



Realigning Funds of Identity with struggle against capital: the contradictory unity of use and exchange value in cultural fields

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Abstract

The Funds of Knowledge (FOK) and Funds of Identity (FOI) approaches have demonstrated potential in engaging school curricula with the lived experiences of disadvantaged communities. However, both approaches are not without critique. Our own previous work (drawing on Bourdieu) highlights how FOK /FOI methodologies can result in surfacing exchange value (capital) in the home in ways that re-position some students' access to the school curriculum, while leaving hegemonic practices of schooling unchallenged. In this paper, we propose a new theorization of funds as a *cultural commodity* of 'knowing-in-practice'. Following Marx, this commodity is seen as a dialectical unity of use and exchange value - a relation that implies development arising through internal contradictions. We exemplify this empirically through an analysis of the Mexican American Studies (MAS) program. We illustrate how MAS harnessed students' lived experience of oppression into a commodity through a critical curriculum which questions the system (use value) whilst offering exchange value through standardized assessment. This contradictory relation can imply development - for students and the system - if socio-material forces engage favorably. Viewing 'funds' as a cultural commodity helps to understand and predict developments arising in practice, and may help identify practical action that exploits such contradictions.

Key Words: Funds of Knowledge, Funds of Identity, cultural commodity, cultural capital, pedagogy, curriculum, Mexican American Studies

For Peer Review Only

Introduction

In this paper we are concerned with overcoming the disconnection of the school curriculum from the everyday lived experiences of students - referred to by Engeström (1991) as the encapsulation of school learning. When schools 'encapsulate' learning, the curriculum (along with its assessment and accreditation) becomes the object of learning activity rather than an instrument for understanding the world, and so the quality of what is learnt is impoverished. This issue is particularly pertinent when we consider questions of *who* the curriculum is for? And *whose* interests it serves? Indeed, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) go further to suggest the school curriculum enacts symbolic violence on the oppressed through its *cultural arbitrary* - it is disconnected from students' real lives, but functional in offering distinction and *cultural capital* to the privileged few who can engage successfully. In this sense, the encapsulation of school learning is functional for privilege and for capital in that it excludes those who do not hold dominant class positions (i.e. those from poor or oppressed communities) within the educational field.

In this paper, we will consider the Funds of Knowledge (FOK) and Funds of Identity (FOI) response to the problem of encapsulation and oppression. Both have sought to identify knowledge, competences and identity practices in the home and community as a resource for developing curriculum projects in schools (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992; Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). In doing so, they challenge the arbitrary disconnection between the academic knowledge of the school curriculum and the 'everyday' knowledge and practices students experience beyond the school gates. In this paper we argue for a new theorization of

knowledge and identity practices as commodified, and propose a unit of analysis which we call a *cultural commodity*. According to Blunden (2009), the unit of analysis in Marx refers to the smallest discrete instance of a relation or unity that is dynamic and can give insight into its development. Following Marx's economic analysis of the commodity, we outline a cultural commodity as the unit possessing the unity of use and exchange value as its quality in the processes of cultural production, exchange, and consumption. Therefore, whilst Bourdieu transported the Marxian concept of capital from political economy into cultural fields, we hereby transpose the Marxian concept of commodity (and its relation to capital) into the cultural field (in this case the educational field). Thus, rather than merely focusing on the exchange value or capital that knowledge, knowing, and identities offer, we suggest that defining knowledge and identities as cultural commodities allows us to recognize that they also have use value in that they may involve knowing (and knowledgeable practices and competences) for public good and the fulfilment of human needs. This aligns with Zipin (2015) who argues that curricula for social justice must work with both use-valued cultural knowledge and knowledge that holds exchange value. We extend this by illustrating how the dialectical relation between use and exchange value, inherent in the cultural commodity, offers the tools to explain change and development that can arise in learning and knowing. Thus, it is the contradictory, dialectical unity of *cultural use value* and *cultural exchange value* in a cultural commodity that provides a tool of analysis of educational development of the individual, of collectives, and of society (Engeström, 1987). We will use the concept of cultural commodity to critically examine FOK and FOI in theory, and also empirically in analysis of the Mexican American Studies (MAS) program, a case inspired by the FOK approach, and one that clearly engages with the identity work of an oppressed group.

We will conclude with an evaluation of this theoretical development for understanding the struggle of the oppressed for their rights and against the educational establishment.

Central to our argument here is the relation between FOK and FOI in framing the home – school relationship. Although we highlight the methodological distinction between the two approaches below to demonstrate how a Bourdieusian critique can be applied to both, our substantive position follows Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner and Cain (1998) to argue that ‘in practice’ knowledge and identities are not distinct - they are, in fact, combined as acts of knowing and identifying which occur simultaneously as one engages in activity. Every act is not only agentic in transforming the object of activity (e.g. knowledge) but also in expressing and transforming the subject (‘self authoring’ according to Holland et al. (1998)). The outcome of the kinds of teaching-learning activity we see reported in the FOK and FOI literature is then not only the development of new knowledge but also, to the extent that it engages self-authoring, the development of a ‘learner identity.’

Funds of Knowledge: a Bourdieusian critique

The FOK approach, originally developed by Moll and colleagues working with Latinx immigrant communities and schools (Moll et al. 1992) has sought to emphasize the rich resources children experience in home or community environments. In order to challenge the normative assumption that children from such communities are in some way *deficient*, it presents home activities and their associated knowledge as a resource for developing a school curriculum orientated towards social justice embedded in complex and rich social networks. Here the object of learning is shifted to focus on knowledge embedded in students’ lives with the premise being that building a

curriculum on these funds will establish more meaningful connections (or networks of exchange) between the school curriculum and everyday experience.

Williams (2016) offers a critique, drawing on Bourdieu, which illustrates how the FOK approach has been used to refer to the surfacing of capital in the home and community as a means to re-position the learner with access to the school. Capital here refers to cultural capital (cultural goods and resources including embodied dispositions which hold value in a given field) and in education, capital includes qualifications, and knowledge, competences, and an academic identity adjusted to accreditation practices. Moll et al. (1992) describe, for instance, how a group of teacher-researchers discovered one Mexican family's educational values and high aspirations for their children, which were previously unrecognized by the school. In examples such as this the identification of FOK may enable the redistribution of capital by making visible home resources and by providing the machinery to scaffold the movement of such capital from the home into the educational field, as a means to access educational success and capital growth. In these circumstances, FOK can be framed as offering students the capital required for private, individual gain – it mediates access to positions in the educational field that allow such students to dominate those in lesser positions that require less capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). However, as noted in Williams (2016), this does not necessarily challenge the process of capital exchange, but instead serves to strengthen its orthodoxy as 'natural' amid false claims of being equitable.

Zipin, Sellar and Hattam (2012) contrast the exchange value associated with capital with *knowledge that has uses*:

knowledge that has uses for social life in those settings - not abstracted from living social use by a logic of accumulation of knowledge that, due to its scarcity, has ‘market-exchange value’ which can be parlayed by either individual ‘entrepreneurs of the self’ or networked collectives of ‘social capitalists.’ (Zipin et al, 2012, p. 181)

Furthermore, Zipin (2009) notes the difficulty of developing a curriculum based on the ‘use-value’ of FOK and anticipates the challenges presented by institutions whose function is to facilitate the exchange of capital. He critiques the tendency of teachers and researchers to gravitate to what he terms *light FoK* or rather positive experiences and to omit the more difficult side of living in disadvantaged or poor communities. Such negative forms of FOK are conceptualized as knowledge which may be painful or challenging (e.g. experiences of bullying, poverty, incarceration, mental ill-health, exploitation) and which Zipin (2009) argues are significant if we wish to fully recognize how poverty and class position permeate the ‘habitus’ and FoK of children.

The use of the FOK approach to surface capital in the home has been associated with ‘domesticated’ adaptations of Vygotsky’s work (Williams, Ferholt, Jornet, Nardi and Vadeboncoeur, 2018). This critique questions what is evidenced as change or transformation in curriculum work by pointing out that whilst many projects indicate change in a given activity system this does not transform the structural relations that maintain oppression. Both Williams (2016) and Zipin (2009, 2015) offer analyses that suggest the need to re-situate FOK in relation to the objective relations of oppression and to acknowledge the obligation on schools (and researchers) to promote the accumulation of private or individual capital afforded to dominant positions in the educational field. We suggest here that this does not need to be the whole story –

our forthcoming analysis will show that through reconceptualising FOK as a cultural commodity, such work can also be used to mobilize collective power for public good whereby change not only becomes possible but necessary.

Funds of Identity: Concerns Regarding the Shift in Methodology

The more recent methodological shift to Funds of Identity (FOI) can also be critiqued from a Bourdieusian, cultural capital perspective since again there is the risk of teacher-researchers working with students to merely surface capital for the school curriculum in ways that do not counter its logic in reproducing unequal relations of power. Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014) define FOI as moments where FOK are used to make an identity for oneself, i.e. an identification as a certain kind of person:

‘funds of knowledge become funds of identity when people actively internalize family and community resources to make meaning and to describe themselves (Esteban & Moll, 2014, p. 33).

This links to our earlier argument that teaching-learning is about identity development as much as knowledge creation since the two are interwoven. The FOI approach emphasizes the subjective significance of a situation for the student as they engage with FOK. This entails a methodological shift from the original FOK approach since the emphasis on what has subjective significance requires reflective activities provoked by some stimulus or representation of students’ everyday lives (e.g. significant circles). This shift also means that data generation of funds can take place in the school setting, which contrasts with the ethnographic work of the

original FOK approach where researcher-teachers visited their students' homes and communities.

A potential challenge to the FOI methodology here from a capital perspective is the location of reflective activities in school settings. In one example, using an identity drawing method, Esteban-Guitart & Moll (2014) describe how one student drew themselves with their university binder in order to express their subjectivity as a student of psychology. Clearly, this is an example of the explicit (re)valuing of academic capital (university status) by the student, mediated by the identity drawing technique - one which, we argue, can be understood in terms of how the activity enacts the relation of habitus to field. Arguably, students are more likely to evoke certain funds (and subjectivities) over others as they address the teacher-researcher in the school context - with their interests and subjectivities conditioned by the discourses available within that space. The recontextualization process at work when students describe their FOI for the teacher-researcher adds a layer of discourse laden with ideologies as the student articulates their voice to address the school culture and teacher-researcher audience. In a recent project, we adapted the method of 'significant circles' in order to generate data with younger children (aged 5 to 6 years old) and their families about their use of what we called 'everyday mathematics' (reported in Black, Williams, Choudry, Pickard-Smith and Ryan, 2018). We called this activity a 'significant line' task and it involved children placing photographs they had taken of their home/community on a line according to how important it was in their lives. Immediately, it seemed apparent that both children and parents wished to offer funds or interests which might be easily recognizable to us as teacher-researchers associated with the school and which thereby

hold institutional value. In one conversation, a parent asked us ‘what do you think about the pictures? [...] you think she took **right** pictures?’ after their child had taken part in a photo elicitation activity. Whilst this question may indicate inadequacies in our communication of the project’s aims, it also reminds us that the articulation of subjective interests is always articulated towards an audience. In the case of school-based FOI research, this audience is likely to be viewed as associated with the institution (schooling) which holds authority regarding what forms of knowledge and subjectivity are of value. This is exemplified further in the following extract involving one of us talking with six-year-old Nico as he placed his photographs on the significant line in order of importance. Here he re-constructs something important to him (money) which leads to a discussion of what happened to his birthday money, which his mum had borrowed. Nico had discussed this event with us on several occasions - here, the researcher links the photograph of money back to this event.

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

Researcher- so things that Nico really, really likes can go this end.. things that Nico, eh, not sure whether I really like them, go that end, yeah

Nico - this is money too

Researcher - money

Nico - money is important

Researcher -and why is money important?

Nico- er so we can buy food and fruit

Researcher - hmm what were you doing in that photo with the money on it then?

Nico - counting all of it here

Researcher - is that your money?

Nico- er me mum's

Researcher - ah do you remember the last time... you told me about buying the fireman Sam fire station with your birthday money?

Nico - yeah

Researcher - so if that was your birthday money?

Nico - I would get it ...well, anyway me mum ...and I even told you that me mum gives me ten pound voucher and me two tenners and me two fiversthose all from me birthday and she said she will look after it not buy [spend] it and she even promised and she broke the promise!

Researcher - ah but she's going to give you the money back, isn't she?

Nico - yeah only when she gets paid and that's going to be like next year or in twelve months

Researcher - and if you get your two fivers and your two tenners back what are you gonna do?

Nico - I'm just gonna buy it [Fireman Sam's Firestation] if it's enough because five add five add ten add ten equals thirty and that's how much I need

Researcher- hmm very good

Here we have Nico re-telling an event (mum looking after his birthday money) which we thought significant to him, given he had told us the story a number of times. In this sense, it can be said to indicate a FOI in that Nico expresses a subjective experience of home activity (looking after birthday money) which he also gives emotional expression to. However, when the researcher

asks a question about what he will do with the money when he gets it back - despite knowing he wants to buy a toy fire station (as signalled earlier in the dialogue) - Nico expresses a more schoolified mathematics statement 'because five add five add ten add ten equals thirty and that's how much I need.' At the time, the researcher felt that Nico appeared aware of his audience (the researcher) and what she expects of him in terms of schoolifying his counting of money. In this sense, he offers this statement as a form of capital when prompted by the researcher. Thus the object of learning activity shifts back to the school text in ways that do not seem to be justified other than to satisfy the perceived values of the researcher. In one sense, this is a methodological issue - the presence of the researcher and the location of the significant line task in a school setting associated the activity with the surfacing and mobilising of capital. However, as Engeström (1991) argued, shifting the object of learning activity (to one that is expanded beyond schooling) requires a substantial shift in the school institution and the social relations it enacts. To avoid this schoolification, it has to be turned into a collective instrument for teams of students, teachers, and people living in the community.

To summarize, whilst the FOI methodology does make visible something that has symbolic value to the students, such artefacts will likely tend to become appropriated by the school curriculum so that they are vehicles to teach what needs to be taught and assessed. The capital critique we outlined above seeks to question this institutional appropriation of FOK and FOI on the basis that although it offers the means to take up positions of power in the educational field through the accumulation of private capital (exchange value), it often loses sight of the use value or public good that FOK and FOI can offer for students and their community. In this paper, we build on this critique to ask: does the award of exchange value (mapping the school curriculum

onto FOI) necessarily imply loss of recognition of the use value of such experiences for the student? If so, how and why? And what can be done about it?

‘Funds of knowledge/identity’ as a cultural commodity - the dialectic of use value and exchange value

In their early work on FOK, Moll and colleagues drew on anthropological literature (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992) which defined the concept in relation to household funds that are linked to labor (Moll et al., 1992). They were interested in the knowledge produced around the funds that households manage in everyday life (e.g. rent, social funds, ceremonial funds etc). This early work had an explicit emphasis on the cultural practices employed by individual households to survive or ‘get ahead’ through work and the labor market. Thus, the concept is not too dissimilar from the concept of private capital we have discussed in relation to Bourdieu’s work. However, whilst this may have enabled the concept to gain traction in the educational field (particularly where such knowledge can be exchanged for grades in standardized assessment), we argue, it misses the underpinning processes and relations which enable knowledge and identities to be produced and consumed in educational practice. As Blunden (2009) notes, if Marx had begun “with such a developed conception as ‘money’, he would have skipped over the very processes of differentiation and development which make the relations of capital comprehensible” (p. 6). In this section, we demonstrate the necessity of unpacking FOK and by association, FOI, as formed and developed in processes of production and exchange, revealing the dialectic unity of their use (for public good) and exchange value (private capital).

In the following quote, Zipin et al. (2012, p.181) argue that FoK approaches should engage in thwarting the ‘exchange-value’ (or ‘capitalising’ in school) by legitimizing what has ‘use-value’ arising in students’ ‘lifeworlds’:

“To build curriculum work around knowledge that carries *lifeworld use values* counters the *exchange-value* (or *capitalising*) logic of school sorting and selecting. The FoK movement does not disregard the need for learners to gain better opportunities through schooling to improve their life chances in the capitalising world as historically received, through redistribution of powerful cultural capitals. However, this is not sufficient and, in terms of pursuing justice, is a secondary impulse. The primary impulse joins a pragmatic need to engage learners with, most importantly, an *ethical* imperative to honour their cultural-historical lives (Zipin, 2006) through knowledge content (curriculum) and ways of transacting knowledge (pedagogy) that resonate meaningfully with cultural use-values in people's lifeworlds. The FoK approach thus thwarts sorting learners through standardized or hierarchically differentiated curricula – in which power-elite cultural capital is the codified principle selecting for success – by *recognising a diversity* of cultural knowledge embodied by learners, and ‘transforming students’ diversities into pedagogical assets” (Moll & Gonzalez, 1997, p. 89 as cited in Zipin et al., 2012, p.181).

In this quote, Zipin et al. (2012) appear to position the distribution of cultural capital through the school curriculum (i.e. standardized curricular knowledge for selection) as separate from knowledge that has use-value - embedded in the real experiences of students’ lives. In doing so, they envision the FoK approach as capable of thwarting the process of capital exchange within the system (the selection and sorting of students for success) with one form of knowledge taking

precedence over another. However, a dialectical approach (following Marx/Hegel) indicates that these two ‘moments’ cannot be dealt with separately if one wants to catch the living, moving development of the unit. We suggest there is a necessary *unity* of exchange and use value inherent in the quality of the unit, which positions the commodity as of and for something (e.g. in Marx the commodity is a unit of the economy). Therefore, the use of FOK to transform or change the system requires us to recognise the dialectic relation (rather than separation) between the commodity’s use and exchange value. In Marx exchange value is measured by the quantity of socially necessary human labor time required to produce the commodity, and its qualitative use value is located in human consumption, i.e. it’s capacity to fulfil human needs. Furthermore, this (economic) commodity is not just a ‘thing’ in itself, but rather Marx refers to it as the *commodity relation* - an ensemble of social relations that includes the relations between producers and consumers and under capitalism also includes the owners of the means of production. The dialectic relation of use and exchange value as a quality of the commodity (as a unit) should be central to understanding its development (Blunden 2009; Engeström, 1987). This economic analysis allowed Marx to reveal how commodities are exchanged, how money develops as a universal commodity, and how under special conditions of exploitation (the creation of a moneyed class and a class deprived of means of production) money develops from a medium of exchange into *capital*.

However, in applying this kind of analysis to educational activity it is important to define clearly what we mean by use and exchange value and the commodity in this context. First, we argue that we *can* import Marxist economics directly and properly in its own terms within the political-economic field, since education does take place within the economic field (Williams, 2012).

Here we might propose that the student invests time and labor in learning, adding value to their labor power as they produce knowledge, competences and identities which have both exchange and use value in the economic field. The exchange value of knowledge is transferable beyond the educational field in terms of enhanced employability. Likewise, the use value of knowledge, competences and identities can be framed as useful labor power for the potential employer in their modes of production. The commodity relation here implicates both exchange and use value and can be described as the relation between learning as the production of knowledge and knowing as the consumption of knowledge – both of which are necessary to grow capital that translates into the economic field.

But education is also a cultural field in which learners are exchangers and users of knowledge in activity, in practices and discourses. With this in mind, the use value of knowledge, competences and identities is not restricted to their eventual consumption by future employers but may also be associated with potential use to meet human needs in other relevant cultural fields (i.e. in the enhancement of an individual's social, political and leisured life). Similarly, as Bourdieu notes, the exchange value of knowledge, competences and identities is not only for private economic gain but is also associated with the need for individual persons to acquire power to access dominant positions and manage power relations in the educational field itself. For instance, the *exchange value* of a unit of knowledge or competence may be seen when that knowledge is practiced in a manner in which the school values (including ourselves as researchers perhaps), which is then rewarded in an exchange where the teacher praises the child and the assessor ticks a box on their assessment, claims credit, maybe even gains promotion or positive evaluation of teacher performance (as is the assessment system in England where Nico goes to school). Yet

the sense of that knowing or competence for the child may be that it is useful for their understanding of other forms of activity. To return to our example with Nico and his birthday money, we might argue that his 'adding in a number sentence' is given credit by the researcher but also may have use value in understanding the quantity of his birthday money and whether it is sufficient to buy the toy fire station. Not only does this potentially fulfil his need for play, but arguably, it also evokes Nico's early experience of a classed practice of borrowing money, which fulfils the needs of his family in managing the financial reality of living in poverty. From this perspective, Nico makes use of adding in ways which may help him to understand, manage and articulate his own realities. Therefore, in the 'educational commodity' that is the understanding and competence of 'adding' in various distinct practices, we see a dialectical unity containing a contradiction between meanings that have use and exchange values.

However, identifying FOK and FOI that offer potential for development or change requires a shift in our understanding of the educational activity that underpins this work. This should not be seen as an activity only for the development of private individuals but rather as a collective cultural activity that has developmental potential in shifting the whole fabric of social relations under capitalism. The use value of knowledge (and also competences and identities) cannot be purely understood in terms of commodities for private individual human needs or even households (e.g. cooking/shopping/surviving) but rather such knowledge is more powerful if understood as being of and for the public good, meeting humanity's collective needs (e.g. for fighting oppression in social struggles). This is a central argument in the critique of domesticated versions of FOK work mentioned earlier (Williams et al., 2018) which suggests it is important

not to equate too easily the home, even the poor home of the oppressed, as a source of radical challenge to the educational capital of the school, since relationships in the home can be as alienating as those of the school.

A similar argument is presented in Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* which outlines the significance of dialogue between knowledge and identities that are located in people's struggles under oppression (use value) and literacy (i.e. knowledge that also has exchange value in that it can allow one to manage power in the cultural field of education). The internal contradictions of use and exchange value here offer a developmental dynamic which can lead to change (although it not always will) when reading and writing the word gives voice to such struggles and mobilizes agency to change. For Freire, it is working through contradictions that people experience a process of conscientization where collective agency, solidarity and social movements are mobilized to fight struggles against injustice pertaining to class, race, etc. As such, the potential human need that generates use value of knowledge (as a cultural commodity) is viewed in terms of a *collective need* potentially generating collective activity. This also includes (a) the *need* for legitimizing the practices and know-how involved in mobilizing solidarity with others who are oppressed, and (b) how to engage in collective action, e.g. through social movements and community, union or party activity.

Therefore, we propose a conceptualization of funds (common to both FOK and FOI) as a form of knowledge, competence and identity that is produced and consumed through 'knowing in practice.' The use value and exchange value of such knowledge, competences and identities arise in dialectic moments of learning (production) and knowing (consumption) (i.e. the cultural

commodity relation) by and for communities, schools, teachers and students. In such moments there is a unity of use and exchange value that holds internal contradictions that can (potentially) bring about transformations to the struggles in people's lives. We argue that such a contradictory unit is likely to be more helpful in finding ways to harness and develop the FOK and FOI approach in ways that can mobilize change for students and the collective. To demonstrate the value of our proposed conceptualization in educational practice, we now offer a worked analysis of a program linked to the FOK literature.

An Empirical Case: The Mexican American Studies Program of the Tucson Unified School District

The empirical case we discuss here draws on the edited collection *Raza Studies: The public option for educational revolution* by Cammarota & Romero (2014a), which documents the struggle to defend a Mexican American Studies (MAS) program set up by the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) in Arizona. We have chosen this example because of its prominent claims – well substantiated – to engage the Latinx community in education about the social conditions of oppression and also to effect a significant change in their educational opportunity by virtue of enhanced scores on standardized tests, implicating a narrative of both use and exchange values. Our purpose here is not to accurately re-document the events that took place (since we believe this is done well elsewhere) but rather to exemplify our theoretical argument regarding the potential of critical pedagogy to transform lived experiences.

Cammerota and Romera (2014a) document how the MAS program was set up to enhance the academic performance of Latinx students in the TUSD - a demographic group that has

historically been under-served by the school system with lower levels of academic performance and disengagement. It was developed based on the work of Freire (1970) to enable students to see and challenge oppressive forces that prevent them from improving their own circumstances and thereby encourage students to see themselves as agents who have a contribution to make to their communities through achieving greater justice. At the same time the MAS program provided students with the opportunity to learn academic skills (e.g. reading and writing critically), framed as a form of resistance to the oppressive forces that are responsible for their circumstances.

The success of this program is clearly documented by Cammerota and Romera (2014a) who note how performance in the standardized Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) tests was higher for MAS students than non-MAS participants at the same period. In addition, they show how the MAS program was successful in inverting the graduation rate between MAS students and Anglo peers and in raising college matriculation rates for MAS students higher than the national average. Nevertheless, the program received considerable criticism from the authorities in the State of Arizona, resulting in a long battle to keep the program open. Eventually the State of Arizona passed legislation to prevent 'ethnic studies' programs such as MAS from operating. This culminated in declaring the MAS program in violation of the law and it was closed.

Cammerota and Romera (2014b) explicitly identify the FOK methodology of Moll et al. (1992) as a key conceptual underpinning of the MAS program, i.e. its humanistic focus on caring (following Freire) involves explicit attention to valuing students' prior knowledge and

experiences derived from their homes/communities. In so far as this also involves valuing the subjective experiences of students as they reflect on the everyday struggles that disadvantage them, we further argue that FOI are implicated here and indeed the program's activities (e.g. reflective dialogue taking place in school) are more akin to this approach than the ethnographic work in students' homes, more typical in earlier FOK work. Here, we see funds as referring to students' and their families' historic experience of inequality and struggle which are both reflected and acted upon through the naming and tackling of inequalities and injustice, e.g. by critiquing the potentially alienating impact of the academic school curriculum. The cultural commodity in this sense is learning and knowing to be critical about one's conditions of oppression in living as Latinx (via its association with ethnicity and class) through Raza education. Below we outline how the dialectic relation of use and exchange value can be seen in relation to this commodity.

Use value

As noted above, use value in our conceptualization refers to how funds or knowledge, competences and identities are associated with the potential to meet human needs. In the MAS program, we suggest use value is evident in the way students were encouraged to identify experientially real problems (needs) by reading critically about their educational, social and economic circumstances. This work was particularly focused on failure in the education system, which had historically alienated families and communities (Cammarota & Romera 2014a). A key principle was that such critical knowing is not only consumed through reflection but that reflection leads to action (following Freire) through praxis with concrete efforts to change the structures that reinforce such inequalities. One such form of action was students' conscious

resistance to acts that are self-defeating (e.g. skipping class in response to abuse from a teacher). In this instance, their critical activities fostered knowledge that can be said to hold use value in terms of forms of resistance that are useful to both students and their communities in struggles more widely (Cammarato & Romera, 2014a).

As noted earlier, some FOK work focuses largely on what is experientially real for private individual human needs (e.g. cooking/shopping/surviving). This point is taken a step further in the FOI literature, with its emphasis on experiences that are subjectively significant to the student. See, for instance, Poole and Huang's (2018) account of existential FOI which refers to "the experiences that students develop and appropriate to help them grow as human beings" (p. 126). However, the case of the MAS program exemplifies use value as being for the public good, i.e. in the production for fighting oppression. This sees knowledge, competences and identities as located in social movements for change or liberation (following Freire) where collective interests are mobilized to realize transformative potential. The MAS program was clearly located in such a social movement: Romera (2014a) documents the origins of MAS as born out of a historical social movement for change involving community groups, members, educators and academics who desired educational justice, equal opportunities, freedom and educational sovereignty for Latinx students. A key aspect of MAS was to teach students that the struggle for improved educational, social, economic and political conditions is not only for themselves as individuals but also for all in their community. Thus, there was an explicit move away from an individualist perspective towards a collective notion of subjectivity (and maybe identity as a MAS participant and its association with ethnic and classed identities) with the aim of achieving outcomes that meet collective humanistic needs.

Exchange value

Above, we follow Bourdieu's work on educational capital in defining exchange value as the value of knowledge, competences and identities that enables individual persons to acquire power in order to manage power relations in the educational field. In the MAS program, we suggest this is apparent through its emphasis on enabling students to engage with the objectives of the state standardized social sciences curriculum, which provides educational capital for the student and the school. At first glance, this can be viewed critically from a Bourdieusian perspective since the academic school curriculum is viewed as a mechanism to exclude the oppressed through its legitimation of values, knowledge, and resources that favor the dominating classes. However, we suggest there are limitations with such a critique in that it neglects the possibility that the school curriculum can sometimes be a site of struggle over the legitimation of knowledge, competences and identities that support oppressed groups. In some circumstances, the school curriculum can offer the possibility of practical action for the public good, even though schools are required by State mandate to use their authority to 'capitalize' knowledge and competences as educational qualifications. Such a process of legitimation of cultural capital is acknowledged by participants in the MAS program who noted how its students began to recognize the importance of an academic identity that had previously been missing:

“According to our students, this foundation has helped them develop a strong social, cultural and historical identity that has allowed many of them to develop for the first time an academic identity, which has also helped them develop a strong sense of academic proficiency” (Romera, 2014b, p. 17).

This links back to the unit or commodity we hypothesize is at stake in the MAS program, i.e. critical knowledge, competences and identity practices that engage with both the collective and the individual's conditions of oppression. It outlines how MAS students came to challenge deficit assumptions (as a source of oppression) through awareness of their own cultural and historical identities. Exchange value can be seen here through the valuing of academic proficiency, which serves private individual interests by enabling students to accumulate the power needed to operate in the educational field. With this in mind, the MAS program had considerable success, made apparent in its students' individualized performance data in the standardized test (AIMS). As noted already, such credit bearing qualifications carry exchange value for the private individual in that they facilitate access to college and other career opportunities. If we compare this manifestation of exchange value with the use value we identified above, there seems to be an essential contradiction here between the way the program developed collective processes that related students' knowledge to their collective experiences and identifications, yet ultimately also led to privatized values of accreditation for the individual students. Let us examine this contradiction more closely.

Dialectic relationship of use and exchange value - contradictions and tensions

Our analysis so far indicates that the cultural commodity in this example can be viewed as moments of knowing where critical knowledge regarding conditions of oppression (and associated competences and identities) are produced and consumed. In so far as the production and consumption of such knowledge addresses both a collective human need (use value) and equips students with the means to accumulate power in the educational field (exchange value) we can say that the dialectic unity of use and exchange value is the substance or quality of this unit.

Therefore, the funds harnessed and developed through MAS appear to fit well with our concept of the cultural commodity outlined earlier. Use value and exchange value are not separate or dichotomous but rather are two moments of this living, dynamic unity in dialectic relation with one another through educational activity. Following Hegel-Marx, we suggest that what makes this dialectical is precisely this developmental dynamic mobilized by internal contradictions between moments of exchange and use value. For instance, when the traditional school curriculum emphasizes exchange value (for credit) without much connection to students' lived experiences (use value), a contradiction occurs in that what is exchangeable negates its use and is instead aligned with the power relations in the cultural field (what Bourdieu refers to as the cultural arbitrary). This contradiction may lead to development if it can be adequately resolved, or the contradiction may persist if development is blocked, e.g. the student may disengage from learning, or resist by not showing up, expressing poor behavior etc.

By contrast, in the MAS program, we suggest the contradiction between use and exchange value can be seen in the way knowledge was produced and consumed for a public good (to meet the collective human need of fighting oppression) whilst at the same time enabling private individuals to resist such oppression through the accrual of qualifications that have exchange value. This internal contradiction was embraced through the MAS program as participants were encouraged to reflect on their struggles as a manifestation of their oppression (use value), but also to resist such oppression through the accrual of qualifications that have exchange value that allowed some degree of at least some personal escape from their conditions of oppression. Development in this sense may be understood as the public actions that participants were able to take (e.g. building stronger social and community relationships or demanding language rights)

that move towards equality and transformation of the oppressed conditions under which they live. At the same time, development may also be understood as a personal transformation or change in consciousness, which arose through reflective educational activity. For instance, in evaluating the Social Justice Education Project (one part of the MAS program at TUSD) Cammarato and Romero (2014b) report that students spoke of the shifts in their commitment to social justice, critical awareness, as well as academic goals of attainment and college attendance. It is for this reason we believe the MAS program exemplifies our theorization of funds as embedded in a dynamic process of development whereby the dialectic relation of exchange and use value can sometimes drive development that can transform conditions of oppression.

However, according to Bourdieu, the distribution of resources that hold exchange value (capital) must take place in a way that ensures scarcity in order to maintain value and therefore, provides the means to access or maintain dominant positions in the cultural field. The curriculum is always a site for class struggle in this respect since the interests of those in more dominant positions in the field are often opposed to those from oppressed groups. A curriculum for the 'elite' few that serves the accumulation and growth of private capital is in contradiction with that which seeks to make visible the cultural knowledge of oppressed communities. Zipin (2015) makes a similar point referring to the ethical vexations that arise in social justice pedagogies where use value contradicts the logic of capital which incorporates the necessary scarcity of the latter. With this in mind, we might argue that the MAS program explicitly challenged the conditions of capitalism in that it opened up access to state standardized grades and qualifications to larger cohorts of students making the exchange value of such qualifications no longer so scarce, and no longer monopolised by dominant families. Thus, a new contradiction

arises between the redistribution of resources (qualifications) that have exchange value that enables oppressed communities to access power in the field and the positioning of such exchange value as only accessible to the elite few who pursue it for private individual gain.

Such a contradiction may explain the tensions that arose between the TUSD and the authorities in the State of Arizona documented by Cammarota and Romero (2014a). Romero (2014a) describes how the legislation passed by the State of Arizona was specifically targeted at ‘ethnic studies’ programs such as MAS. This law stated that a) no classes should be designed for students of a particular ethnic group, and b) it should not advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals. Romero (2014a) tells of how the MAS program was found to be in violation of this legislation and eventually closed, despite limited evidence to support this and mass protests from students, teachers, community members, and academics. As Moll (2015) notes, the state response to what was a successful program indicates how threatened those in authority were by its existence and especially its success. Mobilizing action through developing students’ knowledge and identities as a cultural commodity is threatening work and difficult to achieve within the school curriculum which relies on the scarcity of capital and where authority heavily regulates what is taught to who. It seems that the establishment worldwide has a direct interest in the scarcity of capital in the educational field and is intuitively aware of educational innovation that threatens its interests. Hence, we recognize the need to theorize and critique such mechanisms of reproduction and to take great care in our analysis of movements of the oppressed.

Discussion: our contribution to knowledge

We began this paper with Bourdieu and Passeron's critique of the school curriculum as a cultural arbitrary – disconnected from the lives of many students, including those related to oppressed communities. This poses the old problem “Non scholae sed vitae discimus”, i.e. “It is of life, not of school, that we must speak” (Engestom, 1991) and immediately exposes the contradictions between the needs of the ‘life’ of the oppressed, and those of the scholastic institution and its governors (Zipin, 2015). Our interest in the FOK and FOI approaches therefore, is in the capacity to address this alienation through exposing what Vygotsky called the spontaneous concepts practiced in everyday activities in the home and community to scientific, academic concepts that reorganize, systematize, and generalize these particulars in universal laws and concepts. Hence the whole point of schooling is the development of learners, and generating deeper understandings of homes and communities that are subjected to and legitimized by scientific study. Throughout this paper we have referred to knowledge, competences and identities concurrently since the development of new knowledge also implicates change in what one does (competences) and who one is (identity).

While previous critiques of the FOK and FOI approach have recognized the problem of cultural capital in education (Williams, 2016; Zipin, 2015), we have proposed a reconceptualization of ‘funds’ as a cultural commodity – a unit comprised of the dialectic relation of use and exchange value of knowledge, competences and identities revealed and potentially resolved through moments of knowing in practice. Our analysis has grounded this concept in the case of the MAS program highlighting this as an example of FOK inspired activity where the contradiction between serving the needs of the community for public good (use value) and the exchange value

assigned to grades and test scores required to garner power in an institutional field like schooling (exchange value) was dialectically unified. In this sense, the theoretical analysis we present here makes a contribution in exposing the contradictions manifest at the intersection of the field of power in schools, and the social movements of the oppressed. One's knowledge, competences and identities can be constituted as exchangeable funds, cultural capital, or as *exchange value* in the labor or further education of private individuals; but it can also have *use value* (i.e. be usable or consumable in activity) for one's collective activity with others in social movements opposing oppression. Analyses of educational systems and pedagogies using this unit of cultural commodity whereby the unity of contradictory cultural values is revealed (as per the case of the MAS program) may help us to better understand and respond to practical work in the manner shown in this paper.

We see this paper as making a contribution to the re-generation of CHAT in that it seeks to question how learning and knowing enact the contradiction between capital and labor, which is at the heart of all contradictions that need to be challenged through practical action in humane activity (Williams et al., 2018). This can help explain why certain initiatives might be possible in schools, or in the mainstream of school curricula, and why some reap the whirlwind (as with the MAS program (Cammerota and Romera, 2014a)). It also highlights how domestication of radical agendas is a likely problem for any activity promoted in schooling. However, while the MAS program was eventually closed, its story lives on exposing how the struggle to control the curriculum under capitalism is fraught with racism as well as classed inequalities. By analysing this case using the concept of a cultural commodity, we hope to have illustrated how critical pedagogies can transform (rather than serve) school curricula in ways that better serve the needs

of students and families from oppressed communities. This offers a potential framework for teachers and students to engage with wider social struggles such as climate change, the rise of nationalism and the perpetuation of structural racism (see regeneratingchat.com). As Zipin (2015) notes in his discussion of the ethical vexations that arise in such pedagogic work “when contradictions seemingly defeat the possibility of desirable justice, we must be ‘mad; enough to pursue impossible justice anyway.’” (p. 94).

In conclusion, although we have signalled the "cultural commodity" as a concept that can add well to cultural capital in educational research before (Williams, 2012), the significance of this paper is in the grounding of this conceptualisation in an analysis of educational cultures and their development. By revealing the developmental possibilities of knowledge, competences and identities produced as cultural commodities, we suggest a way forward for those interested in critical pedagogy to explain or predict developments that may arise in practice, or to identify potential actions that might exploit these contradictions. This is particularly relevant to those who use Bourdieu's theory or Marxist theories in the sociology of education since it highlights the need to look again at analyses of education as a process of reproduction. Moving forwards, we see potential value in unpacking the qualitative shift between the cultural commodity and cultural capital in the educational field in order to understand (and thereby disrupt) the accumulation of capital by the privileged few.

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FIGURE 1 – NICO’S PHOTOGRAPH OF MONEY



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FIGURE 1 – NICOS PHOTOGRAPH OF MONEY



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