants of the socio-cultural identities in question onto essentially racial and ethnic signifiers” (Goonewardena & Kipfer, 2005, p. 674, *italics original*). This manifests in how the term is utilized to deal with the problem of cultural difference in various contexts and institutions, from schools and museums to street festivals and community arts centers.

Despite the various critiques of the idea of multiculturalism as inherently colonialist, educators across North America still hang on to the concept as if for dear life. In part this could be strategic, as multiculturalism is official policy and to the extent that it remains so, engaging the concept might be politically expedient (Phillips, 2007). Yet, as Rita Wong suggests, “although it is necessary to support multiculturalism in the face of white supremacist attacks, it is also important to understand the inadequacies of Canadian multiculturalism,” particularly as a response to economic and political injustice (Wong, 2008, p. 159; see also Bannerji, 2000).

The failure of multiculturalism to address political injustice and its tendency to enforce narrow cultural identities requires a critical alternative, one that, as Butler suggests, rethinks the human by re-centering difference through a focus on the particularities of human interdependency rather than the generalities of human universality. Such a rethinking requires, on the one hand, a recognition of how socially constructed categories of race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, and social class have real and direct consequences on both the material and symbolic conditions that affect individuals and groups. On the other, it requires acknowledging that the consequences of such conditions are not always predictable and that particular circumstances and relationships enable or disallow particular responses and modes of being-with-others and acting in the world.

Alternative approaches that seek to press against the limits of multiculturalism have evolved, such as critical multiculturalism and, more recently, a turn towards cosmopolitanism within progressive educational scholarship. Drawing insight from critical race theory, critical multiculturalism locates processes of identification and identity construction within a social/legal framework that addresses the role that power dynamics play in what comes to be seen as culturally specific or relevant (Ladson-Billings & Brown, 2008). Acknowledging the socio-political context of multicultural education, such approaches seek to develop a more dynamic, processual concept of multiculturalism as “a purposely elastic collection of characteristics, rather than a fixed and static definition, that addresses the varying contexts of communities and the changing process of education” (Nieto, Bode, Kang, & Raible, 2008, p. 179; see also Nieto & Bode, 2012). Critical multicultural approaches recognize “that the school is itself a site for the production of difference and not simply a point of reception,” where multiple-cultures are brought into contact (McCarthy, Rezai-Rashti, & Teasley, 2009, p. 76). Despite this important shift, however, within such alternatives the concept of “diversity” continues to operate as a “proxy word for the way governmental systems address problems lying ‘deeper down’ in the

socius: race, class, gender, and their expression in the fundamental inequality which schooling produces within its very organization of knowledge” (p. 77).

In their critique of multicultural education, McCarthy, Rezai-Rashti, and Teasley argue that dispensing with diversity as a proxy requires “abandoning the auratic status of concepts such as ‘culture,’ ‘identity,’ and ‘ethnicity,’” and recognizing instead “the vital porosity that exists among all human groups in the twenty-first century” (2009, p. 93). As an alternative, they follow the lead of more recent calls for a “cosmopolitan ethos” as a response to the failures of multiculturalism (e.g. Hansen, 2008, 2010; Pinar, 2009; Popkewitz, 2007; Todd, 2009). Paradoxically, these calls have largely failed to recognize the ways in which cosmopolitanism itself reinstates coloniality through a reissuing of the descriptive statement of human/Man in the likeness of the European (white, male, upper class) subject. As Walter Mignolo points out, “cosmopolitan projects, albeit with significant differences, have been at work during both moments of modernity. The first was a religious project; the second was secular. Both, however, were linked to coloniality and to the emergence of the modern/colonial world” (2000, p. 722).

Mignolo (2000) advocates for a “critical cosmopolitanism” that replaces universality with what he calls “diversality,” as a way to centre the experience of the violent production of colonial difference. Yet, even Mignolo’s radical rethinking of cosmopolitanism retains the ghosts of the Enlightenment philosophy that informed its emergence in the work of Immanuel Kant (1795/1917; see also Harvey, 2009; Todd, 2009), in his case, through the insistence on the same rationalist definition of what counts as human (Bhimani & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2011). For Thomas Popkewitz, “if cosmopolitanism provides a way to think about the hope of the future, its cultural thesis generates principles that order the qualities and characteristics of people who threaten that future” (2009, p. 395), specifically, the irrational, parochial, emotive “other.” This is part of what Sharon Todd calls the “fault lines of cosmopolitanism, upon which rest a series of paradoxes, ambivalences, and tensions” about the possibility of a new cosmopolitan project (2009, p. 47). By retaining the individual as the unit of action, a rationalist conception of the human—albeit in a subjectivist fashion, and an avoidance of the question of “the other,” cosmopolitanism both reinstitutes the Enlightenment subject and, along the way, the very coloniality that yielded present conditions (Bhimani & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2011).

In light of these critiques, I turn to the concept of solidarity as a possible opening for rethinking educational strategies that might yield different approaches to decolonization. Unlike both multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism, the concept of solidarity has received little theoretical attention within the educational literature. This seems remarkable given how often the concept is used, particularly within the literatures discussed above, as an important aspect of any educational response to conditions of exploitation and colonization. For example, solidarity figures prominently in Paulo Freire’s (1970/2005) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, as a key aspect of how “oppressors” come into liberatory relationships with the “oppressed.” For Freire, solidarity entails the recognition that liberation is a collective project that requires dialogic participation and a critical consciousness of how both oppressor and oppressed are bound together through power relations.

Yet Freire, like most other authors within the critical tradition, leave solidarity largely under-theorized. In their introduction to *Critical Multiculturalism*, Barry Kanpol and Peter McLaren “recognize that there are good reasons why a radical politics of solidarity has been difficult to conceptualize” (1995, p. 4). Even Kanpol’s (1995) own essay, subtitled “a border pedagogy of solidarity,” seems to conflate solidarity with empathy, lacking any theorizing of just what solidarity entails, where it comes from, how it evolves, or why it matters. In part this lack of theorization is due to a taken-for-granted idealization of the concept of solidarity within educational scholarship. This “gap” presents an opportunity for considering the ways in which solidarity might provide new visions for critical and decolonizing approaches to education.

Solidarity

Solidarity is perhaps one of the most commonly used terms within the scholarship as well as the rhetoric of most social movements, whether political, educational, cultural, or of any other kind. It is also one of the most over-used and, as Sally Scholz (2008) argues, misused concepts. Kurt Bayertz notes that the concept of solidarity “shares the same fate as other concepts within ethical and political terminology, namely that of not being defined in a binding manner, and consequently of being used in very different and sometimes contradictory ways” (1999, p. 3). Because it is idealized, the general notion of solidarity gets mobilized for a wide range of projects without a consistent set of parameters. “The theoretical content of the solidarity concept,” says Bayertz, “seems to be overshadowed by its appellative function” (p. 4). Solidarity is often mobilized as an expedient way of expressing certain political ideals without any concern for articulating what precisely is meant by solidarity, often confounding multiple meanings. This is true whether the term is being used within or against the political and social framework inherited through European colonization. Indeed, a decolonizing “solidarity”—by mobilizing the term itself—carries within it the histories and complexities of how the term has evolved from its original Latin etymology through its uses in other colonial languages.

In general terms, solidarity refers to particular types of social relations between individuals as well as groups. As such, solidarity is used in reference to a vast range of social phenomena, from social cohesion to social movements, from political to civic organization, from religious duty to racial obligation. Scholz argues that across all of these instances, solidarity always implies some form of positive moral obligation, and therefore “the different forms or species of solidarity can be differentiated according to their varying moral priorities and constituent relations” (2008, p. 19). While solidarity always has an idealized referent, how that referent hinges on the particular characteristics of a group of individuals varies with regards to differences and similarities. Most of the time, solidarity hinges on similarities in characteristics, political interests, social needs, or moral obligations. Most relevant to projects of decolonization, yet more rare and complicated to theorize, is a conception of solidarity that hinges on radical differences and that insists on relationships of incommensurable interdependency, as I will discuss in the next section.

At the heart of Bayertz's critique of the term is the tension between whether solidarity is a "factual predicate" that *describes* particular aspects of human social and/or political interaction, or a "metaphysical determination" that *prescribes* what those interactions could or should entail:

"Solidarity" is now comprehended as a mutual attachment between individuals, encompassing two levels: a *factual* level of actual common ground between the individuals and a *normative* level of mutual obligations to aid each other, as and when should be necessary (1999, p. 2, italics original).

For Bayertz, the two aims of the concept are intimately related, as those who use the concept of solidarity in a descriptive mode do so in search of patterns that might yield prescriptive norms in order to address social or political problems. This is true regardless of the political context within which the concept is being mobilized.

Whether descriptively or prescriptively, solidarity can refer to social relations at different levels of abstraction, from the universalist to the interpersonal, including social, civic, and political types of solidarity. Bayertz (1999) proposes four different uses of the term in relationship to morality (human solidarity), society (social solidarity), liberation (political solidarity), and the welfare state (civic solidarity). Bayertz astutely demonstrates both the premises as well as the limitations of these four uses of the term. He argues, for instance, that human solidarity is based on an idealized human moral community that does not properly account for "anti-solidary feelings and actions" between humans (p. 7). Civic solidarity, as a characteristic of the welfare state, while based on the moral principle of shared responsibility for collective wellbeing, also operates through a form of institutionalized coercion. What Bayertz's analysis reveals are the ways in which notions of solidarity are caught within conceptions of humanity, citizenship, social belonging, and moral obligation. These are the same concepts around which colonization and other dynamics of oppression also operate, pointing to how solidarity always operates in tension with logics of domination.

The concept of solidarity in relationship to a sense of both mutual and moral responsibility has theological roots that can be mapped on to most world religions. Every major world religion places great importance on some idea that entails responsibility to others, particularly others who are seen as disadvantaged or in some way deprived.ⁱ Solidarity is also linked to the teachings of The Golden Rule, or the "ethic of reciprocity," which is also expressed in many of the world religions. As it evolved in Europe during the 18th and 19th century, solidarity is intimately linked to Christianity, and the concept of *caritas*, in particular (Bayertz, 1999; Scholz, 2008; Stjernø, 2005).ⁱⁱ This is important because it implicates notions of solidarity as part of the justification for religious conversion as a central strategy for colonization.ⁱⁱⁱ Michael Hoelzl argues, in fact, that a central challenge for critical social science in making sense of solidarity is that it "cannot be fully explained without considering its implied theological dimension" (2005, p. 46). This is particularly true in the case of asymmetrical acts of solidarity, which "challenge a theory based on the normativity of reciprocal forms of recognition" (p. 49),

as is the case in theories of social cohesion that are embedded within the evolution of the nation-state.

The impetus behind the search for norms to ensure social cohesion dates back to the work of 14th century Islamic social scientist, Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406) and his concept of *asabiyyah* (Ibn Khaldūn, 2005).^{iv} It evolved through the work of 19th century European sociologists like August Comte, Ferdinand Tönnies, and Emile Durkheim in an attempt to define the patterns that ensured social cohesion and solidarity among members of increasingly industrialized European society. Contemporary theorists of social solidarity are concerned with the question of whether social cohesion in modern nation-states is based on feelings of mutuality or on a “common benefit” agreement based on rational self-interest (Bayertz, 1999; Crow, 2002). At stake, of course, is the question of inclusion and who counts as a member of the social unit to whom solidary obligations are due. As it is concerned with norms and moral obligations, the concept of social solidarity does more for the enforcement of colonial orders than for decolonization. This is also true for normative conceptions of political solidarity.

Hoelzl (2005) describes the emergence of the concept of political solidarity in the context of the French Revolution. From the Latin adjective *in solidum*—for the whole—the word *solidarité* emerges first as a conservative reaction that sought to assert the authority of the monarch as the sovereign of a divine social order to which every individual owed a collective debt or solidary obligation.^v The meaning of *solidarité* was later liberalized through a turn away from the notion of a debt to God toward the responsibility to the self and to the other. Philosopher Pierre Leroux, father of French socialism, specifically uses the term *solidarité humaine* as “a *natural law of solidarity* which stipulated a right of existential protection by the community for every individual based not on emotional relations between individuals, but on the idea of equality” (Ottman, 2008, p. 39, italics original). Solidarity then becomes central to 19th century social movements, particularly to the evolution of the Paris Commune, the First International, and the emergence of an international workers movement.

It is in this context that a theorization of solidarity in the social and political sciences shifts from a focus on social cohesion, to a focus on group interests and political struggle. Particularly in the work of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1967), and later Max Weber (1946), solidarity emerges as a quality of relationships among particular groups of people with shared interests, rather than society as a whole. In this instance, solidarity “denotes the emotional cohesion between the members of these social movements and the mutual support they give each other in their battle for common goals” (Bayertz, 1999, p. 16). Crucial to political solidarity is the identification of an opponent against whom struggles must be waged in order to achieve particular goals. This means that it is both adversarial and exclusive, which reveals the moral dimensions that always accompany the claims to political solidarity. This also points to the fact that solidary relations can be mobilized for multifarious political goals, relative to the interests of particular groups, including extremists of every persuasion. As both Scholz (2008) and Bayertz (1999) argue, political solidarity also implies a risk or the willingness to make a sacrifice for the cause of justice. The extent of that sacrifice or what counts as reasonable risk is, of course,

subject to debate, and it points to the ways in which solidarity seems to always require what Hoelzl (2005) calls a “transcendent referent” through which, in the absence of God, determinations of sacrifice can be made.

Noting that solidarity remains a defused concept, used in relationship to a plethora of social problems and complex relations, Crow notes that the concept evolved in the 19th century during “a period of transformation in which traditional social arrangements were being recast” (2002, p. 27). He argues that divergent processes “like secularization, urbanization, democratization, the development of the modern state and the development of capitalism” informed the development of different ideas about solidarity (p. 28). I would add that both social and political solidarity evolved in the context of colonial expansion and also served to articulate the centrality of the imperial metropolis as the locale of both social cohesion as well as political struggle.

Steinar Stjernø (2005) points out that similar shifts today demand a careful engagement with the concept. “In an age of individualism,” he argues, “the idea of solidarity seems to be threatened and on the defensive. The triumph of capitalism and the expansion of markets and market ideology make collective arrangements and the ideas on which they are founded more precarious” (p. 2). Some social scientists have continued to examine the role of solidarity in contemporary society and have developed responses to increasing individualism and what some see as a fracturing of social relations that tends to undermine solidary relations (e.g. Bauman, 2008; Beck, 1997; Calhoun, 2006; Sennett, 1998). Crow (2002) argues that there is a great deal of disagreement regarding the extent to which contemporary social relations are characterized by a break with the past, along with prior modes of solidarity, or by continuity with the past, along with a reassertion of prior solidary bonds.

The potential of solidarity as a decolonizing response to present conditions, however, does not reside in trying to figure out whether and how social groups organize in order to protect the interests of their members. In fact, while it is crucial to acknowledge the genealogy briefly described above, understanding solidarity in relationship to social cohesion or as a source of collective action for groups in competition with each other has the effect of reissuing the colonizing logics of European social sciences, both classic and contemporary. A decolonizing pedagogy of solidarity must shift the focus away from either explaining or enhancing existing social arrangements, seeking instead to challenge such arrangements and their implied colonial logic. In particular, solidarity in relationship to decolonization is about challenging the very idea of what it means to be human, and by extension, the logics of inclusion and exclusion that enforce social boundaries, including notions of social, political, and civic solidarity. It is about imagining human relations that are premised on the relationship between difference and interdependency, rather than similarity and a rational calculation of self-interests.

This does not mean that prior theorizing of solidarity is not useful; on the contrary. While diffuse, solidarity does not accept just any and all definitions, and the task of defining what we mean by a decolonizing solidarity necessitates a consideration of prior examinations and of the many questions that it raises about what precisely solidarity entails. Does solidarity require,

while also challenging, inherited political and social categories? Does solidarity require similarity, shared interests, or a common destiny, or can it work in a context committed to an incommensurable interdependency? Does solidarity imply a hierarchical relationship between those in solidarity or against those that are the target of the solidary activity? Does solidarity depend on a particular morality, or can solidarity exist in the context to differing, perhaps even opposing, moral claims?

While different ways of understanding solidarity suggest different answers to these questions, there are at least three things that every expression of the concept shares. First, solidarity always implies a relationship among individuals or groups, whether as a way to understand what binds people together or what brings them together for civic or political action. Second, solidarity always implies an obligation, or a sense of duty regarding what is just or equitable, whether it is construed in relationship to some notion of human rights or a social contract, or to commitments to struggles against particular forms of oppression. Third, solidarity always implies a set of actions or duties between those in the solidary relationship, from the disposition to treat others as one would like to be treated, to the kind of life sacrifice that Hoelzl (2005) theorizes as the limit case of asymmetrical solidarity. Based on these three observations, I want to propose a way of thinking about solidarity specifically in relationship to anti-oppressive education and projects of decolonization that take seriously the conditions and implications of the present moment. Through the pedagogy of solidarity, I seek to reimagine the conditions for ethical encounters with others that challenge present conditions of colonization and inequality.

Because my focus here is on pedagogy as a form of politics, I draw primarily on the work of scholars who have theorized various forms of political solidarity, particularly the work of feminist scholars like Audre Lorde (1984), Jodi Dean (1996), Iris Marion Young (2002), Chela Sandoval (2000), Sara Ahmed (2000), and Chandra Mohanty (2003). These scholars have dedicated many pages to rethinking solidarity and proposing ways in which it opens the door for imagining human relations differently. In *Feminism without Borders*, for instance, Chandra Mohanty describes solidarity “as the basis for relationships among diverse communities [in which] diversity and difference are central values” (2003, p. 7). She invites a re-envisioning of feminist solidarity as constituting “the most principled way to cross borders—to decolonize knowledge and practice anticapitalist critique” (p. 7). It is through the work of these scholars, along with others who have theorized decolonization and anti-oppressive education, that I offer the three *modes* of the “pedagogy of solidarity” that follow.

Three modes for a pedagogy of solidarity

Before proceeding, it is important to clarify the move to pedagogy and to briefly articulate the parameters by which I am mobilizing the term here. In contrast to the term curriculum, which focuses on the relationship between the individual and knowledge/knowing, pedagogy highlights both the relational and the goal-directed character of all educational projects; pedagogy “is inherently directive and must always be transformative” (Macedo, 2005, p. 25). Furthermore, an

Indigenous critique of curriculum highlights the ways in which the curricular imperative to “include” always has the effects of both enclosing Indigenous knowledge (Richardson, 2011), and replacing Indigenous bodies (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, under review). Therefore, the pedagogy of solidarity articulated here carries an unapologetic commitment to anti-racist and decolonizing aims.

Curriculum, like cosmopolitanism, is directed toward the self; it is about what the individual should know, be able to do, or about understanding individual experiences and fomenting an individual orientation *toward* difference. Instead, like solidarity, pedagogy is directed toward the relational and highlights the process by which we are made by others *through* and *into* difference. Pedagogy takes place in an encounter between subjects, who are also made—and therefore transformed—in and through the encounter as subjects. Pedagogy thus hinges on a turn toward ethics, as it enacts the “violence which accompanies the very constitution of subjectivity” (Todd, 2001, p. 431).

This ethical turn understands the pedagogical encounter as a process through which both the teacher and the learner are transformed, into which they both bring, and from which they both take, more than they contain (Todd, 2001). Such an ethical turn in pedagogy underscores the unpredictability of the encounter and of the coercion inherent in the process of “learning to become.” For Sharon Todd,

Teachers, as the vehicles through which the pedagogical demand for “learning to become” is made real for students, can not escape their role—they require students to make symbolic attachments and meaning out of the curriculum they present, and in doing so can not escape a certain degree of coercion. ... it is precisely because violence is inherent to “learning to become” and because teachers and students are continually vulnerable to each other in the face of this violence, that the question of non-violence can even be raised. (2001, pp. 438-439)

The coercion in the process of “learning to become” is made all the more violent when the task is to challenge—to transform—the subjectivities inherited from, and continually produced by, ongoing processes of colonization. The kind of “difficult inheritance” that a pedagogy committed to decolonization and anti-racism must surface “is bound up with the ethical problem of learning how to imaginatively account for the forms of life it leaves in ruins” (Tarc, 2011, p. 16).

To this task, the pedagogy of solidarity brings a commitment to three modes of solidary work that are intertwined into its fabric, each of which can be described as an aspect or a type of solidarity: relational, transitive, and creative.

Relational solidarity

If all conceptions of solidarity imply a relationship and pedagogy is always relational, it might seem overly redundant to call the pedagogy of solidarity relational; the redundancy is deliberate. To speak of the pedagogy of solidarity as relational is to make a deliberate commitment to a relational stance. As Jody Dean (1996) argues, such a deliberate “commitment to reciprocity

reminds us that solidarity in postmodern conditions has to be *achieved*” (p. 46, italics added). Unlike forms of solidarity that appear to emerge from the “nature” of a relationship, whether familiar or communal, Dean (1996) proposes the more abstract conception of “reflective” solidarity in order to highlight a deliberate commitment.^{vi} To think of the pedagogy of solidarity as relational is, first, to acknowledge being as co-presence, by deliberately taking as a point of departure that individual subjects do not *enter* into relationships, but rather subjects are *made* in and through relationships.

The apparent separation or distance from another is where Jean-Luc Nancy has located the illusion of individuality that pervades the modern subject. We are not who or what we think we are outside of relationships, and it is in these relationships that we are made as subjects; there is no “I” outside of “we” and there is no “we” without a “they.” Nancy (2000) develops this idea in his essay “Being Singular Plural,” in which he underscores, first, that being is always a “being-with” and that there is no existence outside of a co-existence. But what is most compelling about Nancy’s argument, and which he also develops in his essay “The Inoperative Community” (1991), is that the collective implied in “being” is never an already defined entity with stable markers of any sort. Rather, our collective being is also a being in relationship to another, with boundaries that are themselves part and parcel of being and that are constantly negotiated, redefined, extended, and encroached. Nancy provides a starting point for a conception of the human that is based, not on salvation from sin (theological) or on individual reason (rational), but on interdependency (relational).^{vii}

Taking the notion of being-with as a point of departure, the question then becomes how to have relationships that are based on a solidary commitment to others, with and through whom the I is constituted, and to changing the economic conditions and the symbolic orders through which both self and other are constituted as such. This is not so much about coming to “know” the other, since the other is, according to Levinas, “infinitely unknowable,” but about attending to the conditions of possibility that produce the encounter between self and other (Todd, 2001). For Sara Ahmed this requires being alert to the conditions of the encounter that “might affect *where we might yet be going*” (2000, p. 145, italics original):

To describe, not the other, but the mode of encounter in which I am faced with an other, is hence not to hold the other in place, or to turn her into a theme, concept or thing. Rather, it is to account for the conditions of possibility of being faced by her in such a way that she ceases to be fully present in this very moment of the face to face, a non-present-ness which, at one and the same time, opens out the possibility of facing something other than this other, of something that may surprise the one who faces, and the one who is faced (the not yet and the elsewhere). (p. 145)

To think of solidarity relationally is to ask the question: how am I being made by others? What are the consequences of my being on others? What kinds of sacrifices are implied in the mythology of myself as being and my insistence in my individual freedom? This is ultimately about examining the particular arrangements that enable subjectivities to emerge and be

constituted as individual experiences. This way of questioning “being” brings to the center material conditions and highlights inequality as the basis of present being, rather than as an accident of present conditions. It also highlights the “double-bind” of both acknowledging while at the same time undermining the very constructions of difference that make relationships, and thus the subject, intelligible (see Spivak, 1999). To confront being in this way means to ask how is this mythology of me the result of unequal circumstances and injustice; it is fundamentally, at once, about the politics of identity as well as the politics of imagining a future.

In her book *Inclusion and Democracy*, Iris Marion Young compellingly argues for a differentiated solidarity that “notifies and affirms that locally and culturally differentiated groups dwell together in a wider region whose structural and environmental conditions affect them all, and where action and interaction often have distributive consequences that tend to benefit some over others” (2002, p. 197). For Young, the task of politics is to address structural inequality in order to ensure full participation by those who are differently positioned in society. Young embraces the politics of difference, rejecting the claim that these constitute a weakening of deliberative democracy and a commitment to the common good. Yet, for Young, not all differences count, and only those that are the outcome of injustice and structural inequality should be brought to bear in coming to a judgement about what is fair. Young maintains that a process of rational deliberation should differentiate between “parochial interests” and politically significant social differences.

What Young cannot reconcile is that for those whom structural inequality has positioned as “different,” the distinction between the parochial and the political is tangled in the messy knot between what Linda Alcoff (2000) calls their “public identity” (what Young might recognize as social difference) and their subjectivity, or “my own sense of my self” (what Young might dismiss as parochial). Young commits the error that Alcoff ascribes to Western common sense of thinking “that we have more individual control over our subjectivity than we have over our public identity” (2000, p. 336). This error is the outcome of Young’s implicit idealized subject, for whom public identity and subjectivity are not at significant odds, and who can presumably enter the deliberative space freed from parochial interest and ready to engage in reasoned argument.

Rather than the idealized subject, a relational solidarity committed to decolonization takes the experience of colonization and the racialized other as a point of departure. It is the space where the subaltern *can* speak, as it begins from W.E.B. DuBois’s (1961) “double-consciousness”; from Gayatri Spivak’s (1999) “double-bind”; from what Frantz Fanon called the “corporeal malediction,” the disequilibrium of becoming aware of one’s body “in a triple person,” imprisoned in the white man’s gaze (1967, p. 84):

What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood? But I did not want this revision, this thematization. All I wanted was to be a man among other men. I wanted to come lithe and young into a world that was ours and to help to build it together. (p. 85)

Transitive solidarity

Solidarizarse. More common in romance languages than in English, the verb form of solidarity—to *solidarize with*—is a transitive verb. Freire suggests as much when he defines solidarity as an act of entering into a solidary relation with others:

Solidarity requires that one enter into the situation of those with whom one is solidary; it is a radical posture... true solidarity with the oppressed means fighting at their side to transform the objective reality which has made them these “beings for another.” (1970, p. 49)

Indeed, part of what stands solidarity apart from other strategies of coalition and ways of conceptualizing human relations more generally is that it points directly to an active orientation toward others that, in its very transitivity, rejects a static position and embraces contingency. In this sense, it is crucial to understand the pedagogy of solidarity as a term of engagement—as a *praxis*.

The pedagogy of solidarity is not simply about entering into a state of solidarity—to *be in solidarity*—which might suggest feelings towards, but about actions taken in relationship to someone. More importantly, perhaps, the pedagogy of solidarity is about an action that also affects or modifies the one who acts—to *solidarize oneself with*. It is the middle voice, in which the action of the verb is not only directed to another, but also modifies the subject that takes the action (Sandoval, 2000). *Solidarizarse* is about a performance that transforms both performer and audience and thus has the potential to subvert language and its ideological functions (Butler, 1997). In this sense, a pedagogy of solidarity opposes common expressions of solidarity that largely work to exculpate and exonerate or to ignore complicity on ongoing colonization. It rejects the kind of pseudo-solidarity of “celebrity humanitarianism” that becomes what Lilie Chouliaraki describes as “a practice of voyeuristic altruism [that] reproduces the moral distance between ‘us’ and ‘them’” (2011, p. 366). Instead, the transitivity of the pedagogy of solidarity involves what Chela Sandoval calls a differential mode of consciousness that self-consciously deploys—and transforms—subjectivity:

Deploying an action that re-creates the agent even as the agent is creating the action—in an ongoing, chiasmic loop of transformation. The differential activist is thus made by the ideological intervention that she is also making: the only predictable final outcome is transformation itself. (2000, p. 157)

Because it permanently seeks transformation, transitive solidarity is transient and, by definition, contingent. Transitive solidarity opposes a conception of solidarity based on some sort of core human essence, which fails from the beginning because it excludes by default and operates on a rejection of difference *a priori* of all encounters (Rorty, 1989). “What counts as being a decent human being,” says Rorty, is “a matter of transient consensus about what attitudes are normal

and what practices are just or unjust” (p. 189). Rorty argues that contingency is a necessary condition for retaining a sense of solidarity.

At the same time, transitivity opposes the kind of “ironic solidarity” based on Rorty’s (1989) conception of contingency, in which solidarity becomes “a matter of self-empowerment” through which the idealized Western subject improves *his* humanity at the expense of the suffering of others through the practice of “deferred complicity” (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2009; Razack, 1998). The questions that transitivity suggests have to do with our willingness to act in the world, to use Stuart Halls’s (1986) famous words, “without guarantees.” What unimagined and unimaginable outcomes might become available if we were willing to risk the possibility that we simply do not know where we are going? Or even worse, that this mythology of me, on which my sense of self relies, is exposed for what it is—a mythology—and replaced by some other necessary and contingent mythology? We invest so much in the outcomes we imagine from our actions, that this seems to place us in a precarious position as presumed agents.

The realization that all being is contingent brings about a certain anxiety that has become paralyzing, particularly for those of us in the academy who have so much vested on the various mythologies of who we are and what we claim to do. I am so afraid to acknowledge the privileges presumed in my particular mythology that I often fool myself into thinking that my work makes a difference, even when it is utterly clear that it does not. Or I seek to counterbalance those privileges with a parallel mythology of innocence that makes me feel better about myself, even as my ability to mobilize that narrative presumes a particular kind of (unequally distributed and sometimes precarious) academic privilege.

But this realization might lead to a gross paralysis that will not lead to social change. This is the reason why transitive solidarity insists on praxis; to think of solidarity as a transitive verb means to underscore that it demands that we act in the world. And of course, this acting in the world presumes the notion of praxis as developed by Freire (1970), an acting in the world that is informed by thinking about the world and by reflecting on action and, of course, reflecting as action. Here I want to return to Sandoval (2000) because she elaborates a particular kind of acting in the world based on the notion of differential consciousness. Sandoval also offers her ideas as a response to paralysis, specifically the kind of paralysis that emerges from Fredric Jameson’s (1984) critique of the postmodern, as a sort of no-exits dead-end of modernism.

For Sandoval, differential social movements—like the pedagogy of solidarity presented here—involve a kind of social praxis that intervenes in the ideological apparatus through which power is deployed. Acting with and against the very symbolic arrangements that power avails, such as “identities” and “cultures,” “practitioners can self-consciously replace themselves within the circle of moral conceptions defining our current social horizons, for its activity undoes the conscience—the incarnation of the law—thus renewing consciousness itself” (2000, p. 178).

This idea of solidarity as praxis, or more precisely of solidarity as a manifestation of differential consciousness, raises further questions. How do we ever really know whether and how our actions lead to any kind of reconfiguration of ideas or restructuring of inequality? How would we know the difference? What kinds of new mythologies of the self are lurking behind

what we decide to do and how we decide to proceed in the world? Am I ever really willing to act in a way that might fizzle my mythology of me? “What must be remembered,” Sandoval insists, “is that the differential resides in the place where meaning escapes any final anchor point, slipping away to surprise or snuggle inside power’s mobile contours—it is part and parcel of the undefinable meaning that constantly escapes every analysis” (2000, p. 179).

Creative solidarity

Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. The farthest external horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives. Audre Lorde (1984, p. 37)

Like Sandoval’s differential consciousness, the pedagogy of solidarity “is linked to whatever is not expressible through words. It is accessed through poetic modes of expression: gestures, music, images, sounds, words, that plummet or rise through signification to find some void—some no-place—to claim their due” (2000, p. 149). This is especially important when we attempt to rethink encounters with others in ways that rearrange the hierarchical symbolic orders that produce the very differences that make those encounters legible. This involves “creatively” engaging with others in unexpected and perhaps even inopportune ways that might rearrange the symbolic content of human exchanges by mobilizing that which always exceeds the very terms of the encounter. It requires confronting “hegemony in the fibres of the self and in the hard practical substance of effective and continuing relationships” (Williams, 1977, p. 212).

The term “creative” carries its own conceptual complications, as it is typically framed within the bounds of a human subject who is presumed to be creative or to have the capacity for creativity. Perhaps because the conceptual history of “creativity” has been overwhelmingly located within psychology, and more recently social psychology, the concept retains ideas of individuality that rub against the premises of relational and transitive solidarity. Even the kind of interdisciplinary approach advocated by scholars who acknowledge the complex ways in which creativity is situated in social and cultural contexts retains a conception of the “creative individual” who enters into collective creative processes for the purposes of enhancing individual abilities (e.g. Sawyer & DeZutter, 2009; Sawyer, 2012). The same psychologized atomism evident in individualist versions of creativity pervades the socio-cultural approach, in which presumably rational (and of course, creative) individuals contribute their unique perspectives toward the improvement of the creative process.

Missing from such a view is a consideration of the larger context of struggles over meaning and how both symbolic and economic resources are enmeshed within and circulated through structural inequalities. Yet, as Paul Willis (1990; 1998) reminds us, it is through symbolic work and creativity that we both engage with the sense of collectivity that structures individuality and come to terms with both the material and symbolic constraints that structure the self. Willis’s concept of “grounded aesthetic” is premised on an intersubjective conception of creativity that is consistent with relational solidarity: “It is through knowing ‘the other’,

including recognizing the self as an other for some others, that a self or selves can be known at all” (1990, p. 12). Of course, not all others are also “the Other” or are constituted as “the stranger,” as Ahmed (2000) reminds us; here again it is crucial to centre the experiences of those who are not just other, but “Other” in how we come to understand creative solidarity. Willis is not naïve to such power dynamics, as most theorists of creativity tend to be, but he refuses to relinquish the possibility of new arrangements through symbolic play. “Memberships of race, class, gender, age and region are not only learned, they’re lived and experimented with. This is so even if only by pushing up against the oppressive limits of established order and power” (1990, p. 12).

If relational solidarity requires a different ontology and transitive solidarity, a new kind of praxis, creative solidarity must insist on a more complex and more accurate conception of culture than the one that informs multiculturalism and even cosmopolitanism. Rather than a site of coherence and unity, creative solidarity requires a view of culture as a site of action, change, and dissonance, rejecting the dominant view of culture as something inherent in who we are or something that we can claim to authentically own, with stable and fixed boundaries. Such a view of culture would necessarily abandon any notion that would imply that there are “multiple” cultures. Rather, like colonialism and modernity, there are multiple ways and spaces in which culture is produced, reproduced, and resisted, all implying different symbolic arrangements that are not distinctly separated from other arrangements, but are extensions and manifestation of larger social, economic, and political, as well as cultural, arrangements.

What I am proposing as central to creative solidarity is a kind of *post*-culturalism, not because we have outgrown culture as an idea or a concept, but because we insist in the idea of culture as always immanent. The term “post” is not an evocation that claims a move forward of some sort, but rather, following post-colonial theory, “post” invites a direct engagement with and critique of culture as an ever present and ever changing part of how we engage with each other across difference. I am not suggesting that we should abandon the concept of culture as something anthropologists made up so that they could have a role in colonial conquest, but rather that we engage the analysis of culture as something we do and something that is done to us through the various symbolic arrangements that organize human relations. Culture is the outcome of an encounter between subjects, creatively negotiating—and sometimes rearranging—the structural conditions that produce the encounter in the first place.

The pedagogy of solidarity is concerned with the conditions of possibility for ethical encounters that rearrange structural conditions, including both the symbolic and material dimensions that produce the encounter. Encounters with difference—and I would argue, following Ahmed (2000), that all encounters are encounters with difference that are always-already hierarchical—evolve through cultural practices on the basis of actual human relations and constrained by material arrangement that constrain but do not prescribe. Creative solidarity is concerned with the multiplicity of cultural practices that might evolve in such encounters, as a way of countering the versions of “culture” and “identity” that are imposed by the colonial project of modernity. The challenge for cultural workers lies in re-appropriating concepts like

“culture” and “identity,” “in ways that lead the reader’s gaze back to the social and economic injustices neglected and deflected” by present conditions (Wong, 2011, p. 159). Creative solidarity works to reveal new horizons, against which we might not only imagine, but also produce new ways of being together. Of course, as Rita Wong reminds us:

there are no guarantees that cultural representation does not repeat the violence that has already occurred. Yet in those cases where silence also seems to be an equally and perhaps even more unsatisfying complicity with—and perpetuation of—this violence, tactics of troubled visibility provide an ethical line of engagement that holds promise. (2011, p. 159)

This is the promise of creative solidarity; the possibility of new ways of making, of feeling, of creating, of loving: “while we suffer the old longings, battle the old warnings and fears of being silent and impotent and alone, while we taste new possibilities and strengths” (Lorde, 1984, p. 39).

Decolonization and the pedagogy of solidarity

Complex social, cultural, historical, geographic, and political dynamics have produced a world of intensified movement in which the lines between local and global are diffused, where indigenous/settler, colonizer/colonized, and oppressor/oppressed only *appear* to attenuate, while actually becoming enforced and reinscribed. This appearance “serves to occlude the brute reality that twenty-first-century America fosters internal colonies” (Grande, 2004, p. 5); it only masks the fact that some benefit more than others from the present situation (and also exonerates from guilt those who benefit). Such diffusions reflect the conditions that produce colonial encounters and the very “coloniality” of being (Wynter, 2003). This requires that we begin our analysis of present conditions, as Wynter notes:

with today’s empirical situation of the ongoing subjugation, marginalization, and displacement of the indigenous peoples. Such displacement is perpetuated not only by the whites of North America and be the mestizos of Latin America, but also by new waves of external immigrants of all races, cultures, religions, from all parts of the world—all in search for the higher standards of living not to be had in that 80 percent of the world that must make do with 20 percent of the world’s resources while our 20 percent dispose of 80 percent and is responsible besides for 75 percent of the earth’s pollution. (1995, p. 8)

In this age of disaster capitalism, in which the unfreedoms of liberal democracy are moving beyond subtext and hidden curriculum and becoming the explicit and unquestioned logic of a neoliberalism fuelled by the shock and fear of impending and rampant economic and ecological disaster (Klein, 2007), how might we proceed? What kinds of human relations might

we be able to pursue that might constitute forms of resistance to and perhaps healing from continued invasion and colonization?

The pedagogy of solidarity is premised on a profound faith in the imaginative capacities of human beings to transform the conditions—and thus the definitions—of their existence. Sylvia Wynter underscores this capacity when she notes that we “inscript and auto-institute ourselves as human through symbolic, representational processes that have, hitherto, included those mechanisms of occultation by means of which we have been able to make opaque to ourselves the fact that we so do” (2003, p. 328). This occultation has been necessary for the justification of genocide, slavery, and colonization, all processes that define the various genres of the human available today. It is this capacity to rethink the human that makes the project of decolonization viable, and as Sharon Todd argues, rethinking the human and human relations has always been an educational problem; “if we think that humanity actually comes into being at the point where we acknowledge the risk of its impossibility, then education can be reimagined as a site of response to human difference” (2009, p. 20).

Such a response requires a profound commitment to love, understood, in Sandoval’s terms, “as a hermeneutic, as a set of practices and procedures ... toward a differential mode of consciousness and its accompanying technologies of method and social movement” (2000, p. 140). These practices, as argued earlier, must take as the point of departure the particular context and the experiences of those who have suffered the most damaging consequences resulting from current conceptions of what it means to be human: the victims of genocide, slavery, and wars of conquest.^{viii} It is these very human acts that have produced the devastating conditions of displacement as well as the rich opportunities for new encounters between those positioned as “Others”; between *these* strangers and *those* strangers, both always constituted, yet never completely determined by the gaze of the human/Man, “dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes” (Fanon, 1967, p. 87).

In a sense, the encounter between Indigenous and diasporic communities in the context of the settler colonial state is both one of the thorniest as well as one of the most promising when it comes to thinking through the pedagogy of solidarity. It is in these encounters that projects of solidarity are often short-circuited by different experiences of oppression and different ideas about how to resist white supremacy. Within the logic of white supremacy, what emerges as reasonable solutions for the problems of some marginalized groups, compounds the oppressive conditions for others (Smith, 2006).

For instance, when diasporic communities on Turtle Island (North America) respond to conditions of displacement by generating countercultural narratives of place and belonging, they are in effect participating in the ongoing colonization of Indigenous land (Lawrence & Dua, 2005). By contrast, a primordial or autochthonous conception of Indigeneity largely ignores “the complex webs of interdependency that tie people to each other” (Sharma & Wright, 2008, p. 97). It ignores, for instance, the complex and ambivalent relationship that many Blacks and Latin@s have toward their Indigenous ancestry, which, as Zainab Amadahy writes, “never formed the core of their cultural identities, clearly a testament to the effectiveness of the genocide project

perpetrated in the Americas” (Amadahy & Lawrence, 2009, p. 107; see also Gaztambide-Fernández & Guerrero, 2010). In the context of settler colonial states like the United States and Canada, both Indigenous and people of colour are constituted as “Others”—as the strangers within—but not as the same kind of stranger. While the Indigenous “Other” represents the strangeness of the disappearing/disappeared state of nature, the brown/black diasporic “Other” represents the strangeness of immanent danger and the prospect of terror. Both are denied subjectivity, yet neither can claim innocence. Indeed, neither “may insist that the primacy of their own suffering and powerlessness is so unique and all-encompassing that it erases even the possibility of their maintaining relationships of oppression relative to another group” (Amadahy & Lawrence, 2009, p. 109). As Sherene Razack argues, none are exonerated and all “are implicated in the crisis of our times” (2004, p. 14). Or, as Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) put it, decolonization “implicates and unsettles everyone” (p. 7).

It is with this in mind that the pedagogy of solidarity must be taken, not as a solution, but as a mode through which to engage in decolonizing practices. This requires articulating decolonization, in Chandra Mohanty’s (2003) terms, as a “common interest” that unites racialized and Indigenous people across their differences in solidary struggle. While Mohanty describes the context of the politics of solidarity among women workers, the distinction she draws between common interests, on the one hand, and needs, desires, and choices, on the other, is useful here:^{ix} “The content of needs and desires from the point of view of interest remains open for subjective interpretation” (p. 162). This, as Mohanty points out, “sometimes militates against organizing on the basis of [a] common interest” (p. 163). This means that the three modes of the pedagogy of solidarity must begin from the premise that this process “is an uneasy, reserved, and unsettled matter that neither reconciles present grievances nor forecloses future conflict” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 3); solidarity, to paraphrase Lorenzo Veracini (2011), is not decolonization.

While committed in principle to the common interest of decolonization, the pedagogy of solidarity cannot determine a priori what kinds of claims are relevant to a given instance because it depends on the particularities and complexities of local desires and needs (see Tuck, 2009). In other words, because it is relational, the pedagogy of solidarity requires that we explore “the grounded realities that may help to clarify relations” (Amadahy & Lawrence, 2009, p. 106). This requires a turn to a different set of terms for engaging across differences that do not carry multiculturalism’s “vacant conciliatory language and the parade of ethnic difference” (Sehdev, 2011, p. 273), nor the Eurocentric individual rationalism of cosmopolitanism (Bhimani & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2011). The language of “treaty and treaty relationships,” for instance, provides “the basis of relationships and for non-Aboriginal belonging on this land” (Sehdev, 2011, p. 272). As Robinder Kaur Sehdev explains:

The turn to treaty is important also in terms of solidarity formation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people of colour because it presents the possibility to develop discursive spaces where we can begin to explore our relationship with one another within a settler and racist state. (2011, p. 272)

Of course, the language of treaty is also susceptible to colonization, and as Amadahy and Lawrence (2009) point out, treaties can be broken, can work to extend colonization, and sometimes are based on terms that might seem untenable under conditions of ongoing settler colonization (see [Veracini, 2011](#)). Still, as Sehdev suggests, we can “focus attention on decolonizing treaty” by turning from “an understanding of treaty as a historical artifact [toward] treaty as a process of *making and keeping* good relations.” “After all,” she notes, “treaty is the space where power is negotiated” (2011, p. 273).

A relational solidarity demands that we recognize the complex and sometimes contradictory personal histories that bring us together into treaty relations based on a commitment to decolonization. We must do so while avoiding claims to innocence on the basis of these histories and acknowledging the complicated ways in which we both participate in and resist processes of colonization. This requires recognizing and negotiating the double-bind of being made by, while also exceeding, colonized subjectivity. Indeed, it is the excess that opens, to use Fanon’s words, “the door of every consciousness” (1967, p. 181), and that lays the opportunity for a collective and creative reconstruction of our shared subjectivity. “It is through the effort to recapture the self and to scrutinize the self, it is through the lasting tension of their freedom that men [sic] will be able to create the ideal conditions of existence for a human world” (p. 181). This also requires the practice of transitive solidarity, of a commitment to actions that transform both sides of the solidary equation, to the “pedagogical and transformative dimension” of a commitment to local desires and needs (Mohanty, 2003, p. 162).

The pedagogy of solidarity requires a profound faith in the creative possibilities that become available when we recognize each other (and each “Other”) as we come together on the basis of a commitment to decolonization that, as Veracini suggests “must emphasize open-endedness. Reconciliation should be a practice and not a process” (2011, p. 9). As Sylvia Wynter, quoting Fanon, reminds us at the end of her momentous essay, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom”:

“The true leap,” Fanon wrote at the end of his *Black Skins, White Masks*, “consists in introducing invention into existence.” The buck stops with us. (2003, p. 331)

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Notes

ⁱ For instance: in Islam, “zakat” is one of the five pillars that form of basis of worship; in Judaism, “tzedakah” is considered a religious obligation; in Hinduism, “dana” is the third of the ten “Niyamas” or practices. All of these practices involve some form of obligation to others in lesser circumstances.

ⁱⁱ As Scholz (2008) notes, “Solidarity appears throughout Catholic Social Teaching, beginning in the mid-twentieth century, as one of the primary principles. It applies both to individuals and nations as an obligation to aid those in need, with special emphasis on full human development—educational, religious, and social as well as economic development” (p. 7). In his history of the concept, Steinar Stjernø (2005) notes that the Catholic and the Protestant

ideas of solidarity, “are founded upon the belief that man is created in the image of God and that each and every human being is equal in the eyes of God. Catholic social teaching, which is more explicit, emphasizes human interdependence and the family. Protestants, more often than not, mention the Christian duty to serve other human beings” (p. 88).

ⁱⁱⁱ Indeed, it was a sense of solidary obligation toward the Indigenous people of the Caribbean, based on the *possibility* of their conversion to Christianity, that led Bartolomé de las Casas to argue for their status as humans (Wynter, 2003).

^{iv} In *The Muqaddimah*, Khaldūn (2005) offers an analysis of the shared sense of cohesion among nomadic groups in Northern Africa. He observed the strong bonds, corresponding to the sense of kinship among blood relatives that characterized ties between persons who co-existed or engaged each other through daily activities. This analysis corresponds to what Emile Durkheim (1933) later called “mechanical solidarity,” as differentiated from the kinds of depersonalized and individualized forms of social cohesion characteristic of industrialized society that he termed “organic solidarity.” For Durkheim, the increasing differentiation and individuation of roles within the division of labour in modern society produced a mode of social cohesion that was less dependent on kinship and social similarity and more on the function of differentiated roles.

^v According to Ottman, “originally, solidarity was a purely legal concept. In Roman Civil law *obligatio in solidum* referred to the joint liability of multiple creditors or debtors” (2008, p. 38).

^{vi} Dean (1996) draws a distinction between reflective solidarity and what she calls “affectional” (based on kinship and familiar ties) and “conventional” (based on shared interests and concerns) solidarities.

^{vii} Although he does not take account of the land or of nature, it is worth noting that Nancy’s views are consistent with Indigenous frameworks in which, as Amadahy and Lawrence (2009) explain:

individuals do not and could not exist outside of community or the land. Our past, present, and future relationships define who we are and determine what roles we play as well as responsibilities we have to the community and to the land that sustains it. Likewise, who we are and what we do as individuals impacts that broad sense of community. (p. 117)

^{viii} Of course, this includes “queer” subjects as well as those who are “disabled” by current social arrangements and conceptions of the human, particularly as categories such as “queer” and “disabled” intersect with other markers of difference (see Erevelles, 2011; Smith, 2010).

^{ix} Mohanty credits Anne Jónasdóttir (1988) with this distinction and offers the following quote from her work:

Understood historically, and seen as emerging from people’s lived experiences, interests about basic processes of social life are divided systematically between group of people in so far as their living conditions are systematically different. Thus, historically and socially defined, interests can be characterized as “objective” (Quoted in Mohanty, 2003, p. 162).