HIGHER ARTS EDUCATION: A LOCATION FOR REDRESSING DEFICIT MODELS OF WIDENING PARTICIPATION

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ABSTRACT

Marginalized groups within any dominant culture find engagement with higher education challenging. Partially to blame is the compensatory paradigm within which they are situated and the resulting denigration of their culture and cultural capital. This attitude reinforces the deficit model, where socio-cultural diversity is seen pathologically rather than as a treasured asset. To contest this model, and empower marginalized learners, it is necessary to credentialize the capital, which they possess. Contemporary arts education, liberated from any generalized form of a priori aesthetic, moral imperative, or referential loyalties, provides a learning environment where individuals, once considered outsiders, can achieve such validation.

Introduction

Within Higher Art Education (HAE) and indeed Higher Education (HE) in general, for incoming students, there is a necessary process of adaptation and integration. The level to which students either adapt or integrate is determined by the dominance of the prevailing institutional culture and its willingness to validate and credentialize cultural capital, which lies outside its own dispositional boundaries. These boundaries become particularly acute when students come from socially marginalized or disadvantaged groups. Various studies have recognized this phenomenon, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2019) in relation to race, Fitzwater (2017) in relation to students with learning difficulties, and NCCA (2019) in the case of minority groups, in this instance Irish travellers. The cultural attributes associated with each of these groups very often go unrecognized as forms of cultural capital, not because they are less valid, but because they are different and are viewed with a pathological lens by the prevailing institutional culture, which tries to maintain and reproduce its own values, at all costs. These pathologized forms of capital are devalued to the point that those who possess them are seen to be in capital deficit.

To understand the nature of cultural capital and how cultural dominance can be challenged, this paper looks at the definitions of capital, and in particular cultural capital, outlined in the work of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986). It will show how the nature of cultural capital acquisition can lead to marginalized groups being trapped in a state of social closure. However, the framework that supports current structures in contemporary HAE allows for alternative definitions of cultural wealth, defined by Yosso (2005) in her work on Community Cultural Wealth, to surface. This provides a more inclusive path toward recognition, positive identity formation, and self-actualization, and in doing so, defeat the deficit paradigm, too often, associated with marginalized groups.

An examination of the current art world, liberated from universal forms of aesthetic or historical validation, reveals a location where views on capital deficit can be challenged, and validation of cultural capital becomes a dynamically negotiated process.

Bourdieu's Forms of Capital

The exploration of structure and agency as a social dynamic is at the center of the work of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu's sociocultural theories relating to education are based on perceptions of cultural and symbolic stratification, supported by intergenerational strategies that lead to persisting educational inequalities. The primary elements underpinning Bourdieu's theories are the concepts of economic, social, and cultural capital. These three forms of capital, in Bourdieu's view, are interrelated and interdependent, and he describes how economic capital; capital, which is material in nature, can be transubstantiated into the immaterial forms of social and cultural capital, and vice versa (Bourdieu, 1986).

Economic Capital

Economic capital is capital in the form of material wealth (directly convertible into money) that may be institutionalized in the form of

property rights, and yields returns or profits, which in turn allows for further capital accumulation. Economic theory poses a problem that often overshadows the importance of other forms of capital. The skills associated with non-economic exchange are too often framed under the pejorative title of "soft skills". However, in reality, these are the forms of capital that underpin social integration and assist marginalized individuals to achieve social mobility.

Social Capital

Social capital refers to the "aggregate of the actual or potential resources" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). associated with membership of a defined group. It is a means by which individual members of a group have access to the collective capital of the entire group. Each member is endowed with a sense of credit which can be mutually exchanged, in material or symbolic form, between the member and the group. The advantages associated with membership in a group (the profits) are, to a considerable extent, the basis for maintaining the integrity of the group. For this reason, it is important that each member is seen to have a contribution to make and so some form of selective process is deemed important to ensure and reinforce group cohesion (Bourdieu, 1986).

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is basically a familiarity with the dominant culture in a society. Cultural capital is inculcated in advantaged homes and enables students from wealthier socio-economic backgrounds to gain higher educational credentials than students from lower socio-economic groupings. These credentials assist in reproducing social and educational inequalities and contribute to maintaining and legitimizing the social status quo (Sullivan, 2002). Bourdieu recounts that the concept of cultural capital first presented itself to him during his research into understanding the unequal scholastic achievements of children from different social classes. Cultural capital, according to Bourdieu can exist in three forms:

- the embodied state, where it presents itself in the long-lasting dispositions of mind and body

- the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (artworks, books, musical instruments, designer items, etc.)

- the institutionalized state, in the form of qualifications, credentials or titles (Bourdieu, 1986)

In the embodied state, cultural capital is acquired through an experiential process of inculcation and assimilation. This experiential process could involve the ability to immerse oneself in a cultural environment, through cultural education, or cultural activities such as going to the theatre, galleries, reading literature and engaging in cultural discussions with peers. This process, often begins in one's formative years and results in a gradual culture formation, referred to as "Bildung", a German philosophical term for self-cultivation. Embodied cultural capital, unlike money or titles, cannot be bequeathed or instantaneously transferred from one person to another, but rather must be experientially accrued as a set of dispositions; the language

and vocabulary one uses or one's sense of taste and style. The acquisition of cultural capital generally occurs unconsciously, through familial and social exchange, it is a signifier of social class and is often evidenced through language use; "the ability to understand and use educated language" (Sullivan, 2002, p. 145). It is through this association with language use that cultural capital has the greatest impact on educational inequality. Since the education system tends to presuppose the possession of cultural capital, which many students lack, pedagogic transmission is frequently ineffective because students simply do not understand the language used to deliver course content (Sullivan, 2002). The use of language and other forms of cultural capital (a sense of fashion, appreciation of art, etc.) form a social barrier for those who do not possess them. As with social capital, those who possess an abundance of cultural capital derive a "scarcity value" from its possession and it "yields profits of distinction for its owner" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 245). In both cases the status of the possessor is elevated, which contributes to a class differential on which social inequalities are structured and maintained.

One of the primary factors in acquiring and accumulating embodied cultural capital is time. For an individual to have the ability to take the time necessary to accumulate cultural capital, they must have free time. This free time can often be provided by a home environment unburdened by economic pressures. For those preoccupied with the struggle to survive financially, the acquisition of embodied cultural capital is extremely difficult, leading to a social impasse where social inequality is reinforced, and the hierarchical status quo is maintained. Individuals who find themselves trapped by this social impasse are viewed as being in a state of capital deficit.

Capital Deficit

The compensatory paradigm that surrounds marginalized groups in Higher Education institutions is based on a perceived lack of capital, as defined by Bourdieu. Capital deficit is a perceived lack of economic, social, and cultural capital that would allow an individual or group to engage fully with the institution's dominant culture. However, this deficit model does not necessarily reflect a lack of cultural assets possessed by marginalized groups but rather a lack of recognition and legitimization of those assets by the dominant culture. Through lack of recognition and legitimization. social, cultural, and economic opportunities, as well as opportunities for physical and psychological wellbeing and development are monopolized by interest groups, to the exclusion of others, under an operational framework, defined by Max Weber (1978) and expanded by Frank Parkin (1983), known as social closure. Social closure applies a pathological lens to, not only individual deficiencies, limitations, and shortcomings, but to difference. As a means of perpetuating the social status quo, social closure pathologizes individuals or behaviors which are "not White, not middle class or affluent and not without disability" (Pitzer, 2014, p. 46). Here lies the difficulty for disenfranchised, marginalized individuals trying to gain recognition within the hegemonic structures of the higher educational system. The capital possessed by such individuals fails to be deemed valid, not because it is necessarily deficient, but because it is different.

Community Cultural Wealth

As a counter-study to the theory of social closure it is necessary to view Bourdieu's broad social theories of capital in a more micro-social context and examine how concepts of capital operate at community level. One way of gaining access to this micro-social context is through the theory of Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) and in particular the work of Tara J Yosso. Yosso examines, at a community level, what exactly constitutes cultural wealth and whose culture has capital (Yosso, 2005). Her work is centered on critical race theories which examine the forms of cultural wealth inherent in racially and culturally marginalized groups and how these forms of capital can be utilized beneficially in wider society. Perceived, capital-deficit can be challenged through the recognition, validation, and application of more granular forms of capital and cultural wealth inherent in local communities. CCW recognizes six primary categories of capital:

1. Aspirational capital describes the ability to retain hopes and dreams in the face of adversity and inequity, even when existing circumstances make it difficult to see how positive progression might be achieved. This resilience is often evidenced in how individuals aim to raise their occupational status above that of their parents and how parents in turn try to assist their children to surpass their own academic and occupational attainments.

2. Linguistic capital refers to the intellectual and social skills acquired through use of more than one language or varying styles of language and is often to be found in the children of immigrants. In some instances, this can refer to individuals or communities with strong oral traditions which may develop such qualities as "memorisation, attention to detail, dramatic pause, comedic timing, facial effect, vocal tone, volume, rhythm and rhyme" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Linguistic capital can also describe communicative ability through art or music.

3. Familial capital is "cultural knowledge nurtured among familia (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Familial capital can take the form of encouragement and support but also it can be the fostering of ambition and determination through the telling of stories which relate to historical familial struggles, which inculcate a desire for social mobility.

4. Social capital applies to networks of individuals and community resources. These networks can often be essential instrumental and emotional support mechanisms for individuals trying to navigate through bureaucratic institutions. These could take the form of community or peer support with applications, financial concerns, legal issues, employment, education, or health issues.

5. Navigational capital refers to the skills acquired by an individual as a result of navigating through socially hostile environments. It is this capital that develops a sense of resilience as it involves drawing from an individual's pool of inner resources to survive, recover and sometimes thrive in the face of adversity. Through the process of networking individual navigational capital can facilitate community navigation

6. Resistance capital can be described as the knowledge and skills developed through the actions of opposing and challenging oppression and

inequality. When this capital is informed by a critical understanding of the underlying structures that lead to oppression then it can challenge an individual's perception of their own identity, leading to the motivation to transform the sources of their oppression.

(Yosso, 2005)

Asset-Based Frameworks

When combined, the forms of capital derived from an individual's familial and community background influences, from the basis for CCW and construct an asset-based lens through which we can problematize the injustices brought about by symbolic violence and social closure. The view through this lens exposes the way in which educational structures deflect the responsibility for marginalization from systemic failure to the socio-cultural backgrounds of the students. "Fixing" these cultural deficiencies means forcing students to modify their inherited dispositions, to conform with the prevailing, socially accepted norms.

The implications of shifting to an asset-based framework on educational systems are two-fold:

• It recognizes, and values, individuals experientially accrued cultural wealth. Students are given a more central role in the conditions defining their institutional integration. True integration in the Freirean sense allows students to develop criticality, which gives students not just the knowledge to understand the nature of their oppressive predicament, but also gives them the knowledge to transform it.

• An asset-based paradigm helps to expose systemic failings and places the responsibility for those failings within the institutional structures themselves.

The educational framework which can accommodate such integration is one where recognition of student experience is central, where there is a devolution of power within the student teacher relationship, and plural outcomes are inculcated through a process of dynamic, negotiation. Contemporary art education, reflecting the groundlessness of contemporary art practice, is structured on principles where the intersubjective exchange of individual experience is central. Within these structures democratic integration, based on mutual recognition, is made possible.

Contemporary Art as a Context for Higher Arts Education (HAE)

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the two principal art movements set their sights on attacking the position of art within bourgeois society: the modernist movement and the avant-garde. The modernist movement adopted an approach of extreme estrangement from bourgeois perceptions of pleasure or taste, where the artwork could experience an extra-social existence free from capitalist reification. What emerged from this tradition were formalist, abstract works, structured by modernism's rigid reductionism (Chukrov, 2014). The formalist, abstract qualities of the artworks, stripped of referential contextualisation, became objects which found themselves being

contextualised by Kantian principles, where achieving the beautiful through the judgement of taste became art's purpose. Artworks, determined by form alone, accrue value as objects in themselves. An objectified artwork is valued for what it is, rather than what it does.

Despite modernism's efforts to gain autonomy by stripping itself of the content, which made it accessible to bourgeois sensibilities, its formalist abstracted qualities provided it with an objectified value that made it highly susceptible to commodification, and so returned it to the realm of bourgeois, capitalist attention. The very process by which modernism attempted to gain autonomy became the factor that would ensure that it would fail to achieve its aim.

The avant-garde challenged its position within bourgeois society, not by promoting apartness but by attempting to erode the bourgeois cultural status quo, through merging art and life and using this cultural amalgam as an instrument of political and social transformation. However, avant-gardism was also doomed to failure because of its own emancipatory processes. Rather than act as a force for liberation from the prevailing cultural hege-mony, it created what Burger describes as a culture of pulp fiction and commodity aesthetics. This culture, instead of being one of emancipation, became one of subjection (Burger, 1984). Burger's pessimistic view of the avant-garde is not shared by Ranciere who believes that by abolishing art as an activity separate from life, art was "put back to work" (Ranciere, 2004, p. 42), transforming collective thought into sensory experience.

What was to follow on from both modernism and the avant-garde is what we refer to as contemporary art. It is the point in art's history where grand nar-ratives fracture and disintegrate and "isms" no longer have any structuring relevance. The American art critic and philosopher Arthur Danto has coined the term post-historic to describe this "ism-less" period where historical ref-erence is no longer necessary (Danto, 1997). Non-referential art affords the artist another opportunity for autonomy, where the dissolution of historical loyalties allows the artist to pursue art of idiosyncratic individualism.

Art, devoid of historicity and any form of validating aesthetic structure, is problematic, both in a cultural context and an educational context. Culturally, how can social institutions define, reify, instrumentalize or lay claim to art which has no rules, no boundaries, and no loyalties? From an educational viewpoint, this poses the question how can something be taught when it has no defining aesthetic? In both cases post-historical art appears to provide an antidote to the epochal historicity of art which can be viewed as a cycle of Gramscian cultural hegemonies (Hoare & Nowell Smith, 1999).

Within the field of art, where once the function of art was hegemonically determined, it is now determined by individualistic pluralities. The lack of a priori constraint, on how works of art should look, challenges the concept of aesthetics, which along with technical mastery formed the unchallenged, central tenets of artistic validation until the late 19th century. Both aesthetics and technical mastery have played a significant role as vehicles of reification and instrumentality on both the artworld and art education. Both have been used as forms of control, not of artistic quality but rather of who should be endorsed as a validated participant in the artistic community. The struggle for validation can become an end in itself, and where it is in the interest of the dominant culture, placing increased emphasis on this struggle detracts from art's critical dimension.

Once we instigate the study of art as a technical rather than a critical discipline, it is difficult to alter that preconception, and its associated predisposition at a later point. It also means that if external forces, for mercenary reasons, wish to instrumentalize the field of art, then reinforcement of this preconception can be an effective tool. However, in the artworld, the age of the disinterested, technical, and mimetic has long since been challenged and replaced by one which incorporates criticality, intellectualism, and academicization. It is difficult to see why the former would form any part of the contemporary discourse in art education. To understand this anomaly is to understand the validatory struggles that exist in HAE and how, as a result, the struggle for recognition among marginalized students is a challenging one. For such students to experience affirmation, the emphasis has to shift from a technical, aesthetic structure to one based on art practice as a form of intersubjective, experience-exchange, where teaching-skills pertaining to mimetic technicalities or developing historically reproduced concepts of taste, is neither obligatory nor adequate. As a result, the validating principles can no longer be a priori and must resign themselves to capricious destinations and plural eventualities. Post-historical criticism must recognize post-historic art's pluralistic nature.

HAE as a Location for Recognition

As long as learning, progression, and validation are mediated by competencies, and legitimate competencies are determined by instruments of the dominant culture, there can be no devolution of validation powers, as to do so would break the chain of cultural reproduction. However, the legitimizing vacuum created by an artworld devoid of any universal values, has created a space where HAE can be redefined and reconfigured to embrace and include pluralistic socio-cultural idiosyncrasies.

This all-inclusive landscape is one which eludes a grand narrative or even a common language. The Babelian landscape of contemporary art and art education places experience and social interaction at the center of art practice, moving the referential base of art from one based in historicity to one which is dynamically evolving in real-time, through intersubjective engagement. The devolution of validatory powers, within the realm of post-historic art education is a recognition, by one of the principal structures of cultural reproduction (education), that every participating individual has a role to play in the negotiation of what constitutes legitimacy. Devoid of the authority bestowed by Kantian universality, legitimization becomes a negotiated process mediated by dialectics, without the necessity for a consensual resolution. As the structure of legitimization becomes increasingly malleable, so also the imperatives required for affiliation to the artworld become highly plastic. This allows a range of social phenomena to construct their own definition of what constitutes the artworld and who belongs within it. The artworld therefore, ceases to be a meta-narrative and becomes dynamic structure constantly reshaped by the collision, intersection, and inclusion of a multitude of micro-narratives which are experientially activated, dispositionally interpreted, and socially synthesized. The historical hierarchies prevalent in the artworld and in HAE become replaced by the more democratic concept of a cultural community.

The ability to play a central role in the decision-making validatory processes of one's own social domain is what Paulo Freire (2013) describes when he makes a distinction between adaption and integration:

> If a man is incapable of changing reality, he adjusts himself instead. Adaption is behaviour characteristic of the animal sphere; exhibited by man it is symptomatic of his dehumanisation. Integration results from the capacity to adapt oneself to reality plus the critical capacity to make choices and transform that reality. (p. 4)

As community participant-members are in a position to develop and contribute as individuals, this brings into play the combined cultural capital, of the various individuals, to construct a framework of community cultural wealth. Within this multi-layered construct where shared domains intersect with individual experiences, where autonomous, agentic, fears and hopes, concerns and expectations traverse institutional and societal demands. The definition of legitimacy and the question of what constitutes legitimate capital in relation to membership becomes problematized. It necessitates an operational structure where the aims and goals are continually renegotiated in a landscape of plural eventualities, shaped, and textured by individual experience.

To structure HAE in a way that focuses on recognition, creates the potential for true Freirean integration. Redressing previous instances of disrespect and enabling a positive development of the self, necessitates an environment that is conducive to continuous positive affirmation of each individual's accomplishments, abilities, and relational value. The most appropriate environment to achieve this, is one which inculcates reciprocity and patterns of mutual esteem through frameworks of socialization, situated in a landscape of autonomous practices. Within such communities, individuals move towards ever-increasing levels of legitimacy and participation, where legitimacy is a defining component of belonging. The educational community, comprised of both students and teachers, becomes the shared, authorized sanctioning force which recognizes and validates each participant's contribution and in doing so promotes their sense of self-worth and contributes to positive identity development. Such regulatory structures allow for an autonomous individual to utilize the social world as a resource for developing identity and negotiating meaning and becomes a motivating force for further confirmation of identity, as autonomous individuated beings.

Conclusion

Validation and credentialization of cultural capital within Higher Education, are determined by the dispositions of the prevailing culture. Cultural capital which lies outside these dispositional boundaries is all too often pathologized, with the individuals who possess them declared as outsiders. This pathological lens is applied not just to individual shortcomings, but to difference. HAE, contextualized by contemporary art, has moved from one which is bound by historical values to one liberated from any a priori aesthetic, moral imperative or referential loyalties. This liberated state provides the potential for continual renegotiation of what constitutes validated cultural capital. It allows for the credentialization of individuals societally accrued cultural wealth, through a shift from a deficit to an asset-based paradigm. Through this educational framework, individuals, once considered outsiders can become integrated in an educational community which recognizes the value and contribution of each individual, leading to a redress of past misrecognitions and promoting positive identity development.

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