

# **POST-PEER REVIEW COPY**

## **DRAFT ONLY**

### **Constructing Solidarities at Work: Relationality and the methods of emancipatory education**

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#### **Abstract**

Taking as its starting point the decline of ideological and class identifications in the UK, this article presents the case for reviving a model emancipatory education to develop solidaristic relationships at work. The central argument of this article is that emancipatory education methods offer useful tools to build relationality that can act as a basis for mobilising solidarity in the UK context. In order to explore the psychological and political impact of emancipatory education methods this article explores the conceptual and methodological parallels between emancipatory education and psychoanalysis, namely their capacities to build relationality between people through

consciousness raising and collective problem solving using dialogic methods. This article goes on to argue that in the absence of class identity or shared ideology, emancipatory education practices offer realistic opportunities for working people to formulate conceptions of common interests and build solidaristic relationships sufficient to create some form of collective organisation and action.

### **Key Words**

Solidarity, relationality, class, psychoanalysis, trade union education, emancipatory education, social capital, political capital.

### ***Introduction***

The central organising principle for trade union activity is solidarity, the value of common action and support of others as well as identification of one's own interests with theirs (Hyman, 1997). Traditionally, the practice of solidarity presupposes a shared collective identity, broadly based on class and professional identities. Although the working class has grown on a world scale (Martinez Lucio, 2011), the identities of working people are increasingly diverse and, with the decline in class consciousness combined with the fragmentation and flexibilisation of work (Charlwood and Forth, 2009; Doogan, 2009), the existence of workplace identities can not be assumed.

Although organised solidarity action has historically been underpinned by class identification and relatively clear collective interests, trade unions have always had to navigate a diversity of interests, including class interests. In Hyman's seminal writings about solidarity, he outlines three ideological bases for trade union organisation in Europe; their role in regulating work (market); role in promoting

social justice issues (Society); role in mobilising class struggle (Class). The decline in ‘market-class’ (Hyman, 1997) unionism in the UK, where solidarity is mobilised around labour market issues such as collective bargaining and class identification, is a reality that trade unions have attempted to address through organising and renewal strategies over the last three decades (Simms and Holgate, 2010). This re-orientation raises the question about how solidarity can be constructed in a context where both labour market and class dimensions are weakened.

Trade union organising programmes have grown steadily over the last two decades, often championing a new ‘organising model’, promoted through the systematic organising work of the USA Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the UK’s Organising Academy. The realities of trade union organising in the UK is a little more mundane in that, like the majority of trade union organising activities internationally, they are predominantly based on tried and tested educational methods and techniques used by trade unions over the last century. Although the drive to focus on organising new members, particularly ‘atypical’ workers, is a clear development in the UK, the literature about the educational methods that have formed the basis of this work remains relatively small. Despite the centrality of emancipatory education methods to organising, they are consistently undervalued within trade unions, a reality that is reflected in the lack of funding and executive power that trade union education structures have within trade unions and the relative lack of status trade union educators (Croucher and Cotton, 2011).

Since the 1970s emancipatory education has been one of the dominant models of trade union education internationally, adopted by unions in most parts of the world principally through the work of international trade union structures such as the Global

Union Federations (GUFs) and also the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (Croucher and Cotton, 2011; Cotton and Royle, 2014; Croucher, 2004). Millions of Euro are raised and spent annually to disseminate these education methods to national and local trade union structures in a conscious attempt to build trade union capacities and international solidaristic networks.

Emancipatory education is essentially a problem posing education where both teachers and students are ‘critical co-investors in dialogue’ (Freire: 1970: 62), what Freire calls ‘co-intentional education’ (Freire, 1970: 22) where the knowledge and content of the education process is based on the experience of the participants of the group. Emancipatory education methods are a form of radical learning which have an explicit aim of social change (Shelly, 2007), that can be formulated as the objective to create both social and political capital in the workplace.

These methods provide a consistent framework made up of essentially three connected stages of learning; problem identification, getting information particularly identifying what resources are available and planning concrete next steps. In the TUC education system this became known as the PIP framework; problems, information and planning. Additionally, education programmes provide important opportunities to widen the pool of collective experience and to learn from diverse strategies and union responses to workplace problems (Cotton and Royle, 2014).

Emancipatory education is underpinned by a number of principles, including confidentiality and solidarity, and activities aim to provide a safe space for expressing and processing diverse and often difficult workplace experiences. Although some trade union education programme focus on ‘political education’ such as the long traditions of political education courses in the mining sector (Croucher and Cotton,

2011), there is an inherently political aspect to emancipatory education methods themselves because of the principles and practices they involve. Because the methods open up debate they can if used well support inherently political processes of consciousness raising and collective planning, which serve to identify and mobilise collective interests, the basis of in putting solidarity into action.

In order to analyse the impact of emancipatory education methods on building solidarities, this article will look in detail at emancipatory education practices and draw out the developmental ‘parallelism’ (Armstrong, 2005) between this model of education and psychoanalytic processes. Although emancipatory education is not a therapeutic practice per se, it shares important developmental concepts with psychoanalysis, including its emancipatory aims, the emphasis on understanding internal and external realities and building ego strength, using dynamic and dialogic processes and providing a containing framework for building relationality between people. The central argument is that emancipatory education provides a safe space to build strong emotional ties sufficient to build a sense of identification and therefore altruism (Freud, 1930) and reinforce an often deep understanding of the importance of collectivism where ‘solidarity is un-self-conscious’ (Olmsted, 1959).

In the UK context where class and ideological identification cannot be assumed, the premise of this article is that solidarity is something that needs to be constructed or ‘re-imagined’ (Simms, 2011) precisely because of the need to ‘reconcile differences of situation and interest’ (Hyman, 2011: 251), that exist within union memberships and more broadly in the labour force (Martinez Lucio, 2011). The central argument of this article is that emancipatory education is a model that has potential for building ‘effective participation’ (Hyman, 1997) in workplace settings in

articulating collective interests and constructing the solidarities that come out of them. The article will argue that these emancipatory education methods allow for a high level of mobilisation (Kelly, 1998) around workplace issues because of their capacity to formulate a conception of collective interests, strong relational ties sufficient to create some form of collective, including temporary, organisation and the identification of opportunities to improve working conditions.

### **Methodology**

The material for this article is based on the author's work as a trade union educator during the period 1999-2007, as Head of Programmes and Education for a Global Union Federation. The author was responsible for designing and running education programmes internationally in developing and transition economy contexts in the extractive industries, chemicals, pharmaceutical and other industrial sectors. In addition to working as a trade union educator, the author has trained and worked as an adult psychotherapist in the NHS and continues to carry out workplace education using emancipatory education and psychodynamic frameworks, particularly focussing on the healthcare sector. In addition to carrying out academic research, in 2012 the author set up Surviving Work, an educational resource aimed to build mental health and solidarity and to explore the methods of building relationality at work. This article draws on both the author's academic research and practitioner experience of how working people are able to build relationality in contexts where class or ideological identifications and trade union representation are weak or non-existent.

### **The principles and practices of solidarity**

Solidarity can be understood as three interconnected aspects; firstly, as a normative principle that establishes the obligation to support others; secondly, as ‘enlightened self-interest’ where an attack on workers is understood as an attack on working people more generally, representing a weak moral imperative. This ‘solidarity as a mobilising myth’ (Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2015:2) is used as an explicit rationale for motivating collective action to stop the ‘race to the bottom’ implied in many national and international industrial disputes (Croucher and Cotton, 2011).

A third aspect of solidarity, can be described as a model of ‘mutuality despite difference’ (Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2015:2). This formulation of solidarity emphasises that it is precisely because of the lack of homogeneity of working people that solidarity as a principle and solidaristic relationships need to be actively constructed. The models and practices of solidarity are shaped by the different institutional settings within which they take place, although trade unions at national and international levels commonly move between these three different aspects of solidarity in order to mobilise members. In the sections that follow this third aspect of solidarity will be emphasised.

The decline in union membership and the clustering of current membership in the public sector raise questions about how collective interests are determined and what methods are effective in building up identification and mobilisation around them. Hyman (1997) usefully identifies four main groups of workers; elite, core, periphery and excluded. These groups are constructed differently in different national contexts, but internationally elite and core workers, often clustered in the public sectors and older age groups, dominate trade union membership such that the general interests of workers have traditionally been shaped by the particular interests of

‘relatively advantaged sections’ (Hyman, 1997: 517). Although the literature around inequalities that documents the socioeconomic class structures in the UK is growing and is in the public domain, the ‘idea’ of class is not a primary factor in organising workers (Crompton, 2008).

The different interests of groups of workers in the UK labour market underlines the tension between the ‘two faces’ (Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2013) of trade unionism; trade unions as the ‘sword of justice’ where they defend the oppressed and vulnerable and trade unions as representing the ‘vested interests’ of a smaller group of predominantly elite workers. This is reflected in trade union organising strategies tending to focus on specific workplace interests rather than building wider ‘solidarities’ within sectors or more broadly in society (Simms, 2011; Simms, 2012).

Despite the ongoing debates about the decline of class identification (Charlesworth, 2000; Devine, 1992), class identity continues to exist in the UK (Marshall et al., 1988). However the organising power of ‘class’ has declined (Simms, 2012), in part because of the reduced power of traditional class-based organisations the Labour Party and trade unions (Devine et al., 2005). Although class consciousness has declined, as social inequality grows, the identification with others without economic or social resources continues to be an important mobilising factor at the level of organised political ‘assemblies’ (Butler, 2015) in the UK. Although many political networks such as the People’s Assembly and public sector campaigns such as Health Campaigns Together are driven by experienced political activists much of the solidaristic work currently being carried out through these and other networks in the UK is not based on a single ideology or party politics.

This tension between traditional ways of building solidarity and the challenges of organising in the current climate raises questions about how worker interests are identified and what methods can help mobilise collective action around them. To understand this, it is helpful to use Hyman's distinction between 'mechanistic solidarities' that focus on a set of generalised interests such as collective bargaining and 'organic solidarities' that represent more diverse worker and social interests (Hyman, 1997). This idea of an organic solidarity fits well with a model of community organising (Sullivan, 2010b) that seeks to build solidarity on social justice, community and worker's interests, where groups are often self-organised outside of official trade union structures (Simms, 2012; Simms and Holgate, 2010).

This is not just about the methods of solidarity, it is also a question of what principles underpin those methods and how are they developed collectively (Martinez-Lucio, 2011). The objective of trade union organising is not simply to build social capital but also political capital (Banks and Methgar, 2005), the resources to make political gains and address power dynamics at work. That is, that it is through the development of collective interests that the politics and principles of collective action are determined. This connection between social and political capital is particularly evident in union traditions that emphasise 'social-capital formation and mutual-aid functions' (Jarley, 2005:1) in order to build union organisation. This social capital orientation is a political view that the interests of trade union members are not separate from the interests of society and that resources can be mobilised on the basis of diverse social and workplace interests. In order for this model to work it has to transform 'individual dissatisfaction into collective grievance' (Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2013: 177) where the objective of union activity is to create a collective

sense of injustice, including a sense of who is responsible for that injustice and sufficient organisation to shape collective demands and solidaristic action. This process of developing ‘imagined’ (Hyman, 1999:94) solidarities is explored in the next section.

### **The methods of solidarity**

This section looks at how solidarities can be constructed using a model of emancipatory education. The proposal explored in the following section is that emancipatory education and psychoanalytic processes are parallel developmental projects, by virtue of their shared principals and practices; emancipatory aims, dialogic methods, consciousness raising, relationality and containment. Further, that by exploring these parallels, the value of emancipatory education methods in providing a basis for solidarity at work can be more deeply understood and therefore utilised.

One of the central ways that trade unions organise new and existing members is through trade union education (TUE) programmes. TUE can be divided into three main types of courses (Spencer, 2002); those that provide ‘tools’ such as collective bargaining skills; a focus on themes or ‘issues’ such as diversity; and more broad labour studies courses. Typical processes and types of TUE activities are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1**

There are essentially two roots to TUE methods; the first from the German and Nordic traditions of civic and worker education (Eiger, 1994; Feidel-Mertz, 1964) and the second based on the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1994; 1974; 1970). Trade union education in Western Europe developed out of the Swedish Working Men's Institutes of the 1880s and the German workers education system. As a result of the changes in class and communities in the early twentieth century, trade union education internationally adopted a more liberal and pragmatic focus, often not explicitly working on issues of class or 'political' education. The German system tended from the 1920s to be systematised and became a system of technical training and academies, although the principal aim was to build workers' participation and build their confidence to deal with workplace issues. The Swedish model of study circles developed during the same period is less formalised and more grassroots focussed with participant selection of areas of study. Interestingly in response to the recession in the 1990s the Swedish LO responded by closing its residential colleges in order to cut costs and returning to this original model of workplace study circles (Eiger, 1994).

The second root of TUE comes from the Brazilian pedagogue, Paulo Freire who developed his methods throughout the 1970s until his death in 1997. Freire's politicised thesis is that education is a 'practice of freedom' which has the central aim of 'humanisation' (Freire 1970:25) and emancipation from oppression. This process of emancipation requires raising consciousness, collectivisation and praxis (Klandermans, 1986), understood as understanding reality and taking action to transform it. These methods aim to promote a dialogue between participants, looking at their experiences of the real world, reflecting on them and making material changes (Vella, 2002) particularly in relation to wages and working conditions (Mayo, 1995).

From Freud's theories about the unconscious to his social theories about dynamics in groups, there is a long tradition of using psychoanalytic insights and practices to understand groups and organisations and build cooperation within them. The psychodynamic field, that explores the dynamic relationships between internal and external factors and the conscious and unconscious, has grown over the last decade as a framework for understanding human relations at work (Fotaki et al., 2012; Hoggett, 1992). The principle behind this psychodynamic tradition is 'social engagement' (Armstrong, 2012) or building relationality within diverse and often traumatized groups based on the belief that this social engagement is a requirement for human development (Lewin, 1947).

Within psychodynamic thinking, the group is regarded as a 'radical arena' (Armstrong, 2005) for growth and stimulating developmental processes because it is a vehicle for articulating and addressing problems, pooling individual experience and building collective 'resourcefulness' (Armstrong, 2012). Based on the pioneering work of Bion, Miller, Trist, Jacques and Rice to contemporary thinkers such as Armstrong, Menzies Lythe, Rustin and Obholzer, this tradition is not simply an application of psychoanalytic techniques and practices to organisations (Bell, 1999). Rather, it is a parallel process which attempts to gain insight into the group and the 'relatedness of the individual to the institution' (Armstrong, 2005) through the observation and understanding of immediately present emotional experience.

### *Emancipatory aims*

Emancipation in Freire's writings is understood as a dual task of addressing the external reality of oppression, as well as internal psychic oppression, where indi-

vidual psychological empowerment, or building ego strength, understood as the regulatory agency in the mind (Freud, 1923), is central to the political project of organising. Building agency is, in part, rethinking our relationship to power, inevitably touching on what Freire calls the ‘internal oppressor’. Freire’s understanding of the need to emancipate ourselves from internal oppression, the part of the self that undermines agency, sits well with the psychoanalytic work of Ron Britton (2003) and his writing about the process of liberating the self from the often overwhelming demands of the superego, the part of the mind that establishes ideals and standards. In psychoanalytic terms we can understand this as a process of development where the ego becomes the source of agency rather than the ‘monarchic autocracy’ (Britton, 2003: 104) of the superego. The process of empowerment within the emancipatory education tradition can be understood as precisely the movement from being an ‘underdog’ to a self capable of making critical judgements about reality with the capacity to take meaningful action.

Mirroring this formulation of emancipation, Freire explicitly sees the overthrowing of oppression as a dual process, exposing both internal and external oppressors as a necessary part of the developmental process, leading to a stronger sense of our own and other people’s agency.

### *Consciousness Raising*

In Freire’s writing, he describes two stages of learning; a growing awareness of reality and a commitment to transform that reality. Freire regards learning as consciousness raising, ‘conscientizacao’, where we learn about reality, including issues of power and oppression. Emancipatory education takes an ontological position that our

perceptions of reality are socially constructed, privileging some versions of reality over others and denying those realities that undermine established realities. As with psychoanalytic practices, emancipatory education is premised on a 'recognition of reality' (Freud, 1937) and the bringing into consciousness those aspects of internal and external reality that have been dissociated (Freud, 1923). Methodologically, consciousness raising is stimulated through dialogue in small groups, providing an important reality-testing function, both at the level of raising consciousness of reality but also developing 'reality-tested relations' (Main, 1975:71).

In learning theory part of this process of seeing reality as it is, involves tackling core assumptions, or 'threshold concepts' (Meyer and Land, 2003) that provide a basis for our perspectives and are 'transformative' in that they trigger a 'shift in the perception of the subject' (Meyer and Land 2003:4), or a change in orientation (Mezirow, 1997). This deep level of learning is parallel to Bion's distinction between intellectual knowledge, 'transformations in K' and authentic insight or 'being that something', what he calls 'transformations in O' (Bion, 1970).

An emancipatory model acknowledges the often powerful experiences of being in groups and the reality that dialogic methods can be used to stifle expression and create 'corrective' (Winnicott, 1950) rather than democratic environments. In response to this common dynamic within groups, emancipatory education focusses on setting up 'communicative spaces' (McKeown et al., 2014), principally through small discussion groups, where dialogue and reciprocity are possible. Dialogue in emancipatory settings is framed to be respectful of difference and everyone presents their arguments but attempts to remain open to persuasion (Raelin, 2008). Emancipatory Education therefore emphasises egalitarian, transparent and discursive approaches to

defining and solving problems, and is ideally suited to stimulate democratic involvement in diverse settings (Croucher and Cotton, 2011). The use of small groups is highly effective in establishing dialogue while allowing exchange of diverse experiences providing important opportunities for group learning (Vella, 2002).

For example, the first stage of any TUE activity involves participants defining what the issues are that they are facing, a kind of ‘naming’ process or ‘problematizing’ (Taylor, 1993) that then forms the basis for the subsequent educational activities. This is an important orientation, shared with psychoanalysis, where by engaging with people’s perceptions of their own situations, they become the subject rather than the object of critical investigation. Neither the tutor nor the therapist has a role in establishing or naming problems, only to ensure that the processes that follow are created to address them. This educational approach has parallels to the therapeutic relationship where sessions are directed by the patient bringing issues, either consciously or unconsciously, that then determine the focus of the therapeutic work.

Another important part of TUE is to collectively understand the external environments in which we work and the dynamics that underpin them. A specific method used by TUE, and psychoanalytically informed processes such as clinical supervision (Menziés Lyth, 1989), is to carry out workplace observations and analyse them through workplace supervision groups. Although now rarely used by trade unions, Freire explicitly advocates this method of carrying out ‘observation visits’, which aim to understand environments by observing ‘moments’ at different times and locations. The observation includes taking notes and preparing a report for the workplace observation group, whose aim is to decode and reconsider what was seen. This method re-

lies on collective thinking to understand workplace environments as well as to build collective responses to the issues raised through the observations.

What these two traditions draw from these dialogic processes may be a point of tension. Within an emancipatory education frame the objective of praxis is explicit such that there is a direct and causal link between consciousness raising and bringing about external change. Although implicit in psychoanalytic practice that understanding psychic realities opens the way for development and growth, there is a reluctance within psychoanalysis to make claims about external change, such as addressing poverty (Kumar, 2012) and, therefore, praxis. This may be more a question of emphasis rather than a rejection of external change by psychoanalysis, however a tension between the two frameworks does exist here.

### *Containment*

One of the difficulties for learners is to overcome the defences that we create to protect ourselves from the pain of being challenged and provoked out of an 'everyday consciousness' of the world. This is a central aspect of psychoanalytically informed processes, dealing with ambivalence in relation to wanting and not wanting to know about reality, and the resistances we put in place to protect ourselves from the anxieties this evokes (Gosling, 1981).

Anxieties are heightened by learning in groups, making it important to understand group dynamics and the use of defences that can obstruct learning (Krantz, 2006), such as the inability to engage critically with the subject matter, attacking participants with different views or trying to find quick simple solutions in order to reduce group frustration. One of the most common defences in groups is denial of dif-

ferences, reflected in the idea that we are all the same or that we can always reach consensus, common in trade union settings. Anxiety within groups can lead to toxicity where primitive defences, often involving projection of unwanted states into individuals (Main, 1975), groups or people on the boundaries of organisations, result in a focus on group survival, what the psychoanalyst Bion calls basic assumption groups (Bion, 1961), rather than the work task itself.

TUE focusses on often harsh realities at work including victimisation, redundancies and a lack of power in relation to employers. Trade unionists themselves are vulnerable to anxiety given the nature of their work, heightened in a time of recession and it is therefore important not to underestimate the levels of anxiety experienced within these groups or the importance of the containing function of the educational frame and the tutor to manage them.

An emancipatory framework is designed to manage the likely increase in anxiety of participants through guided activities, setting clear timeframes and tutors modelling of behaviours such as confidentiality and respect for other members. TUE consistently follows three main stages; problem identification, getting information and planning. Activities are designed to be familiar and clear by having explicit aims, tasks and time limits, with instructions at each stage of the process.

Bion describes maternal containment as a process where the mother 'detoxifies' the infant's destructive feelings by taking them in, processing them and then returning them in a digested form (Sandler, 2005). The infant's experience is that although it has projected something painful into the mother, they are able to tolerate and process it and the infant is able to introject the idea of a maternal figure who is capable of dealing with anxiety. Although not explicitly drawing on psychodynamic

ideas about containment, TUE recognises the developmental value of creating a safe group environment to explore experiences and attitudes towards transformative ideas of power, conflict and collectivisation. Using the psychoanalyst Winnicott's idea of transitional phenomena, we can understand TUE as an 'intermediate area of experience' (Winnicott, 1971: 2) which is 'in-between' union organisation and outside it. Winnicott saw transitional phenomena as a 'third area' of life made up of both inner and external realities with transitional spaces providing a 'resting-place' (Winnicott, 1971: 3) from our attempts to keep them separate. This is particularly the case with education settings that create spaces where dialogue and emotional experience can openly be expressed. As a result in small containing study groups, participants are likely to feel a stronger sense of freedom to talk openly about their experience, including their emotional experiences within a group setting. Gosling (1994) argues that, as a result, these transitional spaces are important locations for innovation and experimentation, much needed resources within often stagnating trade union organisations.

Much of this containment comes down to the capacity of the tutor to provide a secure and predictable framework for participants and to negotiate the tensions between individual difference and membership of a union (Gosling, 1981). Although the role of a tutor is not to provide interpretations specifically about group dynamics (Miller, 1989) as with the therapist, tutors are involved in managing group dynamics and providing understanding and articulation of the issues within the group. They will inevitably have to bear high levels of confusion and projections from the group (Bion, 1952; Main, 1975), and develop their awareness and capacities to manage group dynamics. Importantly the tutor is also responsible for modelling the values and principles of TUE, including confidentiality, equal respect between students and acknowl-

edgment of the realities in the classroom. In the absence of clinical or workplace supervision for most TUE tutors, this capacity for containing group dynamics varies with tutors having to find alternative support systems to manage these often overwhelming experiences within groups.

### **Collective Problem Solving**

The third stage of any union education activity will be to help participants carry out collective problem solving and from this develop plans of action. One of the problems with not doing this collectively is that minority interests or interests that are not articulated, particularly for reasons of stigma such as mental health issues, are often not included in plans (Simms, 2010). The way that collective interests are identified and then addressed matters, meaning that this framework of dialogue and articulating difficult issues is essential to make sure that diverse interests are addressed. This is particularly important in mobilising workers because if their interests are not included then this will weaken both the identification as well as the willingness to act collectively.

The emphasis on small group problem solving is based in part on a pragmatic aim to pool ideas and experience, with trade unionists often having enormous experience in dealing with workplace problems. Small group educational activities are helpful in building intimacy and ties where both a sense of identification and ‘belonging’ (Bion, 1961), understood as a workplace equivalent of secure attachment, a necessary basis for development and growth (Fonagy, 1994).

One way in which collective problem solving is encouraged is through simulation exercises, or role play involving negotiations or situations of conflict. Although often initially unpopular with participants because of the experiential nature of learning, they are highly effective developmentally as they encourage people to work in teams on common tasks within complex and realistic scenarios. The use of role play in TUE is a version of a psychoanalytic ‘event’ in that it creates a temporary ‘play space’ (Winnicott, 1971) for individuals to carry out activities as a form of ‘serious play’ (Evans and Palmer, 1989) where play is based on people’s experiences and feelings. The use of role play is a powerful emotional and learning experience, bringing to the fore often denied and under-articulated unconscious dynamics within groups (Erich, 2006). From a psychoanalytic perspective well contained learning experiences have a powerful effect on the individual providing, when successful, a sense of satisfaction and hope that contact with other people can realistically be positive and deliver concrete benefits. For Winnicott, (1971) participation allows individuals to reduce their guilt about their aggression towards the group, and strong feelings of fear, and build non-idealistic collaborations with others.

The availability of different roles within simulation exercises allow participants, often for the first time, to experience different perspectives and positions such as taking authority or arguing back. A key advantage of a role play format is that it allows argument to be experienced as non-personal and appropriate to the task, and can encourage participants to claim ‘the right to form a judgement’ (Britton, 2003: 108) and an important opportunity for ‘benign projective identification’ (Main, 1975). This can, if used well, contribute to building participants’ ‘negative capability’ (Bion,

1970) to understand individual and group dynamics, experience uncertainty and make realistic assessments of what can be changed.

The final stage of any TUE activity is to plan concrete steps forward where ‘solutions’ are based entirely on the experiences and ideas of the participants. This attention on developing realistic plans in the final stage of activity is helpful in addressing the realities that each individual will face once they return to work. If the workplace problems have been identified clearly at the beginning at the beginning of the activity, then finding realistic responses to them can minimise a retreat into defences particularly the idea that the ‘union’ or someone else will omnipotently provide a final solution. This final activity places the responsibility for addressing workplace problems firmly in the hands of the participants and in so doing reinforces their sense of agency (Pogue White, 2006) and builds confidence in the direct benefits of collective action (Flavin et al., 2009).

## **Discussion**

The societal and workplace changes of the last three decades have required trade unions to widen their approaches to organising in order to build relationships with diverse and often spontaneous groups of working people (Sullivan, 2010a), in a context of diminishing trade union resources. A consistent challenge to mobilising collective action at work is how to create a sufficiently powerful conception of common interests to underpin solidaristic activity.

Historically, acts of solidarity carried out against an employer or a political party can powerfully build what Turquet calls ‘oneness’ (Turquet, 1975). This ‘oneness’ implies a defence of ‘being in the union’ that underplays the differences

between members. In some cases trade union organisations can come to rely on a group mentality that maintains a sense of belonging by creating a clear distinction between groups - 'them' and 'us' - such that 'fear simplifies the emotional situation' (Winnicott, 1950). This retreat into 'oneness' can be understood as psychological and ideological defence, often experienced in large group settings such as union congresses. It exposes trade unionists to the risk of fundamentalism (Britton, 2015), understood as a rigid position that splits the world into 'right' and 'wrong' with a tendency to certainty. Within diverse settings and groups, this rigidity represents 'the manipulative potential of mass participatory involvement' (Hyman, 2011:153), one that stifles dialogue and development because only 'correct' positions can be expressed and inter-group differences and conflicts are underplayed (Money-Kyrle, 1951). This can lead to 'gang states of mind' (Canham, 2002) where the diversity of memberships and individual difference are denied, limiting the set of interests that are defended through solidaristic activity.

In this context, establishing collective interests amongst workers requires engaging with the diversity of individual, organisational and political perspectives that exist (Hoggett, 1992) and managing the 'cross-sectional demands' (Sedgwick, 1982) of diverse memberships. This 'organic' sense of solidarity presents trade unions with the issue of how to establish a sense of 'belonging' (Gallin, 2014) and genuine participation that can sustain often demanding solidaristic action.

In both psychoanalytic and trade union traditions, the identification of meaning and collective interests has always been socially constructed. That is, it is through the dynamic interactions with other people that we can collectively construct a sense of identity, including political and class identities (Simms, 2011). Emancipatory educa-

tion methods are highly effective in promoting relations between participants (Flavin et al., 2009) and, as a result, participation in groups is considered a radical arena for growth and an important vehicle for building collective ‘resourcefulness’ (Armstrong, 2012) in carrying out these political projects.

For Freire, it is through dialogue that the transformation of organisations and society takes place by creating a sense of connectedness and humanization. This model of development is parallel to the psychoanalytic project of building strong relational ties, including solidaristic relationships at work. An important element of emancipatory education is that it helps to create spaces or ‘cognitive frames’ (Culpepper, 2002:778) where new ideas, politics and action can be determined by participants within a protective framework. This model allows a deeper and broader exchange between trade union organisations and individual activists and can be understood as a ‘relational process’ (Roseneil and Ketokivi, 2016) where it is through the exchange of ideas, experiences and mutual aid that collective consciousness can be developed.

Relationality, from a psychodynamic perspective, acknowledges that it is through our relationships with others that we survive and develop throughout our lives (Bowlby, 1969). Accepting this developmental ‘fact of life’ (Money-Kyrle, 1951) involves accepting that we are dependent on others while at the same time acknowledging the inherently insecure nature of the relationships we form with each other (Morgan and Ruszczyński, 2007). It is this insecure nature of relationships that emancipatory education is, in part, designed to address through encouraging exchange and identifications between people while within a containing framework where collective action is explicitly planned at the end of each session.

Additionally, emancipatory education methods are designed to encourage ‘political subject-making’ (Lazar, 2013:114) where consciousness raising takes place and political identifications can be established through the taking in of the experiences and views of the people around us. This developmental process uses identification as the ‘glue’ holding groups together, emphasising relational rather than ideological connectedness.

The value of emancipatory education methods is that they do not rely on a sense of ‘mechanistic solidarity’ (Hyman, 1997: 529) rather they allow for formation of spaces where social and political capital can be constructed by the people involved (Martinez Lucio, 2011). It is precisely this capacity to work with diversity that gives emancipatory education methods their key developmental role in the current political and social climate where class consciousness is significantly absent (Simms, 2011). Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman’s (2015) third aspect of solidarity as ‘mutuality despite difference’ where solidarity as a principle and solidaristic relationships need to be actively constructed sits well with the objectives and practices of emancipatory education.

Despite the clear link between trade union education and organising, emancipatory education methods continue to be regarded as ancillary to change, rather than its ‘motor’. One explanation for this may be the ‘organisational overwhelm’ (Perini, 2010) that many unions are experiencing and subsequent retreat into defensive and mechanistic ways of working. Although understandable, the alternative of the censorship of dialogue and denial of diversity is a ‘strategy of survival rather than development’ (Armstrong, 2005: 89) leaving members without

the authentic relationships and political framework that they need to mobilise solidarity action.

## **Conclusion**

This article has outlined the developmental contribution of emancipatory education by drawing parallels with psychodynamic ideas based on a shared aim of emancipation, dialogic methods, consciousness raising, collective problem solving and containment. The proposal is that re-establishing a ‘collaborative conversation’ between emancipatory education and psychoanalytic ideas offers us a deeper understanding of the methods of building solidarity and their political outcomes.

This article has analysed emancipatory education methods as a model that encourages the development of strong relational ties between workers as well as providing a space for dialogue that allows for the development of common interests and principles. That is, that emancipatory education methods can develop the necessary relationality between working people required for solidarity at work.

Edo Fimmen, one of the architects of the international trade union movement in the late nineteenth century, in his seminal book *Labour’s Alternative* (Fimmen, 1924), steadily reminds us that the work of trade unions involves two objectives which are at times in tension: to operate within the existing economic system in order to negotiate the best conditions for working people while at the same time to develop alternatives to that system. The proposal of this article is that in order to do this in the current employment relations context, unions will need to emphasise the development of the social and political capital which can shape this alternative. The proposed

strategy is to use an emancipatory model of education, in order to establish strong relationships where people can genuinely participate in constructing solidarity at work.

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**Table 1: Typical Target Groups, Subjects, Aims and Results of Trade Union Education**

<b>Target Group and Subject</b>	<b>Aims</b>	<b>Results</b>
Union officers and workplace representatives: representing workers	Improve worker representation	Improved worker representation, democratising effects in unions
Union officers, representatives and workers: training for paralegal representatives	Provide free representation in legal contexts	Systems of free workers' representation in industrial courts, legal arbitration systems
Trade union tutors: 'training trainers'	Increase available pool of worker educators	Creation and maintenance of pool of worker educators
Union officers and workplace representatives: union management and organisational development	Improve union structures, ways of working; improve participation of women and ethnic minorities	Improvement in union effectiveness; increased participation of women and ethnic minorities
Workplace representatives and workers: very wide range of workplace-based subjects e.g. HIV/AIDS	Very wide range Increase participation and skills e.g. train peer counsellors	Raise identification with union; specific outcomes such as creating body of HIV/AIDS peer counsellors

*Source: Author A*