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From the streets to the classroom: power analysis as a tool for critical pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

We focus on a power analysis exercise used with undergraduate students to discuss the environmental, economic, and social crises as they are reflected in the conflict between the economy and the environment, and local resistance to mining industry development in a region of Northern Greece (Chalkidiki). A power analysis exercise is a tool, designed and used by (community) activist groups to help understand the terrain of struggle and the actors involved. The exercise was also combined with, and followed from a reflection by the students on their ideological/political position on a spectrum from free market to deep ecology. The power analysis exercise helped students engage with the critical content of the module, understand how the different approaches/positions of sustainable development can manifest themselves, what their implications are, go beyond the academic lingo and reflect on how these issues impact our lives, rethink their positioning beyond the customer/manager dominant position.

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Introduction

The recent economic, environmental and health crises raise questions about the ways in which neo-liberal capitalism affects economic, social, political, and cultural life. In the case of the academy, neo-liberalism is transforming the production and consumption of education (Radice, 2013; Rikowski, 2012). In this paper we take the position that university pedagogy's critical and emancipatory potential have been circumscribed and blunted by the neo-liberal influences that impinge on business school curricula and delivery, and we offer a case example of a form of critical pedagogy as a means of renewing and reviving the critical potential of business school pedagogy. Neoliberalism refers to the prevalence of the market ethos (Harvey, 2007) in all spheres of social organisation, which is reflected in the corporatisation of public institutions in market economies (Firat, 2018). This has led to increased scholarly interest in the concept of the neoliberal university (Gordon & Zainuddin, 2020). Initiated by Thatcher and Reagan's governments in the 1980s in the UK and the US respectively, neoliberal reforms are since transforming universities into 'simulacra of business' (Sauntson &

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Morrish, 2011, p. 73) with an increased emphasis on individualism, managerialism, competition, and capital accumulation (Sauntson & Morrish, 2011). As a result, marketisation (Djelic, 2006), commercialisation (Gordon & Zainuddin, 2020), the treatment of students as consumers (Naidoo et al., 2011), and self-entrepreneurialism (Varman et al., 2011) are key traits of the neoliberal university. In addition to the above, increasingly precarious work conditions and job insecurity further impel academics towards the adoption of the market logic in their research and teaching curricula, impeding the design and delivery of critical pedagogy (e.g. Gordon & Zainuddin, 2020; Tadajewski, 2022).

At the same time, the neoliberal university is also 'characterised by rhetoric, which superficially appears to promote inclusivity and participation' (Jones-Devitt & Samiei, 2011, p. 90). As they compete in the global marketplace for students, funding and accreditations, universities have widened their agendas to include issues around race, gender, able-bodiedness, sustainability (see for example Davies et al., 2020) etc. These discussions, however, are often fragmented and arguably devoid of underpinned ideologies and power struggles (Gross & Laamanen, 2021). Thus, as Jones-Devitt and Samiei remark, 'the neo-liberal university simultaneously offers the promise of everything and nothing; representing rhetoric without substance' (Jones-Devitt & Samiei, 2011, p. 90). For example, discussions on inequality and sustainability are often coopted by mainstream approaches, which tend to commoditise identity politics, and in the case of sustainability, tend to focus on technocratic solutions that do not challenge the dominant social paradigm (DSP) (Mittelstaedt et al., 2014).

Indicative of this conundrum is a recent article in the *Financial Times* (Jack, 2022) reporting on the challenges faced by business schools in incorporating sustainability in the curriculum. Indeed, responsible management education, with an emphasis on incorporating the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in teaching and research, is increasingly becoming a priority for business schools (Davies et al., 2020; Jack, 2022). Yet, the traditional values of the business school, with its focus on economic rationalism and profit maximisation, seem incompatible with the sustainability agenda that promotes collaboration and social responsibility (Jack, 2022). Critical marketing scholarship and pedagogy has recognised the need for more critical, creative, reflexive approaches to marketing education that go beyond technocratic, skill-based education (Catterall et al., 1999, 2002; O'Malley & Lichrou, 2016) and the need for links between education and social movements (Tadajewski et al., 2014).

Addressing these challenges, we reflect on our pedagogical practice to explore ways in which we can incorporate in our classrooms a dialogue with social movements and popular demands outside the market imperatives. In doing so, we turn to emancipatory education and scholar activism. Emancipatory education is dialogical rather than curricular in nature and offers an alternative pedagogical framework, which fosters the creation of spaces of resistance through critical reflection and dialogue among students and faculty. Furthermore, emancipatory education attempts to initiate a dialogue with social movements (Vittoria, 2016), allowing the exchange of ideas between scholarship and activism.

We follow a scholar activist approach, which seeks to resist dominant discourses, and to question social, political, and economic power relations (Fuller & Kitchin, 2004). Specifically, we focus on a power analysis in-class exercise, used in the context of

a collaborative, multidisciplinary sustainable development module. The purpose of the exercise was to examine the economy versus the environment debate, as it manifests itself in tensions between different industries and community groups. For context, the exercise draws on a case study from a region in Northern Greece, where conflicts emerged between mining and other economic activities. The exercise helped students to consider their ideological position, understand the impact of ideology on their approach and their proposed solution, identify allies and position themselves within the given struggle. Moreover, students engaged with the broader socio-political, economic, and environmental debates, moving beyond disciplinary constraints.

This paper offers a reflection on the power analysis exercise as part of a critical pedagogy, which combines radical content with a radical approach (Giroux, 1981). We begin with a brief discussion of the role of scholar activism in emancipatory education, and in particular the emancipatory potential of bridging grassroots movements and marketing pedagogy. We then move to the context of the module and the use of the exercise as a tool for understanding diverse ideological positions and their implications for sustainability. Finally, we critically reflect on and discuss the transformative potential of critical pedagogy in marketing and the challenges involved in teaching marketing critically.

Scholar-activism and emancipatory education

Scholar-activism is defined as scholarly work that resists dominant discourses and questions existing power relations (Fuller & Kitchin, 2004). Hence, it can stimulate 'resistant curiosity' (Tadajewski, 2010) and active resistance to the prevailing (neoliberal) institutional practices (O'Flynn & Panayiotopoulos, 2015). According to Rhodes et al. (2018, p. 142):

> To be an activist refers to the ways that academic work, and academics themselves, can politically intervene into the non-academic world 'out there' with a view to changing it. Practically, this can take a number of forms ranging from action groups, media engagement, political campaigning, advising non-academic activists, trade union activity or engaging in activist research. Moreover, this can be directed at many different political issues such as, climate change, asylum seeking, gender and sexually based discrimination, racism and indigenous politics.

Despite the common distinctions between the academy and the 'real' world, between academics who interpret the world and activists who mobilise to change it, scholar activism bridges social movements and academic practice. Scholar activists are motivated by a conviction that 'there is space for academia in activism and space for activism in academia in which one informs the other, challenging power structures, removing obstacles to open dialogue, and challenging inequalities in a direct way for the benefit of those immediately concerned and for the sake of progressive social transformation' (O'Flynn & Panayiotopoulos, 2015, p. 66). Russell (2015), McAlevey (2012), Gill (2009), Mason (2013), Ivancheva (2015), among others, have demonstrated that bridging academia and activism is not only possible, but also necessary. In the humanities and social sciences scholar activists address issues such as precarity, slow scholarship, gender inequality, the development of academic collectives and the promotion of situated

solidarities among academics (e.g. Autonomous Geographies Collective, 2010; Courtois & O'Keefe, 2015; Ivancheva, 2015; Mason, 2013; McAlevey, 2012; Mercille, 2014; Mountz et al., 2015; The O'Flynn & Panayiotopoulos, 2015; Russell, 2015).

Scholar-activism aims to expose and disrupt power relations and to create a critical space of dialogue that is as free and open as possible (Galloway, 2012). A scholar activist perspective can thus assist critical marketing educators in exposing students to practical and ideological debates, challenges, and paradoxes inherent in sustainability and sustainable development. Mainstream Marketing, not surprisingly, largely adheres to the culture of the customer and is thus not an obvious space for scholar-activism. It is common for marketing academics to consider for example consultancy to private enterprise as service to the community, which often aligns with universities' research impact policy (Rhodes et al., 2018). This is something also valued by the students, who in pursuit of future careers prioritise the development of technocratic skillsets over critical thinking (Varman et al., 2011). However, emancipatory education fits well with the critical marketing school's agenda, which 'rejects the tenets of the DSP, opting instead for exploration of other sets of organising principles for societal well-being' (Mittelstaedt et al., 2014, p. 258).

Within critical marketing studies, scholars have stressed the importance of the development of a link between academic research and grassroots movements (Tadajewski et al., 2014), addressing critical gender issues in marketing academia (Prothero & Tadajewski, 2021), exploring heterotopias of anti-capitalist resistance (Chatzidakis et al., 2012); and other activist spaces and organisations which challenge the paradigm of endless growth (Lloveras et al., 2018) and prefigure sustainable living (Casey et al., 2017, 2020). These approaches incorporate critical, transformative, emancipatory concerns in marketing education, which seek to challenge the perceived apolitical and ideologically neutral nature of marketing as an activity that focuses on the most effective and efficient ways of achieving organisational ends (Catterall et al., 1999; Gross & Laamanen, 2021).

> Marketing is by no means neutral. It is on the contrary a particular way of seeing and "doing" human relationships. They very discourse of a "market" implies something specific about human relationships. In particular, it implies that they are essentially concerned with exchange bargaining, influence and negotiation. (Morgan, 1992, p. 143)

In problematising mainstream marketing discourse, critical marketing incorporates 'explicitly emancipatory aims' in that its goal is 'not only to offer a critique of mainstream marketing discourses but also to transform them' (Catterall et al. 1999, p. 344). Emancipatory education is deemed as an apposite approach to education because it frames a horizontal relationship within an educational environment, which is based on trust and equality (Galloway, 2012). As such, it is dialogical rather than curricular. It focuses on problematisation and critical thinking, rather than technocratic, skill-based education. It aims to emancipate people by allowing them to develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves. This process is best captured in the term 'conscientisation', coined by Brazilian scholar activist Paulo Freire, and derived from the Portuguese conscientização, which can be translated as raising consciousness. Thus, emancipatory education requires reflexive praxis, which denotes a dialectical relationship between thinking and acting, seeing praxis

both as a process of reflection and action and reflection on action (Freire, 1996). To succeed, emancipatory education needs to build on people's capacity to think and act collectively (Galloway, 2012).

We argue that the principles of emancipatory education align with a critical marketing pedagogical agenda, which incorporates a 'wider set of considerations as to what constitutes the social good' beyond 'a matter of profits' to include the environmental consequences and the social and psychological effects of market exchanges (Alvesson, 1994, p. 308). Next, we reflect on our use of a power analysis exercise in the context of a sustainable development module to critically explore the potential for and challenges of emancipatory education and scholar-activism.

Broadening the curriculum through sustainable development

This multidisciplinary, inter-faculty module was developed by a team of academics who formed a sustainable education initiative. The module was offered as part of a range of 'curriculum broadening' modules available as electives to first-year students across all disciplines and university programmes. It was collaboratively designed by academics from a range of different disciplines (including business and marketing, science and engineering, humanities, and the social sciences), brought together by a shared interest in sustainability and a consideration of the multi/interdisciplinary nature of the theory and practice of sustainable development (e.g. Davies et al., 2020). Inspired by the need to move beyond a mere technocratic treatment of the topic, the module aimed to equip students with a critical understanding of sustainable development, drawing links to a range of themes, including climate change, environmental management, the impact of globalisation, sustainable production and design, responsible consumption, environmental law etc. Furthermore, the module was designed to introduce a range of perspectives from various disciplines, including Economics, Politics, Sociology, Psychology, Engineering, International Law, Marketing, Forestry, and Design.

Extending over twelve weeks, each week's session was delivered by a different lecturer (or team) from one of the aforementioned disciplines. The first author served as a coordinator of the module, to foster continuity across the different topics, providing a constant presence in the classroom and facilitating discussions that linked the different topics. Both authors lectured on the topic of critical thinking, drawing on critical marketing and scholar activism. Each lecturer gave their disciplinary perspective on sustainability, being frank about the ideological positions and values underpinning that perspective. Students were exposed to the inherent tensions and paradoxes of sustainability and the 'seemingly contradictory goals in and apparent interdependencies between the ecological, social, and economic realms that the concept represents' (Moratis & Melissen, 2021, p. 3). There was a conscious attempt to challenge the students and provoke critical discussion and debate in the classroom. This provocation came from different perspectives, reflecting both emancipatory and dominant paradigms.

To give an example, in discussing energy production, students were quick to dismiss the practice of fracking as an environmentally damaging activity. To probe a deeper discussion, the lecturer put forward a set of arguments in support of fracking, such as its cost efficiency and lower emissions compared to coal energy production. This was

intentional to prompt the students to think about the issue more holistically and to develop their argument in more detail, addressing the environmental, technological, and socio-political dimensions of energy consumption, including our role as consumers.

In addition, the module included a field trip to an ecovillage, which aimed to take the discussions from the classroom to a real-life context of practical resistance and sustainable living. The students were given a tour of the ecovillage by its members, in which they were presented with a range of sustainable environmental and social practices, including community assisted agriculture, eco-housing, alternative energy production and consumption, the community food exchange hub, an eco-hostel and a social and educational centre. In doing so, the students were given the opportunity to experience aspects of the ecovillage life and to discuss how the members strived to develop a sustainable paradigm, play an important role within the global ecovillage network, and prefigure alternative systems of production and consumption for sustainable living (Casey et al., 2017, 2020).

The module learning outcomes (Table 1) indicate that the students should develop both knowledge and understanding of sustainable development, be able to apply tools available to them to analyse the issues at hand, as well as engage with attitudes and values and explore the relationships between economy, society, and environment.

Aligned with these outcomes, the module was assessed using two assignments, designed to encourage reflection, reflexivity, and transformative change. For Assignment 1 the students were asked to keep a reflective response journal in the form of an electronic blog. Following a critical pedagogical approach, the students were asked to reflect on the themes discussed in class every week, after each week's sessions. The students were expected to complete the journal on a weekly basis but were given the opportunity to refine and finalise their blogs at the end of the module, after the completion of the teaching weeks.

Assignment 2 required that the students engage with change in a more practical way. This assignment was twofold. The first part looked at individuals as agents for change. It encouraged students to reflect on their own actions, how they changed their consumption patterns, and how they created awareness of environmental issues using their

Table 1. Module learning outcomes.

Intended Learning Outcomes
Education for sustainable development aims to help people to develop the attitudes, skills, and knowledge to make informed decisions for the benefit of themselves and others, now and in the future, and to act upon these decisions.
The Cognitive Domain: Knowledge, Understanding, Application, Analysis, Synthesis
On successful completion of this module, you should be able to
• explain key aspects of international and European environmental policy-making and governance, and describe how these translate into national policy-making frameworks
• evaluate the social, environmental, and economic impacts of consumption to highlight the complexity of sustainable development decision-making
• apply a relevant sustainability metric, identify, and evaluate an impact reduction strategy
• exploit current media technology as a means of documenting, analysing, observing, and reflecting on behavioural practices
The Affective Domain: Attitude and Values
On successful completion of this module, you should be able to
• acknowledge and question the relationships among economic, social, and environmental aspects of sustainable development.

influence on their community. The second part engaged the students with more structural issues within organisations and encouraged them to think about how organisations could change towards becoming sustainable by developing a 'plan for change' for an organisation of their choice.

The power analysis exercise, which we focus on for the purpose of this paper, and which is discussed in the next section, was not an assessed task. Rather, it was designed to help the students make sense of the diverse dimensions, perspectives, and definitions of sustainability they were exposed to throughout the module, and to develop the necessary critical reflexivity skills required to complete the formal assignments. The exercise was introduced early in the module (in week 3) as part of the critical thinking session, following a session (in week 2) on the politics of sustainability where students were presented with a spectrum of ideological positions towards sustainability, from anthropocentric to ecocentric and from free market to deep ecology. The critical thinking session was specifically designed to aid students grasp and cope with the complexities and interdisciplinarity of sustainability.

Power analysis exercise as a pedagogical tool

The power analysis exercise (Table 2) was used as a pedagogical tool for the analysis of sustainability as a site of conflicting interests. Gold mining was used as a context for the discussion of the environmental, economic, and social impacts of development. Specifically, the exercise focused on the case of gold mining in a region of Northern Greece (Chalkidiki), exploring the conflict between mining and other economic activities (tourism, forestry, beekeeping, and agriculture), and the local resistance to the expansion of the mining industry in the region. This exercise was originally designed and used by (community) activist groups to help understand the terrain of struggle and the actors involved in a given conflict. As such, it aims to help activists establish goals, identify the players involved, relationships and potential alliances as well as areas for future research. As discussed in the previous section, the exercise was combined with, and preceded by, a reflection by the students on their ideological/political positions informing their stance on sustainability, on a spectrum from free market to deep ecology. Students then, were asked to self-select and work in groups according to where they ranked themselves on the spectrum.

Table 2. Power analysis exercise instructions to students.

Power Analysis Exercise
Define the Problem: Basic Layout, what is the issue?
Sketch the Competing Interests: Every issue has two sides (e.g. Environment Vs Mining), write them down
Sketch the Decision Makers: Who makes the decisions, the specific policy or law into writing (usually government) and how much power do they have?
Sketch Major Strands of the Problem. Every issue has multiple parts, link them together and use them to support issues
Sketch Major Organised Opposition: Who is organised and influencing decisions and how much power do they have?
Sketch Organised Other: Who is in the middle, who flip flops, who is unclear?
Sketch Organised with Us: Who is on our side and how much power do they have?
Sketch Key Unorganised Groups: Who is not organised? (potential)

The exercise took place in week 3, following two sessions in the previous two weeks in which the students were introduced to eco-awareness, the complexities and challenges of sustainability, its interdisciplinary nature, as well as how the concept and practice of sustainability affects and is affected by different groups of social actors with diverse interests. Before the exercise, students' understanding of sustainability as a multifaceted concept was informed by an overview of definitions and contexts of sustainable development and a discussion of a range of ideological positions and associated sustainability perspectives. They were exposed to a spectrum of positions: free market/status quo, greening capitalism through market pricing, sustainable development, green economics, and deep ecology. In the critical thinking session, we used Mingers (2000) article titled 'What it is to be critical?' as a core text. In answering the question, Mingers (2000) offers a framework for critical thinking that identifies four tenets of questioning or scepticism: critique of rhetoric, critique of tradition, critique of authority, and critique of objectivity. Mingers (2000) framework informed the students' understanding of critical thinking before they were introduced to and carried out the power analysis exercise.

For the exercise, the students moved around the class, reflected on their own and others' politics/values and put themselves in groups according to where they positioned themselves on the ideological sustainability spectrum. In order to provide context, we used the case study of the conflict in Chalkidiki. The students watched an independent media organisation (VPRO) documentary titled 'Greece for sale: Grexit?' (Van Luvn, 2015). The documentary discusses the challenges for sustainability within the context of the financial crisis and the dilemmas posed for government, business, and the local community in relation to economic growth, environmental conservation, and social cohesion. The documentary presents views of various social actors, from business representatives to Members of the Parliament, to local miners and local activist group members that opposed the expansion of gold mining activity. Initially, students applied the power analysis exercise on the case of Chalkidiki in their own groups. Then, they discussed their findings and proposals in the classroom across groups. The process of the exercise enabled students to be reflexive about their own position, but to also question the existence of neutral, value free, objective, technocratic knowledge and reflect on the role of ideology in shaping ideas, theoretical constructs, and action.

Student reflections on the exercise

The 'teaching' of critical thinking can be challenging, especially in how it is perceived by students in an increasingly commoditised university that prioritises market values (Tregear et al., 2007; Varman et al., 2011). Students often struggle to engage with theoretical concepts, even when given examples in the lecture. Instead, the power analysis exercise embodies critique in its ontology, subjectivity, and positionality. The exercise allowed students to reflect on different positionalities beyond the conventional marketing focus on either the manager or the consumer. This contributes to critical marketing's emancipatory agenda, which questions the commitment of marketing knowledge to managerial relevance (Brownlie, 2006) broadening our understanding of what critical marketing is for and for whom (Shankar, 2009) beyond micro managerial interests. For example, Peñalosa (2009) stresses critical marketing's role in community development, with its focus on social and cultural aspects of life taking centre stage.

As discussed above, the students were asked to work in groups according to where they located themselves on the ideological spectrum (free market/status quo, greening capitalism through market pricing, sustainable development, green economics, and deep ecology). This self-reflexive group selection process enabled the formation of relatively homogenous groups. However, the class discussion across groups allowed for reflections and comparisons to be made that exposed the role of ideology in the way the different groups problematised the crisis, its struggle terrain, but also what other groups they sought alliances with and how they positioned themselves within the given struggle. The reasoning behind putting the students in homogenous ideological groups was to allow them to freely discuss their approaches towards sustainability within the ideological safe space of their group. In contrast, the comparison between groups revealed the ideological assumptions at play in the ways in which different groups thought about the situation, reached conclusions, and proposed certain recommendations and actions to resolve the conflict, as well as their strategies for development in the region. The importance of ideology and its influence on how we understand and interpret concepts, how we engage with the decision-making process and act upon certain problems was demonstrated and evidenced in some of the students' reflections:

> As a member of the group called market pricing, I was all for the creation of wealth and lesser concerned with the less serious effects of them on the environment. Of course I had given some consideration to the environment in the decisions I had made, but as a person who likes the idea of business and making businesses successful, I understand that there have to be some sacrifices in order for there to be gains. (Student Blog)

> This week's critical thinking topic made me think about how politics power and the exploitation of resources are heavily interlinked. We looked at this more in depth in Friday's class. I found it very interesting how each of the different groups had different perspectives on who had the power and where they stood on economic and environmental issues. (Student blog)

> When we were asked to list the elements at play in the environment vs mining dispute, the Free-Market Economy group had noticeably more factors in favour of mining than the local environment. When [the lecturer] questioned why they believe mining to be such a positive cause for the local community they responded that mining generates money for the local economy and for the government so this had to be a positive. [The lecturer] followed up with a question about where they thought the money would go after it made its way into the government coffers. The realisation set in that inevitably that money may not find its way back to the people, in fact more often than not it doesn't. I found these two examples of challenges to the standard narrative to be a good learning process. Not just in terms of trying to understand the views of others but in trying to understand where these narratives are created and how they filter through our society. (Student blog)

The reflective accounts above are indicative of the ways in which the exercise prompted students to be aware of ideology and open about their own values and assumptions. The value of the exercise was not in getting students to agree with one position or another, but to confront and interrogate their own ideological stance and its influence on their decision-making process. Importantly, the exercise worked because it was set within a critical pedagogical setting. Within this setting, the case study of the region of Chalkidiki gave context for students to engage with a critical understanding of the broader socio-political, economic, and environmental debates, going beyond disciplinary constraints. The exercise allowed engagement with alternative, contrasting

ontological and methodological approaches that defy managerialism, and engaged students with social, environmental, feminist perspectives (Tregear et al., 2007). For example, the role of women not only in the economy in this region, but also in the struggle against the mining expansion was explored. As such, the scope of the module as a curriculum-broadening module was achieved through broadening students' horizons to alternative understandings of and perspectives on sustainability. As Gruenewald remarks, a critical pedagogy:

> . . . aims to contribute to the production of educational discourses and practices that explicitly examine the place-specific nexus between environment, culture, and education. It is a pedagogy linked to cultural and ecological politics, a pedagogy informed by an ethic of eco-justice, and other socio-ecological traditions that interrogate the intersection between cultures and ecosystems. (2003, p. 10)

Student reflections on oppositional content, mainstream approaches, and support or opposition to the status quo are illuminating. On one hand there is a critique to how economic factors are central to the organisation of society and dictate most, if not all aspects of life. For example, one student claimed that business degrees reproduce the dominant narrative. At the same time, they stress the need for a different kind of education, one that is humanistic, with true human values at its core, and collective rather than individualistic.

> It seems that so long as we all live in comfort, well beyond our basic survival needs then the need to ask questions ceases to exist. I was one of those people, I accept that. Probably up until the age of 21 I thought only of myself and which career ladder I was supposed to step onto and how I could increase my earning potential and be all of the great things which I was told that I had to be. This is the pressure placed on our generation. Our parents have lived through a long period of peace where our standard of living and ideals have never been tested. As such we're now expected to go beyond the achievements of our parents and achieve greater things with greater resources available to help us achieve these goals. Every institution in our society has a mandate to continue this cycle. For a person to reject this mandate is paramount to blasphemy or radicalism. The education of our people is crucial, not this absurdity that we learn in the business degree that increasing the wealth of shareholders is tantamount to success. We need to learn true human values again, as a whole society, not as one person pursuing their own self-interest. (Student blog)

Arguably, very few people step outside what is considered the norm. The need to come up with realistic, quick solutions dominates public discourse and confines thinking towards small changes on large problems while structural issues and the status quo remain outside the debate. The exercise allowed voices that are usually outnumbered by more mainstream approaches to be heard, perspectives such as deep ecology that tend to be marginalised in debates about development, because it offered students from all the different perspectives equal say in the discussion, enabling a more visionary thinking beyond managerial restraints to emerge.

> In our class I was very surprised to find that only four people felt aligned with the Green Economics model. One of them being me. What was very difficult to judge was how many people on the other side of the room didn't want a Green Economy or just didn't think it was a realistic aim. Personally, I don't think it's a realistic aim for our society to transition to a Green Economy in the next few decades, but I consider that to be a tragedy. (Student blog)

Finally, the exercise simulated a real-life scenario, formed as a problem-solving exercise, which engendered student engagement. Even though the theoretical concepts discussed were difficult to grasp the exercise worked as a simulation that encouraged experiential and reflexive learning, improving students' learning skills (Tregear et al., 2007). This approach follows Reynolds' call for critical (management) educators to grasp the nettle:

> the important choice is not between methods so much as between either engaging with critical reflection or avoiding it. And whether challenging existing values and beliefs through experiential methods, a critically informed curriculum content or a combination of these, the responsibilities of a management educator should include being alert to the possibilities of troublesome – if ultimately welcome – consequences. (1999b, p. 182)

The power analysis exercise was employed as part of a critical pedagogy, which combines both radical content and radical process (Giroux, 1981). In terms of process, the exercise introduced and facilitated the use of a community activist tool, thus bringing activism from the streets to the classroom. In terms of content, the exercise required intellectual engagement with power dynamics and a range of sustainability positions linked to varied ideological assumptions. In addition, it investigated a complex crisis (economic, environmental, socio-political) from the point of view of resistance, and was open to discourses of resistance in a praxical way, seeking to explore tactics and strategies for struggle. Finally, the context of the module, which embraced the ambiguity and complexity of sustainability, opened a pedagogical space in which it was possible to acknowledge ideological positions and to debate these positions and their effects on society, economy, and the environment. In this context, students were made aware of their own positions as well as the ways in which these positions were shaped socially. Further to encouraging students to reflect on their own values and positions in society, the emancipatory education approach also requires us academics to open up to and honestly engage in reflexive practice. In the next section, we reflect on our role as educators engaging with critical pedagogy, exploring our relationship with and responsibility towards students, and interrogating our own position within the marketing field, and the business school.

Reflection and conclusion

Scholar activism and emancipatory education require engagement by academics and students with reflexive praxis and conscientisation, which refers to critically reflecting on our position within the social world (Freire, 1996). As lecturers in higher education, we are both aware of the privileges that come with this position as well as the challenges involved. Reflecting on our pedagogical practice and the use of the power analysis exercise discussed in this paper, we problematise our role as critical scholars, acknowledging the relationship between instructor and student and the misgivings and discomforts of critique from within our discipline and the business school, and the value of critical education in transforming the discipline. Just as we prompt our students to confront their implicit values, and to move outside of the comfort zone afforded by technocratic education, so must we confront our own contradictions in pursuing a critical marketing pedagogical approach.

First, we reflect on our role as teachers in designing the curriculum, and in the classroom. The module content and learning outcomes and assessment, were not developed in dialogue with the students but in dialogue with the team of lecturers that taught on the

module. Therefore, even though our intension was for students to be active learners it is important to recognise that there were still power asymmetries between teacher and students, which can lead to what Freire (1996) termed 'banking' education, where students are just passive recipients of the teachers'/lecturers' expertise. We tried to mitigate this problem by presenting a range of perspectives by different lecturers and drawing attention to the existence of opposing approaches, modelling debate, and facilitating an open dialogue among all lecturers and students involved. Our aim, largely with the module but more specifically with the introduction of the critical thinking session and the power analysis exercise was to be in dialogue with the students and to be 'involved in collective acts of inquiry' (Biesta, 2017). By no means do we claim this was fully achieved in the context of one exercise, or one module. A range of elements in the design and teaching of the module, however, contributed to our dialogical approach. As discussed earlier, the design of the module as a multidisciplinary effort meant that multiple notions of learning were intertwined in a dialogical way. In doing so, we attempted to align our teaching with Freire (1996) emancipatory approach and contribute to the development of critical, creative, and reflexive practitioners (O'Malley & Lichrou, 2016). Using both radical content and radical processes, the exercise opened the space for students to engage with diverse theoretical concepts and ideological positions, reflect critically on their own thinking and practice and question the (re)production of dominant ideology inside and outside the university.

Furthermore, we must come to terms with the inherent contradictions of promoting a critical marketing agenda within a business school in the neoliberal university. For instance, it is often argued that critiquing marketing is incompatible with working for a business school, given business schools' dependence on corporate patronage (Eckhardt et al., 2018). One might even point out that as academics we enjoy privileges due to our position in the business school and we should thus refrain from critique. However, as Eckhardt et al. (2018) put it, we have a moral duty to question marketing's ideology, defying the axiom 'don't bite the hand that feeds you'. It is also useful to note that while teaching on this module, one of the authors was a precarious academic and the other a full-time permanent member of faculty. The former was thus not privileged in the sense of a tenured lectureship. Being critical may expose academics to various degrees of vulnerability. In some cases, as Gordon and Zainuddin (2020) remind us, this vulnerability is experienced as a form of symbolic violence where academics, especially during early career stages, feel a pressure to conform to the doctrines of the neoliberal university. Still, in other cases, even established academics within the critical tradition can be targets of retaliative action by university management, as was recently experienced by critical management academics in the UK (Gross & Laamanen, 2021).

Finally, the task of critical marketing is to challenge 'the ideological status quo' and 'dissect the politics of marketing theory and practice confronting its assumptions, tools and techniques on the basis of their impact on, emancipation of and responsibility over individuals and communities across age, gender, race and social class divides' (Gross & Laamanen, 2021, online). This task entails critiquing mainstream marketing's key theoretical and ideological tenets, including the marketing concept founded on the notion of consumer sovereignty (Du Gay & Salaman, 1992). In this sense, being critical can be experienced as being 'anti-marketing', questioning the principles and tools marketing managers rely on to carry out their job, but more

importantly the very justification of marketing management as a particular way of seeing the world (Ellis et al., 2012). The critical marketing scholar must negotiate being simultaneously a part of the discipline, while also being apart from its mainstream discourse. Thus, to some degree, being critical is to experience an uncomfortable state of being. Gross and Laamanen (2021) use the term 'misinterpellation' to describe the existential discomfort caused when a subject's personal value system and the greater moral good are conflicting with marketing management's ideological call. Confronting the status quo from within places us and potentially our students in the uncomfortable situation of questioning our very role as marketing academics and, in the case of the students, aspiring marketing managers.

Yet, even on a practical level, challenging the status quo is essential in the development of critically reflexive practitioners, 'who are able to recognise, be sensitive to and have the confidence and ability to cope with a multiplicity of very different and often contradictory discourses' (Catterall et al., 1999, p. 346). For example, marketing managers are increasingly engaging with political activist discourses and many go as far as claiminat they deem appropriate to change their products and services in response to political and environmental issues (e.g. Moorman, 2020). We have seen the examples of powerful corporate brands such as Nike and Gillette in taking a stance on political and environmental issues through their communication campaigns. The authenticity of brand activism and the extent to which socially conscious branding reflects other pro-social practices by corporations (including manufacturing and supply chain) is contested and has become the subject of an emergent research agenda (Vredenburg et al., 2020). However, it is important to acknowledge that political and activist discourses are now relevant even in the context of mainstream corporate branding.

Besides the practical implications, critiquing marketing discourse is a necessary step in transforming the discipline and in opening up new spaces for 'better' forms of marketing theory and practice (Alvesson, 1994; Burton, 2001; Brownlie, 2006). The power analysis exercise helped students engage with the critical content of the module on a higher level, understand how the different approaches/positions of sustainable development can manifest themselves, rethink their positioning beyond the customer/manager dominant position, go beyond the academic lingo, and reflect on how these issues impact on our lives.

> This historical connection really drives home for me how new this particular society is. Less than two hundred years since the Industrial Revolution, but capitalists and politicians would have us believe that the world has always worked this way, and that there is no other way to live. For me, critical thinking embodies one phrase more than any other: "think outside the box." A cliche phrase, but one that we seldom employ today. The box is invisible, after all, and it is hard to find the edges, even harder to go beyond them. But if we are to live in a world with finite resources and a growing population, we're going to need to not just think outside the box but break it into pieces. (SIC – student blog)

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