2-8-2019

Enacting Agency through Influence on Power Relationships

Steve Hayden
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, steven.hayden@unlv.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/btp_expo

Part of the Educational Sociology Commons

Recommended Citation

Enacting Agency through Influence on Power Relationships

Steve Hayden, Department of Teaching and Learning
College of Education

The practice and the need it addresses	Evidence this practice benefits UNLV Students	Resources and where to find them	How other UNLV teachers might adopt this practice

What is AGENCY and why does it matter?

What is agency?

Agency is the *temporal* and *ecological* understanding of the capacity to make **choices**, take principled **action**, and enact positive **change**.
(Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Biesta, Priestley, & Robinson, 2015; Anderson, 2010)

Perception **+** Action **=** Agency

Why is agency important?

Because teaching is complex!
1. New policy directions
2. Wider variety of stakeholder voices
3. Increase in student diversity
4. **Power relationships are embedded in school context**
- Hierarchical structure
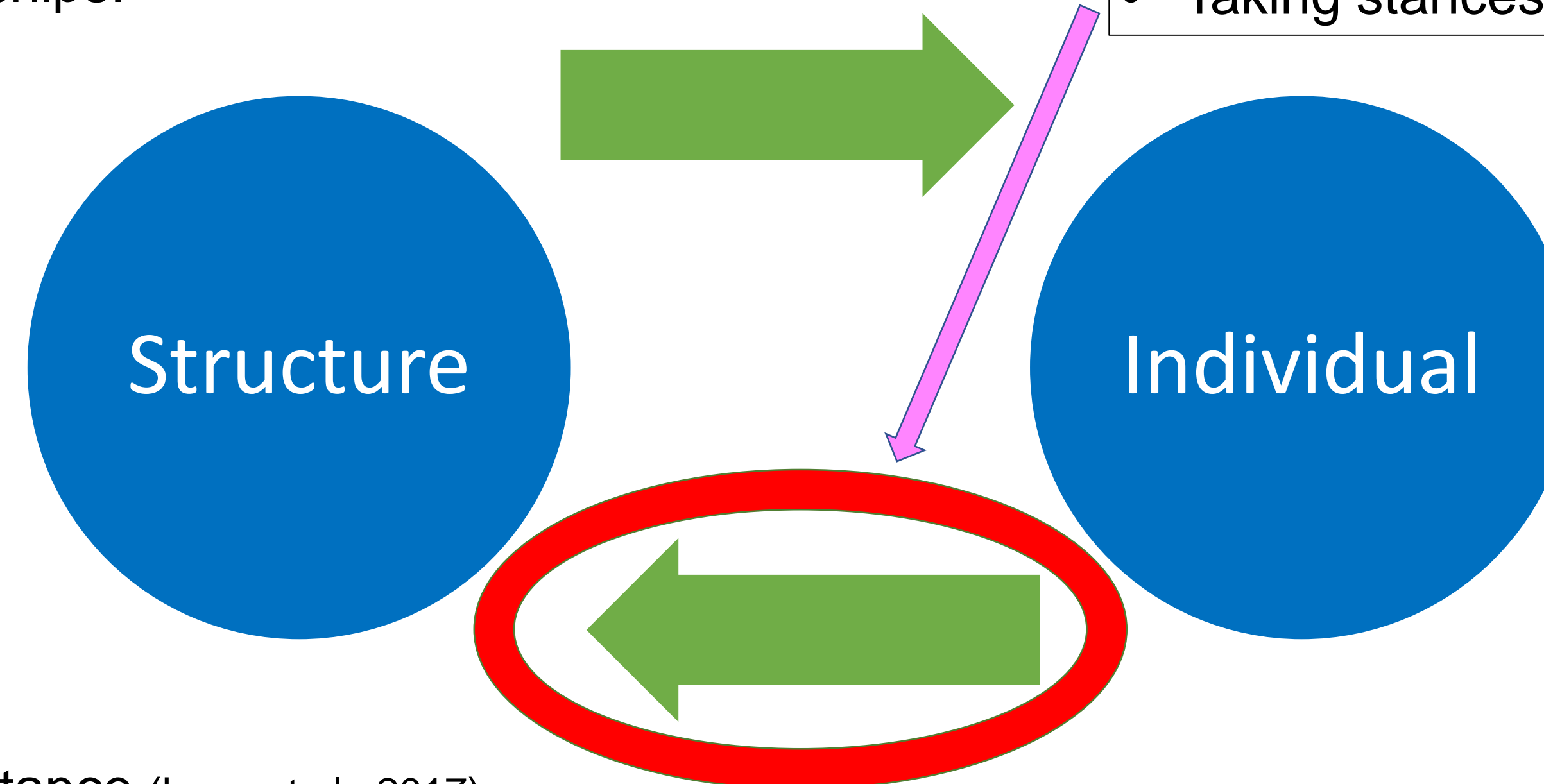- Accountability Measures
- Evaluative components
Ex) teacher-student, teacher-admin, etc.
(Bryk & Schneider, 2002; McNay, 2004; Rainio, 2008; Sannino, 2010)

Teachers are expected to be active contributors to the education process.

How do you enact agency? Linking Agency and Power

Agency is **enacted** through influence on power relationships:

Professional Agency:
- Exerting influence
- Making choices
- Taking stances

Structure → Individual

Examples:

- Policy Resistance (Long et al., 2017)
- Social Justice (Pantic, 2015)
- Educational Equity (Anderson, 2010)

Student Feedback:

"I loved how it was a very open classroom and how he let us feel free to be able to open up and really dig deep into ourselves and figure out why we wanted to be teachers."

I often think about the advice you gave us on the last day of your class. You told us, "Whatever you do, never ever give up on a child." The words were powerful, but it was the way in which you delivered them that made the impact. I remember closing my eyes and then immediately writing them down. I felt their weight and wanted to remember them just as you said them. Hearing that sentence from you has motivated me in ways I cannot even express. So, thank you. Somebody needs to give you a Ted Talk.

Resource(s):

Articles, websites, organizations and resources depend on context.

An aligned example of each:
Article: Note to Educators: Hope Required When Growing Roses in Concrete (Duncan-Andrade, 2009)
Website: http://rosesinconcrete.org/
Organization: Roses in Concrete Community School
Book: The Rose that Grew from Concrete by Tupac Shakur

Contact Information:
steven.hayden@unlv.edu

Bridging the Theory-Practice Disconnect

Consider designing, planning, instructing, implementing, and reflecting your practice around the structural and individual elements in your specific context.

Structure:
- Material circumstances
- Physical artifacts
- Power relations
- Work cultures
- Discourses
- Subject positions

Individual:
- Professional identity (commitments, ideals, motivations, interests, goals)
- Professional knowledge and competencies
- Work history and experience
(Etelapelto et al., 2013)

Possible Activities:

Social foundations discussion/reflection
Microteaching
Philosophy statements
6-word memoir

"Agency is gaining control over one's behavior; the power to act purposefully and reflectively; or the conscious role people play to bring about social change." (Moore, 2007)