

Critical Pedagogy as a Tool for Resistance in the Neoliberal University?

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Abstract

Research shows that academics in the neoliberal university experience increased workload, pressure to perform, and to attain funding for their institutions, which affects their mental health and leads many to leave the profession altogether. This study analyses whether Critical Pedagogy enables academics to resist the neoliberal university from within, by implementing approaches that teach students to think critically about their surroundings so they can begin to challenge the political system that negatively impacts not only on higher education but society as a whole.

The research involved in-depth interviews with eight academics who self-identify as having some affinity with Critical Pedagogy. The aim was to gain a sense of their understanding of Critical Pedagogy, their use of it in the classroom, and their perception of its usefulness in their role as educators within the neoliberal university. The findings were interpreted using thematic analysis through a critical realist lens, thus the research does not only present the participants' reality, but also highlights underpinning structures and mechanisms that produce these experiences.

The findings illustrate the various different ways the participants understand and enact Critical Pedagogy in their classrooms, highlighting the vastness of a field that has grown and developed over more than five decades. They also highlight the importance of connecting what is learnt within the classroom to wider socio-political movements outside the classroom and the academy in order for it to have a meaningful impact on society. While those interviewed believe there to be some level of opportunity for Critical Pedagogy to be transformative and emancipatory for students, they all acknowledged the limitations the neoliberal university imposes on academics who work within it and cannot afford to lose their jobs. Thus, while this research cannot change these conditions, it clearly highlights the structures present in the academy that restrict academics' potential to achieve what they intend to do when becoming critical pedagogues.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Especially over the last two decades, the neoliberal policy agenda has taken a firm hold on the higher education system. As a result, universities have been subjected to commodification and have become part of the marketised landscape in the UK and thus ‘the meaning and purpose of higher education have become besieged by a phalanx of narrow economic and political interest’ (Giroux, 2010, p.188). As government funding has been reduced tremendously, universities have to generate income in other ways, by accepting more students who pay large fees and by securing funding from research councils. Accordingly, academics employed by the university face increasing workloads, decreased job security and are subjected to and ruled by surveillance mechanisms and performativity measures, which have changed the way they approach their work and relate to students. Satisfying the demands of the student-consumer, monitored by student evaluation forms, publishing papers and attaining research funding for the university have become the norm and have ‘overridden the moral purpose (...) central to academic labour’ (Sutton, 2017, p.627).

Situated within the field of Critical University Studies (CUS), this research highlights the detrimental effects neoliberal policies have on universities and how this affects those working within. Seeking opportunity for resistance, this study investigates academics’ understanding of Critical Pedagogy, how they believe they implement and embody it in the classroom and whether they consider Critical Pedagogy to enable them to resist the neoliberal structures imposed on them by the current neoliberal university.

The literature review contains an exploration of the field of CUS, discussing neoliberalism’s effects on universities and their staff, an examination of three well-known scholars in the field of Critical Pedagogy, giving the reader an overview of the field and its main aims, as well as a section on its shortcomings, especially related to the topic of race. The methodology of this research is informed by my understanding of Critical Pedagogy and analysed through a critical realist lens. Like education, research is political and, drawing on critical realism, the data gathered by interviewing eight participants is explored with that in mind, using thematic analysis not only to examine the participants’ experiences and understandings, but also the underlying structures within society that lead to these experiences. The analysis and findings have been combined in order to link participants’ accounts to the topics previously established in the literature review, and the chapter illustrates the various ways the academics interviewed understand and implement Critical Pedagogy in their classrooms. Additionally, the findings

draw attention to the importance of linking what is learnt inside the classroom to the outside world in order to transform society.

1.1 Disclosures

A number of things need mentioning at this point. Firstly, while the data collection of this research was predominantly conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted beforehand but several classroom observations had to be cancelled, the writing of this thesis happened largely throughout the pandemic. Naturally, the pandemic has not only impacted on me as the researcher and writer, it has also led to sections being written at different stages of the pandemic, however, where it is important for the reader to know the time of writing, this will be specified in the particular section.

Secondly, the research topic involves a discussion of race, therefore it is important to highlight the reasons for specific terminologies used throughout this research as there are various debates and disagreements between as well as within communities, making it difficult for any scholar to find one that is accepted by everyone. Thus, I will outline my thinking in order to be able to consistently use certain terms throughout the thesis, albeit there being some inconsistencies when direct quotes by other writers with differing beliefs are used. Throughout the thesis, I use the terms People of Colour as well as racially minoritised. Both these terms are used to replace the previously used BAME, which lacks specificity. While this can be said for People of Colour too, more non-White people seem to identify as such, especially those who do not categorise themselves as Black, such as one of the participants in this study. The term racially minoritised ‘provides a social constructionist approach to understanding that people are actively minoritised by others rather than naturally existing as a minority’ and ‘confirms that so-called minoritisation is a social process shaped by power’ (Milner and Jumbe, 2020, p.419) When speaking about people of African descent in particular, I use the term Black. Throughout, I have chosen to capitalise the word Black as well as White. While Black is often capitalised as a way of owning the Black identity, one that is deserved due to historical wrong doings at the hands of White people and the continuing presence of White supremacy, it is sometimes suggested that White should not be capitalised as it being a lower case ‘represents a righting of a long-standing wrong’ (Appiah, 2020). However, I believe it to enable the assumption that White is the default position and neutral, allowing ‘White people to sit out of conversations about race’ removing ‘accountability from White people’s and White institutions’ involvement in racism’ (Thúy Nguyễn and Pendleton, 2020). Not capitalising White suggests it being ‘an objective feature of populations’ and “treating *Black* as a name and *white* as a fact would exempt people from

history – a rather troubling history at that’ (Appiah, 2020). However, I am aware that my explanation and opinion will not be shared by everyone.

Literature Review

This literature review consists of two chapters. The first one focuses in detail on the field of CUS, which this study is located in and which functions as the backdrop for this research. Having an understanding of the field is important for understanding the circumstances of those interviewed for this research and the issues they encounter. The second chapter focuses on Critical Pedagogy and consists of separate sections discussing three well-known critical pedagogues and their work in order to illustrate the similarities but also the difference between scholars, but also how they build on each others' work and develop it further by emphasising what is most meaningful to them. By giving three examples, the reader is able to learn more about Critical Pedagogy and its aims, without being overwhelmed by the large number of scholars writing in the field and the vast amount of literature that has accumulated over more than half a century. The scholars were chosen because of their meaningful contribution to the field but this in no way indicates that others' contributions are less valuable. Especially the contribution of those who have only been contributing to the field more recently is extremely important for its positive development and advancement in areas where there are shortcomings, which is discussed in a separate section at the end of the second chapter.

Chapter 2: Critical University Studies

The following chapter focuses on a relatively new field called Critical University Studies (CUS). While CUS is considered a new and emerging field, it is only emerging under its current name and various texts written in the last four or five decades are crucial for its development. CUS is of particular interest for this research as it problematises the neoliberalisation of higher education and highlights its impact on staff and students. As many of the issues experienced and described by those interviewed as part of this research are discussed in detail in the work published in the field of CUS, CUS builds the backdrop of this research and puts the interviewees' experiences in the context of the current university, highlighting their needs as well as hopes for Critical Pedagogy.

While CUS has gained momentum since 2017, some scholars suggest that the work currently written can be considered 'third generation CUS' (Petrina and Ross, 2014, p.62). Therefore, it could be argued that E.P. Thompson's *Warwick University Ltd.*, in which he and some of his students publicised the scandal of Warwick University spying on staff and students, can be considered a founding text. Originally written in 1970, Thompson highlighted that 'higher education has become almost universally subordinated to commercial economic imperatives', with an increased focus on 'employability of students rather than their education' and 'knowledge in the form of skills and research outputs' (2014, p.iv). More than two decades later, and thus perhaps part of the second generation, Bill Readings (1996) problematised the corporatisation of higher education, universities turning into businesses to partake in the free market economy of capitalism, with students as their customers and administrations as managers in his book *The University in Ruins*. Additionally, in their book *Academic Capitalism*, Slaughter and Leslie (1997, p.243), examining various aspects of academic work, predicted that universities of the future would hire more part-time and less full-time staff 'until teaching departments have small cores of full-time faculty and large contingents of part-time faculty, graduate assistants, and technical staff'. This prediction has since become reality, with the addition of a rise in zero-hour contracts.

CUS, as the name suggests, is concerned with the state of the higher education system. According to Williams (2012), those who write in the field of CUS are not only concerned with 'the ways in which current practices serve power or wealth and contribute to injustice or inequality rather than social hope', they also look at the university and its purpose more broadly. The "critical" suggests the 'work's oppositional stance' and "studies" indicates the importance of 'its cross-disciplinary character' (ibid.). This is supported by Samuels (2017, p.1), who

describes CUS as an ‘interdisciplinary endeavor’, that ‘employs history, sociology, economics, and political science to analyze the ways higher education is being shaped by larger cultural forces’. As these cultural forces, and especially their impact on universities and those who work or study within them, have been discussed at large, the following section will not only contain work published under the name of CUS, but also draw on previous work that, in many cases, provides the backdrop for more current work and is important for understanding the field.

2.1 Neoliberalism and the neoliberalisation of higher education

While the seeds for the ‘basic ideological infrastructure for neoliberalism’ had been sown by the Mont Pèlerin Society, a group of intellectuals, decades earlier (Srnicek and Williams, 2015, p.54), James Callaghan, Prime Minister and Labour Party leader at the time, introduced neoliberal ideas to the public in his famous speech at Ruskin College in 1976, in which he emphasised the need for schools to supply workers to the industry’s needs. His neoliberal framing of education paved the way for education to cater to economic demands. With the appointment of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister of the UK in the late 1970s and Ronald Reagan taking office as the US in 1980, the neoliberal project gained momentum and the accompanying policies slowly but steadily dismantled the securities previously part of the welfare state (Fitzner, 2017). According to Harvey (2007, p.2) it was proposed that ‘human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade’. ‘Four key features (...) distinguish’ the neoliberal state from the welfare state, two of which are of particular relevance for this thesis: firstly, an emphasis on the promotion of ‘international competitiveness and sociotechnical innovation’ with the focus on ‘innovation and competitiveness, rather than on full employment and planning’, and secondly, the subordination of ‘social policy (...) to economic policy’ (Jessop, 2002, p.459). Harvey (2007, p.2) describes neoliberalism as the ‘central guiding principle of economic thought and management’ that strives to create markets where there are none. Those emerging markets as well as those existing are to be deregulated and state-owned provisions are increasingly privatised (ibid.).

State intervention is to be limited within the neoliberal system. The reasoning against government involvement in markets is that local knowledge transcends government knowledge in the facilitation of well-functioning markets (Harvey, 2007), as local knowledge is deemed more valuable and effective than the ‘text-book-type knowledge’ governments would use for their planning (Ollsen and Peters, 2002, p.317). However, manipulating ‘the economy in favor of capital investment’ is certainly welcomed (Fitzner, 2017, p.221), and the ‘paradoxical

increase in intervention' that during 'a brief transitional period' strengthens the neoliberal project somehow legitimises government involvement (Jessop, 2002, p.454). Another exception and an example of "acceptable" intervention by the government is the £850 billion bank bailout during the financial crisis, where government intervened in order to save banks from collapsing. While this was followed by a 'short-lived backlash against bank executives (...) and widespread criticism of 'fatcat' bonuses in the City', Grimshaw and Rubery (2012, p.43) suggest that the 'policy response to public demands for stronger banking regulations' only enabled 'neoliberal roots' to 'reassert themselves' when the following government review 'argued against re-regulation of the banking industry and rejected tax on banks or on bonuses'.

Despite the bank bailout, the impact of the financial crisis on the global economy was tremendous and the subsequently introduced austerity measures still impact on societies in various ways today, more than a decade later. According to Hall (2015, p.1), it was not only the crisis itself that negatively affected universities in the UK but also the government's responses to it and the amplification of 'the twin forces of marketisation and financialisation that are reconstituting the higher education sector for production, circulation and accumulation of value'. Instead of producing 'socially-useful knowledge' (ibid., p.3), production in universities now focuses on work that, with the help of technology, can be reproduced endlessly and used for teaching (read: sold) in as many locations as possible at any time (Barber, Donnelly and Rizvi, 2013), on measurable outcomes that can be compared and used for advertising purposes by the institution, such as their rating in national or global league tables (Amsler and Bolsman, 2012), and on work that fulfils the criteria to attain funding for the university (Webb, 2018).

Globalisation and the centrality of the development of the knowledge economy have put the spotlight on higher education regarding economic production 'because of its roles in educating people for the new economy and in creating new knowledge' (Altbach, 2006, p.122). Paradoxically, 'as the public university grows in importance, its support and funding are downsized' (Samuels, 2017, p.1). The decrease of government funding led universities to find other ways to generate income, if possible, in ways that seem natural. Being presented as natural and inevitable is one of neoliberalism's key features and enables its implementation, 'it takes technological change and globalization as given, depersonalizes them, fetishizes market forces, and fails to mention the economic, political, and social forces that drive these processes' (Jessop, 2002, p.468). None of these processes happen by accident, however, them being presented as such enable a wide-ranging acceptance and inevitably strengthen Margaret Thatcher's famous phrase "TINA – There is no alternative". The introduction of these processes into higher education, or more specifically the 'illusion of each institution inventing the

processes for itself, voluntarily taking neoliberal strategies up in the interest of competing' with other universities, is described as piecemeal functionalism and allows neoliberalism to take hold of institutions 'without drawing either analysis or resistance' (Davies and Bansel, 2007, p.251). Accordingly, Samuels (2017, p.1) questions how it is possible to educate students in universities that are paramount 'in reinforcing the ideological myths that naturalize and rationalize the political and economic status quo', a question that echoes some of the participants' questions on how they are meant to teach students to challenge discrimination and White supremacy in institutions that are built on and uphold such values.

Especially in higher education institutions, the neoliberal mindset is strongly embedded and rarely questioned. A time before student fees were the norm is difficult to imagine for most current students (Maisuria, 2014). Students were not charged until the implementation of the second part of the 1998 Teaching and Higher Education Act and students from disadvantaged backgrounds were even given maintenance grants to cover their living expenses (Pennell and West, 2005). However, as recommended in The Dearing Report of 1997, which was the result of a 'real shift in policies' that 'occurred under the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher', students were required to contribute to their tuition fees (ibid., p.128). This contribution was deemed necessary in order to balance the loss of funding that the higher education sector would experience in the following decades (The Dearing Report, 1997). It was stated that 'through scholarship and research, higher education provides a national resource of knowledge and expertise for the benefit of out [*sic*] international competitiveness and quality of life, and provides a basis for responding to social and economic change through innovation and lifelong learning' (The Dearing Report, 1997, p.4), highlighting a new focus on knowledge production. Additionally, Thatcher claimed that students paying, even if partly, for their education, would lead them to make better decisions about what to study (Hillman, 2013) and institutions would naturally become more responsive to students' needs, thus improving their quality.

Students' contribution then rose to £3000 per year (Johnston, 2013) until 2010, when a review chaired by Lord Browne, consequently referred to as the Browne review and titled *Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education*, proposed that students are to pay their fees of £9000, in full, as a 'surer way to drive up quality' (Browne, 2010, p.8). Browne (2010, p.4) suggested, institutions would have to compete for students and increase their efforts to meet students' demands, thus putting 'students at the heart of the system' (p.4). However, it is difficult to miss the framing of higher education in economic terms, even in the review's foreword, where the reader is reminded that while England possesses 'a disproportionate number of best performing

HEIs in the world (...) our competitive edge is being challenged by advances made elsewhere' (ibid., p.2). Additionally, it is highlighted that '[a] degree is of benefit both to the holder, through higher levels of social contribution and higher lifetime earnings, and to the nation, through higher economic growth rates and the improved health of society' (ibid.). As Collini (2010) summarises 'Browne is contending that we should no longer think of higher education as the provision of a public good, articulated through educational judgement and largely financed by public funds', but that instead 'we should think of it as a lightly regulated market in which consumer demand' determines the "products" 'offered by service providers' who compete within the marketplace.

As the previously described developments highlight, current university culture is inextricably linked with the neoliberal project and thus 'not only operates at the political and ideological levels', but also on a cultural level, allowing culture, politics and ideology to 'produce and reproduce one another in a system that is designed to perpetuate its own dominant hegemony at all costs' (Maisuria, 2014, p.288). Not only does the introduction of fees, the later raise, and eventually the scrapping of the cap on student numbers accepted to study at any university bring in money for the institution, it also reinforces the idea of university degrees as a good that can, and should be, bought for personal advancement, especially if the majority of young people are doing the same, making it seem as the only way to secure a job later on. Appreciating universities' involvement in the market, a summary published by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2009, p.2) stated 'universities are the most important mechanism' the country has 'for generating (...) and transforming knowledge'. However, there is no mention of the negative side effect of students becoming consumers who pay money to institutions that the government had previously stopped funding, thus students having to pick up the tab the government left. As a result, several participants noted that a number of their students arrive at university with a consumer mindset, expecting teaching to be delivered, without them having to put in the work, something that will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

As already mentioned, neoliberal policies affect higher education in various ways and the following section focuses on a few of these in more detail, especially what it means for universities to run like businesses and subsequently the impact this has on the working conditions of academics, who often draw on their own experiences when writing within CUS, allowing them the space to resist or protest from within the system that shapes their realities of what it means to be an academic. As those interviewed for this research continue to work in universities, their experiences as academics are shaped by neoliberal policies and therefore

several themes discussed in this section have been mentioned during the interviews and are therefore especially relevant for the current research.

2.2 Marketisation in higher education

In order to assure a functioning market, which is crucial for the neoliberal project, social goods, such as education, became part of the marketised landscape. In order to promote marketisation, competition between at least two providers and one consumer is necessary, as it creates pressure for the providers to either lower their price, which Treanor (2005) describes as the ‘simplest “market force”’, or improve their services in order to gain competitive advantage over the other provider. In this scenario, more providers mean more competition and more consumers translate into increased pressure. Thus, increasing the numbers of universities in the country translates into more providers. Allowing further education institutions to become degree-awarding higher education institutions in the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 thus increased the numbers of providers dramatically. Noteworthy is also the act’s wording of ‘transferring further education *corporations* to higher education sector’ (emphasis added) (Further and Higher Education Act 1992).

However, increasing the number of providers was not the only motivation for this change. These post-1992 institutions were intended to be more business-facing and offer vocational disciplines, thus allowing them to become universities also began the process of widening access to higher education, also described as massification. As stated in The Dearing Report in 1999, ‘the UK must now compete in increasingly competitive international markets where the proliferation of knowledge, technological advances and the information revolution mean that labour market demand for those with higher level education and training is growing’ (p.4). Accordingly, and in line with the introduction of student fees that would become some institutions’ main source of income along with research funding, more people than ever were encouraged to study at university. The report further stated that ‘higher education has a key role in delivering national policies and meeting industry’s needs’ (ibid.), which coincides with many post-1992 institutions’ focus. In terms of widening access, Scott (2012) points out, it is the post-1992 institutions that ‘have done the heavy lifting in terms of overall student expansion – and in widening participation’ and educated students who, most likely, would not have gone to university otherwise. This is important as investing in a degree was deemed a ‘sound financial and personal investment’ (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2016, p.7), thus “selling” the idea of university as a way to enhance one’s social mobility that would benefit the individual, while the subsequently produced ‘graduates are central’ to the UK’s ‘prosperity and success as a knowledge economy’ (p.8).

Therefore, ‘corporate methods and goals’ were installed (Williams, 2012), leading to universities being run increasingly like businesses (Beckmann, Cooper and Hill, 2009) and becoming further removed from the idea of the university as a public good. A number of influential people have vested interest in a marketised university, such as ‘administrators, politicians, foundations, and corporate interests who are deeply connected by shared economic interests, ideological orientations, and resource pools’ (Steffen, 2017, p.24). As a result, the struggle against neoliberal forces has been at the forefront of many academics who envision a university that serves society rather than economic imperatives. Unfortunately, a ‘recognition of economic importance of higher education and the necessity for economic viability has seen initiatives to promote greater entrepreneurial skills’ and led to ‘the development of new performative measures to enhance output and to establish and achieve targets’ (Olssen and Peters, 2005, p.313). Accordingly, the current university is often described as the “entrepreneurial university”, a ‘performative university’ that has to ‘perform’ to survive (Barnett, 2011, p.443). Both entrepreneurialism and performativity are important concepts within the neoliberal university and as measurable outcomes become ever more important for institutions that are having to advertise themselves in order to stay relevant in the market (Hall and Smyth, 2016), the pressure is passed from leadership to academics. However, academics’ autonomy has been significantly reduced by the new public management agenda (NPM). NPM, a form of organisational managerialism that spread from the private sector into the public sector from the mid-1980s onwards is described as ‘anti-state/pro-market, anti-provider/pro-consumer, and anti-bureaucracy/pro-network’ by Deem, Hillyard and Reed (2007, p.8). Not only did it transform existing power structures in institutions generally, it ‘intended to weaken, if not destroy the regulatory ethic and machinery that had protected unaccountable professionals’ (ibid., p.10). Instead it ‘compels individuals to perform in the best interest of the organisation’, as their performance is monitored and they will be held accountable if they do not (Fitzgerald et al., 2012, p.3). As Deem, Hillyard and Reed (2007, p.11) point out, ‘established occupational organisational identities that once defined “public sector work”’, have changed tremendously as a result of these changes, as those within the university have internalised and accepted their new reality of ‘monitoring systems and control technologies’, associated with NPM. To this, academics have responded in two ways, some have succumbed to the pressures and now ‘conform to the demands of new public management’ and others ‘resist (...) the “knowledge factory” or the corporate university’ (Fitzgerald et al., 2012, p.6), many of which therefore write in the field of CUS.

As institutions must do all they can to stay relevant in the current competitive environment, one of the ways universities can expand their reach as well as their income from student fees, is the expansion into other countries, where, with the help of technology, they can award degrees to students they will most likely never meet (Altbach, 2006). Thus, universities do not only recruit students in their surrounding areas, they also aim to attract those who live far away and seek to graduate from an institution that is considered prestigious, with a degree that is more valuable to students, similar to the incentives international students have to study abroad. This is problematic for various reasons. Not only does it potentially undermine the importance of local universities and reinforces the idea of “the west does it best”, it also is ‘a profit-seeking endeavour through which American or European universities sell their brands and services’ (Williams, 2012), while portraying the endeavour as an act of bringing “quality education” to those who otherwise would not have access to it. Williams (2012) rightly asks whether the aim should not be to support said areas to develop and strengthen their own universities instead of using them as a way to profit from afar. Instead, British education is sold as a good to those who will pay for it, not only outside the country but also within the UK to those who come as international students.

2.3 International students

Until 1979, international students’ fees were subsidised by the government in the same way as home students’ fees, but with more international students studying in Britain than in any other country and a continuous rise in student numbers, the government introduced full cost fees for international students, turning fees into an income opportunity rather than an expenditure (Belcher, 1987). This was considered important as ‘links between higher education in the UK and elsewhere in the world’ were increasing as students became more mobile and higher education was regarded as ‘an important educational export in its own right’ (The Dearing Report, 1997, p.4), again highlighting the importance of education as profitable good.

As a result, in 2000 the government invested £5m into a worldwide marketing campaign that would turn UK higher education into a brand in order to increase the number of international students, setting a target of recruiting an additional 50,000 students from overseas within the next two years (BBC, 2000). Through this campaign, a ‘clear and competitive identity’ was to be established, one that would attract more people to study in UK universities (Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana, 2007, p.942). Said branding happened on two levels. Firstly, it was established what attracts international students to study in the UK, with the ‘educational standard and its recognised qualification worldwide’ being the most important factor for students, followed by ‘ease of university admissions and of immigration procedures’ (Binsardi

and Ekwulugo, 2003, p.324). Secondly, branding needed to happen on the level of institutions. Not only does the UK compete in the global market, UK institutions also compete on a national or even regional level. Thus, it is important for individual institutions to establish their own brand in order to gain competitive advantage over other institutions in the country, while their branding needs to align with that of the country at the same time. Crucial is that all university products, such as its ethos and mission, programmes of study and values have to match its branding, which Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana (2007) describe as ‘harmonization’. However, they point out, it does not mean it actually aligns, it may only do so in rhetoric. Despite many academics at the time highlighting that branding does not belong in the higher education sector, its ethos is now a firm feature in UK universities.

In order to compete for overseas students, universities seek new ways of advertising themselves to prospective students. While research from almost two decades ago suggested the lowering of student fees as ‘the best way to attract more international students’ (Binsardi and Ekwulugo, 2003, p.324) the opposite occurred once the fees increased, and more international students than ever “happily” pay large fees for their British education. An explanation for this could be the belief that the better the university, the higher the price of the degree, making it seem that one simply has to invest in order to receive the best education, which is impossible for those who do not have the financial means. Additionally, large sums are invested in advertising campaigns to attract new students. This expenditure is criticised heavily by The University and College Union (UCU) who stress that while staff are underpaid and overworked, universities prioritise spending money on advertisement as ‘institutions appear to favour style over substance’ (Hall and Weale, 2019). Buildings such as The University of Sheffield’s distinctive Diamond that cost the institution £81m or the university’s Social Science building with its ‘state-of-the-art research hub, bringing together cross-cutting research centres in an innovative working environment, which is currently under construction (to many neighbours’ detriment) (University of Sheffield, 2020), are part of the institution’s agenda to renovate campuses and erect ever more modern and shiny buildings that look great on prospectuses. As pointed out, ‘we know (...) that students and parents, when they go on open days, they are impressed by shiny buildings’ (Hillman, quoted in Hale and Viña, 2016), thus the more impressive the campus, the more likely students will choose to study at the institution so the more the institution will invest in aesthetics.

2.4 Competition and Performativity

On a large scale, ‘competition forces individual capitalists to produce commodities as cheaply as possible in order to maximise their chances of acquiring a greater share of the market than that of their competitors’ (Banfield, Maisuria and Raduntz, 2016, p.6). For universities this translates into widening their customer base to other countries, producing teaching material for less and saving money by paying their staff less while expecting them to work more. This not only changes what it means to be an academic, the ongoing casualisation of academic work has a tremendous impact on the experiences of everyone within universities, whether they are staff or students. As a survey conducted by the UCU and published in 2019 shows, 70% of researchers working in the higher education sector as well as ‘37,000 teaching staff’ are employed on ‘fixed-term contracts only’ (UCU, 2019, p.3). Additionally, it is estimated that another 71,000 teachers are part of the workforce in universities, half of them in Russell Group Universities, but as they are considered ‘atypical academics’, they are ‘not counted in the main staff records’, have ‘fewer employment rights’, are hourly paid and are believed to do almost half of their work unpaid (UCU, 2019, p.3-4). Their insecure working conditions and financial insecurity not only affect their mental health tremendously, it also makes it difficult for them to do things such as planning a family or buying a house, and many have more than one job in order to make ends meet. As Sparkes (2013, p.448) highlights, ‘a crisis exists’ and ‘how this crisis is experienced and its affects [*sic*] distributed are likely to be influenced by gender, age, social class, ethnicity, (dis)ability, sexuality and religion’. As a recently published article about the University of Sheffield highlights, ‘of the 1,873 staff currently employed by the University on zero-hours contracts, 1,244 are women’, which is ‘almost twice the amount of men employed on zero-hour contracts’ despite there only being 15% more women employed by the institution (Gregory, 2021). This means that they are not guaranteed to have a set minimum of working hours in any given week, meaning they will not be paid regularly. As a colleague and I have argued elsewhere, universities employ PhD students to teach, supervise and mark assignments, marketing it as necessary experience for those who want to work in academia after graduation and thereby not only getting the work done by cheaper labour, but also having a reserve army of labourers waiting to replace those who have been in the institution for longer and thus are better paid and enjoy better working conditions (Maisuria and Helmes, 2020).

As the structures within the university changed, a new kind of managerialism appeared, one that resembles the leadership in businesses and that emphasises hierarchy. As Bottrell and Manathunga (2019, p.5) highlight, ‘managerialism is both structure and modus operandi’, and there is a stark separation between academics, who are the workers, and the ‘managerial elite’ who have business experience and thus are able to make decisions that benefit the university’s

branding. In line with this, universities increasingly partake in partnerships with corporations such as publishing companies (Hall, 2014) or the military (Webb, 2018). As priorities within higher education institutions have shifted, Washburn (2006, p.227) observes, universities are no longer places where ‘research that is critical of industry or challenges conventional market ideology’, or where research concerned with ‘environmental pollution, poverty alleviation, occupational health hazards’ is conducted and supported. Instead, universities side with their ‘corporate sponsors’ rather than defending their staff whose research outcomes ‘conflict with the interests’ of those who invest in the institution (ibid.). What becomes a crucial point within these universities with their ‘managerial regimes’ is where the money comes from, their ‘academic performance, productivity and their measurement and surveillance through numerous forms of accountability’ (Bottrell and Manathunga, 2019, p.6). These keywords, along with transparency, quality control, and efficiency are now deeply entrenched in the institution, ‘in ways that reconstitute what it is to be an academic’ (Blackburn, 2009, p.861).

With the neoliberal focus on reducing reliance on state services and an emphasis on individualism and entrepreneurship, members of society have been encouraged to turn into self-interested individuals whose main aim is to advance their careers. This emphasis on individualism was marketed as an increase in personal autonomy, freedom and choice and thus welcomed by many (Davies and Bansel, 2007). Once internalised by society, this competitive mindset easily infiltrated university departments, which, as they are increasingly run like businesses, are the perfect setting for tightly managed academics who have to undergo progress reviews at regular intervals, especially at the beginning of their careers, to feel the pressure of needing to be better than their colleagues in order to be successful (read: tenured and well-paid). One simply has to stand out, exceed expectations, bring in more research funding than others and produce more teaching material in order to become a valued member of staff. As described earlier, many of those working in universities are on fixed-term contracts or even zero-hour contracts. With only limited open-ended full-time positions available, it is not surprising that academics compete for those in order to attain some sort of security. This clearly pressures academics to “perform” better and turns them into precisely the kind of individuals neoliberalism requires, individuals who internalise the need to perform.

In recent years, more and more performativity measures have been introduced. While the National Student Survey (NSS) measures students’ satisfaction, government frameworks such as the Research Excellence Framework (REF), the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which includes the data collected by the NSS in its metrics, and the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) have been introduced to monitor and assess higher education institutions

and thereby those who work within them. While these frameworks were supposedly justified by assuring quality and empowering students, especially the TEF was ‘rapidly repurposed in order to shape behaviour and priorities of both students and academics’ and has, according to Morrish (2019a, p.355), ‘render[ed] universities, staff and students as neoliberal subjects’. The REF however, which is considered the oldest framework, established under its initial name of Research Selectivity Exercise (RSE) in 1986, replaced by the RAE in 1992, before being renamed REF in 2014, has a tremendous impact on universities and defines what research is considered worthwhile, with the money going to those institutions that can prove their value in terms of outputs and impact (Torrance, 2020). This creates disadvantages on various levels. Not only does research funding predominantly go to older, more prestigious, research intensive universities, it also means that ‘only “world leading” research is now really valued in U.K. universities’, which makes it especially difficult for ‘early career researchers whose research is not currently rated as such’, but who have to ‘return four outputs of sufficient quality, effectively “internationally excellent” 3* and “world leading” 4* research’ (ibid., p.773), further increasing the pressure on those who are already struggling the most.

In the words of Stephen Ball (2003, p.217), performativity is ‘a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgement, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change – based on rewards and sanctions.’ Those who adhere, are (hopefully) rewarded with secure employment. Thus, academics are put in positions where they are solely responsible for their performance and thereby their success. ‘Burdened with the responsibility to perform’ individuals are in ‘danger of being seen as irresponsible’ when not acting accordingly (Ball and Olmedo, 2013, p.88). As personal responsibility and one’s accountability become ever more crucial, ‘survival’ has become individuals’ responsibility within the ‘neoliberal discourse’ (Davies, 2005, p.9), making it ever more challenging for people to persevere. However, instead of institutions taking responsibility for the fact that their obsession with meeting targets, their focus on bureaucracy and the worsening working conditions affects academics’ wellbeing, individuals are chastised for not being able to cope with or adapt to adverse situations.

2.5 Research over teaching

As Robert Nisbet (1971) suggested in *The Degradation of the Academic Dogma* the role of the university changed when the government became involved by supporting research financially, giving professors an incentive to turn their back on the teaching profession and instead take up better paid roles as researchers. Taking Nisbet’s explanation into account, Samuels (2017, p.2) suggests this to be the moment ‘we can locate the central cause of the degradation of instruction

and corresponding casualization of the academic labor force in a tacit collusion of federal government and careerist researchers.’ While the majority of universities’ income in 2018/2019 came from student fees, it is research grants and research contracts from individual research councils, as well as funding from UK administrations’ funding bodies that make up a large proportion of income, as well as what is categorized as ‘other income’, which in many cases involves EU governments and other EU sources and will have a dramatic effect on universities after Brexit (HESA). Thus, apart from focusing on recruitment of large numbers of students, universities are keen on recruiting and retaining academics that are successful at securing funding opportunities that will stand out in the REF. Therefore, staff members are continuously encouraged to apply for grants. One recent example is the urge to apply for COVID-19 related funding opportunities that can be found on various universities’ websites (see for example UCL, 2020; University of Dundee, 2020; University of Plymouth, 2020). The university’s need for funding translate into pressure on academics, defining their value by how much grant money they can attain.

Considering that academics persistently have to apply for funding in terms of research grants to further their career, even if they themselves have no interest in the topic of research (Ball, 2000), there is also little space for them to explore topics they are actually interested in. Furthermore, their areas of interest not being appreciated by funding bodies also means that there is little value, at least in monetary terms, in those areas, potentially putting academics off. As Olssen and Peters (2005, p.328) highlight, it is claimed that ‘if academic research has value, it can stand up to the rigors of competition for limited funds’, meaning that if it does not, it is not valuable. While this raises ethical questions regarding the topics universities or research councils deem “not valuable”, as there can be a clear bias regarding what research is considered important and what is not, it also offers opportunities for dissenting academics. If the university only funds and supports areas of interest that are in line with their marketised values and their overall priorities, this could offer some opportunities for those academics who, often writing in the field of CUS, seek to undermine the university from within, such as some of the interviewees of this research. For someone who is critical of the university and its structures, topics deemed “not valuable” might be just the areas to pursue and those topics that cannot be co-opted by the institution might perhaps have more impact than the university wants within the institution. As Harney and Moten (2013, p.26) emphasise ‘every relationship with the university has to be a criminal one’, being in the university and taking what one can get from it during that time, such as access to publications or making connections with other researchers, would therefore be a way of not being complicit. However, there is a danger that this negatively impacts on the academic’s career progression as they will not be meeting the required targets. There is also

only so much disruption one can cause without losing their job. Nevertheless, it might allow us to rethink ideas surrounding non-funded research and the stigma that it cannot be worth much if it did not stand the test of attaining funding.

2.6 Mental Health

While it is possible to find ways to resist the system from within, many academics do not have the capacity to be subversive as they find themselves in increasingly precarious working conditions. Thus, the impact these conditions have on academics' mental health and wellbeing deserves closer attention, especially because the experiences of those interviewed for this research varied according to their level of seniority and the length of time they have worked in academia.

In recent years, much scholarly work has focused on the effects of increased pressure to perform on academics' mental health, with 'overwork, illness and anxiety' being experienced by many (Hall and Bowles, 2016; Morrish, 2019). These issues are the result of a variety of factors such as: the increased focus on measurable outcomes and the accompanying stress of academics having to produce more, while continuously reinventing themselves; the precariousness of their work (Hall, 2018); having to work more than one job to be able to pay bills (UCU, 2019) and; the 'terror at the prospect of possible unemployment' (Canaan, 2013, p.2). As '54% of all academic staff and 49% of all academic teaching staff are on insecure contracts', they are left in extremely vulnerable positions and unable 'to deliver the high level professional service the strive for' (UCU, 2016, p.1). This is especially true for those at the beginning of their career as 'if established academics feel threatened, imagine the vulnerability of a young scholar who is called to this kind of work' (Morrish, 2017). As these new academics are most likely on short-term contracts, they constantly need to look for their next job and often relocate for their next position (Macfarlane, 2018). During the interviews, two of the more established male academics, Carl and Albert, were very open about their privilege of being in safe positions within their institutions, but nevertheless, Carl mentioned that he still felt the need to strive for more, to sell himself, in a job interview at a more prestigious university.

Performativity measures and encouraged individualism have led to a loss of community within university departments where individuals are encouraged to look out for themselves rather than each other and where getting ahead of colleagues in terms of research outputs decides whether they are promoted or not, which further impacts academics' wellbeing. According to Morrish (2019, p.28) 'those who offer the most support for their colleagues' including activities such as 'commenting on drafts', 'writing references and letters of recommendation' or 'mentoring', are

the staff members who most often experience work related stress. Thus, being supportive of colleagues and investing in collegial relationships can leave individuals worse off. Additionally, this stress is often experienced by new academics who, at this point in their career feel unable to decline a request to review someone else's work, further increasing the workload of those who are already overworked and underpaid. Unfortunately, it has been pointed out that academics experiencing anxiety related to their work is a useful and not 'unintended consequence' in higher education as it drives academics to work harder, thus increasing, at least numerically, their productivity (Hall and Bowles, 2016, p.33). Not only does this make apparent the obvious disregard for academics' mental health and wellbeing, it also turns them into flexible workers who become used to responding to the institution's demands. As a result, more and more leave the profession (Ward, 2021). Sadly, in some cases, the mounting pressure to meet targets has become so overwhelming that academics have taken their lives, such as Dr Malcolm Anderson, a university lecturer and father who left a note citing 'work pressures and long hours' as an explanation (BBC News, 2018), Professor Stefan Grimm who worked at Imperial College London and who was unable to meet targets set by his university (Parr, 2014; Parr, 2015), or Will Moore, a professor at Arizona State University who struggled with his mental health and feeling isolated, until eventually taking his life in 2017 (Flaherty, 2017).

In their research on the emotional labour academics partake in within the academy, Ogbonna and Harris (2004, p.1192) discovered that many academics 'described their offices as "havens", or "refuges", or even "sanctuaries"'. These chosen terms highlight the desperation and need for safety some academics feel related to their work as well as their working conditions. It is worth questioning what this means for academics who share their office space with a large number of other academics and thus potentially lose out on their safe haven. An example of this would be the School of Education at the university where this research is carried out and where academics work in an open-plan office. As university committees make choices to relocate departments or to invest in new buildings, which look great on a prospectus and advertise the institutions to potential students, academics are the ones who have to endure the worsening of their working conditions, especially when the 'temporary' relocation turns into years. Institutional aims here clearly take precedence over that of staff.

Other areas of refuge are described by Webb (2018) when exploring 'bolt holes and breathing spaces' for those working within academia. His examples are what he calls the utopian classroom, the undercommons, and the occupation. Webb describes classrooms as one of the few places where the institution cannot fully control what is taught, thus making 'utopian pedagogical experimentation' a possibility and offering space where radical teaching and 'a

dialogical pedagogy that prefigures in the very process of collaborative learning the kind of social relations that might characterize an alternative way of being' can take place (p.100). The undercommons and its location are more abstract. Here he refers to Harney and Moten's (2013) concept of the undercommons and describes 'undercommoning' as being 'concerned with creating spaces within the academy', where 'subversion' and 'sabotage' can take place from within the institution by 'being within and against one's institution in a way of being with and for the community of outcasts' (Webb, 2018, p.102-103). Thus, it is about finding like-minded people and creating a 'network of radical alliances' in the 'institutional cracks outside the classroom' such as in 'stairwells, in alleys, in kitchens, in corridors, in smoking areas, in hiding' (p.102). Lastly, Webb considers the occupation of university buildings and campuses by students, with the support from staff, as 'creating utopian spaces', 'to create communes within the university walls', with an aim to 'spread beyond the campus through a dual process of provocative rapture'. However, Webb (2018, p.108), after discussing the opportunities and shortfalls of all three concepts, concludes that while the university 'can be the site for fleeting, transitory, small-scale experiences of utopian possibility', it 'cannot be the site for transformative utopian politics', due to its 'institutional habitus' which 'weighs so heavily that projects born in the university will be scarred from the outset' (ibid.).

2.7 Covid-19

2.7.1 As of April 2020

While the current academic's environment is difficult to navigate at the best of times, unanticipated changes increase not only stress levels but also, seemingly, the urge for people to prove their worth as not to appear dispensable. While there are various unanticipated challenges academics can face, the current Covid-19 crisis can certainly be described as one of the major challenges of the century so far. While the banking crisis affected most people in some capacity, the coronavirus outbreak of 2020 certainly impacts on the freedom of almost every member of society in very specific ways and thus tremendously affects the way society functions. While this is not the case for every sector, the higher education sector is currently (as of Spring 2020) run predominantly from home, with staff and students being unable to enter campuses all over the country. Being taught exclusively online with a decreased access to support services certainly impacts on students' well-being and is accompanied by a number of challenges that raise questions regarding equality of access to resources, support, a stable internet connection, appropriate learning conditions, such as a laptop or even a desk, and interaction with peers. While these challenges should not be disregarded and there are overlaps, the particular challenges faced by faculty is most relevant for this research and warrants closer attention.

While universities are closed indefinitely, academics' working environment changes. No longer are they on campus to see their students face-to-face or have access to their office environment which is (hopefully) conducive to writing and researching, where they can talk to colleagues about their work, common challenges and topics of interest. Instead, academics are working from home, relying on the internet to facilitate workshops, giving lectures and seminars, offering supervision, marking assignments and getting on with their own research at the same time. This is challenging for a number of reasons. Firstly, as highlighted by Rivkin (2020), working from home requires an extensive amount of self-control and self-control requires mental energy, much like a muscle requires physical energy. In order to focus on work, other tasks, such as household tasks, as well as distractions from family members or pets have to be resisted (*ibid.*). Secondly, family members are a crucial point as just like universities, schools and nurseries are closed indefinitely, which means that children are solely cared for by their parents or guardians throughout this time, posing particular challenges for those with younger children and children who require extra support. Although not exclusively, it seems that the caring responsibility largely falls to mothers in this scenario and it is not surprising then that a recent headline reads 'Women's research plummets during lockdown – but articles from men increase' (Fazackerly, 2020).

While some journal editors report a drastic decline in women's submission during lockdown, others report an increase of up to 50% in April for articles submitted by men, suggesting that factors such as childcare, household chores and caring responsibilities for older relatives disproportionately affect women (*ibid.*). Previously done research on work related stress experienced by men and women has shown there to be additional stressors for women, such as having to fill 'multiple roles' as well as 'lack of career progress' (Gyllensten and Palmer, 2005, p.272). While more women participate in the labour force now than ever before and more households have two earners, women's domestic responsibilities have only decreased slightly, leaving them in charge of the majority of housework while also negotiating work related demands (*ibid.*). These findings seem to be representative of the developments witnessed during lockdown and the difference in research activity that can be undertaken by individuals exemplifies this. As Fazackerley (2020) points out, '[h]aving articles published in academic journals is key to being promoted at many universities, and is a crucial measure of success in the government's all-important Research Excellent Framework', emphasising how the inability to do research further impacts on the academic's career prospects. While families are solely responsible for childcare during the time of lockdown, couples have to decide whose job takes the hit. Since 40% of women are employed part-time and even those employed full-time earn

less on average than men (Francis-Devine and Foley, 2020), from a financial perspective, it makes sense for men to concentrate on their better paid and often more secure jobs, leaving women to pick up the lion's share of the work at home (Lewis, 2020). Considering the previously mentioned numbers regarding twice as many women being employed on zero-hour contracts by the University of Sheffield, it is not unreasonable to assume it is them who take the hit. To many, research has become a luxury they cannot afford when they are just about coping and it is important to avoid 'privileging those who are able to use the coronavirus situation as time to race ahead of their peers, who are held back not by talent or aspiration but by the need to do homeschooling and put three meals on the table' (Wilsdon, quoted in Fazackerley, 2020). Unfortunately, just as other epidemic outbreaks such as Ebola or Zika, the Coronavirus pandemic will most likely have similar 'deep, long-lasting effects on gender equality' (Lewis, 2020), exacerbating gender-related disparities on a playing field that was not level to begin with.

Another important factor for academics working from home is the use of new technologies (Rivkin, 2020), which are impacting on the relationship academics have with their students and colleagues. Lee (2020), a lecturer in Technology and Enhanced Learning, additionally points towards the speed at which this transition to online learning had to take place in the current circumstances. She states that developing online courses normally 'involves a team of experts including academics, instructional designers, programmers and illustrators', suddenly requiring academics who may not have taught online before, to teach underprepared courses. Another point Lee highlights, is that students might use smartphones or small tablets to follow lectures, which, as well as course materials not being digitised sufficiently or not having access to high-speed internet, will impact their learning and their engagement (ibid.). As a result, the teaching and learning experience will be less enjoyable for both academics and students and students might end up expressing their frustration in teacher evaluation forms that will be discussed in more detail at a later point.

2.7.2 As of December 2021

As the previous section on the Covid-19 pandemic was written during the first lockdown in 2020, the following section is added in December 2021, almost two years after Covid-19 emerged in the UK and brought tremendous changes for academics and students. Currently, some teaching has returned to the university and staff are encouraged to work on the premises, at least part of their working week, however in light of yet another variant leading to an increase in positive cases and hospitalisations, the most recent government guidance recommends that

those who can work from home, do so. What this means for university staff, however, is unclear.

As recently published by Universities UK (2021), ‘students can expect most seminars, small group teaching and study (...), tutorials (...) and some lectures’ to take place on campus as ‘this is what students want’. However, this varies from university to university and changes regularly. In many cases, large lectures continue to be delivered online for safety reasons and thus having face-to-face as well as online teaching is described as a ‘blended approach’ (ibid.). However, despite the challenges that faculty and students face due to a lot of teaching and learning taking place online and many students being keen to return to campus, some researchers found that students reacted positively to online learning, found their university’s platforms ‘satisfactory’ and ‘easily accessible’ (Ismaili, 2021, p.27) and that there is a ‘willingness’ to ‘engage in distance learning classes in the post-Covid19 pandemic’ (p.17). While universities suffered financially during the pandemic, it is not unreasonable to assume that there will be a continuing reliance on online teaching even after the pandemic, as it offers flexibility for the university, for example when there is no need for large lecture theatres, when students can be taught from almost everywhere in the world by whoever is “cheapest”, or when material can easily be extrapolated. Thus, the university will use the necessary changes made during the pandemic for its own gain even when they are not a necessity anymore.

2.8 Morality

Considering the conditions that have been discussed so far in this chapter, in order to survive in the neoliberal university, almost anything goes and it influences people’s actions. As Davies (2005, p.6-7) recounts, she overheard a group of academics talk about wanting ‘to force the retirement of their one-time leader against his will, a man to whom they were deeply intellectually and personally indebted’ as it would benefit them financially. Under neoliberalism, competing with colleagues is welcomed, after all, competition is believed to increase productivity as individuals work ‘more intensively to outdo one another and this generates an increase in output’ (Maisuria 2014, p.287). Turning into self-exploiting entrepreneurs is thus seen as a necessity and material is produced regardless of its social utility, as long as it can generate profit (Hall, 2018). Furthermore, ‘funding pressures’ as those created by the REF, ‘can cause academics to take shortcuts’ by ‘overlooking under-performances’ (Isomöttönen, 2018, p.877), committing research fraud (Webb, 2018), and applying for research they have ‘no academic interest’ in (Ball, 2000, p.8). Sometimes they even lead a desperate academic to enquire whether their submitted journal paper ‘can be turned around in a few weeks’ in order to be ‘published a couple of months later’, as they need another publication in

order to meet their target (Smith, 2000, p.333). People do what they feel necessary, after all, making it work and being ‘successful entrepreneurs’ is a sign of achievement (Davies and Bansel, 2005) and might lead to that much-desired permanent contract.

This behaviour evidently impacts not only on the individual who works in this environment but also on the community spirit, or the lack thereof, in university departments. While the intensification of the work affects relationships within departments as academics have less time to support one another (Ogbonna and Harris, 2004), and supporting colleagues can take a toll on an individual’s mental health, as mentioned earlier, it can also be questioned how the fact that they are not only colleagues but also competitors who apply for the same jobs, promotions, internal and external funding grants, impacts on their willingness, even if subconsciously, to support each other. As Treanor (2005) highlights, sub-markets have become increasingly important for neoliberal enterprises. While universities are not regarded as enterprises or companies as such, they are increasingly run like them. While sub-markets are not new, instead of being outsourced, they are now often part of a firm and, according to Treanor, this creates ‘competition among their constituent units’. Thus, it can be argued that individual academics who compete with one another selling their work and applying for grants can be considered units of the sub-market.

Quality is defined by output measures, such as the frameworks described previously in this chapter, and that in many cases stands for quantity. Accordingly, Earl (2016, p.2) stresses that CUS are concerned with this development as ‘academics’ time is micromanaged to ensure maximum output for maximum income, and quantity rather than quality rules.’ As a result, Hall (2018) suggests, academics experience cognitive dissonance when telling themselves they love what they do while producing knowledge that is solely valuable in terms of monetary value for institutions but not in terms of their own interest. Convincing themselves, in order to avoid what could be described as desperation or fatalism, academics have to resort to further coping mechanisms. Ogbonna and Harris (2004) for example report academics asserting enormous self-control in order to cope in stressful situations that involve students by pretending to be somewhere else or reminding themselves they are paid for doing this work. This behaviour is described as ‘deep acting’ and is the ‘type of ‘self-control’’, that is ‘the ultimate form of control desired by manipulative managements’ (ibid., p.1194). Through the pressure exercised by management, academics begin to manage themselves, making managerial intervention unnecessary. Being able to cope despite a heavy workload seems to have become a badge of honour for those use their performance to define their value.

As workers should ‘be flexible, empower themselves, take control of their pensions by self-funding them’ and ‘undertake lifelong learning’ (Jessop, 2002, p.468), ‘the cultivation of the entrepreneurial and competitive self-seeking individual’ (Banfield, Maisuria and Raduntz, 2016, p.8) was successful when staff begin to doubt themselves and strive to be ever more productive as a way of validating their positions in academia. However, as Ball (2003) highlights, performance indicators often change or are ill-defined in the first place, keeping academics on their toes, wondering whether they are doing enough or whether their performance exemplifies the value of their work. As ‘neoliberal selves are necessarily flexible, multiskilled, mobile, able to respond to new demands and new situations’ to stay employed (Davies, 2005, p.9) and ‘we take responsibility for working hard, faster and better as part of our sense of personal worth and the worth of others’ (Ball, 2012, p.19), it is not surprising that some academics compare who has worked the hardest over the weekend and who has not taken a day off work. An example of this is the Professor of Strategic Management at a Canadian university who proudly announced he had written and published a book within a month of lockdown, which, for the many reasons described earlier in this chapter, was a very challenging time for most academics (Gans, 2020). Being able to cope despite the increasing demands and telling others about it on social media almost seems to be the academic’s version of what Barnett (2011, p.444) describes when he says: ‘the entrepreneurial university thrives in this situation, loudly proclaiming how little it is now dependent on the state for support’.

2.9 Student evaluations

When students become consumers, they purchase “quality education”. To ensure quality and to assess whether teachers deliver what students expect, evaluation forms, filled out by students at the end of modules, have been introduced in most universities. As student evaluations gain in importance for their careers, teachers can feel the need to please their students, but challenging them academically and thus potentially making them uncomfortable could negatively impact their score and thus should better be avoided. In some cases, this results in what would normally constitute unacceptable behaviour not being challenged, and, as many of my interviewees have pointed out, challenging students’ dehumanising beliefs in class is an important part of teaching Critical Pedagogy. Ogbonna and Harris (2004, p.1192) state that ‘the increasing management utilization of student teaching quality evaluations to assess and control performance of academics appears to be driving ‘student-focused’ emotional labour’ and seems to be yet another mechanism to control academics and to ‘create pressure to conform, subjugating individual identity in a quest for standardization’. Quality no longer refers to the ‘quality of teaching in terms of student needs and substantive pedagogical relationships’ that are formed, instead it means those assessed were successful at pleasing the student-consumer,

as well as ‘meeting predetermined benchmarks and standards’ and ‘following processes and procedures’ (Blackburn, 2009, p.863). As Ball (2003, p.217) highlights, ‘complex social processes and events’ have to be translated into ‘simple figures or categories of judgement’ that are easy to compare.

2.10 Further problems with student evaluations

Student evaluations can be seen as a tool to control the academic as their decisions of how and what to teach will be influenced by potential student feedback and strongly impact on the academic’s chances for tenure, promotion or salary negotiations. Furthermore, they can affect academics’ confidence, especially those who are at an early stage in their careers. However, it is important to highlight that research on student evaluations has also shown them to be gendered and racialised. MacNell, Driscoll and Hunt (2015) for example conducted a study using a course exclusively taught online, allowing them to change gender identities for the instructors. One of the findings was that students believing ‘their assistant instructor to be male rated their instructor significantly higher than did the students (...) that perceived their assistant instructor to be female, regardless of the actual gender of the assistant instructor’ (p.298). They attribute this to gendered expectations that students have regarding their instructors. Female and male instructors are expected to possess different traits, ‘female instructors are expected to be more open and accessible to students *as well as* to maintain a high degree of professionalism and objectivity’ (emphasis in original), even though being open and accessible can lead to students perceiving the instructor as being ‘less competent or effective’ (MacNell, Driscoll and Hunt, 2015, p.294). Interpersonal skills, they continue, are generally expected from female instructors but are considered a bonus trait when exhibited by male instructors, leading them to receive a higher rating in those categories. Therefore, ‘gendered expectations represent a greater burden for female than male instructors’ (ibid.). Additionally, it has been found that female teachers ‘who spent more time presenting material in the classroom and going over substantive points’ were rated more competent but less likable by students, while those who ‘checked on student’s understanding and solicited input’ received higher ratings for their likability but lower ratings for their competency (Lazos, 2012, p.181), making it increasingly more difficult for female academics to be rated positively overall.

A study conducted in the Netherlands also found that female academics were rated lower on average by students, particularly by male students (Mengel, Sauermann and Zölitz, 2015). This deviant was especially noticeable related to the instructors’ seniority, with young female academics and PhD students receiving the worst feedback, particularly regarding ‘math-related content, which suggests that students question the competence of female teachers in particular

for math-related subjects' (Mengel, Sauermann and Zölitz, 2015, p.2). Data also shows that gender bias is related to the field of study. In the field of sociology, a field with almost as many female teachers as male teachers, gender bias in student evaluations seems to be relatively low, which suggests that 'gender balance in a field affects gender stereotypes and might reduce bias against female instructors' (Boring, Ottoboni and Stark, 2016). Mitchell and Martin (2018, p.652) highlight that where professors receive feedback from students, 'women are referred to as "teachers" more often than men, which indicates that students generally have less professional respect for their female professors'. Furthermore, Aubrey Hirsch, who works at the University of Pittsburgh tweets 'Are you even a woman in academia if your course evaluations don't give you feedback about your physical appearance', as she reports that in a section titled "Instructor's Greatest Weaknesses" a student thought it was appropriate to state: 'I noticed that Aubrey had put on some weight, but then I found out she had a baby last semester so it's understandable', highlighting students' focus on unrelated and irrelevant characteristics (Hirsch, 2020). While there are cases where students comment on male teachers' appearances, research suggests that women are more likely to receive comments regarding their appearance and their personality than male teachers (Mitchell and Martin, 2018). While this gender bias is already problematic, the problem is exacerbated for those who are women as well as from racialised minorities as several studies have looked at the experiences of Women of Colour, in particular Black women, in higher education.

Studies have shown that women and academic staff from racialised minorities consistently find their competencies and educational credentials questioned by students (Lazos, 2012), thus those for whom these gender and racial identities intersect, face particular disadvantages. Maharaj (2009, p.15) states that 'students more easily find fault with racialized female professors' and 'are less willing to overlook mistakes made by women'. Furthermore, Daniel (2019, p.23) reports that her being a Black woman who introduces texts relating to 'historical realities of enslavement', 'the contemporary manifestations of institutionalized and systemic discrimination' and who actively seeks to generate conversations regarding the experiences of Black people, has resulted in her being described as biased and even racist in student evaluations. While student evaluations are intended to measure academics' teaching ability, Daniel suggests they easily turn into 'subjectively based character assassinations' instead (p.25). This is supported by Lazos (2012) who highlights that student evaluations are influenced by assumptions and stereotypes and rely on subjective parameters, enabling students to judge academics' teaching based on their perception. Thus, those who are judged as inferior and incompetent from the beginning have to work harder to convince students of their abilities. Another component explored by Beoku-Betts and Njambi (2005) is the instructors' accents.

When discussing the difficulties faced by African members of staff in American universities, they highlight that ‘assumptions about Africans include cultural “backwardness”’, with African women in particular being depicted as ignorant, and that their ‘styles and forms of spoken English’ are being perceived as ‘bad and inferior’, leading students to question their legitimacy as academics (Beoku-Betts and Njambi, 2005, p.114). However, this questioning of legitimacy is not exclusive to African accents as Dua and Lawrence (2000, p.108) highlight, non-Canadian accents make female faculty ‘particularly vulnerable to (...) condescending attitudes.’

Academics are required to ‘maintain their individual authenticity in the classroom and yet avoid alienating students’ (Lazos, 2012, p.166). However, not alienating students becomes difficult when students’ political views, values, experiences and realities differ greatly from those of the academic. As Lazos (2012, p.181) highlights, ‘students report not being comfortable in classrooms where the general ideological viewpoint differs from their own’. This puts the academic into a difficult position when students are seen as customers who ultimately need to be satisfied. This is especially true for female academics from racialised minorities who cover course content related to Whiteness, as particularly White students feel uncomfortable when discussing the topic ‘as they are fearful [*sic*] being offensive’ (Maharaj, 2009, p.63). Additionally, it has been highlighted that those faculty who ‘devote any class time or course readings to non-Eurocentric perspectives’ are oftentimes accused of bias (Dua and Lawrence, 2000, p.108; Maharaj, 2009). Considering that academics’ careers depend on student evaluations, it is not surprising that they adapt to students’ expectations and avoid challenging them as making them uncomfortable potentially translates into lower ratings in student evaluations. As Lazos (2012, p.181) further notes, students perceive their teachers as less competent when their political views differ from their own, and the ‘greater the difference between a professor’s and student’s ideological positions, the lower the student evaluations are’. Thus, the academic either has to anticipate and accept a lower score or adapt to students’ demands. Interestingly, some papers mention handing out chocolate to students before they are asked to fill in evaluation forms (Youmans and Jee, 2007). While this might make someone chuckle in disbelief, I have experienced this twice during my time at university. Whether this was intentional or a coincidence I cannot say.

2.11 Eurocentrism in CUS

While the previous section highlights some of the disadvantages that People of Colour, in particular Women of Colour, experience in academia, there are also some challenges in the field of CUS that need mentioning. As Bottrell and Manathunga (2019, p.9) admit regarding their own work, which is situated within the field of CUS, its focus on predominantly European or North American scholars, as well as those from Australia and New Zealand, and the ideas that are built on ‘Eurocentric Enlightenment arguments’, offers a narrow scope and is in danger of dismissing the contribution of non-western writers. Thus, CUS has blind spots. While the analysis of the university provided in CUS is useful, as most places in the world, through the forces of colonisation as well as globalisation, have adapted to the western model of the university, it should not be ignored that not all universities have their roots in the medieval university of Europe, for example Al-Azhar, a university in Egypt, and that some countries, such as China, already had ‘well-established indigenous academic traditions’ before (Altbach, 2006, p.122). Thus, in order for CUS to successfully challenge the existing system, it needs scholars to interrogate their own biases and complicities too.

It is important to highlight that the majority of the writing published in the field of CUS focuses on a specific type of academic with little room for other types. As writers continue to be predominantly White and male, their experiences do not always represent the experience of those outside this category. While there is no doubt that all academics suffer from an increased workload and/or less job security, the precariousness of marginalised groups is exacerbated, as has been shown at various points throughout this chapter. Whether this absence is due to the writers’ blindness to privilege they possess or whether it is due to their prioritisation of their own experiences and struggles, is unclear. The following section will briefly elaborate on additional challenges some academics face within the neoliberal university, which is relevant for this thesis as the majority of the participants interviewed were women born outside the UK.

As Davies and Bansel (2007, p.252) assert, one of the side effects of neoliberalism being internalised by individuals is that it allows a ‘shrugging off of collective responsibility for the vulnerable and marginalized’. While those writing within the field of CUS are certainly critical of neoliberal values, the constant presence and reinforcement of individualism and self-interest potentially influences their thinking without them being aware of it. However, as Weldon (2006, p.79) stresses, ‘marginalized viewpoints are especially valuable for seeing the limits of dominant conceptual schemes because they offer a perspective on social reality that is invisible from the perspective of the dominant group’. Accordingly, it is crucial for field of CUS that the experiences of those considered marginalised in academia is not excluded from the discussion.

While precarity is something most academics experience, early career academics, women, those who are racially minoritised, as well as international academics face increasing pressure. Current political developments, such as Brexit, have also impacted on the way international employees experience working in institutions in the UK. While various new rules regarding immigration have been proposed, there is still a large amount of uncertainty when it comes to the fate of those who live in this country without citizenship. Finding a permanent position in academia is a challenge for anyone but finding one that fills the requirements for visa applications or retention, in other words, one that pays well enough and offers job security, puts international employees at further risk. As the price of visa applications has increased in recent years, making it difficult for academics to afford them, early career academics who do not earn much subsequently struggle as they have to re-apply numerous times, whenever their short-term contract runs out (Fazackerly, 2019). While a Home Office's spokesperson stated that 'we welcome international academics and recognize their contribution to the UK's world-leading education sector. All immigration applications are considered on their individual merits and on the basis of evidence available' (ibid.), these merits are questionable considering what has been discussed earlier in this section regarding what makes a member of staff valuable to the university. Thus this statement highlights the far-reaching consequences of metrics and measurable outcomes, especially where hegemonic forms determine what knowledge is considered valuable (in monetary terms) and where those with foreign accents are judged more harshly.

The question of what is considered to be valuable knowledge and how this impacts on those who do not fit the dominant narrative has been explored by various scholars (for example Ladson Billing, 2000; Delgado Bernal, 1998, 2002). Especially in the US writers have been concerned with the way race and racism have influenced the production of knowledge (Yosso, 2005), but more recently scholars in the UK have begun to include discussions in their work. Hall (2018, p.102) for example highlights that extracting value from knowledge means that 'hegemonic norms (...) marginalise or deny forms of knowledge that cannot be valorised', which is also the case for knowledge produced by academics, especially when they are expected to please students while at the same time producing "internationally excellent" and "world leading" research.

2.12 Alternatives

In his paper, Samuels (2017, p.3) discusses the work of Arthur and Renshaw (2017). He describes how, as suggested in their paper, CUS can be used as a way of teaching. For those

who are familiar with concepts of Critical Pedagogy much of this will sound familiar even before reading the following chapter. Samuels refers to a ‘dialogue between a professor and student’, how this ‘dialogical nature of the teaching’ suggests a ‘democratic model of education’ where ‘the enquiry’ begins ‘with students naming their own problems’ and where students are encouraged to think about their own experiences in education (p.3). As this short section shows, his idea echoes much of what is emphasised in the field of Critical Pedagogy, for example Freire’s ‘naming the world’, Giroux’s ‘democratic education’ and the general focus on the dialogic relationship between teacher and learner. As Arthur and Renshaw (2017, p.8) summarise, implementing CUS as subject matter in classrooms, opposed to seeing it as a field academics write articles in, can be used, similarly to Critical Pedagogy, to ‘provide an intervention’ that presents some students with an insight into a ‘system they are struggling to navigate’ as they make visible ‘explicit the unspoken norms, hidden pathways, and structural inequalities of higher education’, even if this means they ‘find their way onto a different kind of path’.

As neoliberal ideals have become such firm features within higher education institutions, there are increasingly calls for education outside the walls of universities, which is something that a number of academics interviewed for this research are also involved in. Various suggestions have been made in the field of CUS. Cassie Earl (2016) for example calls for a public pedagogy, education that is not limited to academia and serves a purpose other than schooling with the aim of securing a job. As Sandlin, Schultz and Burdick (2010, p.1) suggest, education takes place everywhere as it is an ‘enveloping concept’, we ‘constantly learn, and constantly unlearn’. They describe ‘public pedagogies’ as ‘spaces, sites, and languages of education that exist outside the walls of the institution of school’ (ibid.). In *The Alienated Academic*, Richard Hall also calls for a building of ‘counter-hegemonic positions rooted in solidarity and sharing’ between those within and outside the university and a commitment to a ‘social and cooperative use of knowledge, skills and practices’ (2018, p.127) and bell hooks (1994; 2003) reiterates that education can never be confined to the classroom and needs to be made accessible for those outside the walls of higher education.

While it has been pointed out that some academics hang on to a romanticised view of education in an ‘undisclosed time in the past, a time when it is implied that education was more liberatory than it appears today’ (Lanier, 2001, p.21), it is difficult to, firstly, criticise them for it, and secondly, to imagine that it was not. As highlighted by Readings (1996), the preoccupation with “excellence” smothered any quest for equality within higher education. However, there is a potential for hope. As Barnett (2011) highlights in his paper, historically the university has

shown itself to be adaptable, its form changing over time, from what he describes as the ‘metaphysical university’ (p.441), to the ‘research university’ (p.441), and most recently to the ‘entrepreneurial university’ (p.443). Accordingly, he contends, there is no reason to suggest it would not change in the future, rather that this ability to change can be considered an opportunity. While there are limitations of what is possible, ‘there is an infinite space’, ‘even within a bounded space’ to realise a new version of the university, and the task is to identify one that can sit within the current context (ibid. p.445). And then there is Harney and Moten’s (2013) call for subversive academics to exist within academia, individuals who are in but not of the university, whose relationship to the university is a criminal one, opposed to the academic they describe as ‘professionals *par excellence*’ (p.38), who is critical of the university but whose critique is his labour for the university, a performance.

Under capitalism, everything is for sale and thus even critical academics, who publish articles ranting about and challenging the university, sell their labour power with their publications. The professors who published research about the detrimental effects of neoliberal ideals on students might still tick the box of having published “excellent” work, making their presence valuable to the institution, as long as they continue to reinvent themselves. Whatever can be turned into profit, will be co-opted, just like Critical Pedagogy has according to those interviewed for this thesis. Unsurprisingly, a famous publisher has brought out a series of books under the title ‘Palgrave Critical University Studies’, a series that explores the changes ‘imposed by political and policy elites’ on universities and their consequences ([SpringerLink, 2022](#)). While there is no question that some of the work published in this series is valuable for the debate in the field, a prestigious publisher engaging in this topic and charging 90€ for some of those publications seems to be precisely what many of the scholars writing in CUS criticise: the capitalisation of academic labour.

Chapter 3: Critical Pedagogy

Critical Pedagogy and critical theory more generally are believed to, at least in part, originate in the work of The Frankfurt School in the 1920s. Having been established in Frankfurt in 1923 as part of The Institute for Social Research, The Frankfurt School consisted of thinkers and writers such as Max Horkheimer, Hannah Arendt, Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse as well as others (Darder, Baltodano and Torres, 2003). Focusing, among other things, on the writings of Karl Marx, especially his critique of labour, The Frankfurt School developed what would turn out to be highly influential cultural, political and sociological theories that would inspire thinkers for years to come. Elaborating on the work of Marx, The Frankfurt School considered schooling to be a ‘process’ that limits students’ understanding and hinders them from developing the ‘kind of social consciousness needed to bring about change and social transformation’, instead it ‘serves to de-skill’ them (Breunig, 2011, p.4).

The work done by The Frankfurt School and by Marx himself, but also by other theorists from the 19th and 20th century, has influenced various critical pedagogues (Degener, 2001) or those who would later be described as such. One of them is Paulo Freire. As Degener (2001, p.30) highlights, Freire was strongly influenced by Marx’s work on how, in capitalist societies, ‘dominant ideologies work to justify a society’s social and economic hierarchies’ and how institutions, such as schools, ‘promote ideologies that allow certain people to prosper while others remain marginalized’.

3.1 Paulo Freire

The Brazilian educator and activist Paulo Freire, whose adult literacy programme can be described as the prime example of the praxis of Critical Pedagogy, has inspired numerous critical educators throughout his lifetime and continues to do so after his death in 1997. His book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, first published in Portuguese in 1968 and later translated into English, explains the aims and the implementation of his literacy programme and remains a popular, foundational text for anyone interested in Critical Pedagogy. As Freire explains in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the aim of those involved in the literacy programme was to enable those participating in the programme ‘to move from naïvité to a critical attitude at the same time’ as learning to read and write (Freire, 1974, p.43). Thus, the programme was to do more than teach the mechanics of literacy, and instead aimed for its participants to be active subjects in their learning, rather than the recipients of what is taught. Teaching the mechanics of literacy is not the challenge, Freire emphasises, the challenge lies ‘in the creation of a new attitude – that of dialogue, so absent in our own upbringing and education’ (ibid. p.52). Said dialogue is a crucial theme within Freire’s work and has become one of the most emphasised methods or techniques critical educators seek to implement in their teaching nowadays as it is seen as the basis for the relationship between the teacher and the learner.

As an educator, Freire considered education an opportunity and a tool to improve the human condition through radical transformation, where pedagogy enables learners to gain critical consciousness, a process he calls conscientisation (conscientização). By gaining consciousness, marginalised groups begin to realise their unjust positions in society and recognise the ‘block of hegemonic powers’ that perpetuates the perception of them as an inferior group (Vittoria, 2018, p.38). While being engaged in their learning, the oppressed begin to participate in reflections on their situation and ‘from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for liberation’ (Freire, 1996, p.30). In his writing, Freire describes how this liberation would eventually lead to the “humanisation”, the act of becoming fully human, of the oppressed.

3.1.1 Humanisation

Humanisation is one of the main concepts in Freire’s education and is discussed at large in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. When Freire speaks about dehumanisation, he argues that the oppressed have their humanity stolen as a ‘result of an unjust order that engenders violence in the oppressors, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed’ (Freire, 1996, p.26). As the

oppressors treat the oppressed as objects, they lose agency, and thus are unable to act and transform their world, leaving them dehumanised. In this state they are not treated as fully human and thus cannot act as such. Freire distinguishes between two behaviours of humans, integration and adaptation. 'Integration with one's context (...) is a distinctively human activity' whereby a person is able to 'adapt oneself to reality' while also having the 'critical capacity to make choices and transform that reality' (Freire, 1974, p.4). In this case the person has agency and acts like a subject. However, if this person loses the ability to act and 'decisions are no longer his own because they result from external prescriptions, he is no longer integrated', 'he has adapted' (ibid.) and has thus become an object that is acted upon. Freire describes 'adaptation (...) at most' as a 'weak form of self-defense' and a behaviour typical for animals, thus 'exhibited by man, it is symptomatic of his dehumanization' (ibid.).

According to Freire, it is humans' 'ontological and historical vocation to become more fully human' and it is the praxis of 'dialogical reflection and action for social transformation' that enables them to become humanised (Roberts, 2015, p.379). It is this dialogical reflection that facilitates learning about the world, or in particular, the learner's reality. Freire states that 'as men relate to the world by responding to the challenges of the environment, they begin to dynamize, to master, and to humanize reality' and by adding 'something of their own making', they become actors in their reality (1974, p.5). While participating in shaping their reality, they create culture, they 'create, re-create, and decide', which in turn shape 'historical epochs', but, and this is a crucial point, 'whether or not men can perceive the epochal themes and above all, how they act upon the reality within which these themes are generated will largely determine their humanization or dehumanization, their affirmation as Subjects or their reduction as objects' (Freire, 1974, p.5). In short, the process is dynamic and constantly evolving and thus requires continuous critical reflection as well as the tools to understand, name and act upon reality.

However, it is important to note that it is not only the oppressed that are dehumanised by this process. While Freire argues that those suffering oppressions are unable to be fully human, thus are dehumanised, he also suggests that those who do the oppressing are also not fully human. Humanisation therefore does not only liberate the oppressed but the oppressors too, allowing both to be human (again). Freire opposes the idea that any liberation, any humanisation, can come from the oppressors, as it has to stem from the 'weakness of the oppressed' in order to be 'sufficiently strong to free both', otherwise the change cannot be genuine (Freire, 1996, p.26). Furthermore, their active and reflective participation is crucial as without it, attempting to liberate them 'is to treat them as objects with must be saved' (ibid., p.47), which in itself is also

dehumanising. Thus, it has to be the oppressed who are the driving force in their own and their oppressors' liberation and education is considered instrumental as well as fundamental in this struggle.

Education is considered crucial in enabling humanisation and it has been highlighted that Freire 'argued that undisciplined, naïve, spontaneous hope needed education in order to connect it firmly to the project of humanisation', especially to challenge the 'continual operation of dehumanising forces' (Webb, 2010, p.331). This is important as education, as an apparatus, generally enables dehumanisation as it introduces and preserves the status quo. 'Education as the exercise of domination stimulates the credulity of students, with the ideological intent (often not perceived by educators) of indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression' (Freire, 1998c, p.73). Therefore, educators can unwillingly be complicit in preparing their students for adapting to oppressive structures, even if they believe their education to be liberating. One education model that is considered to be particularly dehumanising is the "banking model" of education as it creates 'oppressive passivity in students' (Aliakbari and Faraji, 2011, p.78), however this will be discussed in more detail shortly. Dehumanisation can also occur in conversations within the classroom. To avoid this, the teacher, as a critical educator, must actively reject any dehumanising sentiments that might be expressed by any of the students, such as those rooted in prejudice, as these are 'innately dehumanising and therefore innately unethical' (Chambers, 2019, p.12). Furthermore, solidarity and fellowship are important components of humanisation. Freire (1998c) highlights the importance of recognising that one cannot become human when seeking to become more human than others or when preventing others from becoming more human, as attempting so is considered dehumanising in itself. Thus, it is crucial for any attempt to become more fully human not to be bound to an individualistic and egoistic idea to advance oneself, but to facilitate the humanisation of all involved. Considering education, teachers and students must work together in order for any genuine change to be attainable. Together they can become subjects in their own transformation and instead it is their world that 'becomes the object of their transforming action' (ibid. p.79).

One of the challenges that those who seek to liberate themselves and their communities may face is an internalisation of the oppression they are experiencing and mostly have experienced not just throughout their own lives but for generations before them. Therefore, the oppressed have 'adapted to the structure of domination in which they are immersed' in a way that leaves them inhibited and incapable of opposition (Freire, 1996, p.29). While yearning to be free, they also fear freedom. Freedom comes with autonomy and responsibility but the struggle for it is accompanied by risks, and both, risk and responsibility can be daunting concepts. Instead, 'they

prefer the security of conformity with their state of unfreedom' (Freire, 1996, p.30). However, as Freire (ibid., p.29) emphasises, '[f]reedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift', which refers to the necessity of those dehumanised to be active in their own liberation, but it also further highlights that freedom cannot be given by the oppressor, it has to be attained, even fought for. Thus, what is feared is crucial for the process. Accordingly, a pedagogy with the aim of liberating the oppressed 'must be forged *with* not *for*, the oppressed' (Freire, 1996, p.30), presupposing a close relationship with cooperative dialogues between those oppressed and their teachers, as the learners must trust their teachers enough to embark on a journey that potentially scares them.

3.1.2 Dialogue

When trying to facilitate learning towards transformation and consciousness, the answer, for Freire, lies in the dialogical relationship between the teacher and the learner. Not only are humans 'essentially communicative creatures' (Freire, 1996, p.109), dialogue is also a crucial instrument to acquire knowledge. As Vittoria (2016, p.74) suggests, engaging in dialogue, although a daunting task at times, can strengthen 'one's identity' by 'taking paths on which one confronts other kinds of knowledge and orienting and reorienting oneself on the relativity of knowledge'. In order to help people move from naïve consciousness (the learners' state of consciousness before becoming more aware) to a predominantly critical consciousness requires methods that enable learners to become active participants in their learning journey. For Freire (1996, p.109), dialogue is 'radically necessary to revolution' and thus identifying how this could be facilitated is inevitable. Accordingly, Freire (1973, p.45) suggests using a method that is 'active, *dialogical*, critical and criticism-stimulating', to change the '*program content* of education' and to adopt '*techniques* like thematic "breakdown" and "codification"' (emphases in original). This engagement in dialogue, he points out, 'creates a critical attitude' and those involved 'can join in a critical search for something' (ibid.). Within this search, the oppressed begin to reflect on their own situation and (hopefully) realise their dehumanisation, leaving them with a desire to become subjects rather than objects. By making 'oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed' Freire's pedagogy leads to the 'necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation' (ibid., p.30). However, Freire admits that it would be 'idealistic' to assume that this act of reflection itself would be enough for people to move from being objects to becoming subjects (Freire, 1996, p.111). Instead, they should be considered "'Subjects *in expectancy*" – an expectancy which leads them to seek to solidify their new status' (García, 1967, quoted in Freire, 1996, p.112). Considering humans as subjects in expectancy also aligns with Freire's notion of humans as 'unfinished' beings (Freire, 1998, p.100), as

beings who ‘move out in constant search’ for completeness, in an ‘incessant pursuit of the humanity denied by injustice’ (Freire, 1996, p.72-73). Webb (2010, p.329) highlights the importance of hope ‘in pursuit of completeness’ and identifies that it is in ‘this hope-driven search (...) that the necessity and necessarily political nature of education can be found. For because we search, we are driven to explore, interrogate, question and learn, thus becoming more *educable*’. Thus, the incompleteness of humans and their quest to be complete, to be fully human, is what makes Critical Pedagogy possible and, if implemented correctly, a powerful tool.

Crucial for Critical Pedagogy are the attitudes and assumptions of those who take on the role of the teachers. Freire (1974, p.48) states: ‘This teaching cannot be done from the top down, but only from the inside out, by the illiterate himself, with the collaboration of the educator’. This suggests it requires a certain type of educator, one that makes the learners’ view of the world the main focus. This approach is in contradiction to the state education system that Freire criticises in much of his writing when speaking about the “banking system” of education. In banking education, the teacher deposits knowledge into the mind of the student who then ‘records it, memorizes, and repeats it’ without questioning the content (Freire, 1996, p.52). As highlighted by Ochuot and Modiba (2018, p.481), ‘rather than helping people become critically literate, reflective agents in the world, traditional ‘banking’ education domesticates, dehumanises and oppresses instead’. This suits the oppressors well, as their domination is not questioned by the oppressed who, through education, have been moulded to fit neatly into the structures of society that have been created by the oppressors (Freire, 1996). However, for students to be able to critique such structures, it is necessary for them ‘to understand dominant forms of knowledge’ as only when they understand this knowledge, they are able to ‘incorporate it into their ways of knowing so that they can challenge and transform it’ (Degener, 2001, p.37). This is clearly at odds with the banking system. Instead the education Freire emphasises requires teachers who encourage students to think critically about their own conditions, teachers who make their students’ conscientisation their aim and who stand in solidarity with them and any oppression they might experience.

As Freire (1996, p.58) highlights, ‘[s]olidarity requires true communication, and the concept by which’ the teacher who ascribes to the depositing of information into the students, ‘is guided fears and proscribes communication’. Thus, there is no scope for communication in the banking model and educators, even if they intend to, are unable to facilitate any type of liberating practice. Additionally, simply taking on the knowledge of their teachers, learners are unable to make a connection between the content taught and their own lives, especially if the content has

been chosen for them. In this case, the teacher acts as the narrating subject and the learners become patient, listening objects whose reality and experiences are far from the reality described by the teacher.

The banking concept of education relies on teachers who believe themselves to be knowledgeable and who intend to pass their knowledge on to those, who, in the teachers' eyes, know very little and require education. Clearly visible here is the difference in agency and power within the relationship of the teacher and the learner, but also the ability, or inability more like, for the teacher to acknowledge the differences in their existential experiences. One of the suggestions Freire makes, is to employ 'local people with "local dreams" as educators' (Freire, 1978, p.82). Not only does it mean the teacher is familiar with the learners' daily realities, it also potentially avoids learners feeling alienated. As emphasised in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 'knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other (Freire, 1996, p.53). Freire's alternative to the banking model is what he describes as the "problem-posing concept" of education.

Problem-posing 'involves uncovering reality, striving for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality', which enables learners to become active participants in transforming their lives and thereby improving 'their life condition' (Ochout and Modiba, 2018, p.481). To do this, '[e]ducation must start with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers *and* students' and learning from each other during the process (Freire, 1996, p.53). In this situation, 'the teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught, also teach' (Freire, 1996, p.61). Therefore, 'in addition to being a highly *qualified* teacher by knowing the content area thoroughly, a highly *effective* teacher knows when to listen to the students' (Behizadeh, 2014, p.101, emphasis in original). For Freire's problem-posing education, the starting point is the students' experiences, the knowledge they possess and what they are interested in. Simply put, it is about 'what students know and what they want to know', however, a key component is 'the teacher establishing essential questions to guide inquiry' (ibid.). Areas of interest to students are considered generative themes, 'themes which have significance within the context of their lives', 'a cultural or political topic of great concern' for those involved, and 'from which discussion can be generated' (Rugut and Osman, 2013, p.25). Thus, taking the students' generative themes into account, the process becomes what Behizadeh (2014, p.102) describes as 'Student-Driven-Inquiry' as she highlights its importance for generating 'authentic learning'

which is considered an ‘effective way to increase student engagement and achievement’ and which enables students to ‘connect what happens in school to their experiences outside of school’. Discussing and reflecting on generative themes within the classroom enables students then to do the same with generative themes of their epoch outside the classroom. According to Freire, any epoch has its own ‘complex of ideas, concepts, hopes, doubts, values and challenges’, which can be explored and then acted upon by those in society through the skills acquired in the classroom (The Freire Institute, 2022). Students thus learn to perceive social, political and economic contradictions in the world around them, and are then empowered to take action against the oppressive elements of reality (Freire, 1996). Taking action here is crucial and Freire is very firm in stating that ‘it is not enough for people to come together in dialogue in order to gain knowledge of their social reality. They must act together upon their environment in order critically to reflect upon their reality and so transform it through further action and critical reflection’ (The Freire Institute, 2022). Only this is what Freire considers praxis and it a crucial aspect of his work.

For education to lead to critical consciousness it has to be located ‘within the lived experiences of students’, which offers them ‘new ways of *naming* the world, rather than allowing teachers to define the world for them’ (emphasis in original) (Boronski and Hassan, 2015, p.61). However, problematic is that educators are inevitably the result of their own education. Thus, those whose educational journey took place in an education system where they, as pupils, felt inferior to their teachers, they might have internalised the idea and believe themselves to be superior to their own students (Freire, 1978). As a result, they will not enable but instead disable their students’ quest for knowledge and perpetuate the existing hierarchical system (ibid.). Even for educators who seek to act in their students’ interest, it can be difficult to overcome their own conditioning. Freire (1974, p.52) admits, ‘the difficulty lies (...) in the creation of a new attitude – that of dialogue, so absent in our own upbringing and education’. However, as mentioned, problem-posing education requires and relies on a partnership between teachers and students, instead of one being the one that teaches and the other one being the one that is taught, ‘they become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow’ (Freire, 1996, p.61).

In his writings, Freire offers examples of his own experiences where the dialogue with his students facilitated learning in him. In *Pedagogy of Hope* Freire recounts a situation where he, having just given a talk about punishment and what it does to the relationship between parent and child as part of a seminar, was questioned by a member of the audience. Firstly, this man highlighted the elaborate language, the ‘fine words’, Freire used throughout his talk (Freire, 2014, p.18). Secondly, he asked whether Freire knew anything about the living standards of the

people he was addressing, how cramped their small houses were or how it felt to come home to children that are ‘dirty, hungry, crying, and making noise’ (Freire, 2014, p.19). This man knew, by listening to Freire talk, that their lives were inherently different, that Freire would have enough space and food in his house, while he and the other members of the audience did not experience such “luxuries”. Addressing this, Freire points out that although he would consider using more accessible language when speaking to audiences outside the university, in this instance he failed to understand the ‘hard reality’ his audience were facing in their daily lives (Freire, 2014, p.17). While the man understood what Freire was saying, he identified other factors that would impact on the way parents interacted with their children. It took this man’s comment to make Freire aware of their differing circumstances and the possibility of a harsher reality, one where parents do love their children but still resort to physical punishment at times, especially after a long, difficult day at work. This conversation forced Freire to reflect on his own assumptions and acknowledge potential differences between his own reality and that of those he sought to teach, thereby facilitating learning in him.

3.1.3 Hope

Manifested in much of Freire’s writing is the concept of hope. For him, dialogue is crucial to education and to educating, however, the kind of dialogue he seeks can only exist when there is hope. ‘Hope is something shared between teachers and students’ in the quest for something more, something better, to ‘produce something together’ and to ‘resist (...) obstacles’, making hope an ‘essential component’ (Freire, 1998, p.69). As mentioned previously, Freire is adamant in his idea of humans’ “unfinishedness”. ‘It is our awareness of being unfinished that makes us educable’ (Freire, 1998, p.58). When accepting the human as an unfinished entity, education becomes the necessary tool in the search to become less unfinished. Without hope, there would be nothing to challenge determinism and thus no way to prevent the fatalism that befalls those who have lost hope for a better future. Freire (1998, p.71) emphasises that without hope for a better future, ‘nothing new, nothing revolutionary, is possible’. Instead, ‘detached from the future’, hope ‘becomes only an alienated and alienating abstraction’ (Freire, 1985, p.127). In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Freire (1996) states

Hope is rooted in men’s incompleteness, from which they move out in constant search – a search which can be carried out only in communion with others. Hopelessness is a form of silence, of denying the world and fleeing from it. The dehumanization resulting from an unjust order is not a cause for despair but for hope, leading to the incessant pursuit of the humanity denied by injustice. Hope, however, does not consist in crossing

one's arms and waiting. As long as I fight, I am moved by hope; and if I fight with hope, then I can wait (p.72-73)

It is important to highlight that Freire sees reflection with an intention to act eventually as an action in itself, even is said reflection determines 'that a particular form of action is impossible or inappropriate *at the present time*' (emphasis in original), deciding not to take action at a particular time is therefore not a sign of inaction (Freire, 1996, p.109). Thus, undertaking critical analysis and reflection within the current education system that fills many with hopelessness, and perhaps waiting for the right time to act, can also be considered action that is worthwhile. As Freire's quote above highlights, as long as he has hope, he can wait, even if further action is impossible at present.

To Freire education in any form is political and any type of education should be considered an opportunity for learners to gain consciousness. Therefore, teaching literacy education, which can seem like a fairly mechanical process, must go beyond the obvious and should not be seen simply as 'a purely technical training of peasants and urban workers' (Freire, 1978, p.78). Rather, '[i]t must make a fundamental contribution to the political consciousness of the people' as '[i]n a capitalist society the technical training of the so-called qualified work hands implies the suffocation of the workers' political consciousness' (ibid.). Thus, where education is reduced to teaching the learner the technical aspects of their work only, it prevents the learner from gaining the political consciousness that can lead to liberation. Instead, only education designed to transform the conditions of oppressed groups can lead to a revolutionary society. While the learner gains awareness of his or her 'condition as a human being as Subject', education 'will become an instrument of choice. At that point he [or she] will become politicized' (Freire, 1974, p.56).

According to Freire (1978, p.78), '[p]olitics serves the interest of the dominant class in a class society; it serves the interest of the people in a revolutionary society'. As in most cases the education system reflects the political ideology of a country and its elite, it is important to change education in order to change society. Freire (1978) explains:

The basic challenge is not simply to substitute a new program for an old one that was adequate to the interests of the colonizers. It is to establish a coherence between the society that is being reconstructed in a revolutionary way and the education as a whole that is to serve that revolutionary society. And the theory of knowledge which the new society must put in practice requires a new way of knowing that is antagonistic to colonial education (p.102-103)

Thus, in order to achieve a different society, one that is more democratic and not founded on colonial ideals, it is necessary for a revolutionary pedagogy to reflect this. Interestingly, in his writing Freire rarely discusses the kind of new society that he strives for with his pedagogical approach, other than saying that it would be ‘less ugly, less perverse, less evil, less discriminatory, less racist, less *machista*; a society without inhumanity, wickedness, alienation and degradation’ (Webb, 2010, p.331). Instead of describing what it should be, Freire focuses on what should be rejected. While the absence of imagery of this new sought-after society can make it a difficult concept to grasp for those relying on a clear ideal to strive for, Webb (ibid.) reminds the reader of Freire’s rootedness in Christianity. He highlights that ‘to hope in Christ is to trust that being *en route* makes sense and has meaning’, that we as humans are incapable to ‘comprehend’ or ‘imagine where the path we are treading is leading’ (Webb, 2010, p.331-332). Taking this into consideration, it is not surprising that the reader is unable to find any explicit and clear picture of what would constitute a better world.

3.1.4 Criticism

While Freire’s Critical Pedagogy undoubtedly has many supporters and followers all over the world, a number of criticisms have arisen over the years. One criticism relates to the apparent sexism within his writing (although this can be described more as an absence of female pronouns). bell hooks, a famous feminist who has been greatly inspired by Freire’s work and whose work will be discussed in more detail in the following section, addresses this criticism as follows: ‘To have work that promotes one’s liberation is such a powerful gift that it does not matter so much if the gift is flawed’ (hooks, 1994, p.50). Thus, although his work might be flawed, the essence of what it teaches outweighs its faults.

Additionally, Roberts (2015, p.386) discusses how, regardless of what Freire focused on in his writing, someone would criticise it for the lack of something else as ‘one cannot please all the people at all times’. Roberts’ example is Freire being critiqued for not having a clearer ‘position on questions of class, gender, and ethnicity’, as some considered his ‘account of social class in his educational theory’ to be ‘inadequate’, while others criticised him for ‘focusing too heavily on class and paying insufficient attention to gender and ethnicity’ (ibid.). Thus, whatever his focus, it seems impossible for him to keep all his readers happy. Furthermore, reading his work it becomes clear that Freire was open to criticism. Not only did he admit that social class was ‘his key focus in works such as *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*’ as he considered ‘the poverty experienced by millions of’ people ‘as a problem of monumental importance for educationists’

(Peters, 2015, p.386), he also addresses a number of other criticisms in his later work. In *Pedagogy of Hope* for example, he highlights how the letters written by women pointing out his sexist use of language, prompted him to reflect on this. He elaborates that ‘discrimination against women’ in a ‘sexist discourse’ ‘is a colonial way of treating them’, which is ‘incompatible with any progressive position’ (Freire, 2014, p.57). Accordingly, he points out, he began to refer to either “women and men” or “human beings” as a whole within his writing but, furthermore, he highlights that language plays a crucial role, as its uses and expressions (or the lack thereof), reflect the ideology of a society (ibid.).

Another criticism that is highlighted frequently relates to the language used within Freire’s writing, which has been deemed ‘inaccessible and complex’ (Boronski and Hassan, 2015, p.62). It has also been argued that Freire’s writing is often abstract, enabling him to make ‘use of broad generalizations’ that ‘allow him to make inspirational pronouncements without having to address the complexities of the local situations’ that are very real for some of the people he seeks to liberate (Weiler, 1996, p.356). Others have pointed out that while trying to mediate between two identities, the Marxist Freire and the ‘Catholic-humanist post-modern Freire’, Freire struggled to reconcile two somewhat contradictory agendas (Gibson, 1999, p.131). At other times, his pedagogy has also been described as “domesticated” and watered down’ (Boronski and Hassan, 2015, p.62). However, his pedagogy being considered to be “watered down”, might stem from his ideas and concepts being used and re-used by a large group of scholars over many years, some of which stayed close to his original thoughts, while others re-invented and recuperated them. This has been highlighted by Giroux (1992, p.15) who states that ‘Freire’s work has been appropriated in ways that denude it of some of its most important political insight’. Additionally, Apple (1999, p.7) points out that ‘much of his work’ has been transferred ‘into the safe haven of the academic world’, a process by which it has lost ‘its concrete connection to lived struggles’ that were at the heart of his work. Apple further admits being ‘suspicious of those individuals who have appropriated Freire’s language and name, but who themselves have never been engaged in putting such work into practice’ (ibid., p.8).

Additionally, as pointed out by Abbott and Badley (2019, p.108-9) ‘Freire’s popularity has led to the irony that many educators who drop his name or use such terms as *praxis* or *banking education* have actually not read his work, and likely would cease making reference to him if they realized how far to the left he actually was politically, theologically, and pedagogically’. Considering this frequent use of his name and his ideas by people who do not necessarily fully understand or agree with his most fundamental concepts, has undoubtedly affected the way he and his pedagogy are regarded nowadays.

One of the main contradictions associated with Freire's work is the application of or aversion to teacher directiveness, which has been described as incoherent on various occasions. This supposed incoherence is founded on the idea that dialogic teaching and directive teaching are 'incompatible pedagogical techniques' (Chambers, 2019, p.21). There is disagreement within his readership regarding this issue. While some of his readers argue that there is simply no space for directiveness in the dialogical pedagogy Freire promotes, others acknowledge 'Freire's emphasis on teacher directiveness' at times (Chambers, 2019, p.22). Consequently, those who belong to the former sometimes describe his ideas as incoherent. However, they seem to consider his vision as rigid and unresponsive rather than context dependent and fluid. Considering that his writing is described as complex and abstract, it can be questioned whether, to some extent, this provides opportunities for different interpretations and the accompanied disagreements. Addressing the idea of dialogue between teacher and learner, Freire clarifies that this dialogue 'does not place them on the same footing professionally', as their '*difference*' is the reason one is the teacher and the other is not, however he asserts the importance of their relationship being a 'democratic' one (Freire, 2014, p107). Therefore, while Freire, with his dialogical problem-posing education, does oppose the authoritarian approaches employed within the banking system, there is nevertheless room for directiveness, if executed appropriately. Addressing this, Chambers (2019, p.26-7) suggests, instead of 'avoid[ing] directiveness by hiding one's own beliefs' the teacher should instead 'consider how directiveness can exist in the classroom in a non-authoritarian manner'. Using one's authority as a teacher to encourage a 'strong sense of societal responsibility' (Freire, 1974, p.13) cannot and should not be compared to authoritarian teaching methods where the teacher's opinion becomes an unquestionable truth. Instead, using directiveness to guide learners towards being liberated and engaged 'in the task of transforming society' does not impair their freedom, rather it supports it (ibid.).

Additionally, disregarding directiveness altogether would inadvertently lead to chaos. Not only does permissiveness or lawlessness hinder the 'training of the democrat' (Freire, 1998b, p.63), it can also push the teacher towards an authoritarian attitude in order to regain control (Vittoria, 2016), and/or impede learning by 'leaving the class without guidance' (Chambers, 2019, p.27). However, when sharing their own beliefs with the students it is important for educators to avoid 'imposing them on students' (ibid.), rather said beliefs can serve as subjects to be discussed, considered and reflected on. As Vittoria (2016, p.74) asserts 'dialogic action is mutual respect and also an acknowledgement of conflicts, which teach us to understand reality from several different viewpoints'. Thus, even when shared with students, the teacher's belief does not

become an unquestionable truth, and further, potential disagreements can teach students valuable lessons about differing opinions and how to engage with them respectfully. As Chambers (2019, p.21) sums up, ‘to find the middle ground between manipulation and spontaneity [] is not something easily done’, and finding a balance between dialogue and directiveness is perhaps what makes Freire’s pedagogy such a demanding task for any educator. The claim, that dialogue and directiveness are incompatible, that it is impossible to engage in the act of teaching in said dialogue, is refuted by Freire who is firm on the possibility of teaching, in a directive way, within the dialogic relationship. However, Freire suggests that for them to be compatible, the ‘educator’s thinking, critical and concerned though it be, nevertheless refuses to “apply the brakes” to the educand’s ability to think’ (Freire, 2014, p.108). He further emphasises the importance of the ‘educator’s critical thinking’ to be ‘delivered over to the educand’s curiosity’, and highlights that if the ‘educator’s thinking, cancels, crushes, or hinders the development of the educand’s thinking’, the educator’s teaching would become authoritarian (ibid.). Nevertheless, and as mentioned earlier, Freire calls for an even stronger directiveness when a student expresses beliefs that are grounded in prejudice, such as racist beliefs. In these cases, the educator is required to ‘reject the argument outright’ regardless of the student’s justifications for his or her beliefs, as whatever the justification, their ‘view is innately dehumanising’, which is clearly incompatible with Freire’s teaching (Chambers, 2019, p.32).

To read Freire and to be able to utilise his certainly profound approach to education with integrity, it is useful to be aware of the criticism that surrounds his work. As Weiler (1996, p.371) highlights, it is important to ‘read Freire with a critical eye’ and to take into account its “blind spots”, which do not undercut the ‘passion’, ‘humanity’, and ‘compassion’ so fundamental to and very tangible in his work. However, what can be questioned is whether the principles Freire emphasises are realizable in the current education system, a question that is crucial for this thesis and those who were interviewed. For example, Freire (2014, p.70) asserts about teachers: ‘[t]he more tolerant, the more open and forthright, the more critical, the more curious and humble they become, the more authentically they will take up the practice of teaching’. In an education system where competition and self-promotion are necessary components of one’s career, where educators have to convince employers of their capabilities and their “success” (measured by performativity, not by their capabilities as educators), being humble and authentic seems almost impossible. Not many educators will have capacity or energy left to hold on to Freire’s idea of a good teacher in light of the ever-rising pressures they have to cope with.

3.2 bell hooks

The author, teacher and social activist bell hooks, who sadly passed away during the writing of this thesis, was one of the most influential Black feminist scholars in the field of Critical Pedagogy in the contemporary United States. Reading hooks, it quickly becomes clear how her teaching has been heavily influenced by her own experience as a pupil and student. As a child, hooks' experience of schooling was very positive, as she was surrounded by supportive teachers within her school in the segregated south (hooks, 1994). However, entering an integrated high school, hooks experienced racism by White teachers who underestimated the capabilities of students of colour who they saw as inferior (ibid.). Despite these experiences, hooks went to university and eventually graduated with a doctorate from the University of California where she later began her teaching career (Wisneski, 2013). Her development as a critical thinker as well as her teaching have been greatly influenced by the educator and writer Paulo Freire, whose pedagogy encouraged her to see teaching and learning as an empowering, liberatory practice, as well as the philosophy of Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh, whose approach to learning was more holistic than that of Freire as it emphasised the 'wholeness, a union of mind, body and spirit', opposed to Freire who was 'primarily concerned with the mind' (hooks, 1994, p.14).

In her first book on education, *Teaching to Transgress*, hooks focuses on overcoming oppression and domination through education and thereby utilising it as a practice of freedom. As her childhood experiences have shaped the way she sees and understands the opportunities provided by education, the joy it brought her as a child when she felt heard and seen, but also when it was used to oppress and undermine her, her starting point was a personal one. This personal touch is perhaps what makes her writing so accessible as it allows the reader to empathise with her and learn from her narrative. While most of her writing focuses on the feminist struggle, especially that of Women of Colour, and her pedagogy can be described as feminist pedagogy, she seeks to educate students to overcome all forms of oppression for example those imposed through racial, class-based and imperialist boundaries.

3.2.1 Engaged Pedagogy

In *Teaching to Transgress*, hooks describes her own teaching as "engaged pedagogy", a pedagogy that is 'more demanding than conventional critical or feminist pedagogy' (hooks, 1994, p.15). She explains that engaged pedagogy 'establishes a mutual relationship between teacher and students that nurtures the growth of both parties, creating an atmosphere of trust and commitment that is always present when genuine learning happens' (hooks, 2010, p.22).

In this atmosphere, the whole group becomes part of the dialogue in the classroom and thus it is important for those involved to know who the others are. Accordingly, hooks facilitates exercises where students have the opportunity to write about something meaningful to them that they then share with the group. It is therefore important that everyone participates in these exercises as engaged pedagogy requires teachers to get to know their students to determine what knowledge is present in the classroom and where there are opportunities for learning, as well as the students 'level of emotional awareness and emotional intelligence in the classroom' (ibid., p.19). In this space, it is believed that all students have valuable contributions to make. This does not mean that all students have to be given the exact same amount of space to speak, hooks is firm on this, but rather it teaches the students to evaluate whether the contribution is meaningful to all in the learning community (hooks, 2010).

3.2.2 Radical openness and dialogue

Facilitating engaged pedagogy, 'teachers must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students' (hooks, 1994, p.15). Accordingly, hooks' focus on spiritual well-being and 'care of the soul' sets her apart from others who work in the university setting, where there is often no space for spirituality or a focus on the whole person, rather it emphasises 'the idea of a mind/body split' (ibid., p.16). As engaged pedagogues seek to constantly reflect on their own practice and to take into account who their students are, teaching becomes inherently responsive. Describing those involved as a learning community, hooks emphasises individuals' differing experiences, hopes, dreams and highlights their 'unique voice' (hooks, 2010, p.20). To get to know each other she calls for "radical openness", a concept that she considers crucial for the relationship between teacher and student. When she speaks of radical openness, hooks suggests that one must be open to the idea that they might be wrong, to other people's viewpoints, and about their lack of knowledge in cases where they do not know the answers, all of which requires courage (hooks, 2010). Radical openness is therefore crucial to the process of critical thinking as it assures integrity. Only where other people's perspectives are acknowledged, genuine learning can take place.

As part of this relationship, hooks, like Freire, emphasises the importance of dialogue as part of her teaching. To hooks, dialogue is a critical exchange of ideas and perspectives. To exemplify this point, she has used dialogue with other scholars, and sometimes even herself, in her writing, where she participates in conversations with different people to discuss various topics, aiming to show that dialogues can cross boundaries (hooks, 1994). It is the collaboration

with 'diverse thinkers', that facilitates 'a greater understanding of the dynamics of race, gender, and class', which is 'essential for those of us who want to move beyond the one-dimensional ways of thinking, being, and living' (hooks, 2010, p.37). The dialogue hooks seeks is one 'where we can debate and discuss without fear of emotional collapse, where we can hear and know one another in the difference and complexities of our experience' (hooks, 1994, p.110). However, hooks (2010, p.38) also suggests that it is crucial to 'remain critically vigilant' and to 'ensure that there is a link between theory and praxis'. In order to do so, her and a colleague 'engage a philosophical approach to dialogue', in which they 'deploy strategies of dialectical exchange, which emphasizes considering and reconsidering one's position, strategies, and values' (ibid.) Therefore, the work is never finished, one is never done, and hooks, like Freire, sees this unfinishedness as part of education as the practice of freedom.

Meaningful dialogue, according to hooks, is only possible if those involved are honest and acknowledge their fears and prejudices, further emphasising radical openness. The example hooks gives, is that there can be no meaningful dialogue between White and Black women, without both sides, but especially White women, acknowledging the negative history the groups share (hooks, 1994). While the call for Black women to join White women's feminist movements, 'the call for sisterhood', by White women might have been 'motivated by a sincere longing to transform the present', their failure to address the past greatly impaired the relationship, making the call for Black women 'to join the feminist movement' 'yet another expression of white female denial of the reality of racist domination' (hooks, 1994, p.102). Radical openness from White women about their shortcomings is thus crucial to make the relationship a reciprocal one and to allow for meaningful dialogue. Furthermore, hooks highlights that, in order to facilitate dialogue, teachers must be able to communicate well themselves. In the same way that teachers who are not self-actualised cannot help students to become self-actualised, teachers who cannot communicate also 'lack the skill needed to facilitate dialogue' (hooks, 1994, p.151).

According to hooks, students need 'a dialectical context where there is serious and rigorous critical exchange' and this exchange can only take place where students and teachers work together 'to overcome the estrangement and alienation that have become so much the norm in the contemporary university' (hooks, 2015, p.51). As hooks claims, students seek spaces 'where they can be challenged intellectually', where 'their subjective needs can be integrated with study', where their life makes sense and where its value becomes apparent (ibid.). hooks (2010) highlights that often students do not want to share their opinions out of fear of conflict or that it potentially alienates those around them. She suggests that oftentimes conflict is seen as

‘threatening to the continuance of critical exchange and as an indication that community is not possible when there is difference’ (2010, p.135). However, according to her, the classroom should be a place where students learn that ‘different viewpoint’ can be ‘expressed and conflicts resolved constructively’, although she acknowledges this to be a difficult process (ibid.). For this to be possible, a positive relationship between teacher and students is necessary and requires an acknowledgement of the issue of power that is inherent in this relationship.

Becoming a teacher herself, hooks recognised that the ‘abuses of power’ had been such a negative part of her own schooling, ‘were still commonplace’, so she decided to write about it (hooks, 2010, p.3). In the student-teacher relationship, there is an inherent difference in power that is unavoidable, however hooks’ aim is to find ways to utilise said power in a way that is neither coercive nor dominating. Firstly, she suggests, it is crucial for teachers to acknowledge that they are not the ‘all-knowing professor’, rather that they themselves ‘do not have all the answers’ and allowing students to know this ‘is a gesture of respect for them’ (hooks, 2015, p.52). Secondly, she emphasises that the teacher acknowledges the experiences the students bring into the classroom as their knowledge, and thirdly, she asks her students to grant her authority by persuading ‘them that she has their best interests at heart’ (Bizzell, 1991, p.65).

The findings of this study show the importance of acknowledging the power imbalance within the classroom, how this affects the student-teacher relationship, and what can be done for the effects to be minimised. While many critical pedagogues reject any form of power or authority within the dialogical teacher-student relationship, hooks considers authority, more specifically granted authority, to be an important component of engaged pedagogy. In this dialogical relationship, hooks ‘initially links her interests’ to those of her students ‘through open avowal of her own moral agenda’, for example by being honest about the aims of her pedagogy, namely to fight ‘sexism, white-supremacist racism, and other unjust hierarchies’ (Bizzell, 1991, p.65). Authority must be granted, as learners have to trust their teachers and thus give them the authority to guide them towards critical consciousness (Bizzell, 1991). In order for students to grant this authority, teachers are required to share their own experiences with the classroom. As hooks (1994) highlights, teachers often feel uneasy about sharing anything personal, as if it might jeopardise their professional identity. However, she also declares that teachers need to be able to take risks as ‘empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging our students to take risks’ (hooks, 1994, p.21).

Accordingly, for teaching to be empowering, the teacher must overcome fear and shame they might feel when being vulnerable to be able to lead students by example. hooks (2010, p.21)

states that sharing thoughts and being open and vulnerable ‘helps establish the integrity of the teacher, while simultaneously encouraging students to work with integrity’. ‘Engaged pedagogy emphasizes mutual participation because it is the movement of ideas, exchanged by everyone, that forges a meaningful working relationship between everyone in the classroom’ and hooks affirms, she only facilitates exercises that she would also participate in (ibid.). One challenging aspect of engaged pedagogy is that it ‘requires that instructors face their deep-seated fears about loss of control of the classroom’, letting go of the dominating and authoritarian way that is prevalent in most schools (Lanier, 2001, p.9). Establishing an atmosphere of mutual respect and vulnerability is therefore crucial and offers a space where a learning community is able to explore social issues in a safe environment. However, hooks’ idea of what constitutes a safe environment is slightly different to that of other critical pedagogues. hooks rejects the idea that people should come to voice in a safe and nurturing environment, rather they should come to voice in spaces where they feel vulnerable, as this will require perseverance and mean they are able to voice their opinions in all settings and thus feel truly empowered, not only in those where they feel safe and secure (hooks, 2015).

Because of her demanding and often confrontational teaching style, hooks is aware that not all students enjoy her classes, especially at first. They find it challenging and they feel out of their depth. Leaving one’s comfort zone makes most people feel uneasy. hooks admits that earlier in her career, she longed ‘for immediate recognition’ of her ‘value as a teacher, and immediate affirmation’ (hooks, 2015, p.53) as she sought for her teaching style to be appreciated. However, thinking about her own schooling and realising she learnt the most from classes she did not particularly enjoy, and previous students getting in touch years later telling her ‘how much they had learned’, despite hating it at the time, allowed her to overcome her own longing for positive feedback and being liked (ibid.).

Instead of telling the students what situations are just or unjust, hooks offers the space and the tools for students to acquire critical consciousness, spaces where they acquire political awareness and learn to voice their opinions on matters that are meaningful to them. She considers her teaching style to be ‘very confrontational’ and one in which students are required to partake in critical discussions (hooks, 2015, p.53). Instead of allowing her students to be quiet observers, her teaching style forces them to ‘come to voice’, which can be considered a contentious point in her pedagogy. By doing so, hooks exercises her power and authority as a teacher, ‘in hopes that the outcome will benefit them’ (Bizzell, 1991, p.65). hooks admits that while in many cases, those who are silent have meaningful contributions to make, this is also only way she can get to know them and their particular needs (hooks, 2015). Another benefit

of students speaking up is that ‘there is infinitely more feedback because students do feel free to talk—and talk back’, which gives hooks further opportunity to learn from her students (hooks, 1994, p.42). Considering students’ transformation of critical consciousness, hooks seeks to create ‘a climate of free expression that is the essence of a truly liberatory’ education (hooks, 1994, p.44), however she does not specify what she means exactly, apart from describing it as ‘true politicization’ (hooks, 2015, p.25), and neither does she describe the techniques she employs to help her students reach it, however, this lack of explicitness is referred to in the section that discusses criticism regarding her work.

3.2.3 Progressive education

Despite all the difficulties hooks encountered and her acknowledgement of the challenges that an engaged pedagogue faces, there seems to be a considerable amount of hope for a better future within her work. In her book titled *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* she examines the tremendous positive impact that progressive education has had on the development of social justice education, but at the same time considers the backlash from the opposition that continues to be spread through what hooks describes as ‘imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchal mass media’ (hooks, 2003, p.8). When speaking about progressive education hooks refers to ‘education as a practice of freedom’ (hooks, 2003, p.xv) and relates it to John Dewey’s idea of democratic education, an education towards a democracy in which ‘learning is valued, where the ability to think is the mark of responsible citizenship, where free speech and the will to dissent is accepted and encouraged’ (hooks, 2010, p.17).

In her writings, hooks reflects on the developments within progressive education, the increase in popularity of Black Studies and Women’s Studies and the threat this posed to ‘mainstream conservative white academics, male and female’ (ibid., p.5). While this resulted in a ‘backlash’, ‘devaluing the feminist classroom’ and making ‘students feel that they would appear academically suspect if they majored’ in these disciplines, hooks emphasises the positive changes that had already been created and highlights the academy ‘making reforms needed to embrace inclusion’, although ‘very little praise’ was given to these disciplines ‘for the amazing changes’ they were responsible for, rather they were overshadowed by the ‘alternative discipline of cultural studies’, created by ‘progressive white men’ (ibid., p.5-6). While hooks acknowledges that despite progress, much of academia remains the same, she nevertheless chooses to focus on the positives, namely that, critical thinking became increasingly important within progressive education and that this is reflected in how students ‘were learning to open their minds. And the more they expanded their critical consciousness the less likely they were

to support ideologies of domination' (2003, p.8). When hooks refers to students learning to think critically or open their minds, she refers to them becoming politicised, to become aware of issues related specifically to class, gender and sexuality, but also imperialism, and to be committed to matters of social justice.

While education became more open, inclusive and critical of oppressive structures with teachers as 'crucial conveyers of democratic ideals' (hooks, 2010, p.14), outside of academia events such as 9/11 were used to advocate a hatred for "the other", insisting that 'otherness must be acknowledged, hunted down, destroyed' (hooks, 2003, p.9), showing the hostility that is still prevalent in society. It is also important to highlight that what hooks described as the progressive change she observed within education is not observed by all scholars, especially those who write about the constraints so apparent in the neoliberal education system described in the chapter on Critical University Studies and also explored by those interviewed for this research. Thus, it could be questioned whether hooks' hope and optimism led her to believe more positive change has been made than there is in reality.

3.2.4 Estrangement

Talking about challenges, in *Teaching to Transgress: Education as a Practice of Freedom*, hooks acknowledges that, on a personal level, there can be some negative consequences for students who gain critical consciousness during their education. She offers the example of White students who learn about racism and white supremacy at university and go home for the holidays where they 'suddenly see their parents in a different light', which can lead to a feeling of estrangement (hooks, 1994, p.43). Talking about feelings of estrangement, hooks speaks from experience. As a child, her inquisitive nature was not appreciated by her parents who punished her for challenging 'male authority' and 'rebellious against the very patriarchal norm they were trying so hard to institutionalize', thus, growing up, she felt like she did not belong to her own community (hooks, 1994, p.60). Additionally, she felt estranged in college, where she expected to be challenged academically but instead faced racist teachers (hooks, 2010) and an apparent class difference to the other students that made her feel out of place (hooks, 1994).

hooks seeks to challenge feelings of estrangement in various ways within her own teaching. One of the aspects that makes hooks stand out is that while she is a scholar with a vast amount of knowledge on educational theory, she is also committed to breaking down the barriers between the academy and the community. At various points in her writing, she refers to the issue that academic language is not always accessible to those she wants to engage and that she

seeks to express herself in a way that can also be understood by those who are not academics. Unfortunately, hooks has been accused of appearing anti-intellectual for that particular reasons and during this study one of the academics interviewed reported that her male colleagues refused to have hooks as part of their reading list because she was, in their opinion, not academic enough. In one of her books, she recounts attending a conference where she deliberately spoke to the audience ‘in a basic way’ as not to alienate ‘the few community folk’ who attended along with a large number of ‘privileged white female academics’ (hooks, 2015, p.77). After her talk, she was approached by someone who had also been presenting that day and who advised hooks not to hide her ‘knowledge of theory’ so she would not ‘appear anti-intellectual’ (ibid.). To hooks’ philosophy, this is the contradiction of the ‘intellectual radicals who speak about transforming society’ but who are complicit in reinforcing its hierarchies (ibid.). Another example hooks offers is her deciding not to use footnotes in one of her books as she believed using them would alienate some of her readers. Being criticised for her decision and ‘warned that the absence of footnotes would make the work less credible in academic circles’, hooks questions ‘how we could ever imagine revolutionary transformation of society if such a small shift in direction’ as leaving out footnotes to make a book accessible to a wider audience ‘could be viewed as threatening’ (hooks, 2015, p.81). hooks emphasises the necessity to critically reflect on the reasons why one might be compelled to conform to ‘structures that reinforce domination’, suggesting that hooks practices what she preaches (ibid.). For hooks it is not about always getting it right but rather to learn from mistakes, which aligns with her idea of the human as unfinished and always learning.

This mindset of acknowledging that there are issues, but being able to extract, reflect on and also celebrate positive aspects seems to be a particular strength of hooks’ work. Another example is the work of Freire, which she criticises for lacking feminist thought and the use of sexist language within it, while simultaneously regarding it as one of the most transformative and profound works that encourages liberatory practice (hooks, 1994). Despite its flaw, ‘there is so much that remains liberatory’ in his work (ibid., p.49). Therefore, instead of dismissing all of his work, ‘critical interrogation’ should be undertaken, something that in Freire’s notion of Critical Pedagogy is highly encouraged (ibid.). Another example of hooks’ focus on the positive instead of the negative is her acknowledgement of White people who are actively anti-racist. In the chapter *What Happen When White People Change* hooks (2003) contemplates how the effort of White people to be anti-racist is often overshadowed by the fact that the majority of White people continues to believe in white-supremacist values, even if unconsciously. However, she highlights that devaluing the work of White people who choose to be anti-racist does ‘not only diminish the work they have done and do to transform their

thinking and behavior’, but it also prevents ‘other white people from learning by their example’ (p.57). Most importantly, she highlights that as long as Black people do not acknowledge the possibility for White people to ‘be free of white-supremacist thought and action, then black folks/ colored folks can never be free’ (ibid.). Instead hooks emphasises that those White people who continuously challenge racism and white-supremacist thought should be recognised as allegiances and ‘comrades in struggle’ (ibid., p.59). To illustrate this, many of her books include dialogues facilitated with for example White feminists or White male academics, to show that critical exchanges are possible even if those involved inhabit different locations, and that this dialogue in fact can enable political solidarity and trust (hooks, 1994).

These examples are evidence of hooks’ commitment to value the positive aspects in situations that might be accompanied by challenging aspects. Despite the success of what we might call hooks’ pedagogy, critics exist. One criticism aimed at hooks’ work is that it ‘occasionally suffers from a sense of the unspecified’, as hooks ‘seldom offers detailed examples of classroom exchanges’ (Lanier, 2001, p.20), which can make it difficult for the reader to see how she would practically implement the ideas discussed in her work. Additionally, Elizabeth Ellsworth’s article titled *Why Doesn’t This Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy* addresses a number of other issues that require consideration. In this article, Ellsworth (1989, p.299) discusses her experience of trying to implement Critical Pedagogy in her classroom by designing a course ‘that would not only work to clarify the structures of institutional racism underlying university practices’, but also enable students to understand how they operate in order to challenge them. The challenge Ellsworth encountered throughout this process relates to the diversity of her class. She highlights that where individuals share their experiences, those experiences generally focus on personal attributes and are not a representation of all oppressions, thus they might discount the experiences of others. What she finds most challenging about this is that all experiences are valid, and that subjecting these individuals’ voices to rational argument might exclude certain voices that are deemed irrational under different circumstances, however they need responding to. Additionally, Bizzell (1991, p.61), discussing Ellsworth’s article, points out that there was disagreement within the class on the topics of ‘race, sexual preference, religion, social class, country of origin, and/or physical size and health’, which resulted in some students feeling ‘their group’s interests were being pushed aside in class discussions’. Furthermore, the article suggests that Ellsworth struggled to come to terms with her own position within the classroom. She states for example: ‘I cannot unproblematically bring subjugated knowledge to light when I am not free of my own learned racism, fat oppression, classism, ableism, or sexism’, ‘[m]y understanding and experience of racism will always be constrained by my white skin and middle-class privilege’ (Ellsworth,

1989, p.307-308). Interestingly, it is this self-reflective assessment that hooks intends when she asks educators to interrogate their own biases. Thus, the situation Ellsworth finds herself in seems to be a prime example for an opportunity for the teacher to learn from the student and develop her own thinking.

When discussing engaged pedagogy in the current education system, it is clear that hooks is aware of the challenges that teachers and students face and she continues to highlight her own efforts to develop her understanding. For those within education who want to implement engaged pedagogy in their classrooms, it is important to engage with hooks' essays. Within her collections of essays in *Teaching to Transgress*, *Teaching Community*, and *Teaching Critical Thinking*, hooks explores various areas, from within the classroom out into the community. In these essays, hooks does not only examine herself as a teacher, by examining her own childhood, upbringing and time as a pupil/student, she explores how the experiences throughout her life have shaped who she has become. By doing so, hooks essentially gives the reader a case study, an example of what she experienced, what this means for her understanding, how she identifies opportunities for resistance (but also her own complicity at times) and especially the effect these experiences have on her practice. As Lanier (2001, p.6) states 'the desire to remake, to reimagine, to push beyond boundaries to explore greater meaning and depth, is an animating force of hooks' work'. Leading by example, hooks gives the reader the opportunity to witness what continuous interrogation, self-examination and reflection is involved when striving to become an engaged pedagogue. As Borczon (2010, p.128) states 'bell hooks cannot do this for anyone other than herself; she can only encourage us, provide us with an example of what it looks like when she performs this interrogation of her own experiences', which, according to the findings of this research, she has definitely done for some of the interviewees.

3.3 Henry Giroux

The American scholar Henry Giroux, currently working in a Canadian university, is considered one of the founding theorists of Critical Pedagogy, with one of his first books, *Theory & Resistance in Education: A Pedagogy for the Opposition*, often being considered the seminal text inaugurating the field, and the one in which the term Critical Pedagogy was first used. In the book, he ‘offers good examples of efforts to develop a critical social theory of education’ (Wexler, 1984, p.407) and highlights schools’ potential to use radical pedagogy to become part of a liberatory force, to be a site of struggle for a more democratic society. However, Giroux does not only focus on institutionalised education, but rather emphasises education in its broader context, within and outside of schools. While he considers schools and teachers to be important in the struggle for a more democratic society, their roles ‘in developing radical modes of pedagogy can only be understood within the broader historical, social, and economic conditions that characterize the wider society’ and, while useful agents, ‘cannot by themselves change society’ (Giroux, 1983, p.234). It is the teachers however, who, to Giroux, can function as a bridge between the inside of schools and the outside world.

Much of Giroux’s work focuses on youth, more specifically the “war on youth” in the US. While he writes about youth extensively and most passionately, especially those who are from a working-class background, he also focuses on neoliberalism, its impact on education and democracy, and the militarisation of education. Considering these topics and his criticism towards US politics, it is not surprising that, although now a tenured academic working in a university, Giroux was denied academic tenure earlier in his career, as his views and ideas were considered too progressive for the university in which he taught (Giroux, 1996).

In an interview with Michael A. Peters, Giroux states that his upbringing in a poor neighbourhood where solidarity was just as present as violence and with a father who struggled to feed the family led to his focus on issues of social justice (Peters, 2012). Hardship, partly generated by underlying systemic forces, Giroux suggests, enabled him to ‘develop a sense of both humility and outrage in the face of (...) unnecessary and systematically determined deprivations’ (Peters, 2012, p.158). This allowed him to draw on his own experiences within his work and thus enabled him to formulate a critique of the circumstances that many people in the US find themselves in and the role education plays in this. According to Giroux, the education system reproduces the social order with classrooms ‘functioning as modes of social, political, and cultural reproduction’, where ‘pedagogy is largely reduced to a transmission model of teaching and limited to the propagation of a culture of conformity and passive

absorption of knowledge' (Giroux, 2020, p.3). While schools are largely considered to be 'instructional sites', the fact that they are also 'cultural sites' is largely forgotten (Giroux, 1983, p.74). Therefore, their power to reproduce existing hierarchies is easily underestimated, and their role in providing different types of education to students of different social groups is not immediately obvious. In these instructional sites, 'ideology is dissolved within the concept of objective knowledge' (ibid., p.74), as they are 'neutral institutions designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills they will need to perform successfully in the wider society', ignoring the important relationship between 'ideology, knowledge, and power' and how 'the power distributed in a society functions in the interest of specific ideologies and forms of knowledge to sustain' the status quo (ibid., p.73).

3.3.1 Culture

For Giroux, entering, and especially succeeding in higher education came with its own challenges. Similar to the experience of bell hooks described previously in this chapter, Giroux found himself in a university setting in which he felt alienated. While being a White male, he nevertheless remembers being confronted with cultural capital different to his own, with individuals 'who assumed a god-given right of privilege and power' and 'middle-class language skills and lifelong experiences' to which he had to assimilate (Peters, 2012, p.160). This idea that some students enter education believing their opinions are more important than others' was touched on by some of the participants of this study. In the interviews, some participants highlighted the already existing imbalance of power within the student body, where more privileged students take up most of the space in classroom discussions, thereby silencing students from minoritised backgrounds. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, which Giroux (1983, p.88) describes as 'sets of linguistic and cultural competencies that individuals inherit by way of the class-located boundaries of their families', the meanings and dispositions that are considered to be of particular 'social value and status' by the dominant social class within a society, he highlights the advantages that some students have when entering the university setting. Not having acquired said cultural capital from his own family background, he acknowledges his challenge of being a 'border crosser', someone who seems to 'cross over into a middle-class institution such as academia without burning the bridges' that are the reason he got there (Peters, 2012, p.161).

3.3.2 Higher education

Giroux criticises the education system for various reasons. The higher education system in the US is perceived to be meritocratic, an idea that Giroux challenges in much of his writing as he

illustrates the disadvantages that working-class students face within the education system. Not only are they rarely able to afford tuition fees and thus end up with large amounts of debt, they also do not possess the same cultural capital as middle or upper-class students, precisely the cultural capital that is most valued within academia and which marks working-class students as “deficient”. He highlights, ‘the culture of much of higher education has little to do with the histories, experiences, languages, and cultural backgrounds of many working-class and minority kids’, and because of the financial burden of education, many working-class students need to work while studying, which often impacts their grades (Peters, 2012, p.163). Additionally, ‘the relationship between the hidden curriculum and social control are discarded for a preoccupation with designing objectives’ (Giroux, 1983, p.74). Therefore, the hidden curriculum, how it shapes students and thereby society, is disguised by a focus on outcomes, which are largely portrayed as necessary, useful for everyone, and neutral. While these challenges are not the result of neoliberal policies specifically, the policies certainly make conditions worse. However, various other issues in higher education Giroux directly attributes to the rise of neoliberalism, more specifically the marketisation and privatisation inherent in the neoliberalisation of higher education. He discusses for example ‘budget cuts, diminishing quality, the downsizing of faculty, the militarization of research, and the revamping of the curriculum to fit the needs of the market’ (Giroux, 2010, p.185). The curriculum taught in universities nowadays is tailored to produce a future work force, rather than independent citizens that are able to think critically. He states that ‘[l]argely removed from politics, citizens are either transformed into consumers and soldiers or relegated to a dustbin of disposability’ (Giroux, 2010, p.189) and as a result of marketisation and budget cuts to social services that support young people, youth has increasingly become affected by measures of ‘punishment, surveillance, and control’ (Giroux, 2009, p.24).

Developing an education for democracy, Giroux focuses on critical citizenship that needs ‘to address (...) fundamental concerns of purpose and meaning’ of education and centres around the question of the goal, more specifically, ‘what kind of citizens do we hope to produce’ and ‘what kind of society do we want to create?’ (Giroux, 1991, p.306). In order to reclaim higher education as a site where critical thinking is taught and developed, it needs to offer space for educators and students to ‘redefine the knowledge, skills, research, and intellectual practices currently favored in the university’ (Giroux, 2020, p.115). Democracy and critical citizenship need to be the focus. To do so, ‘intellectual practice’ needs to be ‘part of a complex web of rigor, morality, and responsibility’ which allows academics to ‘address important societal problems’, those within the institution as well as those located outside (ibid.). Not only does it bridge the gap between higher education and the wider society, it also positions academics in

what Giroux calls ‘mutually interdependent roles of critical educator and active citizen’, thereby inadvertently leading by example (ibid.). One of the things education should be responsible for, is making students aware of their own role in others’ suffering and highlight to them their own implications as well as educating them in a way that enables them to ‘critique their own involvement in the construction of both liberating and dominating aspects of everyday life’ (Giroux, 1991, p.301). Being critical citizens requires students to develop ‘capacities and opportunities to be noisy, irreverent and vibrant’, rather than passive (ibid.), it involves a continuous ‘struggle to reconstruct human experience in the realization of such principles as freedom, liberty’ and enables them to challenge the existing social order (ibid., p308).

His assessment of higher education and what it produces can almost be considered a little contradictory. While on one hand, Giroux considers higher education to produce academics that are predominantly ‘uptight, conservative politically and personally arrogant’ (Peters, 2012, p.162), on the other hand he suggests that ‘neoliberalism has been challenged all over the globe by students, labor organizers, intellectuals’ and others (Giroux, 2005, p.3). Additionally, he criticises the increasing devaluing of the academic, one that is marked by the growing number of part-time and temporary faculty members (Giroux, 2010), but also describes educators as the people who have the ability to defend ‘democracy and higher education as a democratic public sphere’ (Giroux, 2014c, p.11), thus putting the responsibility in the hands of those who are either devalued and disempowered or who may have been educated to become said uptight, arrogant conservatives. Suggesting that a significant number of academics have become ‘a new subaltern class of disempowered (...) cheap laborers’ who are a part of the ‘reserve army’ and are thus disposable and can be exploited (Giroux, 2020, p.9), is something that was not represented within the current study where my participants believed themselves to have autonomy regarding their teaching style and course content. While there was a general concern for the amount of labour required by academics and the insecure working conditions that many face, none of those interviewed expressed feeling their positions threatened. However, it can be questioned whether someone overwhelmed by their work and fearing for their job would have taken time out of their work week to reply to my email or, more importantly, be interviewed by me.

3.3.3 Critical Pedagogy

Focusing on education and how education can be used in order to challenge the current political system and the structure of the education system, Giroux turns to Critical Pedagogy. For decades, his work has been strongly influenced by the theoretical work of Paulo Freire and he

is described by Rochester (2003) as one of his disciples (although it has to be noted that Rochester's term is meant derogatory). According to himself (FreireProject, 2007), Giroux began to work with Freire's ideas and the concept of Critical Pedagogy in order to link private issues to issues of the public and to link Critical Pedagogy to questions of democracy as well as to questions of social movements.

In one of Giroux's earlier works, *Theory & Resistance in Education*, which was first published in 1983 and is considered one of the field's defining texts, he describes his belief that universities are places where critical dialogue and critical teaching are possible. Another of his books *Teachers as Intellectuals* (Giroux, 1988), has been described by Kashani (2012, p.623), as a 'handbook for critical pedagogy'. Scott (2008, p.103) describes Giroux's Critical Pedagogy as an 'ethical project with its roots in critical theory, so that it incorporates both a vision of how society should be constructed and a theory of how currently society exploits, dehumanises and denigrates certain groups of people'. Giroux himself defines Critical Pedagogy as a 'moral and political practice' that emphasises 'the importance of critical analysis and moral judgement' and at the same time 'provides tools to unsettle common-sense assumptions, theorize matters of self and social agency, and engage the ever-changing demands and promises of a democratic polity' (Giroux, 2020, p.1). Therefore, Giroux highlights the need for schools to be reconstructed as democratic public spaces that can, over time, change society, by producing the kind of citizens that recognise their agency and thus act upon the world outside, echoing Freire's idea of conscientisation and action.

According to Giroux, Critical Pedagogy is 'rooted in an aversion to all forms of domination', while 'its challenge centers around the need to develop modes of critique fashioned in a theoretical discourse that mediates the possibility for social action and emancipatory transformation' (Giroux, 1983, p.2). Its aim is to create 'students who are socially responsible and civically engaged citizens' (Giroux, 2014b, p.495). In opposition to many educators and politicians who argue that education should be neutral, he states that those who argue that education should be neutral, in reality argue for a version of education in which nobody is accountable, and those who argue for it become invisible (CCCB, 2019). In this "neutral" education, it is impossible to recognise ideological mechanisms and modes of power that exist (ibid.) and, as Degener (2001, p.31) argues 'calling education "neutral" is actually a code for supporting the status quo'. The ideological mechanisms and modes of power Giroux refers to are exemplified in the concept of cultural and social reproduction. Giroux (1981), referring to the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Basil Bernstein, illustrates how schools are 'agencies which legitimize the principle of social control' (p.72) and are 'a fundamental part of the power

structure' (p.73). He especially refers to the "hidden curriculum", which enables the reproduction of ideologies, values, norms, social structures within the school and the classroom, that are not part of the skills represented in the formal curriculum and the 'school's or teacher's statement of objectives' (ibid., p.73). According to him and other radical educators, the idea of the hidden curriculum is what discredits the notion of schooling being "neutral", as its existence highlights a difference in 'socializing experiences' of students, which 'is determined largely by their socio-economic background', making the 'hidden curriculum itself (...) class-based' (Giroux, 1981, p.74). Accordingly, he uses this example to identify the political function of education and its contribution to socio-cultural and class reproduction and considers schools as potential 'sites involved in contestation and struggle' through the implementation of Critical Pedagogy (Giroux, 1983, p.115). Therefore, Giroux rejects 'mechanistic reproduction theories' that claim schools' only function to be 'the reproduction of the existing order' (Scott, 2008, p.111). While he considers it to be true that schools reproduce hierarchies, he nevertheless also sees schools as a site of struggle and possibility.

Like bell hooks and Paulo Freire, Giroux highlights the importance of context in teaching and learning, and thus also inherently in his pedagogy. He emphasises that 'Critical pedagogy is not an *a priori* method that simply can be applied regardless of context', instead it always has to be related to a specific context with a specific aim (Giroux, 2020, p.2). As Critical Pedagogy works with what students bring to the class, thus what is available, it can be implemented everywhere and at any point. This was highlighted during my interviews where the majority of participants claimed there to be use for Critical Pedagogy, in any context. As part of his work, Giroux criticises that in mainstream education, topics are often taught in isolation without contextual backgrounds, where pieces of information are taught without any meaning making taking place (Giroux, 2014b). Furthermore, when referring to a group of radical educators that by building on the educational ideas of Dewey, sought to transform the purpose of education into one that prioritises democratic values, he stresses the importance of curricula that 'have an organic connection to the problems that students had to face in the outside world' (Giroux, 2015, p.10). Thus, curricular have to be developed taking the students' context and thus their generative themes into account.

Giroux (1992, p.77) suggests, curriculum knowledge should be 'developed as part of an ongoing engagement with a variety of narratives and traditions that can be reread and reformulated in politically different terms'. Accordingly, it is necessary to choose curriculum texts that can be interpreted in a variety of ways and in a variety of contexts, while 'avoid[ing] a master narrative that suppresses multiple interpretations' (Scott, 2008, p. 104). This, to

Giroux, is the task of the teacher, who can use their ‘teacher authority’ (...) against dominant pedagogical practices’ by selecting certain texts and letting students ‘read texts differently as objects of interrogation’, depending on their own position in society (Giroux, 2020, p.3-4). As such, he reiterates ‘critical pedagogy becomes a project that stresses the need for teachers and students to actively transform knowledge rather than simply consume it’ (ibid., p.5). As will be discussed in the analysis chapter, various academics emphasised their students’ involvement in choosing topics as well as materials for classroom discussion, which allows students to take an active part in their and their classmates’ learning. While this requires the educator to be flexible, it means the students’ needs are being met by them having access to material that is meaningful to their personal lives.

3.3.4 Democracy

As mentioned previously, much of Giroux’s writing concentrates on the commercialisation, privatisation and militarisation of higher education and the impact these developments have on democracy. To him, a more democratic society is the aim and education is the tool to accomplish it. At this point it is important to highlight that Giroux does not consider there to be an end point or a final stage to this process. Instead, he refers to Amin’s (2001, p.8) term ‘democratization – which stresses the dynamic aspect of a still-unfinished process’ (Giroux, 2014c). Educators committed to said democratisation are crucial to Giroux’s vision he stated in an interview: ‘You can’t have a democracy without informed citizens and that’s why education has to be at the centre of any discourse about democracy and it isn’t’ (CCCB, 2019, 8m34s). He acknowledges the challenges educators face, preventing them from being actively involved in the discourse about democracy, such as the presence of the audit culture or a lack of a ‘self-consciously democratic political and ethical focus’, which reduces teachers to mere technicians (ibid., p.24). Furthermore, Giroux highlights the importance of practices that are built on collegiality rather than the competitiveness that is encouraged by the current education system (ibid., p.23). Regarding this, Peters (2012, p.157), who himself was mentored by Giroux when starting his own career in academia, considers Giroux a ‘public intellectual located increasingly in a networked environment that transforms the concept of intellectual collaboration and enhances the notions of collegiality and the public space of knowledge development’, which indicates a commitment to his own request. However, Giroux nevertheless criticises radical educators for what he calls a failure to establish ‘a programmatic discourse for reclaiming citizenship education’, which according to him, offers space where ‘emancipatory democratic interests’ can be pursued (Giroux, 2015, p.8).

As another challenge faced by educators, Giroux discusses the risk that is involved in the struggle for social transformation when he points to those participating potentially risking their employment, their safety net or their relationships (Giroux, 1983). However, he suggests that knowing that others are experiencing similar struggles and understanding that this search for a better future is an undertaking that is ‘rooted not only in ethical principles but in an obligation to the past’, to relatives, ‘friends, and comrades who have suffered under these dismal systems of oppression’, can be a consolation (ibid., p.242).

3.3.5 Educational aims

His vision for a democratic society can be described as utopian, however, it can be argued that it is utopian (only) within the bounds of what is possible, which is something that one of my participants, Sam, highlighted during her interview, not in relation to Giroux but those who consider themselves to be critical educators more generally. Instead of imagining something new, Giroux speaks about reclaiming control over schools and universities, which places him in opposition to those pedagogues who would prefer to destroy the system and start anew, as Albert suggested during his interview. Instead, Giroux seeks to reclaim universities ‘as a democratic public sphere’, ‘where teaching is not confused with training, militarism, or propaganda’, rather ‘a safe space where reason, understanding, dialogue, and critical engagement are available to all faculty and students’ (Giroux, 2010, p.190). Giroux has expectations on how schools should function that mirror his ideas about how a democratic society should be run. He seeks schools to be places that include ‘a respect for others; the possibility of communicating; an orderly exchange of views; an acceptance that one might be wrong; and the need to be tolerant of other people’s viewpoints’ (Scott, 2008, p.108). However, as will be discussed in more detail later, this openness to other’s opinions and unwillingness to make evaluative judgements is something Giroux receives criticism for.

According to Giroux (2010, p.188), the purpose of education is to equip students with the tools and the knowledge that enables them to hold politicians accountable politically as well as morally, as the university’s ‘deepest roots are moral, not commercial’. However, Giroux argues that the current pedagogy, which he calls ‘bare pedagogy’ (Giroux, 2010, p.185) or ‘pedagogy of repression’, ‘kills the spirit, promotes conformity and is more suited to an authoritarian society than a democracy’ (Giroux, 2014b, p.494). Instead, he believes that education should allow pupils to seek a better future, to be hopeful and to identify possibilities. Therefore, educators have the responsibility to create conditions where students are enabled to ‘express risky, future-oriented and hopeful thoughts’ (Scott, 2008, p.104). According to Giroux, it is the

educators' task to 'resurrect a language of resistance and possibility' (2020, p.141). Framing it as 'oppositional utopianism', he sees it as a defining factor of the 'preconditions for individual and social struggle and the ongoing practice of critical education in a wide variety of sites' (ibid.). He emphasises what he calls '*educated hope*', which, according to him, 'is built upon recognizing pedagogy as part of a broader attempt to revitalize the conditions for individual and social agency' while at the same time 'addressing critical pedagogy as a project informed by both a democratic political vision and the diverse ways such a vision gets mediated in different contexts' (Giroux, 2013, p.190).

Implementing this within the context of the university and as mentioned previously, Giroux places much emphasis on pedagogical approaches to have a direct link to students' lived experience, which has also been highlighted by various participants in this study. As Giroux (2013, p.153) points out, 'hope is more than an instrumentally oriented politics', hope enables individuals, through pedagogical approaches, to 'tap in to memory and lived experiences, while linking individual responsibility with a progressive sense of social change'. He strongly emphasises "student voice" and believes the classroom needs to be 'fundamentally reconstituted to allow the voices of students to be heard' (Scott, 2008, p.107). In an article Giroux wrote in 1986, he criticises 'radical education theory' for abandoning 'the language of possibility for the language of critique' and failing to engage student voices by enabling them to make sense of their lived experiences (1986, p.49). He highlights the importance of language and its interconnectedness with lived experiences and pinpoints its necessity when generating a voice by developing a language of possibility (ibid.). Regarding student voice, Giroux draws on Freire's work in which 'only through educational practice in which educators are committed to hearing learners' voices and acting together can learners accept the validity of norms and fill the content of hope with these norms' (Ichikawa, 2020, p.6). This focus on a better future emphasises how Giroux's pedagogical project cannot only be described as political but also as inherently utopian. His emphasis on hope and the language of possibilities illustrates the need for a better tomorrow, a dissatisfaction with the present and a search for alternative version of life in the future.

Returning to the concept of voice, one of the ways of engaging students in learning is through popular culture, as popular culture shapes students' experiences. This is something two of my participants mentioned during the interviews. While one of them includes it in her teaching to show students that anything can be considered knowledge, the other draws heavily on it within his teaching as it enables students to explore social issues and to find and develop their voice through media they are interested in and to which they can connect. Giroux would agree, as he

considers ‘popular culture as that terrain of images, knowledge forms and affective instruments which define the ground on which one’s “voice” becomes possible’ (Giroux and Simon, 1989, p.243), and it also fosters inclusivity, for example when LGBT pop culture content, such as the TV show *Glee* or the artist Lady Gaga are included in the teaching (Dell and Boyer, 2015). Additionally, as Scholle (1991, p.126) suggests, popular culture, as a ‘conception of pedagogical theory’, constitutes an area where ‘students actively construct the social identities that prefigure their production of, and response to, classroom knowledge’. Thus, including popular culture in their teaching, educators make visible the connection between schooling and the students’ everyday life, thereby tapping into their interests as well as hopes and fears outside the classroom, which, hopefully, gives them incentive to actively participate in critical analysis of their surroundings and circumstances. It is important to draw attention to the fact that popular culture can also be disempowering, as it can emphasise dominant popular culture, thereby silencing others (Scholle, 1991).

3.3.6 Neoliberalism and militarisation

As mentioned previously, much of Giroux’s work focuses on the inequality experienced by poor young people and he critiques the education system’s involvement in reproducing disadvantages. One of the areas Giroux (2014b) focuses on is what he calls the ‘militarization of public schools’ (p.492), which he describes as ‘dead zones’ (p.491), where poor students are educated not to fulfil their potential but, with the use of discipline and punishment, to become ‘disposable populations’ that are channeled ‘into the criminal justice system’ (p.492), often referred to as the “school-to-prison-pipeline”. As neoliberalism manifests itself in a weakened welfare state and an intensified security state, policing in various areas of life should not come as a surprise. Especially in the US, where Giroux’s main focus lies, this involves increased police presence in schools and zero tolerance policies that lead to students being ‘charged with crimes’ that ‘are as trivial as the punishment is harsh’ (Giroux, 2014b, p.491). Youths of colour are at a particular disadvantage in this system and ‘incarceration rates have soared for black and brown youth’ (Giroux, 2005, p.7). Additionally, high-stakes testing, which is a steady feature within the neoliberal education system and has been shown to be racially biased as it exacerbates existing educational inequalities (Johnson, Boyden and Pittz, 2001), as well as the development of zero tolerance policies have been linked to increased incarceration of students of colour and low-income students (Giroux, 2014b). Therefore, the structure of schools generates a continuous supply of prisoners and those happen to be predominantly from communities that are seen as “disposable”.

While education is portrayed as a way out of poverty, the majority of young people is no longer seen ‘as a social investment for the future’ but rather a ‘national burden’ (Giroux, 2005, p.7). Instead of being seen as an embodiment of the future of a country, they are viewed with suspicion, demonized, and feared (Giroux, 2011) thrown into an education system that is set up to produce ‘consuming and marketable subjects’ (Giroux, 2014b, p.497), creating future prisoners, future employees and future customers. However, ‘under neoliberalism everything either is for sale or is plundered for profit’ (Giroux, 2005, p.2) and thus it is not surprising that those, whose ‘voices and needs are almost completely absent from the debates, policies, and legislative practice that are constructed in terms of their needs’, are left with fewer rights than most other groups in society (Giroux, 2011, p.109). Therefore, Giroux’s particular focus on student voice can be considered a direct challenge to the detrimental effects that neoliberalism has had on education. This is also mirrored in his statement that in order for educators to ‘function as public intellectuals, they need to listen to young people who are producing new language in order to talk about inequality and power relations (...) and asking serious questions about what democracy is and why it no longer exists in many neoliberal societies’ (Giroux, 2014c, p.25).

3.3.7 Criticism

Giroux undoubtedly has a large number of followers and writers such as Kashani (2012) and Yates (2016) have written what cannot be called anything other than homages to not only his work but also to him as a person. However, there are a few areas within his work that have received some criticism over time. Similar to the criticism Freire’s work receives, Rochester (2003, p.4) for example points out the terminology used by Giroux, which, although he argues the point in regards to Critical Pedagogy more generally rather than Giroux’s work specifically, ‘that authors express ideas in such airy, abstract terms that it is hard to get a handle on exactly what practical classroom applications might follow’. Additionally, Rochester describes Giroux (as well as Peter McLaren’s) writing with a new version of the “three R’s”, ‘redundant, recycled rants’ (ibid., p.9), and Wexler (1984, p.407) hints that some readers possibly finding Giroux’s ‘stylistic preachiness (...) off-putting’ and that, due to his writing remaining ‘sufficiently abstract’, ‘the depth of his commitment can sound at times like sloganeering’. In his largely positive review of Giroux’s *Neoliberalism’s War on Higher Education*, Doughty (2014, p.3) suggests that Giroux ‘rehearses the diagnosis, but does not do enough to explain the therapy’, and instead of offering something new, ‘the book tells’ readers ‘what [they] already knew’.

Additionally, McKenzie and Scheurich (2004, p.437) critique what they call a ‘rhetorical and highly abstract totalization’ within his work, although it is important to note that in this section the authors not only discuss Giroux but also two other authors who use similar arguments within their writing. They challenge that Giroux, among others, portrays schools as having been ‘democratic public institutions in the good old days of yesteryear’ and describe these assertions as ‘historically naïve and an overly dramatic romanticization of the past’ (ibid., p.438). This is not the only place where Giroux has been accused of romanticisation, as Webb (2009, p.756) suggests there to be an ‘endless romanticisation of the student voice’ in Giroux’s work. A further criticism that relates to the idea of “voice” pertains to the topic of ableism. Agosto, White and Valcarlos (2019, p.42-43) suggest that the intense focus on voice ‘embedded in anti-oppressive discourse’, such as that of Giroux, excludes those who ‘lack vocal ability’ as ‘voice provides access to power’. While this is probably not a wilful exclusion, it can nevertheless be considered an oversight that indicates a taken-for-granted ability to speak. Additionally, as considered by some of my participants and discussed at length in chapter three, students’ silence can be a sign of resistance in itself.

Another contentious point within Giroux’s work is his use of the term “radical pedagogy”. At the beginning of his career he made regular use of the term (see for example Giroux, 1983). However, in an interview in 2007 he explains he now rejects the term as it ‘carr[ies] an exclusionary weight to it that would not allow most educators to take the leap and identify with it’ (FreireProject, 2007). Instead, he uses the term “radical” in connection with education and educators but especially theory. Radical theory plays a crucial role in much of Giroux’s writing. Having read criticism regarding Freire’s work being domesticated or watered-down, it could be questioned whether the rejection of “radical” in relation to pedagogy might be intended to make the concept more digestible.

Additional criticism relates to Giroux’s interpretation of utopia and utopian pedagogy. While Giroux (2002, p.96) considers education to be a site of cultural reproduction, he nevertheless describes it as a ‘site of utopian possibility’. To Giroux, education’s goal is to enable democracy and seeing ‘education as a democratic project is utopian’ in its vision (Giroux, 2014b, p.496). However, in his article concerned with utopian vision, Webb (2009) discusses the shortcomings of Giroux’s interpretation and application of utopian concepts within education. Webb addresses the wariness with which the concept of utopia is regarded and the caution that educationalists take when seeking to implement the ideas while at the same time seeking to ‘avoid ‘totalistic’ blueprints and advocating prescriptive ‘closure’ (Webb, 2009, p.756). Webb acknowledges the danger that utopia can be ‘rigidly doctrinaire and potentially coercive’ and

points out that in order to stay clear of this particular risk, Giroux attempts to avoid value-based judgements and evaluations of what constitutes a good life (p.755, 756). It is this avoidance, Webb states, that weakens Giroux's approach as it leads to a utopian pedagogy that lacks 'a guiding, directing utopian vision' (p.756). As a result, Giroux's utopian pedagogy becomes a 'naïve and fanciful' (p.755) and 'nullif[ied] concept' (p.757).

While these criticisms should be taken seriously, there is much to be gained from Giroux's work. He draws attention to the various ways in which the education system operates to limit the opportunities for various groups in society, by allegedly being meritocratic while in reality producing future generations of either leaders who already possess the cultural capital needed for success, or docile workers and prisoners. In order to challenge this, Giroux focuses in particular on critical citizenship as a way to make society more democratic. With his utopian vision, he calls on educators as public intellectuals to challenge all forms of domination by focusing on their students' voices who are seen as the future generation that can, with the right support, have the power to make a difference.

3.4 A critical examination of Critical Pedagogy

While Critical Pedagogy has many qualities that, when implemented in classrooms, can benefit students, teachers and societies as a whole, there are several issues within the field that warrant attention and those will be discussed briefly in the following section. Several of these issues will be explored again in the analysis chapter, as a number of participants raised these issues during their interviews, highlighting how their persistent presence has even resulted in individuals stepping back from Critical Pedagogy.

While Critical Pedagogy has received a number of criticisms over the years, such as that voiced by Ellsworth (1989) regarding her failed attempt to successfully implement Critical Pedagogy in her classroom which is discussed in the chapter on bell hooks, or the criticism of Freire's (and others') writing being inaccessible and overly complicated, as highlighted in the chapter on Freire, there are a number of issues that are highlighted again and again. These most often relate to Critical Pedagogy's inability to adequately address issues of racism and, at times, even a complicity in reproducing issues of racism has been highlighted, along with other issues such as sexism and patriarchal structures. Critical Pedagogy's controversial relationship with race has probably received the most attention in the last few decades and while it can be discussed in itself, the way race is treated and side-lined represents how Critical Pedagogy fails to successfully address other issues as well.

3.4.1 The whiteness of Critical Pedagogy

'As the unmarked category against which difference is constructed, whiteness never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations' (Lipsitz, 2009, p.1). As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Critical Pedagogy has its roots in Marxist theory, a field dominated predominantly by White men. Simply googling Critical Pedagogy and its most influential scholars, it quickly becomes obvious that the majority of them also happen to be White men. While many others have been involved in doing 'cutting-edge critical pedagogical work', 'they have tended to not receive the same recognition and status as the White male critical pedagogues' (Malott, 2011, p.lii). Due to its Marxist roots Critical Pedagogy offers a critique of capitalism using social class analysis. As it is described as being 'rooted in the real interest and struggles of ordinary people', 'overtly political and critical of the status quo' and 'committed to progressive social and political change' (Crowther, 2010, p.16), it could be assumed, and I am sure most critical pedagogues would indeed argue the case, that Critical Pedagogy focuses on the concerns of everyone in

society to the same extent. However, while it is asserted that Marxism does not focus on social class exclusively and indeed the challenges pertaining those in society who are not racialised as White are discussed in the work of many Marxists (Hill, 2013), there seems to be a lack of critical pedagogues, at least those who subscribe to the Marxist tradition, examining their own whiteness and their own positions in society within their discussion of oppression based on people's racial identities.

Eddo-Lodge (2018, p.86) describes White privilege as a number of absences, 'an absence of negative consequences of racism', 'structural discrimination' and 'your race being viewed as a problem', to name only a few. While White privilege benefits those who have it, it does not mean that White people do not struggle, it simply means that their race is not the reason they do, rather their race 'will almost certainly positively impact' their 'life's trajectory in some way', probably without them being aware of it (Eddo-Lodge, 2018, p.87). As DiAngelo (2019, p.19) recounts 'I grew up in poverty and felt a deep sense of shame about being poor. But I also knew that I was white, and that it was always better to be white'. Cole and Maisuria (2007) argue that White people as a whole do not consistently fare better in society, as not everyone who is White is in a position of power and privilege, and those who highlight Critical Pedagogy's inability to address racial issues do not deny this. However, when a field that proclaims to be committed to eradicating oppressions of any kind is unable to connect to those groups in society that are amongst the most oppressed, it suggests a disconnect and it has been questioned whether a discourse can be anti-racist, if it does not directly focus on race (Allen, 2006).

In a chapter titled *The Race Problem in the Critical Pedagogy Community*, Allen (2006) discusses his own experiences when attending events that run under the name of Critical Pedagogy. Similar to my own experience at such events, Allen notices that the audience continues to consist predominantly of White or non-Black Latino scholars, which suggests to him that those from a Black and Indigenous background choose not to 'participate in the critical pedagogy community' (Allen, 2006, p.4). Accordingly, Allen questions

How can the critical pedagogy community claim to be on the side of the oppressed when the members of the two most historically oppressed groups in the United States (and throughout the Americas), Blacks and Indians, don't show up to our events or have a strong leading presence in critical pedagogy scholarship (p.4)

Similarly, Kincheloe (2012, p.149) also addresses the absence of 'indigenous peoples, individuals of African descent, and Asians' at 'critical pedagogical conferences' around the

world, especially highlighting the lack of African Americans in the North American context. He adds that ‘one of the greatest failures of critical pedagogy (...) involves the inability to engage people of African, Asian, and indigenous backgrounds in our tradition’, as it ‘has much to learn from the[ir] often subjugated knowledges’. A quote previously mentioned in the chapter on CUS needs repeating here: ‘Marginalized viewpoints are especially valuable for seeing the limits of dominant conceptual schemes because they offer a perspective on social reality that is invisible from the perspective of the dominant group’ (Weldon, 2006, p.79). Thus, marginalised viewpoints are invaluable in the exploration of injustices, as perspectives, experiences, ideas and understandings differ depending on a person’s lived reality and it is almost impossible to realise one’s own privileged position, unless it is highlighted by someone else. The problem with whiteness is that it is seen as the default position, opposed to the “other”, ‘neutral is white. The default is white’ (Eddo-Lodge, 2018, p.85). Its normativity leads to ‘the invisibility of whiteness in social dynamics’ (Hyttten and Adkins, 2002, p.434) and allows White people to ‘avoid identifying ourselves as racial beings’ (p.437). Unfortunately, there is not much exploration of whiteness within Critical Pedagogy, although there have been attempts to include work on whiteness by critical pedagogues such as Peter McLaren and Joe Kincheloe, and even at one point by Henry Giroux.

While there is some discussion of race and racism in Marxist Critical Pedagogy, race is still considered a contested term (and thus often put in quotation marks) as the concept of race is socially constructed and thus deemed not to be a “real thing”. However, despite race being ‘a figment of our imagination, racism is not’ (Kinouani, 2021, p.7). Instead, their race impacts individuals’ experiences tremendously, especially in predominantly White spaces, such as academia (Bhopal, Brown and Jackson, 2018). Malott (2011, p.xxiii) states that his 21st century collection of writings represents a movement towards a ‘more humane, less Eurocentric, less paternalistic, less homophobic, less patriarchal, less exploitative, and less violent world’, suggesting a development in the field that addresses some of the issues considered Critical Pedagogy’s shortfalls. However, the volume does not include any of Critical Pedagogy’s “big names”, although this might be the explanation for Malott’s suggested development in the field.

Within the Marxist tradition, there has been a longstanding debate about the inclusion of theories that focus on race and, in some cases, the discussion of race and racism is considered an unhelpful distraction at best and a waste of time at worst. Many Marxist scholars argue that focusing on issues of race rather than social class does little other than to divide the working class. Hill (2013, p.57-58) for example suggests that considering race to be ‘the most significant form of oppression’ enables the capitalists to ‘reproduce existing patterns of educational, social,

and economic inequalities'. These 'processes of marginalization and inequality are functional' as they 'occlude class consciousness and impede the development of the working-class movement by dividing the working-class' (ibid.). However, scholars who criticise Critical Pedagogy for its omission of race in their discussion, rarely suggest that race should replace class, it is more the case of race being included. Assuming that oppression based on social class is the most significant form of oppression within capitalist societies seems to discount the fact that those in society that are not only poor but also non-white face increased discrimination compared to their White counterparts. As Lynn (2004, p.128) states, 'lives of the Black poor' are 'even more miserable'.

Additionally, it has to be mentioned that focusing on intersectionality, which 'links inquiry to a transformative and ultimately political agenda' as it 'identifies boundary markers that make visible the politics of exclusion' (White, 2007, p.272) and thereby addressing for example race, gender, disability, and sexuality, is sometimes considered identity politics by mainstream Marxists and described as bourgeois politics (Bohrer, 2018), almost ridiculing those who are invested in its inclusion. However, including race as a category is crucial, as suggested by Bell (2017) who points out that Disability Studies should *really* be called White Disability Studies, as within Disability Studies People of Colour continue to be largely ignored and racism remains untouched. Likewise, Agosto, White and Valcarlos (2019, p.43) highlight that where race and racism is left out of research on 'ableism confronting students and their families allow race/racism to remain *untouched, under-emphasized, under-monitored, and under-policed* by curriculum specialist and generalists'. People's identities are complex and their intersection is crucial for understanding and tackling inequality.

The omission of race has also been discussed in relation to social justice movements and White radical social change groups. Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin (2016) for example discusses how many white-led radical social change groups have been instrumental in perpetuating oppressive structures by ignoring or silencing the voices of People of Colour. When raising issues of racism within various Anarchist and radical movements, Ervin has been accused of 'making blanket "false charges" of racism against white Anarchists and progressives' as well as "'wrecking" organizations' (p.35). He points out that 'as long as it is white-dominated', an organisation or a movement 'will only reflect a Eurocentric worldview of a privileged class' (ibid.). While he believes it to be necessary for People of Colour and White people to unite in order to challenge and overthrow capitalism, he highlights the deep mistrust felt by People of Colour due to their historical mistreatment, especially as 'White radicals have always seen the issues revolving around their concepts of the white working class "coming to its senses", recognizing its

“historical mission as a leading class and saving us all” (Ervin, 2016, p.41). People of Colour who are part of white-led social movements, Ervin suggests, are essentially ‘slaves on the white radical plantation, have no voice and tolerate all kinds of abuse, just to be part of the movement’, an ‘unhealthy, oppressive relationship’ (p.31).

Similarly, Campbell (2011), who was involved in the Occupy movement, highlights how People of Colour did not feel safe to raise issues of White privilege within the movement, the obliviousness of those involved in using the term ‘occupation’, its relation to the land of indigenous communities who have experienced the occupation of their land by White people, the continued occupation of other countries by the US via military bases and the fact that it was African slaves who built Wall Street in the 17th century while it was colonised by the Dutch. He states, ‘white Occupiers ignore how language is attached to histories – in this case, histories of genocide, slavery, occupation, and imperialism’ (Campbell, 2011, p.45), showing a disregard for those communities most affected, in the name of fighting for social change. Campbell (2011, p.46) points out that there were indeed ‘compelling remarks from white occupiers about how their movement should be anti-racist in orientation’ but that unfortunately, the ‘topic has been suspended when questions of white privilege within the movement have been presented’. Thus, it seems, those involved in social change movements are especially susceptible to believing they fight for equality by being part of movements that bring about justice, while at the same time potentially being the worst kind of racists, because they position themselves as anti-racist and friends of Black people, living a life of denial and self-delusion, unable to reflect on their own and their movement’s involvement in perpetuating oppressive and racist structures. Thus, it can be argued, there might be a danger for those who are involved in Critical Pedagogy to assume they must be anti-racists, simply due to their involvement in a practice that is, at its core, committed to challenging oppression of any kind.

3.4.2 Brief historical background

Capitalism, its need for capital accumulation and an increase in profits has led Europeans to seek labour power elsewhere. In the United States, the subsequent demand for allegedly ‘inferior people suited “by nature” for the humiliating subordination’ and the construction of racial categories that would justify said subordination led to the enslavement of Native Americans, which was considered impractical, and later to that of African slaves until slavery was abolished (Lipsitz, 2009, p.2). The abolition of slavery then led to ‘the importation of low-wage labor from Asia’, until immigration from Asia was restricted by legislations, making room for ‘low-wage labor from Mexico’ (ibid.). This clearly demonstrates how deeply ingrained the

exploitation of non-white groups is in capitalist societies. This is supported by Mills (1999, p.32-33) who mentions the Racial Contract, which ‘is calculatedly aimed at economic exploitation’ and legitimises the ‘privileging of those individuals designated as white’ as it ‘creates Europe as the continent that dominates the world; locally, within Europe and other continents, it designates Europeans as the privileged race’. Despite the abolition of slavery, the ‘commonly accepted scientific “fact”’ about the inferiority of people racialised a non-white is so ingrained that it continues to impact people’s lives (DiAngelo, 2019, p.17).

In order to argue their case against race as a category, Marxist scholars point towards the experiences of for example Irish immigrants in the US, arguing that oppression based on physical difference does not fully account for oppression that takes place within one racial category. Instead, they argue, racialisation can affect any group, not just those with Black or Brown skin tones and witnessing said racialisation and the subsequent ‘horrors’ selected groups faced allows ‘the international academic community’ to ‘question the “scientific” basis of race and racial difference’ (Singh and Cowden, 2010, p28). However, what is rarely acknowledged is the increase in opportunity to assimilate and integrate into a society if one “looks the part” (DiAngelo, 2019). Furthermore, what the authors mean by “the” international academic community is unclear to me and suggests a generalisation on their part that almost insinuates the hierarchical thinking that appears within academia and is one of the issues discussed by some scholars who criticise Critical Pedagogy.

In 2003, Darder and Torres published a chapter in the first edition of their edited book *The Critical Pedagogy Reader* called *Shattering the “Race” Lens: Toward a Critical Theory of Racism*. It is important to note here, that this chapter does not feature in the second or the third edition of the reader, however, as some of the ideas expressed in this chapter illustrate nicely the reasons for an ongoing debate about the usefulness of race as a key concept, I will use them here. Darder and Torres (2003) begin by describing race as a concept as ‘problematic’ (p.245) and seek to illustrate that ‘using the concept of “race” as a central category of analysis for interpreting the social conditions of inequality and marginalization’ and the subsequent offering of solutions built on race relations have led to problems (p.456). Their example is the busing of Black pupils to White schools in the United States in the 1970, which was implemented in order to ‘improve “race relations” and the educational conditions of “Black” students’, but was later denounced as unhelpful (p.457). However, whether it was unhelpful predominantly because a small number of Black children were suddenly thrown into a school that consisted entirely of White children, where they were taught by only White teachers who had little to no contact with other races in a White part of town, is not acknowledged.

3.4.3 Knowledges and values

Allen (2004, p.122) asserts that in order ‘for critical pedagogy to become anti-racist’, ‘race-radical philosophies of people of color around the world’ need to be included in the discussion and he requests a ‘move away from the comforts and constrictions of a Marxist Eurocentricity’. That Marxist Eurocentricity is at odds with other knowledges is not a new idea, and Means (1983, p.24) states ‘Marxism is right smack in the middle of European tradition’. Allen (2006, p.5) also identifies ‘a tradition in U.S. Marxism that sees Blacks as insufficiently anticapitalist’ and questions how ‘we [are] to believe that the group made the most poor by capitalism, while making the most money for capitalists, is the least aware of capitalism’s damaging effects?’. Said sentiment can also be found in Darder and Torres’ (2003, p.247) analysis that ‘in much of the work on African American, Latino, Native American, and Asian populations, an analysis of class and a critique of capitalism is *conspicuously* absent’ (emphasis added). Thus, it seems to be suggested that those who are racially marginalised are at fault for not contributing to the critique of capitalism and thus potentially for their disengagement in Critical Pedagogy. However, Allen (2004, p.122) suggests that the issue might not be with People of Colour not being sufficiently anti-capitalist, rather that ‘we seem unable to realize that our diminution of race has alienated those who do not have the privilege to ignore white supremacy – no matter what economic form it takes’. Thus, their disengagement might have more to do with the alienation they experience when interacting with a community that does not fully acknowledge the impact their racial identity has on their lives, whether they are rich or poor.

As the chapter on Critical University Studies highlighted, neoliberalism has weakened the welfare state tremendously in various parts of the world and as emphasised in the section on Henry Giroux, the effects on poor young people, especially those of colour, are especially devastating. Interestingly, research from the US suggests that people’s beliefs about race influences their attitudes towards welfare spending. Gilens (1999) identified a correlation between people’s beliefs about racial groups and their attitudes regarding whether welfare spending should be decreased, increased, or maintained. While there was no or very little correlation between people’s perceptions of Whites, Hispanics or Asians and their attitudes towards welfare spending, the majority of participant thought ‘most people who receive welfare are black’ and ‘blacks are less committed to the work ethic than other Americans’, and thus opposed welfare spending (Gilens, 1999, p.3). Considering that the Hispanic population continues to grow and has done so since the research was conducted more than twenty years ago, it would be interesting to see current research on people’s attitudes. While this does not

seem directly related to this research, it illustrates nicely how attitudes towards something as egalitarian as welfare spending continue to be overshadowed by racial stereotypes.

Interestingly, experiences of racialisation and racism continue to be dismissed, despite various examples of People of Colour sharing experiences of specific discrimination that does not affect people who are White and poor. However, there are challenges involved pertaining to White people seeking to understand and empathise with the experience of People of Colour. Delgado (1996) speaks of something he calls “false empathy” which he discusses as follows:

False empathy is worse than none at all, worse than indifference. It makes you overconfident, so that you can easily harm the intended beneficiary. You are apt to be paternalistic, thinking you know what the other really wants or needs, you can easily substitute your own goal for hers. You visualize what you would want if you were she, when your experiences are radically different, and your needs too. You can end up thinking that race is no different from class, that blacks are just whites who happen not to have any money right now (p. 94)

While most critical pedagogues would not try to argue they know how another person experiences the world, they nevertheless happily point out the “harm” that an analysis of race as the most predominant form of oppression causes to the anti-capitalist movement. Considering that the Critical Pedagogy community is predominantly White and that it might stay that way, since those who ‘grew tired of critical pedagogy’s failure to address white supremacy adequately (...) found in CRT a more vital and empowering project’ (Allen, 2006, p.8), it can be questioned whether Delgado’s false empathy is part of the explanation. Perhaps those who denounce an analysis of race are unable to understand the significance of race as a factor, as their ‘experiences’ as well as their ‘needs’ are ‘radically different’ (Delgado, 1996, p.614). Believing to know what others need has also been discussed by Hytten and Adkins (2002, p.433) who admit not seeing ‘the ways in which [their] whiteness distorts [their] intentions’, making them confident in interpreting and addressing ‘education issues in a diverse society (...) without necessarily including the voices of others’. As White women in a society where whiteness is considered the neutral state, they had internalised that they ‘know what [they] are doing and [they] understand what needs to be done’, only later and after much reflection and conversations with non-white colleagues, they were ‘able to see whiteness at the root of’ their ‘intentions gone astray’ (ibid.).

In a way, this correlates with the idea of Freire, who, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, asserts that liberation has to come from the oppressed and cannot be facilitated by the oppressors. He argues, ‘it would be a contradiction in terms if the oppressors not only defended but actually implemented a liberating education’ (Freire, 1996, p.36). Therefore, it can be questioned

whether it is possible for critical pedagogues who belong to the least oppressed group in society, to sufficiently lead the struggle for the liberation of those most oppressed.

There are reasons to hope that even those critical pedagogues who describe themselves as Marxists start to include race as an important category within their work. In his review essay on Shilliam's *Race and the Undeserving Poor. From Abolition to Brexit*, Themelis (2019, p.263), who uses Marxist analysis in his work, acknowledges racialisation as an 'integral part of British history' and instead of analysing race and class separately, racialisation and racialised politics should be 'understood together with capitalist development'. Crucially, he states that 'combin[ing] the analysis of the politics of race with that of class should not come to the detriment of the subjective experiences of domination suffered' by any particular group (ibid.).

Importantly, there seem to be other spaces within Critical Pedagogy where race can be addressed, especially within a new wave of scholars writing in the field such as in Malott's collection of essays mentioned earlier. This inclusion however, Leonardo (2005) argues, can only happen when a sufficient analysis of whiteness, white supremacy and white privilege takes place. He suggests, that it is important to examine white privilege as well as white supremacy, as while these 'two processes are related', it is 'the conditions of white supremacy' that 'make white privilege possible' (ibid., p.37). As DiAngelo (2019, p.25) points out, 'to examine whiteness is to focus on how racism elevates white people' instead of 'the typical focus on how racism hurts people of color'. Thus, the ongoing domination of one group in society allows for the ongoing oppression and the subsequent disadvantage of another. Instead of focussing on those oppressed, critical analysis should focus on the identity and the experiences of the oppressor and the structures that hold racial domination and white hegemony firmly in place.

Considering an ongoing dismissal of race related analyses, it can be argued that the Critical Pedagogy community, especially those who focus on Marxist social class analysis, continues to prove to People of Colour where their priorities lie, or more likely, where not, which explains the mistrust of those who feel unheard and undervalued. Combining this with the analysis of various People of Colour who find their criticism of racism and White privilege within social change movements undermined, it is unsurprising that there is a sense of unease among People of Colour who might have been interested in Critical Pedagogy, but found there to be similar hierarchical and oppressive structures as in other communities, demonstrating to them that the field of CRT might be a safer place for them. Additionally, historically communities of colour did not have much reason to trust Eurocentric ideas and as Means (1983) points out:

So now we, as American Indian people, are asked to believe that a “new” European revolutionary doctrine such as Marxism will reverse the negative effects of European history on us. European power relations are to be adjusted once again, and that’s supposed to make things better for us. But what does this really mean? (p.24)

While Means’ attitude towards Marxism has been criticised (The RCP, 1983), this quote nevertheless represents the deeply rooted mistrust of those who have had to carry the burden of imperialism and colonialism for generations. Thus, it can be argued, the somewhat dismissive attitude, or even “just” the failure to sufficiently include race-based analysis within some strands of Critical Pedagogy can be understood as a reinforcement of existing power relations and a signifier for People of Colour that even if someone is involved in an anti-oppressive struggle, they can still be racist. This is also true for issues related to gender, sexuality, and ableism and other oppressive forces that are perpetuated and not acknowledged by those within the community who are not at the receiving end of any of them. As the analysis of race in relation to Critical Pedagogy has shown, if the field is dominated by predominantly White, heterosexual, able-bodied men, naturally there are going to be blind spots that require the input of those who do not fit this description.

Thus, as just discussed, it is crucial for the field of Critical Pedagogy not only to include the work of people from racially marginalised (and other oppressed) communities in order to “fill” the blind spots of those scholars who are White and male and who are unable to fully comprehend the impact race has on people’s experiences, it is also necessary for Critical Pedagogy to make sure these communities feel appreciated and heard, in order for them to want to be part of the Critical Pedagogy community. As Ervin (2016, p.41) highlights ‘the only way Black/POC and white people can really work in cooperation is when there is shared leadership, interests and risk taking inside a mass movement for racial and social justice’. It is simply not enough to acknowledge the need for others’ perspectives, the community as a whole has to shift its focus to one that is less alienating for those whose voices are desperately needed. It is the voices of the oppressed, not those whose identities resemble that of the oppressors, that will mobilise others who face challenges, whether these are racial, economic, or both. Yes, it is true that the concept of race is socially constructed, however as it implicates ‘deadly social causes and consequences’ it should be treated accordingly (Lipitz, 2006, p.2.).

Chapter 4: Methodology

This research investigates the potential of Critical Pedagogy as a tool for resistance within the neoliberal university. In order to do so, the field of CUS serves as the conceptual framework for the study, the methodology is informed by my understanding of Critical Pedagogy itself and the data gathered is analysed through the lens of critical realism. Within the field of Critical Pedagogy, the idea that education is political, is considered a given as it is linked to issues of power and social change in various ways (Apple, 1998; Giroux, 1988; McArthur, 2010). This is also true for research, therefore my ontological and epistemological assumptions are political too. As Al-Hardan (2014, p.63) highlights, ‘research is far from an apolitical and ahistorical activity; it occurs within a set of historical, political, and social relations of power’ and it is important to stress that ‘these power relations are encountered differently by those of us who are historically and politically positioned’. Holding on to the notion of education and educational research being apolitical or non-political is thus dangerous for a number of reasons.

Firstly, framing educational research as being apolitical plays into the hands of dominant structures in the way that considering education as apolitical does: It avoids the question of who benefits from it, and who, ultimately, is disadvantaged. Because it is depicted as unbiased, it does not leave room for being questioned or challenged. Secondly, in the current climate, which has been discussed in chapter one on CUS, for an academic researcher working in the social sciences, ‘engaging in politics – responding to the exposure of power, joining questions about justice and the good of judgement and action – is not necessarily joyful, festive or fun’ (Barney, 2010, p.383). Instead ‘it is onerous work that is disruptive, antagonistic, risky and dangerous’ (ibid.). Those who work in academia, and who want to remain in their jobs, not only have to, at least to a certain degree, represent the values of their institutions, but also, and more importantly, engage in research that is considered to have “high scholarly impact”. In a neoliberal institution such as the university, where managerial language and regimes of audit in the name of quality and efficiency are omnipresent, research is easily co-opted for the neoliberal agenda. Thus, as the writer Toni Morrison warned in a speech in 1993: ‘There will be more of the language of surveillance disguised as research; of politics and history calculated to render the suffering of millions mute’ (Morrison, 2013, quoted in Davies, 2005, p.7), which has become the reality as neoliberal agendas weaponise research to silence ‘those who ask questions’ (Davies, 2005, p.7). My standpoint is similar to Griffiths’ (1998, p.7), who states about her own academic work, that she is not only ‘contributing to the debate just for academic reasons’, she is ‘also trying to act politically: to influence the parameters of the debate in order to effect changes in educational practices’.

Additionally, at a very basic level, dominant power structures can easily be reproduced through materials studied in class that promote stereotypical views of certain groups, which seem to warrant unfair and oppressive treatments by reinforcing ‘racist, sexist, and patriarchal attitudes’ (McLaren, 2017, p.69). Considering that education’s primary role is to produce labour power (Ainley and Allen, 2010) and thus is ‘regarded primarily from an economic point of view’ (Ball, 2017, p.13), it is particularly important that those who do research within it, do not shy away from positioning themselves as political agents. However, as Paulo Freire highlights, the teacher has to be upfront with her students about her political standpoint in order to facilitate an authentic dialogue, therefore it is necessary for me to be upfront with those who read my research too, making it important that my methodology reflects the content of my thesis.

As a researcher in the social sciences, I believe that truth is socially constructed and depends on the observer’s perspective (Burton, Brundrett and Jones, 2011). It varies, as ‘reality is neither objective nor singular, but multiple realities are constructed by individuals’ (Waring, 2012, p.16). However, those socially constructed realities are also fallible, and reality exists whether we are aware of it or not. Therefore, all representations and perspectives have limitations. One of the participants of this study mentioned this, highlighting how she maps her journey into Critical Pedagogy differently, depending on the circumstances, leading her to give different accounts to the same question. Additionally, when ‘members of society act in accordance with their concepts of reality’, ‘social structures’ are further ‘reproduced or transformed’ (Danermark et al., 2002, p.35). Thus, not only are there various limitations, considering the accounts given by the research participants as well as the understanding of the researcher, but it is also true that ‘the object of social science research is at the same time socially produced – and so in some sense constructed - and real’ (ibid.), as reality exists regardless of the experienced reality of the participant.

Within the field of Critical Pedagogy, much focuses on the development of an individual’s critical consciousness to understand one’s oppression, a potentially hidden reality. In line with this, my attempt in this research was not only to collect and interpret empirical data that presents my participants’ realities, but also to search for underpinning realities. By taking into account the various ways in which the current structures of the neoliberal university constrain the actions of individuals working as academics in this setting, such as insecure working conditions, pressure to secure funding, satisfying the paying student-customer, and others, but also considering the implications that for example realising one’s lack of autonomy would have on academics’ mental health, the participants’ accounts were analysed in two stages. The first stage

includes the empirical data collected during the interviews, thus this stage explores the participants' reality. This data was then considered again in the second stage, where 'events are explained by postulating (and identifying) mechanisms which are capable of producing them', which is called retroduction (Sayer, 1992, p.107), however, these two stages are not separate parts of this thesis, rather they have been integrated to form the analysis chapter.

According to Gibson (2016, p.385), 'qualitative research has often been deployed as a label for any research that takes place in opposition to postpositivism', which is rejected 'in favour of developing contextual understandings of meaning and lived experiences based on, to varying degrees, levels of emphasis, and in various combinations, relativist ontologies, subjectivist epistemologies, and hermeneutic methodologies'. Like Sparkes (2015, p.50), I consider 'a paradigm to be a set of basic beliefs, and a worldview that defines, for its holder the nature of the world, our place in it, and the possible relationships we can have to this world and its parts'. A researcher's paradigm depends on their ontological and epistemological positions and assumptions. As pointed out by Markula and Silk (2011, p.25), these paradigms 'provide the boundaries for the researcher's ethics and values, actions in the social world', whose voices are considered valuable in a research project, and 'indeed, the very basic and fundamental understanding of the world the researcher is investigating'.

While it cannot be denied that interpretivist qualitative research has led to the collection of rich and complex data gathered from subjective experiences of individuals, it has its shortcomings. An example of this is described by Archer (2013, p.55), when she describes that it is impossible for the context 'to be exactly as contemporary actors describe[d] it'. Not only does she highlight their 'lack of objectivity' but also the fact that they 'react to the situations in which they find themselves', while 'they may remain unaware of the factors which moulded such situations' (ibid.). Furthermore, participants' realities change over time, so does the reality of the researcher. Knowledge and understanding evolve continuously, and my own understanding of Critical Pedagogy is an example of that, as it has changed over the course of my interviews and my research project more generally. While this might be a limitation to other research, it is very much in line with Critical Pedagogy and its focus on continued learning and the reevaluation of ideas and understandings. Thus, the data collected presents the reality of my participants at the time of the interviews and this reality was analysed. However, as Marx complained in 1845, 'Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it' (Marx, 1978, p.145). Doing research to interpret the world should therefore not be the end in itself, but the aim is to facilitate change.

There are a number of other issues with interpretivist research. Firstly, concerned with the participants' experiences, the 'researcher becomes the main research instrument' who cannot be fully objective about the data gathered as the 'researcher's preconceptions' are shaped by their 'historical and cultural context' (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, p.6 and 10). Thus, the researcher's understanding inevitably affects what data is interpreted as well as how it is interpreted, which makes reflexivity crucial. As Steele (2011, p.14) states, '[w]e simply are not, and cannot be, all knowing and completely objective. Our understandings and views of the world are partial, and reflect the circumstances of our particular lives'. However, while bias cannot be avoided, the ongoing debate of whether interpretivist qualitative research can be considered research or whether it is "only" ideas, also has its benefits because the debate itself 'often reveals aspects of reality that surpass our original ideas and insights', in which case the direction of research can change or evolve (ibid.).

Secondly, as pointed out by Collier (1994, p.14) there is a danger that, since interpretivist researchers do not claim to know the objective truth, their claims are 'invulnerable to any criticism based on the claim that the facts are different' Additionally, Wiltshire (2018, p.529) summarises, there is an emphasis on producing 'rich, complex, nuanced accounts of experiences' within interpretivist qualitative research, without it also producing 'explanatory theories', which hinders the research from having any real impact by 'explaining how social phenomena come to be' (ibid., p.530). Instead, Wiltshire (2018) suggests critical realism can benefit researchers by acknowledging that 'practices of scientific activity are always fallible as a result of being bound up with imperfect observational methods' (p.531), while at the same time permitting 'researchers to acknowledge a sense of realism' by endorsing a "judgemental rationality' whereby theorising, philosophising and rationalising' can eventually 'lead to satisfactory conclusions' about what claims are more true than others, even when those might only be true 'for-the-time-being' (p.532).

Analysing and understanding the data are important steps in the research process, however the data needs to be situated in its surroundings, a neoliberal university in a capitalist world. Essentially, as discussed in previous chapters, Critical Pedagogy seeks to challenge threats to social justice and democracy through teaching and learning, and as a researcher who aligns with this politically, my aim is to contribute to the knowledge that facilitates change. While I my research might not facilitate change itself, my research findings might shed light on potential structures that are present within the academic setting my research participants inhabit and that restrict their potential to achieve what they set out to do when becoming critical pedagogues,

namely empowering students to become active parts in challenging unjust conditions within their societies.

Qualitative research in the social sciences, especially that which makes use of interpretation, has often been described as non-scientific or biased. ‘Accusation of bias and co-option’ is ‘mostly aimed at researchers who get off the fence’, those who make their political standpoint known in their writing (Griffiths, 1998, p.7). However, as Kerdeman (2015) posits, defining interpretation can be done in terms of ontology, as well as epistemology. The former considers interpretation not as ‘an act of cognition, a special method, or a theory of knowledge’, but rather it ‘instead characterizes how human beings experience the world’ (Kerdeman, 2015, p.18-19). The latter, the epistemological view of interpretation, considers interpretation as ‘a method or cognitive strategy’ to ‘clarify or construct meaning’, in order ‘to produce valid understandings of the meaningful “objects”’ of research, where the understandings, or knowledge, produced must be ‘rational, objective, and valid’ (ibid., p.18).

4.1 Critical Realism

In this research, I was interested in more than my interviewees’ perspectives. I wanted to understand the underlying structures within which they operate and the scope for radical agency that exists within these. In order to do this, I analysed my findings through the lens of critical realism. Therefore, I entered the analysis of my research by taking into account the broader social structures that framed the circumstances of my participants in order to highlight the underpinning structures that constrain the actions of these individuals, rather than using critical realism’s methods to analyse the data collected.

Critical realism emerged in the UK in the 1970s with the work of Roy Bhaskar, but also others such as Margaret Archer, Andrew Sayer and Andrew Collier. While critical realism uses insights of positivism and social constructivism, it is critical of both and seeks to avoid the shortcomings of either by presenting an alternative ontology. Positivism claims objectivity through scientific study and value free research while investigating regularities at the empirical level, in contrast, critical realists seek to discover and describe the mechanisms that produce events that occur at the empirical level (Bygstad and Munkvold, 2011).

Critical realism is described as a meta-theoretical position or a reflexive philosophical stance with an emphasis on ontology, more specifically realist ontology, and is used predominantly in the social sciences. Within critical realism, it is accepted ‘that there are objects in the world,

including social objects, whether the observer or researcher can know them or not' (Scott, 2010, p.33), which means that reality exists and operates outside of our awareness or knowledge, which therefore means that absolute knowledge is impossible. Therefore, the ontological question is: What exists in the social world and how does it behave? Bhaskar (1998) states that

the intransitive objects of knowledge are in general invariant to our knowledge of them: they are the real things and structures, mechanisms and processes, events and possibilities of the world; and for the most part they are quite independent of us. They are not unknowable, because as a matter of fact quite a bit is known about them... But neither are they in any way dependent upon our knowledge, let alone perception, of them. They are intransitive, science-independent, objects of scientific discovery and investigation (p.17)

Within critical realism it is believed that there are three ontological domains or three levels of reality: the empirical, the actual and the real. The *empirical* level describes the level where 'events or objects can be measured empirically', which means these 'events are always mediated through the filter of human experience and interpretation' (Fletcher, 2017, p.183). The *actual* level refers to the level where events occur, whether anybody experiences or observes them or not. Therefore, this reality exists 'independent of our concepts and knowledge of it' (Danermark et al., 2002, p.20), and thus 'there is no filter of human experience' (Fletcher, 2017, p.183). The question of whether the tree falling in the woods without anyone being there to witness it still makes a sound, is a famous example of this. The final level, the *real*, refers to the domain that 'consists of structures and objects, both physical and social, with capacities for behavior called mechanisms. These mechanisms may (or may not) trigger events in the *actual*', which 'may (or may not) be observed in the *empirical*' (emphasis in original) (Bystad and Munkvold, 2011, p.2). Here the idea of "open system" becomes relevant. Since casual mechanisms in the world can act unobserved and mechanisms result in varied outcomes, critical realists argue it is impossible to predict outcomes (Houston, 2001). As a result, 'critical realism does not promote a hard determinism; rather, it posits that mechanisms produce '*tendencies*', which '(re)directs' the researcher's 'attention to an *understanding* and *explanation* of those tendencies' (Houston, 2001, p.850, emphasis in original). Therefore, 'causal laws must be analysed as the tendencies of things, which may be possessed unexercised and exercised unrealised, just as they may of course be realised unperceived (or undetected) by people' (Bhaskar, 2013, pp.10).

As Danermark et al. (2002, p.20) pose, 'one property of reality is that it is not transparent. It has powers and mechanisms which we cannot observe but which we can experience *indirectly* by their ability to cause – to make things happen in the world' (emphasis in original). These

mechanisms, which can also be described as structures, are of particular interest for my study. According to Bygstad and Munkvold (2011) mechanisms are the causal structures that explain phenomena, however it is important to highlight that their contingent causality means they might produce different outcomes in different contexts. Additionally, it is also possible for different causes to create the same outcome or event (Sayer, 1992). While all my participants teach, or have taught, in universities in England, their experiences differ, despite them being affected by the same or similar potentially hidden structures. Important for this study is also that critical realism is not at odds with social constructivism. As such, critical realism does not deny that people are able to transform and manipulate their everyday worlds, rather it ‘provides a more adequate account of social life by also acknowledging the role of structural factors’ (Houston, 2001, p.851).

As Easton (2009, p.121) highlights, the ‘most fundamental aim of critical realism is explanation; answers to the question “what caused those events to happen?”’. Accordingly, critical realism ‘seeks to reconcile the context-bound and emergent descriptions that are made about the world with the ontological dimension that exists outside of, and is independent of, attempts to describe it’ (Scott, 2010, p.34). He concludes:

Critical realism is critical then, because many attempts at describing and explaining the world are bound to be fallible, and also because those ways of ordering the world, its categorisations and the relationships between them, cannot be justified in any absolute sense, and are always open to critique and their replacement by a different set of categories and relationships (p.33)

Furthermore, this research is situated within what Smith (2012) describes as Western research and she states:

to a large extent theories about research are underpinned by a cultural system of classification and representation, by views about human nature, human morality and virtue, by conceptions of space and time, by conceptions of gender and race. Ideas about these things help determine what counts as real (p.95-96)

This cultural system is often not visible for those who occupy space within it, but it is visible for those who are “outsiders” (Smith, 2012). This aligns with the critical realist assumption that just because something is not visible or obvious, it can still exist. This is especially important for social science research, which ‘has been Eurocentric throughout its institutional history’, examples of this being it reproducing ‘the view that Europe’s history is universal history’, and its centering on ‘progress, which became the explanation of the world’s history and the motor of applied social science’ (Mills, Durepos and Wiebe, 2010, p.356). Thus, in academia, and

especially in the social sciences Western or Eurocentric ideas continue to influence knowledge production (Alvares, 2011; Mills, Durepos and Wiebe, 2010; Summerville et al., 2021) and the higher education system itself reproduces the imperial and capitalist logic that Critical Pedagogy seeks/claims to challenge. As '[e]urocentrism is notable in the work of the founders of modern social science, such as Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim' and others, it is not surprising that it is also present in Critical Pedagogy, with its roots in critical theory and The Frankfurt School. Therefore, it could be argued, when analysing my research, critical realism can be a useful tool to illustrate the structures of imperial and colonial roots that are the foundation of the conditions I seek to analyse. However, the scope of the current research does not allow for a closer examination of those structures as analysing the deeply ingrained Eurocentric ideas of myself, my participants and Critical Pedagogy as a field would potentially offer enough material for another thesis. Regardless, keeping in mind how hidden structures of Western scientific knowledge production and Eurocentric ideas impact on my thinking and the way I conduct research is important for the credibility of my work, as research and its methodologies, always bring with it 'a cultural orientation, a set of values, a different conceptualization of such things as time, space and subjectivity, different competing theories of knowledge, highly specialized forms of language, and structures of power' (Smith, 2012, p.92).

4.2 Qualitative inquiry

Within qualitative research, it is crucial for researchers to understand the philosophical anchors of their work, as they inform and reflect the beliefs and assumptions that underpin the work as well as the research methodologies (Ponterotto, 2005). In my case, the motivation for my study is underpinned by my political interest in education as a tool, a tool for oppression as well as a tool for resistance, and is thus framed with an open political intent. By choosing to study the potential of Critical Pedagogy to enable resistance, I am aligning myself with those who seek to challenge existing power structures, systems of oppression and the way those are reproduced within societies. As pointed out by Rubin and Rubin (1995, p.49), as researchers choose the topic of their interviews, some topics simply 'attract researchers' curiosity', while 'others appeal to researchers' political and social values'. By interviewing academics who see themselves as engaged in this work, I record how these different individuals interpret and practise Critical Pedagogy, and how they do this while being situated within the neoliberal structures of the university. However, the aim of the study is not just to understand and interpret the realities of my participants, but instead to politically engage with them as part of the community that challenges the university.

My participants' answers to my interview questions are informed by their experiences as academics. 'The purpose of most qualitative interviewing is to derive interpretations, not facts or laws' and 'the epistemology of the qualitative interview tends to be more constructionist than positivist' (Warren, 2001, p.83). My research is not about measuring levels of the potential for resistance of my participants but rather to present their experiences and beliefs and analyse them in the context of the wider structures on the neoliberal university and the capitalist system more broadly. A qualitative enquiry using thematic analysis in form of a flexible deductive approach therefore best allows me to capture participants' interpretation of their roles as critical pedagogues, their possibilities and their limitations as well as the reoccurring themes within their accounts. There are a variety of approaches within qualitative research and they often overlap not only in their epistemology, but also in their techniques and procedures (Holloway and Todres, 2003). Drawing on the account of Holloway and Todres (2003), phenomenology focuses predominantly on the lived experiences of participants, seeking an understanding of phenomena that occur in certain contexts to 'describe, interpret and understand the meanings of experiences at both a general and unique level' (p.348). It is important to highlight that the version of phenomenology used in this case is known as hermeneutic phenomenology, which acknowledges that the observer, or researcher, cannot remove herself from the process of investigation as she is part of the phenomenon (Sloan and Bowe, 2014). Additionally, 'meaning has to be understood, it cannot be measured or counted, and hence there is always an interpretative or hermeneutic element in social science' (Sayer, 2000, p.17). Therefore, the approach acknowledges that I am myself situated in the university, albeit in a different capacity to that of my participants. In line with what Holloway and Todres (2003) suggest regarding data analysis within phenomenology, my participants' accounts of their experiences as academics teaching Critical Pedagogy in neoliberal institutions are explored in detail, using thematic analysis to find common themes. While it is generally claimed to be important for the researcher to spend some time observing her participants in this setting (ibid.), this was largely impossible in the case of this research due to the Covid-19 pandemic, however, this will be elaborated on shortly.

As mentioned previously, the aim of my research is not simply to address my participants' experiences, it further aims to analyse the data in order to identify causal structures (mechanisms), that result in said experiences. Therefore, data analysis had to be taken a step further. As highlighted by a number of authors (Bygstad and Munkvold, 2011; Fletcher, 2017), while a large number of papers and books have been written about critical realism as a philosophical framework, very little guidance is available regarding the practical application of critical realism in empirical research, especially in terms of methods, coding or analysis.

Following the example of Fletcher (2017), a flexible deductive analysis, a type of thematic analysis, was used to analyse the data collected.

4.3 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is described as a ‘method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.79), whereby the researcher takes an active role in the coding and theme development when analysing the research data (Clarke and Braun, 2017). According to Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas (2013), thematic analysis lends itself well to realist paradigms and allows the researcher to find out about the research participants’ attitudes and their experiences. Critical realism acknowledges ‘the ways individuals make meaning of their experience, and, in turn, the ways the broader social context impinges on those meanings’ without disregarding the ‘limits of ‘reality’’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.81) Thus, thematic analysis ‘can be a method which works both to reflect reality, and to unpick or unravel the surface of ‘reality’’ (ibid.). In this case, the first step is to search for demi-regularities in the empirical data that has been collected during the interviews. As mentioned previously, the social world can be regarded as open systems, making predictions impossible. Therefore, critical realists look for tendencies, rather than predictions, and these tendencies, they can be trends or changes in patterns observed in the data, which are called demi-regularities, that are identified through the processing and coding of the data collected (Fletcher, 2017).

As critical realism ‘aims to find the best explanation of reality through engagement with existing (fallible) theories about reality’ (ibid., p.186), existing theory is a crucial part of critical realist analysis. ‘A deductive approach is useful if the general aim of thematic analysis (...) is to test a previous theory in a different situation’ (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013, p.401), making a flexible deductive analysis, like Fletcher’s (2017) the most appropriate method to analyse my data. When specifying what she means by ‘flexible’, Fletcher herself draws on the work of Hsieh and Shannon (2005), who use the term ‘directed’, rather than flexible and whose article focuses on content analysis instead of thematic analysis, to draw on existing theory and literature to help with the research question as well as any themes of interest. For this, the researcher begins by ‘identifying key concepts or variables as initial coding categories’, before highlighting all sections that relate to the concept (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p.1281). Interviews are often used to establish ‘common patterns or themes between’ participants (Warren, 2001, p.85). However, for it to be a deductive analysis, the researcher begins with codes, or key concepts, identified in the literature, especially researcher’s own literature review and those codes will be organisational as well as theoretical (Fletcher, 2017). Organizational codes, Fletcher suggests, are merely ‘‘bins’ in which information is sorted,

while theoretical codes are derived from prior theory' (p.186). Coding here is necessary to translate large amounts of data (the transcribed interviews) into more manageable, smaller segments that are relevant to individual research questions (Polit and Beck, 2009).

In the case of this study, relevant parts of the interviews were transcribed and the data collected was coded shortly after each interview. The previously established theoretical codes, which were derived from the topics discussed in the literature review, functioned as the key concepts that were searched for in the data collected. This step of the analysis required an active immersion in the data in order for me to be able to make sense of it (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). Different colours were assigned to different themes (appendix d) and used to colour-code transcriptions (appendix e), however not all previously established themes were selected for the analysis. It is recommended not to be too rigid when coding, as this might obscure or distract (Saldaña, 2015) and therefore provisional codes, that can be changed or added when appropriate, are useful (Fletcher, 2017). Accordingly, a number of themes were combined during the process of analysis as there was a significant overlap in topics discussed and their relations to themes from the literature (appendix f). Not only does this reflect 'the flexibility of the deductive coding process' (ibid., p.186), it is also suitable for thematic analysis more generally as it can also be flexible in what themes will be focused on as 'the importance of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures, but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question' (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013, p.403). This allowed me to include themes that were only discussed by a small number of participants, as their discussion was deemed to offer important insight into certain topics that related to the literature.

During this process, identified demi-regularities were reinterpreted through abduction, a theoretical redescription 'in which empirical data are re-described using theoretical concepts' (Fletcher, 2017, p.188). However, it is claimed that abduction should not be considered a method or technique, but rather an art as it is an inherently creative process (Bygstad and Munkvold, 2011) as 'mechanisms are unobservable, and therefore their description is bound to contain concepts that do not occur in empirical data' (Bunge, 2004, p.200). Retroduction was the final stage of analysis. At this point, causal mechanisms that might explain events observed at the empirical level were hypothesized by identifying contextual conditions for what has been observed. As Bhaskar (1998b, p.207) states, the aim is to investigate the 'movement from the manifest phenomena of social life, as conceptualized in the experience of the social agents concerned, to the essential relations that necessitates them', thus my participants' experiences were put in context with the issues discussed in chapter two.

4.4 Gathering empirical data

The research methods I chose for my research study arose from the purpose of the study, to explore whether academics consider Critical Pedagogy to be a way to resist the neoliberal structures ingrained in their working life within academia. The study draws extensively on academics' personal experiences, thus methods were chosen that best allowed me to explore personal accounts. Exploring more than one person's account enabled me to find patterns and draw comparisons between my participants. Arising patterns or themes were therefore situated in the context that is presented in the literature review. In the chapter on CUS, many of the difficulties and limitations that academics experience due to the commodification of the university and the working environment my participants find themselves in, are explored. Accordingly, the research design takes into account participants' personal experiences, while at the same time situating them within the broader context of the university and the political landscape that surrounds and affects it. Combining the academics' narrative accounts, what they identify as their lived possibilities or constraints, with the broader context of academia discussed in the literature contributes to the study's validity.

4.5 Method

4.5.1 Interviews

As Ann Oakley (1981) points out, what is often considered important to interviewing as a research method, focuses on the number of people interviewed, the length of the interviews or what kind of protocol was followed. However, she argues, little attention is paid to the interviewers' and the interviewees' relationship and their feelings during the interview, the hospitality the interviewer experiences during the interview, if the interviewer visits the interviewee, as well as 'the extension of interviewer-interviewee encounters into more broadly-based social relationships', (Oakley, 1981, p.31). Oakley describes the former type of research report as a protocol that 'assumes a predominantly masculine model of sociology and society' (ibid.) which sees interviewing as 'an *instrument* of data collection' (emphasis in original) (ibid, p.32), in which case the conversation is 'initiated for a specific purpose, and focused on some specific content areas, with consequent elimination of extraneous material' (Kahn and Cannell, 1957, p.16). Getting to know the person opposite is therefore not of interest to the researcher. In opposition, a feminist perspective begins with the 'de-objectification of the researcher' (Varga-Dobai, 2012, p.4), instead treating the researcher 'as a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests' (Harding, 1997, p.165), 'whose social and institutional situatedness shapes the results of her analysis' (Varga-Dobai, 2012, p.4).

According to Goode and Hatt (1952, p.191), an interview with a participant is ‘a pseudo-conversation’ that ‘must have all the warmth and personality exchange of a conversation with the clarity and guidelines of scientific searching’. While this might be the case in certain circumstances, I found good rapport as well as a friendly relationship with my participants necessary for them to be able to openly speak about their experiences. While Selltiz et al. (1965) determine that it is crucial for the interviewer not to answer the interviewees’ questions, should they arise, I did not consider this rigidity as necessary or even beneficial for my research, instead I found sharing information about myself a good way of equalizing the relationship between me and my participants (Mitchell, 2010). Even though I considered myself the interviewer seeking information from the participants, I wanted the information to be shared with the “PhD student me”, someone who is also part of the neoliberal academic landscape and thus finds herself encountering similar issues to those of the participants.

What I aimed for and envisioned was what Oakley (1981, p.35) describes as ‘the acceptance by the interviewee of the interviewer’s research goals and the interviewee’s active search to help the interviewer in providing the relevant information’. In the case of my research, this was largely possible without any difficulty as all my participants have experiences with academic research themselves. Their being part of academia automatically involved an understanding of research and research aims, and thus the purpose of the interviews seemed clear to everyone. However, it has to be acknowledged that power dynamics can have a negative effect. If the interviewee for example prefers to speak about something that is not part of the interview, his or her experience with interviewing and them being the experienced academic, opposed to the interviewer, who, like me, is at a very different point in their academic career, potentially enables them to influence and even blindside the interviewer, making the interview about themselves, rather than about the intended topic.

Considering possible power dynamics between my interviewees and I was not straightforward. While it is often the case that the interviewer is considered to be the more powerful of the duo, this was impacted by the fact that I am “only” a PhD student, while all my participants have a doctorate and/or, more importantly, have years of working experiences as academics in the kind of institution that I continue to attend as a student. Thus, the ‘interviewer’s assumed superior position’ was challenged by the fact that, from a professional perspective, my interviewees’ position was superior to that of myself (Tang, 2002, p.706). However, the academics’ commitment to the field and practice of Critical Pedagogy would suggest a rejection of hierarchical structures within academia, thus I should have been considered “an equal”. This

common understanding of and interest in Critical Pedagogy, which is characterised, in theory, by a dialogical relationship between those involved thus suggests a common ground from which our conversations took place. However, my experiences as the interviewer differed greatly depending on the interviewee.

Overall, the interviews with female academics seemed to flow naturally and were accompanied by relatively little hierarchical undercurrents. It is suggested that when women interview women, there are various ways in which their relationship and power dynamics can manifest themselves (Tang, 2002). While ‘the sharing of a gender or some other experiences’ might have been beneficial to establish a relationship with my female participants, a potential rapport ‘is dependent upon both’, the researcher and the researched, ‘wanting to associate with each other’ (Puwar, 1997, p.87). However, even when the researcher and the researched are of the same gender, they arrive at the interview ‘not from stable and coherent standpoints, but from varied *perspectives*.’ (Warren, 2001, p.84). Apart from gender, other ‘structured and historically grounded roles and hierarchies of their society’, such as race and class, impact on the relationship (ibid.).

The interviews I conducted varied and so did the interactions between me and my participants. This is not surprising as ‘forms of interaction between the researcher and the researched are highly individual, and it is impossible to predict levels of co-operation’ (Cotterill, 1992, p.600). How the interaction plays out is highly dependent on the participant’s and the researcher’s personalities (Seidman, 2013). Additionally, this can impact on the relationship that researchers might have with participants later on. Some of my participants explicitly said they would like to stay in touch, invited me to events they were organising, have sent emails to check in, shared research or enquired about my progress as well as my mental state during the Covid-19 lockdown period, something I appreciated tremendously and which shows how researcher-participant relationships can develop. For my research topic, this is an important point. Working or studying in the neoliberal higher education system takes its toll on individuals’ mental health and support from colleagues is crucial, something that was explored in chapter two. Thus, those who consider themselves to be resisting the competitive nature of the neoliberal university, whether with the help of Critical Pedagogy or otherwise, could be expected to emphasise collaboration and to support those at the beginning of their academic career. Mentorship and support with academic development by senior academics is important for someone in my position (Monk and McKay, 2017), thus the individuals I interviewed, who are all vocal about the detrimental effects of neoliberalism on higher education, would, in theory, be perfect candidates to build relationships with the students they encounter.

4.5.2 Confidentiality

‘Confidentiality is a complex process that involves more than merely disguising the identities of research participants or sites’ (Tilley and Woodthorpe, 2011, p.198).

4.5.3 Pseudonyms

When considering how I would refer to my participants throughout my research, I explored various options. My first concern was their gender. While I saw benefits in making all my participants’ names gender neutral and refer to them as “they”, I decided that important aspects of my data would be lost. The experiences of my participants are highly dependent on who they are and their characteristics, not only regarding their gender but also their age, race and potential disabilities. Gender is therefore an important variable of my participants’ identity. Thus, while some individuals consider themselves as non-binary and thus do not refer to themselves as male or female, none of my participants seem to fall into that category. In fact, especially the women brought up their womanhood in our conversations. My second concern related to their names. In order to preserve my participants anonymity, I decided to use pseudonyms, however I was keen to avoid using Participant A and Participant B or numbers. After considering whether I would assign names to my participants, I decided to ask them to choose their own names, names that would reflect them and/or their backgrounds, if they wanted them to. Interestingly, two of my participants who brought up their experience as women in academia during the interviews ended up choosing gender-neutral names for themselves. Overall, my decision to let my participants choose their own names was influenced by my reading of decolonial and feminist literature, whereby choosing participants’ pseudonyms is often considered “paternalism” that impedes participants’ autonomy (Allen and Wiles, 2016). While pseudonyms are considered essential for assuring the anonymity of participant, much research has focused on highlighting that they can also be unhelpful as throughout history ‘anonymity has been about erasing the marginalised, especially women’ (Edwards, 2020, p.385). Thus, the usefulness of anonymity within qualitative research is increasingly questioned (Moore, 2012).

However, despite the criticism surrounding anonymity, the context of my research and the participants’ position within higher education institutions where their autonomy is increasingly undermined by an emphasis of neoliberal principles and where many staff members are already on precarious contracts and potentially face repercussions for speaking out against their institution, anonymity continues to be necessary. Nevertheless, as Allan and Wiles (2016, p.153) argue, ‘there are tensions between the need for confidentiality and the need for context

(...) within health research, where the social determinants of diversity and culture relate to inequity'. While my research project does not relate to health research, the current state of the higher education system with its underrepresentation of academics of colour exhibits similar issues related to inequity and I wanted my participants to be able to express some of their individuality through the name they chose. However, it has to be highlighted that even with the use of pseudonyms, assuring participants' anonymity is difficult within in-depth qualitative research (Saunders, Kitzinger and Kitzinger, 2015). As my participants shared their personal experiences during the interview, particular stories might therefore be recognisable to someone who knows them personally, follows them on social media or is familiar with their academic work. Especially where information is easily accessible on the internet, it is impossible to fully assure anonymity if participants choose to share significant life events or their involvement in famous projects.

Considering my research topic and Critical Pedagogy's focus on autonomy, liberation and voice, giving my participants the option of naming themselves seemed like a logical step and points towards participation as a political project, while concealing participants' identity. Furthermore, choosing a name for themselves potentially anchors them in the project in a more subjective way than being assigned a name or number and allowed them to use their own names if they so wished, as some individuals who are 'well known in their community or occupation (...) may be happy about being identified' (Allen and Wiles, 2016, p.151). This was the case with two of my participants who repeatedly stated they did not mind if they were identified by those who would read my thesis. When emailing my participants to ask for their chosen pseudonyms, all my female participants replied very soon after my email, with all of them seemingly appreciating this option. Of my male participants, only one replied, however he also expressed feeling very positive about choosing his own name and seemed to take great care in doing so. After not hearing back from the remaining two participants, I chose names, emailing them to give them one last opportunity to oppose. Neither of them did but one replied saying he was happy with his name. While it is in no way generalizable, it did make me wonder whether my female participants were more appreciative of being active participants in the research, as historically, women often were not.

4.5.4 Selecting participants

From the beginning of my research, I knew that semi-structured interviews would be my main method of gathering data. Interviewing academics enabled me to gather in-depth data by drawing on participants' experiences, attitudes and opinions, while the interviews' semi-structured nature allowed me to veer away from my pre-planned set of questions when a participant raised a point I considered valuable to explore further. While semi-structured interviews allow interviewees to give personal accounts of their experiences to any questions asked, all interviews including the same set of questions allowed me to collect information on specific topics. Despite the questions being the same, answers varied greatly. However, since their aim is to answer the same questions, it allowed me as the researcher to search for common themes while highlighting how experiences and understandings can differ. Thus, the pre-set interview questions can be seen as an 'interview guide' that offered some consistency which was important when analysing 'data from a comparative point of view' when comparing one interviewee's attitudes to that of another, while simultaneously allowing me the freedom to explore arising themes (Flick, 2007, p.51).

While interviews are one of the more time-consuming methods of gathering data, a relatively small number of participants can generate rich data and valuable insight into a topic. The relatively small number of participants in my research meant this method was feasible. Accordingly, I had to search for participants that would be able to speak on the topic of Critical Pedagogy as well as happy to address current issues in higher education. Therefore, it seemed important to recruit academics that were vocal about these issues and happy to share their experiences. I recruited participants from various places. Some I had briefly met at conferences or events in the past, some were recommended by my supervisor, others' work I had read during my previous degrees. There were some who I had found on Twitter by using the hashtag #criticalpedagogy or through universities' staff profiles, and one participant was recommended to me by a participant that I interviewed early on in the process. How I would approach my participants took some consideration, as the first contact the researcher makes with potential participants is important as it sets the tone for the relationship that hopefully will be established. As mentioned previously, I wanted to build a good rapport with my participants and thus it was important for me to write a personalised email rather than sending the same email to every participant.

While I had initially planned to interview five participants, my sample size grew as more academics replied to my tentative approach email, than I expected. Due to academics' busy

schedules, I had not anticipated that every single person would agree to speak to me. In the end, I interviewed eight participants from different universities in the country. These participants were of varying age and gender, working experience as academics, disciplines and departments, as well as background, however, the majority of them was white. While all male participants were White British, only one of my female participants was. Of the remaining, two participants were from what in the literature is often referred to as the “Global South”, a contentious term for various reasons, such as its homogenization of diverse populations, countries, and cultures. However, in this particular case, its shortcomings are useful as they help to obscure the origins and identities of my participants. While very interested in the experiences of academics of colour, systemic racism results in an under-representation of racialised minorities in academia (HESA, 2019), making White academics more “readily available” participants, especially as their voices are often more likely to be amplified by other academics or the literature. Additionally, as discussed in the chapter on CUS, as a group, academics of colour more often engage in unpaid work, such as sitting on committees, mentoring and other activities, which intensifies their already busy schedules within what are also more likely to be precarious working conditions (Eddy and Gaston-Gayles, 2008; Zheng, 2018). Thus I was mindful that seeking out academics of colour in particular would have meant to add to their already busy schedule without me being able to compensate them for their time.

In the space of five months I traveled to various cities in England to conduct my interviews. Six of these interviews were conducted on the participants’ campus, some in their offices, some in pre-booked rooms, the remaining two took place in cafes that the participants recommended.

4.6 Me and my participants

4.6.1 Positionality

My own perspective impacts on the way I conducted the research as well as reached out to participants. In my initial email, titled ‘tentative approach’ for example, I mentioned that I am aware of their busy schedule as academics and pointed out that the information sheet was written in accordance with the university’s guidelines and thus includes information that I might not consider relevant myself. This, I hoped, would show my participants that I am critical of and affected by some of the limitations and procedures that impact their lives as academics, and that I am confident in discussing those.

More generally, I approached my study as a White woman in her early 30s, who grew up as the only child of parents with enough income for my mother to be a stay at home mom until I

entered secondary school. While I grew up in Germany, a largely homogenous society where almost all my classmates looked like me, where I fit in, I decided to leave my comfort zone and move to the US in 2010 where I became an au pair to a family that did not look like me and lived in a society whose language I did not speak well. Looking back, I can see how this experience of leaving what I knew has influenced me tremendously and that, even if I did not realise it at the time, it ultimately paved the way for where I am now. After returning to Germany a year later and not feeling like I fit in anymore, I decided to leave “home” for good and moved to London in 2012.

As a child I was able to speak my mind and be actively listened to by my parents. I never felt like my voice was invalid or unimportant and even during my time in school, I felt like I could express my opinions freely. After laying out a case challenging a classmate’s unfair grading by a teacher, the teacher suggested I should think about becoming a lawyer, since I was able and confident enough to argue a case, even if it meant I had to speak up to an adult. Additionally, rote learning, which is greatly discussed within the discourse of Critical Pedagogy did not take up much space in my own education, enabling me to further my understanding of subjects rather than enabling me to simply recall answers for exams. However, I was not a very engaged pupil, had to repeat year 7, changed schools and only just about managed to graduate with an Abitur, the German equivalent of A-Levels. I simply was not interested in education and neither did my homework nor studied for exams. Regardless, I believe that having the freedom of speaking my mind and not being punished for not engaging in school plays a role in the way I was able to embrace Critical Pedagogy as a student.

After moving to London in 2012 I worked as a full-time nanny for two years, before starting my undergraduate degree. Thinking back to this particular nanny job, I can see how it has influenced my understanding of what I would later be able to describe as labour power. While being paid relatively well for someone without any official qualifications apart from childcare experience, the family I worked for during that time was well off. Being able to afford childcare for 50+ hours a week, owning a house in Zone 1, going on holiday at various times throughout the year was very different to my experience of London where I rented rooms in house shares with up to 4 other people. Literally seeing how the other half lived and actively taking part in their lives from Monday to Friday (sometimes Saturday), while still not being part of this world and often being treated like the help rather than a member of the family (as nanny jobs are often advertised), opened my eyes to the unequal distribution of wealth that is particularly apparent in places such as London, even if the family I worked for was not particularly wealthy and I was not particularly poor either.

After two years of spending 50-55 hours a week parenting someone else's children, I decided it would be time for me to go back to university and finally get the degree I had been planning to get, because it is what one does. I had always been interested in psychology growing up, but thinking I was not smart enough to study such an esteemed discipline, I decided to study Education with Psychology, a combined degree that would give me an insight into psychology but without an accreditation, while supporting myself by continuing to work as a nanny part-time. Until I started university in 2014, I would have described myself as having a strong sense of social justice, but "political" would not have been a word to describe myself. Looking back, I would probably say that I was blissfully unaware. I had no idea what neoliberalism was, never came across words such as ideology or austerity, and would not have been able to define the term institutional racism. While I use these terms frequently now, they meant nothing to me then and, as far as I was concerned, they had no impact on my life.

The university I chose ended up being a former polytechnic, which also meant nothing to me at the time. I chose the institution based on how I felt during the open day, rather than based on its position in the league tables (which, I later found out, was not a great position at all). What happened to me during my undergraduate degree is something I could not have foreseen, it changed me and I like to call it my personal "mini enlightenment". The campus was on the other side of town, an area I did not frequent much at the time, the student body was as ethnically diverse as the institution's borough and most of the academics I encountered were genuinely interested in their students' success *and* wellbeing. While I very much benefitted from the knowledge of those lecturers who did not only display a real passion for teaching, but also for issues of inequality in society, I learnt just as much through endless conversations with fellow students, whose experiences of schooling seemed vastly different from mine in many cases, especially because I had grown up in a different country. In class we were introduced to the ideas of bell hooks, Paulo Freire and Critical Pedagogy more generally and I began to think about what I had learnt in my lectures in relation to my personal experiences. I became increasingly more interested in what Critical Pedagogy had to offer and considered it to be a practice that enables students to speak up for themselves and for others. Additionally, I should mention that what I consider some of my most formative modules at undergraduate level were heavily influenced by Marxist theory and that I thus continue to read literature through a Marxist lens. Accordingly, I consider "mainstream education" a tool that perpetuates inequalities and unjust power relations, benefitting some member of society, but not the majority.

4.6.2 The participants

Chris

Chris was my first participant and she was also one of the two academics I interviewed who were closest to me in age and would be considered early career academics as they had been working as a lecturer for less than five years. Therefore, Chris' experience of doing a PhD was not as long ago as some of the other participants'. Due to a busy working schedule, she asked me to meet her at her office, where she would have an hour to talk to me. During the interview, we did not veer off topic very much and the interview turned out to be the shortest of all the interviews I conducted. There could be two reasons for this. The first is that Chris' relatively short career as an academic might have given her less to reflect on generally, but also that she had less time to change her teaching approach over the years, which is something other academics reflected on throughout the interviews. The second reason relates to it being my first interview which definitely impacted on how I handled our conversation. At this point of my research, I was not confident enough to improvise and ask questions that were not part of my interview plan, despite this flexibility being the reason for me choosing semi-structured interviews in the first place. This meant Chris was given less questions to answer overall, which offered her less space to share understandings and assumptions.

As Chris did not grow up in the UK and has lived in various countries, it has influenced her understanding of education as well as Critical Pedagogy. Her experience led her to draw comparisons between countries regarding students' experiences when going through the education system, as well as the difference in university models that are more neoliberal than others and where lecturers deliver what students pay for.

While Chris stated in the interview that she does not want her students to consider her an expert and that she sees her students as having knowledge too, it seemed that she expected me not to be aware of certain things, such as the less popular books written about Freire's conversations with other people that she mentioned within the interview. Considering that Critical Pedagogy is the topic of my research, I expected my participants to assume I had read or at least was aware of the work of who many would consider the "father of Critical Pedagogy". Furthermore, Chris asked whether I knew what GCSEs were when she mentioned them. As someone who studies education, this is not a question I anticipated either, as I would expect an education student to know this. As Chris referred to context and personal experiences a lot during the interview, it might be her own experience of studying and working in a different country to the

one she grew up in that made her unsure of how familiar I am with a system that I also did not grow up in, rather than her questioning my knowledge.

After the interview, we spent a little more time talking about our own experiences and things we had in common. I was offered some sweets with something along the lines of ‘I always offer sweets to my students when they come to my office’, thus, albeit a nice gesture, one that suggests Chris regarded me as a student rather than as a colleague.

Suzanne

My second interviewee was someone my supervisor had come across and who, when receiving my first email, was instantly keen to be involved in my research and invited me to her office at university. In preparation of my visit, we discussed hot beverage options for our time together and one or two emojis were part of our friendly exchange, that had no resemblance with the hierarchical teacher/student relationship that is sometimes found in universities. Suzanne gave me her phone number and told me to get in touch once on campus and when I arrived, she went to prepare tea for both of us. While the interview was not much longer than the first one, the exchange was very different to the interview conducted a couple of weeks before.

Suzanne’s route to CP was a little different. According to her, her mother, a teacher who embodied what it meant to be a critical pedagogue without naming it as such, heavily influenced her understanding of education and instilled values in her that led her towards the pedagogy she seeks to practise herself now. Seeing her mother as a radical educator who taught in a way that was very unusual at the time and attending marches with her while growing up allowed Suzanne to implement a social justice ethos in her teaching.

While she draws heavily on Freire’s pedagogy and considers his work to be fundamental to her teaching, her emphasis on social justice, agency and autonomy, she was vocal about its flaws and its focus on “men”, especially in his earlier work. As a result, she finds herself drawn to bell hooks’ work and her focus on language of love and feminism, relationality and a feminist reading of relationships between students and teachers. She does not consider herself a Marxist and the male dominated way of thinking that surrounds much of Marxism, instead she describes herself as post-humanist. Thus, instead of ascribing herself completely to Freire’s Critical Pedagogy, Suzanne seems to adopt those concepts and ideas she finds relevant but continues to explore the work further. She mentioned that to her, dialogue is crucial and that she considers teaching to be the generation of knowledge, rather than the transmission of it. Furthermore, in

line with her post-humanist thinking, she brought up the topic of climate change several times throughout the interview, which is something all of my female participants did.

Suzanne, while being a lecturer, was also working on her own research project at the time of the interview, thus the experience of being in the process of doing a PhD is something we shared. Whether this is the reason of her treating me as a colleague, I am unable to say but considering her answers during the interview and her emphasis on already present knowledge of adults in education, it is difficult to imagine her treating me any other way, even without this shared experience.

Albert

When we scheduled the interview, Albert was very insistent that he would pick me up from the train station as I had not been to the city before. Of all my participants, he was the only one who offered to do this. Whether this means he is the most considerate or whether he has more freedom in how he uses his time, or both, I cannot say. On our way to the university, we stopped at a café to have some time to talk before the interview. When I tried to pay for our drinks, explaining that after all he was taking the time to speak to me, he asked how much money I was getting for doing my PhD. When telling him that I was not paid, he shrugged and said that, in that case, I should let the well-paid academic pay, and so I did. After we finished our coffees, we walked to the university via the city centre where Albert pointed at various landmarks, giving me a guided tour of the city. At our arrival at the university, he asked whether I was okay taking the stairs, showing consideration and awareness of people's differing abilities and the possibility of hidden disabilities.

While getting to know him better was very nice, even helpful at times as it seemed like he was talking to me in a way he would talk to the PhD students he supervises, it made analysing the data collected during the interview a little more complicated. While we spent hours together and talked about various things related to academia, it is only what I recorded during the interview that could be included in the analysis chapter. Therefore, some themes that arose during our conversation are relevant for my thesis but will not be included in my work. Additionally, there is a possibility that my knowledge on other matters can impact the way I interpret Albert's interview responses. However, I do not consider this to be a limitation, rather it is something that is worth being mindful of.

During the interview, Albert reiterated that he wants to get to know his students, their backgrounds, their experiences, their hopes and fears, that he is keen to engage with his students and to get to know their personalities. While I am not one of his PhD students, I felt that he engaged with me in a similar way. He was interested in my opinions and, interestingly, has been in touch several times since the interview, asking about my progress or how I am coping during the Covid-19 pandemic, often including interesting points or articles related to my research within those emails. Judging from my own experience it is therefore easy to believe him when he says he is keen to build relationships with his students as he did so with me, even though he had no responsibility to do so.

The interview itself was exactly twice as long as the shortest interview. This was partly due to Albert exploring themes that were not necessarily asked about in the questions, but which fitted in with his thinking. More than once he asked me to repeat the question after he had gone off on a tangent. Interestingly, this led to a number of ideas to be explored that would not have come up otherwise but offer interesting content to be included in the analysis chapter. Furthermore, Albert's approach to Critical Pedagogy and his understanding of it was less defined than that of my previous interviewees. While his reading on the topic started with Henry Giroux and Paulo Freire, he states that he is not very interested in the White male perspective on issues, but rather focuses on the experiences of his students as a starting point for conversations about the topics raised in the classroom. He is very conscious of his position as a White male professor. While he rejects his power in the classroom and seeks ways to balance this power in his relationship with his students, he nevertheless knows that he continues to be the one marking and grading students' work. Furthermore, his position as a privileged White man is something Albert brings up in conversation frequently as well as the contradiction of him wanting to challenge and abolish something he personally represents. According to him, his position is the reason he engages in readings that address issues from other perspectives, such as feminist, Black, ableist, or an intersection of those. However, that he is a tenured, well-established professor who has a certain amount of autonomy is not only obvious in the way he speaks about assessment and his willingness as well as ability to change students' assessment to what suits them, but also in the fact that he was able to spend half of the day with me. In comparison, my previous two participants had been able to free an hour of their day to speak to me, which might be an indicator of the workload they had to get through on the day.

Denise

When I went to see Denise, she asked me to come to her department and check in with the receptionist who would tell me where her office is. I was a bit early and found Denise watching a video that she was going to use during her teaching. Her office, apart from her desk, also had a round table in it where we sat during the interview. One wall in her office was almost entirely lined with bookshelves and I thought it was interesting that they did not only contain academic books but also a variety of novels. Of all the offices I visited during my data collection, Denise's office felt the most "homely", which was most likely due to the combination of her books, the décor, plants and the numerous colourful collages and zines that covered the walls.

Denise is a lecturer in a discipline that only more recently has looked at pedagogy and how students should or could be taught, therefore Critical Pedagogy is not as common as it would be in for example education studies. Although Denise has been teaching for more than 15 years, her approach to teaching was predominantly informed by feminist research, where questions such as 'who is missing in the work?', 'who writes the stories and who does not?' are used to examine topics. Thus, she stated, she arrived at Critical Pedagogy from a different angle and was drawn to it by her already existing interest in challenging relationships of power that exist in various settings. It is not surprising then, that she was the first of my interviewees not to mention Paulo Freire's work but to refer to the feminist thinkers Cynthia Enloe and bell hooks instead. In line with her feminist lens, power came up frequently throughout the interview and Denise acknowledged her position as a White woman in a predominantly White department. Accordingly, she highlights the importance of her including the voices of People of Colour, especially Women of Colour, in her classroom, the video she was watching at my arrival being one example.

When speaking about her teaching, Denise seems to align with bell hooks' idea of challenging students, even if it makes them uncomfortable initially, and her office is testament to this. The collages on the walls are examples of work produced by students who, at times, were less than keen to deviate from the standard written assignments they were used to beforehand. Denise also uses fiction books, such as dystopian novels, to get students to explore and learn about concepts they discuss in the classroom, which is often met with displeasure by students. As someone who reads a lot of fiction, I very much appreciated this as a way of engaging with topics and Denise and I continued to talk about books when the recording was off.

Martyn

My fifth participant, although still engaged with the university, is the only retired academic I interviewed during my research. While he has not been an academic for all of his working life, he still accumulated various decades of experience within academia. We met in the department he is still involved with since retiring and sat in one of those meeting rooms that most academics seek to avoid due to their bleak atmosphere. However, this was where I was to conduct what was then my second longest interview, not a plant, a bookshelf or a cup of tea in sight.

In one of his first sentences Martyn highlighted that he does not call himself a critical pedagogue. While other participants were also careful about describing themselves as such and articulated their reservations to do so, Martyn was the most direct in his declaration. Instead, he suggested, he practised Critical Pedagogy, without knowing its name, in his earlier roles working with young people, before learning about it during his own university degree. He then began to use critical theory to inform his practice and his work continues to be largely informed by Marxism. To him, Critical Pedagogy, or the pedagogy built on critical theory that he practises instead, does not have the transformation of students as its aim. To Martyn, his aim of education is not about transforming the lives of students. While that is important, the aim is to transform institutions in order to transform the world. Thus, he considers there to be three levels. The first starting in the classroom, where individual transformation may take place, which then enables the second level, the transformation of institutions, turning them into radical and critical projects that lead to the third level, the transformation of the world. For him it is key for transformation to begin in the classroom. Furthermore, he considers a Marxist critique of labour crucial and abolishing capitalism has to be the main principle, opposed to what he refers to as the “liberal critique of liberalism” that is present within Critical Pedagogy, also described as the ‘liberal virus’ that ‘either reproduce social order or promote false, fictional, or delusional challenges in the name of radicalism’ (Kachur, 2012, p.3).

What quickly became apparent in the interview was that Martyn had been able to secure and utilise large amounts of funding for various projects over the years. He confidently claimed that he was given lots of autonomy and financial support for his projects, and, more importantly, that nobody ever said no to the projects he suggested. From the 3.5 million pounds invested in a project to reinvent institutions under Gordon Brown in the early 2000s, to the thousands given to him to design a classroom together with his students, the lack of funding that features in much of the current literature on the neoliberal university, does not seem to be something he experienced. During the interview, Martyn found opportunities to refer back to a number of his

accomplishments several times, more than perhaps necessary. He brought up the book he recently wrote frequently, which he recommended I read, repeatedly highlighted the large sums of money he was given, the journal he and others established and which, according to him, is still going strong, conferences he was involved in, and a project that is referred to frequently within the literature surrounding critical theory and Critical Pedagogy in the UK. He enquired whether I had heard of this or that, whether I had read this or that. Whether he wanted to highlight these writers, books or papers to me to find out how much I knew or whether the teacher in him sought to expose me to more material, I am not sure, it might have been both. However, despite being very confident in his accomplishments, Martyn reiterated at various points that he is not all-knowing, that there is much he is not aware of and that the beauty of teaching in the way he does means that he also continues to learn, not just his students. He also acknowledged his contradictory position as someone who embodies the institution while critiquing it. He seeks to abolish a system he is part of and by being part of it he is implicated, even unwillingly complicit. However, he states that he uses his position to critique the institution from the inside out.

Carl

When I went to see Carl, he had booked a classroom for us to use for the interview. He had given me his phone number so I could send him a text when I was close. When I did, he came to meet me at the entrance as I was otherwise not able to get into the building. As we had some time before the classroom was free, we decided to go and have a cup of tea in the university's café, where comfortable seats made for a much nicer atmosphere than a classroom. Carl insisted he would pay for my tea as I had spent hours on the train to meet him. However, as the café did not accept cards and only I had change, I paid, which made him visibly uncomfortable, so much that he brought it up again after the interview, saying that when we meet again, he would definitely return the favour.

Carl's interview was the longest interview I conducted throughout my data collection and it turned out to be an hour longer than the shortest interview. Carl started by telling me about his working-class upbringing that led him, after some diversion, to work in a factory. He considers this work, which he did not want to do, as the reason he began searching for more. Being inspired by films that centred around education and educating those who, at the time, were not likely to receive an education, led him to study with the Open University while working in the factory. Being exposed to ideas during his studies eventually led to his interest in alternative education that draws on popular culture, which allows individuals to draw on their interests as

well as their identities with the use of films, music, poems and more. Allowing students to include their own cultural reference points, to him, is the foundation of teaching that can transform students' lives.

Having gone through a transformation himself and describing himself as having “flourished” when attending university, Carl strongly believes in education as a tool for transformation as well as oppression, especially for the working class. However, for him Critical Pedagogy is a framework, a cannon that can be used in various ways. While he describes Critical Pedagogy as “fuzzy and fluid” and points out that the university does not like fuzzy and fluid because it cannot be measured with learning outcomes, he considers himself to have a good amount of autonomy to teach what he likes, as long as he continues to achieve publications. Throughout the interview, Carl referred frequently to his working-class identity but at the same time acknowledged his current position as an established academic in a privileged environment who lives in a nice house and makes more money than ever before. This did not seem to be a contradiction to him, like it did for my previous participant. Instead Carl expressed that he considers being situated in the university his opportunity to establish tactical pockets of resistance by doing things differently before the university is able to co-opt and marketise them for its own purposes.

Towards the end of the interview, I asked questions that he perhaps was not prepared for and which he had to think about. He even stated that I had been taking him into a different territory, however, he seemed to be amused by that. While he was still able to answer the questions, it was obvious that this was not something he spoke about often and that he took more care choosing his words and explaining what he meant. This was interesting to see as my other participants had very clear ideas that they seemed to have articulated before, even when their opinions on the topic differed. Nevertheless, after the interview Carl was very keen on me coming back and observe one of his lectures, where he would then definitely and without a doubt pay for the hot beverages.

Sam

Sam was recommended to me by one of my previous participants. I had read some of her work before, so I was familiar with her writing, at least her older articles, as I had not actually read anything recent. When I emailed her, she was very keen on meeting and we were able to set up a meeting very soon. Sam and I arranged to meet at a café near her house as she was not working in the university that week. Unfortunately, due to her having the week off, she did not check

her diary in the morning and only realised she was meant to meet me much later. She called me, apologised profusely and we ended up meeting in a different café that was easier for her to get to and also closer to the station, where I would need to go after the interview. Sam apologised several times once we had sat down and took it upon herself to make the interview run as smoothly as possible, so asked for us to be seated in a separate area and for the loudspeakers near us to be turned off. She asked me if I wanted to eat anything, after all, I had been spending so much time waiting for her. It was obvious that she felt very uncomfortable about being late.

When asked about her journey to Critical Pedagogy, Sam explained that she could map her journey differently, depending on the context in which she addresses the question and what she is concerned with at the time, which means that the answer she gave me might be different to an answer she has given at a previous interview or when she addressed this question in her own writing. Thus, she highlighted, her answers might not always be consistent.

Sam has always wanted to be an educator but had a difficult relationship with schooling and the educational systems herself. The tensions she experienced led her to become interested in the more liberal idea that education is important for social change and she began to see education as a place that included violence and quashed possibilities, which needs challenging. As a result, she pursued a degree in education, but was not exposed to Critical Pedagogy throughout that time. Instead, she worked in other parts of the world where she became concerned with educational and intellectual colonialism, leading her to read Frantz Fanon and eventually Paulo Freire.

While Sam's work focuses on education for social change and covers many of the topics that are explored and discussed within the field of Critical Pedagogy, she does not call herself a critical pedagogue. In part, this is due to several of the limitations that have been discussed in the section on issues within Critical Pedagogy in the previous chapter. Sam highlights the presence of predominantly "White males of a particular type of the American left", who are able bodied and heterosexual and whose critique is anti-capitalist but not anti-racist and feminist and whose critiques reproduce what they critique. She explains that to her, Critical Pedagogy's focus on critique hinders the creation of something new. When describing her interest in creating something new, she uses metamorphosis as a metaphor, where something new is created out of something old, where what dissolves leaves matter behind that then turns into something new, something that can take a completely different shape. Accordingly, Sam has

begun to write about other pedagogies without using the word “critical” because to her, what she is concerned with and seeks to understand, is beyond critique. Instead it focuses on creating new ways of thinking and being. Her move away from critique and as such also Critical Pedagogy, explains why the articles and book chapters I have come across in my research do not include Sam’s more recent work, as they would not have appeared in my searches that almost always included the term “Critical Pedagogy”.

In the interview, Sam described how her understanding and her teaching have evolved over time, how she was trained as a critical theorist in The Frankfurt School tradition and considered herself as a Marxist Feminist for many years. After teaching across multiple continents, where she developed her own pedagogical ethos, she describes herself as having been very confident in using critical pedagogical concepts and critiquing ideology, as well as using self-reflexivity and dialogue and drawing on humanist principles, while believing in radical democracy. However, she later came to the conclusion that this kind of pedagogy did not have the intended impact and that it did not change how people related to each other or the world. While she continues to emphasise dialogue in her teaching, her understanding of what dialogue means has changed. For example, she no longer believes that it is possible for people to fully understand how they relate to each other in the world, especially within the context of systemic harm, and people’s complicity in capitalism and systems of domination. Furthermore, she believes that too many voices are excluded from the conversation and that when Critical Pedagogy is cited, what is used predominantly fits with non-threatening ideas to certain kinds of masculinity, identities and relations to the body and sexuality that are mostly hegemonic to anti-capitalism.

Of all my participants, Sam focused on her concerns about Critical Pedagogy the most. While I think she would have highlighted most of the issues she mentioned in any case, I am wondering whether my own research into the limitations of Critical Pedagogy at the time of the interview prompted me to ask further questions throughout our conversation.

Preethi

When I approached Preethi, it took her a while to respond and I had almost given up on hearing from her. Fortunately, she got in touch after a few months and told me that she had been caught up in work but would be very happy to speak to me. We decided that I would meet her near her university but conduct the interview in a café in order for us to have some privacy. It was obvious that she wanted to be able to speak freely but to avoid being overheard by someone she knows. She was very insistent that she would pay for my drink as I had traveled in to see her,

even decided on a whim to join me in having my favourite iced oat milk latte (even though it was 8 degrees outside), offered to buy me food and when I declined, offered me some of hers, making me feel like I was meeting up with an old friend.

Preethi is the second of the two academics who are closest in age to me. She had been a lecturer for less than five years but has worked as a graduate teaching assistant throughout her PhD, which allowed her to gain some teaching experience while beginning to explore what it means to be a teacher before becoming a lecturer herself. While she explored ideas around the classroom as a liberatory space and what knowledge production can take place there, she began to connect what she learnt in class as a student with the struggles and protests that were taking place on campus. This enabled her to understand that what happens within the classroom and within the university is connected to global politics and gender studies. Experiencing this, Preethi began to explore Critical Pedagogy, which seemed to suit the way she wanted to teach. When she became a lecturer, she realised that academia is not really about teaching, and her idea of teaching was difficult to implement in lecture theatres with hundreds of students. Fortunately, her course also included smaller group workshops, in which she was able to explore what it meant to be a teacher, how relationships can be built in the space and what different techniques can enable this.

During the interview, Preethi highlighted the complications and contradictions that are apparent when doing Critical Pedagogy and teaching topics such as gender, race and sexuality, topics that are political and rooted in social justice, confined within the neoliberal university where racism and sexism are present in the classroom.

Preethi considers bell hooks to be the scholar who has influenced her thinking most when it comes to Critical Pedagogy because her work focuses on gender politics rooted in feminist thought, and she sees the classroom as a radical place of possibility within the university that is run like a business. As Preethi is particularly interested in the work of Women of Colour, she does not consider Paulo Freire to be someone she refers to much in her work or in her teaching. Apart from bell hooks, she suggested Chandra Mohanty as an influential scholar. While Mohanty's work is not categorised as Critical Pedagogy as such, her work in the field of feminist pedagogy, especially anti-capitalist feminist praxis, anti-racist education and women's and gender studies, covers similar issues as some versions of Critical Pedagogy. Preethi stated she is particularly drawn to the work of Feminists of colour as they already understood the connections between the personal and the political before it became more fashionable and

mainstream to talk about. To her, the classroom becomes an important space to draw these connections, especially when the topics taught are political and charged, such as the ones she teaches. Preethi is very vocal about the university's limitations that impact on the classroom as a radical space, not only by the processes that shape the university but also by racism, classism, sexism and ableism. However, she continues to think of it as a space of possibilities and refers to the undercommons, and how through pedagogy or taking from the university, some of its problems can be subverted. Thus, although she is aware of the limitations, Preethi continues to see potential in the university and the classroom as a radical space.

In the interview, Preethi mentioned that she teaches about empire, colonialism and slavery in her classes and that these topics need to be discussed with care as they relate to students' lived experiences of racism. Thus, her classroom is not only a place of academic discussion, but it is also a space of care for those who for example experience intergenerational trauma. Care is therefore a crucial part of her pedagogy and she seeks to understand how care works and how it can be practised. As I was able to observe Preethi's teaching at a later date, I have been able to witness her focus on care for her students for myself and I will elaborate on that in the following section.

4.7 Additional information

Interestingly, there were a few things I noticed when interviewing my participants, which will not be part of the analysis, however they are worth mentioning. It seemed that the male participants referred more to their working-class roots than their female counterparts, for whom their class identity, before becoming an academic and now, did not seem worth talking about. There could be various explanations for this. Firstly, my male participants identified as Marxists much more than my female participants did, therefore a focus on class in British society is not surprising. Secondly, identifying as coming from a working-class background might be a way for individuals to suggest their own credibility as someone who teaches Critical Pedagogy, where gender and class are important concepts. Being a White middle-class male might perhaps lead to questions of authenticity. An academic's experience of being from a marginalised community might function as something like a badge that justifies why they can successfully work with marginalised communities and transform lives by implementing and teaching about Critical Pedagogy, thereby solving what Apple (2013, p.40) refers to as 'contradictory class location' of someone who might now be considered middle class but does not want to lose their working class identity.

Another interesting observation was that my female participants more often referred to other female scholars outside of the field of Critical Pedagogy, citing them as being influential to their thinking and practice. The common ground here was feminist pedagogies, the field itself seemed less relevant.

4.8 Classroom observations

While I had initially intended to observe the teaching of all my participants, apart from Martyn who is retired, I encountered various difficulties at this stage. When interviewing my participants in the first term of 2019/2020, all agreed that I could come back and observe them next term. The idea was to see whether my participants were doing in the classroom what they had described to me during the interviews, if in praxis they would be the kind of teacher they envisioned themselves to be. Stark examples of this could be whether the academic described themselves as offering a non-hierarchical space where student voices were appreciated, while standing at the front of the class, talking at the students for the majority of the lecture, or claiming to want to hear from all students, especially those from marginalised backgrounds, while allowing one or two White and/or male students to dominate classroom discussions. However, when reaching out again to make plans at the end of the first term, a number of them had since learnt that they were not actively teaching in the second term, thus I would not be able to observe any of their sessions. Furthermore, the Covid-19 lockdown and the subsequent shift to lectures taking place online impacted on other academics that were still teaching in the second term. In the end, I was only able to attend and observe two of my interviewees, Preethi and Carl in the weeks just before the first lockdown.

Interestingly, the two academics I observed could not have been more different, personally, a Woman of Colour early on in her career and an established White male academic, and in their teaching styles. For example, one of Preethi's sessions of the module I observed was titled Inclusion, Equality, Diversity and it focused partly on something she described as citational politics. She highlighted that who is cited and who makes it onto reading lists can be considered a political act by those who do the citing and who put together the content for modules. Carl, however, as will be discussed in the analysis chapter, does not think it necessary to include diverse voices, but rather that he adds those who he considers useful for him and offers room for his students to include the voices that matter to them.

While both seminars took place with only a small number of students, in Preethi's it was seven students, in Carl's five, the way Preethi's seminar classroom was set up, was different to that of Carl's. While Carl sat at the front of the class, with his students spread out throughout the classroom, Preethi was part of a circle in the middle of the room. At the beginning of the session, Carl informed his students that I was going to observe him during the seminar. In comparison, Preethi told her students why I was there, asked me to introduce myself to them, and asked her students repeatedly if they were okay with me observing and recording their conversation. During the seminar, Carl made use of PowerPoint slides, jumping straight into the topic. Some

students were engaged, others not so much but Carl only addressed one of his students directly throughout the session. Towards the end, there was an informal conversation about an upcoming assignment, but as there was not much participation from the students, Carl ended the session early. Preethi on the other hand started by asking how everyone was, before beginning to discuss their previous lecture. She did not call on particular students to answer questions but reminded some of the more vocal students to leave space for others to contribute too. The atmosphere in the room was very relaxed, all students attending the seminar spoke at some point and everyone seemed somewhat engaged, even though some used their phones throughout the session, which according to Preethi was permitted. Thus, Preethi's and Carl's sessions were very different in the way they were set up and students' responses to them were equally different. However, throughout a term, there are always sessions that are better attended than others and, depending on the topic, students engage more or less. Therefore, while an interesting observation to draw on as part of the research, there is no way of knowing whether another session would have taken place in the same way.

4.9 Materials

Additionally, as part of the research, I was also sent the then current module guides by my participants, which I used to get an overview of the topics discussed in class as well as what materials they included in their reading lists, or, what they left out. Instead of these documents functioning as a significant part of the analysis, they were only considered to be points of additional insight into the academics' teaching styles, as an extra resources to the in-person observations. While they allowed me to get an idea of the participants' ways of structuring their classes and the content they intended to cover in a module, they do not adequately represent what the classroom atmosphere is like or whether the academics really embody and enact their theory and principles. Instead it would seem more like a tick box exercise of me checking whether for example diverse voices are included in the reading lists. Additionally, and most importantly, Critical Pedagogy being student-centred and participants highlighting at various points the students' involvement in course content development and deciding what topics are meaningful to them, means that module guides only play a limited role in their classes, as it is very likely that the actual content differs, even when broad topics remain on the agenda.

Chapter 5: Analysis

The following chapter explores the data collected during the eight interviews conducted as part of this research. The content of these interviews was analysed using thematic analysis and took into account the deeper structures that are responsible for creating some of the participants' experiences. As some of the themes were much more prominent during the interviews, the sections vary in detail and length, with some sections being much larger than others. The chapter includes a discussion of the following themes in most detail: dialogue, power (relationships), discomfort, transformation, resistance, and limitations to Critical Pedagogy. Themes, such as privilege, autonomy, hierarchies in Critical Pedagogy, and Eurocentrism are explored too, but in less detail, and other themes, such as recuperation and co-option, do not have their own sections but appear in various sections throughout the analysis. Despite the sections' differing lengths, all of the themes were deemed relevant to address the research questions and thus were included in the analysis chapter. The findings a) illustrate the different understandings the individual interviewees have of what Critical Pedagogy means, and b) highlight how challenging it is to be a critical pedagogue in the neoliberal university. It is important to highlight that, on occasions, references are missing where I have referred to my participants' published work. This was done in order to protect the authors' anonymity. Additionally, as I initially intended to observe these academics' teaching but was unable to do so for the reasons mentioned in chapter four, these aspects of my thesis are less fully articulated than my participants' ideas about Critical Pedagogy and the way they see themselves enacting it within their classrooms.

5.1 Dialogue

Dialogue plays a crucial role in Critical Pedagogy and therefore the emphasis on the dialogical relationship between the teacher and the students has been discussed in detail in chapter three. Naturally, dialogue was a reoccurring theme throughout the interviews and Chris, my first interviewee, mentioned it very early on in the interview and returned to it regularly throughout. Chris' pedagogy focuses predominately on the work Paulo Freire, thus her emphasis on dialogue is not surprising considering Freire's own emphasis on it. To give an example of how dialogue is part of her teaching, Chris explained that she asks her students how concepts discussed in class relate to them on a personal level and how she "*will come to them (...) and start asking 'did you understand? Why is that? (...) Why do you think this meaningful?'*" while they participate in small group discussions during a lecture. This questioning of the students is consistent with Freire's idea of dialogue, where the teacher and the students become 'co-investigators of the students' reality' (Beckett, 2012, p.52), but it is also an example of what

has been described as room for directiveness in chapter three. Freire (2014, p.107) highlights that dialogue ‘does not place’ the teacher and the student ‘on the same footing professionally’, as their positions differ, since one is the teacher and the other one is not, thus the teacher continues to direct the student’s learning while participating in the dialogue. Therefore, Chris uses her role as the teacher to ask questions and facilitate dialogue regarding the topic that is being discussed. However, seeking to implement Freire’s pedagogy in a classroom requires more than offering room for dialogue, as it is the teacher’s directiveness that cultivates virtues, virtues that are ‘vital to dialogic educations’ and which are ‘considered instrumental to the operation of liberating education’ (Chambers, 2019, p.31). Chambers (2019, p.32) refers to one of Freire’s books where he asserts ‘that if a student expresses a belief that is rooted in prejudice’ such as expressing ‘a racist argument presupposing the superiority of a race or culture’, it is crucial for the teacher to ‘reject the argument outright’, even in instances where the student offers a well-presented argument where he or she defends it ‘genetically, sociologically, historically, or philosophically’ (Freire, 1998, cited in Chambers, 2019).

In order to facilitate open dialogue, Chris explained: *“I give them a lot of examples from my own life as well. This happened, this is how I see it and I’m very, very transparent on my own positionality”*. Instead of trying to convince them of her position on a topic, she seeks to enable them to make their own decision and stated:

“It’s not about gaining supporters (...) I go to them and I say ‘this is my definition, but you can find your own and as long as you have one and(...) you’re supporting that theory, that’s all I need to know, I’m not expecting you to share my own opinion””.

While it is true that Freire (1998b, p.72) asserts ‘the teacher cannot think for his or her students or ‘impose’ his or her thoughts on them’, it is important to again highlight that Freire nevertheless sought to direct the thinking of his pupils. As has been discussed in chapter three, to pose Freire rejected directiveness entirely is ‘to either misread him or to not have read the breadth of his works’ (Chambers, 2019, p.28). It has been pointed out that those who only read *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* might read Freire’s criticism of the banking system as him denouncing any directiveness in his pedagogy altogether, but that this is far from the truth, which becomes more obvious in his later work, where he clarifies many of the concepts he introduced in his earlier writings (Chambers, 2019, p.24). Instead, directiveness and dialogue need to coexist in the classroom. Thus, to be fully compatible with Freire’s pedagogy, Chris would have to be directive in situations where she considers their opinions to be unjust. This highlights the tensions in Freire’s ideas between privileging student experience and the need for directiveness.

As Chris was very firm in her assertion that various points of view are acceptable, that there is not always one answer and that she does not need them to agree with her, it was not clear from the interview whether she indeed makes use of the directiveness demanded by Freire, whether she disagrees with his calls for directiveness, or whether she would describe herself as consistent with her own reading of Freire. Being able to observe her teaching might have shed light on this. Nevertheless, Chris suggested that her way of teaching does challenge the students who are used to *“one true answer, and I’m challenging them to say it’s not”*, which, according to her, they find very difficult to accept. Therefore, the dialogue she describes seeks to enable the students to reconsider previous experiences of learning and what it means to develop ideas based on increased understanding and encourages them to think outside the binary of something being either right or wrong. As Vittoria (2016, p.74) states in his book on Freire’s pedagogy, ‘dialogic action is mutual respect and also an acknowledgement of conflicts, which teach us to understand reality from several different viewpoints’. Thus, Chris’ approach is still consistent with Freire’s pedagogy, even in situations where directiveness may be lacking.

While it may be challenging for students to be faced with different views and have their own opinions challenged by a teacher, Freire believed that human beings ‘are essentially communicative creatures’ (Freire, 1993, p.107) and thus seek dialogue, even in situations where they are challenged. If there is no room for this dialogue in education, ‘it suppresses and represses an essential element of human nature, which is that nobody owns the absolute truth and nobody knows everything’ (Vittoria, 2016, p.74). However, it is important to emphasise again that Freire sought to do more than simply share his own viewpoint in order to highlight another perspective to his students. He stated for example that ‘it is necessary to go beyond rebellious attitudes to a more radically critical and revolutionary position, which is in fact a position not simply of denouncing injustice but of announcing a new utopia’ (Freire, 1998, p.74), which requires the aforementioned directiveness. ‘Directiveness allows the educator to outline utopia for which they aim’, and it ‘allows students to become the types of people necessary for the creation’ of said utopia, as well as equipping them ‘with the skills and knowledge’ necessary to create it (Chambers, 2019, p.34). Instead of only highlighting other viewpoints, the educator Freire envisions is not afraid of radicalizing his or her students, in fact, ‘radicalisation (in the sense of pedagogy that defies traditional systems oppression)’, is encouraged (ibid.). This requires an educator who ‘does not deny another man’s right to choose, nor does he impose his own choice’ but rather he ‘tries to convince and convert, not to crush his opponent’ (Freire, 1973, p.9). Nevertheless, convincing is the aim, and if one seeks to enact Critical Pedagogy the Freirean way, such as Chris says she does, there can be no shying away from asserting one’s stance. However, it is crucial to emphasise how challenging this might be

for someone in an already precarious situation as a female academic with a foreign accent in the early stages of her career.

During her interview, Suzanne also spoke about her use of dialogue as well as her students having to learn that there is not one single answer to a question. In order to facilitate dialogue and enable her students to become more engaged learners she finds scaffolding very useful, where activities are used in order to slowly ease the students into a new way of learning and engaging.

“I tend to use pedagogies that encourage people thinking together but not in a way that puts them under pressure (...), students have said ‘please don’t pick on me or ask me individually to answer a question’ (...), that fear of speaking out, that fear of getting something wrong and the fear of not being perfect because there is a right answer and of course, at university there isn’t a right answer (...) unless you’re doing exams (...), there is a well-argued answer and that’s something different”

Suzanne gave several examples of what she usually does with her students at this stage. She referred to something called the *“thinking environment, which is a process which is very dialogue based but it tends to be where students take turns to speak and we spend a lot of time working on listening, facilitations of speaking and thinking”*. Further, she mentioned using music or drawing as ways to get students involved, and she pointed to one example on the wall where a student had drawn a *“school that is creative, and what that would look like”*. Additionally, she mentioned students generating their own questions. She spoke about introducing

“things like community philosophy, which is like philosophy for children but for older students, where you might show them a video, they might read a newspaper article (...) and then they generate their own questions and have a philosophical discussion about it”.

While Suzanne finds that this way of teaching works really well for her and her students, she admits that sometimes it takes a while for students to change their way of thinking and being.

‘Establishing a space for dialogue (...) enables participants to question educational issues that are not disconnected from their political context’ (Vittoria, 2016, p.74) and thus opens up possibilities for learning. As Vittoria suggests, ‘[k]nowledge can often be obscured by a fear of dialogue. This fear is basically that the confrontation may weaken one’s identity, calling into question the truths, certainties and beliefs acquired over time’ (ibid.). This is important and touches upon various themes revealed during the interviews. Considering the fear of weakening

one's identity by learning, various academics mentioned their students feeling uncomfortable when course content calls into question their beliefs and ideas and this sometimes leading to students' resistance to engage with the material. Denise for example explained that "*for some students it [the material] is challenging their way of being in the world and that is unsettling, but that to me, is okay*".

As mentioned earlier, understanding other people's point of view is one of the desired outcomes of dialogic teaching and enables students to learn about respecting others' opinions. This is reflected in Albert's account of trying to include his students' experiences

"I like to bring in a lot of examples, to try to situate the content of the curriculum but also the practice of sessions around the students and their life experiences, and their starting points, and their cultural experiences and try to put that and bring it into conversation with a range of other issues that could be about the history of education or the history of UK education, or who is silenced or who has power, or what is the nature of the national curriculum or policy drivers in the UK education or whatever it might, just trying to bring their experiences"

Albert's interest in the voices of people that occupy different positions to himself, which will be discussed in more detail in the section on intersectionality, is also a great example of sharing and generating knowledge by offering different viewpoints on relevant topics and theories. However, it is important to be cautious of power relationships in the classroom, apart from the relationship between the teacher and the learner. It has been noted that 'all voices within the classroom are not and cannot carry equal legitimacy, safety, and power in dialogue at this historical moment, there are times when the inequalities must be named and addressed by constructing alternative ground rules for communication' (Ellsworth, 1989, p.317).

As touched on in chapter three, Ellsworth (1989, p.317) recognised that in her classroom 'some social groups represented in the class had had consistently more speaking time than others' and that marginalised groups had begun to meet outside the classroom, in a space with the 'purpose of articulating and refining positions based on shared oppression, ideological analyses, or interests'. This quote is important especially in relation to Preethi's teaching for two reasons. Firstly, the space outside the formal classroom is something Preethi specifically makes room for in a module that focuses on particularly sensitive topics and which will be discussed shortly. Secondly, I was lucky enough to observe one of Preethi's seminars and am thus able to comment on Ellsworth's suggestion that some groups have more speaking time than others in relation to Preethi's classroom. As in most classroom settings, some students seemed to be more engaged in the content of the seminar and found it easier to or were more interested in

vocalizing their opinions. Two students in particular seemed to be especially talkative (both were female, one of them of white ethnicity and the other of mixed ethnicity), and happy to engage in the conversation that Preethi facilitated, while others were less forthcoming or not interested in contributing at all, although every single person did make a contribution at some point during the seminar. However, twice throughout the session, Preethi reminded the most talkative student that she had already taken up a lot of space compared to her fellow students and that she would prefer to hear from someone else. The student did not seem at all taken aback by this, which suggests to me that Preethi had communicated this before and that it was a common occurrence that she would seek to give all members of the classroom the same amount of space, if they wanted it. Also important to remember is that Preethi's seminar group was set up in a circle, thus no students were situated closer to the front or were forgotten/hiding in the back, and Preethi herself was part of the circle like everybody else, including me, instead of being lecturer faced by everyone in the classroom.

When asked about key themes and processes that she includes in her classroom, Preethi talked about her searching for ways to “*make the classroom go beyond the classroom*”. She mentioned bell hooks' idea of care, how the classroom can be a space “*where we listen to one another, and where we care for one another, where we build some kind of community of care and survival*”. In one of her modules, which focuses on racism, colonialism and nationalism, discussions have to happen with a lot of care as “*in that room are people whose lived experiences of racism are shaping every single thing about their lives*”, a “*discussion of slavery is not just an academic discussion but it's a discussion about generations of their family, of intergenerational trauma*” so care becomes crucial. She stated that to her care is not just about empathising with someone or offering comfort in a physical way but also to know

“when to stop talking, when to not take up space, when to let somebody else take up space, when not to ask a curious question that you might want to ask, when to hold back and when to step in and defend someone, or when not to let someone do the labour but do the labour [yourself]”.

As a result, Preethi implemented a space dedicated to care after she realised some of her students were in need for extra space to share their stories and discuss issues they did not feel comfortable discussing in the classroom. So, on top of the lecture and the seminar that are part of her module, she created a space “*where those people who felt the most affected by what has been going on in the module, the amount of pain and trauma it brings up, could come together and discuss it and heal from it*”. As I attended one of Preethi's seminars as part of my research, I was also invited into this informal space. It took place in a small classroom in the same

building where the seminar took place and tables were arranged in a square, so people were facing each other. It seemed like there was no organisation to this space apart from it being there, open to anyone who wanted to attend, and that this was deliberate in order to allow it to take the shape that was needed at that particular time. The women attending were not all from the same cohort, there was a small number of MA students and a larger group of BA students. Everyone had brought snacks and one student had even brought pizza. There was no structure to the space in terms of start and finish, and students were allowed to come and go as they pleased, raise questions or simply have a conversation with those who were there too. It seemed like they all knew that Preethi would be in that room at that particular time, and although it was at the end of the day, the students chose to spend extra time on campus to attend. This to me suggests that the space is appreciated and valued.

Spaces for discussion outside the formal setting is something that Housee (2010) discusses in detail. While her “space” was not planned but rather developed at the end of a lecture when a group of Muslim female students stayed behind to raise points they had felt unable to raise throughout the classroom discussion, what took place in the space highlighted to her the need for students to have their voices heard, even when they choose to be silent within the classroom context. Housee (2010, p.422) points out that “‘confident’ voices are the regular voices, often reflecting the dominant views, and the less ‘confident’ voices and views remain marginal or simply silent’ in classroom discussion, but it is the voices that are unheard that she wants to hear the most, especially in the work of anti-racism and anti-racist education. However, as Preethi pointed out during the interview:

“Students of colour are always so used to silencing, erasure, violence in the classroom, that they are the ones that then don’t engage by the point in which they have spent a few years in the university. They know not to engage because it’s always a hostile experience.”

Thus, after spending many years in a setting where their voices were not valued, students from marginalised backgrounds can have internalised the idea that they should be silent or might simply not feel safe enough to speak up in formal classroom settings because of the way the classroom is structured, who their teachers are, or what power relations continue to be present in this context. As hooks (1994) highlights

Silencing enforced by bourgeois values is sanctioned in the classroom by everyone. Even those professors who embrace the tenets of critical pedagogy (many of whom are white and male) still conduct their classroom in a manner that only reinforced bourgeois models of decorum. At the same time, the subject matter taught in such classes might reflect professional awareness of intellectual perspectives that critique domination, that

emphasize an understanding of the politics of difference, of race, class, gender, even though classroom dynamics remain conventional, business as usual (p.180)

Therefore, there are various reasons why people might be silent in class. Even within Critical Pedagogy, where there is a particular focus on “voice” and “coming to voice”, as discussed in chapter three, most notably in relation to Paulo Freire’s concept of *conscientización*, there are issues that have been highlighted regarding the assumption that the silence of female students in the classroom is a sign of ‘poorly developed consciousness’ (Stauber, 2017, p.565). Some choose to be silent as a result of not being listened to previously, as ‘when women must compete to be heard in ‘masculine’ discursive spaces, both literally and figuratively, their ‘voices’ frequently go unheard and unheeded’ (ibid., 566). Therefore they ‘keep quiet in silent protest of what they recognize, at least subconsciously, to be an unfair situation’ (Fredericksen, 2000, p.304). They might even feel angry, but because they have been socialised to be polite, this anger only ‘smolders beneath the surface’ (ibid.).

Another possibility is that silence is a sign of ‘thoughtful contemplation’ (Stauber, 2017, p.564). As Stauber (2017, p.572) highlights, in many cases the silent female students were not less engaged or attentive in the classroom discussion, but they were engaged ‘in a manner unrecognizable’ to those who associate ‘critical classroom engagement with quick, verbal insertions into classroom conversation’. Hao (2011, p.270) points out, ‘dominant classroom discourses and practices that tend to privilege Eurocentric viewpoints can silence students of color’ (Hao, 2011, p.270). In the same way, an education system built on patriarchal structures tends to privilege the manner in which male students express their views, thereby potentially silencing the voices of female students, or, at least, not acknowledging their silence as a way of expression. While dialogue can take various shapes, it is important to recognise these differences in communication within classroom settings and how they might be understood by the teacher who potentially seeks to evaluate whether their dialogic relationship with their students is a successful one.

5.2 Power

In chapter three, I highlight bell hooks’ discussion about power relationships in the classroom which impact the relationship between students and their teachers. She highlights the imbalance that is apparent when the teacher remains the person who evaluates and grades the students’ work and emphasises that their ‘status in the classroom is never that of equals’ (hooks, 2010, p.56). Albert considered his own power during the interview:

“I want to de-centre myself as the in inverted commas teacher. I don’t want to be in the middle, I am in the middle, but I don’t want to be in the middle. I want to move myself out of there. I also want to dismantle my role as the teacher, I don’t want to be the teacher, ‘cause I’m gonna learn, right? But I have to be respectful of the fact that it’s asymmetrical, the relationships, so I have power because I’m the professor and they’re whoever they are. They are P1737-whatever, that’s what they are”.

Not only does he acknowledge the imbalance present within the student-teacher relationship in this quote, he also not-so-subtly hints at the problematic situation of universities admitting more and more students in order to gain profit, as was discussed in detail in chapter two, making the students little more than a student number that passes through the higher education system at some point in time. However, as Albert did not describe for example his desired classroom setup, whether people sit in rows or how the classroom is organised and I was not able to observe him teach, I cannot comment whether he also does “de-centre” himself in the literal sense.

Albert further considered how the hierarchical relationship changes throughout the time students spend with him and acknowledged that the gap is widest “*on day one of week one of term one*” but that this has hopefully changed by the end of term.

“While there will still be (...) boundaries between us (...), because I don’t want to be their friend (...), what I want to do is ensure that they are centred in their own story, and respected, and that there is dignity in this”.

He continued:

“it’s about values, rather than value, it’s about resisting commodification of the space, resisting the ‘have you given me value? I’m paying 9500 pounds a year, Albert, and I’ve got x number of teaching hours, have you given me my (...) 321 pounds and 37pence in this lecture?’, I want to resist that”.

To do that, he says, he seeks to centre the student in this space, opposed to presenting a “*traditional White male able professorial curriculum*”, that he as an able White male professor could naturally bring. Instead, Albert explained, he asks “*what voices could we bring in that might challenge narratives? What are the dominant narratives and how do we challenge that?*” Here he highlights the importance of “*recognising that that has to be differentiated, because not everyone is coming from the same position trying to understand the curriculum*”, thus it would require a flexibility on his part, depending who the students in front of him are. He reiterated students’ development over time, stating that “*their critical engagement will be different in the third year to the first year*”. While Albert did not specify how the students’ engagement differs or how he assesses whether students have become more critically engaged,

it is potentially the development of being more involved in their own learning that changes. As van Gorder (2007, p.22-23) points out, teachers who use dialogue in their teaching ‘become less directive as a provider of information’, instead they encourage students to take more responsibility in their own learning’.

Additionally, as emphasised by Reynolds and Trehan (2000, p.268), the hierarchical nature of assessment provides ‘the basis for granting or withholding qualifications’ and thus ‘makes it a prime location for power relations.’ These are the power relations that Critical Pedagogy is meant to eradicate, or at least minimise, which is something several of my participants spoke about during the interviews, especially related to assessments.

Denise highlighted, when talking about the confinements of the neoliberal university, assessment criteria would have to be radically different.

“If you actually wanted to do Critical Pedagogy, you would have to fundamentally transform what we think we do in classrooms, what we think assessment is, what it looks like. What we think the perfect student is, that ideal, because there is an ideal kind of student that we’re working with. Our ideal student is a student who doesn’t work, who has all of the time in the world, doesn’t have any health issues, doesn’t have any mental health issues.”

In Suzanne’s case, many of her students are mature students and she has also worked in further education settings before. When asked about concepts related to Critical Pedagogy, she spoke about teaching, and defined it as the following:

“teaching, obviously not as the transmission of content, but as the generation of new knowledge (...) there is this idea that actually, a lot of knowledge is already held by the people that you’re teaching, particularly true for me in adult education. So it isn’t about the tutor holding all the knowledge and all the content and then transmitting it in some ways so that it can be regurgitated in tests. It’s not about that”.

In the case of assessments, the power imbalance between students and teachers and the accompanying boundaries continue to exist even if the teacher centres the students. Albert described himself as the “middle aged man with power, who marks their work.” At another point during the interview, he suggested that for him

“part of the issue is always that the line of least resistance for a lot of staff, certainly around the curriculum, is to have a standardized curriculum, and a standardized set of assessments, like lecture, seminar, essay, exam or whatever it might be, or we might do some more coursework in there or some portfolio work”.

However, he emphasised that when choosing to implement those “*modes of examining*”, it is important to assess “*that they enable those students to express their position in the world and do something different with it*”, thus what he described seems to be a compromise.

Finding ways to integrate alternative ways of assessment within the neoliberal university is not an easy task and, as remarked by Reynolds and Trehan (2000, p.269) this might be ‘due to the pivotal role assessment plays in maintaining the legitimacy of the academy and its procedures’. While assessments have been an integral part of education for decades, there are various reasons why they, in their current form, have little relevance to the practice of Critical Pedagogy. Apart from the issue regarding power relations between teacher and students, assessments themselves are not necessarily an issues, as they enable the teacher to ‘gather data’ about students’ ‘current understandings and skills by observation’ and ‘careful questioning’ (Alexander, 2010, p.315), allowing them to address students’ individual needs. This type of assessment’s main aim is to facilitate learning and increase the learner’s understanding. Thus, it is, in itself, not problematic. However, this type of assessment differs from the assessment that is ‘primarily designed to serve the purpose of accountability’ (Black et al., 2004, p.10), which is often the case with exams and narrow learning outcomes in higher education. Assessments, in the form of examinations are ‘ceremonial, authoritarian and anxiety inducing’, ‘define what knowledge is worthy of acquisition and mastery’ and ‘tend to focus on expressing judgement to foster competition rather than emphasise information exchange and cooperation that enable students to have control over their own learning’ (Ochuot and Modiba, 2018, p.478). Anyone who has read chapter two, will see the discrepancy of what Critical Pedagogy sets out to do and what common assessment procedures achieve. However, there are ways to challenge at least some of the problematic characteristics of assessments that were just described. One of my participants, Denise, for example described how she introduces key concepts of her module by letting her students choose a dystopian novel. While this activity will be discussed in more detail in a later section, it is important to note that by adding something that is not considered an academic resource, Denise challenges the idea that only some material is valuable in a university setting.

‘Critical Pedagogy’ which, ‘by definition, seeks to introduce an alternative set of norms’ is not ‘compatible with current trends’ (Martinez Serrano et al. 2018, p.10). As Neary (2013) states ‘[w]hile learning outcomes have been an important aspect of providing a framework to assure the quality of teaching and learning in higher education’, ‘[l]earning outcomes can become overly prescriptive, stifling creativity and disempower students and learners, undermining critical open ended notions of student-centred learning’. Having specific learning outcomes can

even disregard the type of knowledge that Suzanne described as knowledge that *“is already held by the people that you’re teaching”* as well as the individual student’s personal journey. However, despite Critical Pedagogy lending itself to be the space where alternative assessments would seem most appropriate, even natural, they are not often put into practice (Reynolds and Trehan, 2000).

As thoroughly discussed in chapter two, the higher education system is focused on outputs and results and students, who are treated like customers, have often, even if unconsciously, internalised the mindset that they are paying for their education, thus it should be provided rather than worked for, and as Chris put it during the interview, *“the more they pay the more they deserve a service for their money”*. Seeing university as a means to attain a better job and better income then means that higher grades are seen as the ultimate goal, which diminishes the learning process as a reason for attending university as outcomes are more important than processes. As Chris further pointed out, when she asks her students why education is valuable *“most of them will tell you because they want a job and they want a job because they want an income”*. When trying to implement alternative assessments, critical pedagogues encounter several problems. As Albert pointed out during the interview, it is often easier for academics to choose the path of *“least resistance”* by sticking to a *“standardized curriculum and a standardized set of assessments”*.

However, there are a number of ways alternative assessments in form of participative approaches that can be implemented within the classroom and several have been mentioned by my participants, especially those that include the participation of students in the development of their assessment. Preethi highlighted in the interview that she considers her classroom a *“collective space”*, where her students are encouraged to participate in not only structuring the content of lectures and seminars, but also in creating *“creative assessments”*, allowing them to choose to express themselves and their learning through *“poetry, journals, movie reviews”* and *“reflections”*. She stated, *“they can do what they like as long as it’s discussed”*. She further elaborated that she believes she cannot teach in the way she does but then expect students to simply *“do as you say”*, thus including them in developing assessments and assessment criteria seems like a natural consequence for a teacher to seek to *“break down hierarchies”*. Similarly, Albert explained that he seeks to allow his students to *“participate, to generate the question”* and to *“reflect on their emotionality”*. He stated:

“I want them to reflect, how does this make you feel? (...) Where do you want to take that now then? How does that then relate to the fact that we have told you you have to do (...) a mini literature review of three papers (...) how are you going to process that?”

Oh, you want to do a podcast, you don't want to write it, that's cool, let's negotiate that then".

Thus, in his classroom Albert is able to allow students the freedom to change assessment, which is still part of their degree, to one that is meaningful to them.

Alternative ways of assessment can also include peer assessment (where students assess each other by, for example commenting on written work), collaborative assessment (where students' work is assessed by other students as well as the tutor), and consultative assessment (where the individual themselves, peers and the tutor assess the work) (Reynolds and Trehan, 2000). However, this requires the collaboration and students' willingness to participate in the process. During his interview, Carl for example highlighted the dismay students express when they find out that part of their grade will come from groupwork, because they were achieving high grades until this point and then worry about how group work might affect their grade. Collaboration can seem especially difficult if it has not previously been part of someone's education journey. However, once encouraged, there are many benefits. Firstly, as teachers' grading can be seen as the ultimate form of authority in the classroom, 'dialogical grading', which includes students and educators, 'allows students to gain some control over the distribution of grades and thereby weakens the traditional response between grades and authority' (Giroux, 1988a, p.38). Secondly, the dialogical relationship necessary for learning collectively enables students to experience the benefits of learning from one another and thus works against the practices that encourage competition and individualism that are so often part of the education system (ibid., p.39).

However, it has been highlighted that this collaboration of students does not always take into account existing power relationships within the groups of students themselves and how this would affect the groupwork as well as the assessment process (Reynolds and Trehan, 2000). Furthermore, research conducted by Martinez Serrano et al. (2018) additionally found potential resistance to alternative ways of assessment. They share the experience of a module leader whose students 'had to be *forced* to be "autonomous learners", by only being able to pass the module if they 'engage in autonomous learning strategies' and they attribute this to the current system in which the paying customer expects 'learning strategies and resources to be "delivered"' (p.16). This correlates with what some of my participants raised during the interviews. Firstly, that many students are not comfortable with ways of teaching that deviate from what they consider the norm, and secondly, that fee-paying students are not always willing to put in the work.

A useful tool for critical pedagogues is considered to be formative assessment. Formative assessment is seen as feedback that is provided to students throughout the school year and requires the educator to ‘assist students develop skills to make judgements about their learning in relation to the standards set’ and to enable them to become more autonomous in their own learning (Ochuot and Modiba, 2018, p.478). This could potentially enable the educator to facilitate meaningful learning as emphasised in Critical Pedagogy, while simultaneously allowing standardized assessments in the classroom, Albert’s “*way of least resistance*”. However, in order for formative assessment to be useful, it has to be implemented well and, according to Ochuot and Modiba’s research (2018), this is not always the case. Similarly difficult is the use of self-assessment, which is considered to be unreliable as students often overestimate their own efforts and performances (Lindblom-Ylänne, Pihlajamäki and Kotkas., 2006). As Ron Scrapp highlights in conversation with hooks (1994, p.157) ‘our task is to empower students so that they have the skill to assess their academic growth properly’, which requires ‘ongoing developmental feedback in workshops’ (Martinez Serrano et al., 2018, p.16). Thus, using formative assessment as well as student self-assessment is extremely time consuming, especially when working with large cohorts as described by Carl, Preethi and Chris. Time is simply not something academics in the neoliberal university have much of.

5.3 Power relationships within the classroom

Considering how to challenge the position of power teachers have in the classroom, Preethi pointed out that she seeks to “*break down hierarchies*” by including her students in decision-making. She stated that she asks her students what resources worked well for them and what resources did not and gives them an online space primarily for them to share their own resources. This corresponds with what hooks (1994, p.205) describes when she says ‘[w]hen I teach, I encourage them to critique, evaluate, make suggestions and interventions as we go along’. While hooks is firm in her idea that all students have to contribute in class in order to ‘come to voice’ (hooks, 2015, p.53), Preethi highlighted her flexibility regarding the question of what contributions can look like. In her classroom she does not “*call people out to speak*” instead she makes “*space for smaller group discussions*” where people “*who may be anxious or who may not be able to participate in a bigger group discussion can still participate*”. She invites her students to

“make interventions in different ways, if they don’t want to say anything, they can write something down, if they want to use their hands and doodle or draw on the side when we are having these discussions, anything like that. So, trying to work with forms of

'how can we have an anti-ableist space' within that space? To understand how different people are situated differently".

The term "engagement" means different things for different academics. While some of my participants were happy for students not to participate in classroom discussions, others thought it was important for everyone to participate. Martyn for example stated:

"I would always make sure people spoke. In a nice way, but if you're sitting in a classroom here, (...) I'm going to ask you what you think, what you feel about it. Help you to speak (...) but I wouldn't force it".

He also added that it was not so much about speaking, more about *"helping you to find your voice, that's part of my job as a teacher"*. Others took more drastic measures to make students speak, using methods such as throwing a paper ball to the student who will have to give input. Chris called this her paper ball exercise and she described it as:

"Every time I am lecturing something, I will ask questions about, for example, I am talking about globalisation and before explaining, [I ask] 'Is there anyone who knows about globalisation', so it's kinda like a very basic question. So I ask them to either raise their hands or not. People are scared to raise their hands even if they know, so I take a paper ball and explain: 'if the ball falls closer to you, even if you don't touch it, you need to answer the question, but don't worry too much because if someone laughs at you or whatever, you have now the power, because you will be the one throwing the paper to someone else. So, don't laugh because the paper might come to you.'"

Chris mentioned that she tells her students:

"I talk a lot, but I also try [sic] you to speak. And I know you might be frightened and people, not just in the UK but everywhere in the world, are scared of making questions, raise their hands, be the one everyone is looking at you [sic], but we need to fight that because if you don't engage, then you just get distracted, get bored, don't reflect on what you're saying and get lost"

At the end of her sessions and as part of the dialogue she considers herself to integrate into her teaching, Chris asks students for feedback and to write down one thing they enjoyed during the lecture, and one thing they did not like. The paper ball exercise features in both sections. She receives comments such as *"don't use the paper ball anymore"* or *"I am very scared of the paper ball, but actually it helps me to keep engaged"*. She admitted *"some people hate it, I knew that was going to happen, but if it's working for others..."*.

Forcing students to speak in the classroom is a contentious topic. Sam for example highlights students' silence as a potential act of resistance. She suggests:

“I can resist the invitation to engage in a particular kind of learning because I feel threatened by or uncomfortable with it. Is that generative? Maybe, yes. Because the person inviting me doesn't recognise some weird racial, sexual or class dynamic between us or that it's doing something of intellect that is harmful to me”.

As such, refusing to speak, or participate, in the classroom, can be an act of resistance that embodies the resistance Critical Pedagogy seeks to teach, namely that students recognise circumstances or practices that cause them harm and are able to actively resist them by refusing to engage. Additionally, Hao (2011, p.270) suggests that ‘students exercise their power by purposely not participating in class discussions’. Which, if one seeks to empower students, could be considered an example of successful teaching, as ‘resistance is a form of empowerment for the oppressed and, as such (...) necessary for critical education’ (Matias, 2013, p.304).

hooks (2015, p.52) suggests that in order to tackle the power imbalance that is part of the student-teacher relationship, it is important for teachers to acknowledge that they are not all-knowing, that they are still learning and ‘do not have all the answers’. This was raised by almost all of my participants. Denise for example stated

“Part of the problem with so many standard pedagogies is that they reproduce this idea that we, the people who are at the front of classrooms, the people who are publishing, are authorities on things and that to me then just simply reproduces the power that we might want to challenge otherwise”

Chris highlighted something similar. She spoke about transparency and how she tells her students that she does not know everything. While they *“might call her an expert, because that's what people say about doctors, the more you know, the more you realise you don't know anything”*. While she is open to her students asking her questions, she is also transparent about potentially not knowing the answer. She admitted that she finds it *“scary to say that because people expect teachers to know it all”*, but that it is important for her to know her limitations and for her students to know them too.

However, it is important to highlight that while ‘many critical pedagogues argue that agency and dialogue in the classroom can only be achieved through students’ willingness to “voice” their own lived experiences’, it nevertheless is ‘a western construct and a very particular way of being and thinking’ that is privileged in these spaces (Hao, 2011, p.268), leaving the question of whether the emphasis on “coming to voice” is only considered to be empowering and emancipatory by virtue of holding itself to be the judge of what is and what is not empowering.

Martyn also spoke about the power dynamics in the classroom and how to challenge them while we were discussing another topic. He suggested:

“it’s not just what you say, it’s how you teach the course and the way the room’s set up, if you have food in it, if you care about them, their role in the whole thing, all these are very meaningful and important”.

He was able to give an example of what that looked like in his classroom.

“Things I have done over the years is they [the students] design the classroom and they design the content of the course, they take control of it with me on the edge of it. So, when I was at my old university, we had a classroom, (...) and it was in the way of how we wanted to teach. So we stripped out all the furniture, it was accessible, we made sure that people who needed certain things would have it (...) and the furniture was all very movable (...), there was no PowerPoint in the room (...), not just the screen, but you know in a classroom, you walk in and there is a ‘PowerPoint’, this is where the teacher goes. (...) So, the whole classroom design, we were able to do that, so the room was democratic, the space, there were no cues where you should sit or how you should act.”

What Martyn describes is also emphasised by Lambert (2011, p.35) who, in her article titled *Psycho Classroom*, describes the perfect classroom as one where ‘furniture can be easily moved about by teachers and students to create the layout they need and want’, and where there is no ‘designated “top desk” or space which the teacher would automatically occupy, thereby establishing the embodied relations of power and knowledge from the outset’. This is especially crucial because a classroom that disrupts the commonly hierarchical setup of most classrooms and instead supports ‘adventurous participation’ that ‘presumes an equality of the intellectual capacities of those working within the space, accompanied by a willingness to allow uncertain outcomes’ (ibid.), is clearly at odds with the narrow and specific learning outcomes that are presented at the beginning of most modules in the current university.

Considering how teaching and learning took place in the classroom he described during the interview, Martyn went on to describe the content of the teaching in more detail:

“We’d have a 3-hour class, one teacher, two PhD students helping and learning, 20 minutes input from the teacher, all run by students who evidently take control of the class, what we’re going to read, things to do, sessions, all of that.”

Martyn then thought about his most recent teaching experience:

“I was teaching on a course the last few years (...), no reading list, students write the reading list together on a Wiki, they get assessed on it, and an annotated bibliography, then they use that to write their essays but it’s a very collective exercise”

Having described what his teaching content and space looks like, I asked Martyn about the students' reaction to the teaching. Most of my interviewees had experienced an unwillingness from students to participate in teaching that made them feel unsettled or uncomfortable, as will be discussed in more detail in the following section, so Martyn's experiences differed slightly. He explained

“usually well. If things are well organized and they know what they have to do and they can see that it works, and they get something out of it, it's meaningful and it's productive. It has to be well done, I think. And we learn every year, we learn something, every year they say ‘this didn't work or that didn't work’, you know, it's a process. But they knew we had their best interest at heart and usually it worked really well actually (...) 80% of the students gave it full whack, of a big course”.

What becomes clear in Martyn's quote is that trust is crucial. This is also emphasised by Bizzell (1991, p.58), who argues that power is not necessarily a negative thing but that it allows for the kind of authority of a teacher that is necessary to persuade students to take part in activities that challenge them, because they ‘trust’ the teacher's ‘assurance that some good for the student ultimately will come out of it’, which is not to be confused with ‘blind faith into the teacher’. This trust correlates with hooks' idea of granted authority, which was discussed in chapter three. In Martyn's case, the students needed to be able to trust their teachers to have their best interest in mind when designing the course, or more specifically when letting them design it themselves. This level of trust is particularly difficult to achieve for students who have only just entered university, even more so, if they lack confidence in their own abilities as well. Later in the interview Martyn admitted that *“there must be”* students who did not like his way of teaching, however they never told him.

5.4 Discomfort/Unsettled students

Not every academic has the same positive experience of students embracing their way of teaching as Martyn, and not every academic goes to the same lengths to offer their students a safe space to care for one another as Preethi does. Not everybody would agree that this is something they should do either and what constitutes a safe space very much depends on the individual understanding of what safe means. Nevertheless, the following section will focus in more detail on the discomfort felt by students. As many of my interviewees described, their students often felt unsettled by tasks and activities in their classrooms, as the participation encouraged in teaching spaces with a focus on Critical Pedagogy requires a type of participation that students are not used to. Alternative assessments and topics that question students' worldviews seem to be something particularly challenging and both were talked about in almost

all interviews. Some academics described their experiences with their students as similar to that of bell hooks (1994) who highlighted

Students do not always enjoy studying with me. Often they find my courses challenge them in ways that are deeply unsettling. This was particularly disturbing to me at the beginning of my teaching career because I wanted to be like *[sic]* and admired. It took time and experience for me to understand that the rewards of engaged pedagogy might not emerge during the course (p.206)

As briefly mentioned earlier, Denise gave the example of having her students read a dystopian novel from which they

“need to think through one of our key concepts that we cover in the course: Power; knowledge; identity, difference and representation; resistance; governance, so they get to pick it. They are very unsettled by using a novel to learn something about global politics. So it takes quite a bit of convincing that a novel is a cultural artefact but also a site of knowledge, the same as a textbook might be.”

She states that she lets them resist *“they don’t have to like it, but they have to do it”*, and that most of the time, these students will later understand the purpose and the value of the task.

In some cases, the discomfort simply relates to students being asked to do something that is unfamiliar to them, something they never had to do school before they came to university. Suzanne described this when asked whether Critical Pedagogy was useful in any context. She considered whether there are challenges when teaching as a critical pedagogue

“the way that schooling is going, is meaning that kids, when they come to university, haven’t been exposed to being taught in this way. So, you ask them to think for themselves but they can’t do it, they haven’t got the language and they haven’t necessarily got the skills because they are used to just being spoon fed information.”

Sam on the other hand described the type of student that does not want to engage in this way. She said *“some students don’t like it because they don’t like to think about things deeply, that annoys them. Some students don’t like it then but they like it at the end of the semester or five years later, they’ve learnt something,”* which is something that was also discussed in the section on bell hooks. Referring to discomfort, Sam added *“I think most of the time in my classes, some students feel really uncomfortable, but that doesn’t mean they don’t enjoy or learn from the class”*. Albert also talked about students who are not keen on thinking for themselves, instead *“people want to be told the answer, some people, not all.”*

Therefore, there seem to be three different ways of being uncomfortable in a classroom setting where Critical Pedagogy is used. There is discomfort associated with having to do something

that feels unfamiliar or new to the individual, as just discussed. There is discomfort related to having one's own identity and experiences discussed in front of others, such as minoritised students who may feel extremely discomforted by talking about their histories and experiences in front of predominantly middle class White students, which will be discussed in more detail in a later section; and there is also the discomfort associated with having one's identity and viewpoints challenged.

When talking about bell hooks, Denise referred to her as someone who

“practised (...) a politics of discomfort in so many ways, so she does not make people comfortable. She's very unsettling in a whole bunch of ways and I think that there is something about that unsettling, that is really crucial to doing Critical Pedagogy”. “It's not about making people feel better, I think it's actually about really deeply unsettling people because that is actually what it takes”, “it's not about playing nice for instance in classrooms, obviously being respectful is one thing but if you want to actually disrupt power, you need to actually unsettle people, you need to make people uncomfortable.”

Since lecturers are more than ever before dependent on student feedback, as discussed in chapter two, it can be questioned how much potential there is to make students feel very uncomfortable within the classroom when the academic will not want to challenge their students in ways that might jeopardise their position within the institution. In recent years, the terms edutainment and infotainment have been used in this context. While edutainment is more commonly used in the context of educational games, digital learning systems and educational television programs (Pan et al., 2008; Rodney, 2012), it has more recently found its way into the conversation around neoliberal universities where it refers to the entertainment of students by the lecturer. Infotainment, however is predominantly used in the context of television, where ‘infotainment means reporting news and facts in an entertaining and humorous way’ (Bugreeva, 2021, p.171). Infotainment is used by Burrows (2012, p.367) to describe an approach to education that academics use ‘in the vain hope that they might ‘improve’ their scores’, as they are urged to adapt their ‘pedagogical practices towards the preferences, tastes and mores of an ever more consumerist student audience’, in short, to entertain them while they teach course content. As discussed in chapter two, lecturers are expected to deliver interesting content to paying customers. Rodney (2012) uses the example of visual culture courses which replaced the previous *Introduction to Art History*, which ‘has ceased to draw the crowds it once did’. In comparison to art history, ‘visual culture comes to represent edutainment, the option that is both flexible and fun’, education specifically developed for the spectator who is a ‘consumer-student who must be engaged in order to ensure brand loyalty’ (ibid.) or, at least, positive feedback. Rodney describes the shift from art history to visual culture as ‘byproducts

or symptoms of infotainment culture, where education is seen to be in competition for market shares with the entertainment sector'. However, it is important to highlight that Rodney's (2012) approach to educating students does not generally work well with the approach of Critical Pedagogy as she states 'we should not see today's students as the victims of the lecture tradition that need to be liberated through discussion and group work, but rather as people capable of navigating, appropriating and assimilating ideas even if they are presented in a way that runs antithetical to our culture of immediate gratification'. While she does not disregard discussion and group work altogether, it does not seem like she would seek to implement these in her classroom either. What does align with Critical Pedagogy however, is her suggestion that 'learning takes place in that moment of recognition (often outside of the classroom) when we are able to link up a concept with an experience of the world that makes our knowledge resonant'.

Additionally, as highlighted by Chris during the interview "*the academy in the UK is being privatised little by little and the more students pay, the more they feel they deserve a service for their money*", rather than having to do the work. This is also reflected by something Suzanne highlighted during her interview. She suggested:

"I don't think the modern university helps with that because (...) they are consumers now, so how do you teach in a critically pedagogic way when people are paying £9000 a year for that content, and I've heard students say that (...) they talk about value, where is the value in this, where is the content, where is the substance."

According to her, not all students react well to the approach of saying "*Okay, we're going to discuss this stuff and really dig into it, but not to do it as a lecture where they can take notes and take the information from you. There can be a lot of push-back against that*". This entitlement of paying customers has been referred to in chapter two, and further inhibits lecturers, who need students' feedback, from adequately challenging for example discriminatory behaviour and thus from implementing the type of Critical Pedagogy that could enable students to question their beliefs.

In some cases, students being unsettled is not necessarily the result of what is taught, but of the process of studying. Albert referred to that when he discussed his work with PhD students in particular, where he treats meetings with students like therapy in which he helps them through the painful process of doing their research. He suggests:

"it's a process, and they hate it (...). It's definitely like 'I hold you, while you go through the pain of this but you have to find your way through the pain of it (...), the pain of the

literature, the pain of the research gap” and many more, all while “having to care for people and care for yourself”.

What Albert described here also suggests a community of care and that he feels able to offer his students this care and support. However, some scholars criticise this approach to educational relationships where the student receives pastoral care from the teacher. Ecclestone and Hayes’ (2009) book titled *The Dangerous Rise of Therapeutic Education*, condemns the increased support of students’ emotional well-being by the institution. They not only claim that focusing too much on social and emotional development, in which they include school counselling services and an emphasis on self-reflection, as well as Philosophy for Children, takes up ‘the space for genuine learning’ (Barrow, 2012, p.359). They also suggest that what takes place is the infantilisation of students who are increasingly seen as vulnerable and unable to cope without support (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009). Interestingly, they admit, with some bafflement, how positively this is received by students who are genuinely enthusiastic. They somewhat mock the increased support for students’ transitions into university life and ‘courses to help students cope with examination stress’ as, so they claim, ‘[t]here is no evidence that student life is more stressful’ (p.88). However, factors outside the institution, such as increased social inequality and the emphasis on competition, and factors inside the institution such as student fees and the accompanying debt (Maisuria and Helmes, 2020), the ‘disciplining of students by academics through assessment and the use of learning analytics’ and ‘attendance monitoring of students by administrators’ (Hall, 2018), as well as the increased numbers of student suicides at UK universities would suggest otherwise (Marsh, 2017; Weale, 2018). Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that some of the support offered to improve students’ well-being might be less about genuinely caring for the student and more about achieving student satisfaction (Amsler, 2011).

The second type of discomfort experienced in class, the discomfort that is mostly related to minoritised students, requires a closer exploration too, especially in the context of this thesis. As touched on briefly earlier in this chapter, minoritised students do not always feel safe enough to speak out in classroom discussions, whether it is to share experiences and opinions or whether it is to challenge a point made by someone else and ‘sometimes the silence in the class can be both a consequence of oppression and a form of resistance’ (Housee, 2010, p.422). While some may feel unable to share out of fear their experiences might be challenged, others may simply not want to be “othered” by those they are sharing with. This is something Preethi highlighted during our interview, when she considered the limitations to her own resistance within the university. She gave the example of a particular module where she sought to show

her students that their lived experiences are actually knowledge that can be shared. She described the issue in the following:

“we had a situation one week where the discussion was on bodies and how our bodies are racialised and how do we experience this racialisation of our bodies and students were talking about the different experiences they’ve had, the moments they’ve realised that they were racialised as Black or Brown in particular ways (...) and we’ve noticed that a lot of the Black and Brown students were talking and a lot of the students who were racialised as white were really silent. But not only were they silent, but there was an element of consumption, like when you have the really sad story of the woman who was talking about her refugee story of going from one country through various ways across borders and end up here being separated from her family (...), they are really sad stories. And in some way, in that space that sad story was being consumed in a very negative way, like you hear someone’s sad story and you pity them”.

While the module’s way of teaching and learning was in alignment with the practice of Critical Pedagogy by “giving students the option to talk about their experiences because they don’t really get to”, this sharing of experiences also had negative consequences when “the same dynamics of the university come back into play where you have a university that’s ultimately built on racism and you have students who will consume students of colour’s pain in a way”. This experience made Preethi realise that “you can only provide a safe space until so far, you can’t, you really cannot!” and she acknowledged that “as long as the university is still structured through all of these systems of oppression, as long as we’re still not addressing the issues, we can’t do much because they keep coming back to affect us”.

5.5 Privilege

During the interviews I conducted, privilege was a reoccurring theme and it seemed that my interviewees had reflected on their own privileges not only as academics in higher education institutions, but also where they were from in terms of their own background. Preethi pointed out that while she is a Woman of Colour in the UK, she grew up with privileges in the country of her birth. When she writes about racism in the context of the UK, Preethi states that she sometimes feels complicit when she excludes the problems of knowledge production in her home country, where people like herself go to university and their voices are heard. Knowledge exists outside of academia too, but often it is not considered worth the effort of translating or even listen to. She also highlighted that Chandra Mohanty, a Woman of Colour whose work she draws on, is an upper caste Indian and who works in the US, which comes with its own privileges. Preethi also highlighted the point of another Woman of Colour at a different university who criticises how women like her become the face of decolonisation, women who have been educated in English all their lives, who have been taught the colonisers’ language

and way of being and producing knowledge, even though they do not consider themselves to be a “*decolonial anything*”.

Denise uses her own identity, as a White person in a predominantly White department, as a particular reason to introduce the voices of People of Colour, especially Women of Colour through the material she includes in her classroom, whether that is in the form of articles, short video clips, or books and movies. It is necessary to stress at this point, that diversifying a courses’ reading lists by including more authors that are not White, is not enough and should be considered to be only the start for those who seek to meaningfully engage in decolonising the curriculum and university spaces (Dar, Desai and Nwonka, 2020). As Doharty, Madriaga and Joseph-Salisbury (2021, p.234) point out, the ‘tokenistic inclusion of one or two Black and Brown authors on reading lists’ in many universities does little to support ‘anti-racist institutional change’. Highlighting this is not to disregard or judge Denise’s efforts, as I am not in a position to make claims whether her efforts to include the voices of People of Colour are done in a meaningful way or not. During the interview, she pointed out that it is especially important for her to include the voices of People of Colour who are in positions of authority. While she did not specifically say why, I assume she wants to counterbalance the number of White people in authority that her students come across in their daily lives, as well as demonstrate that people who look like them occupy positions of power. Additionally, this might also be her way of admitting that she is not an expert on any given topic but that there are scholars and individuals who are much more qualified to speak about certain topics. If this was the case, this humility would indeed be aligned with Freire’s emphasis on virtues, with humility being one of them. Additionally, there is another potential reason for Denise to share others’ work as part of her teaching as there are difficulties associated with being a White academic who teaches students of colour. Bizzell (1991, p.59) argues for example that ‘you cannot persuade someone over whom your own social and political power remains an implied threat of coercion’ and thus sharing the voices of other People of Colour as part of their course content might be a way to bypass the issue, additionally to the obvious benefit of sharing other experiences and points of view because they are important in their own right.

When considering whether Critical Pedagogy leads to transformation more likely for some students than for others, Denise highlighted that she is particularly interested in engaging those students who occupy positions of privilege, which can also be found in Freire’s work. While he argues strongly that the oppressed need to liberate themselves, that liberation cannot come from the oppressors, he nevertheless seeks to shift the oppressors’ ‘perspective from the naïve to the critical, from a posture of privilege and entitlement to the confidence and awareness of an agent

within society who is able to work for social justice' (van Gorder, 2007, p.12). Denise did not give any examples of the pedagogical strategies she uses in order to reach those privileged students during the interview, but she emphasised why she considers it to be important and how the positions of her students differ. She stated:

“Some students, they have to work a hell of a lot harder to be in these spaces already, by virtue of them not being in positions of privilege, so they are already doing so much work that it doesn't actually require them to do more transforming but requires other people around them to do more of that transforming work. So the thing is that some people will transform more than others, but for me, hopefully, the point of doing Critical Pedagogies or engaging through Critical Pedagogies is to try to get those students who are in those positions of privilege to do more of the work. They need to transform more.”

Therefore, the transformation Denise seeks to initiate in privileged students with her teaching relates to Freire's concept of conscientisation (*conscientizacao*). To encourage conscientisation, educators should generate 'an attitude of awareness through critical reflection, a prerequisite for liberative education' (van Gorder, 2007, p.15). This critical reflection, as Freire (1996, p.90) suggest in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, enables people to '*emerge* from their *submersion* and acquire the ability to *intervene* in reality as it is unveiled' (emphasis in original). Thus, if successful, Denise's teaching would enable her privileged students to go through the process described by Freire but also instigate further examination, as the 'more educators and the people investigate the people's thinking, and are thus jointly educated, the more they continue to investigate' (*ibid.*). When asked, whether she considers her privileged students harder to reach, she explained:

“Yes, partly because that requires a hell of a lot more work to see the things that we need to see to be able to challenge things. How does one see and confront ones privilege, that's a lot of work and that's hard work and I think that that's hard to sustain, again versus students who are less privileged, whoever we might consider to be less privileged, you are maybe not always aware of the structures that might be producing that and that doesn't also mean that we don't kind of buy into neoliberal dreams and phantasies about what we can get if we're good neoliberal subjects”

“It's a big ask of some students, and I think it is very hard for students in positions of privilege to sustain a kind of critical reckoning.”

As van Gorder (2007, p.12) points out, the privileged, in this case particularly White middle-class students, 'do not see themselves directly as oppressors' and they, understandably, 'are not interested in exchanging' the comfortable position 'that gives them security and status' which they have become accustomed to, 'to launch into the terrifying uncertainties of dismantling a world constructed for their benefit'.

Carl, however, highlighted some of the logistical and practical constraints of the university in its current form that limit students' transformation when he considered class sizes and what those mean for teaching, especially when seeking to implement Critical Pedagogy. He pointed out:

"I still have to teach core modules as part of a team, in a lecture theatre with 120 students. It's not going to work in that context. It can't work in that context, because this type of pedagogy is based on a real dynamic between lecturers and students. It can probably work with a group of up to maybe about 30, with 2 lecturers, and that's even stretching it. You have to have that meaningful negotiation and exploration, conversations with each student. You've got to connect with who they are at that point. So there is practical constraints with that (...). In universities like this, it's big cohorts and your big lecture theatres, bums on seats, get everybody in, lecture away (...)"

Thus, having full lecture theatres, which makes financial sense for the university, makes it impossible for any teacher to meaningfully engage with every single student, to foster a relationship and to enter into a dialogue that, for Critical Pedagogy in particular, is crucial. In such contexts, engagement also becomes a choice and as privileged students might never meaningfully engage with the content of the class and the teachers' efforts to initiate learning that leads to conscientisation, they are less likely to reflect on their privileged positions. For them, choosing not to engage is a privilege in itself.

Sam also spoke about the privilege of being able to choose as an academic. She suggested that within academia, there is a choice for her to be safe. She chooses what she brings to class, which allows her to play it safe and which sometimes makes her complicit. She acknowledges that she might excuse it by saying that she needs to be able to feed her kids, but that this is a choice she can make and not everybody has that choice. She even points out the contradiction of someone being an educator who considers him- or herself to be transforming the world, but chooses to be safe.

When asked how she relates Critical Pedagogy to possibilities of resistance within academia, Sam also spoke about the idea of Critical Pedagogy being a way to resist comfortably within the academy. She suggested:

"we take up the space that we need, that allows it, we reach the end of what's permitted, we get kickback from students or colleagues or institutions, we say that we're being oppressed, we need more Critical Pedagogy. We never go outside the boundaries of that necessarily, because anything outside the boundaries is really Critical Pedagogy and I'm not sure that's what most of us are doing inside institutions".

When asked if this is because they do not have to, she clarified:

“because we don’t have to and because we don’t want to. For example, when people are constantly citing Freire, they are selective. What he did was totally within the bounds of what was possible at the time, and then the regime changed and there was kickback, and then it became illegal. And then he was doing stuff that was super radical and revolutionary in other contexts, but there is real misunderstanding, especially in this country, people associate what is possible with what is permitted and once reach the end of permission, it’s like ‘oh my god, this is so oppressive’, yes, but that is the beginning of learning for yourself, of what you are willing to stay in and what you are willing to let go and what you are willing to actually disrupt. So I think that if we stay within the boundaries of Critical Pedagogy that assume that the academy is and should be and can be made into a liberal space for example, or a public good, I think it allows a really safe vessel for a certain level and kind of critique that I reckon we need to learn how to get beyond”.

Being unable to imagine something that is possible but not permitted is reflected in Kincheloe’s (2012, p.156) call for educators to immerse themselves in indigenous knowledges ‘of epistemologies that move in ways unimagined by many Western academic impulses’, highlighting that there is, indeed, a beyond after what is permitted. However, it involves taking risks, and not everyone is prepared to do that and to potentially risk their jobs, something that will be discussed again in the section on resistance.

Like Sam, Carl also hinted at his own complicity, although he did not use the word. When talking about his own journey, he described himself as an “*angry Marxist*” who attended university having a “*chip on his shoulder*”, with the intention of fighting the system. As he continued studying, he described how his attitude changed. He stated

“I kind of resolved myself to this new direction (...), I realised I needed to stop, in a sense, kicking the system and ultimately become part of it in order to do something positive, constructive, because it had allowed me to change my life so I thought if they could do it for me, I can do it for other people”.

Thus, it seems Carl realised that it is impossible to sustain the anger he felt towards the institution while still seeking to be part of it. Instead, he decided to focus on what he would be able to do within and adapted accordingly. However, it can be questioned whether what Hall (2017, p.5) describes as cognitive dissonance of academics plays a role in this as he suggests, the academic labourer needs ‘to believe that she loves/likes what she does’, while at the same time working for the institution she criticises. At a later stage in the interview, Carl even acknowledged that academics sometimes want to believe they are different. He pointed out

“What I found over the years is almost a resistance from my colleagues, because they don’t want to see themselves as conformists, they don’t want to see themselves as

bureaucratic administrators, basically just taking a set of criteria and number crunching the students in relations to these criteria, but that's what we do. So for me the challenge is putting flesh into these concepts, and putting lives into these concepts”

His way of dealing with these constraints is to relate the academic knowledge he teaches to the life experiences of his students in order for them to be able “*to do something different*”. In some of his published work, Carl refers to the idea of détournement or détourn, which Coverley (2010) describes as subverting the meaning of something from its initial usage, and which Carl seeks to use as a way of engaging his students by allowing them to create something new. Whether this is a concept, a phrase, a movie scene, an image, it is possible to give it a new, unintended meaning. This reinterpretation thus results in very personal work, a new cultural artefact. As a pedagogical strategy, introducing the concept of détournement allows flexibility that, according to Carl, can spark curiosity in the students because it draws specifically on their personal experiences and allows personalised expressions. Détournement, however, is only one of the concepts that Carl uses to engage his students, unfortunately the wordcount of this chapter does not allow for a further exploration of the others.

Despite the issues academics face in the market-driven university, such as increased work load, less job security, performative measures, bureaucratic tasks and increased pressure to attain funding, the university remains a privileged space, especially for White, male senior lecturers and professors (Hall, 2018), less so for other university staff, early career academics and researchers, disabled staff members, and those racially marginalised. Delivering a curriculum that challenges the structures of the institution and pushes existing boundaries is not only dangerous for less established academics, it is also more time consuming. Albert for example admits that his situation is very different to that of some of his colleagues:

“others have a high workloads, (...) they've got REF pressures on them as teaching staff and actually it just becomes easier to deliver last year's content (...) and the students will do the essays and they'll get through (...), and you come in and you say 'nonono, I'm REF-able already, I'm not gonna worry about that, let's revolutionise this content here'”

What Albert describes here is the different positions academics can occupy, even if they work in the same department and with the same students and how these different positions influence their ability to ‘revolutionise’, challenge or simply restructure the way they teach, create content and set assessments. His own safe and established position as a professor allows him freedom that other less well-established academics do not enjoy, thus his call for them to fight alongside him could have much more negative repercussion for them and damage their careers. It is not only academics who might be caught off guard by his request as it is not something they are

able to participate it, it might also unsettle students who expect a certain type of education to be delivered and thus might push back, further increasing the pressure for those academics in precarious positions whose jobs depend on positive feedback and “good” outcomes. Furthermore, as discussed in chapter two, the current system encourages competition between staff members, which greatly impacts on the atmosphere within departments, collegiality and whether staff members feel supported by senior colleagues. Taking Albert’s statements into account, it would not be surprising for early career academics to feel resentment towards those whose career is already established and who can afford to take risks. As he suggested, at early stages in their career, academics often just try to survive and make it to the end of the year, with little to no capacity to challenge the existing system. As Martyn stated, although not only about those early in their careers but more generally, *“I think there is a sense of helplessness in a lot of academic life or education, among teachers, actually, and the feeling that it’s pointless to resist”*.

Considering the university as a privileged space overall is not to minimise academics’ struggle with physical and mental health issues due to stress, as discussed in chapter two. But, as Johnson-Bailey (2013, p.21), a Woman of Colour teaching in academia, highlights: ‘I can easily lose sight of my own privilege. I have a terminal degree; I am tenured; I am able-bodied; I am a married heterosexual; I am middle-class’, ‘I generally have a comfortable life’. Thus, while disadvantaged compared to White colleagues, Johnson-Bailey’s position as a tenured university lecturer comes with privileges. What Sam considered in the earlier quote on being safely positioned within the institution, relates to this privilege, the relative safety that those within the academy inhabit. Being comfortable, it is not surprising that many academics would not like to see this safety interrupted. Disrupting the academy, although it sounds revolutionary when discussed in academic papers, might not seem as appealing if one has to fear losing their job. By saying *“anything outside the boundaries is really Critical Pedagogy and I’m not sure that’s what most of us are doing inside institutions”*, Sam acknowledges the disconnect between seeking to be a critical pedagogue and disrupting the university, while clinging to the *“safe vessel”* that being a university lecturer provides. When she highlights the difference between what is permitted and what is possible, the question is whether it is possible to remain employed by the university while doing something that is possible but not permitted. If the boundary is crossed and, instead of doing what is permitted, one wants to go beyond and do what is possible, it is likely to jeopardise one’s employment. After all, actions that are possible but not permitted are not likely to be appreciated by the institution.

According to Apple (2011, p.14), many academics ‘wish to portray themselves as politically engaged; but almost all of their political engagement is textual’. He continues that their ‘theories are (...) needlessly impenetrable’ and they consider questions of what should be taught or how to be beneath them, which ‘can denigrate into elitism, masquerading as radical theory’ (ibid.). Furthermore, Apple’s ‘contradictory class location’ which is experienced by middle-class academics and which was mentioned in chapter four in relation to my male participants mentioning their “working class roots” more often during our interviews, should be considered here. It seems men rely more on these roots to construct their identities within academia than female participants. Due to their positions, they might feel this is necessary to become credible voices within the field of Critical Pedagogy where gender and class are fundamental categories, as they, as White men, inhabit the most privileged space as members of the most privileged group.

However, considering that many academics rely on their employment, it begs the question how critical, or radical, an academic can really be within the walls of the academy. As Webb (2018, p.101) suggests, ‘the university, of course, is hostile to radical learning spaces’. It is not surprising then that ‘critical academic professionals tend to be regarded today as harmless intellectuals, malleable, perhaps capable of some modest intervention in the so-called public sphere’ (Moten and Harney, 2004, p.106).

While, as Sam pointed out during the interview, many academics continue to work in the university despite its limitations on how much “real” Critical Pedagogy can be done, there are various reports of people deciding to leave academia to work elsewhere, with one of these people being bell hooks. hooks (2003, p.23) states that ‘like many professors I naively believed that the more I moved up the academic ladder the more freedom I would gain’, instead, what she found was that ‘greater academic success carried with it even more pressure to conform, to ally oneself with institutional goals and values rather than with intellectual work’. Interestingly, shortly before the interview, Carl had an experience that relates to what hooks describes. He shared that he had recently been to an interview at a Russell Group university, which made him wonder:

“why? Why am I aspiring to go to a Russell Group [university], and I hated the interview because (...) the questions were (...) ‘so what research and funding profile are you going to bring to this Russell Group university?’ and I’m thinking ‘aaah, this isn’t for me’”.

Thus, despite knowing that he “*now operates as an established academic in a very privileged environment*”, the idea of working at a Russell Group university was still tempting enough for him to apply in the first place. While it is not clear whether he applied for this role believing, like hooks, it would entail more academic freedom, the interview made him realise that what might be considered a step up on the career ladder, would be accompanied by more pressure to conform, to deliver more measurable outcomes and by having less autonomy.

Considering the implications of all the issues discussed in the chapter two on CUS, it is not surprising that ‘quitlit’ has become a burgeoning genre in the last decade as various academics leaving academia have taken to pen and paper, or rather keyboard, to air their frustrations. While some of the articles published in this genre focus particularly on the working conditions of women (Pryal, 2018), others focus on mental health and academic production and the inability to escape the violence of academia (Macharia, 2013). This is especially difficult for those who consider themselves to be critical as they, according to Loick’s (2018, p.234), ‘could no longer bear the contradiction between the ideals of critical theory and the reality of academia’.

Apart from assimilating or leaving, there is also the possibility of using the academy as a place of subversion, such as described by Harney and Moten (2013) in *The Undercommons*, mentioned at several point throughout this thesis. Additionally, another way of challenging the university as a privileged space was referred to during Carl’s interview. He mentioned The Ragged University in Edinburgh and Manchester, where those involved “*operate public events (...) anybody can come and talk at a Ragged event about anything. Academics can come and talk, people from the general population can also come and talk and just share knowledge*”. For him, he continued, “*this is essential because (...) it is a kind of tactic to try and dissolve the barrier between the officiality of the university and the community*”. This again, although not mentioned by Carl, aligns with bell hooks’ efforts to do more work in the community, as she discusses in her book *Teaching Community*, where she explains that ‘away from the corporate university classroom, from teaching in a degree-centered context, I was able to focus more on the practice of teaching and learning’ (hooks, 2003, p.21).

5.6 Critical Pedagogy and Transformation

During the interviews, it became apparent that my interviewees’ opinions on why Critical Pedagogy can be considered a transformative or emancipatory practice differed. Suzanne for example pointed out:

“it really pushes back, doesn't it, against how schooling is, and I think particularly now, when we look at what's happening in schools, you see the gap massively, just in the way that schools are set up to literally do knowledge transmission”.

Instead, she suggests, for students

“the freedom of not working to something that's just going to test your recall of something is really powerful (...) people can direct their own learning in some way (...) they can do their own research, put their own interpretations on things”.

What Suzanne describes here relates to what has been discussed earlier in the chapter regarding assessment using participative approaches. Another way of including students in decision making in the classroom is allowing them to choose their own research questions (Martinez Serrano et al. (2018) and thus allowing them to take responsibility for their own learning.

Furthermore, Suzanne explained that she lets her students use their own languages, *“literally, their own language, but also metaphorically as well. They can bring their own lexicon into the classroom, I think that's really freeing”* and highlights the importance of *“teaching people where they are, rather than where you want them to be”*. While she uses students' languages in the literal sense, as a language other than the one spoken in the classroom context, there is also an emphasis on using the “the learners” language, as in the way they speak rather than the language they speak, in the classroom that relies on dialogic interaction between students and teachers. According to Freire (1985), for dialogue to be successful, the teacher must be able to use a language that is similar to the one the learner is familiar with. This is equally important when doing Critical Pedagogy with students from the deaf community and as Foley (2007, p.12) emphasises, using their language allows students ‘to be fully involved in their learning’, as it enables them to ‘gain knowledge and power’ and to ‘express their experiences, develop agency, and learn to question the social and cultural system around them’. Thus, Suzanne allowing students to use their own languages in the classroom is consistent with Freirean Critical Pedagogy and, as she says, it means *“teaching them where they are”*, in a context that is most meaningful to them. However, this might create issues too as it is difficult to strike a balance between allowing students to use their own languages, while still supporting them in developing the Standard English needed to pass assessments and to succeed in future employment, one that potentially puts great emphasis on language and grammar.

Denise's understanding of how or why Critical Pedagogy can be considered a transformative practice is similar to Suzanne's.

“By virtue of giving power to students (...) what’s transformatory about Critical Pedagogies, is that actually by endowing, or not endowing, because it’s already there, but exposing that students (...) as citizens, as people who live in the world, they can actually affect change, so what they do, what they think, how they think, what they claim to know, what they think they don’t know or what they might need to learn, all of those things are within their reach. So for me, that emancipatory thing about Critical Pedagogies is that it’s actually fundamentally challenging authority, who we think has authority and allowing, or giving space to recognise that actually, our authority is nominal, it’s only one kind of form of authority and not necessarily the best kind (...) in the context of moving through the world”

What Denise describes is the journey of students developing the skills to critically reflect on their understandings as well as their positions. While ‘teachers uncover reality (...) students develop the power to reflect critically on their experiences and, as they together with the teacher become fully conscious, learn how to transform the world into a more just place’ (Ochuot and Modiba, 2018, p.481-482). In order to challenge authority, students must first be able to understand dominant forms of knowledge and how they influence their everyday experiences. Only then can individuals understand their own roles in transforming their lives and the society they live in. ‘Once marginalized people recognize that society is changeable and that they have the power to transform the structures that put them at a disadvantage’ (Degener, 2001, p.38), including the authority within the education system that Denise describes as “nominal” and “not necessarily the best kind”, they are able to challenge their conditions. This is particularly important as a number of participants noted demographic changes within their classrooms. Denise stated that compared to earlier in her career, the number of Women of Colour in her classes has increased significantly, and, as highlighted by Preethi’s earlier quote, it is students of colour who are particularly unhappy in current universities. Preethi stated: *“this is not specific to a particular university, it’s just the way the university system is structured. They are hungry for spaces where they can explore some of these ideas. They want Critical Pedagogy”*. Thus, these students already enter university with knowledge and understanding about their positions in society, which potentially makes them an “easier” audience to engage in teaching about these structures as they do not have to be convinced that the world is an unjust place and that authority needs to be challenged for this to change. Preethi further emphasised:

“these sorts of pedagogies make an impact on everybody, for sure, but I think they particularly make an impact on marginalised communities, especially in the context of the UK’s students of colour. A lot of the things they are going through, historically knowledge production has been very colonial.”

At a later stage in the interview, when asked who is empowered and transformed through Critical Pedagogy in the classroom, Denise highlighted that both the teacher and the students learn and thus are empowered during their time together.

“I think any time we answer anything about transforming and empowering students, yes, of course, but if I didn’t also change and learn by virtue of this process then there would be a problem here”

As described in chapter three, one of the aims of Critical Pedagogy is for students to become more than mere objects that are filled with knowledge. Instead, they become subjects, subjects that are active participants in their own learning. Through their dialogical relationship, teachers and students both become subjects, and this is what Denise refers to in the above quote. However, it is important to consider that students’ transformation does not necessarily happen right away. Albert for example suggested:

“maybe those students we’re working with aren’t going to be transformed in those three years with us, they’re not going to be transformed until they’re 57 or whatever. Or maybe they were always transforming (...), it’s a movement, you’re not a fixed identity”.

Thinking about his own students over the years, Carl was able to share that a handful of his students later contacted him to say he had changed their lives. He continued *“I hate talking like this, because it’s not anything that I’ve done”*. Instead, he explained, all he does is *“opening up a space to create space and freedom for learners to feel that they can get back in touch with something, almost an originary impulse of going to higher education, because they want to change something”*. However, he admits that this is not the case for most of his students, who are honest and, like Chris’ students, admit their reason for being there is to get a piece of paper that will enable them to secure the job they want. Carl stated he was okay with that

“if that’s what you want to do with the space that I give you, you do that, I’m not going to penalise that. For others you just know when concepts powerfully resonate with a student (...) and they reveal the journey they are going on to (...) inhabit these concepts and take them into a creative direction (...) and making sense of their life, their history, present, (...) and aspirations for an alternative future”.

Carl also highlighted that this transformation *“is not in any quantifiable sense, it’s more about the conversation”*. He gave the example of one of his students who sent him a card many years later about

“how her engaging with these concepts (...), what came to light for her, (...) her dad had taken his life and she’d adored him (...) and she’d kind of parked it. Now there’s always a risk with this kind of stuff, because should I be opening these cans of worms to allow students to [sic]. And there is a risk, but for me it’s a risk worth taking. And I try to navigate it. Up to this point, I’ve navigated it effectively, it’s within certain parameters. (...) So this module had actually enabled her to get back in touch with these (...) painful moments but take them in a (...) more positive direction to navigate and

move beyond the disappointment towards recognition that from the disappointment of the past, the future always contains hope and possibility”.

Despite that, he admitted *“it doesn’t happen all the time. I don’t have a kind of messiah complex (...) but it’s the conversations and the contact for me that I can actually bounce those terms [transformative and emancipatory] around”.*

Sam admitted that, when thinking about transformation, she used to think about the students too. She stated:

“I used to think about this in terms of the students, generally, I don’t think about that anymore because I think that’s very obnoxious, ‘I’m gonna transform students’, (...) my students are so diverse as well and they bring whole histories with them that I usually don’t know anything about (...). I’m less interested in that, I’m always interested in who the people are that I’m with and who is in front of me and who is with me, so what we can do together and the specific things that need to be changed in that moment in order for that to be a safer space, or a braver space, or a less unequal space, or less micro-aggressively violent space, or a less physically violent space. What needs to change in those senses, I’m interested in that.”

She continued that she believes there to be a *“Zeitgeist, a way of thinking about the world”*, about *“knowledge”* and *“theories of change”* that needs shifting and said: *“I do have questions about how anything we do in education is contributing to that”*. So, when Sam thinks about transformation and her teaching, she does not think about it as transforming individuals but rather spaces, ways of thinking and, most importantly, she seeks to explore whether education enables this transformation, or potentially, why it does not. Martyn’s answer to whether he considers Critical Pedagogy to be a transformative or emancipatory practice was similar to that of Sam. He suggested *“in terms of transformation, for me transforming is changing the world. It’s not focused on the student. So that’s the liberal critique of education. Students will be changed, or they will be emancipated”*. While much writing on Freire’s work focuses on individual consciousness raising, what Martyn aligns with here is Freire’s often forgotten emphasis on transformation as a collective process of systemic change, with education as a crucial tool in the creation of a transformed society. When asked whether he thinks it is possible to focus on the transformation of students he replied:

“Not in a society that’s a labour camp, no. The transformation is the abolition of capital. That’s the revolutionary moment, that’s the critical moment. Everything else is important, of course, we want to help each other and, of course, lead more fulfilling lives, but only within that limit so (...) what appears to be a critique is actually an affirmation of the whole process because it suggests you can be emancipated within a process that is the opposite of emancipation in the end. There are positive aspects of

capitalism, it created us, it created this capacity for us to speak in this way but in the end, it kills everything”.

To the question of how Freire’s concept of conscientisation fits in with his idea of transformation of the individual being impossible, Martyn suggested:

“Well, at the end of that book [Pedagogy of the Oppressed], Freire says ‘the way in which we change the world is by workers taking control of their own labour power. So I think, and he says that elsewhere many times, that interpretation of Freire has been put on Freire as if that’s all he is talking about. So, he is talking about that, but he’s also talking about it in a much bigger frame, which almost always gets left out (...), not always, but almost”

Martyn emphasised that to him his “*work is absolutely not about the individual student*”, instead “*it’s about the collectiveness of our intelligence and how that can (...) achieve a state of criticality that the world can be transformed, everybody together for everything*”. Additionally, he added, his work was not about transforming the lives of students,

“that’s what the university says, ‘change the world, you can become a different person’, well, you can’t. You might have a few more choices, good for you and good for us (...), that’s still important, but Critical Pedagogy has to be more than that.”

Earlier in the interview, Martyn had mentioned that it was his master’s degree that had a tremendous impact on his thinking and led the way to him becoming more radicalized and essentially who he is today. Since I had a similar experience during my undergraduate degree, I asked Martyn whether it is not those experiences that are the reason we are here at this moment (this being the interview). He replied:

“of course, yes, there are moments (...), what we’re doing is important but my world hasn’t been transformed, I’m still working, I’m retired, I worked for 40 years. My sense of what is possible... but it can’t just be about me, it has to be about everybody”.

Suzanne, asked whether she thinks about Critical Pedagogy as a transformative practise did not seem to like thinking about herself as someone who, as a teacher, has the power to transform her students. She explained:

“It sometimes troubles me, the responsibility that comes with that. Because I wouldn’t want to think that I’m particularly responsible for someone’s transformation, I don’t think that’s my right to really think that (...) You hear that phrase a lot about how you can empower people through your teaching, that always turns me off a little bit because I wouldn’t want anyone to be that reliant on me as an individual (...) I want them to be transformed by reading some books or thinking their own thoughts or creating their own piece of art(...) I want the act and the process of doing that to be transformative, not my teaching as such”

In comparison, Grioux's (1988a, p.127-128) understanding is less humble as he states that a transformative intellectual should enable students to 'develop a deep and abiding faith in the struggle to overcome economic, political and social injustices, and to further humanize themselves as part of the struggle', something he seems to strive for.

Sam pointed out a crucial point and one that is extremely relevant to the topic of this thesis. She highlighted that in universities today, most academics are preoccupied with other challenges and issues and are thus unable to focus on the more urgent issues that education could address. She suggested that even if people in those spaces talk about these issues, "*the institution itself does not seem mobilised with what I think is a really urgent crisis, not just consciousness, but relationality and the massive rift of relationality amongst people, and between people and non-human beings*". Instead she highlighted that in her place of work, academics' topic of conversation focuses on "*how to deal with administrative bullshit, how to resist neoliberalism, how to widen access (...), how to moderate assessment*" instead, as discussed in the literature review. As universities are increasingly marketised, administrative tasks take up time and energy that could otherwise be used to prepare and share meaningful content of educational value, or indeed to support one another as highlighted by Ogbonna and Harris (2004) and previously mentioned. As mentioned earlier, 'academics' time is micromanaged to ensure maximum output for maximum income' (Earl, 2016, p.2). Therefore, Sam's statement about the preoccupation of those within her institution represents the challenges that academics face when envisioning what their teaching could be like but having to face their limited possibilities under the constraints of the institution that is run as a business.

This aligns with what Albert highlighted. When asked whether he considers Critical Pedagogy a transformative and emancipatory practice he stated: "*well, I'm not sure that it is inside the formal university (...) because it exists in the cracks, it's Moten and Harney's Undercommons*", and if it does not, he points out using the example of the Student as Producer in Lincoln, where it is an "*organising principle of the curriculum, their learning and teaching assessment strategy is based around it, and I think it's still there, but it becomes almost a unique selling point, branding for the institution (...), it becomes co-opted by the institution*". Thus, what Albert describes here is the challenge of avoiding the aspects that make Critical Pedagogy a transformative and emancipatory practice being subsumed by commodification, which so far, seems to be impossible. However, Carl considered this to be part of what it means to be an academic. To avoid anything being subsumed by capitalist ideas, "*we have to be more savvy*

than that". Also referring to the Social Science Centre (SSC), which will be explored in more detail in a later section, and Student as Producer quickly being co-opted, Carl suggested:

"at that point, using my notion of tactics, my advice would have been 'right, you need to adapt, you need to change it to something else. The institution now has that, give it to them, and then you seek out something else'. So, it's about constantly striving to be creative in a subversive sense. Because if you come up with a really good idea (...) universities will coopt it and they will (...) marketise the life and the spirit out of it"

Considering potential limitations for Critical Pedagogy to be implemented within neoliberal institutions, Martyn also highlighted the point of institutions recuperating Critical Pedagogy and calling it student engagement instead. He exclaimed, *"there is lots of fabulous examples of students writing curriculums, producing knowledge, teaching, doing everything inside, of course it's not always critical, but they (...) attempt to depoliticize it (...) Yes, of course, they rip everything off"*.

Carl further highlighted with some urgency the need for resistance.

"There is still a job to do, because (...) these neoliberal systems are hijacking universities and they are constraining universities and making students into consumers to the point where (...) in a short space of time the idea of the lecturer as maverick, as critique, as innovator is going to be defunct. You will have an administrative process to fulfil. It will all be technologized (...). We're not there yet, but you can see the seeds of that happening. So for me that's why we as academics need to (...) still be part of the system but to utilise the privilege and the space and the status that we are still, at this point, afforded within the system, to do something different."

Preethi's opinion about the potential to challenge the system from within was a little less optimistic than Carl's, however, this is not surprising because of their positions within the academy, Carl the established, White male academic, Preethi an early career academic and a Woman of Colour. Thus, in Preethi's experience:

"the university is inherently quite limited in what we can do as a radical space given that the radical potential of the university is still very limited by the processes that are shaping the university, by structures like racism, classism, sexism, ableism that are still dominating the way the university is."

However, Preethi still acknowledged that *"within that, there are things that we can do"*, also pointing towards *"Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's work on the Undercommons, stealing from the university, thinking about how we can subvert some of the problems with the university through pedagogy or through taking from the university has been key as well"*.

Albert highlighted another limitation regarding transformative work within the university. He suggested:

“Clearly you get individuals who are doing critical work inside, (...) but the ways in which that is recognised and rewarded is always rooted in (...), I mean, if you’ve got crap outcomes but everyone feels really good about it but they’re all getting 2:2s (...) or there’s no kind of progression, you’re always judged on your numbers. If you’re getting distinguished teaching awards (...) or a national teaching fellowship (...) you might be doing more maverick critical transformatory work, but if it isn’t delivering consumer related outcomes, it’s problematic.”

Thus, the prioritization of outcomes further inhibits the transformative and emancipatory work that academics could be doing inside the university, as the institution’s judgement of what can be considered valuable and meaningful work depends on measures rather than for example experiences. Interestingly, Albert gave the example of my previous university, referring to me and two other students who attended a seminar he attended himself years ago, as well as some of the academics that used to teach me. He pointed out that this was a sign that staff (at least those individuals) must be *“relatively politically engaged”* and that this resulted in us students being too, demonstrated by me becoming a PhD student. However, he further stated that there were three students out of a cohort of about 150, indicating that clearly not everyone was engaged to the same extent and suggested that *“with certain individuals it chimes at certain times”*. This is interesting point, as I have discussed something similar in my positionality section, saying that Critical Pedagogy was very accessible to me due to my upbringing and my personality, which supports the idea that Critical Pedagogy can be transformative and emancipatory for some more than for others.

In contrast, Chris’ view on transformation focused more on transforming on a personal level and is in accordance with Freire’s idea of conscientisation. She described the process of transformation as students’ thinking develops from *“being very individualistic, very basic, simple minded of things that happen out there ‘I’m not related to that’, and then the transformation in the way you think and the way I try to [sic] my students to go through the process”*. However, she admitted that this process of transformation does not take place for every student and she further acknowledged that *“there are parts of my own thinking that are not as transformed, anyway... it’s to start considering all that context. How you are, whether you want it or not, connected to everything that is happening”*. Chris also highlighted that, as part of this transformation, if her students take one thing away from her teaching, she wants it to be them seeing *“we’re all human beings. Some are struggling more with various types of vulnerabilities, but that’s the main difference”*.

5.7 Students' experiences outside the classroom

As highlighted at various points throughout this thesis, Critical Pedagogy places great emphasis on students' experiences outside the classroom and in their everyday life in order to facilitate learning. Thus, critical pedagogues do not only have to have a genuine interest in what experiences students bring into the classroom, they also have to be open to work politically outside the classroom, which relates to the idea of critical pedagogues as border crossers. Border crossing can refer to disciplinary boundaries that have to be crossed and links that have to be made between various discourses and theories in order to overcome the barriers of individual theories' inadequacies (Jackson, 1997). Freire has been described by Giroux as a 'border intellectual' who 'ruptures the relationship between individual identity and collective subjectivity', who 'makes visible a politics that links human suffering with a project of possibility' and who inhabits the space of border crosser partly due to his experiences of living in exile and embracing "homelessness" (Giroux, 1992b, p.18). However, border crossing can also refer to the space outside the border of the classroom or the institution. Accordingly, as 'voice develops through a physical and intellectual journey beyond boundaries of classroom, of culture, of home and school learning' (MacBeath, 2006, p.195), considering and connecting to life outside the classroom is crucial. Unsurprisingly, various of my participants highlighted not only the importance of students bringing their experiences into the classroom, they also mentioned connections they build with their students away from the classroom. Suzanne for example spoke about reading groups that she facilitates on social media and the conversations she continues with students who have already graduated. She named Twitter in particular as a useful platform to share ideas and to interact. Preethi gave the example of taking part in and attending teach-outs at her university, events that take place on campus but outside the formal classroom, often organised by students.

There were also various ways that my interviewees sought to integrate students' interest outside the classroom into concepts that were studied. Denise for example stated:

"We use a lot of textual and visual material because I try to think what are my students doing when they are not in the classroom? And so what kind of critical skills might be useful that are not knowledge transfer (...), but actual practical things. We live in a very visual world, so how do we read all of those things? So for me it's about trying to impart some skills about how we think critically about that we're always doing, like bingeing Netflix series, playing video games, doing those kinds of things. So I'm trying to think about those general things, bring them into the classroom and say 'how do we analyse these? What do we do with them?'" "I do two things. I give them a sense of how for instance academics might methodologically engage them, but then also try to consider the ways in which they want to engage them. What do they want to look at, think about, bring into the conversation?"

Carl recounted how he used non-academic resources to connect to his students in his early days of teaching when he was sent into classrooms that other teachers had been keen to leave. He stated that *“it was really just crowd management”* at first but, believing that there would be a way to connect to these students that others had given up on, he *“used to bring in reference points to music and film”*. He referred to culture and, being younger then

“could still make those cultural connections”, “applying, in a deductive way, some Freirean principles into teaching of making inroads to meet the students where they’re at and trying to make connections with elements that they’re interested in and bring that into the learning environment”.

At a later stage during the interview, Carl highlighted the importance of allowing students to explore ideas they have always been interested in *“empowering students to sort of traverse or transgress really, the separation between the university and their personal, private inner lives”*, as has been described earlier in relation to détournment. In his experience *“that’s the stuff they really find energising (...). They always wanted to make some kind of connection between what they felt and for that to have currency and meaning in an environment that is beyond them”*. Carl then explained that this is especially powerful as *“it’s irrespective of the culture (...) and the background that they come from. It’s wherever their cultural reference points are. So immediately they can start to make sense.”* He then continued to explain that *“it’s not about intersectionality. It’s not about me saying ‘oh, what would be a feminist reading of this, and what would be a transgender reading?’ , it doesn’t matter”*, which is a very different approach to that of some of the other interviewees, in particular Albert’s, who seeks to include as many different perspectives as possible into his teaching.

5.8 Autonomy

The participants in my study felt they had varying degrees of autonomy regarding their modules and their practices. As highlighted in more detail in the chapter on CUS, autonomy is something that, according to the literature, is missing for academics in the neoliberal university. While there was no specific question regarding my participants’ autonomy in my interview schedule, the topic arose in most interviews, in regard to small decisions such as module content and resources, or larger decisions such a changing of assessment criteria or allocating time for specific exercises.

Martyn explained:

“as an academic, I have always had loads of autonomy to do whatever I wanted to do. Nobody has ever said to me ‘don’t do that’. I know we had to jump through a lot of

hoops and that's something we should remember in universities. I know it's not like that in all universities and when you get to the assessment and whatever, but still, we have a lot, we have loads of autonomy".

When saying this, he especially referred back to decades ago, when he was given a large amount of funding to design his classes in the way he wanted, however, he also spoke about his and other academics' autonomy in the present tense, which indicates that he still considers this to be the case. Whether this experienced autonomy is the result of his long-standing career, or whether he considers this to be true for new academics too, is unclear. Other interviewees, such as Albert, were very clear about the fact that they have reached a level where they have more autonomy and freedom because they have made a name for themselves and do not have to worry about the REF or career progressions anymore.

Speaking about his autonomy within the university and in particular in his classroom, Carl spoke about tactic and strategy, military terms used by Michel de Certeau used in relation to culture generally and applying them to Higher Education. He stated:

"de Certeau defines strategy as something that is an art of the powerful, and we know this, you go to any university, there is always a strategic vision strategized by the executives (...), and that filters down and everybody is expected to behave in relation to, and conform in relation to the vision of the organisation. Very powerful things. So, strategy is aligned with power and what strategies attempt to do to make the people that form part of any collective, any type of organisation, to conform to that vision or strategy. De Certeau then defines tactic as the art of the weak, because at the end of the day, the only power you are left with, when you are kind of subsumed as part of these powerful bureaucracies and organisations is your own agency, (...) so he challenges us to become in a sense critical tacticians. And what we can do, as soon as we engage with our academic spaces (...), if this was a lecture, this becomes my space. I can do whatever I want with this space, people might not like it, people might like it, but at the end of the day I still have the freedom, I have the agency to implement different kinds of tactics within this space that I can influence and control".

Preethi also considered herself to have full autonomy about what she puts on the reading list and how she creates content for her lectures, allowing her to choose various types of media apart from academic books or academic journals, such as podcasts and previous students' dissertations. As a result, she is able to use this autonomy in her classes to involve her students in the decision making. When speaking about potential opposition from others regarding something she puts on her reading list exclaimed she "*wouldn't have it*", which suggests that she is in a position to do so. However, her autonomy within the classroom is still somewhat restricted by the university. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Preethi highlighted that she can only provide safety for her students to a certain extent, as what happens in the classroom, and

especially how other students react to the experiences of students of colour, continues to be shaped by the structures of oppression still present in any institutions. Thus, she might have autonomy regarding the way she structures and teaches her module, but she does not have enough autonomy to reshape the module in a way that avoids outside forces to seep into her classroom.

While Sam seemed to have a lot of autonomy regarding what and how she teaches, she admitted that, if she wanted to include materials and topics she is currently concerned with, she would have to quit the university and she has not found a way to do that yet. *“I think in universities there is probably a lot of space for people to do things that they assume that there isn’t”*, but taking a step and thus potentially risking her career is not something she is ready to do while she continues to grapple with her own thoughts on various topics.

When thinking about opposition that she has encountered with the type of teaching she does, Suzanne reflected:

“there was only one institution that really had an issue with me around Critical Pedagogy, and that was more related to diversifying the curriculum and having a wider range of voices other than the traditional White male cannon in there. And there was massive resistance to that.”

However, she explained that she had moved on to a different institution before it became a larger issue. When asked whether this had happened a while ago, since diversifying the curriculum and reading lists has been a topic of conversation within academia for several years now, Suzanne replied that it was *“not that long ago, maybe a couple of years”*, but fortunately *“this certainly hasn’t been the case here”* at her current institution. She elaborated:

“partly it hasn’t been an issue because I have tended to work where I know that either Critical Pedagogy, whether it’s explicitly said or whether it’s not, where I know that it’s a kind of accepted practice and where it’s supported”.

Thus, it seems Suzanne has chosen her institution depending on the degree of autonomy that would be given to her as an academic and an educator in relation to her teaching style. Additionally, some criticality is desired by institutions. As I and a colleague have argued elsewhere, if ‘criticality is accompanied by rising numbers of citations, publicity for the university, and/or potential research income opportunities’ (Maisuria and Helmes, 2020, p.33), institutions welcome a few dissenting academics. Not only do they bring in money and “fame”, having them in their midst also signals to the world the university’s tolerance and commitment to academic freedom, regardless of the degree to which this is true.

Additionally, there is also a concern that academics might perceive themselves to have more autonomy than they actually do, as admitting they do not, would be uncomfortable. As mentioned earlier, Hall (2017) highlights academics' cognitive dissonance to not feel alienated from their jobs, to feel a sense of what they do is worthwhile. Considering the amount of literature on the loss of autonomy within institutions, it could be questioned whether some of the perceived autonomy my participants experience allows them to feel more valued and their work being worthwhile. While there is no question that they make a difference to the lives of their students on a personal level, whether they would really be able to challenge the institution on a deeper level is unclear.

5.9 Additional concepts in Critical Pedagogy

When asked what key themes and concepts associated with Critical Pedagogy he seeks to make use of in his own teaching, Martyn described Freire as a Marxist and stated:

“I take that from him. And democracy, but democracy with a purpose, that’s why the Marxism becomes important. So not just ‘let’s be more democratic’, but ‘let’s be more democratic in order to create a new form of civilization based on a new form of common wealth’. There’s a logic to the democratic process”.

Although Martyn did not mention him specifically during the interview, his focus on democracy showed some similarities to that of Henry Giroux, as discussed in chapter three, for whom education is seen as a tool to democratize societies by enabling students to challenge and hold accountable politicians, while they attend institutions that mirror how societies should function. However, it is important to mention that Giroux can be described as the type of liberal educator that Martyn criticised during the interview. He stated for example:

“what I will be critical of is the sort of liberal Critical Pedagogy that talks about empowerment [such as Giroux]. Often I think in these critiques, what you get is a liberal critique of liberalism. So, concepts like empowerment is a liberal concept, even equality, actually, is not a concept I use, it’s a liberal concept (...) so I don’t use equality as a principle of my work, actually”.

When asked what he would use instead he stated:

“abolish capitalism in order to create a new form of common wealth or social value for us all to decide what that’s going to be. Equality is a principle that comes out of the market, that it is possible to rank people or rank things. It’s a progressive idea but it’s not a revolutionary or radical idea. In fact, it’s the opposite of that. I think that this happens quite a lot, and one of the problems of Critical Pedagogy is that by people arguing what they are arguing for, they are affirming a system that they are claiming,

in good faith, to be critiquing without even being aware of it because these concepts have become so naturalized and ingrained, these liberal concepts, that we use to make critique of liberalism and get precisely nowhere (...) the problem never gets fixed”.

Additionally, Martyn explained:

“teaching is not about telling people stuff, it’s about creating an environment, it might be in the classroom, it might be the whole institution, where people are able to speak in a voice that has not been recognised, in order to create something that did not exist before”.

Which further coincides with Giroux’s emphasis on student voice, in particular his call for educators to enable students to ‘express risky, future-oriented and hopeful thoughts’ (Scott, 2008, p.104). Thus, it could be argued that while Martyn sees himself as a revolutionary Marxist, his notion of democracy comes close to the more liberal position of Giroux. Despite him critiquing said liberalism, there are similarities to the teaching of Giroux.

Additionally, Martyn mentioned Paula Allman’s work, saying *“it’s a woman, I suppose, using it, but care and emotionality”*, a way of phrasing that I will leave up to the reader to interpret in any way,

“the importance of those, of caring for the students, well, for each other as a kind of non-intellectual thing. When you’re in a room with people, it’s not just about talk about a law of value at all, it’s just getting a sense that you love them, actually (...). But hate, I say love but recognise the importance of hate, so they both go together for me. Love, yes, but hate. I hate what the university has become. I’m not against the university or my colleagues, by any means, but I hate the policy (...). And it’s the hate that drives the critique”.

What Martyn describes here highlights the contradictory relationship of working within the academy and being part of it, while also being highly critical of what it embodies.

Several other interviewees also mentioned themes of love and care during our conversations, mostly in reference to bell hooks’ pedagogy. While Preethi spoke about pedagogy of care in relation to the care space she offers to her students outside the formal classroom, Suzanne mentioned that she values hooks

“because she brings to pedagogy the language of love (...), the kind of relationality aspect a little bit more in terms of maybe a feminist reading of what relations might be like between particularly students and teachers, which I think is really quite refreshing”.

Relationality was something that Sam also referred to regularly during the interview.

When asked how he relates the concept of transformation to his own teaching, Albert suggested “*it’s about courage, and faith and justice and hope and peace, it’s about acts of love*” and referred to a book he read, written by a psychologist and called

“Forgiveness and other Acts of Love and she talks about generosity and tolerance and respect and dignity and courage is in there (...) and that’s what’s transformative. It’s about the humane values that are in the space and those students hopefully engage with those.”

He further added “*my own approach to Critical Pedagogy that is transformative is opening up my soul a little bit to their souls in the classroom and hoping that they then have the courage to celebrate their souls and those around them*”.

5.10 Hierarchies in Critical Pedagogy

Several of my participants raised the topic of hegemonies or even hierarchies within the field of Critical Pedagogy, and for some, it was part of the reason they have moved away from Critical Pedagogy in recent years. Apart from what has been highlighted in the section on Privilege regarding herself being in a privileged position in her country of birth, Preethi also highlighted that the majority of Latin American scholars within the field can be described as predominantly White passing and/or privileged, correlating with what has been discussed in more detail in chapter three.

When asked about problems within Critical Pedagogy, Denise brought up the term “White pedagogy” and explained:

“the rise of any kind of critical anything almost always is marked by whiteness in this way, so I think the language of critical often ends up covering up its own kind of hierarchies, its own kind of exclusions, its own racism, its own -isms, in a whole bunch of ways”.

She gave the example of bell hooks, who “*was doing this shit way before anybody called it Critical Pedagogy, but is anybody tracing that lineage back to somebody like bell hooks? Probably not*”. At another point, when asked about the term Critical Pedagogy itself and whether it is the most appropriate term, Denise highlighted the necessity of reflecting on the terms used. She stated that “*critical gets appended to a lot of things and it doesn’t necessarily make it critical*”, and stressed:

“we would want to continuously interrogate what we think that means because even critical literatures, with Critical Pedagogies being one of them, have their own hegemonies and their own kind of margins and centres, that we want to be suspicious of”.

In the section of chapter three that examines issues within Critical Pedagogy, I have discussed the work of a number of scholars who criticize Critical Pedagogy for having a race problem and several issues that my participants brought up during the interviews echo their criticism. When asked whether she believes there to be a “race” problem in Critical Pedagogy, Sam answered that *“there is a race problem without quotation marks in Critical Pedagogy”*. She criticised that the dominant voices in the discourse are that of *“a particular kind of White male liberal of the American left”*, which could be considered another reference to Giroux, that takes up the most space within the field and whose work is shared most widely. While Giroux problematised whiteness and racism in an article in 1997, where he described increasing anger felt by White Americans and their commitment to ‘a broader resistance to multicultural democracy and diverse racial culture’ (Giroux, 1997, p.377), critical discussion of whiteness is mostly absent from his work thereafter. Additionally, Allen (2004, p.122) notes, there was no further theorisation on ‘why whiteness had been previously omitted from the discourse’ and there were no efforts made to ‘significantly retheorize the base assumptions of critical pedagogy in light of this historical blindness’. Denise also considered there to be race problem within Critical Pedagogy and suggested that many voices have been *“e-raced”* from the field. Thus, Kincheloe’s (2012, p.149) quote used earlier in this thesis, that ‘one of the greatest failures of critical pedagogy (...) involves the inability to engage people of African, Asian, and indigenous backgrounds in our tradition’, is a sentiment a number of interviewees would agree with. Whether these groups have tried to engage but were not accepted or appreciated within the field of Critical Pedagogy, like Denise suggested, is unclear. During the interview with Suzanne, her criticism echoed that of Sam when she spoke about challenges within Critical Pedagogy:

“I’m not a Marxist, I’m probably a bit more progressive, I suppose, I’d call myself a post-humanist rather than a humanist” therefore *“it’s a little bit challenging I think sometimes the theories can be a little bit grounded in quite male dominated ways of thinking (...) and bell hooks has said the same about Freire, so I read her work kind of in conjunction with his”*.

In comparison, some of my male interviewees were less concerned with the possibility of a race problem within Critical Pedagogy. Carl, when asked whether he thinks it is indeed an issue, said he *“would need some convincing”* that there was one specifically related to Critical Pedagogy. He admitted that *“there is a problem there, but whether the problem lies with Critical Pedagogy itself”*, he was not sure. He then mentioned bell hooks as a Black critical pedagogue

but was unable to mention names of any other non-White or non-White-passing authors writing in the field. However, he suggested the problem might lie with the university, rather than with Critical Pedagogy. Being asked why the university did not seem to be the issue in other areas, such as Critical Race Theory, with a much greater diversity in scholars' racial identities, he hesitated and stated:

“the examples that I have given you of the types of students that engage with the utopian pedagogy and the concepts (...) the approach to intersectionality is redundant, because each unique individual is empowered in their own personal unique space and their cultural heritage. They are entirely free to bring that”.

Carl then gave the example of a female colleague enquiring why there are only male voices represented in his module to which he explained that

“because the module is largely a reflection of me and my interests. Why is that relevant for women? Well, the concepts are kind of fluid, malleable catalysts. And what I also say, the kind of theoretical base that I start out from is not exhaustive, because practical constraints, you've got limited space of time, you've got to get across these concepts, you've got to get students set off on a journey. But the journey they set off on, they can bring whatever they want to these concepts, they can use different concepts if they wanted. And I (...) always clarify that at the beginning of the module. If I then had to ensure that I was covering concepts and theories from this representative area and that representative area and that, where do you stop? The module becomes something very different. (...) It's an imperfect model, but it's a model that kind of works.”

Thus, Carl approaches the introduction of new materials very differently to for example Albert, who specifically seeks representations that are different to his own experiences and readings of materials. When asked about 'the race problem' within Critical Pedagogy, Martyn stated

“from my reading of Marx, Marx's critical social theory is a critique also of the way society is classified and the way in which identities are created, like class and race and gender. So Marx' methodology and in a lot of Marxist work, with Engels, allows us to explore categories in the way in which we can see the positive side of their resisting capacity but also the way in which their identity traps. So what might appear to be empowering is actually the opposite (...). So I think one of the problems with Marxism or the study of Marxism is that because it's based often in a rather sociological reading of Marx, it tends to think of Marx as being about the working class and therefore marks this category out of that category and therefore we have to go to this other category because, whether it is race or gender, and that's what I mean by total misreading of Marx. Marx is a critique of all categorization in capitalism, his word is fetishism. The way in which things appear to have power in and of themselves, but in fact are the result of the social process. So, identities and genders, classifications, racial classifications are capitalist categories (...). Of course we use it as a way to resist capital, but in the end we have to find a way of not relying on those categories in order to be able to critique and abolish capitalism. And that would be a problem with intersectionality for example, as another issue. It's important as a description, but it just leads to roadblocks everywhere you look”.

Sam highlighted another issue within Critical Pedagogy when she explained:

“sometimes in some of the groups I’ve been involved in, there has been a real, certain kind of militancy about Critical Pedagogy, which is not itself dialogical, it sort of sees things in black and white. Like ‘you do this and you accept that we’re going to do this really radical anti-capitalist education on this course, I’m going to do all of these things and it’s out of the box’, either that or ‘you’re oppressing me’. And I think that’s not how resistance works.”

“answer the question, make this critique, reflect on this for yourself at this level, that’s all quite authoritarian, and if you don’t do that, you’re somehow more complicit than I am. Or I have this answer, and all you need to do is get there with me”.

What Sam describes here not only seems to go against the virtues so crucial for Freire, who emphasised qualities such as ‘a generous loving heart, respect for others, tolerance, humility (...), a refusal of determinism’ (Freire, 1998c), and suggests a militancy that seems better suited in an educational setting that critical pedagogues seek to critique. However, it does somewhat echo the masculinist approach Albert discussed in relation to resistance and which will be discussed in a separate section. Furthermore, hierarchical structures are difficult to prevent in institutions that are part of the oppressive system of capitalism, especially in the way universities are structured as well as governed through neoliberal agendas, even when those employed within it seek to challenge them in their teaching. Albert referred to the now closed SSC, briefly mentioned previously, which was created as an alternative to the dominant model of universities in which the organisers ran ‘free, cooperative higher education courses and community projects’ (Winn, 2019) and which, according to its website, ‘is organised on the basis of democratic, non-hierarchical principles’ (Social Science Centre, 2012). In such a space, Albert suggested, there would be a

“different approach. There would be people facilitating, there would be much more of a critical community of practice, hopefully we’d be working on projects that have (...) been co-negotiated between more experienced [people] (...), we would all be scholars in this space, some with more expertise and experience than others (...), we would collectively be grading, marking, assessing, giving feedback, whatever it is that we’re doing”

Thus, the space would allow to put into practice what has been discussed in the section on alternative assessments. Albert continued *“inside the university, whether we like it or not, people are here to get bits of paper”*.

When asked about the criticism regarding hierarchical structures at the SSC, as there seemed ‘to still be a hierarchy between the ‘academics’ and the ‘students’ at the SCC and there did

seem to be some divisions along gender lines' (Earl, 2018 p.122), despite the organisers' efforts to prevent hierarchical structures, Albert explained

"Part of the problem is, within the nature of the system that we're in, we have badges, don't we? So, at the moment you're a PhD researcher, you're not just that but in the context of HE, that's one of the ways in which you're being presented (...) whereas I'm the tenured professor (...) and part of it is, are those tenured professors able to challenge their position, both inside the institution and outside? And (...) part of the criticism are that in all sorts of abstract ways hierarchies get reproduced. And part of it is just to keep outing it, and talking about it and try to work through it"

What Albert suggests here corresponds with what Earl (2018, p.119) highlighted after her conversation with Mike Neary, one of the organisers of the SSC, who, according to Earl, admitted that 'the reality is clearly messier than the ideal' but that 'they insist that they attempt to resolve any tensions', 'although there is still a way to go'. Thus, issues continue to arise, even when those involved try to avoid them, which further reiterates the need for critical pedagogues to continuously examine their own practices.

5.11 Eurocentrism

As mentioned previously, it has been suggested that a 'move away from the comforts and constrictions of a Marxist Eurocentricity' is necessary in order 'for critical pedagogy to become anti-racist' (Allen, 2004, p.122). Eurocentrism or the focus on Western knowledge in universities has been highlighted at various points in a number of interviews. One example is Denise, who highlighted that Critical Pedagogy does not necessarily manage to create change in institutions on a large scale because it takes place in a "*setting that is built on disciplines, that is built on White Western knowledge, it takes a lot of work to upend that neoliberal university*". This critique of various forms of scholarship is not new. Three decades ago this was highlighted specifically regarding feminist scholarship which was described as 'uncritically grounded in Western humanism' where so called 'Third World women' were presented 'as a homogenous, undifferentiated group' (Mohanty, 1990, p.180). Furthermore, it has been highlighted that experiences, relationships, or realities that differ from Eurocentric realities are often considered to be 'irrelevant, (...) not scientifically robust' or 'romanticized as 'alternatives'', rather than taken seriously and seen as an opportunity for learning (Amsler, 2019, p.926). Unsurprisingly, Denise highlighted that some of her students have already internalised the idea that the West is superior by the time they attend her classes, which poses a challenge for those educators who critique it as part of their teaching. She gave the example of having one or two students every year who

“feel for instance, that there is a sense that the material, or the approach, is weighted towards (...) critiquing, in the context of global politics, critiquing the West. And so some students are resistant to that, and so some students are resistant to those kinds of stories that then might unsettle some of those dominant world views”

which has been discussed previously.

Speaking about the necessity of including indigenous knowledges in Critical Pedagogy, Kincheloe (2019, p.156) highlights the danger of ‘Western exploitation of particular forms of indigenous knowledge’, thus acknowledging that even when knowledge is not Eurocentric, there is still a possibility for it to be absorbed by the West. He further suggests that Freire understood the importance of indigenous knowledges as a ‘rich social research for any justice-related attempt to bring about social change’ (ibid.). Indigenous knowledges were rarely mentioned during the interviews I conducted, in cases where they were, they were part of a list of what should be included within the teaching of Critical Pedagogy, however, this could be explained by an increased prevalence of indigenous peoples on continents other than the one where this study was conducted, although it can be argued that its understandings are just as valuable in any context. As Amsler (2019, p.926) highlights, ‘the dominance of local European epistemologies and ontologies over other ways of knowing and being have become naturalized’ in various settings and are thus ‘regarded as the only possible ways’. However, Kincheloe (2012) expresses a particular necessity for Critical Pedagogy to ‘enhance education (...) in a multilogical, globalized world’, therefore one that includes Europe.

Sam questioned the possibilities of Critical Pedagogy, as it *“still centres itself in a very Western European liberal White way of thinking”*. This is especially important because even something that is not centred on a Eurocentric way of thinking can easily be interpreted as such. Giroux (1992b, p.15) for example highlights that Freire’s work is often appropriated and taught without any consideration of imperialism and its cultural representation’ and he adds that Freire’s ‘work has been appropriated in ways that denude it of some of its most important political insights’.

5.12 Intersectionality

Intersectionality identifies boundary markers that make visible the politics of exclusion, and because we have come to recognize that these exclusions are often incompatible with norms of social and political justice, intersectionality work has often been accompanied by a politics of liberation. Intersectionality work conventionally starts with the lived experience of some of the most vulnerable exactly because this group has historically been a neglected/excluded constituency in both traditional political life and in disciplines that take for granted a more narrow, exclusively institutional, understanding of politics (White, 2007, p.272)

When asked how she would define Critical Pedagogy Sam explained:

“a particular set of traditions that come together in its hegemonic frame through the work of Henry Giroux having worked with Paulo Freire and also wanting to integrate that into the US set of debates that were going on particularly around anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian education, but also around anti-racist education. Although I think Giroux does not really go there and I really don’t think he gets into feminist education. He definitely doesn’t get into anti-heteronormative education, so I think he is very ‘of his time’, and he is of his time of a particular body, I think”.

As mentioned previously in the section on hierarchies in Critical Pedagogy, Giroux did publish some work on whiteness and race in the 1990s but moved into a different direction again thereafter. With Sam suggesting that he does “*not really go there*” and that he is “*of his time*” and “*of a particular body*”, it is then not surprising to note the absence of both the terms ‘intersectionality’ and ‘feminism’ from the index of Giroux’s recently published second edition of *On Critical Pedagogy*, despite him suggesting that ‘intellectuals must be self-critical in order to address the nature of their own locations, self-interest, and privileges. Moreover, they must be in constant dialogue with those with whom they deploy their authority as teachers, researchers, theorists, and planners in order to expose and transform those cruelties and oppressive conditions through which individuals and groups are constructed and differentiated’ (Giroux, 2020, p.73). Interestingly, both Carl and Martyn did not find intersectionality a very helpful concept, although for different reasons. As discussed earlier, Carl considered it to be redundant because the material he chooses is meaningful to him, and the material his students decide to choose are cultural reference points within their lives, whatever they may be, making it irrelevant how other people would read or interpret said material. Martyn, however, described intersectionality as unhelpful and considered it to be a “*roadblock*”, while admitting it was useful as a description. Thus, of my male participant, only Albert emphasised the importance of intersectionality and listening to feminist voices in order for him to understand his own blind spots and privileges and to gain further understanding on topics he has little experience of as a White male academic. However, as Mirza (2018, p.13) points out, ‘it is not often that we get to hear white male academics critically reflect on their privilege and the frailties of their anti-racist teaching practice and pedagogy’ (Mirza, 2018, p.13).

Hearing Albert give examples of what literature he likes to include in his teaching was thus somewhat refreshing:

“I’m interested in what is the intersection between pedagogy practice and critical theory, whether that’s structural or humanist (...). Are there intersectional flavours we

can bring into that as well, to understand the experience in lots of different ways. That isn't going to lead to a critical pedagogy truth but might lead to multiple ways of expressing what is going on in a particular kind of situation. So, I'm interested in feminist reading, or Black readings of that, or disabled, anti-ableist readings of that or queer readings of that as well. What politics are those voices and understandings bringing into the classroom space in order for people to make sense of policy or the curriculum (...) or the way in which education stitches into other forms of social welfare”

He further emphasised that he is especially interested in ideas and experiences that are not in the already established literature. Wanting to know more about “*positions that individual students come with, but also individual members of staff*”, what it is that “*drives their experiences, and what are the things they accept and what are the things that jar with them*” in order to then “*deliberately read those experiences against the established literature*” to get a sense of “*what is made visible (...) and then look in the margins to see what is invisible*” and whether any of that enables students to “*connect to their experiences*” and “*to make sense of the world*”. Thus, it seems that Albert not only seeks to understand the experiences of his students who occupy different positions to himself, but his aim is to facilitate a way of them also making sense of their own experiences, opposed to them simply sharing them.

It has to be noted, however, that it is still possible to find value in the work of scholars who do not focus on certain, important issues. As discussed in the chapter on bell hooks, hooks criticised the absence of feminist thought in Freire's work. Nevertheless, she regards his work as transformative and profound and considers it to encourage liberatory practice. Thus, despite what Giroux's work might be lacking when it comes to feminist theory or intersectionality, or the fact that he has been critiqued for his soft liberalism by other scholars, the value of his work should not be underestimated, rather it should perhaps be built upon or expanded. As Suzanne mentioned, she reads Freire's work in conjunction with that of hooks, thus perhaps seeking from one what the other does not offer.

5.13 Resistance

Within higher education, resistance can take many forms and my participants' broad interpretation of the term and how they felt Critical Pedagogy contributed to resistance exemplifies that. Resistance as a concept has been mentioned at various points and in relation to numerous themes in this chapter already, which highlights its frequent use in discussion around and close connection to Critical Pedagogy. Nevertheless, a more detailed discussion of resistance will take place in the following section, especially because of its relevance to the research question.

When asked about how he relates Critical Pedagogy to the act of resistance within the academy, Martyn first said he does not relate the two, but then thought about it. He went on to explain:

“maybe more now, maybe since the strikes and the protest of 2010, I take that back. I think there’s been much more of an attempt by academics and students and others to create pedagogic events as part of inside and outside academic life (...). So with the strikes and the student protests and the USS, that sort of thing, there’s been a lot more going on in England in the last 10 years where people are consciously aware of critical pedagogical approaches in order to be able to create new forms of resistance (...). So I think more (...) and the emergence of the genre Critical University Studies, I think that would be a part of that”.

Resistance in the neoliberal university is often discussed at the level of academic workers and their struggle against capitalist production and exploitation (Sotiris, 2013) and Apple (2012, p.13) calls for “decentered spaces”, which he describes as ‘spaces that are crucial for educational and larger societal transformation that enable progressive movements to find common ground’. One way this relates to this research is the fact that it is not only educators who suffer under the neoliberal structures of the academy, such as the increased demand for output, increased bureaucracy and the need for performativity, but also the students, as described in chapter two. Therefore, students play a pivotal role in resistance in higher education and universities hate when students come out in support of academic resistance. Martyn highlighted:

“students together, students can transform the world if they go and kick off in Trafalgar Square, look at how the police responded. They’re terrified of students and the huge impact that had on Higher Education policy. It’s still reverberating now in the election (...). Students have been doing that for the last 100 years, with others’ support, always with others.”

This was the case in the 1970s, when papers revealing corruption were found during a student occupation at Warwick University (Thompson, 2014), in 1998 when student fees were introduced and every time they increased, in 2014 students marched in opposition to further budget cuts for universities (Amsler, 2011b), in 2018 and 2020 when students joined academics in industrial actions over pensions (UCU, 2018), as well as workload, pay, casualised work and inequality (UCU, 2020), and currently during the finalising of this thesis, a ten-day strike action over deteriorating working conditions and pay as well as pension cuts (UCU, 2022).

As ‘results are prioritized over processes, numbers over experiences, procedures over ideas, productivity over creativity’, teachers as well as students miss out on various levels (Ball and Olmedo, 2013, p.91). This is only one example of “common ground” that justifies the

involvement of students in the resistance of academics, there are many more, especially for marginalised students who are further impacted by oppressive structures, not only those of the university but also by those within society. Critical Pedagogy, with its focus on overcoming oppressive structures, thus lends itself as a field where common ground can be found and where resistances and anti-oppressive movements can take shape, when done in a genuine and non-exclusionary way.

When asked how he understands the term ‘resistance’, Martyn stated:

“to be against. Resistance comes from the inside out. I don’t see myself as being against say the university, I am the university. I am a dean, I am a professor, so how can I be against something that I am? Because it made me and it sustains me, so I’m both. So my critique comes from inside the institution, I’m in and against and trying to reengineer the contradiction between capital and labour (...), I’m implicated like everyone else”.

When asked whether he was in a way complicit, he said:

“I’m definitely implicated. Complicit suggests a sort of willingness to impose the system. I’m unwilling, but I do impose. When I’m signing the Tier 4 student border control, when I’m giving somebody a mark, 67 instead of 58, that’s all complicit in the imposition of discipline that is against. So in that sense yes, I am unwillingly complicit. I’m completely ridden by the contradiction (...) but there is no outside of this social relation that we’re in, the labour camp that is capitalism. So I try to use the contradiction to generate the critique from the inside out”

Here Martyn again highlighted the contradiction that was mentioned at several points previously, of hating something that one is part of but still participating because the alternative would be to leave the institution altogether. Thus, academics seek spaces within the university where they can resist in one way or another, such as the undercommons. Suzanne highlighted two ways that she relates Critical Pedagogy to the possibility of resistance within the academy. On one hand, she, like Martyn, highlighted the importance of the students as part of the resistance:

“I think there is a key role for students that often gets overlooked because we are in this sort of binary about ‘they are paying us and we’re giving them the information’, and I think there is a greater role for students in getting more involved in understanding how the academy works (...) and having that critical eye on it. That could be really difficult, but I think it’s important to involve them in that struggle.”

On the other hand, she highlighted the resistance of academics:

“I think there ends up being quite a bit of subversion that’s going on, that people try and do and that might be whether it’s resisting the kind of mechanisms like TEF and

REF and all those kind of things in some way (...) What's key is how much autonomy you have, and I've got quite a lot of autonomy over what I teach and how I teach it, so there's plenty of opportunity to not even necessarily being subversive, because it's quite welcomed here, it's that kind of place, it's that kind of ethos."

This statement relates to what was discussed earlier in the chapter in the section on autonomy. Whether this autonomy Suzanne experiences is the university's way of showing the world its support for dissenting academics and academic freedom or whether her autonomy is indeed encouraged because of the philosophy and ethos of this particular institution, is unclear. It also did not become clear during the interview what Suzanne does with the autonomy, apart from structuring her modules and lectures in a certain way. However, she admitted there to be larger forces within the higher education system that she finds harder to challenge. She considered:

"In the wider sense of the system, it's quite difficult, it feels like a big monolith (...) that you can only chip away at. I'm a big believer in minor gestures, the idea that you can only do small things and that you don't necessarily have to fixate on the big struggles. A bit like climate change, you're not going to resolve that just by not using plastic straws but there might be things that you can do. Small things, or things you can do together with other people that might not feel significant, but actually, if everyone does that then it becomes really significant"

Also related to resistance are the varying forms that Critical Pedagogy can take, which was discussed by Albert when he spoke about people who are doing Critical Pedagogy but who are *"not at the critical leading edge, that kind of critical vanguard who are (...) trying to be revolutionary"*. He suggested:

" There's (...) a kind of almost reformist version of Critical Pedagogy. And that's not necessarily a bad thing. There are people trying to innovate in their own [work] and they're talking about students as partners (...), student engagement, they're trying to renew their curriculum and they're kind of hinting at political change and they're kind of hinting at praxis and they're kind of hinting (...) at student agency. They're not necessarily in that space particularly."

What this quote highlights are the differences and divisions within the field of Critical Pedagogy more generally. Not only do critical pedagogues 'draw on diverse and contradictory philosophical traditions; occupy different generational, class, gender, and racial positions' (Amsler, 2012, p.68), they also occupy what Malott (2011) defines as either *academic* or *revolutionary* Critical Pedagogies, which he admits are 'not mutually exclusive' but rather 'they coexist and inform each other' (p.xxix), while also drawing on various different themes in the Marxist tradition (Cowden, 2013). What they have in common, however, is what Amsler (2012, p.68) calls a 'shared commitment to criticality that makes it possible to communicate across these differences, or even to regard them as learning opportunities in their own right', such as

Albert suggests in the following quote where he refers to a fellow academic who he has been working with (we will call him James). He describes their working relationship in the following way:

“I’m in negotiation with James, who is much less ‘burn it all down’, he’s much more adult learning, community learning, he’s much more ‘how do we begin to dissolve the boundaries between the university and the community, are there alternative spaces, third spaces? Are there things that we can do around the curriculum to nudge us towards forms of praxis?’ And my inclination is to break it all, that’s my inclination (...) and I have to fight that because a lot of people can’t go there. So, I want to read the people who can’t go there in order to understand what they’re trying to do and to maybe soften, or make more pragmatic, my own position.”

Therefore, Albert does not disregard the efforts done by those who take a softer approach to his own way of doing Critical Pedagogy, rather he seeks to broaden and potentially improve his own way of thinking and doing. When Albert uses the words *“a lot of people can’t go there”*, he does not offer an explanation for why not. One of the most obvious reasons however is what Albert mentioned regarding less established academics’ more precarious positions or what has been described by Sam when she considered what is permitted within the university opposed to what is possible, as discussed earlier. Not only does it feel safer to do work that is less radical and therefore less likely ends up receiving unwanted attention from those in superior positions, it might also make academics feel like they have more autonomy than they really do, as they never quite push the boundaries and thus never receive a proverbial slap on the wrist. As Albert’s previously mentioned point highlights, academics sticking to the rules often means the path of least resistance. Acknowledging at various points throughout the interview that he feels himself safe enough in his position as a tenured professor, Albert specified his own acts of resistance as:

“being an active trade unionist (...), trying to bring the politics into the classroom (...), thinking about non-White male professorial (...), they are about abolishing me (...), although I can’t abolish me in the classroom space, can I abolish me in the classroom space? (...) the struggle to abolish me, or to abolish my power and my privilege and my status or to out it in a way that enables people to question it all the time. Because people who look like me got us into the mess we’re in and I don’t want to listen to them finding solutions (...), I want to empower those other people to have those discussions. So that’s an act of resistance for me, to work against myself almost, or the idea of me with those other people.”

Sam described resistance *“as part of an ecology of responses”*, an *“ecology of ways of being with something. There is resistance, there is also evacuation, there is also subversion and there is also horizontally moving”*. She also gave the example of women’s resistances, and highlighted how those did not look like resistances but were extremely powerful and clarified that

“there’s a lot of resistance that demands we stand up and announce to the world ‘I am resisting’, but actually, that’s very fucking dangerous for people in a lot of circumstances” and “it’s a very kind of masculinist approach to resistance”

That to her has its place, but is not the only way to resist. Albert also referred to masculinity and resistance when he suggested that he is *“more about the dialogue than the revolutionary activity (...), you just end up being in civil war (...), it’s very male and it’s brutal and all of that”*, so he contemplated whether his act of resistance in some cases *“is to have a conversation rather than to take strike action”*, although this seems a little at odds with his earlier statement of wanting to *“burn it all down”*.

Considering how he relates Critical Pedagogy to the possibility of resistance within the academy, Carl stated *“it all boils down to critical thinking”*.

“Critical Pedagogy is an ideal vehicle to align critical thinking with and (...) Critical Pedagogy should be about carving out space to encourage (...) by example how to think critically. Because to think critically can’t be reduced to a learning outcome. I think unfortunately it is (...)”

He considers Critical Pedagogy a space where *“allowing students to resist”*, and *“affording students the respect to explore issues that they flag up and encourage them to think critically about it”* is important. However, according to him, it does not always happen as *“with the neoliberal juggernaut that’s currently just riding away through all universities, it’s even more of a rare skill. And for me that’s what we (...) need to protect”*. When considering whether there are limits to resistance within the academy, Albert questioned whether it is *“possible to resist corporate governance, is it possible to resist ideas of student as consumer, is it possible to resist commodification”* but then admitted that *“the answer is no, not really, but we do what we can”*. Albert then suggested that *“we don’t change the world by only focusing on the University alone (...) we need social solidarity”*. This echoes Martyn’s point: *“it’s not just about teaching in the classroom. If that’s it, then that’s nowhere near enough. It’s about reinventing the institution at least, and then everything outside, we just start with the institution.”*

Returning to Carl, he emphasised strongly that it was academics’ responsibility to resist, using tactics that challenge what they are unsatisfied with, and gave the example of colleagues being unhappy with their module and him pointing out

“it is YOUR module, what are YOU going to do about it?”. “It [Critical Pedagogy] can be a powerful act of resistance, but there has to be a willingness and for me there has to be a longer-term purpose to doing it as well”.

He also admitted that there were limits to how Critical Pedagogy can be embodied and practiced and described situations where he had been challenged

“I have been challenged on this, in (...) conference scenarios, and quite powerfully challenged, by people basically saying ‘you’re not really making any difference at all if students still have to be graded, then they’re just being graded, you’re still playing the game, you’re just playing the game in a different way’. And yes, I’m susceptible to those charges as much as anybody else, but that’s why resistance is important, because I can either conform entirely and just deliver in a bureaucratic sense what the university requires, or I can be tactical and I can do it in a different way (...), tactical pockets of resistance, just try something different. And I think from the feedback that I’ve had from students over the years, there is definitely a currency, there is definitely a value to doing. But at the end of the day, I am a lecturer in the university that stipulates the bureaucratic premises within which I operate and they are incredibly constraining”

Thus, while feedback from students has been predominantly positive, he remains aware of potential issues and the limits to his own resistance to the system but chooses to do what he can in the space that he has been given as a lecturer. He further addressed the bureaucratic structures implemented as part of the neoliberal agenda in the following quote.

“They are putting so much money into tables and metrics and NSS and TEF and all the rest of it. And everything is driven by this data, including the students’ satisfaction and module evaluations, which again is very customer facing (...) ‘are you happy?’, ‘yea, we’re happy’, ‘no, we’re not happy’, you have to answer to this. And that is a real pressure in this university and other universities. If you get a bad grade, a negative report on module evaluations, you have to respond to it. You have to explain how you’re going to resolve the concerns. What you can’t do, is turn around and say ‘I tell you what, you lot start turning up to my lectures, and I’ll engage with your criticisms, until that point, I’m hearing nothing of it. That’s not an option.”

This quote indicates that the problem solving is left to the academics, regardless of whether their students are engaged, or even present, during the teaching or not, highlighting how the job has essentially become a customer facing role. However, Carl emphasised “*academia shouldn’t be about serving customers*”. Instead, the constraints experienced by academics bring “*to light that there is a real political agenda there, a quite subversive political agenda to bypass what is ultimately the kind of politically critical purpose of the university*”. He continued that while “*it can be a powerful mechanism for change*”, “*this kind of neoliberal agenda takes hold and kind of strangles everything out of it*”.

During the interview, Carl was able to give an example of a constraint related to an external examiner taking issue with his students' work, stating that what had been produced did not meet the learning outcomes. Carl had then asked him why that was important and the answer was *"well, standards and equity and how on earth are we ensuring that this that and the other"*. However, it was not even the work itself he took issue with, he thought the work produced was good, it was simply about them not meeting the learning outcomes. Carl admitted *"he could have made things really uncomfortable for me (...) if he'd have used the right kind of terms, to the right kinds of people, the pressure could have been brought over to me to actually alter that module"*. While this did not happen, it is an example of the kinds of pressures he is constantly aware of and that could potentially be harmful to him as an academic. He further admitted *"would I sacrifice my job for it? I probably wouldn't, to be honest."* What Carl describes here provides an interesting link to Freire's notion of 'class suicide', which refers to the 'revolutionary activist, and by implication the revolutionary educator' having to leave behind their privileged status by committing fully to the side of the oppressed, 'to work (...) *with*, not *for*' them (emphasis in original) (Mayo, 2013, p.83). Thus, Freire calls educators to stand in solidarity with their students and to relinquish their privileges. What Carl admits in his statement is that he would not commit class suicide, that instead he would choose to stay in his position.

5.14 Student resistance to the teaching

While it would be natural to expect that managers and university chancellors are not keen on Critical Pedagogy being taught in their schools as so much of it criticises the structure of the academy, it is often the students that are resistant. As an earlier section discussed the discomfort students felt because of what is taught and how it is taught, there are some overlaps between the earlier section and this one. To reiterate, several of my participants reported that some students do not feel comfortable with teaching materials, tasks, or ways of learning because throughout their time in education, they were neither encouraged to take part in classroom activities, nor were they asked to share personal opinions or even be critical of the political system or structures of oppression (or in some cases to even notice them). In Carl's words opposition from students *"is not surprising. They have been initiated and nurtured in a system that is pretty much exactly the opposite to expressive freedom and creativity."*

When talking about introducing new ways of learning about concepts to his students, Carl suggested "there is such a fear factor" about doing something different. *"A lot of the resistance to the stuff that I do, doesn't come from managers, their attitude is 'are you getting*

publications? Yes? Then get on with it''”, thus as long as it can be considered measurable output, it is valuable for the institution. Instead, Carl explained:

“a lot of the resistance comes from students. When I open the module (...) I basically say ‘forget the module guide, we’re not even going to refer to that or the learning outcomes, and by the way you’re going to be peer assessing each other’, they complain”

When asked about students’ resistance, Suzanne mentioned something very interesting that relates to my own experience of Critical Pedagogy. She explained that it was becoming harder to teach in the way she teaches, *“particularly with young people, because of their experiences of schooling. But I’ve noticed a big difference, I’ve got students in my class this year from other European countries, I’ve got a student who is Dutch (...) and for her it doesn’t feel particularly alien at all, so she’s quite comfortable with the questioning”*. This is something I have reflected on myself after feeling more comfortable speaking up in class compared to some students who had been educated in England, or in one case in Zimbabwe, where challenging the teacher was not seen as acceptable and would sometimes result in these students being penalised. Additionally, not having grown up with authoritarian parents might have played a role too.

5.15 Terminology

As mentioned in relation to resistance, there are various ways in which my interviewees interpreted the term resistance and there are various differences and divisions within Critical Pedagogy itself, due to what Amsler (2012, p.68) described as ‘diverse and contradictory philosophical traditions’ and the various ‘generational, class, gender, and racial positions’ critical pedagogues inhabit. This also became clear during my interviews when I asked my participants to elaborate on how they understood the term Critical Pedagogy and whether they consider it to be an accurate term. Albert for example admitted:

“We’ve been talking for 28 mins and I don’t really know what Critical Pedagogy is if I’m honest (...). Because the things I bring into it would be political and participative and they would be student centred (...), they would be scholarly, they would be about communities of practice, they would be intersectional (...), about self-actualisation, about border crossing and interdisciplinarity (...), about engagement. I’m interested in the politics of it (...) and resurfacing the human (...). So, is it a humane one? Is it engaged? Is Critical Pedagogy the best term, I don’t know and I’m not sure I care. Not in a way that means (...) it doesn’t matter (...), but in a way that to me is like (...) it makes no difference.”

Similarly, Preethi said about herself that she uses terms such as engaged feminist pedagogy, feminist pedagogy, anti-racist pedagogy within her teaching and she also used them

interchangeably throughout the interview. According to her “*Critical Pedagogy can mean anything*” and sometimes “*settling on terms, what to emphasise*” is necessary when speaking about specific issues. Similarly, Denise uses feminism in particular in her teaching and stated that the “*term doesn’t matter, substance does*”, thus to her it is irrelevant whether Critical Pedagogy is the most appropriate term or whether it is used at all. That Critical Pedagogy ‘suffers from a surfeit of meanings’ is also emphasised by Apple (2011, p.13), who states ‘[i]t can mean anything from being responsive to one’s students’, ‘to powerfully reflexive forms of content and processes that radically challenge existing relations of exploitations and domination’, a spectrum that is, to a lesser extent, visible in the accounts given throughout the interviews.

In contrast, Carl was very specific about Critical Pedagogy not being the right term. According to him it is important to focus on the etymological roots of the word education, which can be traced back to two Latin terms, “*educare and educere*”, with *educare* being a “*conservative approach to knowledge, conserving knowledge and passing on what is deemed as essential knowledge by society, you pass it on from generation to generation so you preserve and conserve*”. *Educere*, however Carl explained:

“is all about drawing out that which is within. Talents, creativities, passions. So, one is about conserving society, one is about empowering new generations to transform society and everything that’s wrong with it. (...) Making the connection with this, educare is very much aligned with pedagogy (...) to lead the child (...) for me those are difficult connotations because to use and reuse the term pedagogy, yes, you might be critical about leading the child, but you’re still using the term, this is critical leading the child, so therefore are you still leading the child?”

However, it is important to emphasise that some might disagree with Carl on the etymology of the word education, more specifically the Latin verbs. Marianna Papastephanou (2014, p.165) for example translates *educere* as ‘to bring out’, ‘to draw out, to take out’ and in that case ‘education bears the connotations of a less free and less enterprise’, with the intention of ‘bringing out’ or ‘extracting latent potentialities’. *Educare*, on the other hand, Papastephanou translates as ‘to mould, to cultivate’ and thus ‘bears connotations of active intervention in the shaping of the self’ (ibid.). Thus, Carl and Papastephanou use and interpret the process of ‘drawing out’ differently, with Carl seeing it as something empowering while Papastephanou considers it to be limiting, she even goes as far as calling it a ‘plainly reproductive rather than transformative task’ (p.166).

Returning to Carl’s interpretation, he suggested that he prefers the term ‘*heutagogy*’, which he describes as being “*related to the philosophical term ‘Heureskein – to self-discover’, (...) it’s*

more about facilitating people moving towards self-discovery". However, he agreed that the term Critical Pedagogy is more widely used, thus people are more familiar with it and know what it relates to, which is not the case with heutagogy.

The popularity Carl refers to here has been criticised by others. Denise suggested that "*critical gets appended to a lot of things, doesn't make it critical*", and Preethi similarly identified that the term "critical" has become appropriated. With Preethi's earlier claim that Critical Pedagogy can mean anything, and the previously mentioned divisions and discrepancies within the community, it highlights the increasingly blurred boundaries between Critical Pedagogy and the outside world, in particular after decades of it being implemented in various ways by numerous people in a vast number of institutions as well as other settings. Similarly, Martyn highlighted that "*Freire, about conscientisation, even he said he stopped using the term because like any term it just (...) gets mashed up so many different ways that I think he says somewhere 'I stopped using it in 1988 or something'*".

5.16 Limitations of Critical Pedagogy

Apart from limitations related to the danger of hierarchical structures that Critical Pedagogy unfortunately is not exempt from, there are a number of other limitations that require closer examination. As alluded to in the previous section, terminology can be ambiguous and terms as well as concepts get appropriated. As various participants pointed out, in institutions, or more broadly under capitalism, everything gets recuperated. When asked whether Critical Pedagogy has been co-opted by marketisation and has thus become too mainstream, Carl referred to the SSC and Student as Producer. He pointed out that at the time where Student as Producer was gaining popularity,

"it got to the point where, when I was at my previous institution, if you wanted to draw some money internally, you just had to use the terms students as scholars, student as producers, 'excellent, here you go!'. So it can be marketised and corporatized as anything can. That's the strength of capitalism, it can subsume, encapsulate (...), sell any kind of idea."

Martyn also referred to the work of the SSC and the recuperation of Student as Producer, saying:

"What became called Student as Producer is pure critical theory (...) it is the organising principle for teaching and learning at the University of Lincoln still (...), ten years of Student as Producer. Of course, these things get recuperated (...), or not of course actually, not of course, it's never inevitable, but it was recuperated the way things often are within the neoliberal university." The Critical Pedagogy model was then taken

outside the university to set up the Social Science Centre, because there was no room to go any further within the institution.”

When discussing the limitations of Critical Pedagogy, Chris gave the example of Freire’s work and his efforts to implement a different style of pedagogy at a large scale in the state of São Paulo. While he had previously been very successful when working with illiterate groups of peasants, his success was very contextual. According to her, implementing Critical Pedagogy at a large scale requires intensive resources and in two years “*he didn’t have enough time to find a way to make a transition, one model for the other. And then he quit.*” The limitation mentioned here, the fact that an overhaul of an established system is not done in a short period of time, also relates to what has been discussed earlier in this chapter regarding voice and the silencing that takes place due to the existing oppressive structures that dominate within the wider society, as well as in regard to academics. Even those with the best intentions and those who believe themselves to have a lot of autonomy as teachers are still confined by the neoliberal system that dominates the university.

Martyn highlighted another issue within Critical Pedagogy. He stated that one of the problems of Critical Pedagogy is that:

“it assumes it knows the world. It’s very confident about its knowledge of the world. That’s probably the worst aspect of it. It knows the world and it knows how it should be changed. Well, I don’t think it does. I don’t think any of us do. I think we have the theoretical capacity, of course. So teaching students is not about teaching students that Marx was right, at all, it’s about teaching students how to think absolutely critically and what that absolutely means. And then they make their own minds up. That would be the worst imposition and abuse in being a teacher, if one did that. But one can be a Marxist (...), I tell the students I’m a Marxist but I tell them the last thing I want for them is to agree with me (...)”

which is another example of the tension discussed early on in this chapter, the tension between directiveness and dialogue. Martyn further elaborated on Critical Pedagogy being too sure of itself and what the implications are by saying:

“I think it’s its claim to authority of the world. It’s somehow standing outside of the world and knowing it (...) I think that’s the problem. It’s not critical enough (...), I don’t think it recognizes how much we all have to learn, it’s too sure. Only in one form, in a certain form. But I guess we all do that in our own way. How we exist. We can’t constantly be questioning ourselves otherwise we’d go mad. We have to have at some point a certain degree of certainty about something, we might change it in the future. But I think Critical Pedagogy gets accused of that, of wanting to tell students what the world is so they can be transformed, or so they can be empowered, it’s like a problem of consciousness. ‘Now we’re going to enlighten you, the problem is the ruling class’.

Well, the problem is not the ruling class, the ruling class is part of the problem, I would say.”

Chris seemed to try to be optimistic when she said she believes that *“if we start using Critical Pedagogy little by little in schools, in how you perform with people, how you do research, not just how you teach but how you live”* it would already improve our situation, however, *“how we’re gonna challenge the capitalist monster”*, she struggles to imagine. She said about herself that she *“likes to believe there is a way”*, and she would not be doing her job otherwise, but she also acknowledged *“that the present solutions are not viable and we haven’t find [sic] a way forward”*.

5.17 Critical Pedagogy and bias

As highlighted by Freire and Shor (1987, p.13), ‘besides being an act of knowing, education is also a political act. That is why no pedagogy is neutral’. The idea that education is political stems from the origins of critical theory which heavily influenced the work of Freire, Giroux and many other thinkers in the field of Critical Pedagogy. While the notion that students have to be actively involved in their education for them to participate in a democracy stems from the work of Dewey, it is the works of Marx and later The Frankfurt School that ideas relating to ‘dominant ideologies’ as a justification for ‘society’s social and economic hierarchies’, can be traced back to (Degener, 2001, p.30). As Degener (ibid.) highlights, ‘Marx would say that all major institutions – educational, religious, government, business – promote ideologies that allow certain people to prosper while others remain marginalized’. Therefore, education is also considered to be a place of opportunity to challenge mainstream ideologies, as long as the teachers are politically active themselves, so they are able ‘to see through curricula that promote mainstream beliefs, culture, politics, and goals’ (ibid.).

While all my participants in one way or another acknowledged the political nature of education, their mentioning of bias differed slightly, with some of them asserting, almost insisting that they are, of course, biased, and others admitting their difficulties to remain unbiased, but still trying to. Suzanne for example said she seeks *“to be able to teach in a way that brings (...) criticality in without also being biased, I think it’s always a challenge, something that I struggle to tread that line”*. In contrast, Denise pointed out that while she *“hesitates to use that language”*, by that she meant using the word ‘biased’, she admits to her students that when *“we are thinking about particular positions that are wholly political (...) it is going to be biased”*. The problem, she highlighted, is that:

“Critical Pedagogy often gets confused with bias, but that partly is because students have largely been taught that what we’re (educators) imparting is kind of unbiased knowledge to a certain extent and often I find that when students (...) arrive at university, part of it is ‘actually all knowledge is biased, of course this is biased’”.

During the interview with Suzanne, the issue of treading the line between acknowledging that education is political and not influencing or changing students’ minds was discussed. She gave the example of speaking about Brexit in the context of children’s rights during one of her classes with students who had been too young to vote during the Referendum. After discussing the impact that Brexit will have on children, she decided to let her students vote. As part of this activity, *“they had to choose different options, or they didn’t have to choose any at all if they didn’t want to”*, thus allowing her students to decide for themselves whether they wanted to be involved in this classroom activity in the same way they are not obliged to vote in a referendum or election. With some bafflement she explained:

“out of the class 4 or 5, maybe even a couple more, still wanted a No Deal-Brexit. So we’ve had this big discussion about Brexit, we talked about things like the Irish Backstop and all of that stuff (...) and after that all these people still want to get out of Europe [sic], and you think ‘that hasn’t been transformative, has it, that teaching actually’. But it isn’t my role either to get them to change their minds on Brexit. So, it’s kind of ‘how do you walk that line between accepting that teaching is political and people needing to understand the political nature of things, but also not influencing them in their politics, how do you do that?’ I have no idea!”

The dilemma Suzanne discusses here is an example of the tension within Freirean pedagogy between foregrounding the student voice while simultaneously needing to be directive. Suzanne also admits that *“that is quite frustrating (...) if you’re trying to help people be critical thinkers and facilitate those kinds of spaces. And then I suppose I question myself a lot. If I was a pro-Brexit teacher, how might I have taught that lesson? So that’s really interesting as well”*, however, while frustrating for her, her reflecting on her own positionality is very much consistent with what a critical pedagogue is meant to engage with in order to be a good teacher.

5.18 Radical honesty

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, honesty is a crucial part of doing Critical Pedagogy. When asked about whether they are open and explicit about their pedagogy with their students, my participants’ answers varied, although not drastically. Suzanne for example explained that at the beginning of a new term, as an introduction to a module, she speaks about her own standpoint and frames it as a discussion about values. She explained:

“we often do values work (...), we say let’s talk about our values in relation to this topic. So, I might say ‘what’s really important to you in terms of your values?’ and they might say things like ‘honesty, equity, fairness, transparency’ and then we relate the teaching to that”.

She concluded that *“If I expect students to share their values or share their fears, or concerns or whatever it happens to be, it doesn’t feel ethical to me to not be honest about my own position”*. This is supported by Bizzell (1991, p.58), who argues that it is important that ‘the teacher demonstrates links between his or her own historical circumstances and those of the students, to suggest their joining together in a liberatory educational project’. Establishing these links is only possible when an open and honest conversation takes place.

While all participants said they were open and explicit about their pedagogy with their students, there were two interviewees who highlighted that there was a time and place to do so, and when not to use certain terminology or mention ideas that would put new students off. Denise for example pointed out that her strategy differs depending on the level of the students. She suggested that *“I’m generally very upfront with my students, I don’t think that there is any sense in hiding anything, because I don’t think that’s terribly helpful”*, however, at the same time she explained that in her experience, different approaches work at different levels.

“For my second year students, or first year students, my strategy is sometimes like a sneak strategy, partly because I think it’s not helpful for me to (...) go ‘well, I’m going to be working through feminist critical pedagogical frameworks to be doing x, y and z”,

as that *“will likely already put some of the students off”*. Instead she starts by saying *“we are going to be working with a sense of curiosity about Global Politics, so what does curiosity mean? (...) but that is actually informed by my feminism”*. Albert explained something similar and suggested that it is not always useful to *“give them everything”*, when first meeting them,

“I don’t go in with those first years and talk about the Grundrisse, or the Critique of the Gotha Program, or this Marxist conception of labour power (...) I know they won’t get it, it’s going to turn them off, they’ll think you’re an idiot”.

Thus, while Albert and Denise share their opinions and beliefs openly, the way they introduce concepts that are potentially controversial or very complicated is almost in a staggered way, with them slowly introducing ideas that lead the student towards more elaborate ways of thinking about concepts.

When asked how Albert implements Critical Pedagogy in his classroom, his questions mirrored that of Suzanne, discussed earlier, as he implements it by “*attempting to understand who I’m working with*”. In order to find out more about them, he asks questions such as

“‘who are you? What are your fears? Where are you from? Why are you here? (...) Some students will make appointments to talk about some of their fears and hopes, aspirations, ‘I can’t talk to anyone else, can I come talk to you’”.

Thus, Albert’s interest in his students extends outside of the classroom and the time allocated for teaching, something that I, as highlighted in chapter four, have certainly experienced myself, despite not being a student of his. When asked whether he is open and explicit about his pedagogy, Albert said that he is very explicit about his position. He stated:

“I start off with very deliberately calling out my own privilege and saying that I want to learn from you and from the curriculum with you about myself, my own privilege and all of that and I’m very clear with them that I am going to try to look at a range of other perspectives (...). This is the curriculum I am given and I can do nothing about, so here’s the structure (...) but I’m going to try to reposition other people and therefore I want you to reposition yourselves in relationship to me”

Thus, by acknowledging his own privilege and telling students about his intentions for the course and the ways he teaches allows the students to know what to expect but also to understand that they are the experts on their own positions and thus can and are even invited to challenge him. Whether they feel able to do this at the beginning of their degree remains unclear, as, as Albert pointed out at various times during the interview, students develop throughout their degrees and (hopefully) become more engaged in their own learning at a later stage.

5.19 Student-teacher relationships in the neoliberal university

As discussed in chapter two, as well as referred to earlier in this chapter, the relationship between students and their teacher is characterised by the binary of the consumer or customer and the provider of “goods”, the goods being education, in particular the degree certificate at the end of it. Having internalised a consumer mindset, ‘[s]tudents are strategic as never before’ in order to achieve the necessary grades (Gibbs, 2019, p.22), which impacts on the way students relate to teachers. In these circumstances, teachers have to find new ways of connecting with their students to allow the relationship to be shaped by something other than the student-teacher binary promoted in the neoliberal university setting. One way of doing this is through sharing personal stories with the students, as encouraged by the idea of radical honesty discussed in the previous section, enabling students to see their teachers as fellow humans instead of figures that

provide resources that will lead to a degree. As Critical Pedagogy relies on teachers being honest and open about their lives, their experiences and their standpoints in general, this openness can provide room to build relationships and even communities. Whether these are communities of care as emphasised by Preethi or simply learning communities, both would be beneficial in their own right. Additionally, as pointed out by Suzanne during the interview, relationships do not have to end once the student has left the university.

“There is something about just focusing on the small changes and the small wins. And for me a big part of it is maintaining relationships, particularly with students outside of the sort of linear ‘you’ve got your degree, off you go, bye bye’ kind of thing, I’m not a believer in that is necessarily the end of someone’s relationship with the university or with my course. So the idea of being on social media and having reading groups and having discussion nights, and chats (...) it’s this idea that we can build community regardless of the student-teacher binary. We can smooth that space (...) not blurring any boundaries or anything dodgy, but saying ‘no, education is not just about transaction, it’s about the relationships that we build and how can we stay in that community after we finish”

Albert similarly thought about communities asking:

“Can we build some kind of community where we are mutually supportive? And why are we trying to do this? Are we trying to do this just to understand the world or are we trying to do this so that we feel emboldened to take action in the world beyond just going into the job market and grabbing that job or that job or that job”.

Thus, he questions what is done with the knowledge acquired during degrees, how it relates to the outside world and how can those communities formed within the university exist and become part of other ongoing struggles outside institutions. Studying not for the sake of achieving a degree, but instead ‘thinking in order to do, not thinking in order to think’ (Sivanadan, 2008). As pointed out by Choudry (2019, p.28), literature written by academics on the topic of socio-political movements ‘rarely engages with the rich range of knowledge production form inside of social movements’ and ‘fails to recognise lineages of ideas, concepts, debates and theories forged in struggles largely outside the university’. Therefore, especially critical pedagogues whose pedagogy is framed to challenge oppressive structures in society need to focus particularly on socio-political movements outside the institutions. One example would be Albert who, during the interview, spoke about his involvement with Occupy Wallstreet, a movement that has been subjected to its own critiques, as mentioned in chapter three (see for example Campbell, 2011). Albert continued:

“I want to situate the work that I do in the classroom against wider social justice issues which might be around race, or disability, or they might be around climate change or whatever. And I’m not trying to build a curriculum that will address climate change but I’m trying to get them to reflect on the fact that a lot of issues that people have been

struggling with historically and culturally over time are similar to what we're doing now."

Additionally, there was Carl's mentioning of the Ragged University, a space to build a community outside the institution where anyone is invited to speak about their topics of interest and share their knowledge. What is crucial in any case however, is the importance of building relationships. Having a group of students attend their modules can be considered a crucial opportunity for academics to build relationships, to build a community, one that extends outside of the wall for the institution. Especially, when the aim is to in Albert's words "*feel emboldened to take action in the world*". However, as Hildyard (2016, p.95) emphasizes 'there is no shortcut around this slow, patient process of 'we-building' and, potentially of class formation'. Thus, building those relationships is time consuming, time that academics might not feel they have in-between marking, applying for grants; and publishing journal articles. Nevertheless, 'it is only within the space engendered by the patient, long-term building of relationships of trust that the process of discovery that is social justice can take place' (ibid.). Using the time critical pedagogues get with their students wisely and employing radical honesty to generate trust that enables relationships seems paramount to the aims of Critical Pedagogy.

What has been illustrated in this analysis chapter is the different ways the participants interviewed for this research enact Critical Pedagogy within their classrooms, the different ways they understand Critical Pedagogy and its aims and the different ways they construct their modules, reading lists and assessments. Additionally, the importance of the relationship between Critical Pedagogy and wider socio-political movements outside the academy has been highlighted at various points. Not only is there a need for solidarity with the wider society in order for the struggle to overcome capitalism to gain momentum, there are also specific limitations the neoliberal university imposes on those who work within it that cannot be dealt with sufficiently from within the institution by those who are unwillingly complicit in upholding its ideals. As one of the participants admitted, while he wants to believe Critical Pedagogy to be transformative and emancipatory, he does not think it is in practice, at least not within the academy. It is not Critical Pedagogy that equates to resistance and empowerment, it is the implementation that matters and the ways it can be implemented largely depend on the institution and the position of the academic within it.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

‘Critical pedagogy stands firmly upon a normative basis that asserts higher education should not succumb to narrow, economic interpretation of its role’ (McArthur, 2010, p.303), however, the university being marketised and seen as an investment means that the consumer mindset is now fully embedded in higher education, with students seeing themselves as paying customers and academics as those who provide. For the university, meeting targets and securing funding has become a priority and academics are expected to deliver, thus changing the way they approach not only teaching but also research. Even those who are actively seeking to resist these changes and implement Critical Pedagogy in their classrooms, struggle. As this study has shown, there are various ways in which the current university limits the opportunities for academics to implement Critical Pedagogy in the classroom in a way that radically challenges oppressive systems within society. Not only are universities built on and uphold white-supremacist and patriarchal values, making it almost impossible for these oppressive structures to be challenged in a meaningful way from within, those who described themselves as having a relatively large amount of freedom admitted to their own complicity in upholding said structures by being part of the university. In order to resist fully, they would have to leave the academy.

Critical Pedagogy, in particular the writing of critical pedagogues, as mentioned in chapter three, is often described as operating on the level of theoretical, conceptual abstraction. In this research, critical pedagogues were asked about their embodied practice in the classroom and their opinions on enacting Critical Pedagogy in the contemporary university, therefore this study adds empirical substance to a lot of theoretical work. As being an academic in the contemporary university becomes more challenging with ever increasing demands and decreasing job security and academic freedom, those academics who are committed to fostering relationships with their students that enable them to become critical thinkers who understand the connection between power structures in society, social justice and their everyday lives, seek ways to resist from within. As this study explored academics’ understanding of Critical Pedagogy, what they hope to achieve by implementing it in the classroom and what they believe to be possible within the constraints of the university, and participants’ experiences varied depending on the academics’ seniority and the institutions they worked in, it suggests that the constraints academics experience differ and so do their opportunities for resistance. Thus, areas for further research could be to explore what institutions offer more freedom to their academics, how this is affected for example by their student intake, where they receive their funding from, or whether those in charge have a background in management or education. Furthermore, there

is an opportunity to take a closer look at the application of those critical pedagogical concepts my participants mentioned. While some of the participants described what their application looks like and what activities they do with their students, there was room for further questioning and asking for specific, practical examples in order for others to implement practical examples in their own teaching. Lastly, it would be interesting to see how many of the academics interviewed remain in academia long term, especially those who are early career academics, thus there is an opportunity to interview participants again in ten years or even more.

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Appendices

Appendix a)

Information sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Research Project Title: Critical Pedagogy as a tool of resistance in the neoliberal university?

Dear prospective participant,

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether or not to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

What is the project's purpose?

As part of my PhD at the University of Sheffield I am undertaking empirical research that will be used as the basis of my thesis. The project is estimated to take place over three years, however the data collection will only take place in year two.

As neoliberal policies increasingly impact on the working life within universities, the aim of my research project is to explore whether academics, who would describe themselves as critical pedagogues and/or who use it as an educational practice in their teaching, consider Critical Pedagogy as a way of resistance against the neoliberal education system they operate in.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because you have either published articles (or books) about the state of the neoliberal university, are active in the field of Critical University Studies and have experience in teaching or implementing Critical Pedagogy, are actively sharing your opinions about the neoliberal higher education system and/or the usefulness of Critical Pedagogy on social media and/or have been recommended to me by other academics. I am hoping that you will be one of the five participants participating in my research.

Taking part in my research is completely voluntary so it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form). You can still withdraw at any time until I have started analysing my data (01/04/20) without any negative consequences. Once data analysis has begun, it will not be possible to remove the already integrated data, however you will not be approached for any further data collection. You do not have to give a reason. If you wish to withdraw from the research, please contact me or my supervisor Dr. Darren Webb (d.webb@sheffield.ac.uk).

What will happen to me if I take part? What do I have to do?

To gain an insight into individual participants' ideas and understandings of what the term Critical Pedagogy involves and how these ideas are implemented in their teaching, I am planning to conduct a

semi-structured interview and a follow-up interview at a later stage with each participant. The first interview will (where possible) take place face-to-face and will most likely be the longer interview, however its length will depend on how much information participants are willing to share. The follow-up interview will only be used for follow-up questions and to avoid misinterpretation and miscommunication and can take place over the phone or via Skype. Travel expenses will not be necessary as I am willing to travel to a place convenient for the participant.

During the first interview I would like to address whether the participant thinks Critical Pedagogy can be considered a tool against the rising pressures in Higher Education, not only for students but also for their educators. I am interested to what extent they believe there to be room for resistance, self-preservation and agency in an education system that denies academics the educational freedom and autonomy that is crucial for teaching and which not only shapes the relationships with their students but also affects academics' mental health and well-being.

Additionally, I would like to ask participants to share some of their lesson plans, module programmes, or other relevant course material with me, or potentially let me attend some of their classes, in order for me to gain a better understanding of the implementation of their ideas in their teaching materials. However, while this would be very much appreciated, it is completely optional and not necessary for taking part in my research.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part in this research?

No foreseeable risks are anticipated when taking part in my research but depending on how communicative the participants are during the interview, it can be time-consuming.

What are the possible benefits from taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for the participants taking part in the research, it is hoped that the work will add to the field of Critical University Studies and share knowledge about the benefits of Critical Pedagogy. As participants are selected because of their interest in both fields, the outcome of this research can be of interest for them. Additionally, taking part in a research that is concerned with topics they are interested in and sharing ideas and experiences about these topics can be an enjoyable experience.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and will only be accessible to members of the research team. The data will be anonymised soon after data collection and codes and pseudonyms will be used in place of names and locations. Therefore, you will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications unless you have given your explicit consent for this. If you agree to us sharing the information you provide with other researchers (e.g. by making it available in a data archive) then your personal details will not be included unless you explicitly request this. Furthermore, if participants share personal anecdotes that they have shared elsewhere, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed as this information can be recognised by an outsider.

The University of Sheffield will act as Data Controller for this study. This means that the University is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. The University takes data processing and protection very seriously and does not release data to third parties unless participants have given consent or the University is under legal obligations to do so. Additionally, all collected data and accompanying notes will be destroyed two years after publication of the research.

What is the legal basis for processing my personal data?

According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis we are applying in order to process your personal data is that ‘processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest’ (Article 6(1)(e)). Further information can be found in the University’s Privacy Notice <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general>.

What will happen to the data collected, and the results of the research project?

The data collected will be stored on my personal and password protected laptop. Only I will have access to the original data before it is pseudomised and anonymised, however, my supervisor has knowledge about my participants as their suitability has been discussed in supervision. Identifiable data, such as the key that links an individual to the data they provided, will be destroyed as soon as possible. The results of the research will likely be published within a year after my research project is finished, and data will be destroyed two years after publication. If participants would like to be identifiable in the data, this is possible but will have to be explicitly stated by the participant.

In line with the open access agenda, data might be used for future research or used for additional or subsequent research as due to the nature of this research it is very likely that other researchers may find the data collected to be useful in answering future research questions. We will ask for your explicit consent for your data to be shared in this way.

Who is organising and funding this research?

As a self-funded PhD student, this research study is not funded by any organisation or company.

Who has ethically reviewed the project?

The project has been ethically approved via the University of Sheffield’s Ethics Review Procedure, as administered by the School of Education.

What if something goes wrong and I wish to complain about the research?

If you wish to raise a complaint about the research in general, your treatment or an incident that occurred during or following your participation, I encourage you to raise your concerns with me or with my supervisor Dr. Darren Webb (d.webb@sheffield.ac.uk). If you think your complaint has not been handled appropriately, you are encouraged to contact the Head of Department (E.A.Wood@sheffield.ac.uk) to escalate the complaint through the appropriate channels. In case your complaint relates to how your personal data has been handled the following will be helpful for guidance <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general>.

Contact for further information:

Researcher: Svenja Helmes, shelmes1@sheffield.ac.uk. Address: 66 Vincent Road, S7 1BW. Telephone: 07745940147.

Supervisor: Dr. Darren Webb, d.webb@sheffield.ac.uk. Address: School of Education, University of Sheffield, 241 Glossop Road, Sheffield S10 2GW. Telephone: 0114 2227084.

A copy of the information sheet and a copy of signed consent form will be given to the participant to keep.

Thank you very much for considering to take part in my research.

Svenja Helmes

Appendix b)

Interview questions

- 1) What is your understanding of Critical Pedagogy?
 - Do you consider CP the right term to describe it?
 - How/why do you consider it to be a useful practice?
 - In what situations do you think it is useful/not useful?

- 2) How do you implement critical pedagogical practices in your classroom?
 - How do you introduce it to your students?
 - What methods do you use that are associated with CP?
 - How do you handle students' opposition?

- 3) How does Critical Pedagogy help you "resist" in the neoliberal university?
 - Is there space for CP in the neoliberal university?
 - Empowering who?

- 4) Can you identify supportive factors that enable a successful implementation of Critical Pedagogy in the university?
 - Are there factors that make it impossible?

- 5) How can you assess/measure whether any transformation in your students has taken place?
 - How does witnessing any transformation of students through Critical Pedagogy influence you as an educator?
 - Are there groups of students where Critical Pedagogy does not "work"?

- 6) Are there limitations to Critical Pedagogy in the neoliberal university?
 - Are there features that can be implemented and others that cannot?

- 7) Have you identified problems within Critical Pedagogy more generally?
 - 'the race problem'?
 - CP co-opted for marketisation and has become too mainstream?

Appendix c)

Consent Form

Project: Can Critical Pedagogy be seen as a way of resistance for academics in the neoliberal university?

<i>Please tick the appropriate boxes</i>	Yes	No
Taking Part in the Project		
I have read and understood the project information sheet dated 12/06/2019 or the project has been fully explained to me. (If you will answer No to this question please do not proceed with this consent form until you are fully aware of what your participation in the project will mean.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in the project. I understand that taking part in the project will include an audio recorded initial interview and one audio recorded follow-up interview in case further questions arise throughout data analysis. The first one will take face-to-face, the second however can be done over the phone/skype.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It also includes me sharing course material with the researcher and letting her sit in on one of my classes, however I am aware that this is considered a bonus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time before 01/04/20; I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part and there will be no adverse consequences if I choose to withdraw.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How my information will be used during and after the project		
I understand my personal details such as name, phone number, address and email address etc. will not be revealed to people outside the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand and agree that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. I understand that I will not be named in these outputs unless I specifically request this.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand and agree that other authorised researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand and agree that other authorised researchers may use my data in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I give permission for the data collected during the interviews and any additional material that I provide to be deposited in UK Data Service so it can be used for future research and learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of participant [printed]

Signature

Date

Name of Researcher [printed]

Signature

Date

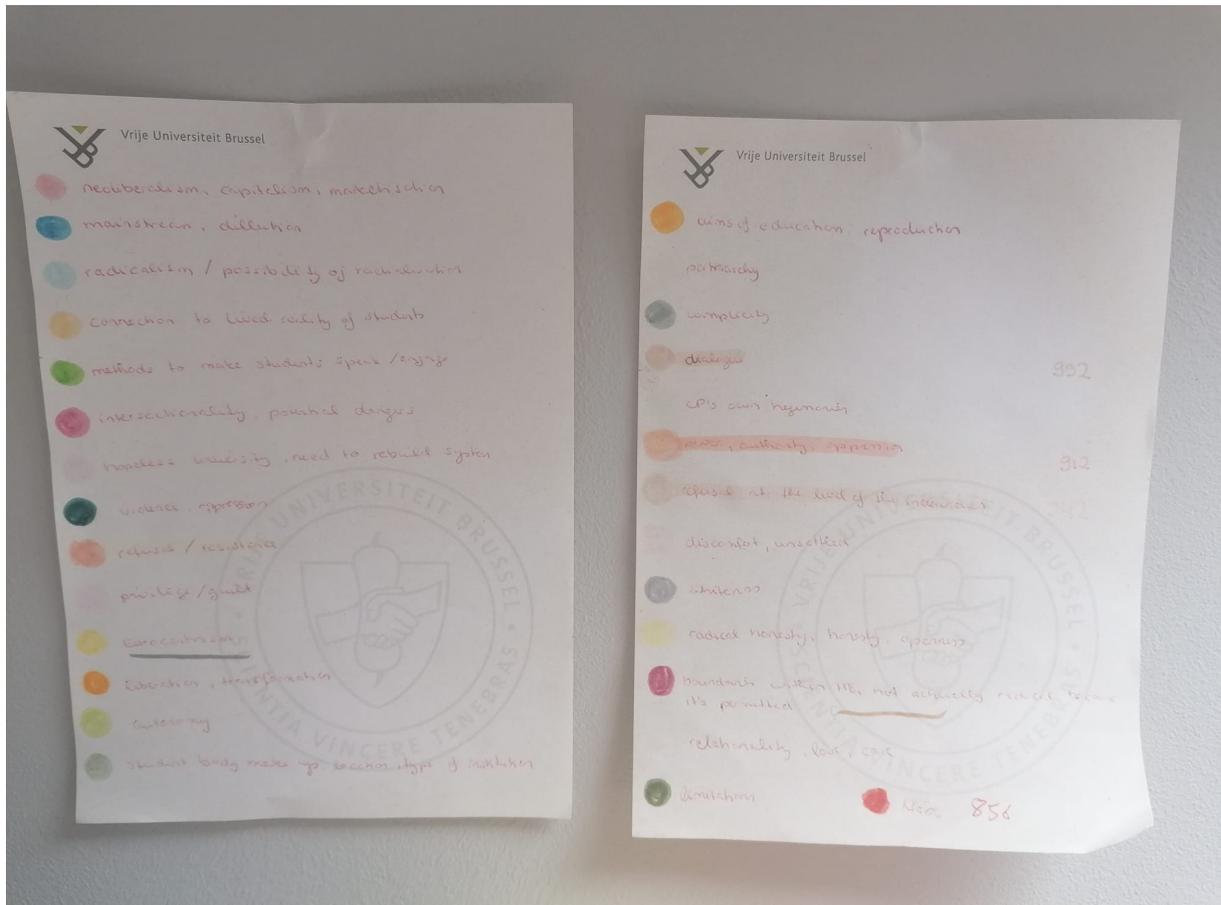
Project contact details for further information:

Researcher: Svenja Helmes, shelmes1@sheffield.ac.uk

Supervisor: Darren Webb, d.webb@sheffield.ac.uk, The School of Education
The University of Sheffield, 241 Glossop Road, Sheffield S10 2GW

Head of Department: Professor Elizabeth Wood, E.A.Wood@sheffield.ac.uk

Appendix d)



Appendix f)

