



**ENHANCING
AGENCY AND
FOSTERING HOPE
IN A GLOBAL
SOCIOLOGY
COURSE**

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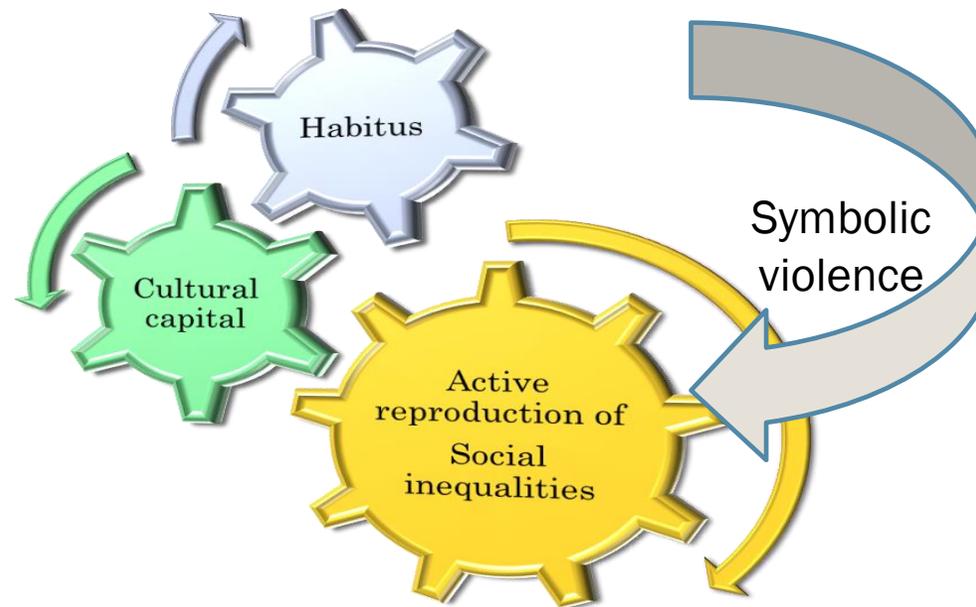
MY CLASS CONTEXT

YEAR LEVEL(S), CURRICULUM AREA, CULTURAL HERITAGE OF STUDENTS



- As an enabling program, UniSA College offers an open entry Foundation Studies program and Diploma programs (with minimal entry requirements)
- **STUDENTS BELONGING TO EQUITY GROUPS:**
- Our student cohort is diverse comprising of various nationalities, ages and educational levels:
- ATSI (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders)
- Students with Disability
- Low-socio economic status' (Low- SES)
- First in Family
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students (CALD)
- Students of refugee backgrounds (SfRBs)
- Rural/regional and
- Women from non-traditional areas of study

Social Reproduction Thesis: Bourdieu





WHAT WAS THE PROBLEM?

- What was your pedagogical challenge?
- Providing socially just and transformative education for those who have previously experienced education as a gate keeper.
- Previously introduction to social structures left students feeling overwhelmed with world's global issues and to extent powerless.



RESEARCH QUESTION

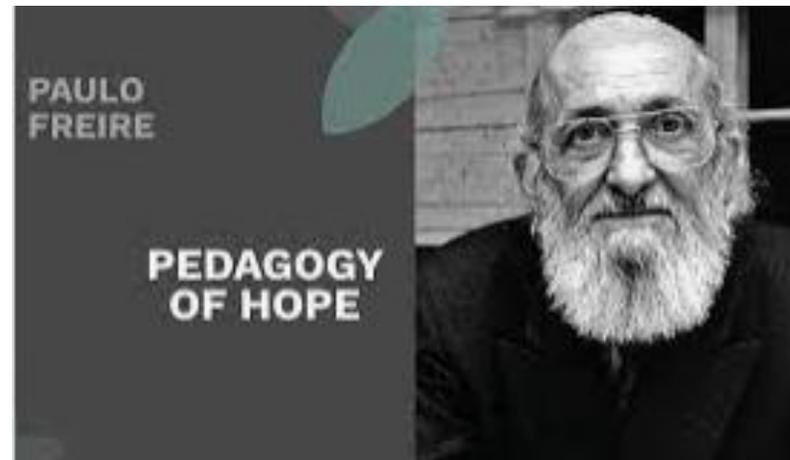
- How does utilising elements of enabling pedagogy and pedagogies of hope – specifically being *culturally responsive* in an attempt to achieve *transformation* and enhance student's *social justice* commitment - increase students' engagement with and understanding of complex sociological concepts and enhance student's sense of agency and global citizenship?

CONNECTING WITH CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY?

- What aspect of enabling pedagogy did I work with?
 - Social justice commitment
 - Transformative
 - Culturally responsive +
 - Pedagogies of Hope

PEDAGOGIES OF HOPE

- Hope may be construed as a belief that a different future is possible and thus students are called to “reflect and take action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire, 1996: 33).
- This is the key aim of education and he terms it as ‘conscientization’.
- ‘Conscientization’ is a shared ‘consciousness of oppression, leading to a shared sense of knowledge, and a shared commitment to fighting oppression” (Jackson, 2010: 464).
- Freire describes this educational process as involving a ‘denouncing’ of unjust social structures and relations, and announcing new, less repressive forms of relationship and being in the world (Freire 1985: 57).



PEDAGOGIES OF HOPE

- ‘Pedagogy of hope’ is associated with critical theory—and with Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux or bell hooks.
- **Freire** (1998, p. 69) saw hope as “a natural, possible, and necessary impetus in the context of our unfinishedness”, **Giroux** observes that hope “gives substance to the recognition that every present is incomplete” (2002, p. 38).
- According to both Freire and Giroux, the individual’s desire to believe that transformed futures are possible is part of our shared human condition.
- Freire (2004) promotes *hope* as ‘necessary’ but recognizes that it is ‘not enough’:

Hope is an ontological need; it demands an anchoring in practice. As an ontological need, hope needs practice in order to become historical concreteness. One of the tasks of the progressive educator, through a serious, correct political analysis, is to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be (Freire, 2004: 2-3)

PEDAGOGIES OF HOPE

- **hooks** (2003) takes up this term in a similar way, positioning it as a necessary driving force behind the demanding and disorientating practice of teaching in a system of domination
- hooks specifically outlines this system of domination as that of a ‘white capitalist patriarchy’ (1994, 2003), in which individuals experience processes of power, both privilege and oppression, in relation to their ‘race’, gender and class.
- She further develops Freire’s work—as she re-imagines the term ‘liberation’ as freedom from racist, sexist and classist forms of oppression, and as the decentering of ‘race’, gender and class based privilege within education systems (see Carolissen et al. 2011).
- It is this form of liberation, this decentring of ‘race’, gender and class based privilege within the society that we base the Global Sociology course on.



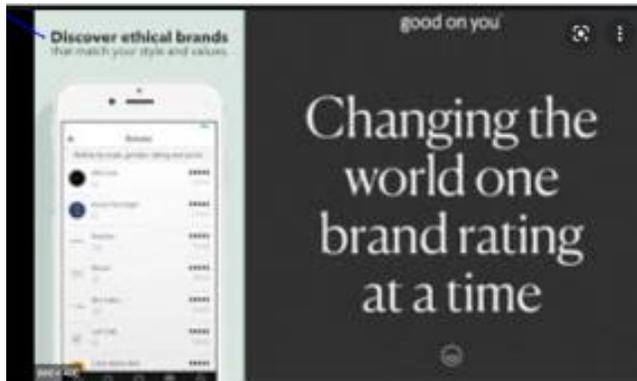
PEDAGOGIES OF HOPE

- A hooksian vision of education that I adopt in this action research project, draws on Freirean principles of education as political and liberatory.
- It also recognises and seeks to decentre the complex power relations that manifest in the embodied lived experience of ‘race’, gender and class, and it is one that thrives in the creation of learning communities.
- hooks (2003) highlights the capacity for student learning and transformation to occur in the classroom.
- As Freire (1994) reminds us, **learning and transformation is equally necessary and possible for both the teacher and the student.**
- A similar version that applies to the enabling context is that of enabling pedagogies – which is another theoretical framework utilised in this action research project.

WHAT IS TAUGHT IN INTRODUCTION TO GLOBAL ISSUES & IDENTITIES? THE CONTEXT

- Students are introduced to the area of Global Sociology exploring the basis of sociological thought and inquiry;
- Sociological theories;
- Issues of power and identity, especially in regards to gender and sexuality and social class and race and ethnicity.
- The nature of socialisation and culture;
- Power of the institutions (like the government) and
- Particular meanings which have dominated the way social order and identities have been constructed and defined (such as multiculturalism; consumerism; the welfare state and globalisation).

- *Why is border protection such a big issue? How does this impact on increasing Islamophobia? Or what is an individuals' role is in a society which seems to be unjust for many – not just in Australia but globally? What is Australia's responsibility to the rest of the world?*



WHAT I TRIED TO DO DIFFERENTLY. WHY?

- I updated the lecture content on structures/institutions highlighting also agency
- Added additional reflective post entry closing the course's theoretical content on the emphasis of agency and people power
- Added a final essay question that explores this further
- I also added a *Good on You* app that enhances Global Citizenship – ethical consumption

WHAT HAPPENED: OUTCOME: ENHANCING SENSE OF AGENCY

The transformation in student's thinking about the world, the social issues globally and agency were evident in the earliest stages of the Action Research:

- Early in the course student feedback:

I found the content (on TNCs) mostly worrying as I realise how few people have so much power in the world, which is something I find worrying as these few people can affect the lives of billions in many ways...which are mainly negative (Student comment, journal entry)

- Later in the course feedback by the same student:

Before taking this course, I had a very pessimistic world view and believed that people power couldn't make a difference in the slightest, but seeing how all of these social movements have changed the world has helped me gain a more optimistic world view. While the opposite is true that individuals and social movements can also have negative impacts on the world, I believe the chances of that lessen as people become more united globally (Student comment, journal entry 9)

WHAT HAPPENED? OUTCOMES ON SENSE OF AGENCY

- **Update to lecture content:** addressing institutions that reinforce social inequalities + examples of social movements and people power from popular culture to highlight people's power and agency.
- Students began making connections with this and in their assignments they have often selected to focus on discussing social movements like **Black Lives Matter** (where up to 26 million people participated in protests and rallies in 2020 making it the largest movement in US history).
- The students not only selected to write about this movement but often reflected on their sense of **agency** and **activism** highlighting their own involvement in the movement's tactics over social media, whether this was by sharing posts, signing petitions or attending the rallies that took place in Adelaide.
- In their reflections students showed a sense of pride and achievement about these forms of activism and a sense of hope.



WHAT HAPPENED? OUTCOMES: 'CONSCIENTIZATION'

- 'Conscientization': renouncing oppressive structures and announcing hope (Friere, 1996).
- In one of the reflection journals questioning: 'How significant is culture as identity marker in your life?' a well engaged, mature aged Aboriginal student reflected:

I am a Kuyani and Arrernte woman, so culture to me is an important aspect of my life, especially because my great grandmother was from the Stolen Generation and my language and culture was taken from my family; this has resulted in me looking into my heritage and learning my culture (Excerpt from student reflection journal, 2020).

- Furthermore, this student was passionate about the topic of 'people power' in the course, so in the last journal for the course she outlines:

'There are so many movements today that work to improve the quality of life. This is power that comes from the people and can help structure policies or even get justice for others. With the Black Lives Matter there is hope that if it continues its trajectory, then we will see major improvement for the minority not just in America but in other countries where the minority are being oppressed or brutalized (Excerpt from student reflection journal, 2020).

WHAT HAPPENED? TRANSFORMATION

- Transformation is promoted by enabling pedagogy and pedagogies of hope as the ultimate aim.
- It occurs because the curriculum teaches critical thought, which is essential for not only university learning but also for student's ability to create new perceptions of a hopeful personal future.
- Achieving transformation in the way students read the world and their lifeworlds – and enhancing students social justice commitment were the central aims of this action research. This awareness of significance of **social justice** and fostering of **hope** that a better world is possible is echoed in the following student comment:
- *I gained so much from this course, it has really opened my mind to the bigger picture and the wider world we live in. So many people in the world scraping together to make ends meet, don't even have a safe home for themselves and their family to live in, subjected to many exploitations in work and society. It has really educated me on how to be better and how to make the small changes to be more inclusive of people that search for that real sense of belonging. And just how important it is that we are all more educated in this area to make changes for the better within ourselves and in the world we all live in* (Student comment from Week 14 Online Forum, SP5 2019, HUMS 1048).

WHAT HAPPENED? TRANSFORMATION & ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

- Implementing pedagogies of hope increased students' engagement with and understanding of complex sociological concepts but it enhanced their sense of global responsibility and global citizenship. The following student comment attests to this:
- *I believe after doing this course, my eyes and mind have been opened up to what is going on around me more, especially in regards to globalization. Being in my 40s, I have seen and felt the way the world has changed, to become more isolated with the fast pace of life. I think I could call myself a global citizen now, rather than sticking my head in the sand :) (Student comment from Week 13 Online Forum, SP5 2019, HUMS 1048)*
- This echoes Freire's articulation of 'praxis': 'reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it' (1966: 33), further accentuating how important pedagogies of hope are and highlighting the purpose of education as innately political.
- This encouragement of students to consider how they can make a difference in the world as opposed to merely being a bystander in life, reflects 'the possibility of active citizenship' to which Giroux (1997, p. 106) refers.

WHAT HAPPENED?

WHAT'S MAKING A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE?

- For students
- Once provided with hopeful messages about the possibility of agency students felt more positive about people having power over their lives
- Number of students downloaded Goodonyou app

*Student 'transformation' here is not the improvement of the economically productive self, but is grounded in an understanding that the world as marked by inequality, and oppressive power relations **can and should be** challenged or 'acted upon' in the name of 'human liberation' (Freire, 1996: 21).*

- Providing a balanced approach outlining both structures and agency challenges the traditional views of sociology as a 'doom and gloom' class



WHAT HAVE I LEARNED ABOUT MY PRACTICE AND ACTION RESEARCH?

- What have I learned about my practice?
- Updating the curriculum and assessment –enhanced student's reflection about agency; in the final essay most students selected 'global citizenship' question arguing it is very important;
- Personal challenge to overcome pragmatic IR power-relations- thinking – feeling more hopeful with pedagogies of hope approach
- Providing a balanced approach has impacted positively on my own pedagogy – seeing a sense of hope, agency and activism in students has enthused me to continue with this practice:
- *This teacher actively raises awareness and makes students feel like they are not helpless against the adversities in the world but part of the solution* (Student course evaluation comment, 2020).
- What have I learned about collaborative action research?
- Sharing ideas, discussing teaching challenges and how my colleagues have dealt with these has been enormously beneficial to improving my own pedagogical approaches



THANK YOU

- Questions?