Pedagogies of Reconciliation: challenging social injustice and forging new social pacts

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I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians across the lands on which we live and work, and pay my respects to Elders both past and present

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Structure of the seminar

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- The project: Aims and purposes
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- Reconciliation, education and pedagogies
- Reconciliation and indigenous epistemologies
- Conclusion

Introduction

- Where I come from: studies of violence/studies of peace as separated fields

- What people do in the name of *reconciliation*?

- Political, methodological and ethical questions
  - what kind of knowledge is produced and for what purposes
  - Documentation, narration and representation
  - who is represented/underrepresented? Which regime of representation?

The project: Aims and purposes

- Aims
  - Develop a research-based, educational perspective on 'reconciliation' in societies
- Purposes:
  - (a) to map the educational practices currently used to support reconciliation, focussing on the cases of South Africa and Latin America
  - (b) to develop a conceptual analysis of reconciliation as education, building on contemporary work in peace education
  - (c) to develop a framework for policy development in this field
- Question:
  - Is reconciliation teachable?

Reconciliation: empty signifier or social practice?

- Key concepts to understand, transform and manage conflicts and injustices
- Global politics of reconciliation
  - 42 truth commissions since 1982, 19 had 'reconciliation' in its title
  - Reconstruction of war-torn societies (Moon, 2008); transformation of past wrongs (Humphrey, 2005);rebuilding of social relationships after protracted conflicts (Lederach, 2001)
- Reconciliation as moral enterprise (South Africa)
  - Deployed in terms of truth-telling and healing through forgiveness
  - http://theforgivenessproject.com/stories/desmond-tutu-south-africa/
- Reconciliation as structural transformation (Colombia)
  - Deployed in terms of reparation of individual and collective victims
  - https://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/
- Reconciliation as dealing with colonial past (Australia)
  - Deployed in terms of rebuilding relationships, promoting respect and trust between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Reconciliation: empty signifier or social practice?

- Reconciliation as empty signifier: a vehicle that carries a whole diversity of meanings that vary according with each context and political culture

- Judith Renner (2015): the vagueness and flexibility of reconciliation was not a problem but a potential. It allowed the articulation of antagonists for a new collective purpose. It was a contingent articulation

- However, reconciliation is not just a rhetoric device negotiated between political antagonist parties. It is also a complex set of social practices.

- Reconciliation as ecology of epistemologies to deal with conflicts

Reconciliation, education and pedagogies

- Formal education
  - Right to education
  - Incorporation of peace and reconciliation in curricula
- Informal education
  - Promotion of community dialogues, facilitation of encounters among opposing groups
  - Education and liberation, hope and trust (P. Freire)
- Challenge: The pedagogies for reconciliation are also pedagogies of collective emotions

Reconciliation and indigenous epistemologies

- Mid-90s: increasing interest in non-western approaches to non-violent conflict transformation

- Early 2000s: Search for complementarity

- Challenges:

  - non-equivalence: reconciliation for Indigenous Australians is more an attempt to recover equilibrium than the admission of blame and guilt (Sutton, 2009)

  - Co-optation: Ubuntu

  - Ignoring contestations

Conclusion

► Reconciliation is a living concept, deployed as a means for creating new social pacts

► For a reconciliation process to have lasting effects, it must have a large presence in education systems

  ► Difficult to implement because of continuing divisions that cannot be removed in the short run by the peace-making efforts

  ► Difficult to evaluate because the wide range of topics make it hard to measure their contribution to social change

► Entering in a respectful and collaborative conversation between epistemologies could facilitate the emergence of alternative reconciliation pedagogies