

Precarity and the need for critical pedagogies of affect in Physical Education: lessons learned from two case studies in Brazil

ABSTRACT

There is a need to understand precarity in the Global South, and to learn from critical pedagogies of affect (CPA) in order to provide inclusive, fair and equitable forms of physical education to people. The purpose of this paper is to explore what we learned when we implement CPA in precarious contexts in Brazil. Drawing on Freirean perspective and CPA, we discuss two case studies of our experiences in socially vulnerable areas with physical education student teachers and women in a public health-promoting program. Our case studies taught us lessons about the relevance of CPA to people's lives, in terms of a need for dialogue, importance of solidarity, power of hope and imagination, possibility of humanization, power of connection, and realisation of benefits through small wins. In the Global South, we conclude that humanization is central to the construction of a collective process to overcome the effects of precarity.

KEYWORDS: Critical pedagogy; Paulo Freire; Pedagogy of affect; Ethic of care; Global south

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Precariedade e a necessidade de pedagogias críticas afetivas na Educação Física: lições aprendidas com dois estudos de caso no Brasil

RESUMO

Faz-se necessário compreender a precariedade no Sul Global e aprender com as pedagogias críticas afetivas (PCA) para proporcionar formas inclusivas, justas e equitativas de educação física às pessoas. O objetivo deste artigo é explorar o que aprendemos quando desenvolvemos PCA em contextos precários no Brasil. Com base na perspectiva freiriana e na PCA, discutimos dois estudos de caso de nossas experiências em áreas de vulnerabilidade social com estudantes de Educação Física e mulheres em programa público de promoção da saúde. Nossos estudos de caso nos ensinaram a relevância da PCA na vida das pessoas, em termos da necessidade de diálogo, importância da solidariedade, poder da esperança e imaginação, possibilidade de humanização, poder do vínculo e realização de benefícios por meio de pequenas vitórias. No Sul Global, concluímos que a humanização é central para a construção de um processo coletivo de superação dos efeitos da precariedade.

Palavras-chave: Pedagogia crítica; Paulo Freire; Pedagogia do afeto; Ética do cuidado; Sul global

Precariedad y la necesidad de pedagogías afectivas críticas en la Educación Física: lecciones aprendidas de dos estudios de caso en Brasil

RESUMEN

Es necesario comprender la precariedad en el Sur Global y aprender de las pedagogías afectivas críticas (PAC) para brindar formas de educación física inclusivas, justas y equitativas a las personas. El propósito de este artículo es explorar lo que aprendemos cuando desarrollamos PAC en contextos precarios en Brasil. Con base en la perspectiva freireana y en las PAC, discutimos dos estudios de caso de nuestras experiencias en áreas de vulnerabilidad social con profesores de educación física y mujeres en un programa de promoción de la salud pública. Nuestros estudios de caso nos han enseñado la relevancia de PAC en la vida de las personas, en cuanto a la necesidad de diálogo, importancia de la solidaridad, poder de la esperanza y la imaginación, posibilidad de humanización, poder de vinculación y realización de beneficios a través de pequeñas victorias. En el Sur Global, concluimos que la humanización es central para construir un proceso colectivo para superar los efectos de la precariedad.

Palabras-clave: Pedagogía crítica; Paulo Freire; Pedagogía del afecto; Ética del cuidado; Sur global

INTRODUCTION

Precarity is used widely in the social sciences to refer to instability and uncertainty in people's lives. It is commonly deployed when social scientists discuss the so-called gig economy, which is inherently unstable and uncertain, and its mal effects on gig workers' and their families' health and wellbeing (KIRK, 2020). The significance of precarity for countries of the Global North has been well-recognised. This is particularly so because the rapid rise of the gig economy disrupts what Lauren Berlant (2011) calls “the good life”. The good life of economic prosperity and emotional security can be secured by individuals as due reward for hard work and good behaviour. Berlant argues that even if this was once the case, increasingly since the 1980s this is true for fewer and fewer individuals. But the myth of the good life is powerfully embedded in countries of the Global North because it is central to the functioning of capitalism, and thus becomes the source of what she calls “cruel optimism”. This is in part why precarity links the working of the gig economy with health and wellbeing issues for workers and their families, in addition to the uncertainty and insecurity gig work generates.

Nevertheless, we know less about the relevance of this concept of precarity to countries of the Global South where, arguably, the notion of the good life is not so strongly embedded (MOSOETSA; STILLERMAN; TILLY, 2016). There is a need to explore the extent to which the gig economy is impacting Brazil as an example of a prominent country of the Global South, and how this sits beside the exacerbation of precarious lives, dehumanising experiences, and related effects on health and wellbeing among workers and their families. As we consider the intensification and pervasiveness of precarity in contemporary times, we should ask how physical education can connect with the experiences of young people and mobilise a socially relevant response with them. Within this context of an alternative notion of precarity, we then present data from two studies of physical education student teachers and women in public health-promotion settings, to argue that critical pedagogies of affect should be considered in the field as a possibility for engendering humanisation, solidarity and life cultivation to confronting inequities and social turbulences among young people. From a critical pedagogy of affect perspective (hooks, 2001; SOSA-PROVENCIO, 2017; DARDER, 2017; FREIRE, 1987), we discuss the lessons learned from the two studies in terms of forms of physical education that are socially relevant to people's worlds and supports them in seeing their lives as worth living.

PRECARITY IN BRAZIL: the gig economy and impact on people's lives

“From the point of view of the South, working had always been precarious”.

(NOGUEIRA; CARVALHO, 2021, p.13)

From Global North to South, labour relations have suffered deformations and attacks that shatter social bonds of solidarity and collective action (ABÍLIO; AMORIM; GROHMANN, 2021a). Although it is possible to identify new working arrangements emerging at a global level, these vary across national settings (MOSOETSA; STILLERMAN; TILLY, 2016). Thus, there is a need to unravel the “specificities of the periphery” (of which Brazil is an example), where informality, work that is done without contracts and social security, is a structural element of the economy (ABÍLIO; AMORIM; GROHMANN, 2021a; MOSOETSA; STILLERMAN; TILLY, 2016).

Regarding the Brazilian working scenario, we cannot ignore an unemployed population of 9.2 million people and a significant number of 38.9% of the employed population that works in informality, corresponding to 38.8 million Brazilians who work without contracts, or are self-

employed, or as auxiliary family workers (IBGE, 2023). By and large, these numbers refer to approximately 49 million people living under deprived and uncertain conditions. The statistics portray the worrying context where precarity has assumed in Brazil an additional facet, mostly related to the rise of new types of jobs, in a phenomenon that has been categorised in different ways: “gig economy”, “crowdwork”, “on-demand work”, “platform labour”, “work platformization”, “uberization” and “platform economy” (ABÍLIO, 2020; VAHDAT *et al.*, 2022).

As an overarching term, the gig economy has been adopted in different sectors to convey a non-traditional arrangement of working, encompassing a variety of temporary jobs, mostly mediated by digital platforms (but not limited to them), in which workers provide services requested on-demand and are remunerated by each completed task instead of having a single employer with a fixed salary (GÓES, FIRMINO; MARTINS, 2021). In Brazil, the “gig economy” is a new expression, an understudied phenomenon, and not easily translated from its original English version, although its exploitive features of instability and uncertainty are well-known by Brazilian workers.

From the perspective of Brazil, in the work context in which precarity and informality are the norm, gig work can be seen as a new process of precarization, conceived as “enterprising informality” (VACKLAVIK, 2020). The emergence of gig work changes the characteristics of Brazilian ‘traditional’ informality and therefore requires additional approaches for confronting it (ABÍLIO; AMORIM; GROHMANN, 2021b; NOGUEIRA; CARVALHO, 2021). In 2021, it was estimated that approximately 1.5 million Brazilians were working in the gig economy in the transport sector with the delivery of parcels, app and taxi drivers, and motorcycle taxi drivers (GÓES; FIRMINO; MARTINS, 2022). From 2016 to 2021, there was an increase of 60% in the number of gig workers in this sector in Brazil (GÓES; FIRMINO; MARTINS, 2022).

As argued by Góes and collaborators (2023), the rise of gig work fuels precarity. It can be wrongly understood that these workers have autonomy, flexibility and freedom, as if they negotiate their work on their own terms and interests. In this sense, this type of work is vested in an enthusiastic discourse of freedom and entrepreneurship, while in fact, it hides a deep layer of uncertainty, exploitation, and lack of guarantees (BOSI, 2008).

Among immediate consequences, we can predict an even bigger increase of vulnerability characterised by the absence of social security and protection to ensure workers' basic rights (GÓES; FIRMINO; MARTINS, 2021; GÓES *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, precarious work leads to conditions of precarious lives, to insecurity not restricted to work, but extended to housing, family, health, and ageing (NOGUEIRA; CARVALHO, 2021). As Kirk (2020) argued, precarious work affects those who experience it, producing negative effects on the health and wellbeing of workers and their families, including children and young people's mental health. For the author, “mental health issues are prominent within the writing about precarity, where tensions and frustrations within families, schools and communities are sources of anger and frustration, helplessness and hopelessness, anxiety and stress, and alienation” (KIRK, 2020, p.32). Therefore, precarity as a socially produced phenomenon is associated with impacts on people's health and wellbeing (ALMEIDA, 2022).

Worryingly, the rise of precarity in recent times has been exacerbated by two additional forces, as the case of the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences, and the growing far-right political movement in Brazil characterised by its necropolitics (SILVA; PIRES; PEREIRA, 2020). The former was associated with an explosion of mental health issues, particularly among children and young people, while the latter spreads discourses of anger, violence and hate against social groups and identities of gender, race, ethnicity, class, and generation. Both phenomena have had an impact on education, with Brazilian schools returning to in-person classes after two years of lockdown within a scenario of rising prevalence of mental health disorders, and the escalation of an

“authorised violence”, generating negative effects on students' emotions, health and wellbeing (VASQUES; WITTIZORECKI, 2023).

In this respect, it is relevant to mention that at the time of writing this manuscript, extremely violent episodes happened in Brazilian schools. On March 27th, 2023, Elisabeth Tenreiro, a teacher, was killed by a 13-year-old student in a classroom in a public school in São Paulo. Nine days later, in an attack on a kindergarten in Blumenau, Bernardo Machado (5 years old), Bernardo Pabst (4 years old), Larissa Maia (7 years old), and Enzo Barbosa (4 years old) were brutally killed. Since then, several threats of attacks against schools have been announced all over the country, spreading fear, anger, and anguish among school communities.

On top of precarity and its associated effects on people's health and wellbeing, these tragic events in Brazilian schools reinforce an urgent need in the field of education and physical education for critical pedagogies that might positively affect students' lives (KIRK, 2020) to confront social forces causing life deterioration. In seeking to respond to this call, we rethink precarity as a concept that emerged in the Global North, but at its core can be associated with peripheral ways of life as historically produced in the Global South (ABÍLIO, 2020).

In this paper, we draw on a Brazilian critical perspective on education of Paulo Freire to pursue our purpose of exploring two examples of critical pedagogies of affect in physical education that might be responsive to social forces fuelling precarity that dehumanise people and produce peripheral and precarious lives. In the next section, we outline briefly how the work of Paulo Freire informs our thinking about critical pedagogies of affect in the area of physical education. Then we provide a short account of the methods employed in our two case studies before reporting our “findings” in terms of lessons learned about critical pedagogies of affect, one in a community-based sport project with young people, and another in a health promotion program with women. Finally, in the conclusion, we consider the extent to which critical pedagogies of affect can be one possible response by physical education to rising precarity as it is manifesting itself in a country of the Global South which has already a high degree of informal employment and associated health and wellbeing challenges.

PAULO FREIRE AND CRITICAL PEDAGOGIES OF AFFECT IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

“As individuals or as people, by fighting for the restoration of [our] humanity [we] will be attempting the restoration of true generosity. And this fight, because of the purpose given it, will actually constitute an act of love” (FREIRE, 1987, p.45).

Paulo Freire wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1968 during his time in political exile. Freire grew up in the Northeast of Brazil where his experiences deeply influenced his work. The world economic crisis forced Freire to know about hunger and poverty at a young age. Freire lived among poor rural families and labourers where he gained a deep understanding of their lives and of the effects of socio-economic conditions on education. Central in Freire's pedagogy is the importance of “radical love” in transforming inequities in education and restoring humanity.

For Freire, the restoration of our humanity cannot exist, however, in the absence of a profound radical love for the world and for people. Freire's critical pedagogy starts with the oppressed critical consciousness and praxis as an act of generosity (FREIRE, 1987). For him, the oppressed “as individuals or as peoples, by fighting for the restoration of their humanity they will be attempting the restoration of true generosity” (p. 45). Freire (1987) defined praxis as reflection

and action directed at the oppressive structures to be transformed. According to him, through the process of action and reflection, oppressed people can acquire critical consciousness of their own condition and take transformative action to change that reality. The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love.

Freire's radical love is aligned with the concept of critical ethic of care. This concept was further developed by Black and Chicana feminists who argued for a critical theory of caring that reveals power relations and aims to prepare people to challenge discrimination in their communities (ANTROP-GONZÁLEZ; JESÚS, 2006; ROBERTS, 2010; SOSA-PROVENCIO, 2017; LADSON-BILLINGS, 2009). According to this body of research, components of a critical ethic of care include (a) practices that reveal power relations and capture complexities and contradictions inherent within caring interactions (b) practices framed as an ethical calling toward recovering dignity and equity, struggle with “the oppressed”; (c) the recognition of people's identities and lived realities. Those premises are at the heart of the conceptualization of “Critical Care” (ANTROP-GONZÁLEZ; JESÚS, 2006), “Critical Feminist Ethic of Care” (SOSA-PROVENCIO, 2017), “Culturally Relevant Critical Teacher Care” (ROBERTS, 2010) or “radical love” (FREIRE, 1987; LUGUETTI; KIRK; OLIVER, 2019), terms that capture the ways in which marginalised populations may care about and educate their own, and their intentions in doing so (ANTROP-GONZÁLEZ; JESÚS, 2006).

In physical education, there is a body of research that recognises that at the heart of critical pedagogies are emotions and affects (DEVIS-DEVIS, 2006; ROVEGNO; KIRK, 1995; LUGUETTI; KIRK; OLIVER, 2019). These authors attempted to show how existing critical pedagogical orientations might be broadened, enhanced, and enriched by giving equal weight to an ethic of care and responsibility in addition to the ethic of justice and emancipation. In this sense, emotions and affects have been the central concept (or at the heart) of some physical educators in their work to challenge the status quo and contribute to building a socially just society (ENNIS, 1999; HELLISON, 2010; LYNCH; WALTON-FISETTE; LUGUETTI, 2022), particularly in overcoming the mal effects of precarity (KIRK, 2020; LUGUETTI; KIRK; OLIVER, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

In order to illustrate how critical pedagogies of affect can work in the Brazilian context, we offer two separate case studies of our experiences with physical education student teachers and women in health promotion program. The two case studies presented here are embedded in real-life situations, that allowed us to share a nuanced perspective of our realities.

Study 1 – Student teachers in socially vulnerable areas

The first case study illustrates how a critical pedagogy of affect emerged in working with student teachers in vulnerable areas in Brazil (for additional information, see LUGUETTI; KIRK; OLIVER, 2019). This research project took place in a community engagement sport program at a University in Guarujá, Brazil. The University is located in a socially and economically disadvantaged neighbourhood in the city, surrounded by three *favelas*. In the city of Guarujá, monthly wage average of formal workers was three minimum salaries and 36% of population received only up to half a minimum salary (which was approximately 1,039 Brazilian Real or U\$\$ 225 dollars) (IBGE, 2020a). As with many urban areas in Brazil, this inequality is omnipresent and highly visible, as *favelas* are side-by-side with new luxury high-rise structures, poverty and privilege live side by side. *Favelas* have rarely had official street names, and the chaotic ad hoc

streets are often an impediment to service provision, and police. Households have historically been denied access to basic utilities like electricity and plumbing, as the development of the *favelas* was unplanned and rapid (see Figure 1).

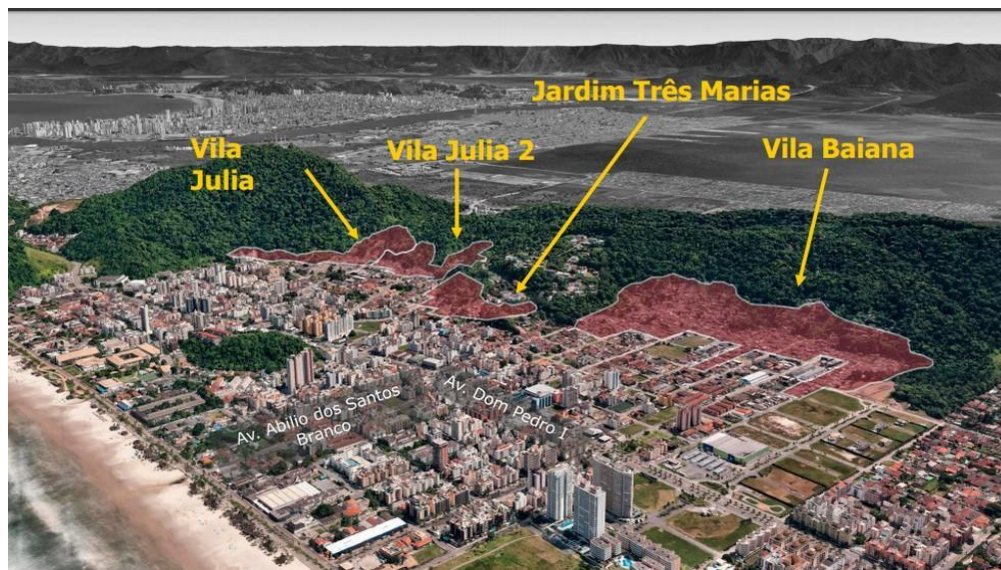


Figure 1: The three main favelas around the university (Vila Julia, Jardim Tres Marias and Vila Baiana)

Carla, a lecturer at the University, facilitated with student teachers a “Sport and Empowerment” class for local young people, to teach a variety of sports. In this case study, we describe the experiences Carla faced when working with four student teachers and 110 young people from socially vulnerable backgrounds (age 7-13) in a co-created sport program where a critical pedagogy of affect emerged. In this context, we implemented an activist approach (LUGUETTI *et al.*, 2017). The approach unfolded over an extended period (20 months) and young people participated in sports for one hour, twice a week (total of 112 classes). The first part of the process for co-constructing the sport program involved the young people and student teachers identifying barriers to learning through sport within their communities. We started by inquiring into what the youth liked/disliked broadly, their perceptions of school and family, their opinions about the training sessions, and the barriers they encountered in relation to sports participation (LUGUETTI *et al.*, 2017). Based on the barriers the young people identified, we worked collaboratively with them in order to challenge these and make the sport, the context, and the opportunities better.

Study 2 – The “Divas of SUS”

In the second case study, led by Heidi, the researchers employed grounded theory and condensed fieldwork methods to explore pedagogical practices and women's experiences with physical activity in a health promotion program (*Academia da Saúde*) under the Brazilian public health system (*Sistema Único de Saúde - SUS*) (for additional information, see FERREIRA; DRIGO; KIRK, 2021).

In the selected program, the “Divas of SUS” emerged as a community focused on women's self-esteem and empowerment. Barbara, a physical education professional, guided the creation of the “Divas of SUS” while working with a group of 16 women (43-66 y). Over a period of 18 months, Barbara led exercise and dance-based sessions and facilitated group conversations among

the women once a week as a safe place for them to talk, share experiences and support each other in their life struggles. Through a participatory and emancipatory process, the Divas engaged in learning to dance, embracing the challenges of giving performances to audiences and organizing group conversations with the purpose of strengthening themselves, their health and wellbeing.

The “Divas of SUS” project shows the mobilization of a critical pedagogy of affect in practices of health promotion in a socially vulnerable context. The project was developed in a neighbourhood of Venâncio Aires/Rio Grande do Sul, characterised by exposure to drug dealing, criminality, a high prevalence of suicide and mental health issues, low educational level and low income of the population. As an illustration, *Venâncio Aires* has the highest number of suicide in Brazil with a rate of 39.9 per 100,000 people against a national average of 6.92 (SECRETARIA DE ESTADO DA SAÚDE DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL, 2019); 57% of people aged over 10 years old had no instruction or had incomplete primary education (SEBRAE, 2022), and monthly wage average of formal workers was 2.3 minimum salaries (IBGE, 2020b). In addition to the local context, the vulnerability in participants' lives was related to the intersection of gender, age, class, and health issues.

FINDINGS

In this section, we describe the lessons learned from the two studies as to the foreground of a critical pedagogy of affect to physical education.

Lessons learned from student teachers in socially vulnerable areas

The lessons learned from working with student teachers in socially vulnerable areas exemplify three features of critical pedagogies of affect: (a) willingness to repeatedly challenge inequities through dialogue; (b) valuing solidarity; and (c) fostering hope and imagination.

Dialogue

One of the features of critical pedagogies of affect that emerged was the commitment to dialogue to abandon oppressive practices in the classroom and reveal power relations. Carla and the student teachers challenged the assumption that they were responsible for all decisions and learning that took place in the program. They had to overcome some of the traditional views of education as a banking concept (FREIRE, 1987). The classroom needed to become a space where students' voices were heard and considered. Dialogue emerged from their willingness to repeatedly challenge inequities. For example, the implementation of the activist sport approach helped them to identify gender inequity (e.g., lack of opportunities for girls' participation in team sports, particularly soccer), but they (Carla, student teachers and young people) needed to be committed to challenging such inequities. They had to have patience and commitment to name, critique, and negotiate the gender issues that arose in our context as well, particularly since they had a way of thinking at the beginning of the project that could reproduce these inequities. This process of enter in dialogue took time:

“When I started here, I thought that as a teacher we know everything. This project changed my life... I understood the importance of listening to the students... when I learned to really listen to them and understand their needs... what I changed is that I have a very strong connection with the kids and with their parents. I changed as a teacher and the way I'm going to teach from now on is the way I learned here” (Janaina's interview – student teacher).

Critical pedagogies of affect demanded Carla and student teachers utilise dialogue to reveal power relations and capture complexities in co-creating knowledge with young people. They invited young people as co-participants in co-creating sport programs. Together, Carla, student teachers and young people built relationships and understood the barriers and facilitators young people faced in seeking to be physically active. Given what they learned together, it was possible to create spaces for change or activism. In revealing power relations through dialogue, we challenged the view of care as colourblind or apolitical (VALENZUELA, 1999). We allowed the social matters to surface and together we negotiated some of the challenges.

Solidarity

The second feature that emerged was the development of solidarity, cultivating a learning community among the participants. Solidarity is about sharing the struggle with people to create a more just world. It must encompass a deep commitment to social inclusion and democracy, a revolutionary commitment to transform oppressive ideologies and practices in education (FREIRE, 1987). Solidarity is framed as an ethical calling toward recovering dignity and equity, a struggle for “the oppressed” (FREIRE, 1987; hooks, 2001). In the case study, solidarity emerged when Carla and the student teachers understood and shared the young people's struggles of trying to escape various forms of oppression. The student teachers came from the same low socio-economic communities as most of the young people and in order to develop solidarity, the student teachers had to be able to share the youth's life situations and understand their emotional needs. The solidarity between the participants, built through trust and empathy, created a space that resulted in a family-like group that cared for one another and their community. Rodrigo emphasised the importance of trust in entering in solidarity:

“One of the things I realize in the last two years it was trust... today I can understand the young people I work with, and I trust them. I understand the kids... the quietest and most agitated kid. That kid who is quieter, maybe by asking questions in the way we learned in the project, I might know what it is in his/her mind and why is this kid behaving like that. That kid will not be that student that stays in the corner, and I will not worry. [...] I was quite an ignorant guy and I've changed a lot. I had to learn to be more patient and trust the kids” (Rodrigo's interview – student teacher).

Freire differentiates charity from solidarity. Charity is assistance provided to you for something that you need so that you no longer need it. Solidarity in this sense is to share the struggle of trying to transform various forms of oppression. It is to join marginalized people in achieving social justice. Solidarity is a deep commitment to protecting, caring for, and empowering young people in the face of social barriers and oppression that surface in their everyday lives. It highlights the importance of building a sense of togetherness that includes getting to know the young people and their hopes, dreams, and communities. In that sense, educators create a community of learners instead of individualistic connections with young people. Additionally, solidarity implied recognition and acknowledgement of people's identities and lived realities. In acknowledging people's experiences, student teachers learned how trust is an expression of solidarity.

Hope and imagination

A third feature to emerge was a desire to foster participants' hope and imagination. Freire (2005, p. 2) argues that “hope is an ontological need” because otherwise our activism dies when we can imagine nothing better than what we see before us. To enact transformation, hope is a necessary ingredient, while its opposite, despair, leaves no room for activism or movement because of the

overwhelming power from obstacles that hinder educators (GREENE, 1995; DANIELS, 2012). The activist sport approach allowed all participants to nurture imagination and hope across the program, with one youth speculating, “we could push the houses back to have more space to play”:

Cris: “If I were to change my neighbourhood, I would build a court for everyone to play. It would be a ‘public’ court with free access”.

Alan: “I wanted more justice in my neighbourhood. In my neighbourhood people steal our bikes and nothing happens”.

Pedro: “The streets could be wider, so we could play. We could push the houses back to have more space to play”.

*Isaac: “I would also distribute cheaper priced balls in my community”
(Semester 1, youth's voice, Lesson 15).*

The possibility to imagine first emerged in the youths' conversations. They could metaphorically imagine alternatives to the barriers their community faced that adults could not, or would not, see. Hope and imagination are central to the transformative experience of education. To enact transformation, hope is a necessary ingredient, while its opposite, despair, leaves no room for activism or movement because of the overwhelming power from obstacles that hinder educators. It is important that transformation occurs at the micro-level, taking small steps toward changing oppressive practices makes a difference over time and achieving small wins (WEICK, 1984). It is important to emphasise that hope and imagination is context specific. So, it will likely take a different form in different contexts. For example, having recognised the barriers young people might face in seeking to be physically active, educators and young people might collectively “mind map” how to make a change, which requires both imagination and hope.

Lessons learned from The Divas of SUS

Investigating the experiences of the Divas of SUS taught us three lessons about the possibilities of affecting women's lives in a socially vulnerable context in Brazil: (a) the commitment to humanisation as a purpose of recovering dignity and unveiling identity; (b) the power of conversation and connection among women to support them to unravel and challenge power relations localised in their lives; (c) the value of realisation in the form of small successes that are meaningful for particular realities.

Humanisation

An important feature of critical pedagogy of affect developed in this project was the commitment to humanisation as a sense of purpose for working with women in a manner that allowed them to unveil a new identity as “Divas”, encompassing their inner values and supporting them to see their lives as meaningful. Barbara viewed the women as whole human beings with unique life stories and potentialities to be more active in their world. Seeing participants in their humanity beyond physical bodies also meant seeing the conditions and factors that were dehumanising and required action, including those derived from socioeconomic instability, lack of autonomy, oppression, and vulnerability.

In doing so, humanisation was central to the construction of a collective process of women recognising and confronting power relations that produced negative experiences over their bodies and lives (e.g., low self-esteem, shame, social invisibility), hindering them from a fulfilling life (BRASIL, 2013). Humanisation involved a recognition of the wholeness and complexity of women's lives in Brazil, which required acknowledging their specific experiences. For example, the women did not attend physical activity sessions on Fridays because they generally assumed it to be a house cleaning day. Barbara claimed the group to look to themselves, critically analyse the

situation, and develop autonomy in relation to their own time. As a result, the women transformed their Fridays into the Divas' day, when they got together to dance, exercise, and have group conversations. In these sessions, they talked about feeling marginalised and overloaded in their families with a burden of invisible work (e.g., housework and caring for others), listening to ironic and sexist comments regularly, and experiencing anguish with body-dissatisfaction and low self-esteem.

In Freirean words, Barbara's work sought to recover dignity and engender a becoming process among the women towards their human vocation of "being more", that is, to comprehend their lives, be conscious about their autonomy, and liberate from forms of oppression that inhibited them to realise their aspirations. Barbara was committed to engage with the women in identifying barriers localised in their daily lives and struggle with them towards better life conditions. With this ethical commitment, Barbara challenged the women to perceive their inner values as persons and to rebuild identities that would embrace this notion of self-worth. Throughout this process of reflection over daily situations they faced, the women discovered themselves: "we are Divas!"

As Divas, they embodied new challenges, as it was the case of their first dance presentation to a big audience:

"They felt very incapable. So, I was all the time challenging them and talking, and always encouraging them as a motivating and challenging piece at the same time, to make them move and believe in their potential". (Barbara's interview)

Giving dance performances in public was an example of how the women developed their potential and added meaningfulness to their participation in physical activity. The participants reported that they started seeing themselves as important, beautiful, strong, resilient, and powerful. Their lives were positively affected by the discovery process of their identity as Divas as it contributed to them seeing their lives as worth living. Nevertheless, this was a non-linear process; Barbara was constantly challenging, provoking, and encouraging the women to develop autonomy and recover dignity. This aspect of humanisation was not an individual and isolated process. On the contrary, it was a shared and collective enterprise which was possible through the development of connections within the group.

Connection

The second lesson learned from the Divas of SUS was the power of connections among people and collectivization of experiences for supporting women in seeing their lives as comprehensible, manageable and meaningful. Bringing the Divas together and cultivating a community was both an outcome (associated with friendship, enjoyment, fun) and a process of a critical pedagogy of affect through which participants strengthened themselves. Being part of a community allowed them to experience belonging and to collectively embrace dancing as a shared challenge. When united, the women were able to recognise differences and similarities around their life experiences, to share struggles and support each other in their particular life situations.

"Everybody is a member of our family. If I have a problem, she suffers, everyone suffers together. When it's Friday, we speak about all our problems from home. Then the teacher provides her advice, and a colleague, another, and so on. We get out of here a new person". (Diana, The Divas' group interview)

Sharing struggles as a community were meaningful to the participants and strengthened them as women who strove together for better lives. More than merely a tool for interaction, group conversations were a democratic key for unlocking authentic connections among women and for

supporting them to comprehend that their life experiences were not individualised but shaped by social forces (hooks, 2020). In their meetings, Barbara did not plan an agenda. The women spontaneously chose topics based on what really matters to them, which allowed genuine and conscious conversations (hooks, 2020). In this sense, facilitating group conversations was an initiative of sharing power (hooks, 2020) and disrupting a “culture of silence” over oppressed lives (FREIRE, 1979).

The construction of a collective space that privileged a dialogic stance and where the women could feel comfortable to express their voices and share experiences enabled them to establish connections with each other, characterised by trust and empathy. The development of empathetic relationships allowed participants to feel they were not alone in their struggles and to collectively develop strategies to handle life situations and challenge power relations. Significantly, the reflections emerged in dialogue encouraged the Divas to take action in the specific context of their lives, which opened possibilities for realisation, even if it referred to minor achievements.

Realisation

The third lesson was understanding that outcomes of the critical pedagogy of affect were situated at a micro-level and within the specific context of participants' realities. In this respect, we learned the value of small transformations as achievements that, to some extent, mobilised forces of resistance to effects produced by social oppression and vulnerability in the Divas' lives (e.g., low self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, among others). In this regard, Barbara acknowledged:

“Like the girls said to you today about being there in the group: ‘how this makes me feel good’. And that’s the message: people feel pleasure in the small things and these small things will add many things to life. They will make you feel better and more pleasure in what you do”. (Barbara’s interview)

In this project, affective experiences were seen in the form of small successes in women's lives, both individually and collectively. Examples reported by participants were their first dance presentation as a group to a big audience in an educational conference, and an event of exchanging second hand clothes that culminated with one Diva being supported to try on a dress for the first time (she had a negative perception of body image). Other positive outcomes that emerged from the cultivation process of the Divas' community included: increased self-esteem, self-care, motivation towards engagement in physical activity, enjoyment, fun, joy, increased perception of physical competence, social support, and new friendships later in life.

We can make three points in summary. Firstly, bringing women together in a community was a small win in their local context, where life conditions lead to individualisation and alienation. Secondly, learning to dance and giving performances in the city referred to another localised victory, where the women had formerly experienced invisibility within their families and communities, and had lacked confidence in themselves. Thirdly, becoming the Divas was also a small but significant win that allowed adult and older women to reimagine and see themselves through their strengths. Even being small wins, all these experiences added relevance and meaningfulness to women's lives, affecting them positively, in a salutogenic manner, strengthening their Sense of Coherence (ANTONOVSKY, 1979).

Our findings show encouraging and positive responses from women to a critical pedagogy of affect as it worked intentionally with them to produce experiences that were meaningful to their lives and supportive for addressing their struggles. Within a context characterised by socioeconomic disadvantages that hinder people to perceive life as coherent, predictable and therefore comprehensible, the work developed with the Divas was revolutionary in its intentionality, even at a

small scale, as it supported them to challenge power relations and see their lives as manageable and meaningful.

CONCLUSION

We noted in the introduction to this paper that rising precarity in Brazil, as an example of a country of the Global South, takes on a particular form that marks itself as different from its manifestation in the Global North. For one thing, the notion of the “good life” discussed by Berlant (2011) does not appear to have the continuing influence in Brazil compared to countries of the Global North. Furthermore, there has already been a high degree of informality of employment in Brazil before the accelerating growth of gig work, which can only bring further instability and uncertainty to the lives of the approximately 49 million people most directly affected by these forces and living within deprived and uncertain conditions. Even those less directly impacted by the informality and precariousness of employment nevertheless feel some effects, including, in terms of employment, demands for greater flexibility and output from salaried workers, not to mention effects ranging from the increasing prevalence of gated communities to fear of public spaces. We acknowledge that understanding precarity in Brazil and the power of critical pedagogies of affect in this context generated new insights about the nature of precarity in the Global South.

Within this context, we argue that our two case studies taught us lessons about the relevance of critical pedagogies of affect to people's lives, in terms of a need for dialogue, the importance of solidarity, the power of hope and imagination, the possibility of humanization, the power of connection, and the realisation of benefits through small wins. The pedagogies of affect employed in each study took different forms to suit their participants, young people and older adults. These pedagogies are not magic bullets; they are instead particular ways of working with people who live in vulnerable situations centred on affect. At their core, they are informed by Freire's notion of radical love, motivated too by a critical ethic of care:

The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love. Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself. It is thus necessarily the task of responsible subjects and cannot exist in a relation of domination. Domination reveals the pathology of love: sadism in the dominator and masochism in the dominated. Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to others. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause - the cause of liberation (FREIRE, 1987, p.89).

Radical love for Freire is never colourblind or power blind – it is committed to the cause of liberation. For Freire (1987), radical love must not serve as a pretext for manipulation and requires “abolishing the situation of oppression” (p. 90). We suggest the case studies show that critical pedagogies of affect can have a beneficial influence by creating spaces for people name, critique and negotiate some of the social injustices they face.

There are several key features of this pedagogical way of working. One is the importance of the local. In both cases, the programs had positive results because they responded to a manifest need in specific places. The programs were supported by people who had deep and intimate experience of these localities, to the extent that they could see the world from their participants' points of view. A third feature of these critical pedagogies is the importance of positive affect in which hope and confidence are crucially important. The heightened sense of community that features in both case studies was possible only because of a further characteristic, which was the length of time each program was running for. In the face of precarity, short term fixes are unlikely to work. Nor is

revolution. Both case studies show that small wins that restore humanity and generate self-belief are highly significant and cumulative.

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