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Humanising Higher Education in South Africa through Dialogue as Praxis

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Abstract

Freire (1993) premised his pedagogical theory on the assumption that humanisation is the fundamental objective of education, and he emphasised the role of dialogue as praxis in achieving this. In South Africa, race has played a constitutive and dehumanising role in higher education since its beginnings during colonialism and apartheid (Soudien, 2015, 2016). During 2014 and 2015, higher education in South Africa came under attack from various student organisations for alleged discrimination, racism, and exclusive practices. We propose two conditions for dialogue as humanising praxis in higher education: the acknowledgement of situated selves, and the ontological need for, and right to, voice. We conclude that these conditions are interrelated and point to the possibilities of humanising post-1994 higher education. We use qualitative data from the NRF-funded project, *Human rights literacy: a quest for meaning (*Roux & du Preez, 2013) to explore student teachers' experiences of implicit and explicit exclusion, racism, and discrimination at institutions of higher education in South Africa.

Key words: dialogue, discrimination, higher education, humanisation, praxis, racism

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Introduction

Higher education (hereafter, HE) in South Africa cannot be understood outside the constitutive role race has played since its beginning (Soudien, 2016). HE has emerged in relation to historic and distinct phases and sets of circumstances during the history of South Africa (Thaver & Thaver, 2015). Although the interrelated histories of HE and the South African nation since colonisation are complex, multilayered, contentious and, as Soudien (2016, pp. 8) referred to it, a site of "perverse ambivalence," we will for the purpose of this article distinguish between two historical periods: the

period before 1994 and the period after 1994. Thaver and Thaver (2015, pp. 282) referred to pre-1994 as the period of the "white South African nation." The establishment of the white South African nation was a result of colonialism, the Anglo–Afrikaans struggle, the discovery of gold and diamonds, the growing demand for cheap labour and, finally, the apartheid framework for separate development (Soudien, 2016; Thaver & Thaver, 2015). Alexander (2011) referred to the post-1994 period as the period in which South Africans could construct a new historic community without race thinking and racial discrimination: a new political community and a new cohesive nation.

Race as a concept is never neutral (Pillay, 2015). Pillay (2015, pp. 137) argued that "the individual is therefore locked into, framed and envisioned within a group identity that he or she has not chosen to be in and this identity determines one's fate." The superiority of one race over others cannot explain itself—it needs to be justified (Soudien, 2016). In order to justify a constant supply of cheap labour to maintain prosperity and policies of separate development pre-1994, a solidification process of race and race hierarchy was implanted in the nation's imagination (Soudien, 2016; Thaver & Thaver, 2015). As a result, "white" universities of this period positioned themselves in relation to the white South African nation while "ethnic" universities were established as a function of the apartheid conception of "other nations" in South Africa (Thaver & Thaver, 2015, pp. 282). One of the systematic reforms in HE, post-1994, was a restructuring of the binary HE sector. The 36 racially and ethnically patterned HE institutions were reduced to 23 (two new universities were recently added, therefore, 25) and placed under a single government structure (Thaver & Thaver, 2015). During the post-1994 period, there has been a demographic shift towards broader access for students from historically disadvantaged communities. Thaver and Thaver (2015, pp. 288–289), however, rightfully questioned whether the knowledge and the institutional cultures students are exposed to "capture the full diversity and complexity of the nation-in-becoming." A nation-in-becoming points to the challenges HE and the South African society face in relation to social cohesion or to what Alexander (2011, pp. 37) referred to as "a new historical community."

During 2014 and 2015, accusations of discrimination and exclusion at universities throughout South Africa were made by students and student representative bodies (cf. Open University and Campus Spring). In August 2015, the student organisation, Open University, at Stellenbosch University commissioned a video, *Luister* (Contraband, 2015), in which students narrated their experiences of discrimination and exclusion on campus. Students claimed that authorities did not listen to them, silenced their complaints, and that they experienced "blackness" as a social burden. While the university initially accused members of Open University of damaging the corporate image of the university and threatened disciplinary action, the university later agreed to enter into dialogue with the organisation regarding transformation and alleged discrimination and exclusion. The aim of this article is to explore conditions for dialogue as humanising praxis, and the possibilities it may present for humanising postapartheid higher education.

Accusations of discrimination, exclusion, and racism point to pre-1994 structures, systems, institutional cultures, and consciousness in HE institutions. As far as HE is immersed in the political and sociohistoric changes post 1994, it seems that institutional cultures and a consciousness of the possibilities of a new historical community in HE lags behind (Thaver & Thaver, 2015). Claims of racism, discrimination, and exclusion within HE have been investigated and reported on by the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions (DoE, 2008, hereafter the Ministerial Committee). The Ministerial Committee (DoE, 2008) based its approach on White Paper 3 (DoE, 1997), which posits that transformation requires all existing practices and values within HE to be reviewed. The Ministerial Committee (DoE, 2008) came to the conclusion that experiences of feeling discriminated against, in racial and gender terms in particular, are endemic within HE. Despite the fact that all

institutions of HE have a range of policies in place to address issues of equity and transformation, there seems to be a disjunction between institutional policies and the real-life experiences of staff and students (DoE, 2008).

In his first paragraph of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Freire wrote: "While the problem of humanization has always, from an axiological point of view, been humankind's central problem, it now takes on the character of an inescapable concern" (1993, p. 25). For Freire (1993), both humanisation and dehumanisation remain historical and ontological possibilities for incomplete human beings, and he assumed humanisation as the premise of education. He defined the telos of education to be a critical and reflective understanding of the world and one's place in the world (Dale & Hyslop-Margison, 2010). Freire (1993) posited that education, as a practice of freedom towards humanisation, should focus on dialogue as praxis. This does not entail an integration, accommodation, or assimilation of all within the structures and social practices that cause exclusion and discrimination, but a transformation of the very structures and practices that cause exclusion (Freire, 1993).

We pose the following research question: "What are the conditions for, and the possibilities of, dialogue for humanising postapartheid HE?" We argue that historic (colonial and apartheid) modes of being, categorisation, and exclusion still persist 21 years into democracy. We propose two conditions for dialogue as humanising praxis: acknowledging the situated selves and the ontological need for, and right to, voice. We argue that dialogue as humanising praxis presents possibilities for the disruption and reconstitution of historic distributions of the sensible, while the reconstitution of the sensible presents possibilities for the continual enacting of dialogue as humanising praxis within a new historical community.

Project Contextualisation: Method and Approach

The data for this article stem from the NRF-funded project, *Human rights literacy: A quest for meaning*[1]*,* that questioned students' understanding of human rights literacy (Roux & du Preez, 2013). The project consisted of two phases. Phase One (South African national data gathering and analysis) was completed in 2013, and the second phase (South African and international data gathering and analysis) was completed in 2015. The first phase of the project aimed to determine the knowledge field of human rights education in teacher education at South African faculties of education (Roux & du Preez, 2013). During this phase, the project group collected qualitative and quantitative data using three different collection processes: a walkabout (n = 80), a survey (1,192 student teachers accessed the survey), and small focus group discussions with 68 participants (Becker, de Wet, & Parker, 2014; Roux & du Preez, 2013). The survey and the focus group discussions were contextualised within the South African realm only. The second phase aimed to explore human rights literacies of South African and international students living in diverse contexts. The international survey was finalised in collaboration with international partners to include the complexities of diverse social environments. The second phase of data gathering included an open invitation to students to reflect on selected topics via e-mail.

Humanisation and dehumanisation concern the self-in-relations. As the relations between self, others, and the world are central to qualitative research, only qualitative data were considered for this article (cf. Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Qualitative data were selected from both phases: the small focus group discussions during the first phase, and the qualitative comments made by South African participants only during the second phase survey. The small focus group discussions followed the

[1] C. Roux Competitive Programme for rated researchers (CPRR) Grant no 81795 (2012–2015). For a project description, see Roux & du Preez (2013) and Becker, de Wet, & Parker (2014).

survey to validate data collected by means of the previous two collection strategies and to reevaluate the literature, ontologies, and epistemologies (Roux & du Preez, 2013). The sizes of the focus groups varied from three to nine participants. A total of 68 student teachers were selected by means of snowball sampling. Twenty-nine student teachers were in their first year, and thirty-nine were in their fourth year. The small focus group discussions took place at six sites in four provinces. Site 1 is a metropolitan campus where the majority of students are Zulu speakers. Site 2 is a metropolitan campus with students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Site 3 is a rural campus where most of the students are Afrikaans speaking. Site 4 is in a semirural area and most students are Afrikaans speaking. Site 5 is situated in a metropolitan area so the student population is linguistically, ethnically, and culturally diverse. At Site 6, a rural campus, most students are Setswana speakers. Discussions were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim by the researchers involved in the collection process (Becker et al., 2014)[2].

The international phase of the project commenced during May 2015 and data collection finished in November 2015. Qualitative and quantitative data for the second phase were collected in an online survey and by means of e-mail responses to the researchers. Undergraduate and postgraduate students from three universities in South Africa, two universities in Europe, one university in India and one university in Israel were purposively selected from faculties of education, sociology, law, and political sciences on the basis that they did a module in human rights or may be confronted with human rights issues within their professional environments. The aim of the second phase linked perfectly to the research project's purpose and objectives: to develop a theory on human rights literacy which may contribute to the knowledge field of human rights education and training. Only data from South African participants (*n* = 136/434 were considered for this article because the sociohistoric context of this article concerns HE in South Africa.

[2] The sociopolitical dynamics of South Africa changed dramatically between the RSA2013 and RSA2015 surveys. Racial incidents at institutions of HE and in a racially politicised South African society escalated on different levels and could impact on student teachers' feedback in the second phase (2015) survey. It was therefore important to reassess the questionnaire's section on biographical data. Debates on nonracialism and the argument that "structural racism connects the endurance of race-thinking to the inequalities that apartheid created" (Pillay 2015, p. 138) demanded a question on race. During the first phase (RSA2013), the research group opted not to racialise the biographical data and survey. Data extracted from 1,151 student teachers who answered RSA2013 Questions 9 and 10 on culture and ethnicity, however, provided some indication on student teachers' race identifications:
Racially Black *n* = 353/1,151 = 30.67% (Black 86; Zulu 64; Sotho 6; Xhosa 9; African 188)
Racially Coloured, *n* = 44/1,151 = 3.82%
Racially Indian, *n* = 59/1,151 = 5.13% (Indian 51; Christian Indian 2; Muslim Indian 4; Hindu Tamil 2)
Racially White, *n* = 197/1,151 = 17.12% (White 185; Afrikaner 11; African White 1).
Other responses included: 43 student teachers described their culture and ethnicity in terms of belief systems; 97 indicated that they did not belong to an ethnic or cultural group; 35 described themselves as South Africans; 208 indicated that they did not understand the question, or it doesn't matter to them or that it was not applicable; 115 described their culture and ethnicity in terms of moral characteristics, social groups or regional affiliations. It is interesting to note that none of the RSA2013 student teachers' defined themselves as European.

During the second, international phase (Survey2015), the research group decided to include a question (Question 8) on race, giving participants an opportunity to define themselves in terms of race classification. Question 8 read as follows: "Do you want to answer a question on race? If yes, what is your race?" Participants thus had an option to define themselves in terms of race. Of the 351 participants who answered Survey 2015 Question 8 (*n* = 83 international participants skipped this question), the international students were less racially conscious: *n* = 106/215 = 49.30% answered "yes" to the question and *n* = 109/215 = 50.70% answered "no." The South African (RSA2015) data showed a much higher incidence in terms of participants who wanted to define themselves in terms of race categories: *n* = 110/136 = 80.88% said "yes," and only *n* = 26/136 = 19.12% said "no." This is an indication of the current racial issues in the South African politicised and racialised society and its impact on HE since the RSA2013. survey The racial indications were:
Racially Black, *n* = 69/110 = 62.72% (African 26; Black 33; Black African 10)
Racially Coloured, *n* = 2/110 = 1.82%
Racially Indian, *n* = 15/110 = 13.64% (Indian 2; Asian 3; Indian SA 10)
Racially White, *n* = 24/110 = 21.82% (Caucasian 5; White 19).

The historic and ontological possibilities for either humanisation or dehumanisation (cf. Freire, 1993) within HE in South Africa speak to conditions of privilege and institutional and interpersonal power relations, and this will be explored and analysed through a critical lens and critical discourse analysis. We regard HE as a sociocultural practice and analyse ways of being and acting within power relations in HE structures and practices (Bernard, 2015). We use Fairclough's (2001) analytical framework for critical discourse analysis, which is problem-based. It aims to illuminate the problems that people are confronted with in society (in this case HE), and the resources people may be able to draw upon in confronting and overcoming these problems. We question the interactional social conditions and boundaries within which racism and discrimination are restructured and move, through analysis and reflection, to the possibilities that such a problem might present (cf. Fairclough, 2001).

During both phases, participation was voluntary and the ethical protocols of participating national and international universities were followed. In order to protect the identity and privacy of participants, numbering is used when findings are reported. Trustworthiness of project data was achieved through practices such as crystallisation, multivocality, and project members' reflections (Becker et al., 2014). We reference the data in terms of the data source: *Survey2015, Q24* (the year in which the survey was completed followed by the question number). Individual comments are referenced *RSA2015, Q24, P7,* indicating 2015 survey, Question 24, South African Participant 7. Data emanating from the first phase (2013) small focus group discussions are referenced *s1y4m2,* indicating Site 1(s1), fourth year students (y4), second meeting (m2). At some of the sites, two small focus group discussions per year were held—these are referenced *a* or *b*. Individual comments from participants in focus groups are referenced *RSA2013, P1M* to show participant number, male (or F, female).

Conditions for Dialogue as Praxis in HE

The essence of dialogue is the word (Freire, 1993). For Freire (1993) the constitutive elements of the word are reflection and action, and he argued that all authentic words are praxis and result in transformation and humanisation. Praxis as a concept was first used by Aristotle, later by Marx and is extensively used by Freire (Dale & Hyslop-Margison, 2010). Praxis refers to consciousness of our past, present, and future in the world as incomplete beings. It includes an understanding that humans are not trapped in history but are able to create and recreate the world they share with others (Dale & Hyslop-Margison, 2010). Freire (1993), however, argued that unauthentic words (not constituted by reflection and action) are idle chatter, empty words, or verbalism (words without action) that, like activism (action without reflection), cannot create and recreate the world or have praxis, transformation, or humanisation as their result.

HE in South Africa has inherited the full complexity of South Africa's apartheid and colonial legacy. In legal and regulatory terms, there has been significant transformative progress during the post-1994 period (DoE, 2008). Legal compliance does not, however, necessarily translate into substantive transformation. Racism is deeply rooted in the consciousness of the South African society and its institutions (Mangcu, 2015). The intersections of history, politics, economy, and society that started pre-1994 laid the foundation for who and what we perceive ourselves to be, and how we position ourselves in postapartheid education (Becker, 2013). The responsiveness of HE in implementing policies to improve equity and address social divisions since democracy remain embedded in historical contexts of oppression. In historically white institutions, a white, male, and Eurocentric institutional culture remains and is perceived as a substantial barrier to black students and staff of all genders and sexualities.

Freire (1993) argued that if education wants to teach and learn for freedom and humanisation, it needs to acknowledge situated selves. Situated selves are positioned within intersections of past, present, and (anticipated) future place and space in HE. Intersectionality explores power relations within categories of race, ethnicity, and gender (Crenshaw, 1991). Racism, for example, is based on unequal relations of power, and is intertwined with other forms of discrimination such as class, gender, ethnicity, religion, and language and utilises these to justify and reproduce itself (DoE, 2008). Adami (2013) built on the intersectional perspective by exploring intersectional dialogue within power relations, which acknowledges that people in different power positions intersect differently in changing relational contexts. Intersectional dialogue refers to the way in which power is multilayered and intersects when individuals position themselves in dialogue, drawing on different cultural and social contexts (Roux, 2015). Intersectional dialogue therefore acknowledges the complexity of power relations between different situated selves and its influence on self-in-relation.

In acknowledging situated selves in South Africa, we have to account for the pre-1994 "entrenched inherited racial identities that disfigured the popular consciousness of colonial and apartheid South Africa" (Alexander, 2011, pp. 40). The popular consciousness of colonial and apartheid South Africa through which we understand the world, HE, and the possibility of a new historic community, is what Ranciere (2015) referred to as the distribution of the sensible. Ranciere (2015) defined the distribution of the sensible as historic modes of perception and being prescribing participation, inclusion, and exclusion. Historic modes of perception (such as colonial and apartheid consciousness) determine who and what are visible and invisible, or are heard and not heard. These practices are informed by cultural scripts and racial–cultural mutations. In order to survive in HE, these pre-1994 prescribed modes of being need to be assimilated for students to be included (cf. Fataar, 2015; Thaver & Thaver, 2015). Constructing a new nonracial historic community, such as Alexander (2011) advocated, would require a disruption of pre-1994 distributions of the sensible.

For dialogue as praxis to disrupt the distribution of the sensible, it is necessary to understand the intersections of pre- and post-1994 structural and systemic conditions in which the thought and language of students, staff, and management were and are dialectically framed (Freire, 1993). Freire (1993) argued that language and thought exist within specific structures and within intersections of past, present, and future places and spaces. The words we use always refer to realities, perceived realities, or views of the world shaped by the place and space that situated selves inhabit (Freire, 1993). Freire proposed that, "to speak a true word is to transform the world" (1993, p. 68). Although Freire argued that all authentic words are praxis and result in transformation and humanisation, he also cautioned that unauthentic words result in dehumanisation. Language itself does not have mystic or transformative power but words are connected to other words and using particular words always leads "more easily to some words than others" (Biesta, 2010, pp. 540). The words we use can continually restructure the historic distribution of the sensible, but also present possibilities to disrupt the distribution of the sensible (cf. Ranciere, 2015).

We have thus far posed the first condition for dialogue as praxis towards humanisation: the acknowledgement of the situated self. The second and interrelated condition for humanising dialogue would be the need for, and right to, voice. Humans have an ontological need for voice and when denied the right to voice within either ontological or physically oppressive contexts, freedom and humanisation become impossible (Dale & Hyslop-Margison, 2010). According to Apple (1999, pp. 198–199), Freire turned "dialogue into something of an art form." Apple pointed to two aspects that were important to Freire when it came to dialogue: listening, and dealing truthfully with disruptive questions. Listening is an activity that goes beyond hearing (Freire, 1998). Listening is an attitude on the part of the listener—of being open to the words, gestures, and differences of situated selves. Listening requires centring the narratives of the excluded, and dealing with disruptive questions.

True listening does not diminish the right to disagree, but is an action that connects the speaker and the listener within dialogue, without prejudice (Freire, 1998). Freire (1998) described the connectedness brought about by listening as communion, in which dialogue as praxis becomes transformative.

Regarding the right to voice, Freire (1993) argued: "Dialogue cannot occur . . . between those who deny others the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them" (p. 69). As already mentioned above, historic distributions of the sensible disable possibilities for dialogue as praxis by inscribing who can speak, and who and what we hear and see (cf. Biesta, 2010; Ranciere, 2015). Historic distributions of the sensible render some words as voice, and others as noise (Biesta, 2010). Biesta (2010) proposed that the assumption in education should be that all students can speak, and all students have the capacity for speech and action. Students neither lack the capacity for speech, nor are they producing noise. Students, staff, and administrators have the ontological right to voice. It is only by claiming the equal right to voice and acknowledging the place and space the situated selves inhabit, that the historic distribution of the sensible can be disrupted and a new historic community can be constituted.

Voices in South African HE

All qualitative data were first read holistically in reference to power relations, discrimination, racism, inclusion and exclusion, and dehumanising structures and practices. Two steps were used to select data excerpts for analysis. Data pertaining to racism, exclusion, discrimination, and dehumanisation were selected first. Following that, excerpts were selected pertaining to place and space. For the purpose of this article, only data speaking to relations, structures, and practices within HE were selected.

During the 2013 small focus group discussions, racism and discrimination on and off campus were voiced at all six sites. At Site 1, one of the student teachers commented, "I personally have noticed that there is a lot of discrimination and racism going on in campus" (RSA2013, P4F, s1y1m1b). Qualitative data from the Survey 2015 (Question 33: Which phobia do you think causes extreme human rights violations? Name no more than THREE) furthermore indicated that South African student teachers regarded racism as a phobia that causes extreme human rights violations. Of the 117 participants who commented in the open box provided, 60 were South Africans and 14 named racism and resulting discrimination as causing extreme human rights violations in South Africa. Data indicate that racism and discrimination in HE manifest on two levels: in interactions with management in institutional contexts where power relations dictate positioning, and within interpersonal contexts on campus and in lecture rooms. Feedback of the students will be given verbatim.

Student teachers described the opposing relations between management and students by using words such as they and those and we and us (RSA2013, s1y1m1; s5y4m1). Management was defined as "those who are in top" by a student teacher at Site 1 (RSA2013, s1y1m1), pointing to a relationship in which management had all the power. Student teachers described the interaction between management and students by using phrases such as "they deny us," "they oppressed and suppressed us," "they didn't want us to express what we felt and what we needed to do" (RSA2013, s1y1m1). Relations of power within managerial contexts, and the unwillingness to listen to students were described by a student teacher from Site 4 as follows:

> *If you're the person with authority, sometimes it is easier for you, you shoot somebody down when they come to you with a problem, because you can say, is it really that big a*

> *problem? Even though it might escalate into something big, but you can just say, but no it's not that big a problem. We've got bigger things to do now. (RSA2013, P2M, s4y4m1b)*

On questions from the researchers whether student representatives can address students' concerns and problems with management, student teachers from Site 3 argued that "student councils only have functions" and do not address any problems (RSA2013, s3y4m1). One of the student teachers from Site 3 argued that if you want your problems to be addressed you need to "go outside of the campus, which is wrong, because I don't know to whom I should go. Then I move outside campus with factors outside campus, they will come inside which I also feel is not right" (RSA2013, P1M, s3y4m1). A student representative at Site 5, however, had a different view. She argued that student representatives do address problems with management but that

> *they don't want us to go against them, management, they don't want us to go against them and the thing is we represent students and what students want. We bring it to management because we are the mediator between students and management. So I think in a way the student leaders . . . we were victimised. (RSA2013, P3F, s5y4m1)*

From the data, it seemed as if management, administrators, and lecturers in their interaction with students normalise implicit racist and discriminatory behaviour from fellow students as one student teacher from Site 3 explained:

> *To add to that, I have had many arguments with our black students. Like here at the front at the financial office, we all stand in a queue and they then pass just to be in the front, and then I say: Aunty, but this is a queue, we are all equal and we all want to have equal bursary. And it is a black lady that sits in front and I feel you don't want to every day fight about it, but it is a reality, because why doesn't she tell them to go and queue at the back? And then she helps them before the rest of us. And then it ends up in an ugly quarrel and they see you as a racist and so on. (RSA2013, P2F, s3y4m1)*

Two student teachers at Site 1 related their experiences of discrimination in a lecture room. After describing an incident of victimisation in class and the apparent lack of action from the lecturer, student teachers concluded:

> Uh . . . I think there is that thing of discrimination against each other. He just gave them more rights than us. Yes. (RSA2013, P2M, s1y1m1a)
>
> *Yes. Because they were the same race [as the lecturer]. (RSA2013, P1F, s1y1m1a)*
> Yes, there was racism there. (RSA2013, P1F, s1y1m1a)

Experiences of discrimination, racism, and exclusions between students mostly focused on implicit racism related to historic modes of perception. Explicit racist behaviour experienced on campus was only mentioned at Site 4:

> *So, I previously studied mechanical engineering in . . . and then one day I came out the toilet and a white girl didn't want to go in after me. So I decided to drop out. I had the mentality of apartheid, with white people not treating us well. Then I came to . . . and I found it the other way round. (RSA2013, P3F, s4y4m1a).*

Experiences of implicit discrimination, racism, and exclusionary practices evident from descriptions of relations between students and campus life indicated that students prefer to stick to "others like us" and are afraid of "others not like us." Although they seemed to realise the need for constructing a new historical community, they did not seem keen to disrupt historic modes of perceptions. Two student teachers at Site 1 explain this in the following excerpts:

> *I think we should be together like she says and not fear each other but most of the time they group together. Like us blacks, we group together because we understand each other. It's hard for someone from the rural areas to group with them because he or she can't understand the language. (RSA2013, P2F, s1y1m1b)*

> *We don't know how they live and how they carry themselves. (RSA2013, P4F, s1y1m1b)*

The above excerpts point to racial stereotyping and campus cultures, practices, and interactions within colonial and apartheid categories and divisions. In order to survive in HE, assimilating whiteness or blackness as coping strategy was described by student teachers as inevitable. Student teachers from Site 1 and Site 5 argued that processes of acceptance and assimilation were necessary in order to not be "victimised" by fellow students (RSA2013, s1y1m1a); they argued, "if you cannot change it, you have to settle and deal with it" (RSA2013, s1y4m2), and that HE is about "survival of the fittest" (RSA2013, s5y4m2).

From the data presented thus far, it seems that policy changes and restructuring had little effect on race categorisations, racism, discrimination, and exclusion in HE and that dehumanising practices persist in HE. If Freire (1993) argued that humanisation and dehumanisation remain historic and ontological possibilities for humans, we considered whether student teachers are conscious of the historic modes of perception and the possibilities for structuring a new historic community. One of the student teachers from Site 1 expressed frustration at the verbalism that disables any possibilities for structuring a new historic community by commenting that "they talk like we are one united nation and everybody is together but they don't do something about it" (RSA2013, P3F, s1y1m1b).

It seemed that student teachers linked their experiences of racism and discrimination to colonialism and apartheid, acknowledging the situated selves with comments such as:

> I had the mentality of apartheid, with white people not treating us well. (RSA2013, s4y4m1a)
> The colonialism is still in our minds. (RSA2013, s1y1m1b)

> *I understand the generations and things. But now everybody is being punished for apartheid and for what our parents did. (RSA2013, P4F, s4y4m1a)*

Apart from the acknowledgement of the situated selves, humanisation depends on the ontological right to voice. Qualitative comments to Survey 2015, Question 25 (Select any five of the following words or phrases you associate most with "freedom") linked freedom to the right to voice. Of the 212 participants who commented, 99 were South African and 24 of them linked freedom to the ontological right to voice and expression of opinion with comments such as:

> *Being able to express myself and stating my opinions. (RSA2015, Q25, P19)*

> *In my own words, freedom means that each and every individual has a voice towards what is happening in the society, especially in his or her country. (RSA2015, Q25, P62)*

> *Freedom is living in a society where you are free to express your opinions and there is no oppression of others because of their race, colour, or ethnicity. (RSA2015, Q25, P54)*

One student teacher, in commenting on Survey 2015, Question 33 (Which phobia do you think causes extreme human rights violations?), explained the role that education can play in realising the possibilities of humanising South Africa towards structuring a nonracist new historical community:

> *South Africa is a very diverse country, there are sometimes tensions that become visible, which contradicts, sometimes with individuals' way of looking at life. I guess this is because we haven't yet reached a state where we are all critical to human race matters. I also believe that formal education should be used more in creating persons who are critical to human race matters. (RSA2015, Q33, P33)*

Moving from *Is* to *Ought*: Possibilities of Dialogue as Humanising Praxis

Words present the possibilities to either humanise or dehumanise HE. We proposed two conditions for dialogue as humanising praxis in relation to Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1993) and *Pedagogy of Freedom* (1998). Through analysis of, and reflection on, the data, we identified persistent racism and discrimination within pre-1994 distributions of the sensible as disabling in this regard. The continual restructuring of pre-1994 "entrenched inherited racial identities" (Alexander, 2011, pp. 40) disables any possibilities for constituting a new historic community, social cohesion, and nonracist spaces for dialogue as praxis. The post-1994 South African Constitution (1996) commits South Africans to continually become a nonracist society: a new historical community (Alexander, 2011). In the movement from *is* (pre-1994 distributions of the sensible) to *ought* (a new nonracist historic community), dialogue as humanising praxis presents definite possibilities.

In relation to the first condition (the acknowledgement of the situated selves), it is evident that normalisation of implicit racist behaviour and implicit demands for assimilation in order to be included disregard sociohistoric contexts (RSA2013, s1y1m1; s5y1m2). Managerial and institutional powers are socially and culturally embedded in pre-1994 legacies and negate the historic and present contexts that situated selves inhabit (RSA2013, s1y1m1a; s4y4m1a; s2y1m1; s1y1m1b; RSA2015, Q33). This seems to confirm Thaver and Thaver's (2015, pp. 288–289) suspicion that the knowledge and institutional cultures that students are exposed to, do not "capture the full diversity and complexity of the nation-in-becoming." Within HE, students and staff, in order to survive, have to continually navigate a culturally incongruent discursive environment that ignores their cultural and historic identities (cf. Fataar, 2015).

Interpersonal relations in HE are dictated by pre-1994 race categories (RSA2013, s1y1m1a; s3y4m1; s4y4m2; s1y1m1b; s4y4m1b). It seems that students find security in race groups. A student teacher from Site 1 conceded that "I think we should be together like she says and not fear each other," but then argues that "like us blacks we group together because we understand each other. It's hard for someone from the rural areas to group with them because he or she can't understand the language" (RSA2013, s1y1m1b). A fellow student stated that the reason for this is: "We don't know how they live and how they carry themselves" (RSA2013, s1y1m1b). The use of us, and they, or them, indicates distance and opposition, the use of the phrase, not fear each other, emphasises reciprocal fear and discomfort. Not understanding "their" language, and not knowing how they live and how they carry themselves indicates an inability to acknowledge the situated selves.

The analyses of the data support the argument that the ontological need for, and right to, voice within interpersonal relations and relations between management and students, is not acknowledged. Student teachers did, however, link freedom to the right to voice (RSA2015, Q25). Although 14 of the 60 South African student teachers answering Question 25 linked freedom to the right to voice, comments indicated that they experienced the right to voice as qualified. They used phrases such as: "without fear," "without threats thereafter," "no oppression of others because of race, colour or ethnicity" (RSA2015, Q25). In their experience, management did not listen, without prejudice, to their words (RSA2013, s4y4m1b; s1y1m1; s5y4m1; s3y4m1). In exploring the possibilities that dialogue as praxis present, we should ask ourselves if students, staff, and management regard each other's speech as noise or as voice (cf. Ranciere, 2012). We should be aware that our choice of words might have both humanisation and dehumanisation as consequence. Dialogue as praxis demands consciousness of our past, present, and future in the world as incomplete beings and an understanding that we are not trapped in history but able to recreate the world by disrupting historic distributions of the sensible. We argue that the dialogue management in HE engaged in during the last 20 years has been verbalism (s1y1m1b): words with no action. Students, on the other hand, have used activism. Their actions also indicate little reflection or listening (cf. Freire, 1993).

Although data point to persistent patterns of dehumanisation in HE, data also point to possibilities for humanising HE. Student teachers linked their experiences of racism and discrimination to pre-1994 colonial and apartheid racist patterns (RSA2013, s1y1m1b; s4y4m1a), thereby acknowledging the situated selves, and they linked post-1994 freedom to the ontological right to voice (RSA2015, Q25). The conditions for dialogue as praxis posed in this article present possibilities for disrupting historic distributions of the sensible towards a new historical community. By claiming the right to voice, student teachers, staff, and management can speak to the intersections between the historic distribution of the sensible and its manifestation in the present. The narratives of racism and discrimination should be centred and listened to without prejudice. These narratives should be understood within historic and present intersections of place and space that shape the words people use in HE. Intersectional dialogue, in the context of HE, should acknowledge the intersections of pre- and post-1994 oppression and the complexities of resulting power relations between different situated selves. The historic distribution of the sensible can then be disrupted and reconstituted towards humanising HE so that students, staff, and management can constitute a new historic community.

Education is crucial to changing the world we share, as one of the student teachers commented (RSA2015, Q25). Within education, we "share our differences" (RSA2015, P33) and "become critical to human race matters" (RSA2015, P33). In education we have a chance to "embrace" (RSA2013, s1y4m2) situated selves. When students and staff in HE display an openness to listening, intersectional dialogue about blackness, whiteness, racism, discrimination, humanisation, and dehumanisation can then begin. This would, however, require HE to start from an assumption that students and staff, situated within diverse contexts, are equally capable of speech, equally incomplete, and equally capable of creating history.

Conclusion

HE in South Africa is deeply embedded in pre-1994 distributions of the sensible. Human rights projects, policies, and legal remedies addressing racism, inequality, discrimination, and exclusions alone cannot disrupt historic distributions and humanise HE in South Africa. Dialogue as humanising praxis simultaneously disrupts and reconstitutes historic distributions of the sensible while the reconstitution of the sensible continually enacts dialogue as humanising praxis. This is possible through the two conditions we proposed. Humanising HE through dialogue as praxis becomes

possible when situated selves are acknowledged, and the ontological need and right to voice is claimed. When equal voices are listened to within the world the situated selves inhabit, historic distributions can be disrupted, and a new historic community constituted.

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