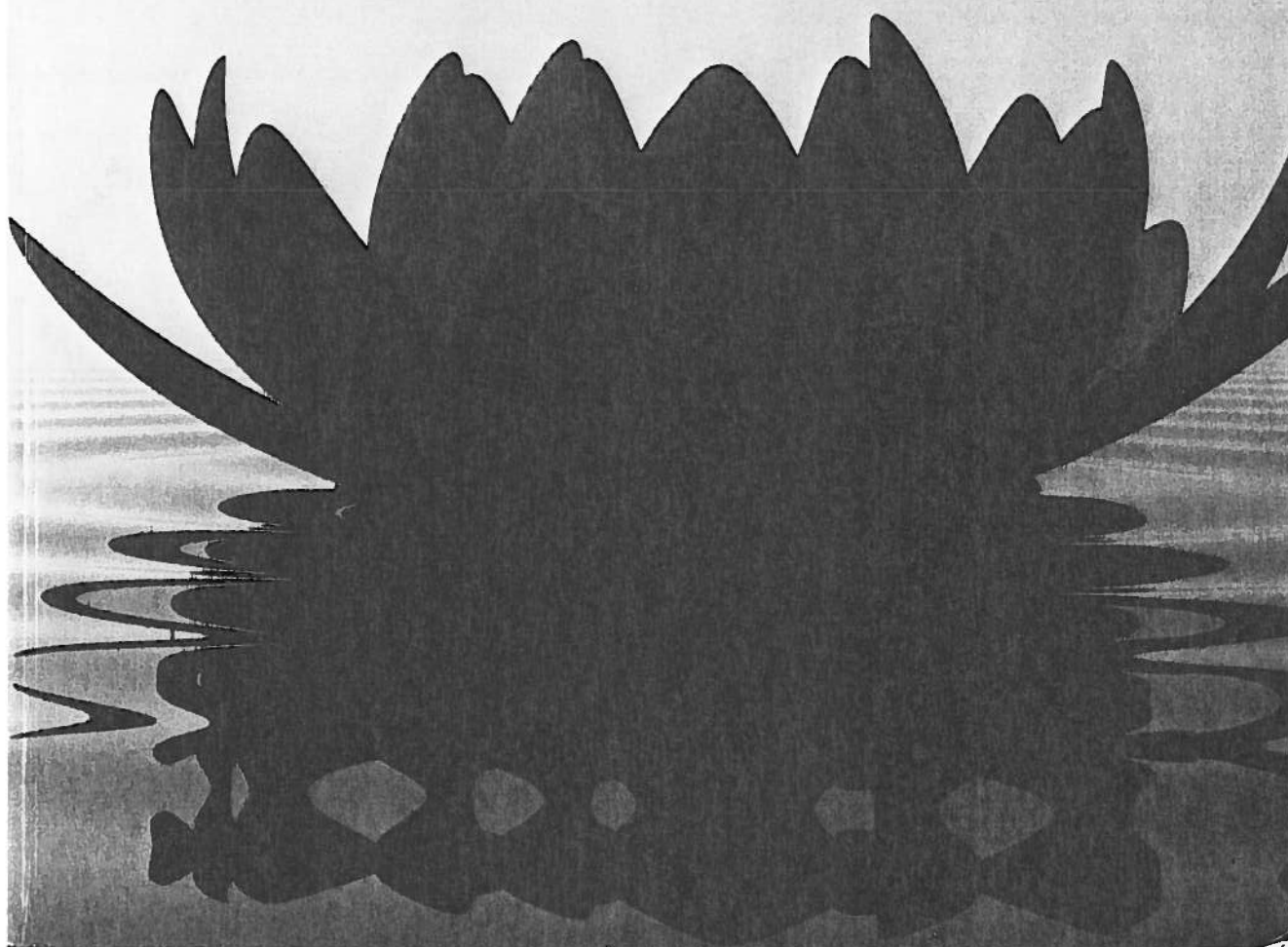


# Just Leisure

Things That We Believe In

Keri Schwab  
Daniel Dustin  
*editors*



©2013 Sagamore Publishing LLC

All rights reserved.

Publishers: Joseph J. Bannon, Peter L. Bannon

Director of Sales and Marketing: William A. Anderson

Director of Development and Production: Susan M. Davis

ISBN print edition: 978-1-57167-753-2

ISBN ebook: 978-1-57167-754-9

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2013935129

Printed in the United States.

Sagamore Publishing LLC

1807 N Federal Dr.

Urbana, IL 61801

[www.sagamorepub.com](http://www.sagamorepub.com)

# Experiential Education, Social and Environmental Justice Pedagogies, and Globalization

*From Theory to Praxis*

Mary Breunig  
Samantha Dear  
*Brock University*

In this chapter, we invite you to accompany us on a 3-year pedagogical journey as we recount a service leadership course we cotaught at Brock University. The chapter parallels the journey itself, which is framed within Freire's levels of social consciousness.<sup>1, 2</sup> We hope this written voyage provides you with insights into and new learning about your own pedagogical praxis.

**Mary:** Sam and I first met in 2002. Sam was an undergraduate outdoor recreation student at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada. I was a lecturer in the School of Outdoor Recreation, Parks, and Tourism. Our lives came together in a second-year service leadership course. Sam was already a seasoned traveler, and I recall her preparing to travel to China on a fourth-year international field experience with a geography professor. Each student was required to complete a project on a topic of choice. Sam's initial proposal was to complete an analysis of trekking in the Province of Yunann, which turned into an analysis of the power dynamics between trekkers and members of the host committee with whom they traveled. This was Sam's first foray into developing a critical, international consciousness.

**Sam:** As Mary said, we first met in a second-year leadership course at Lakehead University. What impacted me most was the day when Mary introduced us to the concept of White privilege. The idea that one could be considered a racist simply due to the privileged position she or he was born into left me walking out of class confused and feeling culpable. A desire to further understand the concept and how I was feeling about it led me to knock on Mary's office door to discuss the topic in greater detail, thus igniting my journey of self in relationship to society and social change.

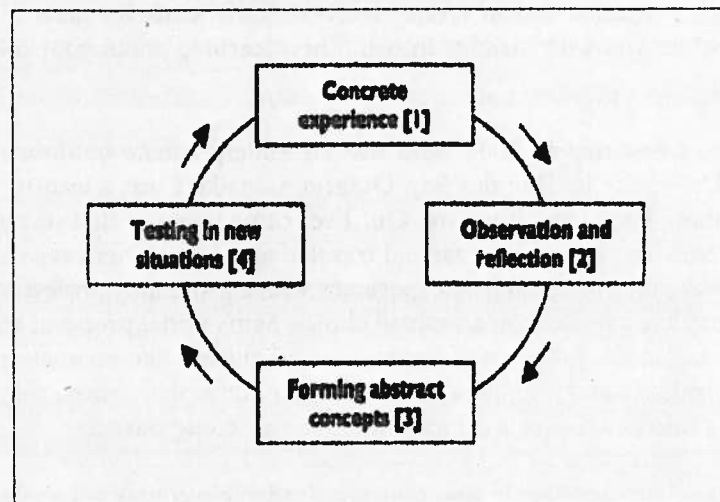
We met again at Brock University in 2009 where Mary was teaching a leadership course similar to the Lakehead course and Sam was pursuing her Master of Arts degree. Sam became a teaching assistant in that course, and together we discussed how best to integrate social and environmental justice pedagogies as one component of the second-year leisure services leadership course. We wanted the course to serve as a platform for students to consider their own positionality and privilege and how they informed their leadership praxes.

What we report here is what we learned through this collaborative teaching experience, including the effectiveness of experiential education as social justice pedagogy, the impact of globalization on the teaching-learning process, and the contributions of Freire's three levels of social consciousness as stepping stones to conscientization.

### Experiential Education

Experiential learning and experiential education are buzzwords in the media, in popular literature, in boardrooms, and across university campuses. When people ask what experiential education is, they often talk about Outward Bound or Project Adventure or outdoor activities. Some respond with a bit more sophistication and mention John Dewey or the Experiential Learning Cycle.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, the Association for Experiential Education asserts that its vision "is to contribute to making a more just and compassionate world by transforming education." How, then, does experiential education factor into bringing about a more just and compassionate world in light of the above anecdotal evidence of its emphasis on activity?

Experiential education's early roots are in the progressive education movement (1930s), and John Dewey is often cited as its founding father. The idea that experiential education is a philosophy is important and distinguishes it from mere methodology (or a way of teaching). Experiential learning, on the other hand, emphasizes methodology, and Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (see Figure 1) exemplifies this method of teaching and learning.



**Figure 1.** Experiential Learning Cycle. Adapted from *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*, by D. Kolb, 1984, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Experiential learning holds its own importance as a methodology, but distinguishing it from experiential education is important. Experiential education as a philosophy is focused on purposeful practice, and in the case of contemporary experiential education theory, its purpose is social and environmental justice oriented.<sup>4</sup> Experiential education as a justice-oriented purposeful praxis is relatively new. Indeed, it has yet to find its way into mainstream school environments. It is interesting to note how the philosophical roots of experiential education share



the common educational ideal of social change. Herbart, Froebel, James, Parker, Dewey, and Kilpatrick were all dedicated to using education as a means for social change. Hahn developed a number of modern day experiential schools based on this same ideal. Montessori, Steiner, and the early K-12 school initiatives that employed experiential education shared this common goal as well. Experiential education has widespread applications and transformative potential as an educational philosophy and as a vehicle for social change.

It was based on the thinking of these early educational visionaries and in light of this definition of experiential education that we began to think about the application of experiential education philosophy to the second-year leadership course for our leisure studies students at Brock University. To link issues of social and environmental justice with experiential education, we first examined current issues facing the global community.

### Globalization

Chomsky defined globalization in its neutral state as "international integration."<sup>5</sup> Globalization thus conceived emphasizes the increased ease of information flow and collaboration throughout the international community. However, defining globalization as a process of cross-cultural exchange is rather naïve in light of more prevalent definitions that define it as a hasty scramble for wealth and power.<sup>6</sup> Viewed this way, globalization has "brought problems of lack of tolerance and respect for others who are culturally and racially different, uneven distribution of resources, ethnic conflict, and struggles of power."<sup>7</sup>

Globalization is thus often viewed in one of two ways: (a) the rich potential of imagining the world as community and (b) an outgrowth of capitalist culture. Ritzer and Ryan employed the term *globalization* to describe the latter more capitalist-oriented extreme and defined it as "the imperialistic ambitions of nations, corporations, organizations, and the like and their desire, indeed need, to impose themselves on various geographic areas."<sup>8</sup> That said, these two extreme views of globalization are neither discrete nor easily separated from one another. Proceeding from the assumption that this issue is complex, and wishing to explore globalization's potential to effect positive social and environmental change, we began our journey cautiously.

The conversation surrounding how to best equip our students with the knowledge and skills to serve as leaders in a globalized society intensified. In Canada, two education paradigms have emerged: (a) global economic competitiveness and (b) global interdependence.<sup>9</sup> The first paradigm emerged as a reaction to the world becoming increasingly competitive economically. O'Sullivan suggested, "Educational reforms were justified as essential to maintaining Canada's position as a front-rank defender of the free world."<sup>10</sup> The second paradigm represents "interdependent global problems and responsibilities."<sup>11</sup> Given that the majority of Canadians favor the global economic competitiveness paradigm,<sup>12</sup> we understand that global educators who favor the global interdependence paradigm are in the minority. Indeed, Schweifurth avowed that those educators who integrate this perspective into the curriculum are on the periphery of the teaching profession.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, advocates of the global interdependence paradigm are firm in their belief that teaching with a global perspective will not only create a learning environment where students see the connection of a subject to real life, but also foster a learning environment that encourages students to become active citizens and agents of social and environmental change.<sup>14</sup> This latter view energized our commitment.

### Freire's Levels of Social Consciousness

As we began to develop the curriculum for our service leadership course, it occurred to us that what we wanted to accomplish Freire's three levels of social consciousness:<sup>15, 16</sup> naïve, superstitious, and critical. Naïve individuals lack the understanding that world institutions and so-

the common educational ideal of social change. Herbart, Froebel, James, Parker, Dewey, and Kilpatrick were all dedicated to using education as a means for social change. Hahn developed a number of modern day experiential schools based on this same ideal. Montessori, Steiner, and the early K-12 school initiatives that employed experiential education shared this common goal as well. Experiential education has widespread applications and transformative potential as an educational philosophy and as a vehicle for social change.

It was based on the thinking of these early educational visionaries and in light of this definition of experiential education that we began to think about the application of experiential education philosophy to the second-year leadership course for our leisure studies students at Brock University. To link issues of social and environmental justice with experiential education, we first examined current issues facing the global community.

### Globalization

Chomsky defined globalization in its neutral state as "international integration."<sup>5</sup> Globalization thus conceived emphasizes the increased ease of information flow and collaboration throughout the international community. However, defining globalization as a process of cross-cultural exchange is rather naïve in light of more prevalent definitions that define it as a hasty scramble for wealth and power.<sup>6</sup> Viewed this way, globalization has "brought problems of lack of tolerance and respect for others who are culturally and racially different, uneven distribution of resources, ethnic conflict, and struggles of power."<sup>7</sup>

Globalization is thus often viewed in one of two ways: (a) the rich potential of imagining the world as community and (b) an outgrowth of capitalist culture. Ritzer and Ryan employed the term *globalization* to describe the latter more capitalist-oriented extreme and defined it as "the imperialistic ambitions of nations, corporations, organizations, and the like and their desire, indeed need, to impose themselves on various geographic areas."<sup>8</sup> That said, these two extreme views of globalization are neither discrete nor easily separated from one another. Proceeding from the assumption that this issue is complex, and wishing to explore globalization's potential to effect positive social and environmental change, we began our journey cautiously.

The conversation surrounding how to best equip our students with the knowledge and skills to serve as leaders in a globalized society intensified. In Canada, two education paradigms have emerged: (a) global economic competitiveness and (b) global interdependence.<sup>9</sup> The first paradigm emerged as a reaction to the world becoming increasingly competitive economically. O'Sullivan suggested, "Educational reforms were justified as essential to maintaining Canada's position as a front-rank defender of the free world."<sup>10</sup> The second paradigm represents "interdependent global problems and responsibilities."<sup>11</sup> Given that the majority of Canadians favor the global economic competitiveness paradigm,<sup>12</sup> we understand that global educators who favor the global interdependence paradigm are in the minority. Indeed, Schweifurth avowed that those educators who integrate this perspective into the curriculum are on the periphery of the teaching profession.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, advocates of the global interdependence paradigm are firm in their belief that teaching with a global perspective will not only create a learning environment where students see the connection of a subject to real life, but also foster a learning environment that encourages students to become active citizens and agents of social and environmental change.<sup>14</sup> This latter view energized our commitment.

### Freire's Levels of Social Consciousness

As we began to develop the curriculum for our service leadership course, it occurred to us that what we wanted to accomplish Freire's three levels of social consciousness:<sup>15, 16</sup> naïve, superstitious, and critical. Naïve individuals lack the understanding that world institutions and so-

cietal norms are human designed. Instead, they view these phenomena as universal facts. They also are not inclined to investigate or reflect upon issues of justice or to trouble supposed facts. Finlay and Faith concluded, "The chief characteristic of naive consciousness is an unreflecting acceptance of the solidity and inevitability of the world and one's own views."<sup>17</sup>

Superstitious individuals exhibit heightened critical thinking skills. In this second stage, people are more cognizant of the injustices created by societal institutions and as a result recognize that options for change and transformation exist. However, as Connolly indicated, superstitious individuals have "a concomitant sense of powerlessness to do anything about those options."<sup>18</sup> For example, people at this stage may identify with a particular justice-oriented issue (e.g., food security) because they are passionate about it, but they do not know how to engage in action-oriented behavior, resulting in action paralysis. The final stage of consciousness is critical. At this level of conscientization, individuals understand that "cultural institutions can be analyzed, understood, and therefore—in principle—shaped, modified, and controlled by members of the community."<sup>19</sup> At this stage, individuals have the ability to create pathways forward to engage in action-oriented behavior and are empowered to do so.

### The Journey

Our 3-year journey transported us through all three levels of social consciousness as we attempted to teach for and about social justice.

#### Naïve

One early attempt at integrating social justice pedagogy into the curriculum involved our naïvely merging a lecture on experiential education theory into a newly titled lecture, "social justice and globalization." We tried to create a safe space using activities from Levin's *Experiential Activities for a Better World*,<sup>20</sup> including saying "ouch" to indicate strong feelings about a topic, dropping the ego at the door, attending to language, and not making assumptions about other learners in this large (130+) leadership course. We wanted to teach the important distinction between experiential learning and experiential education. We wanted to tap into students' lived experiences in schools. We discussed Gardner's multiple intelligence theories and ways in which the experiential learning cycle could appeal to various intelligences and learning styles (auditory, visual, kinesthetic) of the learners in the classroom.<sup>21</sup> Some discussion ensued about the ways in which certain learning styles are privileged over others, and with so many kinesthetic learners in the classroom, this resonated with some students even though they could not see it as an issue of justice.

To introduce issues of justice on a global scale, we asked students to look at various pictures including child soldiers and toxic waste dumps. Furthermore, we showed a series of maps that provided illustrations that were distorted by population on a world map. For example, we showed the greatest population base of people living with HIV/AIDS in relation to gross national product.<sup>22</sup> Although these visual representations seemed to effectively capture the students' attention through their shock value, the exercise was not effective at helping students connect this to real global issues. We naïvely assumed they would just understand.

Another activity had students identify items in their "knapsack of privilege" (e.g., Band-Aids that matched their skin color and foods at the university cafeteria that fit their cultural upbringing).<sup>23</sup> At the end of the activity, one student tersely reminded us that she was not an outdoor recreation major. She was a community recreation major and a leisure generalist and thus did not own a knapsack but rather carried a book bag. That comment led to other students weighing in: "I am not privileged, I am poor," "We already talked about all this in the diversity class," and "What does this have to do with leisure?"

rsal facts. They  
supposed facts.  
an unreflecting

second stage,  
as a result rec-  
indicated, su-  
ng about those  
-oriented issue  
ow to engage in  
business is criti-  
stitutions can be  
olled by mem-  
highways forward

isness as we at-

m involved our  
lecture, "social  
Levin's *Experi-*  
feelings about a  
imptions about  
portant distinc-  
p into students'  
ies and ways in  
learning styles  
n ensued about  
so many kines-  
they could not

at various pic-  
series of maps  
or example, we  
o gross nation-  
e the students'  
udents connect

ge" (e.g., Band-  
t their cultural  
she was not an  
generalist and  
other students  
n the diversity

In sum, we became aware that (a) our efforts were not connecting to students lived experiences in the manner we thought they would; (b) impassioned teaching did not necessarily lead to impassioned learning; (c) our assumption that students would naturally and organically connect these theories to their leadership praxis was presumptive and not automatic; and (d) "going too deep, too dark, too fast" seemed impactful in the short term, but it neither proved to be effective for long-term retention of ideas nor led to pro-social action.

### Superstitious

We realized we needed to backtrack; for students to become aware of their connectedness to these issues, they had to understand how the theories fit with their lived experiences. Our guiding question in this phase was, "How can experiential pedagogues educate in such a way that they connect people's values and beliefs about the world with social and environmental action?"

The second year, we further considered how to expand students' social and environmental justice knowledge through an increased emphasis on experiential education theory and praxis. We asked ourselves, "How can we teach these theories in a manner that connects to a leisure generalist engaging in a leadership practice across a variety of settings? How can we assist students in understanding the justice-oriented importance of this work?" We proceeded in a manner familiar to so many of us in the teaching profession. We consulted with colleagues, friends, and the literature. In the process, we recalled an exercise from a graduate course that identified one's ontology (way of being) and epistemology (way of knowing and seeing the world) through an epistemological lens activity. We brought this to the leadership class the next year as a precursor to the social justice and globalization lecture, asking students to draw an illustration of the lens through which they see the world (see Figure 2 for the starting point). We asked students to imagine this as the lens through which they view the world. We asked them to place concentrically, starting from the inner circle and working their way to the outer circle, from earliest experiences (inner) to most recent experiences (outer), the influences on their lives and their lived experiences that have shaped their view of the world. We then had student volunteers talk about what comprised their lenses and used that as a springboard to talk about opposing epistemological views.

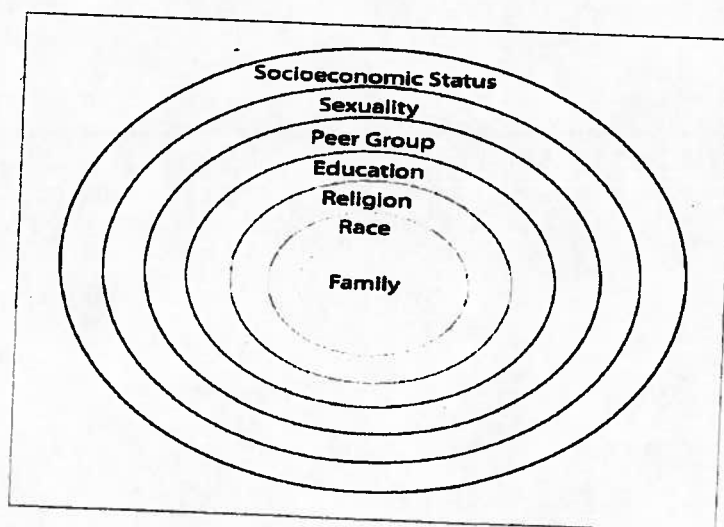


Figure 2. Epistemological Lens



This provided an opportunity for students to actively imagine and situate themselves within society. It also provided them with an experience-based understanding of differences based on lived experiences and upbringing, influences that helped expand their view of the world and their positionality in that world. This helped with our next attempt at "unpacking the knapsack of privilege" exercise that had students identifying privileges (unearned benefits) in their packs. This, alongside the Power Flower activity, seemed to engage students.<sup>24</sup> Power Flower is a tool developed by Canadian social change educators in working with groups to "identify who we are (and who we aren't) as individuals and as a group in relation to those who wield power in our society."<sup>25</sup> This activity, which we introduced to students in a large gymnasium rather than the classroom, helped students more deeply situate themselves both individually and within society. We experienced this deepening ourselves, and student reports articulated it as well: "I had never thought of the unearned birthright stuff as privilege. I get that now"; "For me, when I read about band aids being the colour of my skin and the societal assumptions therein, I was really amazed that I hadn't thought about that kind of thing before"; "I can better understand my own privilege, but I don't know what I can do about it"; and "Most of the people I hang out with at the summer camp I work at look like me and have a similar background, so I don't really need to worry about this stuff in my life or work."

To bring globalization to life within the classroom, we asked students to take 5 minutes to look around the room and examine their clothing labels and consider the furniture and other objects in the room. We then asked them to engage in paired conversation, sharing the names of countries from where the items and objects came, based on the labels and tags. We next asked them to consider the backgrounds and cultures of the people from those countries and asked them to consider the working conditions of those people and in those countries. Some of the queries we posed included the following:

- Who is in this space?
- What are the physical attributes of this space?
- What objects make up the space?
- Where do the objects come from?

We made progress with some of these lessons. At the beginning of the third and final year of our journey, it was heartening to hear experiences students had had at their summer jobs as they attempted to integrate their newly acquired theories and activities. One student in particular discussed her attempts to share her newfound learning with a high school group, saying that the students acted with resistance and would not engage with her in that teachable moment. We were proud to hear of her efforts despite repeated disappointments and encouraged her to keep playing around with when best and how best to teach such a challenging and personal topic. We too had thought more about this.

### Critical Consciousness

The guiding question that informed the third and final phase of our 3-year journey was "How can experiential pedagogues educate for conscientization (critical consciousness and social change/action)?" Once again we turned to colleagues' work about how to continue to expand upon teaching for and about social justice and globalization and how to engage in relevant activities that would connect these theories with students' lived experiences and leadership praxes. We recalled a paper written by Fawcett, Bell, and Russell that contained a hegemony treasure hunt.<sup>26</sup> Students were directed to leave the classroom, view their surroundings with new eyes, and hunt for hegemonic artifacts.

We posed questions such as the following:

- Who or what is privileged by the university system?
- Is this space universally accessible (e.g., elevators, bathrooms)?
- Travel to the senate chambers. Can you identify physical characteristics of the university's leaders?
- Check out the advertisements. Who are the halls named after? Corporation names?
- Go to the library. Who is writing the books? What does that communicate about knowledge and power?
- Travel down a corridor. Are professors in their offices? What are the characteristics of their office spaces, and how are they physically situated within that space?

This activity seemed to resonate with students because it allowed them to view an everyday experience through a different lens. It led them experientially to consider issues of justice within a university setting. From here, we began to believe that we were finally delving into some of the more critical aspects of what we wanted of the students. For example, students reported that they had not previously considered why a book's author would matter. Students had never considered the sociocultural backgrounds or genders of the authors or the year a book was written and how these factors might impact a book's content. They had no idea that every past university president had been a White male. This led them to question their belief that we are living in a gender equitable society.

We were becoming increasingly aware that students were beginning to get it, and alongside this awakening came an array of emotions. Some students exhibited signs of anger, stating with conviction, "Well, let's do something about it!" Others expressed feelings of being overwhelmed or sad. As we reflected on our own personal journeys of conscientization, these emotions resonated with us. Remembering our earlier lessons of going too deep, too dark, too fast, we brainstormed how we could teach these concepts differently so students were not consistently leaving class feeling stuck, overwhelmed, confused, or angry.

One way we addressed this was through Sam's Emotional Graph of Learning About the World (see Figure 3). On this graph, Sam plotted emotional highs and lows associated with her personal journey with conscientization. She began by being intrigued and excited about learning more about the world around her. She then became aware of the injustices in the world. From there, her journey ranged from low emotional points of feeling helpless and angry to being extremely passionate about specific justice-related causes. By explaining the emotional side of her intellectual journey to students, Sam described ways in which her actions were not always as effective as she had hoped.

Sam spoke to students about the importance of looking at action-oriented behavior through a critical lens and told students that when engaging in action, she always asks herself three questions: Is it Western paternalism? Is it exploitive? Is it effective? Her graph ends at the present day where she feels, for now at least, she has found a pathway forward for engaging in purposeful and effective engagement.

After sharing the graph and talking students through that journey, we asked them to create a graph of their own. Our intention behind this activity was grounded in our belief that if students are aware of the stages, they will likely go through when engaged in the conscientization process, be better prepared, and be more resilient through challenging times. We felt that being transparent with our journey helped students become more comfortable with uncertainty and further understand that constant growth is associated with this complex subject. We are still growing through and from all this today.





They should be challenged to answer these questions for themselves and to acknowledge their epistemology as a factor in their thought processes.

- Students should be optimistic. Pedagogues can help with this by not going too deep, too dark, too fast. Shock value pedagogy was effective for gaining student attention. However, it did not contribute to sustainable pathways for students' conscientization journeys. Some of these shock-based teachings were met by resistance, and others resulted in feelings of despair. These were likely setbacks in the students' conscientization journeys.
- Freire's levels of social consciousness should be presented as cyclical rather than hierarchal and linear. We have also learned, similar to so much teaching and learning, that each level can be interpreted differently. There is always collateral learning. We should work in our pedagogical praxes to create spaces for students to learn what they need to learn at any given moment in time and to make opportunities for that learning to be possible and available to them.
- Similar to the stages of human development, we all start off at a level of naïveté. We now believe that individuals cycle between levels of social consciousness—at one moment in time engaging in transformative action and at another moment experiencing a period of action paralysis as new pathways are (re)configured to more fully engage in action-oriented behavior. This is a good thing. We should always hold engagement in action-oriented work and justice-oriented behaviors as our ultimate goals.

### Discussion Questions

1. Discuss Freire's three levels of social consciousness. Do you see them as a pathway to a more critical consciousness?
2. Give examples of Freire's three levels of social consciousness (naïve, superstitious, and critical) from your own life. Where do you see yourself along this pathway toward conscientization? Are you there yet?
3. Mary and Samantha think experiential education is a useful method for engaging students in learning about social and environmental justice. Describe your understanding of experiential education and comment on its usefulness for exploring issues related to social and environmental justice.
4. Do you see a more critical consciousness as desirable for you personally? Please elaborate.
5. Do you see learning as a journey? If so, toward what end? What use do you think we are obliged (or not) to make of our learning?