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Editorial

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Presentation

These articles were originally published in the Pedagogy Series, housed in the ISA's Social Justice and Democratization Space in June and October 2021. We are republishing it in order to standardize all the articles in the Sociological Teaching journal, a new space of publication from the Thematic Group 09.

Dear colleagues,

We are pleased to share the second and third issue of the Pedagogy Series, housed on the ISA's Social Justice and Democratization Space. The Pedagogy Series aims to support the global exchange of research and reflections on sociology teaching and sociology pedagogy. This issue features theoretical and reflective pieces from sociologists at various points in their career. Some articles (re)imagine teaching practices for the future, while others look back at lessons from past decades.

Our previous issue (January 2021) focused on sociology educators' analyses of the COVID-19 transition to emergency remote education. This current issue begins with a student perspective on this transition. Undergraduate sociology student Richy Srirachanikorn theorizes experiences of dis/connection in COVID's digital classrooms, culminating in digitized others. Srirachanikorn calls upon sociology instructors to mediate these othering practices in their approaches to digital education.

In our second paper, Rodney Coates critically discusses universities as a colonial institutions. He interrogates structural racism within academia and outlines specific steps for decolonizing the University. Coates ties these decolonial processes to post-secondary curriculum, pedagogies and methodologies, with an emphasis on the power and contestation of Indigenous counter-narratives. Change, Coates reminds us, is possible, but it will require moving past empty slogans. Instead, we

must engage in a radical transformation of the systemic and structural inequities that characterize academic institutions.

Written by Henry Lee Allen, the third article is a reflective piece on the opportunities and constraints, dreams and aspirations, encountered during a 38-year career in teaching sociology across numerous institutions. Allen describes moments of both challenge and joy and concludes by sharing enduring lessons for sociology educators. His message to sociologists is to “Never stop being bold in your teaching, research, and service to all humankind.”

The number also has two papers from India, focusing on the transition to online and blended learning under COVID-19 within the context of India’s 2020 National Education Policy. Rituparna Patgiri draws upon her experience teaching sociology in New Delhi during the pandemic, raising pedagogical questions about student privacy and possibilities for teaching sensitive topics online. Writing from Koraput, sociologist Nupur Pattanaik addresses similar pedagogical shifts through the lens of the digital divide, highlighting challenges faced by students studying in remote locations. Pattanaik emphasizes that the discipline of sociology teaches students and teachers alike to be adaptable to societies in changing circumstances, positioning sociology as a survival resource in this tumultuous period.

Written by Hala Awada, the final article draws links between Lebanon’s severe economic crisis, political system rooted in neoliberal policies and laced with corruption, and the structure of higher education. Taking a lens informed by sociology of education more than scholarship of teaching and learning, Awada examines how the private and public post-secondary systems have responded in unique ways to these broader crises, and with particular implications.

We are grateful for your readership.

Sincerely,

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Forgetting What We Have Learnt: The Digitalized Other and Implications for Students in COVID-19 Classrooms

Abstract

In a new world of nascent rules, restrictions, and lockdowns, a student's biggest opportunity to connect with other similar individuals beyond their immediate circles is the digital classroom. Even with equipped tools of connection, students under COVID classrooms are ironically feeling the effects of disconnection and face risks for health concerns. As digital classrooms are shown to be prosaic, platformed, and productized, we will come to understand how building relationships with others but more so, of the self, is hugely hindered by faulty methods that do not work under new circumstances, and produce digitalized others which are consequential. It is as much an individual concern of a student's performance as a statement on the public issue of current digital education. Sociological educators are essential in reshaping these pedagogical practices and beliefs, which can otherwise damage both students and their instructors.

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“Honestly, the biggest impacts are not the lectures themselves, but what happens outside. We're missing the study groups, the spontaneous chants in the halls, the moments when you walk by a chalkboard to see a proof of something you forgot to consider. Now everything is painfully deliberate. Nothing happens unless you do it yourself. It's university distilled until it's bone dry, and I think I speak for both of us when I say it's seriously burning us out”

- User ASavageCabbage, *Reddit* Website, Retrieved October 9 2020

Most educators are now met with an unusual situation where the educated becomes seemingly experienced and better equipped. To most current students, technology has always been an integral component of their classroom experience. It may not have been *the* point of most general lessons, but the shift to online platforms for delivery, activity, and more recently community, is notable to its modern-day prevalence (See Shenoy, Mahendra, and Vijay, 2020; Maphalala & Nzama, 2014).

Though undoubtedly these methods offer a more accessible, instant, and inclusive learning tool for both educator and student, its complete form as an exclusive means to teaching have been particularly unclear within pedagogical literature (Emerson & MacKay 2011), instead dedicating its service to “supplementing rather than replacing traditional tools” (Cambridge International 2018, p. 13).

Before full technological teaching has had its scene this past year, the shortcomings of this medium have previously been discussed. Notably, some correlation is stated with screen-time and poorer performance on developmental milestones tasks for young children (Madigan, Browne, & Racine, 2019); conspiring to the pervasive concept of Fear of Missing Out (hereon FoMO) with social media use (Australian Psychological Society, 2015); and locally, social media was the highest factor of stress at 54% for surveyed Canadian students (Jack.org, 2019).

This shift of teaching is apparent within university settings, where under sociology, we can come to understand how to better approach these pedagogical challenges. Lyon et al. (2020) notes sociologists can “(re)tell the story of the discipline” (p. 4) inside less-Western focused and more inclusive introductory textbooks. With the rise of technological domestication, this pedagogical narrative has since become widely accessible and authorable (Waycott et al., 2013; Knochel & Patton, 2014). Physical textbook chapters are scanned as assigned course readings beside its quizzes, discussions, and video links under modules.

Yet truly, the real learning has always occurred – and arguably even more so now *outside* the classroom. Where content is taught, the environment to which it happens is also learnt in order to adapt. So, what is actually learnt inside today’s COVID classrooms? There *is* learning – but a kind as will be proposed, starkly different to the content and the intention of its remotely operated instructors, and in deeper analysis, hindering a kind of learning that exists beyond that of a student.

Learning as We Know It

Technological platforms have long been embraced by students beyond the classroom, given the adoption of consumers (Apple tops the educational technology market in the 1990s), business firms (first office computers introduced by the 50s), and personal use (Artificial intelligence of iPhone's 'Siri' since the 2010s). As our "structures, daily routines and values" are for Berker, Hartmann, Punie and Ward (2006, p. 2), technologically integrated into a process known as *domestication*.

Picture in this case, a homeschooled child is tasked to refine her number skills on the desktop website *Mathletics*, yet at the same time, she is exchanging her native French with another Japanese based in London via the smartphone app *Duolingo*. With the domestication of technological devices, its use in turn also becomes domestic; local: accessible and instant learning occurs by the operation of a child, contained by the home computer and her palm-sized phone with countless opportunities to connect. Yet, beneath the instant exchange of content on said platforms, the learning is intimate: the user must first and foremost, learn to traverse the actual medium before being able to locate its value. One cannot expect to produce a stable build with tools in which they have not yet been exposed to or experienced in handling. Prior that the user and the content is conjoined, one is a student under the principle of the curious self and the static screen.

Yet, the concern with a teenage population lies where any healthy human cannot expect to develop in a one-dimensional role of a student, but rather they are to grow and express their many personalized *selves*, even if they are to do so from the capacity as student. Connection, as it can be cited to Piaget's *formal operational stage*, Vygotsky's *Knowledgeable Other*, and Erikson's *Identity vs Confusion*; and beyond the psychological literature to more sociological: Cooley's *Looking Glass*, Simmel's *Locus of Reason*, and at macro, Durkheim's *collective consciousness*, is constantly a two-way process that is rendered and internalized within a single self. The formation of a presented self is coupled with the commitment to strengthen the collective belonging to a group of interest, which in turn loans that effortful self a tangibility of

its objectified collective shadow. A self, so to speak, only exists within many similar others: **there are only persons, when there are people.**

Sociologically, this path to connection can be attributed by adopting social capitals, prominent in Symbolic Interactionism literature, but increasingly in modern group and conflict studies (See Calvo et al., 2020 & Alcorta et al., 2020). As will be demonstrated, the organic adoption of these capitals is extremely difficult- some cases impossible-under COVID classrooms as compared to the physical realm which is its originator.

On the macro scale, where growing literature indicates heightened anxiety from COVID-styled news (Gao et al., 2020; Mertens et al. 2020), the regular and exacerbated use of smartphones for news by “three quarters” (Statistics Canada, 2020) of a sampled teenage population can expect no better, given such content is “scattered all over the internet” (Tascano, 2020). With this, the search for social media capitals is plagued by the anxious scene, and more so hindered by digital classrooms promoting *selves* exact to the limited social role of a student. Additionally, students face relative deprivation in the digital form of FoMO as will be discussed. In understanding a COVID classroom student’s struggle, we adopt the canonical *Sociological Imagination* of C. Wright Mills to be contextualized for this illustration.

Imagining Connections

University classes and the learning in it have in many ways turned upside down. Originally, we may see participation in classrooms as a *process* of learning, existing in both the curious self and the acting student to its role.

Per Mills, this rests in the immediate relations of a *private individual* that can co-operate many selves at once, emerging into the collective culture of the classroom while also treating to each personal facet.

Problems that arise here, be it being unconfident, unsure of the material, or a late assignment can be communicated and felt not only via the instructor-student bond, but also to other colleagues, becoming accessible as a *public issue*, even if it is personally labelled per each student number. The open forum of physical space and capacities to exercise multiple roles is taken for granted.

Yet in COVID education, there emerges a new norm of participating as a *product*; one is forced to fulfil, to compete whoever first dings the ‘raise hand’ button and speak over the clashing channels of other equally interested colleagues. Such that now, conversation becomes competition. Meaningful and private discourse becomes an act of distilling the question of day and its marks. This is even more apparent in language courses and the those needing participation as a rigid account to the grade.

This co-existence of curiosity, identity, and inquiry is robbed of its nuanced extralinguistic qualities to be more than a student- but as to Mills: a single number, a ‘profile’ under a name, the student retreats to their most singular function of their social role as a *private individual*.

Troubles that previously arose as a collective one, made possible by the physical realm that eases its connection, now becomes isolated to the linear relationship that is the screen and the student. Troubles and issues, even class-wide connection interruptions, wrongly sent links, or simply the cut-out of the educator’s feed is ultimately experienced, imagined, and burdened by the student across the screen: it becomes a trouble and issue that is both private *and* personal.

Thus far, the COVID classroom is introduced as a conflict of content and medium for both educator and the student. Yet, the essence of such question can be deepened by referring to the most individual level of this imagined and realistic situation. As such, we shall contextualize how a student’s impeded learning and growth beyond the classroom is due to becoming a ‘digitalized other’, in which symbolic interactionist George Herbert Mead (1863 – 1931) can offer.

The Self and the Student

In *The Self* (1934), Mead states one “arises in the social experience” (Calhoun et al. 2012, p. 350) of “first becom[ing] an object to himself just as others are objects to him” (p. 349).

Easily, this is translated to a child’s first day at school: she enters a room of individuals somewhat like her, as she notices many firmly cluttered in cliques, others perhaps a little freer, a few isolated. Yet the only merit she has currently befriended is of the presented selves as fellow classmates, students, learners- even before their own individual personalities and collective presentations are to be later assimilated

as bullies, besties, and so forth. Thus, her first point of commonality is to view and acknowledge herself as a student too. This way, she is immersed into one alike the others, and thus can prepare to engage with the rules and languages of an incoming “social experience” (p. 350).

Becoming an ‘object’, to which it may first sound inhumane, is perhaps essential to becoming human. Before individual persons, there are the ideologies of people. Capturing the meaning behind a group’s beliefs and structure into an object is perhaps less taxing than individually befriending each of its members and plotting a three-dimensional visual of its commonalities.

Naturally, there can exist overlapping dynamics of individuals in the classroom, so it is useful to objectify certain appealing bookmarks by the masses. Later, such tool can perform its utility into small talk or afford a seat at a table under the premise of living under the same “social structure” (p. 350) as fellow classroom inhabitants.

Yet, such process takes considerable time, as noted by the generalized other that one first watches and exists outside before belonging into and within. To elaborate, a student first climatizes to the dynamic of the classroom at hand, as one would by steadying the grip of their trolley upon entering a chilly supermarket of selectable items and its signed isles. The process of integrating into a group exists through the “communication” (p. 350) a newcomer is to emulate as one’s own and present it accordingly. Imitation is simply not enough, where like learning a new language alongside an applied citizenship these practices require a genuine effort to the subtleties of its language, and ideally it is to see and hear it intertwined, live, and in action.

Thus, as one is to emulate, she must also emerge into the activities that declare this bond. Engaging inside its conversations, meetings, and recreations provides the opportunity for the newcomer to exist within the rings of its rules, as Mead notes it is “part of the enjoyment” (p. 354) to such discovery.

Yet to actually communicate, to belong, one must precede observation into objectifying themselves as compatible to the group’s fiber in order to be woven into. Doing so requires “tak[ing] the attitudes of the... group” (p. 355) and its members into thinking like them, and to do so within the framework responsible for having “controlled the response of [each] individuals” (p. 354) that is now this unified group. Once so, they become a *generalized other*: a projected ‘self’ that presents and exists

by taking the “attitude of the whole community” (p. 354) to which it eternally owes its origin. Any activity engaged by the group now becomes accessible and understood by its members with the common language of how others operate, and as such “does [one] develop a complete self” (p. 355).

Though as we will come to see, classrooms under COVID will prove difficult to acquiring these processes that Mead firmly stipulated were the “essential basis and prerequisite[s] of the fullest development of th[e] individual’s self” (p. 355), and thus becoming a *digitalized self*. Here, the analysis is divided into (i) *by nature* and (ii) *by design*.

By Nature

It does not take a sociologist to recognize the impacts that ‘social’ and ‘physical’ distancing measures have established into the various domains of many societies. In part, it is the micro unit of analysis of post-secondary students which bears as much utility as it is substantial in analysis.

Historically, students are experiencing a deprivation no different than most others, in that we are all “ultra-social animals” (Tomasello, 2014). Of its various forms: the perceived status of 1880s working-class proletariats (Geschwender 1967), its multi-versed ‘fraternalistic’ group and ‘egoistic’ individual suffering (Runciman and Runciman, 1966), the concept of relative deprivation has successfully permeated its way into our social lives; online.

Now, in the confines of our homes and online profiles, an interruption to Coser & Coser (1990) is the “...expres[sion] of collective activities [which] assures regularity...” in a way of life, and importantly it is this maintained way of life which groups recruiting individuals can derive such norms, values, and rituals from. As many available sources are stagnated, its outlets are equally troubled. What Mead called the ‘enjoyment’ of understanding the norms and rules a group holds and its established body by how it interacts with its milieu, has increasingly shifted online. And though Desai et al. (2019) notes the way we bond “has advanced” (p. 33) with *domestication*, the need to “feel supported, valued, and loved” has never parted. Today, such statement is never truer.

Connections and Consequences

Recently, mounting literature has shed light on the consequences COVID-19 has on students beyond the classroom: Rehman et al. (2020) saw stress, anxiety, and depression exhibited in Indian students and healthcare workers more than any other populations; on the macro scale, Chinese policy that encouraged social isolation yielded substantial mental illness symptoms for younger populations (Chen, Sun, & Feng, 2020). Similarly, Ye et al. (2020) found COVID-19 stressors as a key indicator to inducing Acute-stress disorder symptoms, as reflected with the economic disadvantage of 7,000 surveyed Chinese students in Cao et al. (2020) for generalized anxiety symptoms. Implications for closer mental health monitoring also translated to American students, where there is an overwhelming demand for grief support groups for “non-death related losses” (Siegel & Hager, 2020).

Connection is ever crucial at this time. As students reach out to their peers with Mead’s ‘significant speech’ via the direct chat of social media platforms and online classrooms, it seems relative deprivation persists with indicated literature. Incoming undergraduates may expect in some form an amiable or extravagant college experience, but simply making new connections and retaining them has always remained integral, as Fernback (2007) notes. Yet, by nature of teenage students, Somerville (2013) observes “heightened emotional intensity” (p. 121) in such samples even under perceived social scrutiny. Such need for connection, or a respite to successfully existing ones under current stressful climates, may explain the inclination of Canadians with sedentary lifestyles to increase internet usage for connecting with immediate circles (Colley, Bushnik, & Langlois, 2020) and Chinese young adults amassing an average of 5.08 hours per day online (Qin et al., 2020) posed with concerning health risks.

This is where the digital classroom has its flaw for accommodating connections at a full-time capacity. As illustrated, the productization of points, buttons, modules, and links embody pure, segmented individualism as much as its cultivated users. As previously *imagined*, students are forced to grow only in path of a social actor. Their actions are more with Gershon’s (2011) comparison to Facebook, derived from “entirely social pressure” (p. 877) to succeed educationally, but also to reflect the attitude of the environment so a self can thus emerge. It is with wisdom that Mead notes, “we talk to

ourselves, but do not see ourselves” (Calhoun et al., 2012, p. 358). Being able to first connect, stick with, or take heed from some members provide the *self* a digestible layout of the entire collective symbol which becomes the “significant speech” (p. 350) of the group member’s attitudes, personal and personalized. In a COVID classroom, those ‘raising their hands’ with their open microphone and camera are *selves* who are entering a realm of dark, prosaic profiles staring right back: it is a climate of unknown norms and rules, void of any attitudinal structure to lay oneself with.

Consequently, by the failed nature of social media and the supposedly diverse hub of a university classroom, students face FoMO, or classically: relative deprivation. At its extreme case prior to COVID classrooms, teenagers under this distress inside groups that bonded with the social capital of smoking cigarettes were noted by Haines et al. (2009) to have learnt “quickly and quietly” (p. 71) from the “dreaded social corrective” and risk of rejection. Though conversely, this anxious relationship travels both ways: once one becomes hooked to equip this social capital, many regular smokers were found with an abundance of “depressive and anxiety symptoms” (Patton et al., 2011, p.1518). In today’s context, the opportunity of group connection now shifts from the physical capacity and its previous alternatives when it is absent (writing letters, reunion, long-distance telephone calls), to now a tireless platform of online communication. The social capital of each group becomes a mixture of confusion that overlaps, overpowers and exaggerates a new user to becoming alienated from their group admission. And as one attempts to learn these new tools both on the front of classrooms and social media, they are left to become a *digitalized other*.

The Digitalized Other

In its formation, the self is able to develop only insofar as they are accepted and defined by the group members as worthy. One’s understanding of the world is experienced through the reality of others, who in turn provide the reaction that shapes our progress and character. The *self* is at its crux: is the motivation to understand. Though when taking the generalized standpoint of a group and its members becomes static, difficult, and daunting, students are left to internalize the capital on social media and online classrooms which are abundant of productized connections. This internalized reality of socialization transforms students under

“unconscious social conditioning” (Haines, Poland, & Johnson, 2009, p. 67) into *digitalized others*. It distorts the individual to always reflect against a blurred reflection; becoming a self of misunderstandings, and to the social media capitals, a constant product of the commons- trends, hashtags, and likes stripping any sense of personality away from a personalized reflection.

And so, where the classroom climate fails to provide, social media becomes the last resort to connect daringly. Its capitals on such platforms are static, seemingly rigid than enabling reflection, and driven by the collective blasé of what *has* happened (trending of the world), rather than what *can* happen in a group’s “evolving process” (p. 49) which Fernback (2007) stress is key to communities, both online and offline. Per Cooley’s *Looking Glass Self*, Instagram can literally serve as its physical adage. Each profile is structured by 9x9 columns, a tab of previously recorded ‘stories’ detailing experiences pre-COVID that can only introduce FoMO, and the only open-forum of communication through a direct chat. Different to what a classroom traditionally offered in its capacity to learn the content and the classmates with its inter-personal liberties, every step to social interaction is static, and productized. Approaching an entire group can become overwhelming, as individuals are not met, but instead it is the interpretation of their blasé, static symbols.

It is also noteworthy here, that the applied definition of *the digitalized other* not only exists in the capacity of Mead in that we now rely on actual digitalized means to socialize, but equally in the sense that this form of learning produces the ‘othering’ of restless individuals digitally; such that relative deprivation is to group belonging, and absurdly as aliens are to humans.

Forgetting What We Have Learnt

In many ways, **the sociology classroom is the simulation of the untested world**. What we produce out of the classroom and into the world, is a duty tantamount to what we have spent years dedicated towards. Sociology- to quote Bourdieu: *is to manage to think in a completely astonished and disconcerted way about things you thought you had always understood*.

As the force to this progressive, interdisciplinary, and contemporary practice, it is our duty to realize the biggest lessons of our current troubles, be it public as

always private, is perhaps not to be derived externally by some hasty revelation, but of our own doings; forgotten and locked in place as common practice, and itself the true teaching, marinated with unrealized time and unapplied experience.

More so than its impact, the research on domestication has long been debated per Boutelier (2019), in which many scholars have “take[n] so long” (46) to dispel the “thinking [of] our toxic, plateaued education system”. And perhaps what is deemed taught can become points of new teachings, in that “[its educators] play a strong role in helping break these cycles”. On the larger scale of the teaching network, Lyon et al. (2020) outlines the inescapable “metropolises of the Global North” (p. 4) and its pushed introductory textbooks and liberal ideology.

Rather than focusing on ‘*making things as normal as they can*’ with past fixtures of what worked for physical or part-time technological teaching, perhaps fusing methods that can accommodate a ‘*new normal*’ may be more appealing and feasible. Breaking this “unquestioned good” (Gershon, 2011, p. 881) is no doubt difficult, as to Spinoza, we like things not because they are inherently good, but they are deemed good, because we had liked them for its applied convenience. So, choosing to operate on the capital of discussion posts as means to justify meaningful, human connections is to blatantly ignore the nurtured context to which groups can operate and accept new willing members, in which mere action becomes acceptance.

By Design

One Lesson, Many Selves

Where a physical classroom triumphs over the digital, it is the capacity of connecting to a larger group through its individual members, and attempts of an exploring *self* with “all sorts of different selves [we] refe[r]” (Calhoun et al., 2012, p. 351) to as classmates becomes excused under the trivial activities a student actor under the “social structure” (p. 350) of a classroom would perform. Passing notes, catching their name to exchange contacts, or eavesdropping into their conversations; an amiable, romantic, or competitive incentive can be established, and the self can ultimately decide to continue taking the attitudes of these similar others.

The tensions of a deliberate approach to forcing a friendship or connection is mitigated under the physical capacity that there are other individuals of the group of interest to also persuade. Additionally, student bonding is normalized in the setting of a classroom: collaborative quizzes, group work, or ‘explain to your partner why you chose this answer’ scenarios. It fulfills the first half of courting student selves together, and leaves the other half of the more intimate *selves* to be presented and learnt. Applied on the individual level, Coser’s piece on social group conflict may see those latter interactions as “safety valve activities” (Kivisto, 2013, p. 213), mitigating any tension of premature or overwhelming recruitments to a group by guising activities which every student and self can act under roles of collective validation.

Discovering the Process

Long before our current state of full Zoom lectures and Canvas-structured classrooms, these platforms have operated its successful (financially and of its increasing usage today) delivery on the basis that Osipov et al. (2015) have studied into as *gamification*. Learning instead, becomes a process of consequential reward and planned discovery from completing, fulfilling, or unlocking content-related tasks like an enjoyable quest-driven game.

To its opposite, a dull-fully placed (than presented) load of course information via a click-on-click basis is overwhelming to the learner, as no further incentive arises other than the initial fading curiosity. For instance, one condition in the study saw two stranger participants accomplish language learning under the provided application that rewards currency to both parties’ benefit of the “virtual economy” (p. 72) the longer they had stayed. Interestingly, Osipov et al. (2015) saw more pedagogical achievements than artificial ones, in which learning persisted “regardless of the fact that the average communication time is not very long” (p. 75) and less arbitrary points were thus received. Simply put, learning with applied principles of gamification are not needed at the face of each stepping product, but enough of its presence as a framework can ensure a process to structure and retain inspired learning.

Breaking Room for Thought

Where a physical classroom offers the retreat of many selves that can cope with its equally diverse class members, today's rendition of this practice may prove less flexible.

Capturing the attitude of the whole requires the exposure of its individually interacting members, which a break-out room cannot provide. From linguistic expressions to their physical positionings, the subtleties of group dynamic, structure, and beliefs are torn into toppled prosaic cubicles; the bricks of today's COVID-classrooms.

The *self* is left as a mere student, stagnant to the confines of a social actor, and presented the only choice to grasp onto the capital which its productized infrastructure provides as 'engagement' buttons, modules, and links. Compared to a physical capacity, Marsh et al. (2008) notes in its literature that groups allow for individual members to evaluate their own self-opinions and abilities, and such trend is additionally observed in physical classroom environments where students can engage in 'upward' and 'downward' ability groupings (Rueman, 1989), all of which allow for organic *self*-growth and assimilation.

Yet, break-out rooms and its video-conferencing medium have interestingly been beneficial in both proposed and practical use for medical students (Chick et al., 2020; Hannon et al., 2020). Notably, its proximal benefit of long-distance teaching (Chandler, 2016) have also extended advantages for the wider student population; the voyeuristic capture of every attending student allows the educator to create and adapt an intimate environment (Riedl, 1995), but also utilize the anonymity of students behind profiles as a means to lessen their stresses of being singled out (Roschelle, Penuel, & Abrahamson, 2004). However, barriers of technical difficulties are surpassed by more concerning points noted by Chandler (2016) as student and tutor confidence.

It's About Time

As COVID restrictions interrupt the collective activities and routines that maintain a sense of time as Coser & Coser (1990) can be applied, students are faced with the additional burden to keep up with the course alongside their emotional connections via proliferated screen-time (Colley, Bushnik, & Langlois, 2012). Thus, a viable option of combining these two junctions is through the use of office hours. Since its negative views (King, 2002) are surpassed by positive correlations with academic

performance (Guerrero & Rod, 2013) and student appreciation (Li & Pitts, 2009; Lillie & Wygal, 2011; Mcphee et al., 2020), integrating educator-student office hours alongside rooms dedicated just for students to interact freely may be advisable.

Though disconnection is constantly reminded by the remote way we now connect, it is important not to forget that there are selves who still need connection. Where high procrastinators fare poorly in class performance due to a lack of discussion (Michinov et al., 2011), it may be wise to consider communication as a barrier between international students. Asian students who struggled with communication in a Western University were classified as holding an *independent-self concept* and *social-self concept* by Kwon et al. (2010), yet nonetheless benefitted from a discovery of one another, and thus followed by a sense of community despite different learning styles. It is with Lyon & Guppy (2016), that communication between diverse students has shown various significant influences on its students which can tackle the COVID implications for students in all online courses, adaptable and transfixed (Gonzalez et al., 2020).

Course instructors should look less to what more devices can be added as its equipped width, but more so the depth to which we can hone in. As discussed, implications can be taken on a focus of emotional well-being, decreased emphasis on productized social capitals, principles of discovery and gamification, and to nurture a platform for selves to truly connect organically and less so by order. One thing is certain along Moore, Dickson-Deane, & Galyen (2011) in that educators, cross-country and pedagogically diverse, maintain very different views and definitions of online, e-Learning, and distance learning.

As sociological educators it is important to be reminded that definitions and labels *do* matter, and if attempts to dispel these fixtures are at the least bonded with a recalibration in staff understanding and lesson standards, then fewer cases are likely to suffer from its inconsistency across classes. After all, Iivari, Sharma, and Ventä-Olkkonen (2020) concludes that “we should not only consider student recruitment, but also [the] retention” (p. 5) that will fruitfully provide for the work load of educators, the mental well-being of their students, and the realm of COVID pedagogy onwards.

Conclusion

Notable attempts are made at reframing how sociology is taught, and specifically of Lyon et al. (2020), the ‘what, how, and who’. This paper aimed to show the nature of challenges students can face, albeit the relative deprivation that today’s climate is only exacerbating.

Yet reminding ourselves the way we can disconcertedly reproach these incompatible designs to accommodate a new normal is crucial for more than the *digitalized others*, but to educators, and many future ones we are producing today. Everyone is digitalized; it is crucial here that we try our best to least produce *others* in this process.

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A 12-Step Program for Decolonizing the University

Abstract

Long-standing calls to uproot structural racism across the world have gained impetus, especially within academia, in the wake of dozens of killings including the murder of Breanna Taylor and George Floyd. Universities, as one of the principal sites of European dominance, is central to any decolonizing efforts. As Europe colonized much of the world, it installed its major institutions, such as politics, family, economic systems, religion, and education. Decolonial processes within the University refer to curriculum, pedagogies and methodologies that delink, deconstruct, and unhinge Eurocentric stereotypes. Decolonizing the University means recentering the various voices of peoples of color, taking them from the margins to the core. Indigenous counter-narratives are being produced that both challenge the centrality of European established knowledge systems, while simultaneously recognizing that counter-narratives will be generated by canon proponents that challenge both the legitimacy and authority of these indigenous counter-narratives. Universities have become the site of contested spaces not only in the United States but worldwide as symbols of our colonial, confederate, and imperial past have been challenged. We must provide the spaces where all, particularly the marginalized, can be heard. In this paper we shall explore the 12 steps for accomplishing this.

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Keywords: Decolonization, academy, Eurocentric stereotypes, counter-narratives, allyship

Introduction

Long-standing calls to uproot structural racism across the world have gained impetus, especially within academia, in the wake of dozens of killings including the murder of Breanna Taylor and George Floyd. Universities, as one of the principal sites of European dominance, is central to any decolonizing efforts. But what does it mean to decolonize the university? And how can professors, faculty members, students, and academics work to create this change?

As Europe colonized much of the world, it installed its major institutions, such as politics, family, economic systems, religion, and education. These institutions, found in the West, throughout India, Africa, and the Caribbean primary purpose were to guarantee Western ideas and knowledge systems, racial hierarchies and identities that would prevail. As former colonies have struggled to remove the imperial colors, their efforts have been stifled in many ways by the institutions that are central to their existence. The University is no different. Within the University, as with all other European imported institutions, white privilege, space, and identity have been not only preserved but continually reified. Consequently, history in the Americas start with colonization, the Indigenous Peoples, Africans, and others take their identities from this starting point. Most Indigenous cultural systems, systems of knowledge, and world views were not only denigrated but also ridiculed as being backward, unsophisticated, and disregarded. The colonized and the slave were treated as people without history, without substance or essence. They had no agency and only existed in juxtaposition and as a reaction to Western Imperialism. Even when forced to take these various groups into consideration, reluctantly it did so by creating identity programs such as Native American, African American, Asian and Latino American Studies programs. This left intact, much of the foundations of European history, White identity, and privilege. Ironically, even these programs continue to be marginalized, while areas, such as Global and American studies, which primarily concentrates on the Western experiences, are again the dominant voices even among identity programs. Decolonizing the University means recentering the various voices of peoples of color, taking them from the margins to the core. In these presentations we shall explore the

12 steps for accomplishing this. But first let us consider what a colonized educational system, its scholarship, and pedagogy has produced.

Decolonizing the University: 12 Step Program

Decolonial processes within the University refer to curriculum, pedagogies and methodologies that delink, deconstruct, and unhinge Eurocentric stereotypes. This process simultaneously challenges the canon and dominant ideologies of Western based systems of knowing, theories, and information systems. As a result, these have become contested sites for decolonial activists, scholars, theorists, researchers, and policy artists. It is an ongoing process directly related to the anti-, post- and decolonial struggles developed in China, India, Asia, Africa, and the Americas that challenge the Eurocentric control of knowledge, theory, and praxis.

Indigenous counter-narratives are being produced that both challenge the centrality of European established knowledge systems, while simultaneously recognizing that counter-narratives will be generated by canon proponents that challenge both the legitimacy and authority of these indigenous counter-narratives. If the canon proponents are successful, they will not only deflect criticism but also perpetuate the colonial based orientation that marginalizes formerly colonized and subjugated peoples. As we begin, we recognize that any authentic conversations must start from places of safety...so before we begin let us go over the rules of engagement...

emotional safety

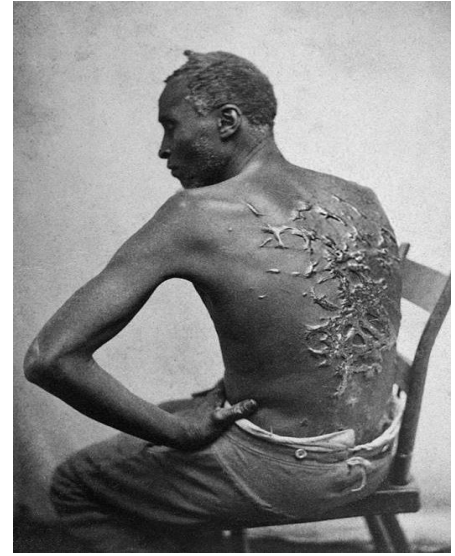
comes from:

Sara Kuburic, CCC, @millennial.therapist

- Being acknowledged (*seen and heard*)
- Being appreciated
- Being treated respectfully and justly
- Having our feelings, thoughts, and experience validated
- Having space and permission to show up authentically

Decolonizing the University – Step 1: Beginning the Dialogue

Have you noticed near every major corporation there has been discoveries of black pain, abuse, and distress? All the major firms have come out with statements of feigning shock and sympathy, huge banners but there are limited support provided past the verbal recognition of the problem. Everyone is getting on the bandwagon, many of which rolled that same wagon over us in the past. See we care that you are broken and bruised, let us help. Unfortunately, such pandering ignores the social reality of not only this moment, but the movement that has brought it into being.



How we interpret social reality reflects our biases. Preconceived notions of racial inferiority have long since been a part of academia. If we look across time, over the past few centuries we see these same racist structures being reified throughout academia. Hence:

- 1. Universities across the Western World glorified, embraced, and celebrated colonization, genocide, slavery, rape, pillage, and theft of Indigenous lands.*
- 2. Academia was silent as racism, sexism, and ethnocentrism were enshrined into both law and public policy after the so-called end of slavery.*
- 3. With the end of slavery, the Western academy was silent or turned a deaf ear to the cries of the newly enslaved under European colonialism that invaded India, the Middle East, and Africa.*
- 4. Universities across the Western World, during the first 40 years of the 19th century, were silent as thousands of African Americans were lynched, millions of Indians were slaughtered under British rule, Jews were systematically exterminated, and Darwinism came into being under Hitler.*
- 5. Academia was virtually silent as eugenics and the Mississippi appendectomy targeted Blacks, Native Americans, and the urban poor.*

6. *Academia discovered the civil rights movement late in the game and did not really embrace the social movements until long after the riots, long hot summers, and the assassination took the lives of King, Malcolm X and Kennedy's.*
7. *Academia was virtually silent as retrograde and conservatives, upset with the presumed progress of the civil rights movement began to systematically dismantle the structures reluctantly put into place, and to purposefully create the cradle to prison pipeline.*
8. *Academia was silent or blind to the killing of Black, Hispanic, and Native American youth until three brave Black mothers began the Black Lives movement.*
9. *Academia continues to discover blacks, Hispanic, and Native Americans as problems, as victims, but rarely as conquerors and overcomers. In ways that DuBois queried "what is it like to be a problem". Hence the continual problematization of these lives by academia and rarely can one find any significant attempt to empower, address their concerns, or repair the damage caused by white fragility.*

Decolonizing the University – Step 2: Difficult Conversations



Universities have become the site of contested spaces not only in this country but worldwide as symbols of our colonial, confederate, and imperial past have been challenged. While it is great that the symbols of our racist past, such as the Confederate flags, statues of Edward Colston (director of the Royal African Company that dominated the African slave trade), King Leopold, and other monuments are being retired, we must do way more. We must dismantle the colonial, imperialist, and racist structures that continue to deny identity and agency, history and cultural realities of the those that were subjugated, whose liberties were denied,

and who even now call for justice. If indeed we are to move forward, we must commit to more than symbolic gestures and dedicate our efforts to making substantive changes. This means being willing to engage in difficult conversations and put our resources where our values are.

Difficult conversations about privilege and racial discrimination requires us to first be honest. We must provide the spaces where all, particularly the marginalized, can be heard. So often we want to bring in outsiders to tell us what is wrong. I find this strange when the real experts are there in the room. Bringing in an outsider who controls the discussion, essentially tells the insider who is a person of color that their experiences are not of value. Outsiders can indeed facilitate, but should not dictate, the conversation. Legitimizing the voices of People of Color (POC) who are insiders sends a clear message that ownership of the conversation and the solutions are internally driven. When privilege dictates not only whose voices will be heard, but how these voices will be evaluated only reaffirms privilege. In this strange game, conflict arises between the various peoples of color as each strives to be validated. Decolonizing the institution and anti-racism movements are not exclusive zero-sum operations, but inclusive and additive processes. Decolonizing is not affirmative action but equitable action. It is not equal opportunity but equitable opportunity.

Briefly, affirmative action set aside a proscribed number of slots for those deemed harmed by racist and sexist policies and practices. Within academia, the chief beneficiary were White women, while only token position, scholarships, and opportunities were granted to Blacks, Native Americans, Hispanics and others. Recently published data reveal that at our elite public institutions in higher education, the number of Black and Hispanics has not changed in 20 years. The reality is that they, like much of our school systems, remain as segregated as they were at the height of the Civil Rights movements. Equitable action would acknowledge these historical processes that have denied access to far too many of our citizens. It would at the very least insist that public institutions should reflect the demographic realities of their respective states. Equitable opportunities within higher education would recognize that historical racism has resulted in significant racial wealth and education gaps. It would respond by establishing scholarships and pathways to progress. We shall return to these in step 8, which will be discussed

below. Failure to accomplish this means that we will fail to diversify, become more inclusive or experience real social justice within the University.

Decolonizing the University – Step 3: The Emperor's New Clothes

We have all read or heard of the children's story *The Emperor's New Clothes* by C. A. Reitzel. Dealing with #whiteprivilege is treacherous, particularly for persons of color. In real life, not in children's stories, what happens when one challenges power and privilege? It is interesting that Reitzel, shortly after writing this story,



received a ruby ring from the Prince, which was the last political satire critical of royalty that he would write. In academia and corporations, as those of lower status challenge #whiteprivilege they are similarly either bought off or punished. Often, rather than face scorn, lowered evaluations and consequently decreased salary raises and likelihood of promotions many simply stop caring and become less critical. Such things as student evaluations and performance reviews are frequently used to punish those who would dare reveal and challenge White privilege. Strange, the ire is most severely reserved for those people of color that provide such critiques. Consequently, when we notice lower class sizes and student evaluations, we point to the professor of color as being the problem, not the #privileged.

The past_with regards to Indigenous Peoples, Black, Hispanic/Mexican, Asian, and for women and other gendered groups_have been reduced, redacted, and remained obscure. Much of the problem has to do with the stock narratives that continually fuel our scholarship. Thus, we continue to discover racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, and homophobia. We have discovered both the truly advantaged and the truly disadvantaged, in every field of human endeavor. And while these narratives are important – hell they sell books and are the central driving

forces for all our professional conferences – they do not tell the counter-narratives. They fail to capture the work of women over the past 40-50 years, especially by women of color, like Patricia Hill Collins, who ushered in lots of exciting sociological work that does center the voices of people of color. These counter-narratives, such as stories of resistance, rebellion, and transformation tend to be conflated with social movements, civil rights, and the like. Again, while these movements are important, they fail to capture the moments that make up the lived experiences of the majority of people. These moments and their stories fill in the gaps and demonstrate how the marginalized transform the system and “How we got over.” These tales help us understand how agency is realized, experienced, and articulated in the everyday lives of those we so conveniently socially constructed. We are left with the objectification of others, rather than the subjective understanding of us.

Decolonizing the University - Step 4: The Meaning of Allyship



It seems that everyone now wants to embrace Black people by sharing our pain and joining us in our struggle. Thanks for your honesty and humility. As we begin this journey, let us now discuss what [#allyship](#) means. It means to walk a mile in our moccasins, pulling alongside us the cart of our

complaints, and sharing our vision. Please, however, remember that this is our struggle, our complaints, and our visions. If you would join us, then embrace these and we will welcome you into our struggle for [#socialjustice](#) and an [#equitable](#) future. So yes, recognize the [#allyships](#), but please also remember the reason why we came to the table in the first place, which has to do with Blacks’, Indigenous Peoples’, and People of Color’ struggles. Many now are trying their damndest to figure out ways that they can benefit, at the expense of their Black colleagues, from this current surge in White angst. This is the real danger. If we fail to understand this, then academia and America will continue to be racist, and our efforts

to decolonize and produce anti-racist policies, systems, and structures will be failures. This will mean we will be back here in a couple of years again, mourning the death of another Black man, Black woman, Indigenous man or woman, or an unarmed migrant worker.

Decolonizing the University – Step 5: Allyship vs. Catering to The Audience

There is a difference between allyship and catering to the audience. The former is focusing on what is right, while the latter is appearing to be right. Allyship is about being in the trenches, dodging bullets, taking chances. Catering is about pimping the movement, looking for photo ops, and promoting personal agendas. We do not need the crowds mimicking our pain, but those willing to share that pain. Those who want to demonstrate authenticity in our struggle, go to your job or place of business and begin to identify and dismantle racist barriers. Take some risks, make some individual and collective sacrifices by funding some scholarships, provide skills training, open up some pathways to occupations, and crafts. Then you will demonstrate that you are indeed an ally. It's what you do when the cameras are off that makes a difference #allyship, #socialjustice, and #equity.



Decolonizing the University – Step 6: Defining White Privilege



The Black Power movement was a deliberate attempt to challenge and critique white institutions within the U.S. and Britain. Institutional racism, as used by Carmichael and Hamilton, made reference to the attitudes, practices, and systems that produce racist outcomes. Further, these racist outcomes assumed to be normal were neither questioned nor

interrogated by major societal actors and embedded within institutions, to include the academia. Defining #whiteprivilege is quite easy. The #whiteprivilege is a product of racial hierarchies, which are embedded within racial institutions/structures. We describe the processes as structural racism. Systems of racism, where several key racial institutions/structures overlap, socializes each new generation, and accepts the racial systems, hierarchies, and privileges as being normal. Any patterns of racial inequities are typically assigned to individual incapacities, neglect, or inabilities. From these structures, white privilege derives by which all Whites collectively benefit not only as individuals but as a group. Persons of color, within these systems, suffer as a consequence of a form of internalized colonialism whereby their statuses, political voices, and life chances are significantly circumscribed by race. Embedded within internalized colonialism are also gendered, sexual, and other forms of oppression and social control. In all fairness, the work of W.E.B. DuBois, while never using the term internalized colonialism, nevertheless presaged this area with both theories and research. As early as 1906, DuBois was demonstrating that the life chances of Blacks were a result of social, economic, and political isolation. Improved life chances (both in terms of mortality and upward mobility), he argued, would come about by improving education, offering enhanced economic opportunities, and removing other institutional structures that maintain internalized colonialism (Du Bois 1906).

Hence higher incarceration and conviction rates, expulsions and failure, graduation, wealth, and health gaps are defined as individual or group failures, not the failures of the system. The irony of [#whiteprivilege](#) is that it allows the recipient the veneer of innocence and plausible deniability. As a result, even in the face of decades of scientifically verified and objective data, and the constant complaint of people of color, the [#whiteprivilege](#) are able to operate cluelessly while the storm rages.

Decolonizing the University – Step 7: Structural Racism

Consider the number and types of courses, leadership positions, and staff at your institution. If the majority of your faculty of color are teaching identity courses, then you may have a problem and if these are the only courses they teach you have a

crisis. If this pattern is duplicated within your administrative structure, where the majority of the diversity, inclusion, and equity leaders are people of color, you have a problem, if these roles are exclusively filled by people of color you have a crisis. Finally, if your staff are bifurcated, with one area say administrative/clerical are all filled primarily by Whites and the janitorial, grounds crew are more diverse, then again you have a problem. If even these positions are primarily filled by Whites, you have a crisis. If whites are the only face one sees, even in the lowest of staff positions, again you have evidence of structural racism. Decolonizing the Institution starts here, with both a strategic plan for diversifying the opportunities within your institution for your personnel and one for long range hiring. The first priority is to provide pathways that allow each employee to maximize their development, expand their capabilities, thus enriching theirs and the institution's experiences. The latter is accomplished by initially conducting a census to determine the frequency of turnover and retirements, then developing a strategic 5-year diversity hiring plan. I will discuss each of these steps in detail in the next sections.



Decolonizing the University – Step 8: Pathways 2 Progress



I believe in us. We just need to be brave enough to talk openly and honestly. Then act in deliberate ways to strategically decolonize the institution. Together, we can be transformative as we ourselves are transformed. The first step in the process is to identify the ruts and channels which divert and deny people of color access to the range of rewards, privileges, and opportunities within the institution. Do a detailed census of all levels

within the institution, determine if, when and where these blockages occur. Then dismantle them. If, for example, you note students of color are less likely to be admitted and successful in say Business or STEM, have some frank discussions with current and former students about their experiences. These are the experts. Use these as your core faculty and allies to staff your courses, help you transform, and rebuild your system. When necessary hire additional faculty members with proven track records. Of course, you also have to ensure that the pathways are open and provide a robust, reliable flow into these areas. Alternatively, if major streams of students believe they are being diverted into less desirable areas we need to understand why.

Decolonizing the University – Step 9: The Perfect Storm

As many institutions are just now assessing the damage caused by COVID-19 many fiscal problems are only being exacerbated. Prior to COVID_19, universities across the country were already facing a fiscal cliff through declining enrollments, increasing costs with filling the slots, and the continued erosion of state fiscal support. Secondly,



COVID-19 promises even deeper budget deficits as fewer international and out of state students choose to stay at home, as an estimated third of high school graduates plan on taking a "gap year" off, and as state budgets get even tighter. Added to this, the costs of repaying students for dorm and related expenses, tuition reimbursements, and expenses associated with going fully online. Thirdly, #blacklivesmatter will mean certain racial unrest as these students come to campus and challenge the racial climate at their respective universities. Collectively these amount to nothing less than the Perfect Storm. COVID-19 will eventually be resolved. The escalating budget crises faced by universities is a looming nightmare. Already, universities have cut faculty and staff to the bone and are now facing even more cuts. But the crisis is also due to a shrinking White and international student base. These

numbers will not improve, either short-term or long-term. The only real solution is to expand the pathways for underrepresented students. But herein lies the real problem: it is called the cradle to prison pipeline. Strange that we would spend 60k to lock up a young person, yet can find little to no money to educate, provide scholarships and training. Added to this the reality that Black males stand a 1 in 3, and Hispanic males a 1 in 6, chance of going to prison for at least 4 years, while each has only a 3 in 10 chance of going to college. We can keep doing the same things, and the certainty of extinction will be realized as the Perfect Storm hits, or we can expand the pathways to progress through partnerships with local schools.

Decolonizing the University – Step 10: Goodbye Ivory Tower



In some nostalgic mythical place, the university existed on a hill, the Ivory Tower, where all not only saw but were attracted to its light. Academe prided itself in its exclusivity, its difficulty, and its failure rates. However, academia could not survive such a model. The very

meaning of the university, derived from its Latin roots, refers to a community of scholars and learners. The reality is that functional universities are tied to their capacity to serve the community. Although the core mission of the university remains the same, the mission is expanding. The future of the university lies in its capacity to develop community partnerships. These partnerships are most robust when they encourage pathways linking diverse constituencies to successful and thriving lives as responsible, liberally educated citizens. If the university cannot accomplish this, in today's competitive environment, it will cease to exist. On the front end, this means working with local schools to help articulate and model what pre-college skills and experiences are most appropriate for college success. On the back end, we need to ensure that we maximize the number of diverse students who graduate with the skills and experiences to enter society ready to be fully engaged. The pathways that lead through the university must be demographically diverse and reflect the composition of the wider community, state, and/ or nation. The pathways that lead from our

universities must be equally diverse across the full spectrum of opportunities afforded by the university. Chief among the skills needed of our graduates include the ability to positively interact with an ever increasingly diverse world, the ability to think both critically, logically, and analytically to solve complex problems, and to be an accomplished scholar. Barriers to access and success must be identified and eliminated in order to maximize the core mission of the university.

Decolonizing the University – Step 11: Giving Lions a Voice

As we discussed above, for much of the history of the academia the stories of Blacks and others have been othered, and not central in the conversation. Then when the academia was forced to discover, hire, and give space to Black voices, it created such things as ethnic



studies, black studies, and other studies. This was indeed an advancement for the university, but soon everyone became experts on the Black condition. Books, symposiums, and a whole cottage industry came into being celebrating the "authentic" black, Latino(x), Indigenous, and Asian voices. Now the University is replete with those who speak for the Black and other people of color, who have used the "voices of lions" to become experts on these voices. In the process the Lions' voice has become tame, has become marginalized, and has become muffled. This is particularly true at Historically White Colleges and Universities (HWCU). While we welcome these allies in our struggle, they should not be given priority to the "authentic" voices of the Lions.

Specifically, many can teach using the works of DuBois, Crenshaw or Collins, or José Martí and José Enrique Rodó or Crow Creek and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, or Jeffery Paul Chan, and Lucie Cheng but only those who have walked in these paths can use their own experiences in the caldron of race, struggled to remove the stench of forced marches, still cringing from being forced into reservations, internment camps and ghettos, been segregation, lynched, raped and incarcerated. The various contemporary expressions captured in the hashtags #BlackLivesMatter,

#AsainLivesMatter, #IndegenousPeople’sLivesMatter and Chicano Lives Matter movement provide radically nuanced meanings when articulated by Lions voices. The system, particularly at HWCU's penalizes

authenticity with more critical evaluations, lower class enrollments, and more tenuous appointments. The average student at HWCU's avoids these difficult conversations and classes by avoiding those taught by Lions. When forced to take such courses, these same predominantly White students are more likely to punish the Lion who dared to challenge them, the hunter. We have long understood that faculty of color teaching particularly courses in critical race and ethnic studies are more likely receive lower evaluations, their research more likely to be marginalized, and their voices within the university more likely to be muffled. Strange, given the centrality of race in the history, economy, politics, and realities of America -they become marginalized within the Academy, discipline, and our realities. Stranger still, when we can talk about theory, critical inquiry, history, and America in general that we can do this without any reference to race, class, or gender. Only by giving centrality to these voices and protections can such voices continue in clarity and authenticity. We can ill afford to allow the hunters to dictate when, where, and how the Lion speaks. Decolonizing the institution means giving Lions Voice while understanding that the hunters will be troubled.

Decolonizing the University – Step 12: We Need Strategic Processes Not Slogans



Universities and Corporations across America are frantically trying to wordsmith their way out of the crisis #BLM presents. Slogans, pithy statements, and crocodile tears aside, this is not a Public Relations moment. This is a time for deliberate, strategic, and protracted change. This is not a moment but a movement. The usual band-aid approaches will not work. Bringing out your beleaguered Black and other people of color to stand

alongside you on the front lines will not deflect the coming storm. Carefully phrased strategic plans without strategic investment in change will not halt the hemorrhaging wounds systematic racism continues to inflict. Naming, blaming, and shaming selected targets while providing some immediate gratification only makes the next crisis certain. We are in this crisis today because we have done all these things in the past. We have whole shelves, thousands of pages of documents that document our willingness to say anything to get past this moment. Promises made in the heat of the moment often shrink when the moment has passed. We do not need another revival where some anointed “diversity leader/ pimp” tells us how bad we were/are. We do not need to rehearse all our many failures as we have repeatedly promised yet avoided any real change. We are sorry when there is no reparation, redemption, or restoration is the epitome of hypocrisy. This is not a virus where a vaccination will cure our indifference, this is not a rash where a bit of salve will relieve the discomfort, and this is not an infection where a bit of quarantine will make it all go away. What we are looking at are system wide and structural problems that only systematic and structural changes will solve. The solutions therefore are radical processes that redefine who we are, transform our cultures, and redirect our resources in meaningful, tangible, and measurable ways. It should ultimately be realized that unless there is a significant investment in recruitment, retention, and promotion of people of color at all entry points and levels of our universities and corporations then we will continue to see the same problems manifest themselves. This is our chance to transform and decolonize the university and corporation. If we fail, no worries, we will be right back here in the next cycle. The only thing is, that the longer it takes, the more severe the strain and the costlier (both in human and other resources) the fix. We need strategic processes not slogans.

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To Boldly Teach: An Incredible Voyage Teaching the Beauty of Sociology, 1982-2020

Abstract

The unfolding of any academic career contains a level of mystery as one engages structural opportunities and constraints, dreams and aspirations, unexpected challenges or setbacks, as well as, one's own limitations and mistakes. After retiring from 38 years of teaching sociology in a range of academic institutions within the United States, below are my selective subliminal and conscious reflections. As such, this is a reflective essay that contains all my biases and proclivities. For me, teaching sociology at the postsecondary level has allowed me to pursue the most constructive ideas about humanity—especially those concerning individuals, groups, networks, institutions, organizations, social justice, and social systems. While my pathway was unique in many respects as an African American sociologist, I hope that all who pursue the sociological imagination across generations and various global populations will benefit from my particular adventures to boldly teach the controversial beauty of sociology. Humanity needs sociology now more than ever. Those of us who have been given the exquisite privilege to explore the life of the mind in this academic field are truly among the chosen ones. Never stop being bold in your teaching, research, and service to all humankind! Sociology matters greatly to all, even if intentional dullards or vested interests do not recognize its inherent worth!

Henry Lee Allen

African American Institute
for Advanced Scientific
Research

Keywords: Teaching Sociology, Sociology as a Career, Institutional Racism

Early Background Antecedents

My entrance into this world in 1955 was shaped by my working-class African American family, only one generation removed from the barbaric sharecropping system within the segregated southern United States. My father was a laborer, while my mother was a homemaker. I was the eldest of eight children. My father had a sixth-grade education; my mother finished the eighth grade. Three of my brothers had severe mental disabilities (autism). For much of my youth, we lived in a segregated suburb in the Chicago metropolitan area. With these social origins, my life in sociology has been nothing short of a miracle.

As far as I can remember during the 1960s, my pre-professional life as an African American sociologist was inspired by the critical legacy of W.E.B. Du Bois, the preeminent cultural icon among African American intellectuals or social thinkers. Du Bois inspired young intellectuals like me to critique society because of the ubiquitous, hegemonic legacy of racial injustice and stratification in the United States. I grew up in a contentious era of school desegregation, after attending a segregated elementary school dominated by African American teachers and school administrators. This cocoon nurtured my intellectual growth, self-efficacy, and personal worth, thereby allowing me to overcome the structural vestiges of poverty by the sponsorship of a caring community. My segregated elementary school was subsequently desegregated in the eighth grade.

Early on in my youth, I was confronted experientially with the dynamics of social diversity as the only African American in my high school classes during my first and second years. Of course, this reality contributed to racial trauma, some cultural adaptations, and isolation— especially when racial confrontations occurred within the student body. I tried to understand these confrontations and dynamics scientifically as a youngster who had investigated ideas about racism, stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination in summer programs for gifted elementary school students in 1967 and 1968. I was then taught by high school teachers, none of which were African American.

I matured as a teenager during the ascendancy of Motown music in popular culture, so my emergent sociological aspirations were heavily influenced by Marvin Gaye's poignant album "What's Going On?"— with its many songs about the idiocy of war (Vietnam), police brutality, the dangers of drug addiction, the pathologies of urban life, environmental pollution, the future plight of children, religious faith, and similar sociological issues. This collection of music has imprinted me for life, across 65 years containing 38 years of teaching sociology! Most significantly, I have always started my classes by asking my students 'What's Going On?' from their uncensored perspectives.

My postsecondary education took place in two different social spaces: (1) a large, diverse public university in a distinctly 'southern' cultural milieu, (2) a racially-homogenous, predominantly 'white' evangelical liberal arts college. To my utter surprise, from the former social space, I had a dynamic sociology professor during my first year. His engaging instruction reoriented my life to distinguish between codifications (ideas or explanations) and tested evidence from popular culture, logical schemas, the humanities, and science. He 'rocked my world' in sociology with strategic insights that have always influenced my publications and teaching. From the latter collegiate context, I engaged the overt and covert organizational sociology of suburban Protestant evangelical elites with their particular social networks. Moreover, I explored the realms of religion and faith, contrasting these with scientific pursuits, dogmas, and the social sciences.

Eventually, these proclivities led me to the University of Chicago to explore the social construction of ideas in science, academic systems, and societies. Sociologists like Edgar Epps, Willian Julius Wilson, Edward O. Laumann, Peter M. Blau, Joseph Ben-David, and others like Hubert M. Blalock or Joe Feagin shaped my sociological development appreciably. At that time, mathematical and empirical sociology also infused my imaginations about racial stratification, social inequalities, and education, thereby enabling the contours of my research in the sociology of science and higher education. These interests often exceeded the classes I taught throughout my career, because my imperative was to integrate the natural, physical, mathematical, and social sciences in my work as much as possible. To sum, I received my Ph.D. on August 26, 1988 (exactly 32 years before the date of this writing).

Career Trajectories and Pathways: 1982 ~ 2020

The academic labor market was stagnant during the 1980s Reagan era, so there were few appropriate job openings for me at elite research universities. Thus, my first job was at Bethel College (now University) in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, starting on August 1, 1982. At that time of economic recession and great distress, I was desperate for any academic work in order to pay the exorbitant medical costs associated with the emergency operation preceding the birth of my second child. While I was never a fan of cold winters, I loved the liberal progressive social atmosphere of the Twin Cities. Nonetheless, my meager wages were deficient, given the inflationary costs of living. I thrived as a sociology instructor teaching about race and ethnic relations, poverty and social stratification, social problems, and introductory matters. By using academic journals, I quickly learned that many of my ‘white’ students were terrified by having an African American professor. They wrote entries expressing their fears and anxieties. Many of them came from homogeneous suburban and rural social locations. I was the very first African American who had power and control over their lives. (When hired, Bethel had just two African American faculty, with my counterpart leaving the institution after her first year).

Negotiating these matters of diversity improved my social intelligence as a young sociologist. I had assumed a certain level of intellectual sophistication that was absent in my students’ social experiences, so I had to develop countermeasures or enriching assignments to cure any phobias about my professionalism and the ‘hidden curriculum’. To be accurate, I did have a few racist students— some of whom I converted, while others exited my courses. I built my pedagogy around research about various learning styles, research from cognitive and developmental psychology, and writing-to-learn schemas (especially academic journals). Listening to and engaging my students brought great success as well as joy to my role as a sociology teacher dedicated to enabling the sociological imagination in all my courses, no matter if they were targeted to lower-division or upper-division students. After five years (1982-1987), I left Bethel College because of poor salaries and other economic constraints. Its baptistic religious context as a denominational college mostly demonstrated an irenic atmosphere, a far cry from the more conservative antics of

other evangelical colleges. Decades later, students would contact me with kind remarks about the positive impact of my teaching. Nice!

Calvin College: 1987 ~ 1991

My career situation at Calvin College (now University) was a great improvement since I was promoted to Associate Professor of Sociology with increased remuneration. While the social ecology surrounding Bethel was dominated by Scandinavian descendants, Calvin's academic community was dominated by officials and students with Dutch ancestry. Despite their conservative Calvinistic pretensions or religious fervor, academic administrators at Calvin College were dedicated to the pursuit of racial and ethnic diversity in the faculty. This job was a tougher assignment culturally, but I had the best facilities to work with. While Bethel had a student body of 2200 students, Calvin had 6000 students. Issues related to apartheid resonated among students and faculty. Ideas regarding social justice flourished in this context as prominent faculty debated them. In many respects, Calvin had a much more European ambience within its faculty culture.

In contrast to the Twin Cities, the metropolitan area of Grand Rapids, Michigan was at that time much more conservative politically for me. My family was still growing. As I recall, less than 5 out of over 225 faculty members were African Americans. Fortunately, I had a younger colleague in my department. Moreover, I felt somewhat disconnected from much of the indigenous African American community, with the possible exception of one local church I attended. In retrospect, I deeply missed the inherent intellectual challenges and habitus of an elite research university (at Bethel, I had occasions to find nurture from colleagues at the University of Minnesota). Having been educated at a premier research university at the graduate level, being stuck at the collegiate level with undergraduate teaching duties was causing me to atrophy.

The main problem with my experiences as a sociologist at Calvin College was the homogeneity of its ethnic hegemony or related social networks, inside and outside the institution. Faculty had to subscribe to denominational tenets that were based in the ethnic evolution of its core constituencies. So, on the one hand, I thrived in its

academic freedom and expanded cultural engagements at Calvin College; on the other hand, I felt an ‘iron cage of religiosity’ that constrained or marginalized my ambitions. Beyond teaching about social stratification and similar introductory topics, I wanted to develop further competencies in mathematical sociology. Therefore, I left that campus in order to reach my full potential.

University of Rochester, Margaret S. Warner Graduate School of Education and Human Development: 1991 ~1997

Thanks to the recommendation from one of my professors at the University of Chicago, I had an interview at the University of Rochester and obtained an academic appointment in its interdisciplinary graduate school of education. I grew in a professional network of four sociologists, with my primary teaching and research duties being in the sociology of higher education. My signature course was about the academic professions and society. I also taught graduate courses in the sociology of education and urban education. At this university, there was a dozen African American faculty spread across other disciplines and academic departments! I consulted joyfully with them at the faculty club as well as other intellectual venues, including the Frederick Douglas Institute on campus.

At the University of Rochester, I developed my competencies in mathematical and computational sociology. Furthermore, I became a key scholar and consultant for the National Education Association analyzing national surveys about the status of the academic professions. From this vantage point, my career blossomed exponentially with professional connections to national conferences, school systems, teachers’ unions, and government agencies. I published relevant articles on the academic professions or the sociology of higher education, made pivotal presentations with esteemed educational leaders, and expanded my research portfolio. Unfortunately, the university had severe economic problems, thereby losing ‘star’ faculty colleagues and freezing modest salaries. This instability threatened my family’s future, so after my sabbatical, I decided to leave the University of Rochester for the Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the Rochester Institute of Technology (raising my income \$20,000).

Rochester Institute of Technology: 1997 ~ 1998

Moving to the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) should have allowed me to develop further competencies in mathematical and computational sociology, but that did not happen! Just a month or so after I took that academic job, the academic dean who hired me was deposed by vote of the faculty. My dreams and aspirations were crushed at the start. I was subsequently shocked and depressed. My classes (and the rest of the year) were filled with bouts of depression and drudgery. It was the worst of times. Yet, even in my dark despair, hope had emerged from unexpected directions.

I might have had a nervous breakdown if not for the responsiveness and salvation I received from most of my students. They seemed to enjoy my pedagogy and sociology! What a surprise, in the very midst of my deepest disappointment. At RIT, I taught classes about social change as well as social inequalities along with the usual Introduction to Sociology. Surprisingly, most of my students (whether ethnically diverse or not) engaged my subject matter and assignments with intellectual courage and honesty— especially feminists, gay students, technocratic types, and those from military backgrounds. These counterintuitive results enhanced my perceptions of the power of sociology. When I left RIT, years later, many of my students contacted me to express appreciation for my classes. Wow!

While I had my best financial circumstances at RIT, my collegueship was inadequate, marginal, and disturbing. Looking back, I attribute this outcome to my depression and struggles. I failed to allow myself to visualize the potential of that academic opportunity.

Wheaton College: 1998 ~ 2020

I accessed my job at Wheaton College through a mutual friend, a minority sociologist, who I met during a consulting opportunity in my second year of teaching at Bethel College in 1983. He was a tough, controversial, professional acquaintance that I kept in contact with throughout my career. He was a dynamic department chair with considerable influence over the hiring process. That social capital helped me tremendously during the processes and protocols of securing an academic

appointment at this evangelical liberal arts college. This was my best option, my urgent escape from the shattered visions of RIT.

As an alumnus (1975-1977), I originally anticipated a relatively short tenure at this homogenous, conservative evangelical campus, but I ended up finishing my academic career there after 22 years. Even though I shared many of the religious understandings of the college, my interpretations and implementations of those understandings were influenced by my social experiences within the African American church. My faculty role as a sociologist at Wheaton was an amalgamation of the professional adaptations and competencies I utilized during employment at Bethel College and Calvin College. Wheaton College is a private, nondenominational institution located in the affluent western suburbs in the Chicago metropolitan area. The campus is known as a citadel of 'white' evangelicalism.

Besides my introductory classes, I taught Urban Sociology, the Sociology of Education, and Criminology in the first decade of my tenure. For the first time in my career, I attained tenure at Wheaton, too. I served as a department chair for nine years in the latter half of my career, even as I developed courses such as Violence against Women, Sociology and the Civil Rights Movement, Violence in Minority Communities, and the like. Occasionally, I taught Urban Sociology, the Sociology of Science, the FBI and Policing. My courses were often considered to be too difficult for many undergraduates, but for those who endured I became a well-respected professor. Most of my most conservative students were not favorably disposed regarding my courses. For them, I was far too liberal and biased. My African American viewpoints did not sit well with an implicit white supremacy, the pretensions of popular culture, the idiocies of conservative dogmas, and religious bigotry (including its precursor of ethnocentrism). I taught against implicit bias, racism, patriarchy, foolishness, and their intellectual offspring! For me, scientific conceptualizations and proven evidence prevailed over ethnocentric dogmas, falsifiable panaceas, and informal traditions.

Sociology, its ideas, traditions, research, and evidences, was my solace all throughout my years. I experienced racial microaggressions, mainly from conservative or ignorant students, at Wheaton. Elite social status was no guarantee of wisdom or intellectual sophistication. Among the few African American faculty,

there was isolation and controversies at times. Invariably, there were empathetic faculty, students, and administrators who imbibed genuine diversity instead of habitualized assimilation or tokenism. Collectively, they were no match for the dominant informal tendencies of organizational culture or policies. Wheaton was a stressful place culturally, experientially, and professionally. I just did not fit these institutionalized, pathological aspects of the evangelical world with its norms of whiteness. Thankfully, things may be slowly changing for the better as policy norms or protocols implicit in institutionalizing diversity evolve.

My ultimate antidote for the organizational dissonance that existed beyond my classes was the pursuit of outside consulting challenges and opportunities. I published challenging and innovative articles regularly, incorporating my nascent interests from graduate school. In various capacities, I worked with the National Education Association, the American Bible Society, the FBI Academy, University of Oxford, Carnegie Mellon University, school systems, law enforcement, the Athens Institute for Education and Research, and similar venues to maintain my sociological sanity—culminating in joining the International Sociological Association (ISA). Through ISA, I have been the most fulfilled by far, engaging sociologists in Yokohama, Vienna, and Toronto. I connected (via webinars and websites) with Wolfram Research, the Royal Society, the Upjohn Institute, the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine—absorbing advanced research and other resources. Additionally, *Quanta Magazine* nurtures my interests in the sociology of science as I retire. Indeed, there is more to see than can ever be seen; more to do than can ever be done in sociology and beyond. We sociologists must not quit or surrender to the horrors of the sociologically illiterate, the vile, and oppressors.

Enduring Lessons

My passion for sociology is ubiquitous! Whether it is scientific or humanistic, artistic or philosophical, mathematical or idiosyncratic, sociology covers vast social universes—real or imagined. Our intergenerational, international pursuit is multidimensional in shape or substance across temporal sequences, cohorts, and

social spaces. From my career in teaching sociology for 38 years, let me briefly share a few of my most poignant principles, practices, and lessons.

1. *Let your human interactions or endeavors generate excitement and enthusiasm for sociology! Always nurture and anchor your academic work, intellectually and experientially, in the best of sociology. Let the sociological imagination infuse your soul like a virus or contagion. Do not ever become stagnant. Inculcate the heights and depths, the circumference and expanse of sociology to maintain its perpetual mystery. This academic enterprise, a particular version of the life of the mind, is like nuclear energy in the quantum dimension; it is a sustainable treasure of scientific joy. Never forget that social systems are not sacred entities, they are socially-constructed by specific populations plus their ideologies as well as vested interests (notions of patriotism).*
2. *Be curious about all human beings, especially those unlike you or with whom you disagree most vehemently. Let the unique existence of all humans stir your scientific or humanistic sensibilities in teaching, research, consultations, and service. As in Star Trek, feast intellectually on the infinite diversity expressed in infinite combinations among sentient beings as well as all forms of life. Life is short and precious always, regardless of violence, pandemics, and social disorganization. Let sociology be the sweet music of your soul like Marvin Gaye's epic album: "What's Going On?"*
3. *Relish the awesome privilege of teaching sociology, regardless of pedagogy, students, and classes. Discern its promise and potential as a liberating force for everyone. Of course, as I retire, ugly Nazi-level pathologies contaminate the sanity of science in the United States and beyond--as Trumpism, neoliberalism, police corruption and violence, kakistocracy, sophistry, and anti-scientific idiocy invade recent generations within democratic societies. Sociological theories and research can readily expose the potential lunacy behind racism, conservatism, and an ignorant populism. These are societal maladies that have re-emerged, being promulgated by deficient narcissists with paranoid or predatory motives as well as criminal impulses. Sociologists must lead the fight in*

understanding these social evils and creating countermeasures to refute them, thereby minimizing their pernicious, nefarious consequences. The cultivation of sociology within popular culture or in resident academic systems can inoculate one from the utter foolishness of the inhumane, stupid, and violent. We must always be impatient with the aggressive stupidity that destroys or inhibits human flourishing in society.

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Access, Privacy, and Gender Divides in Teaching Online: Reflections from India

Abstract

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The entry of the COVID-19 pandemic into our lives meant that the process of teaching and learning shifted online. While issues of digital divide have been in the limelight, some other problems related to online teaching have remained under the radar. For instance, are there any privacy concerns associated with online teaching and learning? How does one discuss sensitive matters like gender, religion and caste in an online class? Also, most importantly, how does one 'teach' and/or 'learn' during a crisis? In this piece, I wish to explore some of these issues drawing from my teaching experiences in New Delhi – India's capital city, in the past year.

Keywords: Online teaching, privacy, ethics of teaching, India, Gender

Introduction

As the novel coronavirus entered India in January 2020 (Chakrabarti 2021), a national lockdown was announced on 25th March 2020 (BBC 2020). The process of teaching and learning moved online. Digital classrooms and technology suddenly became the way to continue this process. However, even before we could get used to online teaching and learning, reports started emerging of how it was exclusionary and accelerating the pre-existing digital divide. The transition from physical classrooms to online teaching and learning was rough, as there is unequal access to resources like electricity, computers, laptops, phones and the internet. There are gender, caste, class and regional gaps (Modi and Postaria 2020).

According to the Mission Antyodaya survey conducted by the Ministry of Rural Development in 2017-18, only 47 per cent of households in India receive regular electricity (Scroll 2020). Only 24 per cent of Indian households have an internet connection, and the number is even lower for rural areas – 15 per cent (NSS 2018). There is also a huge gender gap – according to the report by the Internet and Mobile Association of India, as opposed to 67 per cent of men having access to the internet, the number was only 33 per cent for women (IAMAL 2019). The digital divide has also taken lives. Students from socio-economically marginalised backgrounds in different parts of the country have committed suicide, unable to cope with the structural inequalities (Chandhoke 2020).

However, while issues of digital divide have been in the limelight, some other problems related to online teaching have remained under the radar. For instance, are there any privacy concerns associated with online teaching and learning? How does one discuss sensitive matters like gender, religion and caste in an online class? Also, most importantly, how does one ‘teach’ and/or ‘learn’ during a crisis? In this piece, I wish to explore some of those issues drawing from my teaching experiences in the past year.ⁱ I had also attended the webinar Teaching and Learning Anthropology during the Pandemic: Dilemmas, Challenges and Opportunities organised by the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) Teaching Anthropology Network (TAN) on 17th March 2021. The discussions from the webinar have also contributed to my piece.

Almost every introductory Sociology/Social Anthropology in India class tells us about the disciplinary history of the subject – that it emerged as a response to the crises caused by the French and Industrial revolutions in the West (Chaudhuri 2021). Amongst other things, the discipline emerged as a reaction to growing forms of modernity, capitalism, urbanisation and industrialisation. While I was not around when the discipline emerged, I have experienced and seen the global health pandemic called COVID 19 since March 2019. Thus, I attempt to combine the personal with the social (Mills 1959) and the knowledge of the self with that of society (Chaudhuri in Tandon et al. 2021). This reflexivity and self-introspection are, of course, critical to the discipline of Sociology/Anthropology (Chaudhuri 2019).

Sociology in India is closely connected with Social Anthropology. In its early years of development in India – in the 1940s and 1950s, most Indian sociologists were trained in Social Anthropology. They were advocates of field work as a viable method that could look at issues of social reality from a sociological lens (Mukherjee 1977). The boundaries between the two disciplines are blurred – with practitioners treating Sociology and Social Anthropology as one and the same (Palackal 2015). Sociological inquiry in India is concerned with studying both the questions of tradition and modernity (Beteille in Das 2013). They frequently study ‘social anthropological topics’ like kinship, religion, caste, village, etc. (Deshpande, Sundar and Uberoi 2000). Thus, both in terms of research methods and content, the boundaries between Sociology and Social Anthropology are blurred in India. This close relationship between the two is seen as a source of strength. Prestigious journals like *Sociological Bulletin*, *Contributions to Indian Sociology* and *Economic and Political Weekly* publish works by sociologists and social anthropologists interchangeably (ibid). In fact, some of the papers that I have taught as a Sociology teacher include *Sociology of Religion*, *Sociology of Kinship* and *Gender and Violence*. Thus, the experiences of teaching Sociology in India can also be helpful in teaching Social Anthropology.

The Education Setting

I had been teaching Sociology to a batch of undergraduate students in an open university in New Delhi – India’s capital city - since January 2020, before the lockdown was announced in March. This was not a full-time, regular undergraduate course but a part-time correspondence one in which the learning mode was self-study. The open university has numerous study centres, and the one that I taught in was an ‘all-women’s’ one. As part of this Open Bachelor in Arts (Honours) programme students could choose papers from various subjects, including Sociology, Hindi, English, Economics, Political Science, History. Prior to the lockdown in March 2020, I would meet them every Saturday for two hours in the designated counselling centre, and they would utilise that time to clarify their thoughts on the course readings. In September 2020 I shifted to a full-time role teaching regular undergraduate students enrolled on a Bachelor of Arts Sociology course in a women’s college in New Delhi. Thus, the

timespan that helps me formulate my thoughts and insights for this piece is from March 2020 to the present (May 2021) – roughly fourteen months of online teaching during which I taught both correspondence and regular undergraduate students.

Interestingly, all my students are women. While the rough size of the correspondence classroom was around 50, the approximate size of the regular class is 40. Both are three-year-long courses. While there are no attendance regulations in the correspondence course, one has to attend a minimum of 66 per cent of the total lectures to be eligible to sit for examinations in the regular BA sociology course. Most of the students pursuing their undergraduate degrees from the open university are from socially and economically marginalised families. Pursuing an undergraduate course from an open university is cheaper and gives them the chance to pursue other activities. The fee for the undergraduate course is between Rs. 3000-6000 per semester. These students are either pursuing some technical or skill-based course on the side (learning TALLY, CorelDRAW, etc.) or preparing for lower-level government jobs. For them, the undergraduate degree is a qualification that they should attain so that their path to employment becomes easier. Most of the jobs that they are aspiring for prefer candidates with an undergraduate degree. Some of these students also work in beauty parlours or shops as saleswomen to earn an income and support their families while they study. Open and distance learning also provides students who had to leave their education mid-way a chance to complete it later while working. In contrast, the students pursuing a regular undergraduate degree are from relatively better-off families and are involved in a full-time course. The fee for this course is between Rs. 25000-30000 per annum. I encountered similar and different issues with both sets of students when we shifted to online learning.

Material and Technological Issues

Let me begin by first talking about some of the technological issues students face in online learning. As stated above, most students enrolled in the correspondence course are from economically marginalised families. As such, their technical knowledge is limited. This was the first time they had engaged with online learning. After the university had instructed that all assignments had to be submitted online, most of

them struggled to set up an email account. Students were also used to submitting handwritten assignments, a widespread practice in most Indian universities. So, with the strict lockdown in place, they struggled to find open stationery shops that sold A-4 size papers on which to write these assignments. Students would then encounter difficulties scanning their handwritten assignments and submitting them electronically. In contrast, students in the regular undergraduate classroom faced much lesser technological challenges in shifting to online learning. Most of them owned a laptop, and all of them at least owned a smartphone. Thus, the challenges that the students in the correspondence classroom faced were directly connected to their socio-economic backgrounds, reflecting a class bias.

WhatsApp, Online Classes and Privacy Classrooms

However, it is not just technological and material issues alone that shaped the experiences of students differently. There were other social concerns as well. I would meet the students pursuing their undergraduate degrees from an open university every Saturday at the designated centre in regular circumstances. The students would come with questions and doubts, and I would help clarify them. But after the lockdown, there was an online shift. There was an expectation that teachers would take their counselling sessions online. However, the problem was that most of these students did not even own smartphones. Possessing a computer or a laptop was also out of the question and as was having an internet connection.

In the past decade, India has seen a substantial increase in mobile phone use – which have become the major source of information exchange. However, there are disparities in who uses these mobile phones. According to the Mobile Gender Gap Report of 2020 by GSMA - an association that represents the interests of mobile network operators worldwide, – 63 per cent of women, compared to 79 per cent of men, own mobile phones (GSMA 2020: 11). However, women are 50% less likely than men to use mobile internet, with only 21% of women and 42% of men being mobile internet users (GSMA 2020: 11). Therefore, even ‘free’ google meet classes were out of the question. The university also did not provide teachers or students with access to a paid subscription to zoom or google meet.

After some deliberation, we figured out that WhatsApp would be the best solution to our problems. A group was formed which was used to exchange information. Students would post their queries as texts or audio notes between 9-11 am Indian Standard Time (IST) on Saturday, and I would address them during this time itself. Records of class participation and attendance would have to be kept and shared with the university later. Some of them would also fix a time later on and call to clarify certain issues.

While this system of WhatsApp classes was the best possible solution to deal with the crisis, it led to certain privacy concerns. As noted above, most students do not have personal smartphones and would use their brother's or father's devices to join the WhatsApp group. They had no knowledge and/or control of how the data saved on these phones were being used later. Soon, I started hearing complaints from many students that they would get unwanted messages from their classmates' relatives (mostly men). In fact, many a time, their fathers or brothers read those messages, which lead to quarrels as the family members of students receiving these unwelcome messages assumed that it was a two-way conversation. Most of these female students live under strict parental control, and receiving texts from men can create serious familial problems. Most of these students were only able to pursue their education because this study centre was in an 'all-women zone'. Some students also mentioned that they had started getting calls from unknown numbers. It was a breach of their privacy, and there was a genuine concern about their education getting interrupted. I had also received a message that read 'Hi' from an unknown number, but I had ignored it, assuming it to be spam.

However, after these complaints were brought to my notice, I left a strongly worded message in the group that those using others' phones should tell their family members not to message anyone. But I was quite convinced that this was a half-baked solution as there was no way one could keep a check on who is messaging whom and when. Additionally, there was always an opportunity to say that the message had been sent 'by mistake'. In such situations, it is not easy to take any action without concrete evidence.

These incidents illustrate how shifting to online teaching and learning led to a serious breach of privacy for the students and threatened their education prospects.

The National Education Policy (2020) of India states that open and distance learning courses can democratise education, giving students from economically marginalised backgrounds an opportunity to complete their education without regular classes (NEP 2020). It was this very democratisation that was under threat. The digital divide that already existed (Singh and Vimalkumar 2019) was being extended in new ways.

In contrast, among the regular full-time BA Sociology students, it was possible to hold classes on google meet as the university provided teachers with paid subscription-based accounts. It was convenient to share information and reading material in the google classroom. For them, being a part of WhatsApp groups was also easier as they had their own smartphones. But there was another kind of privacy concern associated with taking classes in the digital mode in the full-time course. Teachers have to record their lectures and upload them in the classroom if requested by students. They could then download and use these recordings for further reference. But for many teachers uploading recorded lectures brought additional worries. . One is unsure of how the recordings will be circulated, particularly in the context of increasing threats to academic freedom in India (Sundar 2018). This makes teachers hesitant to record and share their lectures. These concerns are exacerbated by the student practice of leaving cameras off. There are multiple reasons why students keep their cameras and microphones switched off. The most obvious is limited data connection. Most students do not have unlimited internet data, and hence switching off the camera can help them to save data. Secondly, not everyone has a separate, private space in their homes to attend online classes. There is movement of people, and hence, students prefer to keep their cameras and microphones off to cut out the noise. Many are also not comfortable showing their homes to others as it can reveal details about their private lives. Students often also prefer to ask questions by typing in the chat box instead of switching on their microphone.

These are all genuine reasons. But for teachers, it can be challenging as well. We are not sure if the students' family members are also listening to our lectures and if it might create uncomfortable circumstances both for the students or for ourselves. Sociology as a subject challenges pre-existing stereotypes and commonsensical knowledge and can be considered 'offensive' by parents and relatives. Thus, as a teacher, one is often hyperaware of these privacy and security concerns in online

teaching. Attending to these privacy and security concerns are novel challenges that the digital mode has introduced.

Teaching and Learning in a Crisis: Gender Disparities

While access to resources and privacy concerns emerge differently when teaching across the correspondence and regular full-time BA courses, there are also certain similarities in how students and teachers have experienced the digital mode. One of them is that all teachers and students are experiencing a global health crisis, which raises the question – what does teaching and learning mean in times of crises like these? Sociologists like Ulrich Beck have point to the ways risks and uncertainties can shape societal and individual responses (Beck 1986). But how does one ‘teach’ and/or ‘learn’ during a crisis?

The shift to online teaching and learning was considered as the ‘new normal’. However, this ‘new normal’ raises several challenges that remain unaddressed. How does one address questions of inequality and exclusion in the classroom when the students themselves are suffering because of these? Students complain of both physical and mental exhaustion. There is a feeling of ‘purposelessness’, loneliness, lack of motivation and fatigue, a situation not unique to students in India (Gillis and Krull 2020). Many universities and institutions lack counselling support systems.

With university campuses and colleges shutting down, students had to move back to their homes. At home, they are not just ‘students’; they are also family members – who are expected to contribute to household work. Many have thus complained about the lack of time to attend online classes. They have to juggle household and caregiving roles with their education. Students would often listen to the lectures while performing household chores like washing dishes and chopping vegetables, switching off their cameras and microphones. Some others would say that they ‘are out’ – picking up stuff from the market and so on.

The gendered nature of household and care work is not new (Oakley 1974; Hoschschild and Machung 1989; Chakravarti 2008). It is mostly women who are doing these works. However, because the pandemic increased hours of ‘staying at home’, women’s burden also rose. The same disproportional gender impact has also

been true for women in academia. More women have lost their jobs than men since the pandemic began as well as publishing lesser articles and books (Miller 2021; Skinner et al. 2021). Both students and teachers have been impacted by this. In fact, many of my female married colleagues with children have complained of feeling overburdened by online teaching. In these situations, I often felt grateful that I am unmarried and have no children.

Is it then possible to ‘teach’ and/or ‘learn’ during such uncertainty (Alexander 2017; Harp-Rushing 2017), particularly when universities do not have the infrastructure to cope with these unprecedented situations? As teachers, one is bound by structural requirements. We have to check essays and submit assignment marks by a stipulated time. How does one ask their students to submit their assignments if they say they are sick or taking care of ill family members? Is it possible to teach and talk about inequality in these circumstances? These are unaddressed questions that raise both equality and ethical issues.

Conclusion

Engaging with questions of teaching and learning during crises and times of uncertainty is critical for disciplinary development. This reflective piece, that draws from my teaching experiences in India, is an attempt to contribute to this. We need, as a discipline, to develop a pedagogy that takes account of crises and uncertainties, and also their regional variations (Tauritz 2016). As this piece shows, questions of unequal access and its associated fallouts can be shaped by very local, cultural forms. It is not easy to shift to online learning in a country like India because of pre-existing economic and gendered inequalities.

Marginalised sections of the population - such as women - face additional challenges in protecting their privacy and balancing their household work and education during crises like COVID-19. Thus, we need to discuss and think about ways of dealing with these novel challenges of access, privacy, security and gender disparities that have emerged with online teaching and learning. While continuing the teaching and learning process is important, we must reflect on how to addressing these associated concerns.

Students and teachers do not learn in a vacuum but are part of a society that is struck crisis and hence needs to be situated as such.

While the use of technology and the shift to the digital mode has been the preferred way to cope with COVID-19 related disruptions in education, we must also think about its impact on those directly involved. Teaching and learning from home is not a linear and universal experience as the Indian case illustrates.

Additional Notes

This paper expands on a blog post where I introduced some of these themes and was published in Applied Worldwide on 19th November 2020:

<https://www.appliedworldwide.com/>

This paper has also been published in Teaching Anthropology (2021):

https://www.teachinganthropology.org/ojs/index.php/teach_anth/article/view/618/619

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Sociological Analysis of Teaching in India and Persisting Digital Divides in the Pandemic

Abstract

With the pandemic there have been various transitions and shifts in the pedagogy of education in India, with teaching and learning methods witnessing metamorphosis. Sociology as a discipline teaches to be adaptable with the society in changing circumstances. The subject and the forms of teaching by addressing the existing divides and inequalities and by arriving at a balanced world in this crisis was a major challenge. The difficulties arising with pandemic teaching and learning, specifically people residing in remote locations, was a major issue. This paper evaluates how teaching sociology in Covid-19 times is connected to new forms of pedagogy, within the context of the importance of education for the growth and development of nation. Sociology can address the social changes brought on by the transformation of India's education system with the NEP (New Education Policy) 2020. Teachers and students reshaped themselves with new forms of online learning and teaching under the NEP's timing and meaningful approach to education. The discipline of sociology embraces all vital aspects of social life, especially to mould oneself with the situation and times. Empowering the students remains an utmost priority

Keywords: Teaching, learning, sociology, education, digital divide

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Introduction

The advent and repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic in India, the universal lockdown, and staying at home among students to prevent the virus has led to the birth, growth and development of online teaching in India. The rise of the virtual classroom and technological adaptation via Google meet and Zoom has become the norm of the day. The New Education Policy (2020) introduced in times of the pandemic was intended as a transformational policy and a permanent cure to the educational problems in India with the aim to blend the Indian knowledge system with modern education. It was a visionary policy in this distressing time. The pandemic has brought innovation in teaching and learning policies the NEP has brought innovative ways of learning as a major step of educational reform, addressing the rural urban divide that caused great damage to the marginalized with multimodel ways of learning also with the use of technology. Viewing these shifts from the sociological lens – sociology being an important discipline theorizing and charting changes in the social order and the interplay of social forces – enables sociologists to provide solutions to social problems especially in policy formulations and practice. Geoff Whitley (1985) in *Sociology and School Knowledge* analyses the connections of sociology, curriculum studies, educational policy and practice. The objective of education being transmitting knowledge, with each society having social arrangements for cohesion and survival. With Durkheim and Manheim highlighting the social role of education, the aspects of gender sensitization in education system is a remarkable venture. Teaching Sociology in India with the subject being very vast and all encompassing to several social dimensions helps to understand the pandemic much better by proposing betterment to educators and learners by moving ahead in the social sphere.

Sociology and Social Phenomena in Teaching

The teacher and the social subjects are united by the social world who receive social lessons throughout their everyday life. The fundamentals of social construction imply transformations of knowledge in production and reproduction of the mental

structure of the society which discloses new sociological understandings in the phenomenon of teaching. This teaching dominates the educational perspective of the society with social reproduction of knowledge. The modern sociological theories emphasize the communicational realities of society, which the discipline makes it feasible to understand the underlying social occurrences or phenomena. Hence, the phenomena of teaching are the important element in the sociological analysis of education, communication and social transformation of important knowledge. When we try to understand that how sociology helps in the existence and co-existence of individuals, sociological analysis is required for the understandings of social reality within the learners and the conditions that affect their mental structures. As Anthony Giddens argues that social institutions like school, colleges and universities are the result of social practices rooted within social space and time, social, values, norms and rules influence communication including teaching communication. Sociologists have different specificities with mobilizing sociological imagination, fostering reflexivity at different levels with unlearning and relearning during the COVID-19 pandemic (much of which we take for granted about society).

The Remembered Class Room with Digital divides

The pandemic has made a seismic shift in the world education system with virtual education being the new normal alongside new ways of discovery and engagement. The role of C.W. Mills' sociological imagination (1959) is to understand the biographies in the historical moment. The Covid-19 pandemic affecting India's social, economic and political crisis is having an impact on students and educators. For example, the classroom involves students from different backgrounds, specifically students from the remote areas who had difficulties in accessing internet and learning during the pandemic. This has to a great extent affected the mental and physical health of the students who cannot study due to the challenges. Specifically, the students with special needs are more swayed with the global catastrophe which becomes a major threat to their well-being.

Using a sociological lens allows for recognition of the sociological passages of change causing disruptions in students' daily lives. The discipline gives in-depth knowledge about the consequences of human systems and social relationships in times of heightened insecurity and uncertainty. The COVID-19 outbreak impacted the feelings, motives, behaviors and thoughts of educators and learners in the virtual learning space.

The rapid shift in the Indian education system under NEP (2020), with e-learning resurfacing, exacerbated numerous issues of inequality and digital divides. There are huge regional disparities and gender biases. Girls in vulnerable households are already loaded with substantial domestic duties and male learning is given priority. This is compounded by the unavailability of technological gadgets and internet in these remote homes and regions, preventing online learning for girls under the pandemic. There has been also silent exclusion of girls from the educational access, ties to social menaces like early marriage and gendered trafficking. The pandemic has only further silenced these processes and created havoc in the lives of the children.

According to UNICEF (2020) the report in India estimates that school closures have created major problems for 247 million students in elementary and secondary education, with 28 million in pre-schools and the Anganwadis. This is a violation of young people's educational rights.

Sociology enables students and educators alike to understand the issues affecting the real world under Covid-19, including reflecting on major deepening issues like gender inequalities, divides of technology and major adaptation strategies. The glaring digital divides in teaching and learning with the pandemic gives an opportunity for digital inclusion and a boost to digital education. The launch of National Mission for Digital Inclusion aiming to provide access, availability and affordability to digital device was a great step. This National Broadband Mission aims to provide internet services to all the remote villages by 2022 for accessing and connecting to learning.

Using Sociology as a Key Component to Survive

Sociology educators have often been effective in exploring the merits and demerits of teaching and learning, with a major analysis of policy perspectives that evolves out of the depriving conditions and crisis situations. The lives of India's diverse students are widely understood through the sociological discourses, particularly through teaching about the gender impacts of Covid-19 while evaluating the outcomes of the belief that education is a tool for empowering and enabling women. Sociology as a discipline is all inclusive which gives coverage to all facets of an individual's life. Making best use of the pandemic social lens to make the process of teaching and creating a better learning environment for the students remains a goal of sociology.

The ambitions of Indian education are captured in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4) which ensures equitable and quality education for all by 2030. Teaching the discipline not only requires an understanding of students' perspectives but also ways for forming policies and programmes.

This process has made me rethink the value of education, the classroom and many other social aspects. Sociology embraces also the need to support students emotionally during the times of catastrophe by addressing their fears and anxieties in the distress, alongside the society-individual relationship. Students represent a community who are affected by various factors and are making a shift from the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic, which remains a very strenuous task. Erving Goffman (1956) depicts that interactions between individuals depend on their environment, which drives them to seek meaning of the situation and control over it. In these times of vulnerabilities those learners affected try to devise ways to deal with anxieties and fears. The rise in virtual classrooms all of a sudden highly impacted their mental health. The rise in coping methods was also widespread. Therefore as a discipline, sociology addressed the social realities and teaching in itself was developing resilience and protecting the well-being of the students in these times.

Conclusions

The educational crisis, deprivation, as well as the policy perspectives addressing these has led to a rebuilding of India's education system in the Covid-19 era. Sociology has played a role in assessing processes of learning and teaching, as various social constraints and pandemic divides being the hindered yet contributed to reforming the society. The lessons from the pandemic like social distancing, virtual teaching, gender equations, and many social media aspects have promoted a new social consciousness. Sociology shows how the pandemic is reshaping new roles and redefining them.

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The Crisis of Lebanese Higher Education or the Crisis of the Lebanese Political System?

Abstract

Lebanon is suffering from a severe economic-financial crisis that the World Bank ranks in the top 10, possibly top 3, most severe crises episodes globally since the mid-nineteenth century. This turmoil has resulted from years of corruption, mismanagement, and neoliberal policies, which put the whole political system in the bottleneck. All sectors in the country and especially, higher education, are enduring critical problems. This piece of writing intends to describe the collapsed situation of Lebanese higher education as well as the conditions engendering this breakdown. In discussing this issue, we focus on the different reasons that let private universities to redress the crisis differently than the public university. However, we suppose that this collapsing situation is not a momentary event; however, on the contrary, it is a case that expresses the crisis of the Lebanese political system. Lebanese higher education system has its share of mischievous policies. Nevertheless, the crisis impacted the public sector the most

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Keywords: Lebanese economic and financial crisis, neoliberal policies, corruption, higher education, Lebanese Public University, system crisis

Introduction

In the past few years, Lebanon has had the highest rate of university graduates — not only in the Middle East but also in the entire world. The rate of tertiary

graduates was estimated around 80% of the population in 2018. ¹ However, this high rate was threatened to decrease dramatically. This is due to the unprecedented financial and economic crisis, which has hit the country since 2019. This paper intends to describe the collapsed situation of the Lebanese higher education as well as the conditions engendering this breakdown. In discussing this issue, we claim that this collapsing situation is not a momentary event; however, on the contrary, it is a case that expresses the crisis of the Lebanese political system.

In the process, this piece of writing aims at answering the following questions: How is the Lebanese education system affected by the financial and economic crisis? Why has the Lebanese public university (LU) been impacted more than the private sector?

To answer these questions, we have divided this paper into many sections. First, we have introduced the causes of the Lebanese compound crisis. Second, we have provided the readers with an overview of the history of the higher education system in Lebanon. Third, we have shown the impacts of the crisis on the higher education sector, emphasizing on the Lebanese University — the only public university in the country. In the end, we have come up with our conclusion.

Roots of the Lebanese complex crisis

To begin with, the Lebanese people have raided the streets since the 17th of October 2019, triggered by decades of corruption and economic mismanagement. They hit the streets demanding to put an end to the authoritarian oligarchy and the political confessionalism as well as asking for the right to free access to quality higher education (Kabbanji, 2021). The country has sunk into an unprecedented compounded crisis, in addition to the Corona pandemic and lately the Beirut Port explosion² that destroyed over half of Beirut city, where the universities' damages reached millions of dollars (Hoban, 2020). Consequently, the latest World Bank

¹ Trading Economics, Lebanon - Percentage of All Students in Tertiary Education Enrolled in ISCED 6, Both Sexes

<https://tradingeconomics.com/lebanon/percentage-of-all-students-in-tertiary-education-enrolled-in-isced-6-both-sexes-percent-wb-data.html> , access time 8 July 2021.

² On 4 August 2020, a large amount of ammonium nitrate stored at the Port of Beirut in the capital city of Lebanon exploded, causing at least 218 deaths, 7,000 injuries, and US\$15 billion in property damage, and leaving an estimated 300,000 people homeless. Experts consider Beirut port explosion from one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history

report 'Lebanon Economic Monitor' ranked Lebanon's crisis as one of the top 10 (possibly top 3) most severe crisis episodes experienced globally since the mid-nineteenth century (World Bank, 2021).

Moreover, the reasons underlying the compounded crisis date back to around 30 years ago. In 1989, the Taif Agreement³ ended the civil war (1975-1990) and set new policies, which impacted the country politically, economically, and financially.

Politically, this accord fixed a presidential and parliamentary election, where the major parties of the war eventually became the ruling political authorities. The latter has used the state welfare as "a patronage resource and sought to retain control over monopoly rents in consumer markets" (Baumann, 2012). This is the structural reason for establishing a wide resource-exhausting net of clientelism.

Economically, the successive governments adopted the neoliberal policies based on the "state retreat from domains, in which it formerly intervened, its promotion of market-led policies, and its creation of new, purportedly more efficient institutions and agencies" (Verdeil, 2018). One of the main consequences of the adopted policies was the proliferation of market-oriented private universities, which would merchandise higher education.

Financially, since 1992, governments have funded the reconstruction plans⁴ and the expansion of the public sector by debt. The interest rate on the debt reached as high as 36%, where the banking sector was the primary debtor. In 1990, the banking sector held two-thirds of government debt, while the Central Bank was responsible for the other third. Subsequently, banks mainly relied on the public debt to accumulate their capital. Thus, the capital's investments have been channeled towards the public debt and not to the real economic sectors like manufacturing, technology, agriculture, tourism, services, and basically higher education.

³ This agreement, which ended the civil war in Lebanon.

⁴ The National Emergency Rehabilitation Programme (NERP), involving US\$ 2.3 billion public investment over the 1993-1995 period, was proposed and adopted in 1992. It was designed as a multi-sectoral operation focused on emergency repairs and rehabilitation of physical and social infrastructure. The program was subsequently expanded and merged into a ten-year plan, known as Horizon 2000 for Development and Reconstruction, announced by the Government in October 1994. Since the completion of the initial version (US\$ 18.5 billion financing requirements in the 1993-2002 period), there have been several revisions to take into account the evolving national and regional situation and developments in critical factors affecting the course of recovery.

Moreover, the public debt, high interest rates, and oligopolies over trade and production (like oil imports and cement industry) were some of the main reasons behind the extraordinary wealth and income inequality in Lebanon. It is worth mentioning that some experts expect triple-digit inflation as well as a projected increase in poverty to 45% and in extreme poverty to 22%. (World Bank, 21 & Assouad, 2017).

On top of that, Lebanon currently has the highest number of refugees per capita in the world (Yassin et al., 2015). In addition to the existing Palestinian and Iraqi refugee populations, Lebanon hosts 1,017,433 registered Syrian refugees comprising 247,736 households in Lebanon, with an additional estimated 300,000-500,000 unregistered refugees (Janmyr, 2016). Such a sharp increase in population has strained the tiny country's limited resources and has impacted the economic, social, health, and education sectors (El-Ghali et al., 2017).

The aforementioned factors have led to the breakdown of both the financial and economic sectors of the country, which is clear due to many different aspects. However, it is important to mention that the current turmoil is not a momentary crisis that has affected some sectors in the country, subsequently; some adopted reforms will straighten things out. On the contrary, as Kabbanji describes: it is a “crisis that neither affects the way [the system] operates, nor its structural cleavage between its sectarian dimension on the one hand, nor its dependence on the looting of public and private resources (bank deposits of small depositors) by a few located at the heart of the rentier-financial system on the other hand. It is a system in crisis with all its components and it can no longer continue” (Kabbanji, 2021).

Features of the Lebanese higher education system

To clearly understand the crisis's impacts on the higher education system, one has to shed light on the history, structure, and functioning of this system in Lebanon.

The Lebanese higher education system is composed of two sectors: the public that consists of the Lebanese Public University (LU) and the private sector that can be divided into three categories. The first, which is the oldest, is known as “the elite universities”. The second, is the market-oriented universities. The third, is the religious universities (see table below).

Table 1 - Total number of higher education institutions in Lebanon by type for the academic year 2021:

Type of Institution	Number	Year of establishment
Lebanese Public university (LU)	1	1951
Oldest private universities / founded by the religious missionaries	4	1866-1939
Private universities (licensed and operational)	32	1986-....
Private institutes and colleges	9	1986-2015
Private institutes of Theology (two Christian institutes and one Muslim)	3	1932-1999
Private universities (licensed but not operational)	2	

Source: MEHE website, 2021.

Establishment of the sector

The Private Higher education sector in Lebanon backs long before the foundation of the state of Lebanon in 1920. This sector was polarized — for around 85 years — by two private universities: the American University of Beirut (AUB), which was founded by the evangelic missionary in 18665, and Saint Joseph’s University (USJ) which was created in 1875, by the Jesuit Fathers, with the collaboration of Lyon University (Herzstein, 2010). In 1951, after students’ relentless demands and violent confrontations with the police, the Lebanese Public University (LU) was established. The foundation of LU was considered a step towards the democratization of the higher education sector, by making it independent from religious and foreign authorities, and it also “became a major theme of mobilization during the late sixties and the early seventies, a period during which rural-urban migration accelerated” (Nahas, 2010, p:51). Moreover, this institution was established to fulfill a main role of providing adequate training and learning for instructors and teachers (Faculty of Pedagogy) as well as providing the state’s institutions with qualified professional staff. In the late sixties, for the socio-confessional balance, two other private universities were founded. The first is the Arab University of Beirut (BAU), “a subsidiary of Alexandria’s University in Egypt, which [was] considered at the time as an “Islamic” counterweight

⁵ See the following website:

<https://www.aub.edu.lb/AboutUs/Pages/history.aspx#:~:text=After%20collecting%204%2C000%20in%20England,students%20on%20December%203%2C%201866.>

to the domination of AUB and USJ as Christian universities. The second is the Saint-Esprit University, which marks the direct entry of the Lebanese Maronite Monasticism into academia” (Kabbanji, 2012).

The higher education sector remained exclusive to these universities — with some breaches — until the nineties when the sector witnessed the emergence of a new model that is known as market-oriented universities⁶. With their emergence as a response to new liberal policies, there was a “growing demand for higher education in Lebanon” (Jalakh, 2019).

Origin of difference

The private universities differ in many aspects: teach different curricula, address different student clientele, embrace different strategies of formation, and adopt different types of governance. Nevertheless, all of them — since their establishment — tend to homogenize their educational system with the LMD curricula. Although, the private Higher Education is governed by a new law announced in 2014, and work under the tutorship of the Ministry of Education and Higher education (MEHE) through the Directorate General of Higher Education” (Jammal et al, 2017); however, their freedom is guaranteed by the Constitution. According to Article 10, chapter 2 of the Lebanese Constitution, “Education shall be free” and every religious community has the right to have its own schools or universities (Lebanese constitution, 1990). This autonomy reflects their independent governance and free choices from the state.

In Lebanon, 80 to 90% of the resources of private universities come from student tuition fees and therefore rely on the solvency of direct beneficiaries. The clienteles in private higher education come from the most stable middle strata; in other words, government officials and public and private sector employees, with collective bargaining agreements, granting a premium for the education of children. The overwhelming majority of these officials and employees choose private education;

⁶ 48 private universities have been established during the last two decades in Lebanon, knowing that population of Lebanon is 6,819,062, based on Worldometer elaboration of the latest United Nations data.

thus, we can observe a mechanism that allows private higher education to be partially financed from public funds (Kabbanji, 2012). Therefore, despite the common idea that says “Private Higher Education institutions do not receive any direct support from the state” (Jammal et al, 2017), it is clear that they indirectly benefit from it.

The Lebanese University differs in many ways from private universities. It teaches mainly in Arabic, English, or French basically in the applied scientific faculties. Regarding its governance, LU is ruled by the Council of the University formed of its president and respective faculties 'deans. The deans are generally selected by the Council of Ministers from a list elected by the faculty members. Nonetheless, this is currently not the case, because the president of LU — which was appointed for his confessional and political affiliation — has put his hand on the prerogatives of the council and has been illegally ruling the university with a group of deans. Regarding its clientele, they mainly originate from poor and middle-class strata. Moreover, LU is funded by the Government via the ministry of higher education (MEHE) with a moderate contribution from the students (see the table below). This budget is allocated to LU, without following any performance-based funding and is mostly designed to cover salaries and administrative needs (Jammal, 2017). In fact, it has been subjected to recurrent cuts since the nineties, and between the years 2005 and 2014, the Ministry of Finance adjusted the university's budget towards more crucial areas within the government.

Table 2 - Tuition Fees

Tuition fees in LU per academic year	Lebanese students	International students	Tuition fees in LU per academic year
Bachelor in faculties of theoretical disciplines	195000 LBP/ equal to 9.75\$	945000 LBP	Bachelor in faculties of theoretical disciplines
Bachelor in faculties of applied disciplines	245000 LBP/ equal to 12.25\$	995000 LBP	Bachelor in faculties of applied disciplines

The tuition fees within the Public Higher Education are almost free. It contributes to only 6.5% of its total budget (National report, 2019). The humble fees make the LU attractive to students from poor and middle-class strata, for example, students enrollment in higher education reached 219,248 students during the academic year 2018/2019. Of these students, 37% (81,024 students) were enrolled in

the LU, while 63% (138,224 students) were distributed over all private universities. Therefore, it is clear that the LU attracts the largest number of students.

Neoliberal policies and the reconfiguration of the higher education field

After the end of civil war (1975-1990), with the announcement of the Taif agreement, the successive Lebanese governments adopted neoliberal policies which were based primarily on “using state welfare as a patronage resource” (Baumann, *ibid*, 2012). This in turn has created a vicious circle“ since the state is unable to provide many services [that] the Lebanese demand, [and] the population becomes reliant on services provided by politicians or political parties, delegitimizing the state for citizens, who then bestow that legitimacy on political representatives” (Young, 2009).

As a result, the socio-economic scene has been reconstructed, based on the distribution of power between the politico-sectarian groups (Baydoun, 2012, P: 256). At the same time, a new socio-educational policy reconstructed higher education structures as Kabbanji elucidates (2012). Subsequently, since 1990 the Lebanese higher education system has witnessed a rapid expansion of private universities to reach 48 institutions that are mainly owned by the members of the ruling sectarian political class. This new batch of universities was perceived as a lucrative business and has opened the sector to the commodification of education (Jalakh, 2019).

Furthermore, the Lebanese University has known the largest amount of changes with regards to the neoliberal and sectarian policies. Its relative autonomy guaranteed by the law⁷ was breached by many decrees. One was when the legislative decree N° 1228 branched the university into 5 branches and allowed the university president to confiscate university council prerogatives. Another decree — N° 1167 issued in 1978 — gave the university president the right to nominate members of the teaching body instead of the college boards. Those decrees left, along with the adopted neoliberal policies in higher education, a clear imprint on the structure of LU as a scientific field. Some of these changes include but are not limited to the radical change in its morphological structure as a scientific field and the amendment on the

⁷ Law 75/67 endows Lebanese university administrative, academic, and financial freedom.

⁸ N°122, 30 June 1977

LU role. The first change spurred the growth of the enrollment from rural areas, — considerably females — as well as the significant expansion in political and confessional recruitment of professors distinguished by their confessional and political affiliations. The second change was the radical hit of the role of the LU as a public institution, which turned it into a patronage and clientelism resource to reproduce the ruling class.

Nonetheless, one has to wonder how these universities participate in the economy. We mentioned that LU originated to provide the state with academic and qualified staff. Whereas, one has to wonder how a large number of private universities serves a small country with a population that does not exceed 6 million. The reality of youth migration may explain this phenomenon, where “the total stock of Lebanese emigrants, stood at around 1.9 million out of a total population of 4.5 million and the majority of emigrants [were] aged between 20 and 64 years” (Dibeh, Fakih, & Marrouch, 2017). In relation to the high rate of tertiary graduates (80% of the population), it can be concluded that private universities, basically the market-oriented ones, release graduates into the market for the purpose of exportation rather than feeding the national economy.

For all the mentioned reasons, the responses of the two sectors toward the crisis would differ dramatically.

The sector responses to the challenges

This overview on the higher education sector helps in reading better how the sector will be affected differently by the financial and economic crisis. It goes without saying that both the private and public sectors have been affected by the devaluation of the Lebanese currency, COVID-19, and the declining socio-economic conditions. Both, public and private universities have been damaged, but the degree of detriment varies regarding the autonomy of the institution from the state or “ruling class” that offers the universities administration, its malleability in taking free, and flexible decisions.

Private universities absorbing the crisis

Private universities alleviated their losses in many ways. One of these solutions was the raising and dollarization of tuition fees. In this context, the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the Lebanese American University (LAU) adopted a new Lira rate equal to 3,900 LBP/USD (the official rate is still 1,515 LBP/USD). That step dollarized the tuition fees and raised them by around 260%. For example, the tuition fee of only one year in the school of medicine at AUB increased from around 60 million LBP to about 160 million LBP. Hence, chances of pursuing a university degree are now challenging, where incomes are still equal to the 1,507 LBP/USD rate. Moreover, some private “universities required the payment of tuition fees in dollars and imposed restrictions on students who did not pay [the] fees on time” (El-Ghali, 2020).

Other dire resorts for private universities were the dismissal of some professors, blinding some courses, and the closure of entire academic departments. For instance, AUB — considered one of the most prestigious universities in the country — dismissed 850 staff members, closed entire academic departments, and canceled many contracts of its part-time lecturers (Rose.S, 2020; Dhaybe, 2020). Lately, things have taken a serious path when the Crisis Observatory at the American University of Beirut has concluded that the crisis-hit nation is getting into a 3rd mass exodus wave of immigration. The report mentioned that in AUB itself 190 professors, who immigrated, were already registered during the year of their departure, which makes up about 15 % of the academic physique.⁹ Nonetheless, In order to redress the bleeding of human resources, AUB’s administration decided to pay “part of their [professors]’ salaries in fresh dollars, after the university financed it with about \$150 million from its endowment abroad” (Hussein, 2021). In the same context, after losing around 10-15% of its academic staff, LAU followed the lead of AUB and paid part of the salaries in USD.

⁹ See the Facebook page Lebanon Crisis Observatory, Indicators warn of a ‘third mass exodus’ from Lebanon: AUB Crisis Observatory, <https://www.facebook.com/CrisisObservatory/>

This collapsing situation has pushed eleven universities to issue an adjuration statement asking “the authorities to act urgently to prevent the higher education sector’s collapse”, and mentioning that it will have “a catastrophic impact on the social reality in Lebanon in general” (Statement, 2020).

The LU: the infectious relation with the political system?

The financial and economic crisis weighs even more deeply on LU’s faculty and staff members. The continuous devaluation of the Lebanese currency, which has lost 90% of its value since October 2019, has not only effectively reduced the university’s budget, but has also affected the social and medical benefits of the professors and employees (Al-Modon, 2021). This situation will inevitably lead to the inability of LU in securing the simplest needs of its students, like printing paper for exams, a scenario that has previously occurred during the exam periods (Bsat, 2021). This dire fact has pushed the Commission of the Association of Full-Time Professors at LU to release a statement announcing that they “refuse to start a new academic year, and stop all academic work starting from the first of October 2021” (Middle East, 2021). That means that around 81,000 students will miss their academic year.

Moreover, the academic body suffers on two levels: first, from the prevailed economic crisis as everybody does, and second, from the political interference and inequality of recruitment and promotion.

In this respect, the LU teaching body consists of nearly 6,000 professors¹⁰ distributed between tenured (11.66%), Tenure-track position yearly contracted (16.66%), and adjunct professors¹¹ (71.66%). These three categories teach in 17 faculties and three doctoral schools¹², in which 81,024 students¹³ are enrolled. Since 2014, more than a 100 teachers have retired yearly, while no full-time professors have been recruited instead. It is worth mentioning that around 80% of the academic

¹⁰ Data on higher education institutions are in major dismay, so we sometimes use a different number to the same figure.

¹¹ Adjuncts staff are paid per hour, full-time teachers are paid monthly based on yearly automatically renewable contracts, while tenure-track professors have open-ended contracts.

¹² Lebanese University website, <https://www.ul.edu.lb/faculte/faculties.aspx>

¹³ In the academic year 2018-2019.

courses are taught by adjunct professors who represent the largest number of the teaching body, are paid based on the number of hours of actual teaching, and are not given social and medical services as well as any pension. This situation breaches the LU's by-law (Law 6/70 Article 5) that indicates that full-timer professors should teach 80% of academic courses. Things do not stop at this point; the interference of the ruling class in the intern issue of the LU makes it incapable of handling the impacts of the crisis. The LU urgently needs to recruit and allocate full-time professors, but ironically the ruling sectarian class has frozen the recruitment and promotion of more than 4,300 professors, for more than 8 years. That is due to the disagreement of the confessional and political leaders on the quotas while neglecting the academic criteria from one side (Awada, Tabar, Kabbanji, & Alhassbani, 2019), and from the other side, to the acquiescence of the ruling power to the World Bank's terms in decreasing the size of public services.

Consequently, this imbalance in the recruitment process and in the equilibrium of teaching staff negatively influences the teaching performance.

Conclusion

It is not a hastened conclusion if we say that since the nineties a prevailed conviction has believed that neoliberalism was the required solution for the 'flourishment' of the country's economy after the war. Indeed, a recipe made from a combination of neoliberal policies and corrupted political sectarian strategies, supported with a large net of patronage and clientelism, has not only replaced the state institutions but has also applied, looted, and depleted them. Therefore, it can't be ignored that the core problem is deeply rooted within the ruling class, which has set these mischievous policies that have drastically hit the whole system. Hence, the enlarging gap of inequity between the public and private sector was one of the fallouts of these implementing policies as well as an increase in the polarization between public and private universities. Neoliberalism as Mahfouz concluded has "contributed to the collapse of

public education in Lebanon by surfacing tensions between the right to education and freedom of education” (Mahfouz, 2021).¹⁴

In this context, the problem of the higher education sector is deeply rooted and related to the Lebanese structural system turmoil that has paralyzed the public sector and handicapped LU — the only public university — from fulfilling its role of providing the poor and middle class with education of quality. The sector's rapid response to the crisis is due to its independence from the state. The evidences that we presented shows how the private sector took the initiative to pick up the effects of the crisis, while, the austerity and recurrent budget cuts of the LU in parallel has obstructed the functioning of the university as a public entity. This was done by breaching its relative autonomy, which has made it incapable of facing the compound crisis of the country. Subsequently, LU has been handicapped till this moment and it has no tangible initiative to start the academic year.

We are not overdoing it if we conclude that the reckless political economic policies put the whole system into the bottleneck and for the first time since the declaration of the state of Lebanon in 1926, the ruling power has no ability to reproduce itself.

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