MASTER'S DEGREE
FINAL DISSERTATION

Ways to empathy in critical pedagogy of higher education: A decolonial feminist analysis

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Castellón de la Plana, October 10, 2022

ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at empathy in critical pedagogy of higher education through the lens of decolonial theory and decolonial feminism in order to look for new ways to frame empathy. To do so, it delineates the historical and genealogical background of empathy conceptualizations in different disciplines. It outlines the underlying critical decolonial standpoint with an emphasis on decolonial feminist thought. Subsequently, it elaborates the ways in which empathy surfaces in critical pedagogy theory and practice while highlighting particular contexts of differences within learning spaces, and teacher-student relations. The thesis will then identify the problems of empathy related to structures of power and oppression and suggest critical approaches to empathy in critical pedagogy by applying a decolonial lens.
KEYWORDS: Empathy, Emotions, Critical Pedagogy, Decoloniality, Decolonial Feminism

RESUMEN

Esta tesis analiza la empatía en la pedagogía crítica de la educación superior a través del prisma de la teoría decolonial y el feminismo decolonial para buscar nuevas formas de enmarcar la empatía. Para ello, traza los antecedentes históricos y genealógicos de las conceptualizaciones de la empatía en diferentes disciplinas. Asimismo, describe el punto de vista decolonial crítico subyacente con énfasis en el pensamiento feminista decolonial. Posteriormente, elabora las formas en que la empatía surge en la teoría y la práctica de la pedagogía crítica, al mismo tiempo que destaca contextos particulares de diferencias dentro de los espacios de aprendizaje y las relaciones docente-alumno. Posteriormente, la tesis identificará los problemas de la empatía relacionados con estructuras de poder y opresión y sugerirá enfoques críticos de la empatía en la pedagogía crítica mediante la aplicación de una perspectiva decolonial.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Empatía, Emociones, Pedagogía Crítica, Decolonialidad, Feminismo Decolonial

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all the wonderful people who accompanied and supported me on the journey of accomplishing this Peace Master and in the process of writing this thesis.

I want to thank my parents who always supported and cared for me, who's encouraging and loving words carried me throughout this learning journey that was both, beautiful and challenging.

I am very grateful to my supervisor Dr. Carlos Cordero Pedrosa for his dedicated support. His deep reflections and critical mentoring have made me learn far beyond the scope of this thesis; his guidance was of tremendous value for me and made me curious to keep learning and unpacking in future.

I want to thank my tutor Dr. Irene Comins Mignol for the technical advice regarding this thesis. I would like to thank my teacher and good friend Dr. Jenny Jang for always believing in me, for her uplifting words, and her tireless care through food and invaluable life lessons. I would also like to thank my Zen teacher Chunghye Sunim for her selfless sharing of wisdom that has helped me push through with this last step of the Peace Master.

I want to thank my study group, Luisa, Reney, Paula, Carolyne, and Miriam, who brought humor, mutual care, and a sense of community to this last part of our shared Master journey. I would like to thank my dear friends Feli and Mo for their support and loving friendship throughout the past years, even if we are far. I am particularly grateful to Zika, Yulia, Tabby, and Nassim who continuously showed me their unconditional care in these past months, who let me be myself, always lift me up, and without whom I would not be where I am now.

I am endlessly grateful for the chosen family I have found here in Spain, in Castellón, people who gave me so much more than I ever thought to deserve. I am very humbled to have them in my life and at the same time excited about where this journey of life will take us next.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Motivation for the thesis

Before I describe what motivated me to investigate what is presented in this thesis, I want to outline the circumstances, under which I got to pick this topic. For that, I want to draw on some thoughts of bell hooks to illustrate my motivation better. bell hooks talks about a person's academic identity within academic institutions, that is often treated separately from private matters and that there is sometimes the assumption that "the best in oneself emerged in one's academic work" (hooks 1994, 16–17). This split often makes it the only priority whether the academic mind functions and a student is able to do what they are required to, regardless of matters outside the academic space (Ziv 2020, 765–766). Writing from a feminist stance that I as an author take on, means bringing in personal perspectives and elaborating their influence on research. As Ziv explains, "[p]ersonal narratives told openly are a good starting point […]. Feminist researchers often write about the processes that they went through to arrive at their current stance. They don't place themselves outside of the research" (Ziv 2020, 765).

Throughout my time of studying the Peace Master, I was highly interested in topics around the entanglements of gender, feminism and decoloniality and was dedicated to writing and researching on these topics as much as I could. I wanted them to be at the heart of my thesis as well, particularly in the context of pedagogy, as it could contribute a lot to my interest in non-formal education. Unfortunately, it was not possible for me to find supervision for the topic in the ways I was hoping for, so I started compromising my ideas for a topic. At the same time, I was mentally exhausted from private matters unrelated to my studies, which impacted my capacities in preparing appropriately for my thesis journey. Having been short on time, I ended up with this topic that is quite unrelated to my original plans. Nevertheless, I found joy in the process of creating this thesis, particularly because of the valuable, constructive supervision I received.

However, I would like to shed light on the fact that writing a thesis is not always resonating with topics that are at heart or the romanticized metaphor of a "baby that one must nurture to perfection" – a metaphor I have been told multiple times in this process. It can instead require physical and mental capacities, which might not be available. I decided to include this in my elaboration of my motivation because I want to create awareness for the different experiences that come with writing a thesis, especially knowing that classmates of mine struggled, additionally to limited mental capacities, with problems such as residence permits, visa, and finances, adding layers to the efforts of writing a Master's Dissertation. Considering the ongoing violence through the Russian invasion, and the many young women that are killed in Iran for protesting their rights in this very moment, just to name a few examples, it seems to me cynical and important at the same time to reason about empathy, especially in the context of Peace Studies.

I chose this topic for various reasons. The term empathy has accompanied me throughout many stages in my life. In High School, I learned to become a school mediator and understood that empathy is a concept, which is related to communication processes that are dealing with conflicts. I was taught that empathy can be learned and used to open spaces for conversation. Later, empathy crossed my path when I trained to become a professional mediator. Here, the concept was mostly highlighted in the context of tools like Nonviolent Communication, that were mostly based on Marshall Rosenberg's approach (Rosenberg 2015, 150) and Active Listening. It was the first time I felt estranged with the concept of empathy, as it didn't seem always to be appropriate in the ways it was used. Empathy in these contexts was treated as an asset or tool that treats emotions as universal, and that one could use through asking questions, mirroring emotions, and in general, making another individual feel seen and understood in their suffering. This suffering was, however, always seen as individual suffering and never addressed as suffering in the context of systems of oppression. My questions regarding empathy and power imbalances remained unanswered, and I was told that situations

involving experiences of oppression such as racism or gender-based oppression could not be mediated. It seemed to me, there was a gap or issue that was not addressed.

I observed similar situations when coming to Spain and joining the Peace Master. Empathy was a term that surfaced in various contexts within classroom teaching. I kept wondering what empathy means for each of us individually within the learning community, and how it plays a role within learning spaces. It appeared to me, there was a concept that is inherent to understanding someone's emotional experiences related to suffering and that helps with understanding conflicts. In the light of how I learned about empathy in my mediation context, it seemed almost ironic to apply such a concept within learning communities like the one I was part of, considering the many different and intersecting experiences of oppression and the dynamics of power within the classroom. There was something about the concept that remained unaddressed, while the term itself was used quite regularly within teaching contexts. At the same time, I tried to understand ways in which one could emotionally connect or understand another, particularly when seeing emotions as relational. In that regard, when Sara Ahmed's says that "[t]he impossibility of feeling the pain of others does not mean that the pain is simply theirs, or that their pain has nothing to do with me" (Ahmed 2004b, 30), it resonates a lot with my reasoning here.

Within the context of the class *New Tendencies in Peace and Conflict Studies*, I was happy to see empathy approached critically, and to be introduced to scholars and theories that dealt differently with empathy than I was used to it. It made me curious to deeper engage with the topic and to explore these critical perspectives. I share Carolyn Pedwell's reasoning and questions on empathy who says that the concept is generally assumed to be a "good thing" that needs to be generated desperately, and that academia often dismisses critical questions such as "What is empathy? What does it do? Who does it serve? What are its risks? And crucially, how might it become otherwise?" (Pedwell 2013, 25).

When I learned about critical pedagogy and decolonial thought within the curriculum, I connected a lot to the concepts I was presented, particularly through my experience as a facilitator of non-formal education. Critical pedagogy theory and practice, especially including decolonial perspectives, seemed promising to me. My own experiences with its methodologies proved to me the potential of its pedagogical approaches. Taking from this pedagogy and merging it with what I learned in the context of mediation seemed to offer new ways of doing non-formal education, particularly in contexts where students from different sociocultural backgrounds come together to learn about coloniality and oppression, while sharing their own experiences with oppression. As empathy is an important part of mediation theory and practice, I struggled merging these two interests of mine, since I kept wondering how empathy can be of any use in critical pedagogy when the most common definitions of empathy describe the ability to relate to and feel someone else's emotional experiences. Empathy, as well as critical pedagogy are both concerned with questions around intersubjectivity. In this light, I align with the following questions on subjectivity and empathy:

> How do we get to know and understand others? […] Is our understanding of others in principle like our understanding of trees, rocks, and clouds, or does it differ in fundamental ways from our understanding of inanimate objects? Do we understand others in analogy to ourselves, that is, does self-understanding have primacy over the understanding of others, or is the understanding of self and other equally primordial, basically employing the same cognitive mechanisms? (Zahavi 2014, 99)

It appeared to me, that empathy the way I learned about the concept seemed to be a notion that reflects ideas of appropriation and pity, as well as hegemonic power structures, which left the impression of empathy being a one-way street that can only be felt by those who find themselves in a dominant position of power.

To bring an example, in this context I ask myself how I could possibly relate to the experiences with racism of my black classmates through empathy, and if attempting to do so was not an act of appropriation of an (emotional) experience that I, as a white person, will not

be having in that way. I was further wondering, if empathizing in such context would be an assertion of power through giving validation to someone's emotional experience. In relation to this, I asked myself if empathy in its Western conceptualizations is a necessary part of education for social change as it is found in critical pedagogy. It also seemed problematic to me to expect for example my black classmates to empathize with me in the ways I have learned about empathy, when sharing my emotional experiences in relation to me being a white person. In other words, I was wondering to which extent hegemonic power and structures of oppression played a role in empathetic encounters within critical pedagogy theory and practice.

As much as one might want to believe that empathy is a general solution to all ills of society (Boler 1999, 155), I was wondering if it is not merely a concept that is reserved to those in dominant positions of power and may run the risk to reinforce these structures of power. Having learned that empathy can be a concept found in critical pedagogy, I was curious if and how it could be framed and applied in ways that served the pedagogy's objectives and, ideally, acts in a decolonial manner. I was wondering how concepts such as empathy can be framed and applied without reinforcing what they aim to deconstruct. In relation to this, I got inspired by the article on "Pedagogy of fear" by Zeus Leonardo and Ronald Porter (Leonardo and Porter 2010), which was covered in the aforementioned class. Their discussion on the safety of spaces in race dialogue and how safe spaces protect white feelings reflected some of the thoughts I had on empathy, as I was wondering how empathy in the ways I had learned about it could be even productive in such emotional spaces without protecting feelings related to whiteness. Considering those approaches to empathy that require the one empathizing to set aside their own feelings and experiences, this seemed to pose a contradiction to me.

I focused mainly on critical pedagogy theory and application in higher education, as I am highly interested in critical education for youth and young adults. Moreover, most literature that deals with critical pedagogy in connection to empathy is discussing issues in the context of higher education, as this appears to be a common target group in critical pedagogy teaching.

Following this outline of my personal motivation for this thesis, the next section will shed light on why this thesis is relevant for me, and why it could be considered relevant for Peace Studies and scholars from related areas.

Relevance of the thesis

On a personal level, this thesis helps me to understand empathy critically in my future journey as a Peace Studies graduate and facilitator. Joining decolonial theory with the tools and concepts that I will be dealing with in future is essential for me, particularly within the educational spaces I will be moving in. Moreover, this thesis can offer new critical ways for Peace Studies when dealing with tools of critical pedagogy and peace pedagogy, which both entail approaches related to or including affective concepts like empathy. One such tool within Peace Studies would be Nonviolent Communication, as mentioned before. Moreover, critical pedagogy is commonly used and referred to within Peace Studies and related to Peace Pedagogy and Education (Shapiro 2016, 7). Empathy, as well, is seen as an essential element of Peace Education (Zembylas 2020b, 369). Scholars from areas such as Critical Peace Pedagogy, which aims to embrace decolonial thought in Peace Pedagogy, express similar critiques on tools in Critical Pedagogy as this thesis (Hajir and Kester 2020, 520), and might find the reasoning and results of this research insightful.

This thesis may also inspire reflection of concepts and theories within Peace Studies, which are often uncritically framed and approached within Western epistemologies, by white Western scholars, in Western geographic spaces by decentering the emotional and experiences of those who face oppression in multiple ways within and outside academic spaces. In this context, this thesis also aims to highlight the urgency of authentic conversations on mechanisms of oppression such as racism in universities, and the Peace Master in particular. Considering, that race dialogue was absent in most of my classes while students experienced racism within

the very same classes and outside the classroom is alarming, particularly in a master program that underscores its interculturality. There is a need for authentic race dialogue that does not fear going beyond an abstract theoretical discourse for white people, in which they can academically excel, while those who experience racism daily are at risk of merely facing another situation of potential exposure to racism (Leonardo and Porter 2010, 150). In order to create authentic dialogues, it is necessary to question the dialoguing tools and concepts, such as empathy. With this research, I want to inspire scholars, educators, and students to reconsider and reframe the tools and approaches that are commonly used in critical pedagogy theory and practice, and empathy in particular, through a decolonial lens. The next section serves to position myself as the author and researcher of this thesis within the context of the topic.

Situating myself in the topic

Before I elaborate more on the content and structure of the thesis, I want to explain why situating myself is important within academic research, and further outline my own situatedness within the topic of this thesis. Situating oneself within one's own research is significant considering the biases that influence academic knowledge creation. I am writing this thesis from a feminist stance, using a decolonial framework. Epistemological positioning within feminist and decolonial thought is necessary considering my entrenchment within feminist discourses. Feminist work emphasizes the need for constant self-reflexivity within the scholarship, particularly because it is vital to continuously question one's own complicities with intricacies of power. In deciding to situate oneself within the research "we are part of the myriad dimensions of power – both conscious and unconscious – that influence our subjectivities and politics" (Kiguwa and Segalo 2019, 130). A feminist perspective in writing and researching includes an understanding that all researchers and writers are acting "within their own subjective worldview that influences what they see and how they research. From a feminist

perspective, it is appropriate for researchers to express their perspectives openly when they write and to acknowledge how it influences their research in the academic world" (Ziv 2020, 765).

Situating is also important in the context of the politics of epistemological positioning. This is not only because a great deal of research is conducted within the West and based on Western epistemologies, but also because a great deal of academic literature within social science being written by white male authors "with very little coverage of feminist, critical race or queer theory approaches" (Arshad et al. 2021, 1). Considering these aspects, situating may not only help understanding possible biases personal experiences that may have influenced this thesis, but also explain why this thesis is particularly interested in bringing in feminist perspectives (or pointing out that there may be a lack of such in the context of the topic).

As a white person, I am actively trying to continuously reflect on my own biases and internalized oppression, and I want to be sensitive towards how these can influence my research. I am learning about race, racism, and my own racialization, and aim to reflect how the latter impacts this thesis' research. As a queer person, my experiences and perspectives are not always reflecting and fitting into heteronormativity. Being genderqueer influences my research insofar that I have been aware of the underrepresentation of queer perspectives throughout the literature used in this thesis. Particularly in relation to gender and its spectrum outside the binary construction, there is a clear lack of research and discussion on this topic in both, empathy as well as critical pedagogy discourses.

It is also important to highlight this part of my situatedness, as empathy has been related to womanhood as well as whiteness, as will become clearer throughout this thesis. In both cases, this needs to be assessed critically. Being assigned a gender marker that is constructed in relation to certain emotional skills needs to be questioned just as much as conceptualizing empathy in ways that ignores hegemonic power situations in relation to whiteness. I believe that only if I understand empathy critically within my personal and educational context, I will

be able to reason about empathy in relation to critical pedagogy theory and practice. For that, I consider my own experiences and complicities within oppressive systems as relevant in relation to my situatedness within this thesis.

Context of the thesis

Empathy as a concept has received an increasing attention within the past years and decades. It became part of political discourses and campaigns, psychological research, medical care, ethics, gender discourses, theories of the mind, discourses around morality and moral development, as well as research and practice of pedagogy and education. The multiple approaches, definitions and conceptualizations of empathy across many disciplines show that it is a contested phenomenon that that lacks consensus on what it is, how it works and how it is generated (Zahavi 2014, 101). Some scholars say that it is the glue that enables social life (Zahavi 2014, 102). To use Amy Coplan's words, "it's safe to conclude that whatever empathy is, it's important" (Coplan 2011, 3–4).

In the context of pedagogy, and critical pedagogy, empathy as part of a series of affective concepts, has so far been attended to from a Western perspective. This is not surprising, considering that empathy itself is a concept that has been coined and framed within a Eurowestern academic environment, by white Western scholars (Pedwell 2016, 52). In these conceptualizations, it is mostly focusing solely on individual suffering without considering suffering from the structures and mechanisms of systematic oppression (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xlv).

As critical pedagogy aims to deal with knowledges in ways that decenter Western universal epistemologies and center those who are the oppressed in critical pedagogy terms, it is crucial to critically assess concepts like empathy in such contexts. For that, empathy needs to be looked at in its genealogy and historical context. Bringing decolonial thought to empathy

can help to gain valuable insights in how empathy and its entanglement with power can pose a problem within critical pedagogy. To do so, contemporary workings of empathy need to be put into questions and rethought. The complex connections of empathy and transnational relations of power will have to be analyzed (Pedwell 2016, 28). Empathy needs to be reinterpreted by considering paradigms for understanding emotions that exist outside of Western approaches (Pedwell 2016, 32–33).

In the context of critical pedagogy, this can offer new ways of thinking and doing empathy. It is what Michalinos Zembylas refers to as "critical pedagogy as decolonizing pedagogy of empathy", which "would emphasize action-oriented empathy and solidarity relationships that seriously engage the demand posed by decolonization" (Zembylas 2019b, 415). Such approaches to empathy can be framed and discussed from different perspectives and will offer a glimpse of what empathy in critical pedagogy could look like if examined from a decolonial lens. Even though, this thesis introduces approaches that critically deal with empathy in the context of such critical pedagogy frames, it does not intend to provide solutions but rather starting points for a reflection of empathy in critical pedagogy from a decolonial feminist perspective. These can give insight into what is possible, as well as what needs to be seen critically about some of these approaches.

Thesis statement

In the context of critical pedagogy, there are various concepts and tools that need to be assessed critically and looked at from a decolonial perspective. Choosing empathy to be at the center of analysis here is particularly interesting as, historically speaking, it seems the concept has been mainly approached very one-sided in academia, which makes visible the need for critical, decolonial reframing. This thesis looks at empathy in critical pedagogy of higher

education through the lens of decolonial theory and decolonial feminism in order to search for new ways to frame empathy.

Objectives

a) General Objective

To analyze the approaches to empathy in critical pedagogy theory and practice from a decolonial feminist perspective.

b) Specific Objectives

1) Identify and elaborate discourses of empathy in its historical origins and in its contemporary, neoliberal framings and notions.
2) Outline the ways in which empathy is approached and conceptualized within critical pedagogy of higher education.
3) Understand and critically assess these discourses of empathy in critical pedagogy from a decolonial feminist perspective.
4) Suggest approaches to empathy and alternative concepts in critical pedagogy of higher education from a decolonial feminist perspective.

Structure of the thesis

Chapter one will respond to the first specific objective. In order to understand empathy discourses comprehensively, this thesis will begin with a historical, genealogical overview on the concept and its main approaches, whereas the focus lies on the affective framings of empathy. This will enable the reader to situate empathy discourses within the topic and relate them to contemporary understandings of empathy. The latter will then be discussed to give a comprehensive picture of empathy approaches and explain their interconnectedness with

neoliberal political and academic discourses. Through that, the reader will understand the entanglement of empathy and Western hegemonic power structures.

To illustrate these power structures and their implications for empathy discourses, chapter 1 will also offer a decolonial perspective in reflection to Western empathy with a particular focus on feminist perspectives. For that, there will be a brief elaboration on the underlying understanding of decoloniality. The reader will be able to situate empathy within critical decolonial reasoning by recognizing its imbrications with the colonial matrix of power and the coloniality of gender.

Chapter 2, which relates to the second specific objective, will then introduce the context of this thesis by firstly offering an insight into critical pedagogy theory. The reader will find explanations of what critical pedagogy is, how it came into being, what it aims for and a brief critique on its situatedness in relation to decolonial thought. Following up, the chapter will offer a variety of approaches to empathy in critical pedagogy of higher education, that frame and access the concept from various perspectives. Hereby, the chapter will underscore the context of empathy in teacher-student relations, as well as in teaching spaces with students from different sociocultural backgrounds that bring about inequalities. These contexts are particularly important considering the objectives of critical pedagogy that aim address those students targeted by oppression, and the relationality of teachers and students within classroom, that plays a role in questions of power and empathy.

Chapter 3 addresses the third and fourth specific objective. To bring chapter 1 and 2 together, chapter 3 will apply a decolonial lens to the ways empathy is approached within critical pedagogy of higher education. There may be overlaps with what has been presented in chapter one. This is, in order to be able to better understand the critique within the context of critical pedagogy. This critique will be comprehensive and deeply analytical, and address the workings of empathy in the context of coloniality and power within critical pedagogy. The sections will help the reader to understand why a critical, decolonial approach to empathy is

vital in critical pedagogy for the pedagogy not to contradict its own objectives, but instead to be acting as a decolonial pedagogy. Chapter 3 will also offer a variety of approaches and notions that have been delineated by different scholars to reframe and conceptualize empathy in ways that are sensitive towards the coloniality of the traditional understandings of the concept and aim to be truly decolonial. Further, within these approaches, the chapter will set a focus on the affective aspect of empathy and its relation to coloniality, in order to understand the emotional implications of empathy with power and how to address them without reinforcing them. Those approaches are rather seen as suggestions for new conceptualizations, than actual solutions for a decolonial empathy. It will become clearer throughout the thesis that the entanglement of affective concepts and coloniality are complex. Therefore, this thesis can serve as an incentive to deeply engage with questions around empathy, emotions, and coloniality within critical learning spaces, particularly critical pedagogy.

Conceptual clarification

Some concepts that I am using in this thesis might need clarification in advance to give a better understanding of my perspective as an author and helps the reader situating certain terms within the context of this thesis. Several of the authors that are referenced in this research refer to constructs such as race, gender, class, as "categories". Even though, a detailed discussion of this notion would exceed the framework of this thesis, I would like to highlight that I am critical of such a framing. María Lugones describes "categorial, dichotomous, hierarchical logic as central to modern, colonial, capitalist thinking about race, gender, and sexuality" (Lugones 2010, 742). I will, therefore, rather describe these constructs as social and political relations.

Similarly, several authors refer to those who are often framed as the oppressor with the term "privileged". This is not a very contested term, which I decided not to use because of its

ambiguity, unless it is contextualized within a scholar's approach. However, out of a lack of alternative terms, I refer to the same as those in "dominant positions of power", which is a term used by Leonardo and Porter (2010). Although, this term may be entailing contestations as well, it can help illustrating the power imbalances related to situatedness in hegemonic systems of oppression.

A last aspect I want to highlight is to avoid confusion in the reading process. Regarding the use of pronouns of the authors quoted in this thesis, I want to avoid misgendering. Instead of assuming the pronouns of those authors, of which I do not know their pronouns, I decided to refer to these scholars in the gender inclusive way using they/them pronouns.

Methodology and theoretical framework

This thesis applies a qualitative methodology, which draws on primary and secondary literature that guides a critical analysis and discussion of the literature reviewed. This theoretical framework aims to offer an overview of the main perspectives presented in the literature that this thesis is based on. The framework displays the different views of scholars in a thematic manner, meaning that it is organized around the key themes of this thesis while following the logical order of the chapters. In this thesis, the assessed literature consists of scholarly articles from journals, monographies, edited books as well as information from textbooks. The three chapters on the theory of empathy in history, the context of empathy in critical pedagogy, and the approaches to empathy in critical pedagogy from a decolonial lens are not based on the insights or lead by the perspective on one single scholar or approach but rather diversified.

In the first chapter, which starts by delineating the historicity and genealogy of empathy, Coplan, (2011), Coplan and Goldie (2011), Boler (1999), and Zahavi (2014) give insights on the historical contexts and development. They highlight the concept's origins and understandings in various disciplines such as Philosophy, Psychology, and Social Sciences.

Even though, they guide the discussion in the section, their individual perspectives and approaches to empathy are of secondary interest at this point, since this section is rather of an informative nature. At this point of the thesis, the theoretical foundation for the topic is laid and complemented by an elaboration of the understanding of empathy in the context of affect and emotions, which is led by Kawai (2017). In the context of contemporary approaches to empathy, Coplan (2011), Pedwell (2012 & 2013), Boler (1999) and Bloom (2016) are the delineating the connection of empathy to neoliberal discourses in contemporary politics and academia. Pedwell generally speaks from a more critical stance. Moreover, Fassin (2012) brings some valuable insights of empathy in the context of development discourses to the section.

Following this, the next section is guided by Mignolo and Walsh (2018), Mignolo (2011), and Maldonado-Torres (2008), whose approaches to decoloniality serve to frame the critical lens this thesis uses. Mignolo and Walsh elaborate on the meaning of decoloniality and its relation to power and epistemologies, while Maldonado-Torres emphasizes on the importance of a decolonial turn. This section is complemented by a critical perspective on the relation of coloniality and gender, guided by Lugones (2010). Bringing this to the context of empathy, Pedwell (2013 & 2016), Kawai (2017), and Zembylas (2019b) point out the various ways, in which empathy is entangled with coloniality and questions of power. Hemmings (2012) offers a critical feminist perspective in that regard, highlighting the nexus of epistemology and ontology and critically assessing the over-individualization of subjectivity in the context of gender and coloniality.

In chapter 2, the first section on critical pedagogy and its objectives is introduced by referring to the insights of Giroux (2011 & 1997) and Freire (2000b & 2014), who can be considered pioneers in the field, whereby Freire particularly paved the path towards critical pedagogy. Freire's and Giroux's approaches are at the core of the contextual framework of this thesis, whereby Trifonas (2018 & 2020) and Gutierrez et al. (2003) add valuable perspectives to these approaches, drawing particularly on Freire's thoughts. Down and Steinberg (2020) top

this framework off with their thoughts on contemporary interpretations and approaches to critical pedagogy.

Zooming into the framings of empathy in critical pedagogy, Warren (2014), Zembylas (2019b), and Damianidou and Phtiaka (2016) introduce different approaches to empathy, related to their individual scholarly perspectives. Gutiérrez Rodríguez et al. (2020) add a perspective to that, which considers the role and influence of race, class, and gender in classrooms. At this point, Freire's (2000b) and Giroux's (2014) approaches are considered as foundational again, as they offer framings to concepts related to empathy and offered a basis for other scholars to pursue their own takes on empathy. Finally, Zembylas and Papamichael (2017) bring in a perspective that highlights culture and interculturality in relation to empathy in critical pedagogy.

The section on empathy in critical pedagogy settings of inequality facilitates various scholars, whereby the focus is set on Trifonas' (2020) pedagogies of difference, Ouedraogo's (2021) approach of cultural empathy in the context of intercultural learning, and Kawai's perspective who reasons about an approach to a critical multicultural empathy. Highlighting the meaning of teacher-student relations, Damianidou and Phtiaka's (2016) approach to the three steps to a critical pedagogy of empathy is introduced in the next section, together with an approach of Liston (2008) who reasons about empathy in the sense of perspective taking and focuses on the teacher's interpretation of their interactions with students. Another approach that is elaborated here is the one of Warren (2014 & 2018) who connects the teacher-student relations with intercultural learning spaces and highlights the role of empathy in such contexts.

Chapter 3 begins with a critique that analyzes the conceptualizations of empathy in the context of critical pedagogy using a decolonial lens. This section begins with Zembylas' (2012 & 2019b) reasoning, who underscores with regards to the previously introduced approaches the necessity of a decolonial critique to empathy in critical pedagogy. The section is then divided

into subsections guided by themes that highlight different aspects of empathy framings in critical pedagogy that are assessed critically.

In the context of empathy and choice, Pedwell (2013) guides the critique, whereas in relation to conversations on race and racism Zembylas (2019b) and Davis (2004) are the central voice. The latter critically discusses the concept of cross-racial empathy within this context. This is followed by a critique on appropriation that draws mostly on the reasoning of Leonardo and Porter (2010) and Merriman Brown (2020). The problem of recognition in empathy within critical pedagogy is then elaborated with the help of Gutiérrez Rodríguez's et al. (2020) and Dei's (2996) thoughts, whereby Dei particularly highlights the connection of recognition and power in the context of coloniality. The subsection that deals with the issue of language in empathy is highlighting the contribution of wa Thiong'o (1981) who talks much about the coloniality of language in relation to the aftermath of settler colonialism. This reasoning is then connected to Gunew's (2009) and Pedwell's (2013) critiques that are relating this issue of language to empathy (Gunew) and pedagogy (Pedwell). The next subsection is bringing in a critique on empathy from the perspective of the politics of emotions, whereby Ahmed (2004a & 2004b) is the central voice, reasoning on the connection of emotion and power in relation to coloniality. Zembylas (2018 6 2019b) as well as Zembylas and McGlynn (2012) build the bridge here to the context of emotional experiences in relation to empathy in critical pedagogy. Lastly, the section ends with a feminist critique, which is drawing on Abu-Lughod and Lutz's (1990) approach that discusses the nexus of emotions and gender and is presented here in relation to Ziv's (2020) elaboration on feminist critical pedagogy.

The subsequent section is finally proposing various approaches to empathy in critical pedagogy that aim to be decolonial. The first suggestion is the concept of pedagogies of discomfort which is guided by the thoughts of Boler (1999) who coined the term. This approach is accompanied by Zembylas (2012, 2013, 2020), as well as Zembylas and Papamichael (2017) who have comprehensively discussed this approach. This is followed by a reasoning on shame

as a tool in critical pedagogy, whereby the conversation is led by Zembylas' (2019b) and Costandius and Alexander's (2019) ideas on shame and pedagogy, as well as Pedwell's (2013) thoughts on shame in the context of a decolonial approach to empathy. Subsequently, an approach by Leonardo and Porter (2010) is introduced that discusses their idea of a pedagogy of fear and reasons on the meaning of anger in this context. The section is closed by a proposal to merge Pedwell's (2013) conceptualization of a decolonial empathy with Velásquez Atehortúa's (2020) reasoning on epistemic disobedience in pedagogy for new ways of discussing and doing empathy in critical pedagogy.

CHAPTER 1: EMPATHY IN THEORY

1.1 **Introduction**

Framing empathy theoretically is challenging as many scholars used and continue to use the term to refer to concepts, processes and behaviors that are different from each other (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xxiii–xxiv; Goldman 2011, 31). The term appears differ in its meaning to the scholars who are referring to it and cannot be seen as a unified phenomenon that is uniquely entitled to the label (Goldman 2011, 31). Empathy deals with questions of emotions, experience and intersubjectivity. Discourses on empathy deal with question that ask if the concept is

> a question of sharing another's feelings, or caring about another, or being emotionally affected by another's experiences though not necessarily experiencing the same experiences? Is it a question of imagining oneself in another's situation, or of imagining being another in that other's situation, or simply of making inferences about another's mental states? Does empathy necessarily entail that an observer feels the same emotion that she detects in another person? Does empathy preserve or abolish the difference between self and other? (Zahavi 2014, 101)

As a concept, empathy is as widely discussed, framed, and criticized as it is ambiguous in its definitions and conceptualizations. Its loose understanding of "putting oneself in somebody else's shoes" (Bloom 2016, 30; Pedwell 2016, 27–28; Boler 1999, 158) is probably the most common and yet vague way of interpreting the term in Western academia. Within the latter, the concept of empathy itself and the questions around how to gain or develop more of it and improve it are often framed as the affective "solution" to all sorts of societal ills and within the context of discourses on generating social justice (Pedwell 2016, 27–28; Boler 1999, 155). As the concept is broadly understood as "good", particularly by those connecting empathy with morality (Prinz 2011, 211), framing and defining it can become a conceptual challenge in conversation and analysis. Therefore, instead of focusing on the question that asks what empathy is, it might be just as reasonable to ask how to cultivate empathy, in which context, and who does it serve (Pedwell 2016, 27–28). This may help situating and understanding the critiques on empathy as a concept of Western origin.

This chapter aims to target some of these questions. In order to be able to situate the origins and conceptualizations of empathy in different discourses, as well as to provide a solid ground for the argumentation on why there is a need to decolonize empathy, this chapter will provide an overview on different approaches to empathy in divers disciplines and their historical embeddedness. Having been approached from multiple disciplinary directions and framed in various contexts, this chapter is not interested in covering all aspects and notions of empathy, considering the complexity of the concept. It rather aims to highlight the concepts most popular historical and contemporary understandings in Western academia. These will be outlined in the first sections, followed by a section that elaborates the decolonial feminist perspective that this thesis takes on. The last section highlights a critique of historic and contemporary approaches to empathy that applies a decolonial feminist lens. This critique serves to situate empathy within critical discourses, which may help connecting empathy discourses to the analysis in chapter 3. Throughout the following sections, this chapter will emphasize on empathy in connection to emotions and affect, as in Western discourses this nexus is rather unquestioned and often at the foundation of framing the concept. Moreover, the understanding of empathy as an affective concept will be important when brought to the context of critical pedagogy.

1.2 Western historicity and genealogy of empathy

Considering the complex and interdisciplinary entanglement of approaches in empathy, it can be helpful and illuminating to take a look at the origins in history of contested notions of empathy, a history that is not very long (Zahavi 2014, 103). In different disciplines, empathy has been conceptualized in various ways. Especially in scientific academic contexts the term needs to be sharpened to facilitate a specific topic and, moreover, to underscore the perspective of the respective scholar, since various researchers approached empathy from different angles (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xxxi–xxxii). The concept's history has considerable roots in

psychology and philosophy but has also received great attention from the field of cognitive neuroscience (Goldman 2011, 31). In this thesis, the latter will be disregarded due to the focus and scope of this research. Its origins are distinctly philosophical, which might explain why many approaches to empathy fundamentally lacked experimental research, even when the concept was picked up later in psychology (Zahavi 2014, 103). Empathy, in its most rudimentary forms, is described as motor mimicry as well as emotional contagion (Zahavi 2014, 101–102). The notion of "putting oneself into someone else's shoes", one of the most popular understandings of empathy, roots in the Aristotelian understanding of pity and is at the basis of many definitions of empathy (Boler 1999, 158).

Despite its long and diverse genealogy, in modern Western thought the roots of empathy are traced back by many scholars to the philosophers Adam Smith and David Hume (Pedwell 2016, 30; Coplan and Goldie 2011, ix). Even though the term empathy was coined later in history, Smith and Hume laid the foundation for discourses on empathy in the 18th century with their reasoning on sympathy, which is a concept that is closely related and was meant to explain various psychological phenomena (Coplan and Goldie 2011, x). At that time sympathy was understood as a way of fellow-feeling that required the evaluation of someone's expression and demeanor as well as the scene in which the object of sympathy is placed (Foster 2011, 10).

Hume and Smith also elaborate two major aspects in which later conceptualizations of empathy play a significant role. The first one relates to the capacity to receive a glimpse of what another person's mind contains. This understanding opposes the idea of sketching some sort of theory about the minds of others to enable a deeper understanding of each other. The second aspect goes further and connects to the capacity of responding ethically to the respective other, or whatever is considered an ethical appropriate response. This line of thought became a significant factor to revive moral sentimentalism and was later on put at the center of an ethics of caring (Coplan and Goldie 2011, ix).

According to various scholars, Hume's approach to sympathy was describing psychological mechanisms to experience others' emotions that could be seen as mirroring and what is today referred to as "low-level empathy", whereas Smith's approach went further by involving imagination of taking another perspective which is today framed as "high-level empathy" (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xi; Pedwell 2016, 31; Kawai 2017, 133). Davis explains the difference of those two concepts by underscoring the use of sympathy as an umbrella term for having feelings or interests in common with another, whereas (high-level) empathy has a stronger component of taking a perspective or imaginatively living another's experiences (Davis 2004, 403). In other words, Smith's reasoning shows close parallels with contemporary, particularly neoliberal, approaches to empathy. This will become more visible within the next section. Smith emphasized in the conception of oneself, while moving into the situation of the other and enduring all the same struggles of them. This could be interpreted as the self that enters the other's body, becoming the same person, and further feeling what they feel although in a weaker sense (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xi; Kawai 2017, 134).

Being defined as the experience of becoming one with the object of someone's contemplation, a first general conceptualization of empathy appeared as such in Robert Vischer's framing of *Einfühlung* in 1873 (Foster 2011, 138). This approach was also used by Theodor Lipps, who aimed to explain how individuals experience not only objects, but also others' mental states (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xii). It is quite likely that Lipps' reasoning, in the beginning of the 20th century, was based on Hume's approach. Lipps used the German concept of *Einfühlung*, which meant to explain how people get to know and understand others' mental states. The term was developed within discourses around aesthetics and psychology (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xii; Kawai 2017, 132). *Einfühlung* in this context described "a process of inner imitation or inner resonance that is based on a natural instinct and causes us to imitate the movements and expressions we perceive in physical and social objects" (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xii). An important aspect about this terminology, as several scholars point out, is

the physical component of *Einfühlung*, which insinuates an act of moving into the body or object that is felt in the sense of a physical connection (Foster 2011, 10; Pedwell 2016, 30; Kawai 2017, 134). Lipps' approach was highly influential in other scholars' approaches, such as Sigmund Freud's for example (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xii). In relation to Lipps' approach, it is important to mention that empathy in the sense of *Einfühlung* does not allow one "to recognize anything in the other that is new, anything that I am not already familiar with, anything that I haven't put there myself" (Zahavi 2014, 105). In other words, one can only empathically engage with those experiences of others, that one has lived through themselves.

Einfühlung is the concept that was then later in 1909 translated to the English term empathy by Edward Titchener taken from the Greek word *empatheia* (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xii). When the term was coined, it played a major role in shifting the perspective from understanding the concept as the expression of a new capacity of fellow-feeling to acknowledging a change in the sense of physicality, which again influenced the way one felt another individual's feelings (Kawai 2017, 134). In other words, its meaning shifted towards an understanding of a process in which one's whole physicality inhabits another, whereby some theorists included the kinesthetic component of the empathizer's sense of self coming to play (Foster 2011, 10).

In philosophical discourses, conceptualizations of empathy were further explored within phenomenology around the same time as they became central within hermeneutics (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xv). Western philosophers in the phenomenological tradition adapted the notion of *Einfühlung* or empathy as alternative to the idea of ascribing a mental state to others by means of a process of analogy with the state of our own mind (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xii). Their approach framed empathy as "the affective capacity to enter the minds of others" (Pedwell 2016, 31). Their perspectives however were less shaped by Hume's models of imagination and rather adapted Smith's accounts of embodied perception (Pedwell 2016, 31). Having framed empathy with an understanding of analogy, which deviates the existence of other minds by

assuming that other minds are constituted the same as mine, Lipps' approach was problematized and reframed by the phenomenologists Edmund Husserl and Edith Stein. These philosophers argued in terms of intersubjectivity and described empathy as the way, in which another consciousness is being experienced (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xiii–xiv). Empathy, in their reasoning, allows humans to

> experience foreign consciousness, describing it as 'the basis of intersubjective experience' and as 'the condition of possible knowledge of the existing outer world' and further to understand others but also to understand ourselves as others experience us. Thus, through empathy I come to discern the other's mental states while at the same time gaining self-knowledge by coming to know how the other experiences me (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xiii–xiv).

Husserl and Stein both connected their framing of empathy to the problem of intersubjectivity, which deals with questions around how and to which extent one can know another's mental state (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xiii; Kawai 2017, 134).

It was Max Scheler who picked up Husserl's and Stein's approaches to address issues regarding culture, religion, and ethics, by using the concept of sympathy again. Scheler criticizes the sentimentalism that puts sympathy and empathy at the baseline of morality (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xv; Pedwell 2016, 31). In hermeneutics, because of their specific commitments in terms of methodology, empathy was regarded as a vital epistemological instrument. Hence, the human sciences were assumed to be based on a process that is identical or resembles empathy when making sense of another agent's perspective (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xvi). Empathy in hermeneutics was further thought of as a tool that merely helps understanding those individuals that are very similar to us, however, not those that were considered "culturally different" from the one who engages empathetically (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xvii). However, there have been arguments that an understanding of empathy, which comprises the reenactment of the thought processes of other individuals, also referred to as re-enactive empathy, is inevitable for understanding others. This is because only re-enactive empathy can make us see other individuals' thoughts as reason (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xvii).

As Coplan and Goldie further elaborate, the concept of *Einfühlung* had a significant influence not only in discourses of philosophy, but also psychology, including psychoanalysis (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xii). When introduced in clinical psychology and psychoanalysis, empathy was controversial, whereby this controversy remains until today (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xviii). In self-psychology, the concept of empathy is considered vital as in early development the empathetic mirroring of care givers helps developing a sense of self. Further, in therapeutic processes empathy is seen as an essential tool as it is inevitable for psychoanalytic change (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xx). Other psychologists have focused on empathy in relation to affect by asking, how one can authentically share and replicate the emotions of another individual. In that sense, empathy was framed as an emotional reaction or response (Kawai 2017, 135).

Aside of psychology and philosophy, care ethics is another area of research, in which empathy has played an important role. Developed in the 1980s, care ethics opposed the model of ethics, which highlighted the ethical agent as autonomous and required the repression of emotions in order to be just and fair (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xxvi–xxvii). In care ethics, connections were drawn between empathy and altruism. Empathy here is interpreted as "a process of contagion through which feelings can spread among individuals" (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xxvii–xxviii). Empathy plays a significant role in concepts of caring and deals a lot with approaches that encompass heteronormative binary gender constructions. In Noddings approach to empathy in care ethics, empathic caring and its notion of "feeling with" is interpreted in a sense that rather involves reception instead of projection. In other words, empathy refers to one receiving the other into oneself in order to see and feel with the other (Noddings 2013, 30). In relation to questions of morality, care ethics sees empathic caring as inevitable in a personal as well as in a political context (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xxvii–xxviii).

One aspect that needs to be highlighted in the context of this thesis is the way care ethic discourses essentialize gender in empathy. Within this discourse it is commonly assumed that

women are more empathetic than men (Noddings 2013, 244). Besides the very common misconception of gender as a binary construct, empathy in the sense of empathic caring is assigned to women, particularly in the context of motherhood (Noddings 2013, 32). This focus of care ethics on the gender binary and the differences between women and men leads to notions such as the claim "that women tend to think of moral issues in terms of emotionally involved caring for others and connection to others, whereas most men see things in terms of autonomy from others and the just and rational application of rules or principles to problem situations" (Slote 2007, 1). The issue of essentialization of gender in relation to empathy is an important aspect to consider in the context of critical pedagogy and will be addressed at a later point in this thesis.

When discussing the complexity of empathy, it needs to be understood as a concept that has been interpreted simultaneously as an affective, as well as cognitive process (Kawai 2017, 136). Even though, empathy has been approached in these two ways, this thesis focusses more on its affective aspects as they are important in the later discussed context of critical pedagogy. As empathy approaches repeatedly draw connections between empathy and different types of emotions, as well as conceptualizations of affect, it is vital to shed light on the relational understanding of these concepts. This will provide a better understanding of how empathy can be situated and defined in the context of emotions and affect. Kawai points out that the concept of empathy not only incorporates affective components, but also has emotion as an integral part due to its etymological background (Kawai 2017, 132).

Some of the definitions of empathy, such as those based on the idea of fellow-feeling or feeling with someone, indicate a connection to some sort of conceptualization of emotions (Foster 2011, 10). Emotions, as it seems, appear to be an important aspect in most framings of empathy. Even though there is hardly any consensus on the definition of empathy, "most accounts list some type of shared emotion as an essential component" (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xxiii). Empathy is also considered a major component of what is called "emotional intelligence"

(Boler 1999, 155). In the context of discourses on affect, empathy is conceptualized as an affective response, which resonates with the situation of another individual, and through that helps understanding someone else's emotional state or condition (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xxiii). Within the definition of empathy as an affective concept, other scholars regard to it as affective solution or ability (Pedwell 2016, 27–28), or, as mentioned before in the context of hermeneutic approaches, as an affective capacity (Pedwell 2016, 31).

The conceptualization of affect in this context is not easy as there is no solid definition of the term as well. It may, however, be helpful to provide a brief insight into the concept of affect in order to situate discourses on empathy in relation to emotions and coloniality. Instead of being defined concisely, affect is rather associated with a wide range of emotions (Thrift 2004, 59). Affect, in the context of understanding empathy, could be equated with intensities, something like the halo effect, which surrounds moods or emotions (Gunew 2009, 15). It can also be seen "as a set of embodied practices that produce visible conduct as an outer lining" (Thrift 2004, 60). This understanding stems mainly from reasoning of the phenomenological tradition but it also contains aspects of social interactionism and hermeneutics (Thrift 2004, 60). Affect can also be described as a force that produces a relationship between a body and the world (Lowry 2019, 189). In an attempt to question the common binary of affect being in opposition to consciousness and reason, it was further framed as a form of thinking (Gunew 2009, 14). One of the most comprehensive definitions is given by Costandius and Alexander who state that "[a]ffect is a matter of autonomic responses that occur below the threshold of consciousness and cognition, which are rooted in the body" (Costandius and Alexander 2019, 2417). In that context, empathy could be seen as a transformation on an affective level. Empathy in this sense is said to be needed for feeling the other's plight and suffering (Pedwell 2012, 166).

Even though, researchers agree that empathy can be seen as part of affect theory or has a component related to affect, the question of "how to characterize that component is a matter

of some controversy" (Coplan 2011, 6). Zembylas even frames empathy as an affect itself, putting it at the same level as other concepts such as love and hope (Zembylas 2019b, 405). Pedwell's definition, on the other hand, conceptualizes empathy as a socio-political relation that involves affective processes. Yet, these processes are then not defined more detailed in this context (Pedwell 2016, 28).

Even though, the approaches to empathy are very comprehensive and interdisciplinary, as this section has shown, and there is an increasing interest in the concept of empathy in recent years, there is no consensus on the precise meaning of empathy and how it is connected or different to emotional contagion or sharing, projection through imagination, perspective taking and many similar concepts (Zahavi 2014, 101). It is, however, a term that still enjoys much popularity generally in Western academia across disciplines, and particularly in neoliberal and political discourses, as the next section will show.

1.3 Contemporary Western, neoliberal approaches to empathy

"The biggest deficit that we have in our society and in the world right now is an empathy deficit" (Bloom 2016, 3), is one famous quote of former US president Barack Obama, who implemented the concept in his political agenda repeatedly. Having come a long way of being defined, redefined, contextualized and criticized, empathy met great resonance as a concept in contemporary Western discourses. Obama promoted empathy not only as something that is necessary to foster solidarity and altruism in society, but also as something that individuals choose to engage with (Bloom 2016, 3). This aspect of choice plays a significant role in empathy discourses and its critique and will be picked up in chapter 3. Obama's quote is just one out of many of such catchphrases about empathy, mainly used in sociopolitical contexts to ignite solidary mindsets, generosity and "good" feelings among the population in times of subsequent media reports about the disastrous results of the global interlocking crises and ongoing wars (Pedwell 2013, 18).

Contemporary discourses on empathy have reached transnational politics, national political agendas, media, international development, and education (Pedwell 2013, 19). There seems to be the underlying understanding that the idea of "putting oneself in the other's shoes" can be the cure to the most deep-rooted problems in society (Pedwell 2013, 18). In the context of the West promoting multiculturalism within the past years, empathy has been seen as a bridge between these divergences, which equals an affective reason to engage in democratic dialogue with who is considered "the other" (Boler 1999, 155). In relation to this, Boler highlights the strong nexus between empathy discourses and identity discourses, which are part of the Western notion of multiculturalism (Boler 1999, 159). Vice versa, for various sociopolitical problems the absence of empathy is interpreted as the problem, and developing more empathy is seen as the cure (Bloom 2016, 4).

These discourses, which take place in the context of multiculturalism in the West, promote empathy as a bridge that crosses differences and the affective reason why one should get engaged in democratic dialogue with the other (Pedwell 2013, 18–19). Such neoliberal narratives of empathy tend to divide into "good" and "bad" and polarize the choice of whether to empathize or not (Foster 2011, 137). This division, even though simplified, is found in the discourse around moral judgements and empathy, which is referred to in neoliberal accounts of empathy. Linking empathy to moral judgement would mean that one would empathize based on true understanding of the emotions that are felt on the side of the other. In that view, only empathy would allow us to judge good and bad actions or feelings (Prinz 2011, 213). Although, the connection of empathy and moral judgement is not to be neglected, it will exceed the scope of this thesis to elaborate on it comprehensively. It shall, however, be highlighted that from a moral perspective empathy is necessary to be developed as it would make people better and lead to "good" actions (Prinz 2011, 211).

This connection of empathy and morality is particularly important in Western discourses around charity and action towards social change in general. In such discourses, the emotional aspect of empathy seems to play an important role. In this context,

> emotion is produced in the interaction between the suffering of one and the gaze of the other, a common humanity can emerge […]. Emotion is a powerful driver in the exercise of charity, particularly because it plays on two levels: empathy with the unfortunate individual, and the satisfaction of helping him or her (Fassin 2012, 70).

What Fassin describes here, is an important aspect of empathy in the context of this research as will become more visible within the next chapters. In relation to contemporary understandings of empathy, Fassin's reasoning shows how important the role of empathy is within neoliberal discourses of aid, development, and the idea of doing good. Moral sentiments are a vital part of contemporary liberal and neoliberal politics, influence its discourses, and contribute to the legitimization of its practices, specifically "where these discourses and practices are focused on the disadvantaged and the dominated, whether at home (the poor, the immigrants, the homeless) or farther away (the victims of famine, epidemics, or war)" (Fassin 2012, 1). The underlying assumption of these discourses are the generation of moral indignation in individuals through the empathy they feel with those who are suffering, and that this indignation can lead to action that ends this very suffering (Fassin 2012, 1).

Another common understanding in neoliberal approaches to empathy is the notion that the concept is universally applicable and extendable to every individual. To offer an example, the brutal killing of unarmed black people in the US by police sparked a call for empathy towards so-called racial minorities, just as much as it came along with calls for empathy with police officers amongst those who are leaning towards the politically conservative right (Bloom 2016, 4). The connection to morality discourses might become more visible within the context of this example. At the same time, current neoliberal politics, however, seem to be exhausting what Pedwell calls "the very affective capacities that hold our potential to become a more

equitable and democratic society" (Pedwell 2013, 18). In this regard, claims are increasing for a shift towards what is called "the age of empathy", which is believed to unite societies and hold the solution to a wide range of sociopolitical and economic dissensions (Pedwell 2013, 18). It is important to point out here that individual suffering is often at the center in Western neoliberal discourses on empathy, which decenters structural components of suffering and dismisses their historical entanglements (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xlv).

In Western academia, empathy is often framed similarly in accordance with neoliberal notions and the Western roots of the concept. Pedwell refers to a very general contemporary definition of empathy, which understands it "as similar to other 'humanising' emotions such as sympathy and compassion in denoting an orientation of care or concern towards others", only that it includes the stronger element of identification and perspective-taking (Pedwell 2012, 165–166). Other scholars frame it as an affective bridge, which can offer the basis of what is considered ethical relationships. This includes the desire for love and altruistic cooperation (Angeles and Pratt 2017, 269–270).

Generally speaking, the academic conceptualizations of empathy within liberal and neoliberal narratives mostly entail the conviction that in a world that is transnational and centering discourses on culture and multiculturalism, any sort of social crisis, hierarchies, and controversies can be dealt with affectively by means of empathetic imagination (Pedwell 2013, 18–19). From a contemporary socio-political Western point of view, it is often approached as an "affective act of seeing from another's perspective and imaginatively experiencing her thoughts, emotions and predicaments" (Pedwell 2016, 30). Differentiating it from emotional contagion, Coplan calls the factor of perspective-taking essential in empathizing in neoliberal Western views. Perspective-taking here is a process that allows someone the construction of another individual's experience by simulating their experience (Coplan 2011, 9).

Coplan and Kawai here distinguish two types of perspective-taking, one that is self-oriented and one that is other-oriented (Coplan 2011, 9; Kawai 2017, 133). The first one, in

their definition, does not count as empathy. It is, however, often falsely framed as such. Self-oriented perspective taking comprises the idea of imagining what the self would experience in another's situation, similar to what is described as treating the other "as we would like to be treated and that we are empathetic when we try to imagine how we would feel if in the other's situation" (Coplan 2011, 9). In opposition to this, other-oriented empathy focusses on simulating the other's experiences and characteristics, rather than using imagination based on own experiences. In other words, if using other-oriented empathy, "when I successfully adopt the target's perspective, I imagine being the target undergoing the target's experiences rather than imagining being myself undergoing the target's experiences" (Coplan 2011, 13). For other-oriented perspective taking through focusing on the experience of the other, it needs mental flexibility and regulatory mechanisms that can suppress the own perspective (Coplan 2011, 13). This differentiation and understanding of empathy is important to consider in the context of this thesis, as it touches upon what will be referred to as appropriation in empathy within chapter 3.

The confusion of perspective-shifting and imagining-how-it-feels is commonly made, for instance, through statements that imply one imagining how another individual feels and mistaking that for empathy (Goldie 2011, 306). Empathy discourses are also seen as an issue of ethics, in this regard. Coplan and Goldie state that empathy evokes altruistic behavior with the underlying motivation to foster another individual's personal welfare. They refer to social psychologist Daniel Batson who, in relation to this, understands empathy as a form of empathic concern, which is rooted in an other-oriented emotion (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xxiv).

At this point, it is important to highlight that there is a need to have at least some knowledge on the subject one is empathizing with, particularly depending on the context of both parties, empathizer and empathized. Hence, they see empathy as something that is liable to biases, which are related to the empathizer's familiarity and identification with the other individual. In other words, there seems to be a higher chance to be able to empathize "with those we know well and whom we judge to be like ourselves in some important respect. Not

surprisingly, we're also more likely to succeed in our attempts to adopt their perspectives" (Coplan 2011, 13–14). This is an important aspect that will surface repeatedly within this thesis in the context of difference. This understanding of empathy implies that the more one is different from another individual, the less one can empathize with the other. This also indicates that empathy becomes a more difficult undertaking, as the effort is higher when aiming to empathize with those we cannot or can hardly identify with, and the risk is high to not be able to simulate their mental states (Coplan 2011, 13–14).

Even though Coplan does not frame it as such, there seems to be a gap which begs the question of identity, as well as power relations and structures within neoliberal discourses on empathy. It is related to the aspect of empathy that talks about making someone's experiences salient and valid in the sense of "your pain becomes my pain, your thirst becomes my thirst, and so I rescue you from the fire or give you something to drink. Empathy guides us to treat others as we treat ourselves and hence expands our selfish concerns to encompass other people" (Bloom 2016, 5). This conceptualization of empathy, as it has been mentioned previously, could also be interpreted in a sense of appropriation.

Even though the (neo-) liberal narratives of empathy vary based on context and discipline, the shared presupposition is that empathy is a universally inherently "positive" or "good" human trait that needs to be valued and instrumentalized in order to counter "negative" feelings such as shame, fear or greed, which are said to be at the opposite of empathy (Pedwell 2013, 19). Thus, empathy in these discourses is connected to other concepts such as compassion and sympathy, implying an idea of mutual care. What separates them, however, is the factor of identification or perspective-taking, as elaborated before. Empathy, in the neoliberal sense, is further conceptualized in terms of temporal progresses, which Pedwell explains by stating that

> through its power to engender self and social transformation, empathy is framed as that which can heal past wounds and move us forward into a more peaceful, harmonious and equitable future. As such, empathy is understood in teleological terms: its invoking as affective remedy

> implicitly pre-supposes a natural telos or end-point, at which tensions have been eased and antagonisms rectified (Pedwell 2013, 19).

If we consider the atrocities of colonialism and colonial legacies as such past wounds, this highlights again the urgency of critically approaching empathy in that context. In relation to this, it is vital to look at those approaches to empathy that emphasize on the concept as an affective self-transformation in social justice contexts. Empathy in social justice contexts has been contested and widely discussed. Davis draws the connection between empathy and social justice by stating that "leftoriented cultural critics have become increasingly wary of the political effectiveness of compassion, sympathy and empathy as tools in the fight for social justice" (Davis 2004, 399).

Supporters of empathy, however, emphasize on the perspective that empathetic identification with other individuals are said to enable opening "oneself up to different ways of knowing and new forms of intersubjectivity with the potential to dislodge and rearticulate dominant assumptions, truths and boundaries" (Pedwell 2012, 164). This notion of empathy is seen to be a tool to transform those subjects who benefit from oppressive structures. In this logic, it may be useful to foster more ethical relations not only between individuals, but also across boundaries of culture and societies (Pedwell 2012, 164). Such empathetic insights are said to lead to social change as they would enable seeing other's needs and tolerate differences more (Segal 2011, 269).

Pedwell calls this kind of empathy "transnational empathy", a concept which is found in Euro-American discourses. It refers to the capacity of the ones who are benefitting from structures of oppression to work towards retrenching, rather than disrupting social and geopolitical inequalities. Regarding this concept, Pedwell raises the question if empathy has potential to be a useful tool in transnational projects of social justice (Pedwell 2013, 20).

Particularly interesting here is the connection that Pedwell makes between postcoloniality and neoliberalism in relation to empathy. The author discusses the link between

empathy, proximity, and colonial history in the light of neoliberal technologies of governmentality. Especially in the context of what is framed as "the distant other" – those individuals who the development industry is claiming to support (often from the distance) – the question of the role of empathy is an important one as the concept has been highly used and praised within such discourses (Pedwell 2012, 164).

Another approach that points in the same direction is the one discussed by Segal. The author discusses the aspect of empathy as a social responsibility, in which empathy involves an informed understanding of historical, social and economic contexts of the other (Segal 2011, 268) This is related to the conceptualization of empathy in discourses around charity, which has been mentioned previously. In this regard, some scholars suggest to bring empathy to the working contexts of sectors dealing with development through skills training programs for example (Cartabuke et al. 2019, 612).

Pedwell's focus, in this context, is the international aid industry, which the author calls "neoliberal compassion economy". In this context empathy is used as a tool to create an affective understanding of "the distant other's" suffering. This understanding is based on the assumption "that in a contemporary world order structured by transnational capital, 'engagement based on empathy' is central to processes of achieving 'social justice' and 'building solidarity across otherwise debilitating social, economic and psychic boundaries'" (Pedwell 2012, 165). Within this neoliberal compassion economy, the tendency of transnational politics turning towards discourses of affect is played out. In relation to that, empathy and compassion are seen as essential in contemporary development discourses and practices (Pedwell 2012, 168). In other words, the humanitarian sector is self-evidently related to empathy in the context of people's suffering (Fassin 2012, 7).

The problematic conceptualization and use of empathy in transnational contexts of the aid and development industry becomes visible in frameworks like the ones of immersion programs. Those are used by international development organizations to expose their (white,

Western) employees to contexts of poverty hoping "that development professionals will 'engage in critical self-reflection' which will increase 'their motivation and commitment' to the work of poverty reduction in ways that can 'bring longer-term benefits to the practice of development'" (Pedwell 2012, 168–169). The aid industry justifies those immersion programs with arguments instrumentalizing the empathy narrative of the wealthier development staff putting themselves in the situation of "the poor". Through that, it is assumed, they would come to an easy understanding of the particular hardships faced by those people they are meaning to serve, and reach some level of self-transformation that enables recognition of own responsibilities, which would then in the long run lead to actions for social change (Pedwell 2012, 169). What immersion programs consider vital in this conceptualization of empathy is the face-to-face contact, which is supposed to generate empathy on the side of the "development professional" (Pedwell 2012, 170). Empathy in this context of so-called development and aid discourses, is strongly related to questions of suffering and morality. Hereby, the subject encounters an ambiguity in the confrontation with the one suffering. This ambiguity shows in the reaction to the confrontation, because the sight of someone's suffering leads to both, horror and pleasure. This is because "one feels sadness when one sees the misfortune of others, but cannot detach oneself from this vision because […] we love to feel pity. This emotional duality of empathy remains a characteristic trait of humanitarian reason" (Fassin 2012, 251).

The idea of immersion does not consider that the ones described as the poor or the distant other are placed in a position of passive teachers of their own lived reality and perspectives. Their emotional experience and needs are not only overlooked, but also appropriated while they remain the object of empathy fixed in a designated place (Pedwell 2012, 172). This is an important aspect that will be more deeply elaborated within the next chapters, in those sections that critically deal with the implications of power in empathy discourses.

In general, empathy within the neoliberal context is seen as an emotional skill or capacity that generates institutional as well as market value. Emotional expressivity and

emotional intelligence, which are concepts that are connected to empathy in neoliberal discourses, are considered valuable assets in neoliberal capitalist settings that pose a new workplace resource along the intensification of what is considered "soft capitalism" (Pedwell 2012, 172).

Having approached empathy from various theoretical angles, historically as well as contemporary, the next section aims to shed light on empathy and its colonial entanglement. In order to give a comprehensive outline of empathy, coloniality and decoloniality, the section will first elaborate the underlying understanding of coloniality before moving to the questions of decoloniality in relation to conceptualizations of empathy and different aspects that notions of empathy are connected with.

1.4 Decolonial critiques of Western approaches to empathy

As mentioned in the introduction, this thesis makes use of decolonial approaches to empathy. This section aims to explain the perspective within decolonial thought, from which this thesis is arguing. It further provides a critique from this very perspective on the different approaches to empathy that have been presented so far. The genealogies of decolonial thought and action have always been happening parallel to the advancing of modernity and coloniality on the globe. However, the many racialized and gendered decolonial thinkers have experienced their stories being made invisible by the racism and heteropatriarchy of the modern colonial system (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 8). What is often referred to as the decolonial project, needs a conversation between those contemporary anticolonial movements and the legacy of antiracist and anticolonial teachings (Eriksen and Svendsen 2020, 2). Both shall find a voice within this thesis.

1.4.1 A brief outline on decoloniality

The underlying understanding of decoloniality in this thesis is based on Mignolo's approach who frames decoloniality as multiple, contextual, and relational. As such, it is

> not only the purview of peoples who have lived the colonial difference but, more broadly, of all of us who struggle from and within modernity/coloniality's borders and cracks, to build a radically distinct world. Decoloniality […] is a way, option, standpoint, analytic, project, practice, and praxis (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 4–5).

Following this approach, decoloniality is not a static condition, or some enlightened point one can arrive at, but it seeks to highlight and establish radically different perspectives and positionalities. Those perspectives and positionalities strive to decenter Western hegemonic rationality from its universalizing position of being considered the only possibly existing frame, analysis and thought. Moreover, when talking about decoloniality it is vital to address the aspect and implication of power and its coloniality (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 8).

This understanding of decoloniality, as Mignolo states referring to Maldonado-Torres, manifests a decolonial attitude, which demands accountability and the inclination to approach many perspectives, especially the perspectives of those whose existence and right to humanity is put into question and framed as insignificant (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 17). Aiming at a decolonial turn, Maldonado-Torres points out that it is necessary to achieve "the definitive entry of enslaved and colonized subjectivities into the realm of thought at previously unknown institutional levels" (Maldonado-Torres 2008, 8). In other words, it aims to center epistemologies other than the Western universal ones, which dominate current discourses inside and outside academia.

Another aspect that is significant in the decolonial turn is the introduction of questions regarding the effects that colonization has on modern subjectivities and ways of life. It also needs to consider and implement contributions of subjectivities who are racialized and colonized to the production of knowledge and critical thought (Maldonado-Torres 2008, 8).

The process of decoloniality hereby involves not only ejecting colonialism in reference to values, knowledge, and subjectivity, but also in terms of material redistribution (Leonardo and Porter 2010, 141).

It is vital to also emphasize on the role of gender at this point, as "native peoples (in both the North and South) have always transgressed the imposed binaries, gender categories, and sexual norms of Christianity and the West, institutions whose logics and projects are undoubtedly entwined" (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 40). This does not imply that heteropatriarchy is merely a Western colonial invention. However, it is well known that there existed several understandings of what is considered gender or sexuality way before the conquest invasion. In relation to colonialism and coloniality, sexuality and gender often opposed the imposed norms while obeying other cultural, ancestral believes or philosophies (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 40).

I want to emphasize on María Lugones approach to gender and coloniality, firstly because I consider it essential in decolonial discourses, and secondly because it will be important in the context of critical pedagogy and empathy in chapter 3. The author explains how gender in the colonial understanding was framed in its binary distinction of male and female, whereby the female was considered the inversion and deformation of the male. In the context of colonization, the construction of gender was used to judge the behavior of those who are colonized as non-gendered (Lugones 2010, 743). In this reasoning, Lugones draws on Anibal Quijano's coloniality of power and adds that coloniality needs to be thought together with gender, thus, coining the term of the *coloniality of gender*. What is important in this notion is the understanding of coloniality not only as "a classification of people in terms of the coloniality of power and gender, but also the process of active reduction of people, the dehumanization that fits them for the classification, the process of subjectification, the attempt to turn the colonized into less than human beings" (Lugones 2010, 745). The coloniality of gender is placed at the intersection of gender, race and class, and forms a central construction

of this world's capitalist system of power. It is, however, not the aim of this approach to look for a non-colonized gender construction, as gender cannot be separated from modernity and coloniality (Lugones 2010, 746). This makes gender concepts essential to decolonization. Moreover, the heteronormative implications of coloniality and power that are related to the gender binary need to be challenged (Schiwy 2007, 272).

Critiquing coloniality in general means critiquing how epistemologies and power relations, which are created through and by colonialism, still are perpetuated and maintained in today's societies and institutions (Eriksen and Svendsen 2020, 2). It is what Mignolo calls *the colonial matrix of power*, which needs to cease being controlled and perpetuated by the so-called West (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 10). This colonial matrix of power works in various interconnected heterogenous and historicostructural nodes. Those are crossed by imperial and colonial differences, as well as the underlying logic of coloniality, that holds those connections in place. Historicostructural nodes in this context mean "no one is independent of any other, as any node is likely to be related in two or more differing ways" (Mignolo 2011, 17). It is not only related to colonial invasions and settler colonialism but also to the "system of social classification based on the idea of race, of "conquerors" over "conquered," and its structural foundation tied to modernity and Eurocentered capitalism" (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 16). All of these are driven by the control of labor and subjectivity, the brutal policies of genocide and slavery, the elimination of knowledges and the denial of humanity and spirituality (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 16).

What needs to be taken into account when talking about decoloniality is that it is contextual just as relational and lived. Moreover, it encompasses the intellectual, spiritual, emotional and existential (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 19). Decolonial thinkers emphasize on decolonial liberation, which could rather be seen as a process and not a finished project. Decolonial thinking and doing begins at analyzing levels and layers, in which it can effectively expedite the process of decolonization, as well as the struggle for liberation from the colonial

matrix of power (Mignolo 2011, 17). Liberation, in this sense, opposes the competitive fight for controlling authority and knowledge through states, corporations and other institutions, while aiming to liberate from the control in regard to oppression based on gender, race, sexuality, class, ability, and their intersections. This kind of liberation contests

> not only the control of authority in inter-state relations (and therefore in political theory and in human-rights regulations), but also the control of the sphere of knowledge and subjectivity. […] The dispute of knowledge in this sphere is being fought not only in mainstream and independent media, but also in higher education through the creation of programs and departments focusing on ethnic/racial and gender/sexuality issues (Mignolo 2011, xix)

Regarding decolonial liberation processes, decolonial thought and action does not dismiss individual accountability for their own decolonial liberation. However, the task is not an individual responsibility, but it is based on community action. In other words, nobody should hope "that someone else will decolonize him or her or decolonize *X* or Z, and it means that none of us, living- thinking- being- doing decolonially should expect to decolonize someone else" (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 10–11). Moreover, it is important to consider that decoloniality cannot go without a relational way of seeing and understanding. It shifts the narrative from thinking and talking about to thinking and talking with the peoples, struggles, knowledges and notions (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 17). In addition to that, it has to be considered that the real work of decoloniality needs to go beyond thinking and writing the path to a decolonial future. There needs to be a movement through experience and embodiment included that goes further than "intellectual" knowledge and considers all sorts of knowledges (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 18–19). Decoloniality thus entails facing

> voices, bodies, minds, spirits, and thought that speak from and to individual and collective standpoints, struggles, projects, propositions, and practices— […] that work to loosen and undo modernity/coloniality's hold; transverse time, place, and space; and put forward an otherwise of being, feeling, thinking, knowing, doing, and living that craft hope and possibility in these increasingly desperate and violent times of global coloniality/global capitalism taken to the extreme (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 20).

Having framed decoloniality with a particular emphasis on its connection to gender, the next subsection will highlight how empathy is situated within coloniality and approached from decolonial perspectives.

1.4.2 Empathy and decoloniality

Feminist and anti-racist scholars have been raising challenging and critical questions for long in relation to how the working of empathy and its political and ethical implications can be understood (Pedwell 2016, 31). This includes calling attention to conceptualizations of empathy and analyzing their colonial legacies. Furthermore, it entails situating the development of empathy within the context of Western colonialism and colonial expansion (Pedwell 2016, 33). Moreover, the section on the use of empathy within neoliberal discourses has shown that colonial legacies are visible in contemporary approaches of empathy as well. When analyzing empathy discourses in the light of decolonial thought, it is vital to look back at the roots of these discourses. Similar to the parallel existence of decolonial thought and the advancing of colonial/modern processes, critical counter-discourses to empathy have always existed alongside liberal discourses around the subject (Pedwell 2013, 19).

As I mentioned previously, the Aristotelian pity is the most common understanding of empathy and at the root of empathy discourses. It is predicated upon the assumption that one would know someone's feeling based on one's own fear that what the other experienced could happen to oneself. According to Boler, this understanding makes the fear for one's own wellbeing the agent of empathy. Thus, this understanding of empathy is a projection of the self rather than an understanding of the other. The understanding of empathy in the sense of this very early approach, is one that posits the "other" as the secondary object of interest, only considered because of the empathizer's fear about their very own vulnerability (Boler 1999, 158). It places the one who decides to empathize in the position of the one having the decision about whether the "other" is deserving of empathy (pity), and would then be rewarded with it

by the one empathizing (Boler 1999, 158). In this sense, empathy may become a form of asserting power (Pedwell 2013, 19). To better illustrate the relation of the concept to coloniality, I want to bring up the colonial self-other relation, that might reflect in the self-other construction of empathy. Othering practices are inherent to hegemonic knowledge regimes and can be ascribed to the colonial logics (Arshad et al. 2021, 2). Othering and the colonial other as a deviation from the self are related to a naturalization of the self on the side of the colonizer. Ziai imagines this as a universal scale that

> allows to measure and compare according to a Eurocentric norm and thus to define the majority of humanity as 'underdeveloped'. The Other is not seen as different, but as a deficient version of the Self, which is why development discourse operates by identifying deviance from the norm as inferiority (the 'less' or 'underdeveloped') (Ziai 2020, 246).

Empathy could be seen as a problematic feeling that reinforces othering and leads to colonial constructions of development aid (Gutiérrez Rodríguez et al. 2020, 186–187). Nevertheless, the othering in empathy is rarely assessed in critical literature on empathy.

In line with this, one major issue of counter-discourses to empathy is the contemporary liberal claim to empathy enabling the empathizer to know or even represent the experience of the other, often entailing projection or appropriation, which will be discussed more comprehensively in chapter 3 (Pedwell 2013, 19). At the same time, the assumption that empathy is reserved for those subjects in dominant positions of power remains unquestioned and consistent, not only in liberal discourses but also in critical academic debates. In other words, "it is nearly always a socially advantaged subject who is compelled to imagine the situations, constraints and feelings of 'others'" (Pedwell 2013, 19). Supposedly, this empathetic engagement enables them to be moved to acknowledge complicities in perpetuating oppressive structures of power and then ideally concomitantly feel responsible to act towards social change (Pedwell 2013, 19).

The problem here is that placing empathy in a position of being able to heal, for example colonial wounds rooted in historic and structural oppression and further transform hierarchies in order to lead to social change, neglects what Pedwell calls the affective legacies of colonialism that show through emotions such as anger, bitterness and sadness. This makes a healing through empathy appear naïve and misleading (Pedwell 2013, 22). In other words, this critique of liberal framings of empathy highlights "how the affective afterlives of colonialism, slavery and racism continue to shape contemporary lives in ways that are not easy to penetrate, nor possible to undo, through the power of empathetic will or imagination alone" (Pedwell 2013, 22). This illustrates, how power relations need to be examined in relation to the context of empathy and emotions. The structural circumstances and collective experiences around race, class, and gender, for instance, are formed by the social control of emotions, which generates questions around the power of emotions in the context of injustice (Boler 1999, 5)

Assuming social transformation through liberal empathetic approaches can lead to centering the emotional and personal/individual over the structural and completely dismiss their imbrications, which are complex and related to coloniality (Pedwell 2013, 19). Moreover, these liberal interpretations of empathy as a universal concept fail to consider the historical colonial background and power structures that benefit from the liberal, ahistorical, understanding and use of empathy (Kawai 2017, 137). Further, assuming that empathy is an intrinsically good concept that moves from the privileged to the sufferer not only dismisses the perspective of who is considered the other, but also maintains the power imbalances which are based on othering along colonial hegemonic relations of race, gender, class, and ability, and at the same time silencing by not considering whether one wants to receive empathy in the first place (Pedwell 2013, 19). Therefore, empathy itself, just like emotions such as grief or happiness, needs to be treated not like a universal concept as suggested in liberal approaches "but rather radically shaped by relations of history, power and violence" (Pedwell 2013, 22). This problem

of empathy and power relations in connection will be given a closer look in chapter 3, in relation to critical pedagogy.

Therefore, in regard to conceptualizing (Western) empathy, scholars have challenged this very aspect of power, both the initial uncritical assumption of relating empathy to the empathizer as well as the question of whether empathy can lead to social change (Zembylas 2019b, 411). With the intention of becoming aware of differences in power, they suggest to ask from a decolonizing perspective "how might we understand the complex links between empathy and transnational relations of power", whereby transnationality is defined "as constituted by inter-related and shifting processes of colonialism, slavery, diaspora, migration, development, globalisation, neoliberalism" (Pedwell 2016, 28). As elaborated previously, the question of the role of empathy in transnationality and its implications within the colonial matrix of power is significant considering the use of the concept in transnational contexts. These contexts will become more relevant in the context of critical pedagogy within the next chapters.

Pedwell reasons that based on this, "feminist and ant-racist [sic] theorists have provided a potent critique of universalist discourses of empathy" (Pedwell 2016, 32). Zembylas also highlights the nexus of empathy and colonial history, throughout which the concept was employed as an affective and political tool fostering the insidious construction of differences based on race, class, and gender. This historic construction becomes visible in the contemporary liberal and neoliberal discourses, whereby the construction of the "privileged empathizer" from the west and the poor colonized empathized depict the underlying assumption (Zembylas 2019b, 412). Hence, empathy did not only take up the role of an affective tool within the harmful construction of differences along the lines of race, class and gender. It also becomes clearer how these discourses on empathy are not merely European, detached from any colonial history and continuity (Pedwell 2016, 34). Rather, as Khanna puts it, such empathy discourses "could emerge only when Europe's nations were entering modernity through their relationship with the colonies" (Khanna 2003, 10).

As Khanna continues to reason, this is because the concept of self within psychoanalysis discourses developed in the context of the European nation state idea. By calling psychoanalysis a colonial discipline, the author further points out that it is closely tied to colonial narratives, the concept of modernity's self and civilization. In that logic, psychoanalysis and its concepts, of which empathy is one, are crucial to be taken into account in the understanding and undertaking of decolonization (Khanna 2003, 10). Hogan argues similarly by pointing out that colonial hierarchies, which as previously elaborated are found within the conceptualization and discourses of empathy, rely on and reproduce specific psychological relations. Thus, when attempting to alter these hierarchies it is necessary to change the psychological relations as well (Hogan 2015, 333). Moreover, one needs to consider at this point the significance of colonial psychological relations, which lead to colonizer and colonized understanding themselves and reacting to individuals of the same, as well as the other group in patterned ways (Hogan 2015, 333–334). Even though, the binary categorization of colonizer and colonized is problematic in certain contexts, it can be helpful to understand the mechanisms and implications of empathy in its historical context of colonial psychological relations.

The dissatisfaction about the categorization of differences and hierarchization through the power imbalances it entails, goes in line with the frustration of several feminist and anti-racist scholars regarding certain claims for empathy. In decolonial discourses, empathy is repeatedly linked with "social privilege" (Zembylas 2019b, 411). The critiques target the approaches to empathy in the sense of co-feeling as they are said to pose a means of projection of feelings, especially in contexts in which "racial, ethnic, and gender hierarchies are magnified and heightened by structural inequalities and injustices" (Angeles and Pratt 2017, 270). In this sense, empathy further risks obscuring the one in a dominant position of power to be complicit in the context of those power relations in which marginalization, oppression and suffering take place (Pedwell 2016, 32). Assuming that empathy, therefore, leads to transformative affective connections bears the risk of reinforcing patterns of dominant hierarchies and exclusion, which

might reify power imbalances and further ‘silence’ marginalized subjects (Zembylas 2019b, 411).

In this context, empathy needs to be framed cautiously as the notion of projecting the self in understanding the other bears the risk of “a peculiarly rational, western, masculine way of looking at ‘feeling with’” (Noddings 2013, 30), considering that the concept has originally been approached and defined majorly by white male western scholars mostly. In other words, empathy used to be conceptualized in various academic disciplines within a relatively biased and Western setting, which left other approaches to empathy and similar concepts excluded. Zembylas critically addresses this bias by stating that there is a need for attending to the uneven effects of empathy, meaning the exclusions it might reproduce and/or reinforce. This will open a space for critical discourses around empathy (Zembylas 2019b, 412). This uneven effect could be related with the general liberal assumption of universality in emotions and empathy. Thus, empathy is assumed to be something everyone has the ability and potential to develop, and further speaks from the underlying implicitness of a “socially privileged subject” in the position of the potential empathizer (Pedwell 2016, 40).

Therefore, contemporary Eurocentric calls for empathy in terms of an affective solution may place an imagined subject in a dominant position of power regarding race, class, gender and geopolitics at the center, which then comes across differences, while having the choice of granting empathy and compassion or not (Zembylas 2019b, 411). This is part of the colonial legacies of affects and emotions, which refer to the affectivity in relations and structures of coloniality and oppression (Zembylas 2019b, 404). In this context, it is necessary to consider what many scholars have pointed out: The social, political, historical and cultural construction of emotions. The latter are seen as interdependent with values and play a vital role in reasoning about what is considered good and just (Kawai 2017, 137). Emotions, in that sense, need to be considered in discourses around social justice and colonial legacies. Kawai brings that to the point by stating:

> Emotions, therefore, are tightly connected to ethnic, racial and national identities as well as ideologies that reify and reinforce these identities, such as nationalism and racism […]. This suggests that understanding another's emotions is indispensable for critical multiculturalism (Kawai 2017, 137).

Hence, as Zembylas reasons, there is a need for a different framing and conceptualization of empathy, and in relation to that the concepts of affect, as well as emotion in a broader context. Empathy "needs to be decolonized, that is, it needs to move beyond Eurocentric categories of affect theory […] and urge individuals to pay critical attention to their own complicity in perpetuating coloniality" (Zembylas 2019b, 411). Pedwell shares this perspective by expressing the interest in a different translation of empathy and a reinterpretation of liberal, neoliberal and neocolonial notions and practices of empathy "to activate alternative affective meanings, practices and potentialities" (Pedwell 2016, 30). Following Gunew's reasoning, this also raises the question of how culturally specific universal concepts like empathy are, since concepts within the "psy" disciplines like psychoanalysis, psychology etc. are immediately related to a universality in terminology and conceptualization. As an example, Gunew invokes the implicitness of assuming five universal expressions of emotions, comprising anger, fear, disgust, sadness, and enjoyment (Gunew 2009, 15).

To add a critical feminist perspective to this decolonial critique of empathy, Hemmings' insight and reasoning is helpful insofar as they highlight the nexus and opposition between ontology and epistemology in feminism in the context of empathy (Hemmings 2012, 147–148). Hemmings reasons that this opposition leads to an over-individualized approach to subjectivity or to "a determinist account of the social world and the modes through which it may be transformed, that understate the importance of affect to gendered transformation" (Hemmings 2012, 147–148). The author's point of departure is the placing of affect at the intersection of ontology and epistemology in feminist theory. Here it is interesting to highlight the intersubjective nature of being as symbolic and significant in feminist concerns with the

relationship of these two philosophical approaches (Hemmings 2012, 148). Drawing on Ahmed's and Berlant's approaches to affect, Hemmings highlights the concept's potential for thinking about what is considered the ontological and the epistemological in the sense of a resource for comprehending their mutual overlapping "or as a kind of knowledge about the interface between ontological or epistemic considerations" (Hemmings 2012, 149).

This is significant, considering the close link between relationality and intersubjectivity with concepts such as empathy and care (Hemmings 2012, 151). Related to this is the discourse on the self-other conceptualization of empathy, which is contested and receives much critique from post- and decolonial scholars (Boler 1999, 159). Empathy, in this context, could be paradigmatic to an affective attentive epistemology, which may lead to a transformation of all individuals involved as well as knowledges themselves through "[c]hallenging the status of the expert, considering the importance of shared epistemic claims from below, thinking outside of one's own initial investments in the desire for clearer and more accountable knowledge" (Hemmings 2012, 151). In other words, what Hemmings discusses is ways of reframing empathy in feminist discourses in order to foreground the significance of emotions as knowledge. According to this notion, empathy favors embodied knowledge, affective connection and the wish for transformation of social spaces. This would specifically count for white feminist action across differences through cultural, ethnic and racial constructions (Hemmings 2012, 151).

However, critics of empathy's valued status within liberal feminist epistemology, underscored that feminist empathy is easily framed as the essentialized heteropatriarchal assumption of women's natural capacities for care (Boler 1999, 7; Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990, 10). Another critical remark highlights the presuppositions of empathy, which downplay the remarkable classed and raced divergences within feminist discourses (Seibel Trainor 2002, 634). Those cannot merely be overcome through the feminist aspiration towards to connection. Even more, in the attempt to close the gap between epistemology and ontology, one might end

up misrecognizing the other in altering their experiences to have them serve our own feminist agenda (Hemmings 2012, 151–152). In that case, empathy can result in "sentimental attachment to the other, rather than a genuine engagement with her concerns, then; or worse, it may signal a cannibalisation of the other masquerading as care" (Hemmings 2012, 151–152).

This call for a decolonization of empathy with an emphasis on a feminist perspective needs to be extended to the urgency of highlighting and applying approaches to the concept of empathy and similar, that did not arise within and base their reasoning on western, colonial, neoliberal etc. structures. This is of tremendous significance as the aforementioned Euro-American genealogies of empathy are by far not the only or most striking approaches of understanding such type of affective processes and their implications (Pedwell 2016, 32). Thus, Zembylas highlights the urgency of understanding the historical trajectories of knowledge production as dynamics that are not exclusively happening in the West but include various perspectives. This means that epistemologies concerning approaches to empathy in and from Indigenous and other colonized settings need to be understood and prioritized inside and outside the academic discourse (Zembylas 2019b, 416).

Practically speaking, this involves more than taking a person's suffering as affecting the own flourishing and making oneself vulnerable within the other person (Zembylas 2019b, 416). This, according to Zembylas, only marks the beginning. What needs to be following

> is the acknowledgment of each and everyone's complicity in continuing colonization and thus taking action that dismisses essentialized categories of victims and benefactors or empathizers and empathized and highlights instead the need to develop affective solidarity through specific actions that reduce everyday inequalities (Zembylas 2019b, 416).

These processes will be interesting to be considered within critical pedagogy as coloniality and decolonization are vital topics there. The next chapter will provide the theoretical basis for such reasoning.

1.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to offer an introduction to the origins of different approaches to empathy within their historical context and to highlight its universality within Western academic interpretations. In doing so, the chapter emphasized on different disciplines that have dealt with conceptualizations of empathy historically, such as psychology and philosophy. The chapter also underscores the discourse on the emotional understandings of empathy. The section on contemporary neoliberal understandings provides insights on how empathy is framed in contemporary politics and in discourses around social justice and development. An outline of the thesis' underlying perspective based on decolonial theory and decolonial feminism is provided, in order to offer a comprehensive theoretical foundation. Further, in its last section the chapter brings a critical decolonial feminist lens to the approaches of empathy. This critique of historic and contemporary approaches to empathy may help with situating empathy within critical discourses, highlighting their connection to questions of power and coloniality from different angles, which will later be discussed more profoundly in the analysis of chapter 3.

Implicitly, many of the definitions and conceptualizations of empathy that this chapter introduced assume that it is always the subject in the dominant position of power that empathizes with the marginalized, oppressed other. Moreover, based on the insights from the historical and genealogical overview, we learn that empathy as a concept has often been approached and used uncritically in relation to power discourses in disciplines such as psychology and philosophy, as well as in neoliberal discourses. Looking at these rather uncritical approaches to empathy and their connection to power might make the question of how empathy can be approached and defined critically even more urgent.

In order to be able to profoundly bring this decolonial perspective and its critique to the context of this thesis, the next chapter will prepare the contextual framework for the critical analysis that this thesis contains. This will be done by delineating the definitions and approaches

to the concept of empathy in pedagogical settings of higher education. To that effect, the following chapter will briefly introduce the influential work of Paulo Freire, the role of empathy in his thought, and the discussions of different authors on empathy in critical pedagogy. In doing so, the chapter will set a focus on the aspect of difference in relation to power, and on the ways in which empathy has been approached in teacher-student relations in critical pedagogy.

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CHAPTER 2: EMPATHY IN CRITICAL PEDAGOGIC PRACTICE

2.1 Introduction

"It is pitiful that whiteness would give itself the right to be the pedagogue of democracy in the world. The incredible nerve!" (Freire 2014, 23). What Paulo Freire expresses with this exclamation lies at the bottom of critical pedagogy. By centering white, Western and hegemonic epistemologies, formal, institutionalized pedagogy is set to train people in maintaining a status quo. Formal pedagogy "disarticulated formal knowledge from practice in ways that prohibited the development of critical social consciousness" (Amsler 2011, 48). Here, critical pedagogy does not only offer new approaches and methodologies to learning and doing, but also provides a comprehensive critique of the formal and popular education systems, which will be elaborated in this chapter.

As I have discussed different approaches to empathy and outlined the understanding of the underlying decolonial feminist lens of this thesis previously, this chapter will provide a deeper insight into approaches and different applications of empathy within the context of critical pedagogy theory and practice. It will delineate how empathy has been framed within foundational theories of critical pedagogy, referring to different scholars who approached the topics from various angles, also depending on their focus and context.

Firstly, to be able to comprehend why it is important to understand and discuss empathy in critical pedagogy, the chapter will start with a general introduction on critical pedagogy as a discipline and its theories with an emphasis on the influential contributions of Paulo Freire. Further, this chapter will take a particularly close look at specific contexts such as empathy in student-teacher relations, and the context of critical pedagogy and discourses of difference that are dealing with pedagogical frameworks for students from different socio-political, geographical, and cultural backgrounds. These contexts, as will become clearer throughout the chapter, are of greater significance in critical pedagogy teaching and deserve to receive particular attention within this chapter.

On some points of the chapter, the connection of critical pedagogy with decolonial thought and theory will be made to provide a better understanding on how to situate critical pedagogy in decolonial thought and pedagogical approaches. This is vital for relating the approaches introduced in chapter 3 to empathy in critical pedagogy theory and practice.

2.2 Critical pedagogy and its objectives

To understand what critical pedagogy is, it can be helpful to look at how it came into being. For that we will have to contextualize it within popular, formal education and pedagogy. Education in general is often displayed as the answer to suffering in the world and seen as the foundation of social transformation. It is, however, also critiqued as an institution of oppression itself that reproduces inequalities. This raises the question, what form of education and pedagogies in relation to that are needed for social transformation (Carr and Thésée 2020, 67–68). This is where critical pedagogy comes in.

At the bottom of critical pedagogy is a fundamental critique of popular education systems and practices, and their pedagogies. It arose from an increasing critique of all forms of formal, institutionalized pedagogy (Amsler 2011, 48). The necessity for a critical pedagogy lies, amongst others, within the continuous failure in popular education to foster an ethical way of being that can at the same time oppose and dismantle the forces of colonization in a satisfactory manner (Gaztambide-Fernández 2012, 42). Critical pedagogy regards to and stems from the material aspect of discriminatory educational practices posed by the cultural politics of an agenda that leans towards excluding and dis-equalizing subjectivities (Trifonas 2020, 218–219). Critical pedagogy thought developed within a socio-cultural environment of insensitivity towards the reality of global conditions that comprise a multiplicity of differences (Trifonas 2020, 220).

As indicated in chapter 1, discourses of difference are not only repeatedly referred to throughout this thesis in the context of empathy, but also related to oppressive and hegemonic

ideas that are work along the line of sociopolitical relations such as race, class, and gender. It can, therefore, be interesting to highlight the understanding of difference in the context of critical pedagogy, and its interconnectedness with concepts such as identity within societies/communities.

> On one level, the subjects of contemporary societies are characterized in terms of this 'world of difference' where individuals are considered to be identities constructed from an unceasing exposure to a diverse array of images, discourses, and codes, etc. On another level, the heterogeneity of identity is exemplified in communities of otherness and multiplicity that is inhabited by individuals who further embellish the singular differences of subjectivity in complex affiliations integrating an endless combination of gender, class, race, ethnic, sexuality, ability, and other orientations (Trifonas 2020, 220).

Difference here, in connection to what is considered an acceptable norm of identity, is interlinked with "a pejorative connotation vis-à-vis highly arbitrary criteria of judgment that are based on the problematic categories and their representation" (Trifonas 2020, 218). The oppression along these markers or "categories" and their intersections are what critical pedagogy is interested in addressing and dismantling.

Having touched upon the necessity for a critical pedagogy, I want to present relevant definitions and approaches to describe how scholars attended to this type of pedagogy. When looking at critical pedagogy's coming into being, there are certain voices that strongly shaped and influenced critical pedagogy thought. Regarding the evolution of critical pedagogy in theory and practice, a great deal of what is considered the canon of critical pedagogy leads back to the Brazilian philosopher and educator Paulo Freire.

Freire occupies an almost sacred position among the voices in critical pedagogy. In his approaches, Freire always took a strong stance against neoliberal politics and ideologies, and emphasized the importance of solidarity and reintegration through political and social networks on a state-level (Freire 2000a, 11). The legacy of his work serves as a testimonial that displays Freire's passion for helping students develop a critical consciousness of freedom in their learning process, become aware of authoritarian notions, understand the connection of

knowledge, power and agency, and finally learn to understand word and world as part of a bigger struggle for democracy and justice (Giroux 2011, 152).

What contemporary scholars of critical pedagogy take from Freire is the understanding that social transformation needs to serve the needs of "working-class indigenous and nonwhite peoples" and achieve a comprehensive understanding of the necessity for a critical consciousness of social existence and the possibilities to transform it (Gutierrez et al. 2003, 18). In other words, "a critical decolonizing consciousness is fundamental to the transformation of the internal neocolonial condition of social existence" (Gutierrez et al. 2003, 18) and it is what critical pedagogy teaching wants to achieve.

The famous concept of conscientization (in original *conscientização*), which Freire developed as part of critical pedagogy, describes criticism generally as an intellectual resource that "broadens knowledge through dialogic constructions of the differences of experience stemming from deconstructive/reconstructive exercises designed to synthesize the subject's return to self" (Trifonas 2020, 220). In critical pedagogy, the concept is directed towards the concrete other in practical ethics instead of an abstract intersubjective other of academic discourses. Therefore, serving as a practical critique, conscientization does not only include a social psychological process of consciousness transformation, but is also connected to ethical reflection, and not to be confused with psychological notions of raising consciousness (Morrow and Torres 2002, 151).

One aspect Freire repeatedly highlights in this context is the call for action towards social change, which is at the heart of his pedagogy. Following that call, the sole perception of reality is not considered as a true perception as it cannot lead to transformation unless it is followed by critical intervention (Freire 2000b, 52). In Freire's approaches the premise was acknowledging a heterogenous understanding of knowledge and power structures which would maintain an appreciative attitude towards what is considered different. In that, autonomous thought and independent action receive a significant value, especially related to students taking

active part in developing systems of logic that allow them to deal with the knowledge claims that are imposed on them in a critical way (Trifonas 2020, 219).

One famous pedagogical notion of Freire exerted a strong influence on critical pedagogy theory and practice and can be found within his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* from 1970. This pedagogy asked for a radical change in schooling and a social and humane transformation to a contextual education (Down and Steinberg 2020, xl). In this approach, Freire underscores the internalization of oppression by those who he refers to as "the oppressed", meaning those who experience systematic discrimination through oppression.

At the center of this pedagogy theory are questions around humanization and dehumanization in relation to colonial narratives of being human. Freire sees humanization as the vocation of the oppressed and states that this vocation is repeatedly "thwarted by injustice, exploitation, oppression, and the violence of the oppressors; it is affirmed by the yearning of the oppressed for freedom and justice, and by their struggle to recover their lost humanity" (Freire 2000b, 43–44). This also means that by being concerned about humanization one automatically recognizes dehumanization, not only in the form of an ontological possibility, but also as a reality with historical roots (Freire 2000b, 43).

Freedom is an important aspect of Freire's pedagogy. It is conceived in this context, as an indispensable state for the search for completion of humans. In this logic, the oppressed fear freedom, as they internalized and adopted the oppressor's guidelines. To achieve this kind of freedom, which is pursued through conquest and not by gift, the oppressed must let go of this image and instead adopt an attitude of autonomy and responsibility (Freire 2000b, 47). It is what Freire refers to as the oppressed being absorbed by the oppressive reality they live in which leads to their consciousness being submerged. This means, that oppression is domesticating and can only be dismantled by the oppressed emerging from it and turning upon it (Freire 2000b, 51).

The legacy of Freire's work testifies a pedagogical project which aims to help students to acquire a consciousness of freedom and draw a connection between knowledge, power (structures), and agency (Giroux 2011: 152). Here, Freire offers a language of critique and possibility that does not only call out the dehumanizing structures in contemporary social conditions, but also proposes new ways of living together. Therefore, as Down and Steinberg frame it, "[c]ritical pedagogy is central to this broader political project because it helps us to question common-sense assumptions, beliefs, values, rituals and practices that serve to mask hierarchical power relations" (Down and Steinberg 2020, xli).

Moreover, Freire's pedagogy centers experiences of the oppressed, based on the assumption that their realities can authentically and effectively counter oppression. Following this logic, the apprenticeship needs to be created by the oppressed themselves and those who show genuine and true solidarity with them (Freire 2000b, 45). Freire explains this by stating:

> Who are better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society? Who suffer the effects of oppression more than the oppressed? Who can better understand the necessity of liberation? They will not gain this liberation by chance but through the praxis of their quest for it, through their recognition of the necessity to fight for it (Freire 2000b, 45).

Hereby, critical thinking and inclusive action are at the roots of critical pedagogical thought. Moreover, they "are essential prerequisites for ensuring social cohesion and enabling people to live in dignity, take an active part in society, combat poverty and achieve long-term growth in a fair and egalitarian world" (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 236). Critical pedagogy wants to enable the subject to free itself from the entanglements with the oppressed consciousness. This process would provide students with a new understanding and awareness of selfhood, of being in the world. It would also enable them to consciously reinterpret the self within this new awareness (Trifonas 2020, 218–219).

A central aspect in this creation of a new awareness are questions around epistemologies. Critical pedagogy is vital for drawing attention to questions around who can

control the conditions for the production of knowledge and of classroom practices (Giroux 2011, 5–6). It highlights the significance of shifting knowledge production and teaching towards centering those who experience systemic and structural oppression (Freire 2000b, 45). In the context of knowledge production, it was essential for Freire to see the practice of teaching not as a transfer of content from the teacher's head to the student's, which Freire refers to as *banking education* (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 235–236). Instead, Freire suggests teaching as a

> possibility for students, while developing their curiosity and making it more critical, to produce knowledge in cooperation with teachers. […] The teacher must simply propose to the learners the allocation of the necessary means toward building their own comprehension of their discovery process and of their object of study (Freire 2014, 24).

Educators like teachers play a vital role in creating the frame and conditions for a new kind of encounter in teaching. The teacher, in this context, acts as a facilitator with a certain responsibility for interventions, however, not from the position of speaking to but rather speaking with (Freire and Horton 1990, 180). Therefore, the setting of teacher-student relations will be highlighted later in the context of empathy in critical pedagogy.

Giroux, who's pedagogical reasoning is based on Freire's, coined the term "critical pedagogy" (Down and Steinberg 2020, xl). Having done extensive research and writing on the topic, Giroux is another pioneer in the field of critical pedagogy who advocates for an equitable institutionalization of education that crosses cultural boundaries (Trifonas 2020: 222). Giroux's pedagogy accents experiential reflexivity "for an education more suited to introspections of subjectivity […] to heighten students' awareness of self as a vital source of informational logic to motivate critical thinking in direct relation to the communicative act of teachinglearning [sic]" (Trifonas 2020, 222). We can see here the parallel to Freire's pedagogy in the aspect of creating awareness and encouraging critical thought.

Similar to Freire, Giroux picks up the aspect of critique or possibility in relation to freedom. In critiquing, a language needs to be applied that intersects issues of freedom with issues of responsibility, in the sense of a dialectic approach that does not only see freedom as individual rights but as significant in the discourse of social responsibility (Giroux 1997, 222–223). Freedom, in Giroux's understanding, not only continues to be a vital factor "in establishing the conditions for ethical and political rights, it must also be seen as a force to be checked if it is expressed in modes of individual and collective behavior that […] produce forms of violence and oppression against individuals and social groups" (Giroux 1997, 222–223).

A fundamental aspect that all theories of critical pedagogy have in common is the belief that education is essential to democracy, and that a democratic society can only survive with "a formative culture shaped by pedagogical practices capable of creating the conditions for producing citizens who are critical, self- reflective, knowledgeable, and willing to make moral judgments and act in a socially responsible way" (Giroux 2011, 3). In that, critical pedagogy is seen as a radical theory of education that is unapologetically and genuinely committed to the side of the oppressed. It is a theory that is repeatedly in a process of change and growth as it considers advances in social theory. However, one of its main characteristics is that it cannot be singled down to one conception or any homogenous cluster of theories and methodologies in general (Gutierrez et al. 2003, 28).

In summary, critical pedagogy could be seen as:

- Rooted in a social and educational idea of justice and equality
- Built on the conviction that education is inherently political
- A dedication to decreasing human suffering
- Convinced that schools do not (need to) harm students or strip them of knowledge
- Using themes that are based on educational benefit from students' experience
- Pose teachers as researchers who teach students to produce their own knowledge

- Concerned with those who experience oppression and subjugation
- Dedicated to withstanding the harmful results of dominant power

(Down and Steinberg 2020, xliii; Kincheloe 2010, 8).

Having described what critical pedagogy is, it is important to understand what it aims for. Overall, critical pedagogy strives to offer pedagogical practices that are able to develop conditions for generating self-reflective, knowledgeable, and critical citizens who are willing to engage in socially responsible actions and "make moral judgements" (Giroux 2011, 3). In other words, it aims to challenge common discriminating structures in education contexts and to offer ideas and approaches that can help educators in teaching towards a more just and responsible society. Moreover, it targets questions of power inside and outside learning spaces (Down and Steinberg 2020, xliii; Kincheloe 2010, 8).

Critical pedagogy, through questioning the basis of epistemological discourses and the material state of cultural objects and habits, aims to set the foundation of possibilities for a social change in order to enable a more equitable picture of a new world through a newly achieved agency of the subject (Trifonas 2020, 219). In this context, liberating subjectivity does not seek to deny one's own identity but more precisely to reinforce independence and to assert control over the homeostatic impacts of ideology, which is continuously enslaving the subject to a living-through of what is the systems desire and interest (Trifonas 2020, 219).

In this context, Freire argues in support of a pedagogical praxis that engages with the oppressed in reflection that guides towards actions based on their concrete realities (Gutierrez et al. 2003, 17). In other words, critical pedagogy aims to comprehend and dismantle different forms of oppression (Down and Steinberg 2020, xliii–xliv). What becomes visible here is that critical pedagogy aims for an anticolonial teaching that challenges hegemonic whiteness, and heteropatriarchy, asks to decenter Western epistemologies and seeks to make teaching a practice that is holistically intellectual, physical, emotional, and even spiritual (Liston 2008,

392). In a radical manner, the call for a critical pedagogy demands a rejection of the traditional rules and logics of formal schooling (Gaztambide-Fernández 2012, 42).

Contemporary critical pedagogy, although inspired by them, goes beyond Freirean pedagogical thought and practice, as critical pedagogy itself is seen as a process of continuous remaking and recreating "the world in a spirit of epistemological curiosity, dialogue, humility, solidarity and love. Herein lies the major strength of critical pedagogy: it is never static, formulaic or complete" (Down and Steinberg 2020, xliv). As Down and Steinberg suggest, it could also be seen as an umbrella term that covers a wide range of approaches and points of views that arose in reaction to unjust legislations, policies and practices (Down and Steinberg 2020, xlii–xliii). Moreover, its task becomes increasingly urgent considering the rise of cruelties based on structural oppression in the world and the global interlocking crises humanity is facing (Down and Steinberg 2020, xli).

In academia, critical pedagogy is seen as a moral and political practice that goes further than pointing out the importance of critical analysis and moral judgments as it also offers tools to unsettle popular assumptions and theorizes issues regarding the self and social agency (Giroux 2011, 3). As Giroux elaborates, one of its central projects is "[…] an attempt to be discerning and attentive to those places and practices in which social agency has been denied and produced" (Giroux 2011, 3). Contemporary critical pedagogy serves to "give us tools to assert ourselves as the subjects of history" (Freire 2014, 14). What might become clearer here is that critical pedagogy advocates not merely for mastering certain skills or memorizing what is seen as facts. It particularly emphasized thinking beyond the inevitability of the current state of issues, challenging assumptions that are considered commonsense and entering a critical dialogue with history (Giroux 2011, 155).

Critical pedagogy calls for recognition of the conditions of human life, critically reading them, and lastly to intervene as a responsibility of informed citizenry. In doing so, contemporary critical pedagogy in Freire's sense does not support pedagogy that aligns with neoliberal

economic models and those models where freedom is merely defined through consumerism (Giroux 2011, 156). Instead, it emphasizes on "perspectives that do not conform to 'common sense', [whereby] co-construction of meaning, active involvement in the education process and collaborative learning are encouraged" (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 241). This places the willingness to confront injustices and power relations that maintain them, in- and outside the classroom, at the center (Down and Steinberg 2020, xliii).

Since Freire's pedagogy, as well as contemporary interpretations, are strongly inspired by anticolonial thinkers (Freire and Horton 1990, 36), there is a relation to decolonial theories. This relation can make critical pedagogy particularly interesting for those who reach for teaching practices that counter colonial implications. Freire's reasoning is important for thinkers of decolonial pedagogy. In this context, it can be interesting to mention that his pedagogy was critiqued as ahistorical and abstract. Tuck and Yang elaborate on that by reasoning that "[f]or Freire, there are no Natives, no Settlers, and indeed no history […] Settler colonialism is absent from his discussion, implying either that it is an unimportant analytic or that it is an already completed project of the past (a past oppression perhaps)" (Tuck and Yang 2012, 20). This critique matters insofar that it is important to differentiate decolonization that is referring to the liberation from settler colonialism, and decoloniality as it has been defined previously.

However, in the context of this thesis decoloniality in critical pedagogy will be seen as a response to the oppressive structures of coloniality that result from the socially constructed relations of race, gender, class, ability, body etc. and not necessarily in direct response to settler colonialism. Through that, we do not lose its educative value but still acknowledge the valid critique in how decoloniality/decolonization is often misused. Thus, this thesis treats critical pedagogy approaches that have decolonizing potential as such if they educate and aim towards dismantling those oppressive structures of coloniality.

Approaching critical pedagogy in this way could be seen as relevant in the context of the conceptualizations of empathy in the discipline. It will be important to keep in mind its similarities and differences as well as its potentials regarding discourses around coloniality and decolonization. To understand the situatedness of empathy within critical pedagogy, the next section will shed light on the concept and how it has been applied.

2.3 Empathy in critical pedagogy of higher education

Before highlighting different approaches to empathy in critical pedagogy, this section aims to shed light on the relevance of empathy and how it is situated in critical pedagogy. This is to better understand how the concept is brought to critical pedagogy and why it is considered necessary. Empathy appears to have an important position in various educational contexts. Studies have shown that empathy in education, in its popular Western understanding, is a useful concept that can support teachers in demonstrating care (Warren 2014, 399). Empathy in learning spaces is said to lead to a deeper sense and understanding of own accountability (Gutiérrez Rodríguez et al. 2020, 186–187). The use of empathy in teaching has further been insisted on by many scholars who demand that it should be at the center of the work of all teachers, particularly in those learning settings that are transnational and multilingual.

At the same time, as Warren points out, there is hardly any comprehensive study from a critical perspective offering useful data on empathy in classrooms (Warren 2014, 399). This is not very surprising considering that despite the many conceptual approaches to empathy itself, it has rarely been assessed critically and contextualized as a phenomenon in pedagogical contexts. As such, it has also not seen much comprehensive research within critical pedagogy. In line with that, Warren emphasizes the little empirical evidence there is on the teaching and application of empathy in educational settings (Warren 2014, 396). Thus, Warren states that "[…] few instructional frameworks grounded in empirical investigation exist to provide a

pragmatic approach to applying empathy to social relationships in education" (Warren 2014, 396).

However, empathy as an affective concept matters in transnational learning environments because critical pedagogy teaching tends to stress approaches that are inherently seen as "rational" and considered cognitive, which leaves a lack of paying attention to what is called the affective (Kawai 2017, 132). Relating to those scholars' work who discuss empathy in the context of critical pedagogy, there is no one way of empathy's coming into being in the discipline. Scholars have written from different perspectives and research fields, whereby some emphasized on its theoretical conceptualizations and others more on practical strategies to implement and teach empathy in learning spaces of critical pedagogy. However, despite its lack of definitions or clear guiding theoretical frames in critical pedagogy, empathy as a phenomenon has always had quite a vital role in discourses of critical pedagogy and pedagogy in general. It has for long been seen as an important factor in teacher-student relations and even more so in heterogenous "diverse" educational settings (Warren 2014, 396).

Scholars have focused on different aspects of empathy and teaching contexts when discussing its relevance for critical pedagogy. Warren highlights particularly the aspect of critical pedagogy that deals with transnational classrooms (Warren 2014, 396). Considering that there is an increasing attention to learning communities that intersect different experiences based on race, gender, class, ability etc., empathy can be an essential tool in classroom teaching. In other words, empathy, according to Warren, is crucial in spaces that consider dismantling oppressive structures at the center of learning. In that regard, there is an underlying assumption that empathy as an intervention for improving classroom communication is inevitable, especially in the context of needs that are related to cultural and/or linguistical expression (Warren 2014, 396). At the same time, scholars have failed to further elaborate the connection of social change based on empathetic engagements. In other words, the question arises "how -

through which pedagogical practices - social transformation might actually happen as a result of the empathetic experiences cultivated through critical pedagogy" (Zembylas 2019b, 405).

Zembylas, similar to Freire's conceptualization, also describes solidarity in connection with empathy in the context of critical pedagogy (Zembylas 2019b, 416). The author argues that in order to foster solidarity and an empathy that is action-oriented within critical pedagogy, "there has to be a systematic investigation of the different ways in which feelings of empathy are evoked in the classroom and have differential implications for those who suffer" (Zembylas 2019b, 416). Empathy in that sense is paradigmatic of efforts to stimulate an individual's affective transformation (Zembylas 2019b, 404). In relation to this, Damianidou and Phtiaka point out that "the best way to prevent oppression is to start interrogating our teaching practice and how it contributes to the perpetuation of oppression" (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 244). Empathy is essential in that process as will become clearer further on in this chapter. They underscore that empathy poses a key value in critical pedagogy and education that needs to be emphasized in learning spaces in order to promote equity and inclusion (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 239).

This goes in line with Angeles' and Pratt's statement that empathy is one of the many origins and roads to social change. They argue that critical-creative educational practice paired with empathy can offer accessible and usable knowledges (Angeles and Pratt 2017, 276). Likewise, Zembylas states that "empathetic experiences of the feelings, thoughts, and situations of others are seen as important ingredients of a process of social transformation that acknowledges and interrogates oppressive hierarchies of power" (Zembylas 2019b, 405). A similar reasoning is presented by Virella and Weiner, who adopt a Freirean perspective, and argue that feeling empathy with the experiences and realities of others is part of being humanist and developing a deep critical thinking (Virella and Weiner 2020, 152).

Highlighting the affective aspect of empathy, Amsler points out that in relation critical pedagogy education needs to go beyond the recognition and learning about injustice, the

development of a critical consciousness. Instead, it needs to help developing what Amsler calls "critical affectivities" which move the student to transform injustice (Amsler 2011, 53). In other words, if understanding critical affectivities here as a form of empathy, then it describes a form of connection of the critical consciousness that students develop and their subsequent desire to take action as part of critical pedagogy (Amsler 2011, 58).

In sum, empathy as a concept seems not to be studied, framed and defined very clearly within pedagogy and critical pedagogy literature in particular, yet the term is frequently used in the context of education for social change such as critical pedagogy. Similarly to what has been discussed in chapter 1, this leads to the question of whether there is an underlying assumption of everyone being able to empathize, while considering empathy as a universal concept, and moreover assuming everybody to have a natural understanding of the concept (Zembylas 2019b, 405).Some answers to this contradiction can be found in the following subsections, which will analyze the concept in the context of critical pedagogical thought.

2.3.1 Freirean approaches to empathy in critical pedagogy theory

To situate the different approaches to empathy in critical pedagogy, it may be helpful to begin with delineating the approaches of Freire, considering their importance for critical pedagogy. Zembylas reasons, that within the frame of Freirean and critical pedagogy particularly, "the achievement of social justice and the dismantling of oppressive relations have often been linked in part with the development of affects such as empathy" (Zembylas 2019b, 404). As mentioned in chapter 1, some approaches to empathy act in essentializing ways, while being uncritical of power relations. Within the broader paradigm around Freire's pedagogy, there is a tendency towards the assumption that affects such as love, hope and empathy are essentialized within all human beings. This means that they occur naturally and their suppression is considered a vital reason for the perpetuation of oppressive structures and

relations (Amsler 2011, 53). This assumption could partially result from the lack of a comprehensive empathy discourse in critical pedagogy.

Moreover, Freire, as well as other scholars of critical pedagogy, seem to not always use the term empathy directly but rather implicitly refer to it through related concepts such as love and compassion or solidarity, which show parallels to empathy in their definitions. In terms of love, Freire insisted "on the practical importance of love as a dimension of pedagogical relations and dialogue generally" (Morrow and Torres 2002, 153). According to Morrow and Torres, Freire's definition and consideration of love as a vital aspect of dialogue stays ambiguous and offers much room for interpretation (Morrow and Torres 2002, 153). In Freire's case, love and solidarity are connected and show close relations to Western ideas of empathy. He highlights the importance of solidarity in relation to love, which according to critical pedagogic logic entails the application of empathy. I want to unpack this relation some more, as it matters for the subsequently elaborated approaches to empathy in critical pedagogy.

Freire's solidarity sees liberation as a collective project including dialogic participation and critical consciousness towards the implications of the power relations between oppressor and oppressed (Gaztambide-Fernández 2012, 45). The aspects of dialogue and critical consciousness have been picked up in other scholars' conceptualizations of empathy in critical pedagogy, as will become visible further on in this chapter. The "oppressor's solidarity", as Freire calls it, will be evoked if the latter terminates to see the oppressed as an abstract group but perceives them as persons that were treated unjustly, "when he stops making pious, sentimental, and individualistic gestures and risks an act of love" (Freire 2000b, 49–50).

Here we can see the connection Freire makes between solidarity and love. Solidarity here is described as going further than merely the oppressor's discovery of themselves to be an oppressor. For solidarity to be present, it is necessary that one moves into the situation of those one is solidarizing with (Freire 2000b, 49). What Freire describes here shows close similarities to various Western framings of empathy, such as the one of perspective-taking. However,

Freire's approach demands an action, because in his reasoning "[t]o affirm that men and women are persons and as persons should be free, and yet to do nothing tangible to make this affirmation a reality, is a farce" (Freire 2000b, 49–50).

This action is what Freire considers the "act of love", whereby it is important to highlight that this act is assigned to the oppressor who is becoming aware of injustice. I want to briefly draw a connection here to Liston's approach to love in critical pedagogy, as it shows parallels to Freire's. Liston, in addition, argues that parallels to concepts of empathy can be found in the act of leaving behind the egoistic self to see other students more clearly (Liston 2008, 388). This could be interpreted as empathizing through perspective taking, while letting go of one's own perspectives and feelings and taking on those of another person.

What needs to be mentioned is that Freire offers another approach to love that is conceptualized differently than the "oppressor's love" and Liston's approach of attentive love. This approach delineates love in the context of the self-liberatory task of the oppressed in Freire's pedagogy, by calling self-liberation an act of love: "And this fight, because of the purpose given it [sic] by the oppressed, will actually constitute an act of love opposing the lovelessness which lies at the heart of the oppressors violence, lovelessness even when clothed in false generosity" (Freire 2000b, 45). In reference to this approach of Freire, it needs to be pointed out that this is one of the few moments in the critical pedagogy literature, at least the one referred to in this thesis, where an affective concept is approached through centering the ones experiencing oppression. Those are repeatedly framed as the other in empathy discourses within critical pedagogy, and as the one asserting an act of affection, love in this particular case.

Freire's elaboration on solidarity and the oppressor's love shares features with the conceptualization of empathy in the sense of the understanding of another individual's experience of injustice, involving a process of becoming aware that is, however, not defined more concisely. Gaztambide-Fernández argues, that solidarity in Freire's approaches, just like approaches to empathy, remains under-theorized. The author assumes that this could be related

"to a taken-for-granted idealization of the concept of solidarity within educational scholarship" (Gaztambide-Fernández 2012, 46).

Besides conceptualizing solidarity and love, Freire also discusses the act of listening, which he considers a fundamental idea to critical pedagogy. In this sense, it is important to learn how to listen in order to be able to speak. Freire reasons that "it is by listening that one learns how to speak. One cannot speak well who does not know how to listen. And listening always implies not discriminating. How can I comprehend the students from the slums if I am convinced that they are just dirty children who smell?" (Freire 2014, F22–23). Freire's reasoning here seems to imply empathy in underscoring the need to listen and comprehend the reality of the one he considers as the oppressed. In his ongoing arguments it becomes more clear what kind of empathy he is referring to:

> Learning how to listen implies not minimizing the other, not ridiculing the other. How can a teacher have good communication with a student having previously devalued or been ironic toward that student? How could a sexist teacher listen to a woman, or a racist one to a black person? I say, if you are a sexist, own up to your sexism, but do not represent yourself as being democratic; [...] At the same time, should you wish to insist on dreams for democracy, you will, then, have to start thinking about overcoming your sexism, classism, and racism (Freire 2014, 23).

What Freire expresses here could be understood as the act of empathy that is other-oriented as it demands to leave one's own sentiments and believes aside and hear as well as aim to understand somebody's reality. However, he goes further than common empathy approaches and demands for the one empathizing (while assuming that the one is in a dominant position of power) to critically engage with their problematic biases and sentiments. Again, this kind of empathy seems to only work in the direction from the oppressor towards the oppressed.

At this point, I briefly want to add some thoughts of Giroux who is considered a main figure in critical pedagogy. Strongly influenced by Freirean pedagogy, Giroux highlights the importance of affectivity in any theory of critical pedagogy. It is what he calls affective investment that enables students to connect their own lives and experiences with the knowledge

they encounter within a learning space. Through this affective investment, Giroux argues, students are moved and motivated, which makes pedagogy then more than simply a transfer of knowledge (Giroux 2011, 82). According to how empathy has been framed and understood previously, it could be seen as part of the concept of affective investment as it is seen as a concept that is necessary to open up and comprehend other knowledges and realities than the own. Giroux further builds upon Freire's pedagogy and suggestion in order to develop a critical understanding of the value that sentiments, emotions and desire carry in the learning process (Giroux 2011, 82).

Even though there are various attempts to approach empathy in critical pedagogy - some more, others less explicit - the question remains how empathy in context of critical pedagogy applied in higher education settings can offer valuable support and be a helpful tool in the struggle for liberation. The following subsection will take a closer look at an aspect that has been repeatedly mentioned before, the educational settings of students and teachers with unequal background and experiences of oppression. As this is at the center of critical pedagogy, it is inevitable to address empathy in this specific context.

2.3.2 Empathy and difference in critical pedagogical settings

Critical pedagogy is assumed to be applied in spaces where the so-called oppressor meets the so-called oppressed. Teaching in environments where experiences of oppression intersect across the lines of race, class, gender etc. is significant for teaching towards social change (Warren 2014, 395). Therefore, this subsection addresses approaches to empathy in settings of critical pedagogy in higher education, in which individuals have different experiences of oppression. As highlighted previously, there is not much research, particularly critical research, on the approaches to empathy in critical pedagogy. However, "[r]esearch that features the interactions of students and teachers with contrasting identities may likely improve

how empathy is conceptualized" (Warren 2014, 399). This reminds of the previous elaboration on the meaning of difference in pedagogy and the discourses around it.

This difference in contrasting identities is addressed in critical pedagogy in various ways, for example in Trifonas' idea of pedagogies of difference. The notion of difference has offered the conceptual basis "for educational theorists of diverse ideological perspectives working toward the ethical purpose of actualizing equitable curricular contexts for teaching and learning that are responsive to individuals and groups within a society or culture regardless of race, class, gender, or sexuality" (Trifonas 2003, 1). In other words, difference becomes the intrinsic factor which theoretically validates the existence of these pedagogic discourses as they aim to dismantle the ideological oppressive preconditions of discrimination based on difference (Trifonas 2003, 1).

Trifonas, whose approach particularly focusses on these conceptions of difference(s), argues that critical pedagogy values intersubjectivity (Trifonas 2020, 221). Thus, Trifonas reasons, "[t]he mien of educational practices that pervade the intellectual and ethical environment of the subject should inculcate an empathy for and not a tolerance of otherness through critical reflection upon the cultural sites of discourse production" (Trifonas 2020, 221). Trifonas sees this approach to empathy as an analytic exploration of perspectives through constant dialogues between individuals. That will lead to a negotiation of the meanings of differences and would foster a challenging of codes and schemata of meaning-making. This, according to the author, will lead to an extended individual understanding of which alternative worlds are possible (Trifonas 2020, 221).

On the contrary, Liston raises the point that empathy as a way of attending to others might encounter differences as an obstacle. Similarly to Freire before, Liston emphasizes the necessity of listening with open hearts and minds in this context, while putting own beliefs on hold to deal with these obstacles (Liston 2008, 391). The author explains that by engaging in this form of listening we

> cease to exist as ourselves for a moment – and that is not easy. It is painful as well, because it means turning yourself inside out, giving up your own sense of who you are, and being willing to see yourself in the unflattering light of another's angry gaze. It is not easy, but it is the only way to learn what it might feel like to be someone else and the only way to start the dialogue (Liston 2008, 391)

This can be done by talking and aiming towards becoming aware of "the good" in the student or the situation (Liston 2008, 391). In relation to listening as a pedagogical practice, Warren emphasizes the importance of perspective taking as a form of empathy and underscores the role of certain emotions that are framed as part of empathetic concern, such as tenderness and compassion, as well as sorrow and distress depending on the perception of another individual's circumstances or shared knowledge (Warren 2014, 398). Following Warren's reasoning, empathy has a humanizing aspect in educational settings which reminds of Freire's line of arguments on humanization in critical pedagogy. Warren states that in such settings where inequalities based on oppression are present empathy can serve as a tool to listen to and interpret other students knowledge and further promote nurturing classroom environments that are based on empathetic interactions (Warren 2014, 398–399).

One approach that particularly highlights empathy in intercultural learning contexts, similar to what Warren talks about, is what Ouedraogo refers to as cultural empathy (Ouedraogo 2021, 317). Culture and interculturality are notions that repeatedly surface in critical pedagogy contexts (Zembylas and Papamichael 2017, 1). In this approach, the general understanding of empathy is the effort one makes in order to move into and try on the perspectives and realities of the culturally different individual based on cognitive, affective and behavioral aspects. Empathy in this approach is a concept that "implies a decision to focus on the best interests and well-being of the other individual, family, or community" (Ouedraogo 2021, 321–322). Ouedraogo highlights how empathy is guided by experiences which must be expressed cognitively, centering the other more than the self. Empathy is seen as rooted in human interaction and an origin for a cultural dynamic (Ouedraogo 2021, 322). Thus, cultural empathy

in critical pedagogy teaching expresses "the ability to cognitively, affectively, and behaviourally participate in the reality, or world, of the cultural 'other'. The substance of an intercultural relationship is at the core of these three aspects of empathy" (Ouedraogo 2021, 317). "Intercultural" in this contexts is described as the idea of culture comprising of values, beliefs and habits that are interacting with the cultural contexts of other people (Ouedraogo 2021, 317).

The author further reason that a pedagogy of empathy implies sharing of knowledge, skills for gathering information and generally skills that enable the cultivation of empathic capacity. It highlights the skills that need to be developed in learning spaces for students and teachers to be able to "identify and address cultural differences and acknowledge similarities to enhance intercultural awareness" (Ouedraogo 2021, 318). Such a pedagogy of empathy relies on skills based on knowledge and information that support individuals to respond to and handle intercultural encounters with care and competence. Calloway-Thomas in that regard calls empathy a toolbox in intercultural encounters, and confirms what Ouedraogo describes, which is a pedagogy that "focuses on skills that students and other citizens need to develop empathy, factors that influence empathetic competence, and approaches to improving empathetic effectiveness" (Calloway-Thomas 2018, 496).

Ouedraogo's approach entails a practical strategy, which comprises four steps of empathy pedagogy. These consist of "(1) attending to the moment, (2) directing attention toward other, (3) focusing on other people to understand their thoughts and feelings, and (4) communicating our understanding of the other person's experience to them with the hope that they will feel understood" (Ouedraogo 2021, 323). The author states that while the last two steps can be learned through model exposure to the experiences of others, the first two are necessary to reach an appropriate attuning towards cultural differences or challenges that are connected to struggles rooting in culture and can involve recognition of other individuals' realities. Ouedraogo, therefore, sees particularly the first two steps as imperative in intercultural

critical pedagogy learning spaces in order to enable different knowledges to be shared and exchanged (Ouedraogo 2021, 323).

Regarding step one, the author refers to this process of attending as transcending one's own focus on the self and making the effort of positioning oneself within the perspective of another person (putting yourself into someone's shoes) (Ouedraogo 2021, 324). Step two further is important in order open a space for talking about injustices and oppressive realities that others are confronted with. Further, this step serves to confront own prejudices, biases and frames of reference (Ouedraogo 2021, 325). One important aspect that Ouedraogo highlights here is the hegemonic implications regarding the language that is chosen to communicate in as "[t]he theme around language was also reflected as a source of a power imbalance" (Ouedraogo 2021, 325).

Concerning the execution of step three, it is significant to bear in mind that while taking the perspective of someone else and relating to their emotions, the distinction of one's own feelings needs to be maintained. In specific, for this step the author suggests techniques such as paraphrasing and mirroring (Ouedraogo 2021, 326). The last step aims to encourage students to make use of non-verbal and verbal communication when connecting with the one sharing their perspective and further to make them feel understood (Ouedraogo 2021, 327).

Another approach that is related to interculturality and values similar aspects as the one of cultural empathy is framed by Kawai. The scholar talks about a "critical multicultural empathy" that would help those students that are not harmed by certain forms of oppression understand the ones who are and learn their perspective in an other-oriented manner. This includes thinking from individual positionalities and moving from their own thinking and feeling towards the one the thinking and feeling of the one that is empathized with (Kawai 2017, 144).

Considering emotional imbrications in such spaces based on individual experiences, it is crucial for learning processes to deal with power and oppression (Kawai 2017, 132). This becomes clearer when considering what bell hooks elaborates on the politics of domination:

> As the classroom becomes more diverse, teachers are faced with the way the politics of domination are often reproduced in the educational setting. For example, white male students continue to be the most vocal in our classes. Students of color and some white women express fear that they will be judged as intellectually inadequate by these peers. […] Accepting the decentering of the West globally, embracing multiculturalism, compels educators to focus attention on the issue of voice. Who speaks? Who listens? And why? (hooks 1994, 39–40).

What hooks describes is essential to be considered in so called multicultural environments within teaching contexts. The questions raised at the end of the citation are significant to understand the underlying challenges that empathy approaches in spaces as the ones addressed in this subchapter needs to incorporate. Such frameworks, according to Warren, need to account for the various dimensions of empathic expression that are significant for educational contexts, specifically in the light of so-called multicultural classrooms (Warren 2014, 396). Kawai emphasizes in this regard that "[e]mpathy is useful because it is a way of creating unity between different others" (Kawai 2017, 133). Unity shall not be seen as "positivist and universalist versions of empathy" that, as it can be seen in psychological discourse, are often based on the possibility of indirectly understanding each other and further entail the decontextualized notion of people as individuals. This version lets aside structural and systematic aspects of their experiences (Kawai 2017, 133).

A problem that Kawai sees here is the tendency to contrast the majority against the minority through seeing the experiences with marginalization of the minority (the oppressed) as the center of learning processes without giving the majority's realities, feelings and thoughts enough attention (Kawai 2017, 133). This perception can be problematic in the context of critical pedagogy's attempt to always center the realities of those who experience oppression

as it is giving a platform to the feelings of those considered the oppressor. It will be picked up later when critically approaching these concepts of empathy.

I interpret the terms majority and minority figuratively here since a greater number of students with experiences of marginalization than the number of those benefitting from oppressive structures, does not make the former a majority in Kawai's terms. A general assumption of those with experiences of oppression posing the minority (in numbers) would be problematic here.

Those scholars who went deeper into the research on empathy and critical pedagogy and propose approaches to the concept, also set their focus quite divers by highlighting different aspects. Another general approach that attempts to frame empathy within critical pedagogy is given by Zembylas and Papamichael. They highlight what is called pedagogies of empathy in critical pedagogy. These are pedagogical practices that allow students to develop certain elements of empathy that are especially important for critical pedagogy teaching (Zembylas and Papamichael 2017, 4). Those elements comprise searching the individual perspective of the other person in the sense of placing oneself in somebody else's circumstances, and accepting "that he or she possesses the same rights" (Zembylas and Papamichael 2017, 4). Further, it means making an honest effort of getting to know the other and their perspectives and lastly to embrace an emotional and cognitive openness including a tolerance of ambivalence. The latter entails understanding differences as an essential and enriching aspect of creating relationships and learning processes (Zembylas and Papamichael 2017, 4). The authors underscore that "becoming able to empathise with the Other's experiences and narratives is probably one of the most challenging goals for intercultural and anti-racist education" (Zembylas and Papamichael 2017, 4). Pedagogies of empathy are those practices that give students opportunities to develop these qualities of empathy through encouragement to understand others' conditions such as structural inequalities. They further guide towards acknowledging some type of human connection between the one empathizing and others (Zembylas and Papamichael 2017, 4).

Merriman Brown voices another take on empathy in critical pedagogy theory that particularly highlights empathy in the context of teaching anti-racism. They emphasize the need of empathy to counter the silencing of individuals' or groups' identities and instead to foster an environment for reflection and growth (Merriman Brown 2020, 1011). This, according to them, works through "build[ing] empathy and make the space to consider different perspectives as we build a reflective practice" (Merriman Brown 2020, 1011). The author points out that this empathy and reflection can only happen if there is a willingness to get uncomfortable. I am assuming that they refer to the discomfort of white people being confronted with their own racial biases.

They bring up an example in which a white cis male student was provided insight about his own racial bias by reflecting on an incident of self-victimization when he was stereotyped. He was advised to use this experience in order to understand empathetically the way structural and systemic powerlessness might feel for someone experiencing racism (Merriman Brown 2020, 1011). One could say that empathy here functions as a tool to teach those who are in a position of power. What might become clearer here is the repeated framing of empathy as a capacity only assigned to those who are said to have certain privileges or who do not have certain experiences of oppression (Zembylas 2019b, 411).

The aspect of anti-racist education raised by Zembylas and Papamichael, as well as Merriman Brown, is also picked up critically by Nghi Ha in a conversation with Gutiérrez Rodríguez and other scholars. The authors are referring to emotions in learning spaces, particularly universities. A crucial aspect here is the entanglement of critical pedagogy teaching with emotions such as shame in relation to the recognition of own power implications. Even though, this aspect will be dealt with more detailed in chapter 3, it is quite interesting at this point to highlight the call for empathy in such pedagogical contexts. This may help to bear in mind the importance of "the readiness to be accountable for one's own actions in society

through empathy and knowledge [, which] should be at the centre of the learning process" (Gutiérrez Rodríguez et al. 2020, 185).

This line of arguments is particularly interesting here, as the authors indicate the relevance of somebody's motivation to engage with testimonies of those living experiences of oppression and marginalization. In the context of antiracist teaching, it is important to address emotions differentiated and critically. This is because white students seeking for absolution through Black, Indigenous and People of Color could become the center of action, and thus threaten and impede the learning process of the class (Gutiérrez Rodríguez et al. 2020, 185). Moreover, in the context of different experiences with oppression Kawai states that empathizing becomes more difficult the less familiar other's experiences are (Kawai 2017, 144). This makes the question of whether and how it can be a suitable concept in critical pedagogy teaching even more pressing.

The next subsection will zoom in on the encounter of educators and students within learning spaces. This encounter does not only play a significant role in critical pedagogy, but also has been highlighted in those discourses around empathy in critical pedagogy. Therefore, the subsection will give space to those scholars who reason about empathy in teacher-student relations and their proposed approaches and strategies.

2.3.3 Empathy in the context of teacher-student relations in critical pedagogy

Despite little empirical evidence within education literature on how empathy can be developed and applied in teacher-student relations in order to improve teaching and learning experiences (Warren 2014, 398), critical pedagogy literature has dealt with this particular relation, which is quite significant, considering teachers' roles, in pedagogy. Zembylas notes that in teaching environments of difference, inequality, and experiences of oppression, literature has repeatedly documented that educators struggle with the task of developing empathy within their students just as much as empathizing themselves with some views presented by students

(Zembylas and Papamichael 2017, 4). This makes the question of what role empathy plays in critical pedagogy teaching more pressing, and further how teachers can approach this question. Teachers' roles, however, are discussed comprehensively in critical pedagogy as they differ tremendously from mainstream banking education pedagogy. In critical pedagogy, teachers are required to construct the conditions that enable a new kind of encounter, which opposes colonization and everything it entails, and to aim for a healing of the social, cultural and spiritual devastations of colonialism (Gaztambide-Fernández 2012, 42).

In the context of teacher-student relations, Warren highlights the necessity of reasoning about empathy in such relations. The author argues that teachers are thought to make assumptions mainly about the students' experiences, based on their own relations to power, social capital, and educational attainment. This can become a socially constructed filter that might influence how the educator perceives and understands a student's reality (Warren 2014, 399–400). Those assumptions made by teachers might often remain unchallenged by both, teachers and students, and, thus, keep a deeper understanding of the social construction of knowledge out of reach. Not challenging such assumptions may lead to situations in which the teacher "appears insensitive to the complex transmission of socially based definitions and expectations that function to reproduce and legitimize the dominant culture at the level of classroom instruction" (Giroux 2011, 19). Here Warren sees empathy as the connective aspect that ties teachers to students' realities (Warren 2014, 399–400). In that regard, empathy could be considered very likely to improve "the quality of teachers' interactions with students" (Warren 2014, 400). Through making the political more pedagogical and vice versa, while centering empathy methodologically, teachers can expand their teaching agendas towards empowerment and egalitarianism. Damianidou and Phtiaka see this even as the main role and ultimate mission of these teachers' pedagogy. (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 244). At this point it is important to consider that in some critical pedagogy theory, the teacher is seen as a healer. In other words, the teacher's position appears to be one of great responsibility (hooks

1994, 14–15). I am highlighting this aspect here, considering the power relations in learning spaces, within the knowledge production, and in connection to the responsibility of facilitation and mediating withing a learning community.

One of the most comprehensive approaches to teacher-student relations in the context of empathy discourses in critical pedagogy, is the one of Damianidou and Phtiaka. They present an approach to a "critical pedagogy of empathy", which addresses the relational aspect that empathy includes. Within the broader field of critical pedagogical thought, the authors offer an approach to empathy, in which they refer to the concept as the ability to feel someone's private world as if it was one's own, however, without letting go of the as-if-aspect. In other words, it is different from approaches that imagine becoming one with the other and also from those that interpret empathy as perspective-taking. I would rather relate it to a form of self-oriented perspective-taking, based on the description of feeling "as if it was one's own". At this point, I want to briefly refer to chapter 1, where Coplan and Kawai are critical of labeling self-oriented perspective-taking as empathy.

Empathy, according to them, is an understanding, sharing, and offering of an internal space that allows accepting the other individual. Following their reasoning, empathy is necessary for students to create a better and fairer world as they need the ability to understand what other people feel and experience (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 238). They see empathy as "an important component of supportive relationships and improved communication because it is related to reduced prejudice, better understanding of thoughts, contexts and motives, better perception of situations and more accurate assessment of actions and consequences" (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 238).

The authors point out that when applying this critical pedagogy of empathy, there can be evidence for a more egalitarian approach to knowledge and knowledge production. They argue that "[i]n this framework, students grow into active and engaged researchers, who challenge the imposed and solidified ideologies and interpret the hidden messages through new

perspectives and multiple viewpoints, in order to find the true meaning, effect change and create a better world." (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 244). In their reasoning, empathy is defined as "a skill that may be taught through interventions such as communication skills workshops, drama techniques, narratives, storytelling, vignettes and creation of avatars" (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 239).

Their framework is based on this understanding and serves as a strategical tool towards emancipation and social justice. By using it, they claim that "the teacher and the students may learn to empathise with each other and with people from oppressed and marginalised groups" (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 239). This framework gives a more detailed understanding of what empathy in classroom settings can look like, when applying a critical pedagogy. The teacher takes up a particular role here as will become clearer in the following figure which shows how the authors display their approach to empathy in student-teacher relations through the application of three steps:

Table 1. The three steps of a critical pedagogy of empathy.

Step	Goals	Tools
I	Trying to understand the students' perspectives and become familiar with personal experiences by becoming learners and attentive listeners The students teach about life from a different perspective	Role-playing Interchange of role-taking Drama-based instruction (interactive games, improvisation and role-playing)
II	Presenting material, relevant to the students' experiences and relating to matters of oppression and emancipation Facilitating students to organise and re-synthesise prior and new knowledge, deepen their understanding and initiate critical analysis	Well-crafted and effective questions that require students to analyse and evaluate concepts Discussions Exploring the subject matter being presented through Texts Paintings
III	Communication of the students' findings and thoughts to the school community and the outer world, so as to bring about change	School exhibitions and conferences School newspaper Online web page Mass media

Figure 1: Table 1. The three steps of a critical pedagogy of empathy. (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 243)

This model displayed in figure 1 shall get some more attention here as it offers some valuable insight for the subsequent analysis in chapter 3. The first step is meant for teachers to attempt to understand the perspectives of the students and make themselves familiar with

personal experiences. Empathy is not framed as adopting someone's view but rather the acknowledgement of the existence of other perspectives (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 240). In their proposal, teachers would turn into learners and attentive listeners. This would enable students to "teach them about life from a different perspective" (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 240). Their research showed that teachers who adopt the position of the student, report sustainable and profound changes in their teaching and receiving valuable insights into students' experiences (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 240).

As indicated in the figure, role play is an important tool in this step. Role-interchange, according to the authors, is said to enhance the students' engagement and active participation within the learning space (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 240). They bring different examples of what such role plays can look like. They all share a similar way of taking on another student's perspective. Hereby a student steps "into the role of a person from a marginalised and oppressed group (preferably the one they come from) and narrates their experiences, while the teacher and the other students take the role of listeners and interviewers" (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 240–241). These methods are said to enable and encourage students to take into account other worldviews and further get challenged to think critically about differences in experiences regarding oppression and marginalization. Other strategies involve students playing experts based on their life experience in order to teach the class about issues regarding oppression, discrimination and injustice whereby everyone else in the learning space becomes critical observer (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 240–241).

Following this, teachers will then present learning material based on the student's experiences that are related to issues regarding oppression and emancipation. When such material comes in the form of texts, students develop a critical empathetic awareness of their own experience, or of the social, historical and cultural experiences of the world to what is being read (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 242). Likewise, Amsler underscores the importance of connecting personal experiences with abstract knowledge in critical pedagogical learning

which they consider one of the affective conditions of learning (Amsler 2011, 58). In this context, Damianidou and Phtiaka emphasize that "poetry in particular is an efficient tool in order to engender and develop empathy into students" (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 241–242).

The underlying aim of the teacher is to achieve empowerment and better learning results within the learning community through connecting personal experiences with appropriate learning material. The authors reason that the teachers are able to decide on which material can be considered appropriate and provide it because they have "stepped into their students' shoes by employing activities such as the ones described above", and "are able to understand the students' fears and worries and the emotional complexities involved" (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 241). Hence, empathy in this approach is seen as an important pedagogical tool which opens affective spaces and through that disrupts what lies at the bottom of troubled knowledge (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 238), which is the knowledge that is discomforting and troubling for various reasons to differing parties of a divided community (Zembylas 2012, 114).

This framework of a critical pedagogy of empathy, that Damianidou and Phtiaka developed, has been assembled with an emphasis on interaction and communication, while underscoring the need to listen attentively in learning spaces when facilitating communication. The authors argue that this involves a transformation that helps the listener to go beyond the security of what is known to them and further requires them to be prepared to be changed through what they are being told. And lastly, they reason that based on Freire's suggestion of education being a free exchange of ideas and knowledges, with interchangeable roles of teachers and students, either of them becomes responsible within the learning process that will then offer growth to everyone (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 239).

In accordance with critical pedagogy's claim to include action towards challenging and changing structures of oppression, Damianidou and Phtiaka suggest in their third step the encouragement of students to communicate their learnings and ideas to the outside, whether

that is the school/university community, or other communities outside their learning space. Similar to Freire's take on the application of critical pedagogy, they argue that "keeping critical awareness within the boundaries of the classroom is not enough" (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 243).

Another rather brief approach to empathy in critical pedagogy that addresses teacher-student relations is offered by Liston. When Liston analyses the role of empathy in teacher-student relations, it becomes quite clear why it might be a concept that critical pedagogy struggled with. Liston states that it is the teacher's task to "see the matter at hand from our students' point of view" (Liston 2008, 391), which is essentially describing the perspective-taking approach to empathy. Liston then further specifies that in doing so the degree of difficulty of this perspective-taking can differ.

> With some students, we are able to see fairly clearly the obstacles and issues at hand, and we can facilitate their learning. With others, it may take a few days of trying on different interpretations, distinct framings, so as to see the student before us with clear sighted attention. And yet with others, we have to examine not only their situation but ourselves; we have to look at what in us is getting in the way of seeing them more clearly (Liston 2008, 391).

Even though Liston is describing that empathizing within a critical teaching context is not always applicable the same way, depending on the student, it is not specified what exactly lies at the bottom of this varying difficulty.

One approach that discusses empathy in critical pedagogy in the context of teacher-students relations appears to address these difficulties. It could be assumed here that this difficulty is connected to the different experiences in relation to experiences with oppression. To combat these difficulties, Warren points out that teachers need to filter their work through their understanding of what students need. This can be done by centering a student's social and 'cultural' perspective in their pedagogy (Warren 2014, 398). Empathy in that regard is considered as a way for teachers to better understand students, particularly "in racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse" learning environments (Warren 2018, 169). Warren sees

empathy as significant in such contexts as it would lead to a decrease in prejudice against marginalized students with experiences of oppression, different from the teacher's experiences (Warren 2014, 399). However, Warren argues that in order to develop empathy teachers need to "acquire students' social and cultural perspective to maximize the effectiveness of their response to students' specific cultural needs and to minimize the conflict that can occur from the cultural discontinuities between them" (Warren 2014, 399–400). It needs to be mentioned at this point that unlike other approaches in this thesis, Warren's reasoning here is leaning towards a rather cognitive approach to empathy as it highlights that the teacher's interpretation of the student's experience is what will determine the way pedagogy is applied.

Without further specification of what factors influence and bias this interpretation of students' reality, Warren continues arguing that "[c]ulturally diverse students deserve teachers who understand and appreciate their home lives and personal experiences. They also need teachers aware of the social and cultural implications of being a person of color in a multiracial society" (Warren 2014, 399). What Warren expresses here will be addressed within the next chapter, however, in a way of critically bringing relations and structures of power into the empathy discourses of critical pedagogy.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter aimed at providing a comprehensive overview on critical pedagogy theory and more importantly, the different approaches to empathy within critical pedagogy as well as practical frameworks regarding the application of empathy. The latter has been highlighted particularly within the context of differences in learning spaces along markers of race, class, gender amongst others, and the experiences of oppression related to it. Moreover, this chapter highlighted conceptualizations of empathy in teacher-student relations and their relevance for critical pedagogy.

Generally, it has become visible that empathy has not only been undertheorized within critical pedagogy, but also that there is barely empirical research on the mechanisms and approaches of empathy in such learning spaces where critical pedagogy is applied. It remains unclear whether the original voices in critical pedagogy theory such as Freire and Giroux purposely did not address and theorize empathy comprehensively within their scholarship. If we follow the reasoning of other scholars, it could be assumed, however, that their approaches to solidarity, compassion and other similar concepts contained framings of empathy or at least show strong parallels to the common definitions of empathy introduced in the first chapter. In sum, it seems that empathy has been approached from different angles and in various contexts by scholars who make use of critical pedagogical methodology and theory in their research and teaching.

Nevertheless, there appears to be a lack of critical approaches to affective concepts such as empathy when topics around oppression are at the center of conversations, as it is the case in critical pedagogy teaching. Bringing empathy in its Western understanding into critical pedagogy may leave the impression that critical pedagogy teaching spaces are a power vacuum in which unequal social conditions related to markers of oppression, as well as power dynamics are only addressed in theory. This may become visible in the introduced frameworks and approaches in relation to difference and teacher-student relations. Even though, they discuss the role of empathy in spaces of power imbalances, they do not address the entanglements of power with the concept and phenomenon of empathy itself.

This appear to contradict the objectives and aims of critical pedagogy as they are elaborated in section 2.2. In that light, it might seem only logical that there is a need to engage more critically with approaches to empathy in critical pedagogy and to reframe or replace the concept of empathy in critical pedagogy theory and practice if necessary.

The following chapter will reflect on what this chapter has presented while applying a decolonial feminist perspective, followed by an outline on how such reconceptualization could

look like. In this reflection, it will highlight different critiques on empathy as it has been presented so far. Based on these critical insights, the chapter will then suggest different approaches, frameworks and notions that address or involve empathy within critical pedagogy theory and practice.

CHAPTER 3: REFRAMING EMPATHY IN CRITICAL PEDAGOGDY

3.1 Introduction

Calls for decolonial and decolonizing theory and practice are not new (Gutierrez et al. 2003, 12). As chapter 1 has shown, the same counts for discourses around conceptualizations of empathy. The conversations on decoloniality in education joins political and academic forces, which can be observed with student movements that have been calling for decolonizing practices at higher education institutions (Eriksen and Svendsen 2020, 2). Decolonial teaching centers the deconstruction of global and local structures of power that entail a colonial legacy. It needs to address them within curricula. Although they influence our experiences and self-perceptions "concepts of power often remain abstract" in teaching contexts (Danielzik et al. 2020, 237). Critical pedagogy offers much potential in relation to decolonial teaching and understanding power beyond the theoretical abstract boundaries. Like discussed previously, critical pedagogy itself is in many ways related and connected to decolonial notions. As empathy discourses are directly and implicitly part of critical pedagogy theory and practice, as chapter 2 aimed to delineate, it becomes apparent that a decolonizing lens can offer new insights for how empathy can be approached within critical pedagogy. This is particularly significant when considering "that in its overly rationalist assumptions, critical pedagogy overlooks the complexity of students' emotional investments in particular social positions and discourses" (Zembylas 2019b, 407). This can be seen in the gaps that show within critical pedagogy's theory, regarding critical approaches to empathy that aim to be emancipatory.

This chapter will, thus, explore such insights and approaches. For that, I will firstly carve out the ways in which empathy can be problematic within critical pedagogy theory and practice by making use of decolonial perspectives on empathy in the context of what has been presented in chapter 2. There will be a visible connection to the critique offered in chapter 1 with a particular contextual focus on critical pedagogy of higher education. Following up, I will outline perspectives of various authors who critically approached empathy and affective

concepts within critical pedagogy and discuss their approaches with different focal points. This will help to understand the various contexts and implications of empathy and related discourses within critical pedagogy but also help to understand the complexity of the topic. Subsequently under 3.3 and its subsections, this chapter will offer an analysis of what needs to be considered when using empathy in critical pedagogy theory and teaching. In the second part of this chapter, I will reason, to which extent there is a place for the concept. This will be done in a more suggesting and ideating manner and by outlining approaches that have dealt with this topic from different angles.

There will be a focus on affect in teaching spaces, particularly highlighting the meaning and role of discomforting emotions, such as shame and anger. Further, this chapter will bring in approaches that center conversations around race and racism in critical pedagogy teaching and with an emphasis on intersectionality. I will present different approaches and thoughts of scholars on the topic in a specific order. Even though, I consider the inputs from scholars on discomforting emotions valuable for the reasoning of this thesis, I address them critically in some respects, which I will elaborate on further in the respective subsection. For that reason, I will start with these insights to build up on them with other approaches that apply a more decolonial notion of empathy.

The presented approaches should be taken as ideas rather than solutions as they are not all completely unproblematic and will, thus, be accompanied by brief critical reflections if deemed necessary. They shall, however, be an incentive to further develop the questions this thesis asks in a more comprehensive way.

3.2 A decolonial critique for empathy in critical pedagogy of higher education

As we have seen in the previous chapter, critical pedagogy, and the conceptualization of empathy within its discourses are not only approached and understood in many ways but also at times ambiguous and vague in their definitions. However, even though critical pedagogy

literature has recognized the overemphasis on cognition in pedagogy, rationality, and reason as well as emotion and affect, and, therefore, also empathy have not received enough attention, particularly from critical and decolonizing perspectives. It is crucial to take a close look at empathy from this angle as its colonial legacies have to be recognized (Zembylas 2019b, 411).

Affective concepts like empathy within learning settings might often uncritically occur as mediated by neoliberal, capitalist notions and values and by the ways it can be essentialized in gender and universalized in relation to power structures and dynamics (Boler 1999, 5). Empathy is often treated as a resource or asset rather than being seen as an affective resonance, relationship, or exchange. That bears the risk that empathy reinforces neoliberal discourses of self-managing individualism and can end up being used "as a source of exploitable labor within intimate economies" (Angeles and Pratt 2017, 270). This critique fits with Freire's critique of the oppressor who has the conviction that they can transform everything into objects that one can possess and thus develops the understanding that to be means to have (Freire 2000b, 58). Empathy could be seen as such an affective possession, following the neoliberal and liberal understandings. Empathy is said to cover up problematic complicity with oppressive practices as a product of a neoliberal rhetoric and pedagogy (Jurecic 2011, 17).

In other words, discourses around empathy in critical pedagogy need to consider "the ways in which empathy has developed in the context of […] colonialism" (Zembylas 2019b, 411), and understand and dismantle colonial continuities that are perpetuated by the concept. Consequently, it is vital to analyze the ways in which the construction of race and gender, as well as racism and other forms of oppression are interwoven with emotional discourses and how these ways lead to particular forms of inclusion and exclusion (Zembylas 2012, 117). This connection will be looked at more closely later on in this chapter.

The discourse around empathy and colonial entanglements within the context of critical pedagogy becomes particularly visible in Giroux's thoughts on critical pedagogy teaching. Giroux discusses the notion of critical pedagogy which focusses on the potential of dealing with

questions around how experience, knowledge and power are shaped within a learning space specifically in environments of differences and inequality. This is ultimately related to affective relations such as empathy in the classroom. Following this reasoning, empathy in learning spaces cannot be separated from questions of power, knowledge and experience. Further, Giroux highlights the teacher's authority in such spaces (Giroux 2011, 5). This is a relevant aspect in the context of empathy, considering the role of the teacher in learning spaces and the approaches to empathy in critical pedagogy that highlight teacher-student relations. As questions around power, knowledge, differences and inequality play a vital role in understanding how empathy works in critical pedagogy learning spaces, these aspects will be picked up within this critique and the next section will explain why this can pose a challenge in such contexts.

Empathy not only plays a role within the concepts, methodologies and approaches that are applied in critical pedagogy learning spaces. It also is relevant to be analyzed in connection to the learning content of critical pedagogy teaching which is organized around topics of oppression and coloniality as well as ways to social change. Within critical pedagogy teaching, decolonial thought and critique against racism and other forms of structural oppression need to strive to understand which human relations might emerge from the current global conditions that are brandmarked by migration movements and economic, ecological and political instable structures (Gaztambide-Fernández 2012, 42). Counter-hegemonic thought, mobilization against racism, sexism and inequalities have been introduced to pedagogical practices through introducing decolonial perspectives (Teasly and Butler 2020, 186). What learning spaces demand is "to imagine and pursue modes of human relationality that might constitute forms of resistance to, as well as healing from, the coloniality of present conditions" (Gaztambide-Fernández 2012, 42).

Considering empathy as based on such a human relationality, it needs to be critically attended to as a concept in critical pedagogy. Zembylas reasons that empathy within critical

pedagogy must be given a closer look from a decolonizing perspective as "it is not clear how the workings of empathy in critical pedagogy might be conceptualized, when relations of coloniality are placed in the foreground" (Zembylas 2019b, 405). Critically addressing relations of coloniality and power in concepts used in critical pedagogy is vital for it to be a form of decolonial teaching. These relations are often disregarded in the standard western teaching practices when they need to be acknowledged and discussed instead (Danielzik et al. 2020, 227). Following Danielzik's et al. line of argument, this entails a critical reflection and practical application of decolonial critique that goes further than merely talking about coloniality (Danielzik et al. 2020, 227). Furthermore, for critical pedagogy to be following a decolonizing path it needs "a reframing of pedagogical practices and theoretical frameworks so that they are forced to explicitly confront coloniality with the aim of dismantling colonial practices" (Zembylas 2019b, 414). Such reframing was done by some scholars, as will be shown later on in this chapter. However, before getting there it is important to critically analyze empathy and its colonial entanglement within critical pedagogy.

3.2.1 Empathy as a choice

The first aspect that will be addressed here is the framing of empathy as a choice, a framing, which has its roots in Western genealogy of empathy (Coplan and Goldie 2011, xxv) and surfaces within neoliberal approaches of empathy. The latter highlight empathy as the act of choosing to widen ones ambit of concern and further making the choice to empathize with the suffering of others (Bloom 2016, 3). The choice to empathize in the context of critical pedagogy plays a role within the context of teacher-student relations, for example in Lindquist's reasoning. Lindquist argues that students who are situated differently than their teachers in terms of experiences with oppression, might express rage about political views or talk about an experience with oppression of their own. The teacher, who has different perspectives and experiences may feel alienated in this situation. In that case, the teacher could have the choice

to act according to that feeling and "exercise their power to silence students who express such views or invoke their own moral authority to challenge such views" (Lindquist 2004, 201–202). Or they can decide to empathize with the student despite their differences. It may be important to highlight at this point that for Lindquist emotions are constructed and situated and emotional responses such as empathy are based on will and social imagination (Lindquist 2004, 201–202). Therefore, empathy here is seen as part of an active decision on how to engage with a student's experience or opinion. The teacher is not only in the position of having the power to choose but also to decide over the consequences resulting from the choice they make.

As Lindquist delineates, the aspect of power plays an important role in the context of choosing to empathize, particularly when considering that "power relations that structure the classroom are often disregarded. They need to be acknowledged and addressed" (Danielzik et al. 2020, 227). Having the choice to empathize leaves the empathizer in a position of power over recognizing, acknowledging and legitimizing what the student expressed or delegitimizing it by silencing the respective student (Lindquist 2004, 201–202). In this regard, the act of choosing to extend empathy can be a form of maintaining power relations (Pedwell 2013, 19), and a way to perpetuate structures of oppression based on power imbalances within the learning community. The aspect of recognition that is mentioned here is vital in this context and will be picked up later on in this chapter.

In relation to the nexus of power and choice, Pedwell explains that when empathy is applied in an uncritical manner that does not question and dismantle power structures within learning spaces, "the usual subject of empathy is implicitly (or explicitly) a privileged individual with (some) power to choose whether he or she extends her empathy to the less privileged 'other'" (Pedwell 2013, 21). In this regard, there is then always a risk within the efforts of developing empathy and empathic experiences that separate individuals from structural relations. Within the Freirean approach that centers humanization in its theories of pedagogy, transnational circuits of power are then at risk to be concealed and concepts based

on dehumanization might be maintained. This problem of power and choice in empathy, thus, calls "for critical theories to reconsider the possibilities of empathetic engagement with "others" within the geopolitical structures of feeling" (Zembylas 2019b, 412–413). Such act of reconsideration can enable to keep structural legacies of injustice at the center of learning. Further, it supports critiquing the status quo while aiming to imagine futures that are radically different (Zembylas 2019b, 412–413).

While this subsection aimed to highlight the general problem that the act of choosing to empathize brings, the following subsection will deal with the challenges brought to learning spaces through the colonial implications of being a white student, and the issue of fixing empathy onto an individual within a sociopolitical relation of power.

3.2.2 Fixing the role of the empathizer in the oppressor/oppressed duality

It needs to be kept in mind that when applying empathy in learning spaces of critical pedagogy, the concept must be reflected in contexts of conversations around social justice and suffering inflicted by the various systems of oppression. The question of suffering and oppression here goes further than the structural and political layers of oppressive systems outside the learning space, it plays a major role in the workings of empathy. As Pedwell argues, there is a general assumption in empathy discourses that those who live in relative comfort, hardly harmed by colonial systems of power, and even benefiting from oppressive structures, possess greater empathy or capacity to extend empathy as opposed to those being framed as the other that is in need of empathy (Pedwell 2016, 33–34). At this point it is important to remember that empathy itself in the ways it is commonly used today and framed throughout history is treated as a concept that sees all emotions as universal, while the one who is empathizing is generally assumed to be in a dominant position. Moreover, it is historically based on primarily white cis male Western thought. The discourses around the empathizer and the empathized that assign the capacity to empathize to the one in a dominant position of power contribute,

therefore, to maintaining colonial legacies through affective politics. In the context of critical pedagogy, this refers particularly to the power relations and structures connected to empathy that are not addressed (Zembylas 2019b, 412).

It applies in learning spaces insofar as students have experiences based on discrimination along markers of race, class, gender, ability etc. These experiences also entail emotions and ways of perceiving realities that these other students who do not experience the same cannot even assume, let alone relate to. To understand race and racism, which pose topics at the center of critical pedagogy teaching, "one has to adequately account for the embodiment and affectivity of race and racism. Therefore, racial stereotypes are enacted through particular emotional practices that fixate 'us' and 'them' into exclusive subject categories" (Zembylas 2012, 117).

Following that logic, empathy seems to be a one-way street which can only be assessed by the subject in a dominant position of power. It is what Pedwell refers to as the "white empathizer" who by means of empathetic experiences sees from the perspective of another subject and, thus, becomes critically aware of the constructed racial, gendered and oppressive hierarchy. This critical awareness would compel the empathizer to work against these inequalities which are the foundation of their own "power" (Pedwell 2013, 19). In that sense, if empathy is mainly approached as a capacity that is only reserved for those considered privileged "the roles of the (privileged) empathizer and the (less privileged) empathized are essentialized, the other is fixed in place, and the oppressive relations of power are preserved" (Zembylas 2019b, 411). In other words, the so called "privileged empathizer from the West" and the "poor empathized from the colonies" are categories that are assigned to students in a universalizing way and have long been used in many liberal and neoliberal accounts. This indicates how empathy has for long been applied in colonial history as an affective and political tool (Zembylas 2019b, 412).

This understanding or implication of empathy in critical pedagogy contexts is problematic and dangerous for various reasons. Firstly, the aspects of reification of discriminatory systems of oppression may be a result of this way of understanding and using empathy. This may leave students, whose experiences are already often marginalized and disregarded, feel even more alienated from the learning community. Davis analyses in this context the use of empathy in learning spaces where students from different racialized groups are present. This sort of *cross-racial empathy* might reinforce power imbalances along markers of race, and therefore perpetuate racism (Davis 2004, 405). The reification could be seen within the imagined hierarchies that empathy tends to maintain by leaving the white empathizer with the power to decide whether to affirm or to turn away from the one sharing their suffering (Davis 2004, 405). Reifying hierarchies is not only contrary to what critical pedagogy is aiming for, it also perpetuates the decentering of marginalized students' voices. This also reflects what has been already pointed out in the critique of the previous subsection referring to empathy as a choice.

In the context of the critique of the white empathizer, Zembylas draws a parallel to Freire's duality of oppressor and oppressed by reasoning "how current manifestations of empathy may be tied to particular pedagogical discourses and practices grounded in Freire's dualistic approach of oppressor and oppressed and the categories of empathizer and empathized" (Zembylas 2019b, 412). In other words, the problem that shows in fixing empathy into whiteness can be projected onto Freire's dualistic construction. What Zembylas aims to illustrate here is that despite critical pedagogical practices involving and promoting empathy, the question remains to which extent those students who are considered the empathizer in this duality can actually show empathy towards those who according to Freire's terms are the oppressed (Zembylas 2019b, 412).

The argumentation which Zembylas presents here is vital in this thesis as it is again shedding light on the aspect of structural and colonial power within learning communities and

how it affects the communication in such spaces. Therefore, Zembylas comes to the conclusion that "[i]f the categories of oppressor and oppressed, empathizer and empathized are essentialized, there is no guarantee that social and geopolitical hierarchies are going to be disrupted" (Zembylas 2019b, 412). This critique not only targets generally the rather uncritical categorization in Freire's approach as it has been discussed in the previous chapter but also how it affects empathetic processes within learning spaces. If categories of empathizer and empathized are fixed, power dynamics need to be considered in empathetic encounters. These constellations can entail the risk of appropriating the emotional experiences of the person one is empathizing with. The next section will analyze this issue.

3.2.3 Emotional appropriation and empathy

As it has been discussed in chapter 1, empathy entails questions of emotional appropriation in the connection to power dynamics in empathetic encounters. Translating this to learning spaces with students from different sociopolitical backgrounds, empathy can be enacted in an emotionally appropriating way that disguises as an empathetic embrace (Davis 2004, 405). Furthermore, appropriation in the context of empathy describes that the privileged empathizer "will ignore differences in his or her zeal to connect emotionally with the sufferer. Erasing the subjective experience of people of color, the white empathizer falsely claims someone else's particular pain as his own" (Davis 2004, 405). This false claim may lead to the silencing and further marginalization of the students sharing their emotional experiences and it further contributes to the perpetuation of what is referred to as color-blindness, that is often found in racial pedagogy and expresses the denial of race as a social construction (Leonardo and Porter 2010, 147).

One explanation for this emotional appropriation could be based in the fear of the student who is, relatively speaking, in the dominant position of power – white students in the context of race dialogue – to be exposed as engaging in discriminatory behavior such as racism

and, moreover, in this context, as a racial being themselves. Leonardo and Porter elaborate in reference to this that for white students, "[h]iding behind the veil of color-blindness means that lifting it would force whites to confront their self-image, with people of color acting as the mirror" (Leonardo and Porter 2010, 150). In the context of empathy, this can be translated in a way that appropriating someone's pain instead of acknowledging own complicities in the perpetuation of the systems of oppression can maintain these very systems that critical pedagogy means to dismantle.

What needs to be pointed out is that empathy here, as it has been indicated in chapter 2, becomes a tool to educate those in dominant positions of power through the experience of those with experiences of oppression. Following this logic, by means of appropriating emotions and the critical awareness the white empathizer is supposed to develop, the one sharing their suffering becomes an object of learning. Thus, the act of extending empathy, and everything it entails, becomes an empathizer-focused approach that serves their learning about injustice and, through that, merely poses an educator for those in dominant positions of power on the backs of those living with experiences of oppression (Merriman Brown 2020, 1011). hooks expresses a similar concern when she refers to a particular setting in which those students with experience connected to oppression such as racism are outnumbered by those who are benefitting from the very same system of oppression, such as white students. hooks states that those students in the classroom with experiences of oppression might end up being "objectified by others and forced to assume the role of "native informant." […] This places an unfair responsibility onto that student" (hooks 1994, 43–44).

As it has been mentioned in chapter 2, this may lead to placing the emotions of white students at the center of learning. Nghi Ha emphasizes this issue in a context of power relations among students with different experiences based on racialization. Nghi Ha states in a conversation with other scholars that when looking at the political culture in learning spaces of higher education such as universities, "the limits of perception, empathy and recognition

become clear. The questions and problems of *white* subject formation and its attendant identity politics and hegemonic representations have not at all become obsolete on the dominant side" (Gutiérrez Rodríguez et al. 2020, 164–165).

Further, the appropriation of emotions and experiences may be problematic when white students are challenged to learn about racism. In the context of conversations about racism and related experiences, Leonardo and Porter voice the concern that such dynamics can make those white people who are deciding to open their mind and empathize, "feel enlightened and enlivened by discussions that confront racism, vowing their commitment to the cause" (Leonardo and Porter 2010, 150). This can lead to white students perceiving race talk as an intellectual stimulation whereas it may have "students of color walk away from the same discussions barely advancing their understanding of race and racism, sometimes satisfied departing with their legitimacy and mindset intact" (Leonardo and Porter 2010, 150). Centering the one empathizing may also reinforce their emotional and affective responses as well as the knowledge that is produced and shared in a learning space. In this context, the connection of emotion in learning spaces and its relation to power becomes particularly interesting (Boler 1999, 3). It will be discussed later in this chapter in reference to specific emotions that reappear in such settings.

Coming back to the issue of centering the empathizer, this may lead to a further marginalization of those voices which "do not meet the White, Western/Northern, hetero-normative, English speaking standard that affords greater access to a broad academic readership" (Teasly and Butler 2020, 187), as it has been indicated before. Those are voices which within critical pedagogy theory are meant to be at the center of critical pedagogy teaching. It is especially these voices and perspectives that can point out the urge to re-situate and challenge the Eurocentric premises that even critical theory in critical pedagogy is built on (Teasly and Butler 2020, 187). Zembylas underscores this by discussing how critical pedagogy can act as a decolonizing pedagogy. The author calls out that "we need to pay attention to

empathy's uneven effects, that is, the exclusions that might be produced as a result of expressing empathy" (Zembylas 2019b, 412). In other words, if applied in a way that disregard implications of power structures and relations, empathy acts exclusionary towards those who are already silenced or decentered within teaching contexts.

As it has been indicated previously, recognition is connected to questions around the implications of power relations and structures in conceptualizations of empathy. The next subsection will investigate how recognition can be both, problematic and at the same time relevant in empathy.

3.2.4 Empathy and recognition

Highlighting again the context of critical pedagogy settings where students of different sociocultural backgrounds encounter each other, the aspect of power in empathy could be perceived as particularly problematic when the student who is extending empathy in addition possesses over greater structural power than the student they are empathizing with. Such settings then may involve testimonies of students with experiences of oppression that indirectly confront the witness with their own complicity in the perpetuation of oppression. In such situations, empathy becomes an act of recognition of the knowledge that is created through sharing these experiences and the emotional injury that this testimony inflicts on the witness. It further entails the choice to rebuild the emotional connection and relationality between the students (Zembylas 2012, 120–121).

Following this logic, the aspect of power is not only related to empathy being a choice, as elaborated earlier, but also the act of recognition within empathetic encounters. Nghi Ha, in conversation with other scholars, mentions recognition in connection with empathy by pointing out that either of them are limited within higher education learning spaces (Gutiérrez Rodríguez et al. 2020, 164–165). The formation of most institutions of higher education, such as

universities, rest upon axes of power, which are inherently hegemonic. They become visible through the ways in which different constructions are looked at through white subjectivity's gaze which is in turn relying on by colonial structures of power. Empathy and recognition in such spaces cannot be applied and analyzed uncritically. This is because "[t]he questions and problems of *white* subject formation and its attendant identity politics and hegemonic representations have not at all become obsolete on the dominant side" (Gutiérrez Rodríguez et al. 2020, 164–165). These limitations are reflected within learning spaces of such institutions. In the context of relating to someone's pain through an empathetic process, recognition refers not only to their pain but also their perceived differences. This makes difference the medium of identification similar as emotions like pain are the conduit of identification here (Tuck and Yang 2012, 13–14).

The problem that could arise from notion of recognition in empathy and its connection to power structures is, however, that the one who empathizes implicitly validates the knowledge and reality of the other person. The general processes of knowledge production in those types of higher education, which make use of Western thought in teaching, add another layer his issue of recognition and validation. This is because the recognition and validation of certain knowledges "determine which knowledges are worthy of academic attention and disciplinary status and which are rejected […]. Further, the Eurocentric knowledge that characterizes dominant academic discourses is presented as objective and universal" (Dei 2006, 50). This may pose a challenge for those using empathy, as the task of the (white) empathizer in a critical pedagogy setting is to avoid reasserting whiteness and its hegemonic implications, which simultaneously maintain structures and relations of oppression (Dei 2006, 50). That issue opens up the question of how within the learning community, whiteness and white students can be called out "as perpetrators of injustice who must be taught to disavow whiteness and as legitimate social actors on whom we must risk "an act of love"", as Freire proposes (Seibel Trainor 2002, 634). This question is important in the context of empathy in critical pedagogy

teaching, because the student "who resists or rejects critical perspectives or who openly expresses racism or sexism in the classroom has, unfortunately, become a familiar figure in the literature on critical pedagogy" (Seibel Trainor 2002, 631).

It needs to be mentioned, that the aspect of recognition in empathy is not one-sided related to power and coloniality. Even though, the parallels to Fanon's master-slave duality cannot be transferred to this context unproblematically, Maldonado-Torres highlights that Fanon called the struggle for recognition in this duality a struggle for liberation (Maldonado-Torres 2008, 16). Leonardo and Porter draw a similar connection between recognition and liberation, by referring to Freire's understanding of self-liberation as an act of love. They argue that through the act of love "the oppressed open their wounds through communication, they express the violence in their dehumanization that they want the oppressor to recognize" (Leonardo and Porter 2010, 151).

I want to translate this understanding to the context of empathy in critical pedagogy by highlighting, that being recognized in one's lived reality can also mean a struggle for survival, in a world where the realities of black students consist in everyday fear of being killed out of racist motivation. As Leonardo and Porter further point out, "[i]t may sound like a slave's maneuver to desire recognition from the master but such is the relationship of bondage within a colonial relationship" (Leonardo and Porter 2010, 151). In that sense, recognition as opposed to being invisible or even rejected can be perceived as liberating (Leonardo and Porter 2010, 151). Weiler emphasizes that "[w]hen tied to a recognition of positionality, this validation of feeling can be used to develop powerful sources of politically focused feminist education" (Weiler 1991). Boler elaborates a similar argument by saying that through recognizing the feelings that are at the roots of oppressive structures, critical pedagogy creates an important starting point that allows deeper learning based on critical consciousness-raising and enables students to take action (Boler 1999, 116).

Nevertheless, to a certain extent it can bear the risk to keep the empathizer in a position of power. In that context, the question remains to which extent empathy can be applied within learning spaces that bring together students from different social backgrounds. Arshad et al. call this connection of empathy and power enacted through recognition ironic, by stating that the very same tool that is meant to support those with experiences in relation to oppression in recognizing their situation and validate their emotions, also reinforce the structures of colonial power by means of recognition (Arshad et al. 2021, 13). In other words, empathy can aim to dismantle colonial structures of power and oppression through recognition. It may, however, as a tool reify the colonial power imbalances through the act of recognition of the empathizer who at this point still is assumed to be the one in the dominant position of power.

Boler, who questions Western neoliberal approaches to empathy is "not convinced that empathy leads to anything close to justice, to any shift in existing power relations" (Boler 1999, 156). The act of recognition may be interpreted in various ways and at the same time seems not to guarantee actual action that leads to the social change critical pedagogy aims for. Boler explains this by bringing up the lack of accountability on the side of the one empathizing, assuming the empathizer to be the one in the dominant position of power. In this sense, this kind of empathy may make the empathizing student feel relieved from their complicities and not feel encouraged to take any action about the other student's suffering (Boler 1999, 156).

Another reason why the idea of recognition in empathy within critical pedagogical settings could be problematic can be taken from Bialystok and Kukar's reasoning. They argue that "students must situate themselves in relation to the suffering of another to move beyond a passive empathetic response. Recognizing their own implication in the suffering of another, of course, generates its own affective response, often of discomfort" (Bialystok and Kukar 2018, 32). This could be understood in a way that highlights the emotions of the one empathizing as crucial in the process and contradicts Western understandings of empathy in which the one empathizing sets their own emotional experiences aside. The authors reason that accepting

empathy uncritically and apart from its historic legacy can lead to ignoring the problematic aspects of the concept. They discuss that

> the absence of a (perceived) monoculture does not negate the fact that there are stark differentials of power and privilege within our societies. Social justice education would need empathy to do not only the work of recognizing another but also recognizing ourselves in relation to the other (Bialystok and Kukar 2018, 31).

This aspect will be further elaborated when we take a closer look at the type of emotions that are commonly arising when applying empathy in critical pedagogy later on in this chapter. The next subsection will discuss the problem of the coloniality of language in empathy, particularly in learning spaces that apply critical pedagogy and in critical pedagogy theory and literature itself.

3.2.5 The coloniality of language in empathy

One significant critique of empathy in critical pedagogy that has not yet received much attention in this thesis so far is the issue of language. At this point I want to remind that within Eurocentric and also critical literature, empathy is often framed as a tool that can open up spaces of communication. Through that it can bridge the potential gaps based on social, cultural and geopolitical differences (Pedwell 2013, 23). Language is necessary for communication – whether it is verbal or not. Assuming that much writing, teaching, and learning in critical pedagogy is conducted in the most widely spoken and used languages, of which many are languages with colonial legacies, everyone within the learning community might be expected to be willing and able to communicate in these very languages.

It is, however, quite likely that not everyone has the same level of understanding and communicating in the respective language, and they might have a different understanding of particular expressions depending on their sociocultural background. That can pose a problem,

particularly when the topics of learning are emotionally loaded for some. In the context of empathy, this needs to be taken seriously as

> different cultures may not have the same words for emotions or may explain a particular emotion in a radically different way. Further, the specific events that trigger particular emotions can, of course, be quite different between cultures; for example, disgust is triggered by quite different kinds of food according to cultural norms of what is nice and nasty (Thrift 2004, 64).

Thrift highlights once more the ways in which empathy has been approached uncritical of power and Eurocentrically throughout its history, not considering the challenges language and communication can bring. Empathy in critical pedagogy is then confronted with a very fundamental problem as language and communication are at the heart of the concept. What critical pedagogy has to deal with here is similar to what Gunew examined by looking at "the ways in which people expressed emotions and feelings when they had to move from one language to another in a context where these languages did not have equal status" (Gunew 2009, 12). The approaches to empathy in critical pedagogy do not discuss this issue. Yet it is vital to consider because even if the content of learning in critical pedagogy is significant for teaching about oppression, the language in which it is taught plays an important role. In that sense, it is not sufficient to merely apply empathy within learning spaces where different cultures meet but "[o]ne has to know the rules, the conditions, the mores, the local myths and popular expectations. One has to understand the society and not merely the emotion" (Gunew 2009, 16). If oppression is made visible in the language of the oppressor, the oppressor might still not understand or be able to understand the own complicity in oppressive structures (Kincaid 1988, 16).

One aspect here is the way we define ourselves through language, as wa Thiong'o elaborates: "The choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe" (wa Thiong'o 1981, 4). This can also show through the vocabulary and

terms students are limited to in learning spaces to express their experiences, emotions and knowledges. In the context of the literature and material presented to the students, in many institutions of higher education anglophone languages are dominating. In wa Thiong'o's eyes, language then acts as a tool for spiritual subjugation (wa Thiong'o 1981, 9). This way of penetrating "western modes of thought and behavior and its appropriation among the domestic anglophone writers produces "injuries of coloniality"" (Velásquez Atehortúa 2020, 159). It also reflects in the classist assumption that all students have the preconditions to deal with academic literature in the same way, particularly concerning those students with a diasporic context and working-class backgrounds. These students may feel alienated, as they might not know how to appropriate academic language (Velásquez Atehortúa 2020, 166). It seems ironic, considering the topics of critical pedagogy teaching that aim to address particularly these contexts. This illustrates how the languages dominating academia, including research on coloniality, oppression, and decolonization, contribute to sustaining these colonial injuries (Velásquez Atehortúa 2020, 165). Regarding the topic of self-definition, the relation of language and gender is also an important and neglected issue in critical pedagogy (Ziv 2020, 767), and plays a role in the understanding of empathy within learning spaces. This particular connection will be picked up later on in this chapter through critical feminist perspective.

Moreover, empathetic encounters in critical pedagogy need to be questioned more critically in the light of the coloniality of language. Language, in this context, "is a symbol of the violence and loss wrought by British colonialism" (Pedwell 2013, 23). Pedwell emphasizes that language in the context signifies more than just the actual language but it also refers to the broader discursive and cultural structures that were established through colonialism (Pedwell 2013, 23). The following quote out of Kincaid's *A Small Place* helps illustrating the problematics of language when sharing one's own experiences with oppression:

> For isn't it odd that the only language I have in which to speak of this crime is the language of the criminal who committed the crime? And what can that really mean? For the language of the criminal can contain only the goodness of the criminal's deed. The language of the criminal can explain and express the deed only from the criminal's point of view. It cannot contain the horror of the deed, the injustice of the deed, the agony, the humiliation inflicted on me (Kincaid 1988, 16).

Kincaid is referring to the colonization of Antigua and addresses the colonizers and their descendants as criminals. Even though, the context is significantly different, there are aspects that can serve as a learning when discussing language in the context of empathy in critical pedagogy theory and practice. It is particularly interesting that language has an enormous impact on how empathetic engagements take place in pedagogy settings. If the language that is used in teaching and all communications within the learning space has a colonial legacy and continuity, interactions will not be easily unbiased and may always remain dependent on the interpretation based on the oppressor's perspective. Pedwell describes this as a too simple equivalence of experience, temporality and language (Pedwell 2013, 25), in the context of very different experiences and an empathetic moment that could be influenced by the existing power structures between empathizer and empathized. It is, however, important to keep in mind that within this context, the feelings of the one who is harmed by colonial legacies and oppression are important to be attended to. Referring to language and experience, Pedwell reasons that the one who is extending empathy "can never really know or understand such feelings" (Pedwell 2013, 23).

Moreover, language and affective concepts such as emotions are connected. The individualization or social construction of emotions, for example, is deeply embedded within language (Boler 1999, 5). If we consider specific cultural contexts in critical pedagogy learning communities, we need to understand that languages, gestures, and other forms of communication are significant factors that determine affective expression and relation as it happens in empathetic encounters (Gunew 2009, 15). Freire, as one of the pioneers of critical pedagogy, disregarded the issue of language in his work. His theory and approaches are said to

"have ignored the White settler colonial imperatives behind the use and performance of the language and tools of critical pedagogy" (Zembylas 2019b, 404).

3.2.6 Empathy and the politics of emotions

In relation to emotions in the context of asserting power through empathy, Lindquist describes emotions as situated and constructed. This is important to consider, when reasoning about empathy in the sense of an emotional response (Lindquist 2004, 201–202). Ahmed similarly reasons that in interactions with others, emotions can align with some individuals and work against others. The author argues that emotions circulate between bodies and thus contradicts the assumption that emotions are a private issue and that they would merely belong to individuals or would be generated within a subject and then move outwards (Ahmed 2004a, 117). Ahmed further elaborates that in the confrontation with someone's pain, we are being moved by what does not belong to us. The following statement underscores this perspective:

> If I acted on her behalf only insofar as I knew how she felt then I would act only insofar as I would appropriate her pain as my pain, that is, appropriate that which I cannot feel. […] It is the very assumption that we know how the other feels, which would allow us to transform their pain into our sadness (Ahmed 2004b, 31).

This scenario described by Ahmed does not only show parallels to understandings of empathy, but it also highlights that empathy can include the act of making an assumption over the other individual's emotional experience and further appropriating it as the own suffering. However, Ahmed highlights that despite the impossibility of feeling someone else's pain, that does not imply that this pain belongs to them and has nothing to do with me (Ahmed 2004b, 30). Boler describes in this context the connection of emotions and power, which is, as indicated previously, significant when aiming to understand empathy in critical pedagogy (Boler 1999, 3). The involvement of emotions in relations of power is a complex entanglement that needs to be investigated further. It is vital in the way social norms are arranged (Zembylas and McGlynn

2012, 42). This connection of emotions and power shows in "the ways in which our emotions, which reflect our complex identities situated within social hierarchies, "embody" and "act out" relations of power" (Boler 1999, 3). Accordingly, these social norms can only be disrupted through a change in those emotions that are related to the norms (Zembylas and McGlynn 2012, 42).

In the context of critical pedagogy theory and teaching, an affective transformation that leads to social change demands to take a closer look at the emotions present in empathetic engagement (Zembylas 2019b, 413–414). Those emotions, which arise within conversations related to experiences with oppression may take a key role here in understanding why empathy might be a limited tool within these contexts. The affective transformation

> is not grounded in naïve or sentimentalized discourses but rather empathetic failure or failed empathy, that is, those circumstances in which empathy reaches its limit point—that is, it is ignored or rejected by its intended recipients, or it produces antithetical consequences to those anticipated (Zembylas 2019b, 413–414).

What might become clearer with the help of Zembylas reasoning is the understanding that empathy can barely work as a tool, or at least only in limited ways, within learning communities that contain different sociocultural backgrounds. In order to understand and approach other ways of communicative engagement in such spaces, empathetic engagement and related emotions need to be put into question

At this point, it can be interesting to understand within critical pedagogy contexts why certain emotions arise and to learn through that about the conditions that enable visions about radical alternatives towards social justice (Amsler 2011, 58). In all the previous reasoning about empathy and critical pedagogy, it may be surprising that even though the connection of emotions and empathetic engagement is being made, critical pedagogy literature rarely fleshes out the particular emotional processes as well as the kind of emotions we are dealing with. Emotions, however, are almost inevitable in empathetic encounters on topics related to injustice

and oppression. The relationship of emotion and justice in this context is complex (Zembylas and McGlynn 2012, 43). Zembylas and McGlynn offer an insightful reasoning on this nexus:

> While feelings of outrage and anger may readily be evoked by unjust circumstances, reducing the identification of injustice to the presence of the 'right' emotions is deeply problematic […]. Such a reduction leaves an individual's determination of right or wrong, justice or injustice […] based on the presence or absence of specified feelings. Similarly, if injustice cannot be equated with simply feeling bad, neither can justice be identified as simply feeling a set of 'good' emotions, such as empathy for those who suffer or a sense of shared human vulnerability […]. Compassionate feelings for children who live in poverty […], for example, do not guarantee activism to transform the structures of oppression that may have created the injustice in the first place, nor do they assure action to redress the inequity (Zembylas and McGlynn 2012, 43).

Drawing from this argument, it could be helpful to look at the emotions that are being displayed when critically understanding empathy in critical pedagogical contexts, within situations as the one described by Zembylas and McGlynn and by Ahmed. The contents of critical pedagogy teaching deal a lot with discourses around injustice, suffering and oppression, as explained in chapter 2. Experiences of injustice cannot be reduced to feeling bad or some sort of pain. It is rather a complex entanglement, as "the fact of suffering, for example, has something to do with what is 'wrong' about systematic forms of violence, as relations of force and harm" (Ahmed 2004b, 193).

It can be helpful here, to distinguish between comfortable and uncomfortable emotions instead of using the labels good and bad. Moreover, in that distinction it could be important to always keep in mind the question 'for whom?'. In conversations around discomfort within critical pedagogy, the feelings of those students who are benefitting from oppressive systems can be a key to understanding how critical pedagogies that incorporate affect in learning can implement discomfort in their pedagogical frameworks. Zembylas' reasoning on discomfort as a pedagogical tool uses the example of white students and their discomfort and is "[w]orking from the assumption that decolonising pedagogy must engage this terrain of difficult emotional knowledge in ways that have not been sufficiently addressed by critical pedagogy so far"

(Zembylas 2018, 98–99). Through that, a critical understanding of emotions in learning spaces, and empathy with those suffering from coloniality and colonial continuities can be promoted (Zembylas 2018, 98–99; Zembylas 2019b, 409). Within Freirean theory and critical pedagogy theory in general, there is a need for a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay that is happening between oppressor and oppressed, as well as the complex nature of oppression itself. The notion of transformative learning being more than a rationalist means of knowing needs to be put in question by considering what Zembylas calls "affective knowing", a concept that includes empathy in education (Zembylas 2019b, 408). Zembylas' approaches and ideas regarding empathy and discomfort will be given more attention in the subsection that deals with the topic of reframing empathy.

Related to the implications of power in discourses around emotions in empathy, the following subsection will offer a critique from a decolonial feminist point of view, which highlights these implications of power amongst others in relation to intersectionality.

3.2.7 A decolonial feminist critique to empathy in critical pedagogy

Generally, there are not many voices and approaches to empathy in critical pedagogy that argue from a feminist and gender sensitive perspective. What is important to understand here is the fact that critical pedagogy itself has often disregarded and ignored feminist thought, particularly in empathy discourses. Feminist thought has been long underrepresented in critical pedagogy theory, particularly in the context of discourses on hegemonic masculinity and the coloniality of gender (George and Waltz 2021, 1). At the same time, feminist scholars have called for critical approaches to empathy and affective concepts in critical pedagogy, based on the critique of empathy being a tool "of appropriation and projection on the part of privileged subjects, particularly those engaged in contexts where racial, ethnic, and gender hierarchies are magnified and heightened by structural inequalities and injustices" (Angeles and Pratt 2017, 270). Some critics address the universal assumption of a collective experience of oppression in

critical pedagogy, that does not appropriately address and display the reality of critical pedagogy learning spaces, which then often end up tension-filled (Weiler 1991, 450).

This has been particularly criticized from feminist educator perspectives who are aware of "the continuing force of sexism and patriarchal structures and of the power of race, sexual preference, physical ability, and age to divide teachers from students and students from one another" (Weiler 1991, 450). One major critique that needs to be addressed when speaking of patriarchal structures affecting critical pedagogy practice is related to the phallocentric paradigm of liberation that various scholars, Freire amongst others, uncritically perpetuated. This paradigm links freedom and the experience of patriarchal manhood in a way that makes it appear the same (hooks 1994, 49). This critiques is part of the reasons why feminist pedagogy was incorporated into critical pedagogy (Ziv 2020, 761). It is, therefore, important to highlight how patriarchal structures and narratives in critical pedagogy theory influence the practice and as such, the way empathy is constructed and applied in learning spaces (hooks 1994, 49).

Another significant aspect that this paradigm includes, and that critics address is the consequent use and imagination of the gender binary in critical pedagogy, which reinforces colonial gender perceptions in classrooms. What needs to be problematized here is the ignorance in critical pedagogy theory towards gender being "a complex and ambiguous social construction which is produced, as much as described, by attempts to make it a binary variable" as much as "a colonial construction" (Arshad et al. 2021, 11). This is manifests within the language, that most critical pedagogy literature uses. Even though, gender is addressed as part of oppressive systems, there is little sensitivity towards its working within learning communities, its colonial legacies, as well as its entanglement with race, class and other markers of oppression.

This leads to a general assumption in critical pedagogy practice that gender is a binary division – man and woman – and, resulting from that, to limiting experiences with oppression to this opposition (hooks 1994, 49; Borsani and Ñamku 2017, 327). At this point, it needs to be

added that in relation to the coloniality of binary gender constructions in languages, the gender binary is not a concept that appears in all languages, as it is a "system that predominates Euro-American thought: a system that stipulates that we are male or female, masculine or feminine" (Vega 2020, 429). The uncritical use of the gender binary in language in a restrictive way results in the reproduction of familiar stereotypes liked to gender (expression), defining what it means to be, or rather to present, feminine and masculine. Through that, queer, trans and non-binary experiences are omitted from discourses and educators might lack the knowledge to address these experiences and make queer students feel seen and valued (George and Waltz 2021, 1). In this context, it needs to be underscored that an intersectional approach to gender is inevitable in order to comprehensively and justly address oppression. The ways in which oppression that individuals and groups experience, operates throughout different layers such as race, class and gender (Ziv 2020, 762). It is important to highlight these voices that white, universalist feminism overlooks, which means that race and gender here need to be thought together at all times. This is because "[i]f woman and black are terms for homogeneous, atomic, separable categories, then their intersection shows us the absence of black women rather than their presence. So, to see non-white women is to exceed "categorial" logic" (Lugones 2010, 742).

In relation to empathy, a feminist critique calls out the lack of awareness when it comes to the use of inclusive language in empathetic encounters. Students may not feel safe to talk about their own queer experiences when there is no awareness of the constraints of the gender binary and knowledge about the construction of gender in the context of colonial history (Ziv 2020, 767; Lugones 2010, 746) and when the language itself might not offer inclusive vocabulary. It also reflects what has been discussed previously in the context of language and empathy. If critical pedagogy theory uses a binary gendered language, the self-definition of students may be influenced or restricted to that binary, which can reflect in their understanding and communication of their own emotional experiences, as well as in their own ways of engaging affectively with other students (Zembylas 2018, 98).

Another aspect that critical pedagogy dismisses in the context of empathy, similar as before, refers to the essentialization of the notion. From a feminist perspective, this entails "the problem of naturalising empathy as a specifically feminist capacity, through its association with femininity and womanhood" (Hemmings 2012, 154). In patriarchal binary gender constructions, emotion and affect are mostly assigned to femininity, particularly when they involve caring, solidary and compassionate notions. Whereas masculinity is connected with reason, wisdom and rationality (Arvin et al. 2013, 13; Boler 1999, 7). This discourse on emotions and their relation to gender is strongly related to power relations and shapes the ways in which students are perceived in learning spaces (Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990, 16). Moreover, it is inseparably related to the workings of emotions in the context of being universalized and fixed onto subjects in relation to race, as it was discussed previously. Essentialization and universalization of emotions influences affective concepts like empathy. There may be a tendency that female students in the classroom are perceived as more capable of empathizing. The consequence of such gender constructions might be that "[t]his approach deflects attention from social life and its possible implication in the very language of emotion. It also prevents us from looking at the role of emotional discourses in social interactions" (Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990, 3).

The universalization of emotions and affective capacities may lead to problematic assumptions about empathy in regard to power relations and structures and contributes to what has been already touched upon in the context of the coloniality of language. Following this strategy will reinforce the assumption that emotions are universal in their meaning, for example within different sociocultural contexts, and in their processes (Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990, 3). What comes along with such strategies of universalization is "a strange invisibility of emotion itself as a problem, since positing emotion universals allows us more easily to take emotion for granted" (Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990, 3).

Having critically discussed these different aspects of empathy from a decolonial lens, the next section will introduce new ideas of how empathy can be approached in critical pedagogy. In order to do so, the section will briefly outline the urgency of such new ideas.

3.3 Reframing empathy in critical pedagogy

If aiming to approach empathy as a concept in critical pedagogy from a decolonial perspective, the pedagogy itself in its coming into being needs to be put into question, specifically in the parts where compatibility is missing (Danielzik et al. 2020, 227). Within this subsection, critical approaches to empathy in critical pedagogy will be presented. Having discussed various aspects that critically reflect on empathy in critical pedagogy teaching, these approaches aim to offer critical, new ways of dealing with the question of empathy in critical pedagogy. The need for such critical new approaches becomes clearer when considering that

> in a world where the possibilities for radical thought and political action are seen to be so cramped, and where a powerful machinery of therapeutic education is being developed to normalise and discipline the alienation that this can create, critical affective pedagogies may prove to be among the most radical political interventions of all (Amsler 2011, 59).

In line with Amsler's call for critical affective pedagogies, such approaches may pose radical interventions that aim to embrace or reframe empathy as an affective concept in learning spaces in ways that are coherent with critical pedagogy thought and might, moreover, offer new pathways for the latter. This section does not aim to offer solutions, but to see the notions in critical pedagogy theory and potentials in its practice that can help in finding alternatives of approaching the issue. Therefore, this chapter keeps a critical stance towards the perspectives that are presented and include their limitations. As one author who has done comparatively comprehensive research on the topic of empathy in critical pedagogy, Zembylas' approaches

will be presented first. The order of the approaches that are presented here does, however, not imply that some are more important than others.

As it has been discussed before, critical pedagogy plays a significant role in recognizing and positioning itself "against the multiple ways in which knowledge production in the neoliberal order is implicated in the material and affective conditions of coloniality and its persisting effects […] on understandings of empathy and other affects" (Zembylas 2019b, 415). In order to do so, critical pedagogy theory needs to include and draw from other critical and anticolonial theories such as decolonial theories, critical race theory and feminist perspectives that argue intersectionally (Zembylas 2019b, 415). Through that, power relations need to be addressed, which entails "(self-critically) applying a post-/decolonial critique to classroom interactions, rather than merely teaching *about* postcolonial perspectives" (Danielzik et al. 2020, 227). This will enable spaces that recontextualize knowledge, including affective knowledge that deals critically with questions around empathy and its colonial legacies. Zembylas in this context brings as an example the need for a decolonization of curricula in learning institutions, which would demand including the affective histories and affective experiences of colonized people as much as involving in subjugated knowledges such as affective experiences in relation to coloniality and how this impacts the understanding of transformative agency (Zembylas 2019b, 415). Following this argument, notions of decolonizing affect theory need to be taken into consideration as well within the context of this section (Gunew 2009, 27).

Firstly, Zembylas' reasoning on decolonizing empathy for a decolonizing pedagogy gives insights on new visions of empathy. For a decolonizing empathy, critical pedagogy needs to adopt decolonizing perspectives. This means, it needs

> to move beyond Freirean theory and critical pedagogy not only because Freirean theory and critical pedagogy highlight the human as the unit of liberation whereas decolonizing pedagogy has to denaturalize the category of the human […], but also because the knowledge emerging

> from the counter-narratives of various agents in colonial/colonized settings has to be foregrounded rather than backgrounded (Zembylas 2019b, 415).

This approach to knowledge and knowledge production is vital, considering the previous critique in chapter 2 regarding knowledges and epistemologies in the learning community. In the context of decolonizing empathy in a decolonial pedagogy, Zembylas refers to what he calls *affective transformation*, a process that is related to social transformation and includes self-reflective processes in relation to emotions and power in empathetic encounters (Zembylas 2019b, 410). Affective transformation based on empathy "has been understood within feminist and anti-racist literatures as central to achieving social justice" (Zembylas 2019b, 410). What Zembylas means here is that an understanding of empathy as a concept, which works to radically transform those people benefitting from oppressive structures and coloniality, it could offer an affective tool in dealing with social ills and reaching for social justice (Zembylas 2019b, 410).

To reach there, critical pedagogical thought must move away from the idea of empathy that is concerned with feeling someone's emotional state, as emotional equivalence would require it (Zembylas 2019b, 414). Instead, "the idea of decolonizing empathy involves a complex and ongoing set of practices and processes of confrontation, conflict, negotiation and attunement" (Zembylas 2019b, 414). Zembylas adds that such an approach to empathy in critical pedagogy would become valuable for questioning both, liberal and critical discourses of empathy in pedagogy, as it lets go of the assumption that there is a need for psychic transparency and, moreover, withstands uncritical Western ideas. It sets a critical focus on power structures and one's own complicity regarding coloniality and colonial continuities (Zembylas 2019b, 414). In practice, that means that students start understanding

> the conditions (structural inequalities, poverty, globalization etc.) that give rise to suffering and create realistic opportunities for affective solidarity between themselves and others […]. But mere understanding is not enough; students will become more susceptible to affective transformation, when they enact empathetic action early on in their lives […]. As they grow

> up, children can be offered varied opportunities to enact more complex manifestations of empathy that include specific actions to alleviate the suffering of people who experience the consequences of oppression and colonization as well as a critical and honest evaluation of the impact of these actions on decolonization (Zembylas 2019b, 416).

In other words, Zembylas does not deviate from the concept of empathy itself but demands that in the process of maturing, students learn to understand empathy within the context of experiences with oppression and colonization and their own complicity and situatedness within systems of coloniality. One approach that that aims for such understanding is found in pedagogies of discomfort and will be introduced in the next subsection.

3.3.1 Pedagogies of discomfort

As indicated previously, the notion of acknowledging discomforting emotions becomes an interesting aspect when critically questioning empathy in critical pedagogy. In her reasoning about learning settings that deal with topics of oppression, hooks emphasized the importance of discomfort, particularly relating to the pain that might arise when old ways of thinking are replaced by new approaches (hooks 1994, 42–43). In relation to that pain, hooks states: "I respect that pain. And I include recognition of it now when I teach, that is to say, I teach about shifting paradigms and talk about the discomfort it can cause" (hooks 1994, 42–43). Giving attention to these reactions of discomfort can enable educators to confront and guide through the emotional complexities of the historical dimensions of oppression and coloniality. In other words, "[a]nti-racist pedagogies […], are essentially pedagogies of emotion" (Zembylas 2012, 117–118). The issue of discomfort in learning environments of critical pedagogy can thus be seen as quite central as the following approach will show in detail.

Originally coined by Boler, "pedagogies of discomfort" entail an invitation to students and teachers to critically inquire values and beliefs within the learning community, and to investigate the construction of self-images in connection to the learned perception of others (Boler 1999, 176). While creating this environment of inquiry and examination "a central focus

is to recognize how emotions define how and what one chooses to see, and conversely, not to see" (Boler 1999, 176). However, this goes further than mere self-reflection. Boler reasons that self-reflection bears the risk of reduction of historical complexities while disregarding mutual responsibilities to one another. This goes in line with the critique on empathy, that highlights its lack of encouragement to action taking. This is because empathy "often works through reducing the other to a mirror-identification of oneself, a means of rendering the discomforting other familiar and non threatening [sic]" (Boler 1999, 177). In Boler's pedagogy of discomfort, honoring the complexity of others' and one's own personal and cultural histories is at the center and can be achieved by learning about the genealogies of one's own positionalities and emotional resistances (Boler 1999, 178).

After being further developed by scholars, pedagogies of discomfort became a pedagogical framework that strives to engage students and teachers empathetically with topics around difference, race, and social justice. To achieve that the approach encourages the questioning and troubling of emotional comfort zones (Zembylas and Papamichael 2017, 3). Dealing with learning through questioning and understanding uncomfortable emotions, this framework aims to understand "under what circumstances discomforting learning may help teachers and students to engage in new affective relations with others" (Zembylas 2012, 120). Discomfort is an essential aspect here, as various scholars have argued, to develop a decolonizing education as it helps to shift education frameworks towards a critical examination of the complexities of sociopolitical classroom contexts (Zembylas and Papamichael 2017, 1). An example for such discomforting emotions is what Ahmed describes in the context where a racist person and a racialized subject come into contact. Ahmed talks about the fear, hate, disgust and pain that the racist might experience (Ahmed 2004b, 194). Such strong emotions often merge after or during conversations about racism and exploring anti-racist theories and strategies (Zembylas 2012, 113). Following the framework of pedagogies of discomfort, these emotions need to be addressed as "emotions are forever present in the work of race" and

repressing “those emotions, and the state of discomfort they create, makes us nothing more than somnambuliacs, walking through life asleep” (Matias 2016, 2). If not addressed, these discomforting emotions are continuously able to hinder, dilute and distract the transformation process of the students (Zembylas 2012, 113). This approach offers helpful ways of theorizing and reacting to the resistance of students in situations where they are asked to reflect upon what they deemed universal knowledge (Amsler 2011, 56–57). Pedagogies of discomfort are rooted “in the assumption that discomforting emotions are important in challenging dominant beliefs, social habits and normative practices that sustain stereotypes and social injustice and in creating openings for empathy and transformation” (Zembylas and Papamichael 2017, 3). In other words, a pedagogy of discomfort asks students and teachers to critically think about their deeply engraved assumptions of themselves and others through taking up a position as witnesses to social injustice (Costandius and Alexander 2019, 2416).

This pedagogy draws on post-structuralist and feminist thought that sees emotions as discursive practices, which are part of the construction of a person’s subjectivities. In this paradigm, comfort zones in relation to knowledges and emotions are defined as sites of hegemonic struggle (Amsler 2011, 56–57). In other words, individuals are enabled “to move away from attempting to ‘activate’ the psychological and affective dimensions of political struggle that are assumed to be latent but repressed, towards a more critical engagement with the emotional foundations of hegemonic power itself” (Amsler 2011, 56–57). To reach the students, who might show various responses to stories of suffering, the educators need to find ways that allow overcoming feelings of discomfort. For teachers to get there, they must build trust within learning spaces and create strong relationships within the learning community (Zembylas 2020a, 257). Zembylas argues that this pedagogical framework can even be used in environments where traumatic experiences are shared as it embraces the complexity of difficult emotional knowledge (Zembylas 2013, 183). Therefore, pedagogies of discomfort may help to transform educators’ and students’ emotional lives and experiences, whereby “compassion,

tolerance, caring, empathy and criticality" should be at the center of this process (Costandius and Alexander 2019, 2416). For teachers, this framework might offer other ways of thinking about how educators could react to students' subjectivities without having to agree with them (Amsler 2011, 57).

Pedagogies of discomfort are not considered particularly radical or transformative because it is often situated within spaces that are rather emotionally loaded. Amsler suggests "that it is precisely for this reason that the theory offers an important pathway for conceptualising the actual forms of affective labour which may condition the radical intellectual transformations […] and that can help to reconstitute learned fatalism into a desire for agency" (Amsler 2011, 59). To reach there, critical pedagogy's rhetoric needs to be expanded and the complexities of emotions that are discomforting need to be investigated more comprehensively (Zembylas and Papamichael 2017, 5–6). Even though, pedagogies of discomfort offer valuable incentives to approach empathy and affective concepts in critical pedagogy, there are aspects that need to be seen critically. This pedagogical framework talks about discomforting emotions as a tool for learning. These emotions are mostly assigned to those who are benefitting of oppressive systems such as white students for example. The approach might risk centering whiteness in the learning process by focusing on the feelings of those students who are already profiting from being associated with different social norms. This becomes more visible when considering that pedagogy of discomfort has been proposed as a strategy that can increase the learning experience of those students who struggle with tasks of understanding racism and social injustice (Zembylas 2012, 119–120; Zembylas 2018, 88). Considering "that the emphasis of pedagogy of discomfort should be on challenging students to critically analyse their ideological values and beliefs that subordinate on the basis of race, gender, class and sexual orientation" (Zembylas and Papamichael 2017, 3), it is unlikely that this pedagogy addresses those who are subordinated on the basis of the aforementioned markers the same way. By taking

a look at the question Zembylas raises in this context, it becomes clearer, how pedagogies of discomfort can be situated in this critique:

> As Whites continue to be complicit in the violence of white coloniality and participate in its reproduction, how can educators ethically address Whites' affective responses, such as guilt, shame, denial, and anger at the loss of privilege, status, and security without sentimentalising their pedagogical approach, but rather contributing to dismantling white supremacist power relations and structures? (Zembylas 2018, 93)

Following that perspective, a pedagogy like pedagogy of discomfort can help to add a point of view to approaching empathy critically in critical pedagogy by highlighting those feelings that historic Western approaches of empathy ignore. Similar to pedagogies of discomfort, approaches to shame as a tool for learning circles around a rather discomforting emotion. The next section will flesh out in detail, in which ways shame can bring insights to an emancipatory empathy in critical pedagogy.

3.3.2 Shame as a pedagogical tool

As indicated, shame, guilt and anger play a significant role in affective concepts like empathy in critical pedagogy (Angeles and Pratt 2017, 269–270). These emotions will be given some attention at this point in order to better understand their role and meaning in the learning spaces of critical pedagogy theory and practice. This thesis does not offer the framework and space to discuss these emotions in their genealogy and anthropological distinction. It can, however, be helpful to understand their situatedness in empathy discourses within critical pedagogy. Shame and guilt often are mentioned together and still differentiated along the lines of culture, chronological levels of age, or historical development (Zembylas 2019a, 307). Even though, there are many critical voices that argue against the focus and instrumentalization of shame and guilt and it is, moreover, not often seen as a decolonizing strategy to incite self-reflection that leads to social transformation, these emotions have been receiving much attention within the context of critical approaches to empathy in critical pedagogy. For that

reason, this subsection will shed light on some perspectives on the discourse with an emphasize on its critique.

There is a view in critical pedagogy that shame as an emotion is dehumanizing and needs to be overcome to reach a place of recognition, which is seen as humanizing (hooks 2003, 103). However, other scholars who contribute to critical pedagogy theory discuss shame as an emotion that is vital for transformative processes within the context of empathetic engagement in learning spaces. In critical pedagogy, shame can play a role in confrontation with other students' suffering as it happens when one empathizes with another. This means that it is likely that a student might experience shame when learning about and acknowledging own complicities in the perpetuation of oppression, and more precisely the other students' suffering based on oppression (Zembylas 2019b, 413). Despite being a challenging emotion, it can offer transformative potential (Pedwell 2013, 23) as "feminist, antiracist, and postcolonial thinkers […] have connected the experience of shame to that of patriarchy and oppression, suggesting that shame can play a constructive role in sensitizing us to transform what brought shame upon us in the first place" (Zembylas 2019b, 413). Shame can be used in such learning spaces as the ones discussed here, to reevaluate one's own positioning in relation to legacies of oppression and to rethink how one can live in proximity to others (Pedwell 2013, 23).

In order to use shame in educative contexts, it needs to be understood in its meanings and implications within education. It could be described as an emotion that stands for an impossible ambivalence as it seeks to be concealed as well as recognized or confessed at the same time. It further can be seen as an emotion that involves exposing vulnerability and some form of inadequacy (Costandius and Alexander 2019, 2417). Zembylas calls it "a social and political emotion", as it attaches to questions of identity and enhances the meaning and feelings around who we are (Zembylas 2019a, 306–307). If shame is understood beyond its initial discomfort, it may turn out to be a tool of reflection.

In the context of empathy, shame may help to create "an opening that is necessary for self-criticism, selfreflection [sic] and ethical, political and educational deliberation […]. Shame is therefore an important part of dealing with shameful histories" (Costandius and Alexander 2019, 2417). According to this reasoning, it then becomes a vital tool in decolonial projects of social justice. In this context, shame can be seen as radically and complexly imbricated with empathy discourses. This is because of its framing "as the only affect through which 'the self' views itself from perspective of 'the other' […]. As such, shame might be read as the inversion of empathy, which views 'the other' from the perspective of 'the self'" (Pedwell 2013, 23–24). Even though, this framing of shame in the context of empathy might deserve some more comprehensive and less simplified analysis, it can help to understand the complex nexus of empathy and shame discourses and might offer a starting point for fleshing out the ways in which empathy and shame are entangled. Both concepts only work with an imagined other and, thus, involve practices of imagination (Pedwell 2013, 23–24). Through the process of developing awareness for the complexity of oppressive systems and one's own situatedness within them, shame can surface in students and help developing, criticality in the form of empathy and reconciliation (Costandius and Alexander 2019, 2417). In critical pedagogy discourses, shame is often connected to whiteness and the engagement in race dialogue. Here it might appear amongst others as a reaction to the confrontation of one's own complicities in the perpetuation of racism (Costandius and Alexander 2019, 2417).

However, as indicated previously, there are critical voices in relation to shame and empathy discourses. Nghi Ha in conversation with Gutiérrez Rodríguez states that shame might not even be helpful and not necessarily offer a basis for constructive political learning processes. Following their reasoning, feeling shame might not be relevant for acknowledging the problematics of whiteness as a colonial construction and its benefits of an oppressive system (Gutiérrez Rodríguez et al. 2020, 184–185). Pedwell also critically touches upon the issue of shame in connection to empathy. In this critique, shame as an emotion follows a reaction of

anger when being confronted with own complicity and accountability in the perpetuation of coloniality and oppressive structures. Moreover, this critique also puts into question that shame is a productive tool and necessarily leads to the anticipated transformative change that critical pedagogy strives to achieve (Pedwell 2013, 24). Referring to Ahmed's approach to shame, the author further claims that "shame only occurs in relation to an imagined other who one already feels desire or love towards and, as such, shame may simply bear witness to hegemonic affective alliances" (Pedwell 2013, 24). Shame would in this case work against what critical pedagogy theory and teaching stand for, which is amongst other things the aim to address and dismantle hegemonic power structures. In other words, taking the example of shame in contexts of addressing the coloniality of whiteness, shame bears the risk to "be easily reincorporated into white melancholia, thus retrenching rather than disrupting racialised hierarchies" (Pedwell 2013, 24).

In this sense, a genuine engagement with racism is always challenging and comes along with complex psychological processes. The question then is if the process of becoming aware of own complicities and benefitting from oppressive structures is necessarily connected to feelings of shame. Like Pedwell, Gutiérrez Rodríguez et al. put into question whether those students who do feel shame are any more anti-racist than those who acknowledge their own complicities in oppression but do not feel shame. Following this reasoning, what becomes even more problematic is the normativity of shame. This opens the question of whether "white people [can] be anti-racist, if they do not feel ashamed of their privileges, but reject their privileges?" (Gutiérrez Rodríguez et al. 2020, 184–185). Shame might then not be a pedagogical tool that is desirable in individual interactions and relations of empathy as such. There seems to be no promise that shame will necessarily make white students act in counter-racist ways. It might be even the opposite, that "the constellation of shame-fear-guilt […] contributes towards developing psychological defence mechanisms such as denial, escapism and projection including de-solidarization" (Gutiérrez Rodríguez et al. 2020, 187). In this logic, the aim of

anti-discrimination work as it is part of the objectives of critical pedagogy, should not be inducing shame on the ones that are complicit in enacting discrimination. It might also have to be treated critically if students engaging in anti-discrimination work do it driven by their own shame about their own position of benefiting from the very same structures of discrimination (Gutiérrez Rodríguez et al. 2020, 187–188).

Another critical perspective on the role of shame in empathetic interactions in critical pedagogy highlights the shift of focus within the learning space when addressing shame. Similar to what has been discussed in the context of pedagogy of discomfort, which uses shame as a pedagogical tool, the focus on shame in critical pedagogy contexts fails to address the different experiences within a learning community when learning about oppression. Even though, it can be helpful to highlight the situatedness of discourses on shame in the context of empathetic engagement in critical pedagogy learning spaces, critical pedagogy again needs to be sensitive towards not centering the feelings of those whose epistemologies and experiences tend to already be at the center of discourses. If this is not considered in critical pedagogy theory and practice, it may lead to moving the focus away from the experiences and emotions of those who are already marginalized within learning spaces (Leonardo and Porter 2010, 148). Through that, critical pedagogy learning spaces may foster the creation of safe spaces for those students in dominant positions of power by catering their image and emotional wellbeing. Centering the emotionalities of those students who are in dominant positions of power bears the risk that "[t]hrough the avoidance of conflict and the emphasis on personal and image management, it maintains the self-image and understanding of whiteness and reveals a refusal to change through the other" (Leonardo and Porter 2010, 148).

Besides the contributions of scholars on shame in the context of empathy in critical pedagogy, other emotions that play a vital role in the learning process need to be addressed as well, particularly when discussing affective concepts like empathy. As conversations about racism and other forms of oppression can be painful in many ways for all subjects involved,

there might be a strong reluctance to deal with the topic rooting in the desire to avoid dealing with certain emotions of one's own and other students, that may surface in the process. Students might be left angry, hurt and offended for various reasons (Zembylas 2012, 117–118). In that sense, it will be relevant to look at approaches that move away from centering experiences of the oppressor, particularly as this is what decolonial scholars often demand. The next subsection introduces such an approach. Here the emotions and experiences of those who are considered the oppressed are aimed to be centered.

3.3.3 Anger and the pedagogy of fear

Despite the focus on discomforting emotions that occur when being confronted with topics and testimonies around oppression - topics that for some students are not part of their experience - it does not pick up the emotional experiences of those who involuntarily have to deal with these topics on a daily basis. It is not the same for the white student to learn about racism as it is for the black student, or for the cis male student to learn about misogyny as for the student who suffers from it. Such dialogues are entered from different positions in learning spaces:

> intellectual for the former, lived for the latter […]. In an apparently common quest for mutual racial understanding, whites and people of color participate in a violence that becomes an integral part of the process and seeking a 'safe space' is itself a form of violence insofar as it fails to recognize the myth of such geography in interracial exchange (Leonardo and Porter 2010, 151–152).

Considering the ways through which "critical pedagogies informed by emotion highlight the practices through which certain emotions and knowledges become of most worth" (Zembylas 2012, 119), it is relevant to ask what it means to learn and feel something about topics such as race and racism and further how the learning space can provide a suitable space for every individual within the learning community to reach productive dialogues on these issues (Zembylas 2012, 119).

One approach that emphasizes on centering the voices and emotional experiences of those living with experiences of oppression is the one of pedagogy of fear offered by Leonardo and Porter. Their elaboration on a pedagogy of fear brings in aspects of violence and safety into classroom spaces, whereby they focus on race talk being at the center of teaching. In the context of affective experiences and empathy, they highlight that those students in dominant positions of power may perceive the learning about own complicities in oppression as violence towards them. Similar to what has been described before, this learning is connected to feelings of shame and guilt (Leonardo and Porter 2010, 150). It is important, in such teaching contexts, to feel, recognize and acknowledge these emotions. If white students would disregard these emotionalities, "misconceptions of them arise, tightening the shackles of racism even more" (Matias 2016, 2–3). The fear which arises from this risk of being vulnerable around one's own shame and guilt is necessary in order to enable a comprehensive learning experience that leads towards social change. Nevertheless, it "represents one of the many walls that people of color have to scale as they attempt to convince whites that race matters in a manner different from whites' understanding of it" (Leonardo and Porter 2010, 150). The risk for those who experience oppression themselves and cannot choose when and whether or not to deal with this topic, is given through another kind of exposure. If they choose not to remain silent while also being denied the space within the learning community to promote their own growth, the other students' safety will remain untouched and their risk for exposure remains low. If they choose, however, to take the risk of exposing their experiences and opinions, they might also risk to be perceived as illogical and irrational and experience violence (Leonardo and Porter 2010, 140).

Therefore, it is essential to bring the attention to those students who suffer from oppression and to center their emotional experiences in learning spaces of critical pedagogy. Even though, and to stick with the example of talking about racism in the learning space, "race dialogue is almost never safe for people of color in mixed-racial company" (Leonardo and Porter 2010, 147), it needs to be a priority to create spaces that consider and aim to reduce the

violence, students with experiences of oppression are exposed to. The challenge is then for the whole learning community to create this environment while at the same time addressing the feelings of discomfort that may arise to reach a comprehensive learning outcome. This kind of learning environment will bring about violence for all individuals. It is, however, "[a] certain kind of violence that shifts the standards of humanity for people of color and whites" (Leonardo and Porter 2010, 141). In other words, and as indicated previously, for those considered the oppressor, violence is necessary to push them to account for race and their own complicity, and further to not protect whiteness and white emotions in a space considered "safe". And for those students who are seen as the oppressed, this violence is hardly avoidable as Leonardo and Porter described. It may, however, help in the "search for liberatory possibilities" (Leonardo and Porter 2010, 141). This approach avoids sidestepping important issues that race dialogue needs to address. In doing so, it fosters dealing with the educative benefits that emotions such as anger and frustration offer, which are inevitable for a fruitful and liberatory conversation to take place among students (Leonardo and Porter 2010, 148).

For the application of empathy, this means that its original and historical definition lacks the inclusion and consideration of the different emotional experiences of students in the context of conversations around oppression and experiences related to it. Further, it runs the risk to center white emotions as it has been elaborated in the context of discomforting emotional experiences. However, there seems to be a need to discuss these emotions, whereby Leonardo and Porter's approach offers ways to tackle this dilemma.

One aspect that Leonardo and Porter discuss in their approach has been surfacing at several points in this thesis. It is the problem of the implications of power structures and dynamics in empathy, and the essentialization of emotions. Besides being a problematic aspect in empathy discourse, this is a common issue in race dialogue as "[t]oo often, whites interpret minority anger as a distancing move, or the confirmation of the 'angry' person of color archetype, rather than its opposite: an attempt to engage the other, to be vulnerable to the other,

to be recognized by the other, to be the other for the other" (Leonardo and Porter 2010, 150–151). This is an issue, that needs to be discussed in empathy discourses in critical pedagogy theory and practice. Boler points out, emotions are political in various ways. Discourses around emotions serve the interests of patriarchy, colonial narratives and capitalism (Boler 1999, 7). Even though, the scope of this thesis does not allow the space to dig deeper into the topic of the politics of emotion in relation to empathy, it is important to consider this discourse when framing empathy in learning spaces of critical pedagogy. The one who is showing empathy should not uncritically perceive the emotions that are displayed in a way that does not only frame them as naturally appearing and connected to someone's identity, but also perpetuates narratives of coloniality and racism as pointed out by Leonardo and Porter. If empathy in learning spaces aims to be transformative, it needs to be sensitive towards the essentializing and universalizing notions in discourses around emotions and question to which extent these notions are related to relations of power (Hemmings 2012, 152).

Having introduced an approach that deeply questions power and aims to center the emotions and epistemologies of those who experience oppression, the next subsection introduces two concepts, that if brought together may offer potential for an emancipatory empathy in critical pedagogy. Other than pedagogy of fear, the following proposal is not only aiming for a critical take on empathy, but also addresses the pedagogical framework.

3.3.4 A decolonial lens for alternative(s to) empathy: epistemic disobedience

Whereas the previous approaches still partially rely on the oppressor/oppressed duality and may center the feelings of those in dominant positions of power, this subsection discusses ideas that aim to overcome this duality and put decoloniality at the center. Concepts like "subaltern empathy" or "alternative empathies" offer such starting points that can be useful for critical pedagogy teaching (Zembylas 2019b, 411). To elaborate these, I want to bring in different voices that carry together the conceptual ideas of decolonizing empathy in general and

the methodological tools that may help brining in these ideas in critical pedagogy learning spaces.

One approach to empathy that I consider particularly relevant is not directly taken from or based on critical pedagogy thought. Critical pedagogy could, however, learn from it as it brings in a radical decolonial notion to empathy. It is Pedwell's idea of "alternative empathies" (Pedwell 2013, 21). The approach discusses how the affective and the structural are intertwined in the context of decolonization and diaspora. In that context, the structure of feelings and feelings of structure are underscored, which "produce and mediate us differentially as subjects and geopolitical communities who feel" (Pedwell 2013, 21).

Pedwell refers to "confrontational empathy" as a result of postcolonial melancholia from the side of those who are affected by oppression. This type of empathy refers to "an empathy from the margins that, in illuminating the lived connections between colonialism and its affective afterlives" brings a persistent and open connection to the colonial past (Pedwell 2013, 25). At the heart of this confrontational empathy is the questioning of hegemonic power. Instead of seeing empathy in its neoliberal and uncritical frames, which conceive it as somehow a "luxury of the privileged", empathy in Pedwell's elaboration works differently (Pedwell 2013, 25–26). In fact, confrontational empathy functions in ways that do not enable those in dominant positions of power to put themselves in the other's shoes,

> but rather as an uncompromising mode of affective perspective-taking by those usually viewed merely as empathetic postcolonial 'objects' that illuminates the effects of 'the past' in the present and holds to account differently located subjects for their role in perpetuating the social and political status quo. While this empathy refuses to repress the sadness, anger, and shame that fuel it, it testifies to how these affects can be affirmative in their demand to re-open the archives of history, to keep 'the past' alive precisely for the political work of the present (Pedwell 2013, 25–26).

Empathy, in this understanding, is not merely an emotional experience that creates connection or distances in the present, time and place wise. It is rather described as an affective relation, which – if applied in critical pedagogy learning spaces – can help students to engage

with their own understandings of time and space in a critical and imaginative way. If the dominant liberal frames of empathy draw the picture of a "teleology of affective (and moral) progress" (Pedwell 2013, 26), confrontational empathy as part of the idea of alternative empathies, as Pedwell describes them, can be divided partially by its characteristic of being open to thinking and feeling time as something other than progressive, as well as space as something else than self-contained (Pedwell 2013, 26). This notion of empathy could be understood "as a critical receptivity to being affected by ways of seeing, being and feeling that do not simply confirm what we think we already know" (Pedwell 2013, 26). Therefore, empathy can pose a concept that is expressed by voices "from the margins" and does not necessarily imply care, concern and sympathy towards the other but rather aims for shifting the others awareness towards their own complicity and accountability in oppressive structures (Pedwell 2013, 21). Confrontational empathy disagrees with liberal and critical discourses that frame empathy as a journey, and aims rather towards feminist and anti-racist literature by calling empathy "a potential catalyst for a larger affective journey which can move the privileged subject from empathy, to selftransformation [sic], to recognition of responsibility or obligation, to action with the potential to contribute to wider social change" (Pedwell 2013, 21).

So far, there is no discussion of Pedwell's suggestion for confrontational empathy within the context of critical pedagogy theory. There are, however, various scholars that pave the theoretical path towards methodologies of decolonial pedagogy. These could offer a valuable point of departure for reasoning about how to implement ideas such as Pedwell's into critical pedagogy. One approach that offers very practical insights into ways of decolonial pedagogy is the one given by Velásquez Atehortúa. The author discusses how the classroom dynamics not only influence the distribution of power in learning spaces, but also the representation of students from different socio-cultural backgrounds. This issue can be connected to questions of representation and power within societies at large. Following the Freirean pedagogy,

> the distribution of power in the educational institution is seen as an enactment for the power relation in society at large […]. In this light, the social asymmetries in society at large continue to be perpetuated in university classrooms through the exclusion of students from participation in teaching situations (Velásquez Atehortúa 2020, 156).

For that reason Velásquez Atehortúa elaborates an approach that counters this issue of representation, which they call an "effect of the coloniality of pedagogical practices" (Velásquez Atehortúa 2020, 156). A concept that can challenge this exclusion within educational practice is epistemic disobedience. The term was coined by Mignolo to describe the delinking of knowledges from universal Eurocentric epistemologies, in order to dismantle the hegemonic colonial knowledge production in institutions of higher education (Mignolo 2009, 173). Velásquez Atehortúa uses this concept within a pedagogical context. The approach is meant to build a frame for a decolonial education with a strong focus on intersectionality, in order to disrupt "the mechanisms that subordinate students, also when the class is composed of white, non queer, young, middle-class students" (Velásquez Atehortúa 2020, 157). In other words, this framework invites students to generate their own epistemic disobedience, which will then enable their liberation from the assumption of an expected role in the system of oppression (Velásquez Atehortúa 2020, 158).

Intersectionality in this context is used as a disobedient epistemology that challenges "the entanglements between patriarchy, racism, capitalism, ageism, ableism, and speciesism into the notions of feminism" (Velásquez Atehortúa 2020, 162). This resonates with notions from feminist critical pedagogy, which advocates learning space that move away from students dwelling on their own experiences, but instead creates room for a participatory and critical sharing of knowledge. Ultimately, in a feminist classroom students have the opportunity of an educative experience that engages in the practice of freedom in the sense of critical pedagogies liberatory objectives (hooks 1994, 15). Similar to Velásquez Atehortúa's framework, a feminist critical pedagogy cannot go without addressing intersections of race and gender. Therefore, approaches to decolonizing gender need to be included in in curricula to enable a

comprehensive feminist experience of education as a liberating force that can lead to social change. Reasoning about the coloniality of gender, enables students to think beyond a one-sided understanding of oppression (Lugones 2010, 746), and can offer valuable starting point to critically approach the oppressor/oppressed duality in critical pedagogy theory based on Freirean thought. In other words, in order to implement empathy in a critical and decolonizing way in critical pedagogy, the preconditions in theory and practice need to be set in a decolonizing way. Intersectionality must be at the root of teaching and learning as

> [d]rawing from women of color feminism, lesbian feminism, transformational feminisms, radical philosophies, US Third World feminism, and anticolonial theorists, queer of color critique develops a better understanding of how race, sexuality, gender, and other forms of oppression are interrelated. Queer and non-queer scholars challenge dominant (White) epistemologies in order to analyze oppression and the marginalization of people of color, especially queers of color, by sharing their own histories, counter-narratives, and *testimonios* while giving birth to new epistemologies (Vega 2020, 429).

Such testimonies and counter-narratives come along with a variety of emotional experiences. For a decolonial empathy in critical pedagogy this means that emotions in connection to affective concepts such as empathy need to be thought as political and public, not a private and universalized asset. This will allow the learning community to get an idea of "the relationship between social control, hegemony, and emotions" (Boler 1999, 6). Bringing a decolonial empathy to critical pedagogy could happen through adopting new curricula that addresses and adopts much of the critique that has been expressed previously on framings of empathy just as much as critical pedagogy itself.

Thus, this way to decolonial pedagogy addresses the issue of language, as expressed previously in the critique of scholars like wa Thiong'o, which is an issue that reflects in empathetic encounters in learning spaces. Velásquez Atehortúa reasons that language needs to be addressed with "calls for translanguaging practices among the students to use their extended linguistic repertoire" (Velásquez Atehortúa 2020, 159). As an aspect of communication practices, this affects empathy discourses in critical pedagogy learning spaces. The framework

that is used here is a participatory one for the exchanges of knowledge within a learning space that is composed of multiple identities. Empathy is enacted through the exploration of the "politics of emotion to erase barriers toward potential others, and including literature on coalitional politics to pursue radical and transformative knowledge that can ignite social justice" (Velásquez Atehortúa 2020, 162). The politics of emotions expresses not only a critique that points out how emotions are not a private, individual deal. It also emphasizes on "a critique of a model of social structure that neglects the emotional intensities, which allow such structures to be reified as forms of being" (Ahmed 2004b, 12).

This can be taken to the context of epistemic disobedience. It underscores the students' recognition of oppression as a substantive common denominator through learning about the differentiations of oppression along the lines of class, race, ability, gender, and age. By understanding the different dimensions of oppression, it could be easier for students "to arouse disgust, rage, sympathy, and solidarity, and to begin to contest cold reason with a politics of emotion […]. This frame functioned as a bridge to a classroom driven by feeling-thinking […], and to awaken compassion" (Velásquez Atehortúa 2020, 167). Through this methodology, the course was on a path to "decolonizing itself" through the act of connecting the curriculum to other epistemic coordinates (Velásquez Atehortúa 2020, 167).

This approach may hold space for Pedwell's take on alternative empathies in regard to emotions in the classroom, as discussed before. The politics of emotions here relate to the previously mentioned nexus of coloniality and its affective continuities, in the context of confrontative empathy. The connection that Pedwell makes can offer forms of affective engagement in critical pedagogy learning spaces that allow individuals to break away from patterns and positions that are fixed in place, and offer connections that could be helpful in thinking and feeling "possibilities for political change beyond the status quo, to conceive of social worlds in which existing lines of privilege are radically re-assembled rather than simply reproduced" (Pedwell 2013, 25). This aligns with Ahmed's take on solidarity, whereby the

author does not assume that all struggles that students face are the same, all pain is the same or all expectations of a future resemble. Instead, solidarity here includes “commitment, and work, as well as the recognition that even if we do not have the same feelings, or the same lives, or the same bodies, we do live on common ground” (Ahmed 2004b, 189). Employing these ideas to empathy in critical pedagogy theory and practice can help students to emancipate themselves from dogmatic narratives and experiences that were imposed on them. Through that, they are enabled to be empowered to create a better future and society (Damianidou and Phtiaka 2016, 241).

3.4 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to elaborate comprehensively why empathy in critical pedagogy needs to be approached critically and might need to be reframed. In order to embed the critique within the chapter, it offered an outline of why it is necessary to bring such critical questioning and new approaches to empathy in critical pedagogy. Subsequently, the critique highlighted different aspects about empathy in critical pedagogy theory and practice, in order to emphasize on its complex entanglement with power in regard to relations of race, gender and other markers of oppression. These different aspects are related to empathy itself in different ways.

Firstly, the chapter pointed out the problematic understanding of empathy being something one can choose to assert, focusing on the relations of power and the aspect of recognition that plays a role here. This lead to the questioning of power relations in regard to sociopolitical relations such as race, whereby empathy in critical pedagogy is criticized to fix the role of the empathizer onto the person in the dominant position of power, which is often a white Western individual. The critique highlighted that this may reinforce inequalities along relations of race.

Further, the risk of emotional appropriation related to empathy was brought to discussion. Hereby the problem lies in the appropriation of the emotions of the one experiencing oppression, as this may not only lead to centering the one empathizing, but also objectify the empathized in the sense of a "native informant". Subsequently, the chapter pointed out the problem with recognition in relation to empathy. Particularly in the context of power structures and relations within classrooms connected to different experiences of oppression, recognition determines what kind of knowledge is at the center of learning.

The chapter also shed light on critical views on the coloniality of language in empathy. Here, language was analyzed in relation to power as a great deal of critical pedagogy theory and practice is based on anglophone languages and their colonial legacies and assumes a universal understanding and expression of emotions in terms of communication. This aspect of emotions was further picked up in an emphasis on the politics of emotions and affect, which at the same time is critical of assuming emotions as something private.

Finally, a decolonial feminist analysis underscores the problem of critical pedagogy thought failing to reason beyond the gender binary. Moreover, it problematizes the essentialization of womanhood by assuming women to be more capable of empathizing.

With the aim of implementing this critique, this chapter explored critical approaches to empathy and affectivity in critical pedagogical theory and practice. Pedagogies of discomfort contend that addressing discomforting emotions may be a valid pedagogical strategy. However, it might risk reinforcing classroom power dynamics by strengthening the marginalization of those students who are experiencing oppression. Nevertheless, pedagogies of discomfort offer a useful insight for empathy in critical pedagogy; it enables to interrogate universal understandings of emotions that are individualized and, therefore, disconnected from their political dimension. By discussing the challenges and opportunities of emotions like shame and anger, this chapter showed how emotional experiences can play an important role in understanding empathy critically in critical pedagogy. It further offers insights into the complex

entanglement of certain emotions with experiences of oppression. These emotions may offer a valuable starting point for learning about oppression and bringing in emancipatory notions into affective concepts such as empathy.

Finally, the chapter addressed a new approach to empathy, confrontational empathy, that was not only framed within a postcolonial context but also aims to center those individuals with experiences of oppression. It also aims for a collective learning process that includes those individuals that benefit from the very same system of oppression. The section incorporated a decolonial approach to critical pedagogy based on epistemic disobedience. Merging epistemic disobedience with confrontational empathy might provide a foundation to think about new ways of learning and using empathy in critical pedagogy. Finally, the last section underscores that such new ways need to be accompanied by an intersectional understanding of oppression and include decolonial feminist perspectives. In doing so, the entanglement of experiences of oppression based on race, gender, class and other markers of oppression receive the attention they deserve without neglecting the affective experiences that come along with such conversations in spaces of critical pedagogy practice.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This thesis critically assessed empathy in critical pedagogy of higher education through the lens of decolonial theory and decolonial feminism, in order to find new ways of addressing empathy. To do so, it outlined the historical and genealogical background of empathy conceptualizations in different disciplines. In accordance with its objectives, the thesis identified and delineated discourses of empathy in its historical Western origins as well as its contemporary, neoliberal understandings and uses. Moreover, it elaborated the ways in which empathy is conceptualized and defined within critical pedagogy of higher education. By doing so, it analyzed these discourses of empathy in critical pedagogy from a decolonial feminist perspective. Lastly, the thesis proposed approaches to empathy and alternative concepts in critical pedagogy of higher education from a decolonial feminist perspective.

In order to give an overview of the context analyzed in the thesis, it fleshed out the coming into being and objectives of critical pedagogy, and elaborated the ways in which empathy surfaces in critical pedagogy theory and practice while it highlighted particular contexts of differences within learning spaces, and teacher-student relations. Based on this theoretical and contextual foundation, the thesis then identified the problems of empathy in critical pedagogy related to aspects of power and oppression through the application of a decolonial lens.

The first chapter began with an introduction of the historical and genealogical roots of empathy. It showed the strong contextualization of empathy discourses in Western academia and emphasized on different disciplines that have dealt with conceptualizations of empathy historically, such as psychology and philosophy. The chapter also underscored the situatedness of empathy in discourses around affect and emotions. In order to bridge the historical discourses of empathy with recent ones, the chapter provided a section that discussed empathy in contemporary politics and academia, highlighting its connection to neoliberal discourses, including discourses around social justice and development. The last section delineated a

comprehensive overview of the thesis' underlying perspective based on decolonial theory and decolonial feminism. Further, this section applied a critical decolonial feminist lens to the discourses of empathy discussed so far. This critique of historic and contemporary conceptualizations and definitions of empathy aimed to help situating empathy within critical discourses. In that, a connection could be drawn from discourses of empathy to questions of power and coloniality.

We learn from chapter 1 about the strong embeddedness of popular contemporary empathy discourses in Western historical approaches to empathy. Historically, empathy was introduced in various disciplines such as psychology and philosophy, whereby intersubjective understandings of the self and the other play a significant role. It becomes clear that in these approaches empathy itself is asserted to be inherently "good". The chapter elaborated how contemporary, neoliberal approaches to empathy, for example in development discourses, are based on these assumptions of empathy being universally good, and generally base much of their reasoning on moral aspects of good and bad. We learn that empathy is often referred to and used in political contexts, and that it is deemed necessary for any kind of social transformation in the liberal and neoliberal sense. In the theoretical outline of decoloniality, we can see that decolonial thinking and doing begins by analyzing those spaces in which it can expedite the process of decolonization. This includes the struggle for decolonial liberation. This includes the struggle for decolonial liberation from oppression based on gender, race, sexuality, class, ability, and their intersections

After applying this decolonial frame on the understandings of empathy, we learn that implicitly many of these definitions and conceptualizations of empathy assume that it is always the subject in the dominant position of power that empathizes with the marginalized, oppressed other. Moreover, based on what we have learned from the historical and genealogical outline, it becomes visible that empathy as a concept has rarely been attended to critically, particularly in the context of power discourses in disciplines such as psychology and philosophy, as well as

in neoliberal discourses. This puts into question how assumptions like the one of empathy being a universally good notion into question by relating it to its entanglement with power dynamics and structures which are often dismissed in empathy discourses.

The second chapter zoomed in on the context of this thesis which is critical pedagogy of higher education. Hereby, theory and practice have been considered. In order to give an overview of critical pedagogy the first section explained why it is deemed a necessary pedagogy, what it is, what it does, and what it aims for. In that, Paulo Freire's work is particularly highlighted as it is considered foundational to all critical pedagogy thought and practice. Another emphasized point is made on the aspect of difference in critical pedagogy as it introduces questions that would be expanded in the thesis.

To connect the context of critical pedagogy with empathy, the chapter also indicates why empathy matters for critical pedagogy. Based on this theoretical foundation, the chapter digs into the question of how empathy has been addressed in critical pedagogy and presents different scholars' approaches and definitions of empathy. Starting again with Freire's contributions, the chapter moves into contemporary takes on empathy in critical pedagogy and offers a particular focus on critical pedagogy in relation to learning spaces where students come from different sociocultural backgrounds and have different experiences with oppression. Moreover, the chapter sets a focus on empathy in student-teacher relations, as these are discussed comprehensively in critical pedagogy literature and entail power relations which need to be unpacked.

We learn from chapter 2 that critical pedagogy extensively addresses questions of coloniality and oppression, while it emphasizes on centering the voices, experiences, and epistemologies of those who are considered the oppressed. The chapter shows that critical pedagogy sees education as political and deals with questions of equality and justice. In that, it strives for social transformation and is mainly based on the work of Paulo Freire, who takes a major position in critical pedagogy thought. His pedagogical insights, particularly from his

pedagogy of the oppressed, inspired many of the voices that get to speak in this thesis. In connection to empathy in critical pedagogy, it becomes visible that notions of empathy in critical pedagogy are strongly related to conceptualizations of love and solidarity, which were originally addressed by Freire. Freire's definitions of these are closely related to later interpretations of empathy by other critical pedagogues.

The chapter further highlights that empathy has not only been undertheorized within critical pedagogy, but also makes clear that there is a lack of empirical research on the mechanisms and approaches of empathy in such learning spaces where critical pedagogy is applied. In the context of difference in classrooms, we learn that many approaches to empathy in critical pedagogy emphasize on overcoming differences and the role of culture and interculturality, in relation to which empathy is considered to be of great value. At the same time, these approaches barely address power and oppression in relation to empathy as a phenomenon itself. Regarding teacher-student relations, the power relations that exist between teachers and students are indirectly addressed in the presented concepts as they are concomitantly framed as a responsibility which the teacher needs to reflect on when learning about students' experiences. There is, however, no general questioning of power relations within the aforementioned approaches to empathy.

At this point of the thesis, it may have become clearer why there is a gap within the various takes on empathy in critical pedagogy. There appears to be a lack of critical approaches that question the entanglements of oppression and power with empathy. To unpack this gap, chapter 3 started off with a comprehensive analysis of empathy in critical pedagogy, using a decolonial feminist lens. This chapter's aim was to profoundly explain why empathy in critical pedagogy needs to be approached critically and how it could be reframed. The critique pointed out different issues related to empathy in critical pedagogy. From a decolonial perspective, the focus here was set on questions of relations and imbalances of power. This focus was set

because most empathy discourses in critical pedagogy appear to disregard questions of oppression along relations of race, gender, class, ability etc.

The first part of chapter started with carving out the problems around empathy being a choice, with a particular focus on teacher-student relations. Looking at the issue of empathy as a choice, we learn that if empathy is an option to choose for someone in a dominant position of power, it may give this individual power over recognizing, acknowledging, and legitimizing what the other person expressed. Such an understanding of empathy can maintain power structures. As this can also lead to the fixing of the empathizer and empathized onto positions of power, which is related to the power relations in empathy in connection to race in critical pedagogy.

This is followed by a critique on empathy in relation to how race and racism are addressed in critical pedagogy. Hereby, power and whiteness in empathy were addressed by explaining, how empathy is often fixed onto the white student in a dominant position of power. This issue speaks of the assumption that empathy is often approached as a capacity that is only reserved for those considered the privileged who empathize with the less privileged. This reminds of neoliberal framings of empathy such as those in contexts of development discourses. In that regard, there could be seen a parallel between the oppressor-oppressed duality to the one of empathizer-empathized. In that sense, categories of the Western empathizer in dominant position of power and the poor, oppressed empathized from the colonies are assigned to students.

Subsequently, the problem of emotional appropriation, which we can find in empathy in relation to difference and power imbalances, was addressed. In this case, the person in a dominant position of power does not acknowledge differences regarding experiences in relation to oppression. Thereby, as the critique elaborated, the one empathizing may falsely claim the pain and experiences of the other person as their own. Consequently, those students who share their experiences of oppression may be further marginalized and decentered within the learning

space. Another problematic aspect covered here is the way, in which empathy becomes a tool to educate those students in dominant positions of power through the experiences of those living through oppression, who are placed as the object of study.

Another critique that was voiced is related to the aspect of recognition in empathy, which underscores the connection of recognition and power in learning spaces. As such, recognition, even though it is seen as a way to liberation by some scholars, is related to hegemonic power relations by being connected to validation. When empathy is applied in the Western understanding, recognition, and validation of experiences in a learning space may determine, which knowledges and epistemologies are considered worthy of attention, and which are rejected.

Further, the chapter shed light on the power implications of language in empathy in critical pedagogy, particularly when oppression is at the center of learning. Language is often taken as a given in intercultural contexts without questioning its implications with power and colonial continuities. We learn from this critique that there is a gap in the framings of empathy in critical pedagogy when it comes to the languages students speak in relation to their sociocultural background and the overall relations of power in the classroom. It became clear that if the only language a student has in order to speak of the colonial wounds and oppression which they experience is the language of the colonizer, this has a tremendous impact on empathetic encounters in classroom communication.

As the social construction of emotions is connected to language, the chapter addressed the relevance of the politics of emotions in empathy. Considering emotions as constructed, relational and political, as opposed to the view of emotions as private, shows how important it is to approach them with a critical lens in relation to empathy. Particularly these emotions that arise when talking about oppression have a key role in the kind of empathy discussed in this thesis. Empathy, as it has been approached within critical pedagogy, may be a limited concept to turn to in such conversations. This is an important insight in order to understand how little

critical pedagogy literature fleshes out the emotional processes in relation to empathy, and their political implications.

This aspect of emotions was connected to the last critiqued issue in this chapter, which looked at empathy in critical pedagogy from a decolonial feminist lens. We understand that feminist critique calls for a critical discourse on empathy in critical pedagogy and specifically targets the universal framing of emotions within the concepts and the way empathy has been essentialized in womanhood. The critique further calls out the popular assumption of gender as a binary division and limiting gender-based oppression to this opposition. This manifests itself for example in the use of binary language, which is often related to questions of identity. Not only the erasure of queer identities in language and discourse, but also the lack of intersectional approaches in discourses around emotions in critical pedagogy is at the center of feminist critique. This critique again entailed questions of power and asks how empathy can work in spaces where emotions are seen as private and universally experienced.

In response to the aspects, which were critically assessed in the first part of the chapter, the second part offered an insight into suggested approaches that might bring new, emancipatory ideas to empathy in critical pedagogy. As scholars have reasoned that empathy in its Western conceptualizations and definitions cannot work in critical pedagogy, those approaches aim to address the concepts considering the aspects that were put into question.

The first presented concept is pedagogies of discomfort. Here, the chapter outlined the importance and meaning of discomfort in critical pedagogy. We learn that discomforting emotions are part of anti-oppressive education as it is found in critical pedagogy. Scholars argue that discomforting emotions need to be addressed in order to avoid students being hindered in their transformation process within learning spaces. These emotions are considered to be crucial and, thus, need to be addressed to enable authentic empathic engagement. In relation to empathy, pedagogies of discomfort disagree with the common framing of setting aside one's own emotional experiences when empathizing and emphasize on the importance of addressing

one's own emotional discomfort. However, I treat this approach rather critically as there is a risk of centering white feelings in multiracial, multinational encounters, which would then run the risk of reinforcing the power imbalances within learning spaces.

Subsequently, the next subsection highlighted the meaning of shame in critical pedagogy, as it has been reasoned to be a pedagogical tool. Shame in pedagogy is seen as an important emotion to support dealing with shameful histories and often connected to whiteness in race dialogue. We learn that shame is included in pedagogical practices to make those who are considered the oppressor shamefully aware of their complicities in oppression, in order to transform them to act socially responsible according to critical pedagogy objectives. However, there is critique that the emotion, despite making the one in dominant position of power shamefully aware, may not actually work in favor of the critical pedagogy objectives as shame may merely bear witness to hegemonic affective alliances, but not work against hegemonic power. Moreover, those students in dominant positions do not necessarily have to feel shame in order to understand their complicity in oppressive systems. Locating shame at the center of learning, again, runs the risk of centering white emotionalities.

With the next approach we could see a more critical take on the workings of affect and empathy in critical learning spaces. The idea of a pedagogy of fear entails questions of violence and safety in learning spaces and focusses particularly on race dialogue. It has a strong focus on centering the perspectives, epistemologies, and emotional experiences of those who are living with experiences of oppression. Even though some notions of the previous approaches are included in it, such as recognizing and feeling uncomfortable emotions, this pedagogy particularly highlights anger as an emotion that is often fixed onto to those students experiencing racism and encourages learning spaces to use this anger as a starting point for engagement and vulnerability in the learning process.

The last suggestion in the chapter was connected to pedagogy of fear, as it also aims at centering those students that are often considered marginalized. It is not an approach itself but

rather a suggestion for merging the concept of alternative empathy and the idea of epistemic disobedience. This subsection showed that confrontational empathy questions hegemonic power and promotes an affective perspective-taking by those who are often viewed as the oppressed. Confrontational empathy aims for being affected by forms of feeling, being and seeing that do not merely verify what we already know.

I decided to take this concept to critical pedagogy by joining it with the concept of epistemic disobedience in critical pedagogy, while particularly emphasizing on a decolonial feminist stance. Epistemic disobedience is based on intersectionality and as such challenges the intertwined relations of all forms of hegemonic colonial oppression. For a decolonial empathy that means considering emotions in learning spaces as public and relational, and implementing them into the processes of questioning hegemony and power. Such decolonial notions in critical pedagogy can support students with their own emancipation from those narratives and epistemologies that have been imposed on them.

Limitations

During the process of creating this thesis, previously expected limitations were confirmed, and new limitations arose. Much of the expected limitations stem from the scarcity of literature on the debated issues. There was little comprehensive coverage in critical pedagogy and empathy literature of queer and disabled authors highlighting the perspectives they draw from their experiences. I see a strong limitation here, as there appears to be a gap in research around such experiences in critical learning spaces. I think that in the context of empathy in critical pedagogy questions of ability, gender, and sexuality need to be further and more deeply addressed.

Moreover, what limited this research was the impossibility of covering theoretical literature on empathy comprehensively, as there are various disciplines that deal with empathy which were not covered in the thesis.

I see another limitation in the difficulty of framing empathy without addressing the universal assumptions about affect emotions that Western approaches often entail. It becomes challenging in the context of spaces where emotions are read, expressed and interpreted in ways that Eurocentric epistemologies disregard. I have observed that this may be a reason why empathy in critical pedagogy remains a vague concept that seems to be hard to grasp. Addressing emotions and affect from a more political stance that considers colonial and neocolonial imbrications may open ways to reframing empathy more comprehensively.

Due to time constraints, I could not add field research to this thesis, which may have brought valuable insights into the discussed topic. Interviews with students in the international environment I am studying in may have brought some new, critical aspects to this thesis.

Further research

This thesis offers multiple incentives and starting points for further research. As the topic of empathy is covered so comprehensively in literature of other disciplines such as neuroscience and biology, and also in the context of care ethics, it could be interesting to add such frameworks to have more comprehensive understanding of the origins and entanglements of empathy.

Further, it will be intriguing to bring questions regarding a critical, decolonial assessment of approaches to (affective) concepts in pedagogy, such as empathy, into Peace Studies and peace pedagogy.

A comprehensive approach from a philosophical perspective that analyses the concept from its root until its workings in critical pedagogy theory and practice would be very insightful, particularly in relation to decolonial theory, and offers room for further research.

Considering the lack of literature covering the entanglement of empathy and other forms of oppression that this thesis does not address, such as ableism, this gap could offer an important starting point for further research.

It could be interesting, to look for approaches to empathy or similar concepts outside the Western academic sphere and search for indigenous and black epistemologies to see what they can offer concerning emancipatory pedagogies such as critical pedagogy.

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