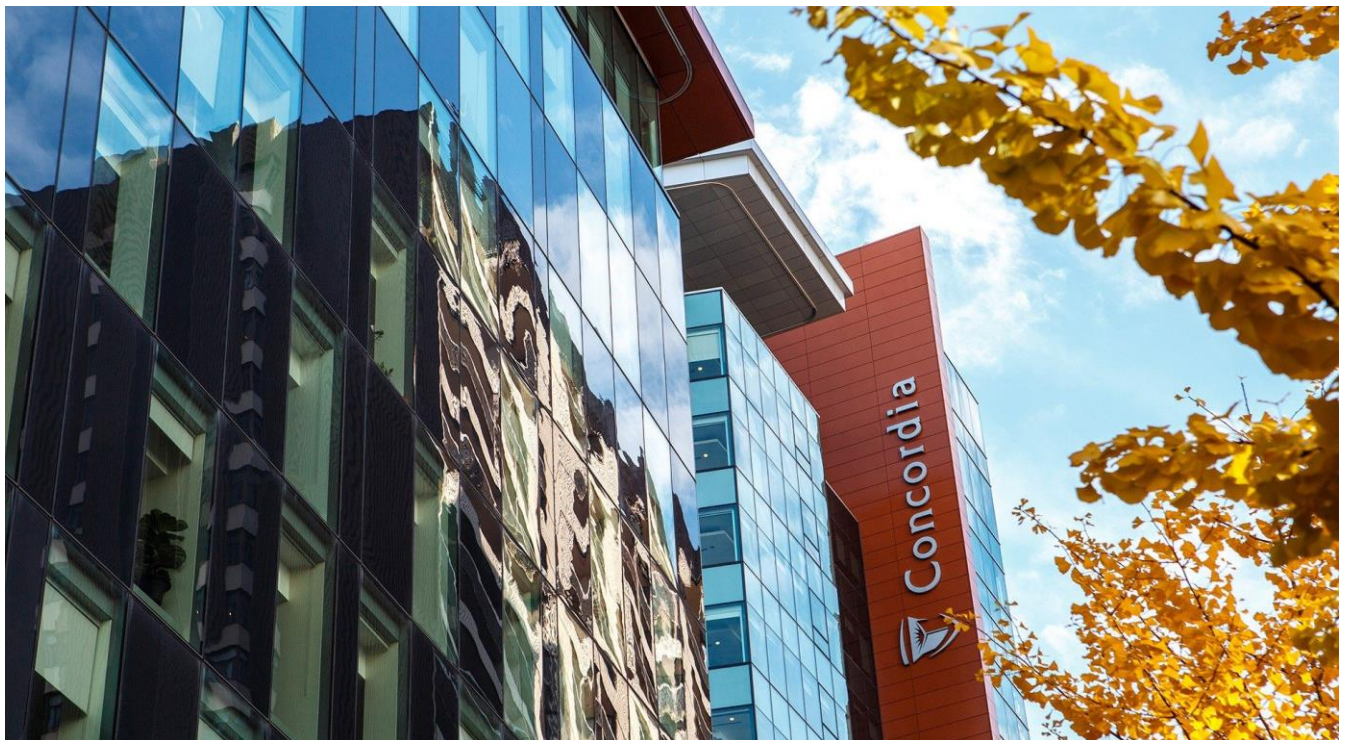




CASAE/ACÉEÉA
2024 Annual Conference/conférence annuelle 2024

~

Hosted by Concordia University
Organisé par L'Université Concordia



Conference Proceedings

Edited by Emily Dobrich

2024 Annual Conference of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE)/ Association canadienne pour l'étude de l'éducation des adultes (ACÉÉA) from June 17 to 19, 2024.

Edited by Emily Dobrich.

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About CASAE/ACÉÉA

CASAE/ACÉÉA was established in 1981 as a vibrant and energetic organization that provides a supportive network for graduate students, faculty members, researchers, practitioners and policymakers who are engaged or interested in adult education scholarship.

Membership to our association is open to all individuals and institutions—both formal and informal—who are interested in the field of adult education. We hold an annual conference in May or June, often in conjunction with the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences' Congress.

CASAE/ACÉÉA also publishes an academic journal. The Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education (CJSAE) publishes original reports of research, critical reviews of the literature of adult education, biographical and autobiographical reflections on the field and practice of adult education, and book reviews. CASAE/ACÉÉA maintains active links with comparable organisations around the world, including the Adult Education Research Conference (AERC), the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA) and the Standing Conference on University Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults (SCUTREA).

Message from the President Roula Kteily-Hawa, PhD, MPH, OCT President, Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education/ Association canadienne pour l'étude de l'éducation des adultes (CASAE/ACÉÉA).

It has been an honour for me to serve CASAE for the past two years, as President-Elect from 2022-2023 and as President from 2023-2024. As an Ontario certified teacher who taught in Ontario's public education system for several years and with scholarship in Leadership, Higher and Adult Education, I am constantly reminded of the dynamic and often complex relationship between formal and adult and continuing education. You may have heard that Canada's largest and most diverse school board, Toronto District School Board (TDSB), is threatening to eliminate Learn4Life and the Seniors' Daytime Program, serving more than 100,000 learners in Adult and Continuing Education programs for close to 160 years. That begs the questions, "what is our responsibility as adult educators?"

We welcome everyone to CASAE 2024 from June 17-19 at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec. Thank you to Conference Chair, Mitchell McLarnon for leading such an engaging conference and to the conference organizing committee: Jean-Pierre Mercier, preconference chair (UQÀM), Jayne Malenfant (McGill), Arpi Hamalian (Concordia), and Marlon Sanches (Concordia), Ian McPhail (Concordia), Cindy Balan (Concordia) and Nolan Bazinet (Concordia) and CASAE's Board members Emily Dobrich and Vitor Yano for your commitment and service to CASAE! Hosted by the Department of Education and the Centre for the Study of Learning and Performance at Concordia, this year's 3-day conference promises an engaging program packed with symposia, round tables, and paper presentations. Make sure you visit our poster display running from 9:00 – 3:00 on June 18 and 19. New this year are "Alternative Sessions" that are well aligned with this year's theme: "Redéfinir l'éducation des adultes/Redefining Adult Education" and stay true to the diversity in our discipline. We have 8 alternative sessions running over our 3- day conference, with titles such as "We all carry stories: Community writing workshops as transformative learning spaces", "Scholasticide in Gaza: A conversation on war, education, and resistance", and "Critically reflective comics: An arts-based alternative workshop for adult educators", to name a few. We invite you to attend these engaging alternative sessions and workshops. Also, this year, with the vision of members from across Canada, CASAE has launched a new initiative: CASAE Literacy Special Interest Group (SIG). Our Board of Directors voted on the SIG proposal and the motion passed. There will be an informal get-together organized by CASAE's Literacy SIG during CASAE conference.

Our AGM this year will be running in a hybrid mode to accommodate CASAE membership who are not able to attend this year in person. We want to make everyone is included. A highlight of our AGM is a celebration of Tim Howard who is planning to retire after many years of service to CASAE. You do not want to miss this special AGM. We also invite you to attend our award ceremony, with Arpi Hamalian as Chair for the Lifetime Achievement Award with committee members, Susie Brigham and Bill Fallis; and Lili Jardine as Chair for the Alan Thomas Award for Best Grad Student Paper.

Thank you to Tim Howard for his continuous support to CASAE's Board of Directors as we navigated regular business and new initiatives. Thank you to Barb Ford for her support on membership.

CASAE had a very active year, thanks to our energetic Board of Directors for their service. Our regional directors engaged membership in many ways: "Learning Circles" from Quebec, "Writing Journal Articles and Preparing Manuscripts for Publication" from Ontario, and "Exploring International Opportunities for Adult Education: Building Partners" from the Prairies Region. Thank you to Jean-Pierre Mercier, Emily Dobrich, and Lili Jardine for your dedication. We also had a successful CASAE networking and social at OISE, University of Toronto, organized by our Ontario regional director. I had the honour of attending the social and meet many of our members in Ontario. Also this year, our Ontario and Prairies regional directors organized an exciting webinar, "Graduate Student CASAE's Orientation: Planning, Connecting, and Navigating the Ins and Outs of the Conference", geared towards graduate students to support them as they navigate CASAE 2024 conference. Check out this year's events, webinars and more on CASAE's revitalized website. Keep an eye on new webinars and activities that our regional directors will be planning for Fall, 2024.

Going back to the opening paragraph of my message and to the question, "what is our responsibility as adult educators"? We are reminded of CASAE's mission, "to provide a supportive network for graduate students, faculty members, researchers, practitioners, and policy makers who are engaged or interested in adult education scholarship". Part of this supportive network is to lobby and sustain adult education, continuing education and life-long learning programming that promote a sense of community and afford vulnerable members of society. We have a responsibility as adult educators to stay true to our values and morals in the pursuit of EDIDJ- equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonization and justice. The pursuit of EDIDJ includes a commitment to the land acknowledgments we all honour across our Canadian campuses, as we "*make explicit Indigenous peoples' ongoing presence and their rights to self-determination*". Rights to self-determination, mean ending occupation wherever it exists. What is happening on campuses in our own backyards violates all principles of EDIDJ. Mobilizing police violence on our students is shameful and goes against everything we stand for as educators. We have a responsibility to initiate change and critically contribute to creating a space for discourse, acceptance, inclusion, equity, and action—currently missing on our university campuses. A belief in decolonization in Turtle Island means a belief in decolonization in all parts of the world.

I pass on the baton to Wellington Sousa who will be stepping in as CASAE's president for 2024-2025.

Be well.

Roula Hawa, PhD, MSc, MPH, BEd, OCT, PHEc (she/her)
CASAE President, 2023-2024

Message de la présidente Roula Kteily-Hawa, PhD, MPH, OCT Présidente, Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education/ Association canadienne pour l'étude de l'éducation des adultes (CASAE/ACÉÉA).

Ce fut un honneur pour moi de servir la CASAE/ACÉÉA au cours des deux dernières années, en tant que présidente élue (2022 à 2023) et présidente (2023 à 2024). Comme enseignante certifiée du système d'éducation publique de l'Ontario avec un intérêt particulier en leadership, en éducation supérieure et en éducation des adultes, je me souviens constamment de la relation dynamique et souvent complexe entre l'éducation formelle, l'éducation des adultes et l'éducation continue. Le conseil scolaire le plus grand et le plus diversifié du Canada, le Toronto District School Board (TDSB), menace d'éliminer Learn4Life et le programme de jour pour les seniors, qui ont servi plus de 100 000 apprenants dans les programmes d'éducation des adultes et d'éducation permanente depuis près de 160 ans. Cela soulève donc la question suivante : « quelle est notre responsabilité en tant qu'éducateurs d'adultes ? »

Nous souhaitons la bienvenue à tous à la conférence CASAE/ACÉÉA 2024 du 17 au 19 juin à l'Université Concordia à Montréal, Québec. Merci au président de la conférence, Mitchell McLarnon pour avoir dirigé une conférence aussi engageante et au comité organisateur de la conférence : Jean-Pierre Mercier, président de la pré-conférence (UQÀM), Jayne Malenfant (McGill), Arpi Hamalian (Concordia), and Marlon Sanches (Concordia), Ian McPhail (Concordia), Cindy Balan (Concordia) et Nolan Bazinet (Concordia) et les membres du conseil d'administration de l'ACÉÉA, Emily Dobrich et Vitor Yano, pour votre engagement et votre service à l'ACÉÉA ! Organisée par le ministère de l'Éducation et le Centre d'étude de l'apprentissage et de la performance de Concordia, cette conférence de trois jours promet un programme captivant rempli de symposiums, de tables rondes et de présentations d'articles. Assurez-vous de visiter notre exposition d'affiches qui se déroulera de 9 h à 15 h les 18 et 19 juin. Les nouveautés cette année sont les « Séances alternatives » qui s'alignent bien avec le thème de cette année (« Redéfinir l'éducation des adultes/Redefining Adult Education ») et qui restent fidèle à la diversité de notre discipline. Nous proposons 8 « Séances alternatives » au cours de notre conférence de 3 jours, avec des titres tels que « Nous portons tous des histoires : des ateliers d'écriture communautaires comme espaces d'apprentissage transformateurs », « Scholasticide à Gaza : une conversation sur la guerre, l'éducation et la résistance » et « Bandes dessinées à réflexion critique : un atelier alternatif basé sur les arts pour les éducateurs d'adultes », pour n'en nommer que quelques-uns. Nous vous invitons à assister à ces séances et ateliers alternatifs engageants. De plus, cette année, grâce à la vision de ses membres de partout au Canada, l'ACÉÉA a lancé une nouvelle initiative : le Groupe d'intérêt spécial en alphabétisation (SIG) de l'ACÉÉA. Notre conseil d'administration a voté sur la proposition du SIG et la motion a été adoptée. Il y aura une rencontre informelle organisée par le SIG pendant la conférence de l'ACÉÉA.

Cette année, notre AGA se déroulera en mode hybride pour accueillir les membres de l'ACÉÉA qui ne peuvent pas y assister en personne cette année. Nous voulons que tout le monde se

sente inclus. L'un des moments forts de notre AGA est la célébration de Tim Howard, qui prévoit prendre sa retraite après de nombreuses années de service à l'ACÉÉA. Vous ne voulez pas manquer cette AGA spéciale. Nous vous invitons également à assister à notre cérémonie de remise des prix, avec Arpi Hamalian en tant que président du prix pour l'ensemble de sa carrière et les membres du comité, Susie Brigham et Bill Fallis ; et Lili Jardine en tant que présidente du prix Alan Thomas pour la meilleure communication d'un étudiant diplômé.

Merci à Tim Howard pour son soutien continu au conseil d'administration de l'ACÉÉA alors que nous naviguons dans les affaires courantes et les nouvelles initiatives. Merci à Barb Ford pour son soutien en matière d'adhésion.

L'ACÉÉA a connu une année très active, grâce au dynamisme de notre conseil d'administration. Nos directeurs régionaux ont mobilisé les membres de plusieurs manières : par exemple les « Cercles d'apprentissage » du Québec, la « Rédaction d'articles de revues et préparation de manuscrits pour publication » de l'Ontario et « l'Exploration des opportunités internationales pour l'éducation des adultes : nouer des partenariats » de la région des Prairies. Merci à Jean-Pierre Mercier, Emily Dobrich et Lili Jardine pour votre dévouement. Nous avons également eu un événement social réussi à l'OISE, Université de Toronto, organisés par notre directeur régional de l'Ontario. J'ai eu l'honneur d'assister à la soirée sociale et de rencontrer plusieurs de nos membres en Ontario. Cette année également, nos directeurs régionaux de l'Ontario et des Prairies ont organisé un webinaire intitulé, « Orientation des étudiants diplômés de l'ACÉÉA : planifier, connecter et naviguer la conférence », destiné aux étudiants diplômés pour les soutenir dans leur navigation dans la conférence CASAE/ACÉÉA 2024. Découvrez les événements, les webinaires et bien plus encore de cette année sur le site Web revitalisé de l'ACÉÉA. Gardez un œil sur les nouveaux webinaires et activités que nos directeurs régionaux planifieront pour l'automne 2024.

Pour en revenir au premier paragraphe de mon message et à la question « quelle est notre responsabilité en tant qu'éducateurs d'adultes » ? Cela nous rappelle la mission de l'ACÉÉA, « fournir un réseau de soutien aux étudiants diplômés, aux membres du corps professoral, aux chercheurs, aux praticiens et aux décideurs politiques qui sont engagés ou intéressés par l'érudition en éducation des adultes ». Une partie de ce réseau de soutien consiste à soutenir des programmes d'éducation des adultes, de formation continue et d'apprentissage tout au long de la vie qui favorisent le sentiment d'appartenance à une communauté et offrent des services aux membres vulnérables de la société. Nous avons la responsabilité, en tant qu'éducateurs d'adultes, de rester fidèles à nos valeurs et à notre morale dans la poursuite de l'EDIDJ : équité, diversité, inclusion, décolonisation et justice. La poursuite de l'EDIDJ comprend un engagement envers la reconnaissance des terres que nous honorons tous sur nos campus canadiens, alors que nous « rendons explicites la présence continue des peuples autochtones et leurs droits à l'autodétermination ». Le droit à l'autodétermination signifie mettre fin à l'occupation partout où elle existe. Ce qui se passe sur les campus, dans nos propres cours, viole tous les principes de l'EDIDJ. Mobiliser la violence policière contre nos étudiants est honteux et va à l'encontre de tout ce que nous défendons en tant qu'éducateurs. Nous avons la responsabilité d'initier le changement et de contribuer de manière cruciale à la création d'un espace de discours, d'acceptation, d'inclusion, d'équité et

d'action, qui manque actuellement sur nos campus universitaires. Croire en la décolonisation à l'Île de la Tortue signifie croire en la décolonisation dans toutes les régions du monde.

Veillez souhaiter la bienvenue à Wellington Sousa qui assumera la présidence de la CASAE/ACÉÉA pour 2024-2025.

Roula Hawa, PhD, MSc, MPH, BEd, OCT, PHEc (she/her)
CASAE President, 2023-2024

Message from the 2024 CASAE Conference Organizing Committee

Dear colleagues,

Bienvenue à Montréal! We are delighted to welcome you all to the 2024 annual conference of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE). This year's conference will occur at Concordia University's Department of Education and at the Centre for the Study of Learning and Performance (CSLP). We acknowledge that Concordia University is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters. We also wish to recognize the strong ties that unite the Anishinaabe Nation to this territory, which is known as Mooniyang (in Anishinaabemowin).

In our teaching, research, and practices we recognize the connections to the ongoing violence of settler colonialism towards Indigenous peoples within Canada—which the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has called a form of cultural genocide—to the genocide in Palestine. Like our colleagues in the Simone de Beauvoir Institute at Concordia University “we are committed to making connections between wars, ethnic cleansing, and/or genocide in global contexts, including but not limited to Gaza, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Armenia, Afghan refugees in Pakistan, and Uyghurs in China”¹. We applaud the many presentations in this year's conference program that stand firmly against oppression, xenophobia, and discrimination, including all forms of Islamophobia, antisemitism, racism, and settler colonialism.

We have an impressive program with many evocative and generative presentations and workshops. We express our gratitude to the many volunteers who have devoted time, effort, and intent to make this conference an event where we can all gather to share our research, practices and pedagogies with old friends and new. A big thanks to Roula Hawa and the entire CASAE board for their ongoing care, support and collegiality. We would also like to extend our appreciation to Tim Howard for his service, professionalism and ongoing administrative support, and to Barb Ford for her ongoing help, kindness, and patience.

This year, we invite you to consider the theme “Redefining Adult Education”. While this may seem ambitious, we see it as an invitation to reaffirm the specificities of adult education, or to (re)develop its meaning. We employ the term “redefining” to enter a dialectical, practical, non-hierarchical, and potentially transformational space where researchers, activists, grassroots educators, community organizers, vocational educators, educators working in formal/informal settings, those working within and outside of professional orders, in popular education, and in alternative and anarchist education can gather, exchange ideas and learn together.

This year, the call for papers was written collaboratively with professors and graduate students from multiple different universities from across Quebec and Canada. The

¹ [https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/artsci/sdbi/docs/positions/SdBStatementreGaza2023\).pdf](https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/artsci/sdbi/docs/positions/SdBStatementreGaza2023).pdf)

preconference will continue this collaborative and non-hierarchical spirit and will create a live and active document that will be showcased in different locations of the conference. During the conference, we encourage you to contribute to this document to help shape, refine, trouble and problematize this notion of "Redefining Adult Education". We are also happy that so many of you have submitted to the alternative session option! We created this format with hopes of disrupting conventional academic exchanges and to move adult education into more practical, artistic, poetic, outdoor/environmental/land-based, and potentially more public terrain.

As a collective, our main objective is to provide a space where everyone enjoys getting together to share their research here in Tiohtià:ke/Mooniyang/Montreal. Thank you all so much for your involvement and engagement. We wish you a very pleasant conference.

Au plaisir,

The 2024 CASAE Conference Organizing Committee

Cindy Balan, Nolan Bazinet, Emily Dobrich, Arpi Hamalian, Jayne Malenfant, Jean-Pierre Mercier, Ian McPhail, Mitchell McLarnon & Vitor Yano

Message de la part du comité organisateur du congrès de l'ACÉÉA de 2024

Cher·e·s collègues,

Bienvenue à Montréal! Nous sommes ravi·e·s de vous accueillir à la conférence annuelle 2024 de l'Association Canadienne pour l'Étude de l'Éducation des Adultes (ACÉÉA). Cette année, la conférence se tiendra au Département d'éducation de l'Université Concordia et au Centre d'étude de l'apprentissage et de la performance. Nous reconnaissons que l'Université Concordia est située sur des terres autochtones non cédées. La nation Kanien'kehá:ka est reconnue comme la gardienne des terres et des eaux. Nous souhaitons également reconnaître les liens étroits qui unissent la nation Anishinaabe à ce territoire, connu par ce peuple sous le nom de Mooniyang (en Anishinaabemowin).

À l'intérieur de nos enseignements, nos apprentissages et nos recherches, nous reconnaissons les liens entre la violence actuelle du colonialisme de peuplement à l'égard des peuples autochtones du Canada - que la Commission de Vérité et Réconciliation a qualifié de forme de génocide culturel – ainsi qu'au génocide en Palestine. Comme nos collègues de l'Institut Simone-De Beauvoir, « dans notre enseignement et notre apprentissage, nous nous engageons à établir des liens entre les guerres, le nettoyage ethnique et/ou le génocide dans des contextes mondiaux, y compris, mais sans s'y limiter, à Gaza, au Soudan, à la République démocratique du Congo, à l'Éthiopie, à l'Arménie, au Pakistan (en ce qui concerne les réfugiés afghans) et en Chine (en ce qui concerne les Ouïghours) »². Nous saluons les nombreuses présentations du programme de la conférence de cette année qui s'opposent fermement à l'oppression et à la discrimination, y compris toutes les formes d'islamophobie, d'antisémitisme, de racisme et de colonialisme de peuplement.

Nous avons un programme impressionnant avec de nombreuses présentations et ateliers évocateurs et génératifs. Nous devons également saluer les nombreux bénévoles qui ont consacré du temps, des efforts et des intentions pour faire de cette conférence un événement où nous pouvons tous nous rassembler pour partager nos recherches, nos pratiques et nos pédagogies avec nos camarades tant du passé que du futur. Nous remercions tout particulièrement Roula Hawa et l'ensemble du conseil d'administration de l'ACÉÉA pour leur soutien constant et leur collégialité. Nous souhaitons également remercier Tim Howard pour son dévouement, son professionnalisme et son soutien administratif permanent, ainsi que Barb Ford pour son aide inestimable, sa gentillesse et sa patience.

Cette année, nous vous invitons à considérer le thème « Redéfinir l'éducation des adultes ». Bien que ce thème puisse sembler ambitieux, nous le considérons comme une invitation à réaffirmer les spécificités de l'éducation des adultes ou à (re)développer sa signification. Nous utilisons le terme « redéfinir » pour entrer dans un espace dialectique, pratique, non hiérarchique et potentiellement transformateur où les chercheurs, les activistes, les éducateurs communautaires, les organisateurs communautaires, les éducateurs

² [https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/artsci/sdbi/docs/positions/SdBISTatementreGaza2023\).pdf](https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/artsci/sdbi/docs/positions/SdBISTatementreGaza2023).pdf)

professionnels, les éducateurs travaillant dans des cadres formels/informels, ceux qui travaillent à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur des ordres professionnels, dans l'éducation populaire, et dans l'éducation alternative et anarchiste peuvent se rassembler, échanger des idées et apprendre ensemble.

Cette année, l'appel à communications a été rédigé en collaboration avec des professeurs et des étudiants diplômés de différentes universités du Québec et du Canada. La pré-conférence poursuivra cet esprit de collaboration et de non-hiérarchie et créera un document vivant et actif qui sera présenté à différents endroits de la conférence. Pendant la conférence, nous vous encourageons à contribuer à ce document pour aider à façonner, affiner, troubler et problématiser cette notion de « redéfinition de l'éducation des adultes ». Nous avons également le plaisir de voir autant d'entre vous vous soumettre à l'option des sessions alternatives. Nous avons créé le format de session alternative cette année dans l'espoir de perturber les échanges académiques conventionnels et d'amener l'éducation des adultes sur un terrain plus pratique, artistique, poétique, en plein air/environnemental/basé sur la terre, et potentiellement plus public.

En tant que collectif, notre principal objectif est de fournir un espace où tout le monde apprécie de se retrouver pour partager ses recherches ici à Tiohtià:ke/Mooniyang/Montréal. Merci encore pour votre implication et votre engagement. Nous vous souhaitons une très bonne conférence.

Au plaisir,

Le comité d'organisation de L'ACÉÉA 2024

Cindy Balan, Nolan Bazinet, Emily Dobrich, Arpi Hamalian, Jayne Malenfant, Jean-Pierre Mercier, Ian McPhail, Mitchell McLarnon & Vitor Yano

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PAPERS

IMMIGRANT WOMEN AND ADULT EDUCATION IN CANADA

Najlaa Alzaanin¹

¹*St. Francis Xavier University (CANADA)*

Abstract

This paper provides the theoretical background for an exploration of the immigration experiences of Arab women in rural Nova Scotia, Canada. Drawing upon adult education and transformative learning theories, the research will examine how the immigration journey influences the learning process of Arab women and their integration into Canadian society. The comprehensive literature review presented in this paper identifies gaps in existing literature concerning the intersectionality of gender, race, and social identities in immigrant women's learning experiences, especially Middle Eastern immigrant women in rural areas. Filling this gap, at least in part, will allow for tailored support services to address the unique needs of Arab immigrant women.

Keywords: Arab Immigrant Women, Adult Education, Transformative Learning, Social Integration

INTRODUCTION

The objective of this literature review was to comprehensively examine existing literature on adult learning and transformative learning, and their impact on the lives of immigrant women in Canada. The aim was to identify and analyze ongoing debates, controversies, and critiques in these areas to gain deeper insights. Furthermore, the review sought to identify gaps in the literature and opportunities for further investigation. The literature review allows me to focus my own research to maximize my contribution to the existing body of knowledge. Through this literature review, it became apparent that there is a dearth of research exploring the intersectionality of gender, race, class, and other social identities that influence immigrant women's experiences within adult education in Canada. Additionally, many articles focused primarily on immigrants from Chinese, African, Filipino, and other Asian backgrounds. There was a severe lack of focus on Middle Eastern immigrant women in rural areas of Canada, particularly Arab women. Therefore, my upcoming study aims to contribute to filling this gap by examining the impact of the immigration journey to Canada, especially to rural Nova Scotia, on the learning process of Arabic-speaking immigrant women. The research is informed by the dynamics of Arab women's diverse cultures and backgrounds, despite their sharing a common language.

LIFELONG LEARNING

Adult education plays a crucial role in lifelong learning. The literature comprised different facets of adult education and particularly highlighted the transformative learning experiences of immigrant women in Canada. The literature also showed how theoretical perspectives are continuously evolving. It is essential to understand the characteristics of adult learners, the effectiveness of adult education programs, and the impact of such education on personal and professional development (Boyd & Myers, 1988). This knowledge is instrumental in designing effective adult education programs and promoting lifelong learning. Despite significant progress in women's education in Canada over the past several decades, women still face persistent challenges in accessing and participating in adult education programs (Mellor,

2019). The participation of women in adult education is influenced by factors such as socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, family responsibilities, and prior educational experiences (English & Irving, 2015). One factor that affects women's access to adult education is their financial situation. Women are more likely than men to live in poverty or low-income households, which can limit their ability to pay for education and training (Liu, 2019). Furthermore, women who take time off from paid work to raise children or care for family members face additional financial barriers to accessing education (Hou & Picot, 2018; Lloyd, 2018). Another factor that affects women's participation in adult education is their prior educational experiences. Women who have had negative experiences in school or who lack basic literacy and numeracy skills may be hesitant to enroll in adult education programs (Mellor, 2019). This highlights the need for adult education programs that are welcoming and supportive of women with diverse educational backgrounds and experiences.

TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

Transformative learning theory, as proposed by Cranton and Taylor (2013), provides a powerful framework for adult education, focusing on facilitating personal growth, self-awareness, and social transformation. Transformative learning involves substantive changes in an individual's perspectives, beliefs, and behaviors (Mezirow, 2012). English and Irving (2015) noted that transformative learning, traditionally associated with individual-focused approaches influenced by Jack Mezirow, went beyond acquiring knowledge or skills. It involves a fundamental reorganization of one's worldview and sense of self. Boyd and Myers (1988) and Dirkx (1998) expounded on the principles of transformative learning theory, emphasizing that it occurred when learners critically reflected on their assumptions and beliefs, potentially resulting in a paradigm shift. Transformative learning theory places importance on emotions, critical reflection, and personal growth in the learning process (Morrice et al., 2015). Transformative learning theory may be relevant to understanding the experiences of immigrant women in community-based programs. Numerous studies (Lange, 2015; Lloyd, 2018; Richter et al., 2020) suggested that community-based programs emphasizing transformative learning can foster a sense of belonging and empowerment among immigrant women. Such programs encourage the development of critical thinking skills, self-reflection, and social connections. Furthermore, the transformative learning model could equip immigrant women with new skills, confidence, and knowledge to navigate their new environment and improve family relationships (Lange, 2015).

However, the literature showed a disconnect between women, social transformation, and learning within the realm of transformative learning (English & Irving, 2015). English and Irving (2015) highlighted the lack of exploration regarding the connection between transformative learning and social transformation, particularly concerning women's experiences. Cranton and Taylor (2013) also underscored the limitations of transformative learning theory, including its tendency to focus on individual-level change and its limited attention to structural and systemic factors that may impede or facilitate transformative learning. They argued that future work should address these limitations in transformative learning theory and engage with broader social and political issues. Additionally, Cranton and Taylor (2013) contended that transformative learning theory should be more attuned to the ways in which power and privilege shape individuals. They proposed that scholars and practitioners should consider how structural inequalities and power dynamics can either limit

or enable opportunities for transformative learning (Cranton & Taylor, 2013). Greater understanding of the practical applications of transformative learning theory may hold potential for fostering positive individual and social change (Cranton & Taylor, 2013).

SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION PROCESS OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN

Canada is a nation of immigrants, with a long history of welcoming people from around the world. Today, according to the 2021 Census, approximately 23% of the Canadian population is foreign-born, and of those, just over half are women (Statistics Canada, 2023). The data from Statistics Canada (2023) showed that the number of immigrant women in Canada continued to increase from 2016 to 2021: in 2016, there were 4.2 million immigrant women in Canada, and by 2021, this number had increased to 4.7 million, a rate of increase of 3.7% for women only slightly more than the 3.6% for men from 2016 to 2021.

While the experiences of immigrants settling in new and foreign countries have long been a topic of interest for researchers, the immigration experience of Arab women in rural areas of Nova Scotia presents a unique and understudied perspective. The immigration experience can present an opportunity for new ways of learning, as individuals learn to navigate a new culture, language, and social system. According to Lange (2015), immigrant women who had access to supportive social networks, including mentors and peers, were more likely to experience new ways of learning. Lange's statement underscores the importance of community-based programs and initiatives that provide opportunities for immigrant women to connect with others who share similar experiences. This points to the need to further examine the settlement and integration process of immigrant Arab women in rural Nova Scotia and their access to such programs and the impact on their learning and adaptation process.

IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S CHALLENGES IN CANADA

Immigrant women in Canada have been the subject of extensive research and scholarship, with numerous studies exploring diverse aspects of their experiences through their settlement and integration in a new country. Studies have looked at language barriers, employment, health, social integration and networking, discrimination, access to resources and services, and other issues.

Language Barriers

Language barriers are one of the primary challenges for immigrant women, leading to social isolation and difficulty accessing services (Shan, 2015). Moreover, research has shown that limited English proficiency can hinder access to employment, education, and social services (Richter et al., 2020). Richter et al. (2020) found that immigrant women who had higher levels of language proficiency were more likely to be employed in professional positions and earn higher wages than those with lower proficiency levels. However, Shan (2015) showed that language proficiency was not the only factor affecting socio-economic outcomes, as education and occupation in the country of origin also played a role. In their exploration of the experiences of immigrant women with English language learning programs in Canada Richter et al. (2020) found that women faced numerous barriers when accessing language programs, including financial constraints, lack of childcare, and limited availability of programs. The authors recommended that language programs be made more accessible and culturally sensitive to the needs of immigrant women (Liu, 2019; Phan et al., 2015).

Immigrant women may also experience social isolation due to language barriers, which can lead to feelings of loneliness and depression (Richter et al., 2020). The authors concluded that women who had higher levels of language proficiency were more likely to be socially integrated and have better mental health outcomes than those with lower proficiency levels. The authors also found that social support, education, and employment were all important factors that contributed to social integration among immigrant women.

Employment and Labour Market

Employment is a critical aspect of immigrant women's integration into Canadian society. However, immigrant women face substantial barriers in accessing and succeeding in the labour market, including discrimination, lack of recognition of foreign credentials and experience, lack of Canadian work experience, and limited access to training and networking opportunities (Lai et al., 2017; Liu, 2019). Immigrant women are also more likely than Canadian-born women to work in low-wage and precarious employment (Shan, 2015). In light of these observations, Lai et al. (2017) highlighted the importance of providing immigrant women with access to language training, mentorship programs, and networking opportunities to overcome these barriers.

Many immigrant women are highly skilled and educated, and there is evidence that improving their labour market outcomes can have significant economic benefits for Canada (Hou & Picot, 2018). Hou and Picot (2018) added that immigrant women in Canada also have important strengths and contributions to make to society. For example, research has shown that immigrant women are more likely than Canadian-born women to participate in volunteer work and community organizations (Shan, 2015). Immigrant women also bring diverse skills, experiences, and perspectives to the Canadian workforce, and have the potential to drive economic growth and innovation (Lai et al., 2017).

Access to Healthcare

Access to healthcare is a critical issue for immigrant women in Canada. Richter et al. (2020) emphasized that immigrant women face multiple barriers to accessing healthcare, including pre-migration experiences, lack of health insurance, language barriers, lack of knowledge about the healthcare system, and cultural differences in health care services and practices. The authors highlighted the importance of providing culturally sensitive healthcare services and improving access to language interpretation services to address these barriers (Richter et al., 2020). Moreover, Phan et al. (2015) noted that fear of deportation is a major factor that affects immigrant women who are still in the process of getting their permanent residency in Canada. Overall, immigrant women tended to have better health outcomes initially than Canadian-born women, but this advantage can erode over time as they experience the stressors of migration and settlement (Richter et al., 2020). However, immigrant women in Canada are at higher risk of experiencing domestic violence than other women. A study by the Canadian Council for Refugees (2018) found that immigrant women were particularly vulnerable to abuse due to factors such as isolation, lack of access to resources, and fear of deportation. This makes it very important for policymakers and service providers to address these issues and ensure that immigrant women have access to the supports they need to live safe and healthy lives.

Social Integration and Networking

Integration is a complex and multifaceted process that involves the development of social networks, language skills, and a sense of belonging in Canadian society. Immigrant women's social integration can be shaped by factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and social class (Liu, 2019). Often Immigrant women experience culture shock and a sense of isolation and loneliness when they first arrive in Canada, which can affect their mental health and wellbeing (Phan et al., 2015). Furthermore, discrimination is a significant challenge that immigrant women face through the social integration process. Research has shown that immigrant women are more likely to experience discrimination than immigrant men or native-born individuals (Hou & Picot, 2018). Discrimination can impact an individual's ability to secure employment, housing, and access to social services. It can also lead to negative health outcomes, such as depression and anxiety (Liu, 2019). Immigrant women may face barriers to social integration, such as discrimination, language barriers, and social isolation, but they also have strengths and resources that can support their integration, such as family and community networks (Hou & Picot, 2018). Moreover, Phan et al. (2015) found that the role of family was essential in the settlement and integration of immigrant women. Their study revealed that family support, including spousal and familial support, played a critical role in helping women overcome culture shock and adapt to Canadian society (Richter et al., 2020; Phan et al., 2015)

STRATEGIES OF INTEGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

Immigrant women in Canada are a diverse group with varied backgrounds, experiences, and reasons for coming to Canada. Many immigrant women come to Canada through family reunification, while others come as economic immigrants, refugees, or temporary workers (Hou & Picot, 2018). The settlement and integration of immigrant women are complex and multifaceted issues that are influenced by a range of factors as discussed above. However, immigrant women are also resilient and resourceful, and many find ways to navigate these challenges and build new lives in Canada (Richter et al., 2020). Immigrant women use a number of strategies to facilitate their settlement and integration in Canada. These strategies include accessing language training, mentorship programs, community-based programs, and availing themselves of policies aimed at reducing discrimination and increasing social inclusion (Liu, 2019). Language training is especially important as it can facilitate immigrant women's access to services and increase their social networks (Richter et al., 2020). Mentorship programs provide support and guidance for navigating Canadian society and culture (Phan et al., 2015). Community-based programs provide opportunities to connect with other women and build social networks (Liu, 2019). Policies aimed at reducing discrimination and increasing social inclusion help to create a more welcoming and inclusive society for all (Richter et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the literature demonstrated the difficulties immigrant women in Canada encounter. Nevertheless, immigrant women showed resiliency and tenacity in their quest for social integration and economic success despite difficult challenges. Diverse strategies are needed to address these challenges, ones that prioritise women's needs in policy initiatives, community involvement, and specialised support systems. Through the provision of

comprehensive educational opportunities, workforce development, improved access to healthcare, and social assistance, Canada has the capacity to unleash the full potential of women immigrants and build a fairer and more affluent society for all. To create inclusive communities and maximise the contributions of immigrant women in Canada, it is imperative to recognise and address the complexity of their experiences.

In light of the above, my upcoming research aims to identify the barriers specific to Arab women immigrants in rural Nova Scotia, and the strategies that they use to overcome challenges associated with migration and settlement. While I expect to find many of the same issues that confront women in other immigrant communities, and likely some similar strategies, Arab women have demographic, cultural, and religious particularities that identify them as a distinct community, the resources for which have yet to be fully developed. By examining how Arab immigrant women in rural Nova Scotia navigate the settlement and integration process by engaging in informal and transformative learning, I aim to uncover ways that immigrant services can support the empowerment of women and partner with them as agents of their own destinies.

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“THE QUALIFIED WORKERS EMPLOYERS ARE WAITING FOR”: (RE)DEFINING ADULT AND YOUTH LEARNERS IN QUÉBEC VOCATIONAL EDUCATION POLICIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a critical examination of education policy documents guiding vocational education systems in Québec. It specifically delves into how these documents depict vocational education students and their educational needs, in dialogue with frameworks for understanding the needs of adolescent and adult learners. The research addresses two inquiries: Firstly, it investigates how learners and theories of learning are conceptualized within Québec's vocational education policies. Secondly, it explores potential avenues for redefining these concepts and their interrelations in the future. Through this inquiry, the paper provides insights into the implications for research in adult, secondary, and vocational education, as well as for the ongoing discourse and advocacy surrounding vocational education in Québec.

Keywords: Vocational education, adult education, critical discourse analysis, education policy, Québec

INTRODUCTION

For over a hundred years, educational philosophers and policymakers have debated the purpose, function, and structure of vocational education programs at the secondary and higher education levels. These debates have informed the development of a wide range of institutions supporting the vocational education of both adolescent and adult students, at times within the same classrooms. In the province of Québec, these institutions include separate anglophone and francophone public education systems, each of which include several degree pathways through vocational education centres. These include pathways that allow students to commit to a vocational education in their teens, earning a distinct vocational diploma, as well as pathways that allow them to earn a vocational diploma or attestation in their adult years. While this system is unique, it presents similar challenges to those in many other contexts, with secondary students learning alongside adult learners in heterogeneous vocational education classrooms.

To explore some of the educational implications of this system, this paper offers a critical discourse analysis of key education policy documents related to vocational education in the province. More specifically, we discuss how these documents frame vocational education students and their needs as learners in relation to major theoretical frameworks for guiding teaching and learning for adolescents and adults. To explore these issues, we pursue the following research questions:

1. How are learners and theories of learning defined within Québec vocational education policies?

2. How might we *redefine* these concepts and relationships moving forward?

Drawing on this analysis, we offer reflections on the significance for adult, secondary, and vocational education research, as well as for debates and advocacy related to vocational education in Québec.

Vocational Education in Québec

Like many of the significant changes in Québec government policy, vocational education was born out of the Quiet Revolution of the 1960's. In 1968, the Parent Commission ushered in formalized vocational education, situating it in secondary schools; however, it was not until the 1980s where it took its current form. In 1987, vocational education was granted separate school centres and its own separate diploma. Thus, two-year programs leading to a Diploma of Vocational Studies (DVS) were added, intended for students who already hold a Secondary School Diploma (SSD) or who are 16 years of age or over and who have earned credits in Secondary IV language of instruction, second language and mathematics. One-year programs leading to a Secondary School Vocational Certificate (SSVC) were also designed for students who have earned credits in Secondary III language of instruction, second language and mathematics and who are 16 years of age or over (Gouvernement du Québec, 1999).

These educational pathways result in many vocational education settings including both adult and youth learners. According to the Banque de données des statistiques officielles sur le Québec (2022), approximately 20% of students in vocational education are 19 years of age or younger. These numbers, however, vary greatly depending on the program of study. For instance, in the Electricity and Industrial Construction and Maintenance Mechanics programs, the number of students 19 years of age or younger is approximately 30%. Further, in programs like Carpentry and Automobile Mechanics the age group representation is nearly half at approximately 46% for both. Also, in some programs, like Construction Machinery Mechanics, Tree Felling, and Livestock/Animal production, the under 19 group outnumber the over 19-year-olds. Thus, these pathways include a mix of youth and adult learners, each of whom bring unique strengths, challenges, and interests.

Developing research on vocational education in Québec suggests that adolescent vocational education students face unique barriers in their educational journeys. For instance, studies on issues relating to adolescents' perseverance have revealed the unique struggles this age group experiences in vocational education (Mazaon & Dumont, 2020). Furthermore, researchers such as Mazalon & Bourdon (2015) have highlighted the complex challenges youth experience in relation to their adult peers, noting that youth report experiencing marginalization immediately as they enter vocational training. This marginalization is experienced, according to Saint-Pierre (2000), because educational institutions prefer adults with greater maturity, motivation and work experience who are more likely to succeed (Saint-Pierre, 2000, p. 28 as cited by Mazalon & Bourdon). Such a problematic is aggravated by the obstacles faced by young people as they enter the vocational education system. Mazalon and Bourdon (2015) note that youth between the age of 15-20 years of age without a secondary diploma face more significant barriers than those of the same age group who have obtained a diploma and those over the age of 20 year with a secondary diploma in vocational programs.

This context and these demographic data present several challenges from an educational policy perspective. For the purposes of this paper, the most significant challenge is the heterogenous nature of vocational education learning environments in Québec and their relation to debates around the needs and identities of adult and adolescent learners, including youth facing greater educational and social barriers.

METHODOLOGY

In our discussion of key texts informing vocational education policies in Québec, we use the methodology of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2013). This methodology endeavors to “explore the relationships between discursive practices, events and texts; and wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes” (Taylor, 2004, p. 3). More specifically, we analyze major policies related to vocational education to examine how they discuss learning and teaching. Through this exploration, we illuminate the relationship between vocational education policies, educational discourse, and systems of power, building on Foucauldian traditions in sociology and related fields (Marshall, 1997; Taylor, 1997).

By engaging in a critical analysis, we aim to illuminate discourse around theories of teaching and learning embedded within these policy documents, particularly as they relate to theories of adult and secondary education. In doing so, we draw links between research, policy, and practice in the province and more broadly. We further suggest possibilities for future research and policies that more fully support equitable access and outcomes for vocational education students.

FRAMEWORKS FOR CONCEPTUALIZING ADOLESCENT AND ADULT LEARNERS

Discourse around Québec education can be understood through the lens of theories of teaching and learning. It is particularly interesting to consider the extent to which this discourse aligns with frameworks around adult and adolescent learning in the fields of adult and secondary education. In the following section, we will first review major frameworks on adult and adolescent learning that are salient to these documents, before embarking on a critical discourse analysis of these frameworks in major documents on Vocational education in Québec, in comparison with comparable documents on Secondary Education.

Theories of learning and learner development are integral to the field of educational studies. Researchers have put forward a wide range of approaches to the education and identities of learners, with many of these frameworks tailored to students of a set age or level of education. In our discussion of vocational education policies, we will focus particularly on secondary/adolescent and adult education research, given the diverse age range of students in vocational education programs.

Youth and adolescent pedagogy are largely informed by frameworks for understanding adolescents’ cognitive development. For instance, researchers argue that, as young people grow, their cognitive development extends beyond a subjective, ego-centric model focusing on their immediate and proximal (time and space) needs and the development of communicative abilities (language refinement), moving towards a more objective, abstract, and theoretical understanding which better situates them for problem solving and reasoning skills (Piaget, 1946; Biggs & Collis, 1982; Case, 1980). This places the emphasis on instructors to foster

adolescent's abilities to reach higher order cognitive processes (Giedd, et al. 1990; Sowell, et al. 1999) in order for them to construct a robust world view and identity. More importantly, through a social-capital lens, critical thinking skills can have an important effect on traditionally marginalized groups in providing them the critical thinking tools to self-actualize (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). In this way, research on adolescent education emphasizes the importance of students developing broad critical thinking skills as well as their own worldview and self-concept.

While from an institutional perspective adult education often refers to formal basic education for adults, frameworks from the research literature on adult education apply to a much wider range of contexts. Scholars of adult education discuss the informal, non-formal, and formal education of adults, including but not limited to their academic learning. In their discussion of these forms of education, they discuss how adults learn using a range of theoretical frameworks. While these learning theories are particularly relevant to conversations around the education of adults, they have also influenced and hold relevance for other areas of education, including secondary and vocational education. Furthermore, they are also relevant in regards to education outside of formal contexts, including labor, popular, teacher, and workplace learning and education.

Perhaps the most well-known framework within the field is that of andragogy, or the teaching of adults (Knowles, 1980). In his foundational texts on adult education, Knowles posited five key assumptions about adult learners: 1) their self-concept allows them to direct their own learning, 2) they have prior experiences that enrich their education, 3) their education should be directly connected to their social functions, 4) they seek learning that addresses concrete problems and is directly applicable to their lived experience, and 5) their learning is intrinsically motivated (Knowles, 1984). Drawing on these assumptions about adult learners, Knowles argued that adult education spaces should foster mutual respect and shared responsibility for the planning and assessment of learning among educators and their adult students. These assumptions laid the groundwork for a range of traditions in the field. Most notably, Knowles's assumptions about the adult learner ground the tradition of self-directed learning (Oddi, 1987; Merriam, 2011). These assumptions are also integral to the traditions of transformative (Mezirow, 2018; Taylor & Cranton, 2012) and embodied learning (Lawrence, 2012).

RESULTS

Discourse Around Adolescent and Adult Learners in Québec Vocational Education Policies

In research on critical discourse analysis, scholars note that discourse can be seen as both a text that can be analyzed and also a social force that can alternatively reproduce or transform systems of power. This is true in the case of discourse on adolescent and adult learners. In our analysis of discourse around adolescent and adult learners in vocational education policies, we consider the extent to which this discourse draws on research on secondary and adult education. We also consider the extent to which this discourse constructs and reproduces a certain understanding of the vocational education student (as well as students in other educational pathways), highlighting the ideologies underlying these pathways and distinctions.

As outlined in the section on the vocational education context in Québec, students in the vocational education system are diverse in age and educational experiences, with some students beginning their vocational education at the secondary level and others as adult learners. Likewise, youth in vocational education programs in Québec report more negative prior educational experiences as well as greater marginalization within their current programs, particularly in the case of youth who do not already hold a diploma (Mazalon & Bourdon, 2015). This research makes it particularly important to consider the extent to which the needs and strengths of adolescent learners are considered in frameworks guiding multi-age vocational education pathways.

The government of Québec documents guiding vocational education differ considerably in their discussion of the development of vocational students' self-identities, worldviews, and connections to their communities, notably aligning more with theoretical frameworks for conceptualizing adult than secondary education. In the government's reference framework on vocational education, the ministry of education recognizes the need for "[p]edagogical differentiation" to adapt instruction to meet students' "type of intelligence, personality, learning style, pace, need for hands-on experience, [...a]ge, as well as work and life experience" (Gouvernement du Québec, 2004, p. 15). The document further outlines the potential for some element of choice and the development of more broadly applicable skills. It outlines the possibility of projects and creativity "dependent on the program and evaluation requirements." Likewise, it suggests that there should be learning of skills such as "communication, teamwork, problem solving, the development of critical judgment or a methodical approach, deserves special attention" to support "employability and versatility" (p. 15).

Despite these moments pointing toward broader educational strategies and outcomes, the vocational education document explicitly defines students in their programs in terms of their (already settled) identities as future workers: "[Students] are the qualified workers employers are waiting for. They are the reason why there are training programs. They are in the process of acquiring qualifications for the trade or occupation they have chosen" (p.3). In other words, the self-identities and worldviews of vocational education students are presumed to already have been developed, and to align with the dispositions and skills expected within the trade or occupation they have chosen.

Fittingly, the bulk of this reference framework focuses on the development of competencies related to a student's targeted occupation or trade for a given program. As outlined in the reference framework, each program of study includes anticipated outcomes and "competencies required to practise the trade or occupation at entry level on the job market" (p. 20). With its focus on the development of a single set of skills, this document assumes the developed self-concept and self-direction associated with adult learners. It implicitly suggests a fixed self-concept in students determining a "objective of qualifying for a trade or occupation," suggesting that vocational educators can support students' success by affirming "students' perception of themselves and the value of their objectives" (Gouvernement du Québec, 2004, p. 51). It further affirms students' self-direction in suggesting that they are further motivated by "[b]eing in control of the steps on the road to success" (p. 51).

This self-direction is also suggested in the documents' suggestion that vocational education students must be "aware of internal and external resources, knowing how to use them, and

recognizing that they are relevant to a given competency, training profile or qualifications, play an important role in the mobilization needed to acquire new learning” (p.7). The reference framework for vocational education also suggests that students’ intrinsic motivation is already high, arriving at a vocational training centre “proactive and interested,” aligning with concepts of intrinsic motivations among adult learners in research on andragogy (p.7). In this way, while recognizing the diverse age range of vocational education students, this reference framework emphasizes qualities associated with adult learners in research on andragogy (Knowles, 1984).

It is perhaps unsurprising that guiding documents in vocational education would integrate frameworks from adult education such as a developed self-concept or self-direction, given the considerable number of adult learners in vocational education classrooms. However, it is notable that these frameworks only draw on select concepts within the field – for example, adult learners as self-directed with intrinsic motivation – rather than andragogy’s focus on the co-construction of learning goals or emancipatory frameworks from research on transformative learning, for example. Central to the argument of this paper, it is also notable that this reference framework does not integrate developmentally-appropriate guidelines around the ongoing development of self-concept and world-view relevant to adolescent education. While the self-concept and self-direction expected in this document might be reasonable for an adult student who has already collected a fair share of work and life experience, it is less reasonable to expect a student of 15-19 years of age to arrive with a deep sense of their own identity and professional goals, how to navigate the available knowledge of resources, or how to develop at the same rate and with the same intrinsic motivation of their adult peers.

The andragogical focus of the vocational education reference framework is especially striking upon comparing it to the secondary education guiding document. Unlike the vocational education guidelines, the secondary education document explicitly discusses students’ development using discourse associated with adolescent and secondary education and human development. In particular, this document emphasizes students’ development of core provincial education goals connected to student self-actualization and socialization: “construction of identity,” “construction of world-view,” and “empowerment” (Gouvernement du Québec, 2005, p. 2). In its discussion of students’ construction of identity, the QEP for Secondary Education states that this aim sees students developing identity in order to “[broaden] their horizons, expanding their knowledge about themselves and their origins” while providing them “the opportunity to reflect on the moral and spiritual tenets of their community” (p.6). Thus, the QEP takes more of a holistic view of students’ internal identity development and how it relates to learning, aligning with both developmental frameworks in adolescent education as well as the humanist tenets of progressive education.

CONCLUSION

Our analysis of discourse around adolescent and adult learners and learning in adult education policy has significant implications for research, policy, and practice. As argued in this paper, despite the inclusion of both youth and adult learners in the vocational education system, the guiding documents for the Québec vocational education system emphasize qualities associated with adult learners in the field of andragogy. This emphasis is one possible explanation for the higher levels of self-reported marginalization among youth within

these programs (Mazalon & Bourdon, 2015; Mazalon & Dumont, 2020), given the little emphasis on developmentally-appropriate strategies for fostering the development of self-concept, world view, and belonging.

These findings present opportunities for future research. Our analysis suggests the value of research on to what extent and how learning theories associated with andragogy and adolescent education inform students' experiences in vocational education centers in Québec. Through this research, scholars and policymakers have the opportunity to reconsider the relationship between adolescent, adult, and vocational education in Québec, as well as considering alternative policies that might more fully ensure that every student has access to equitable opportunities to both develop and pursue their individual goals.

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STRUGGLING JUST TO SURVIVE: THE PRECARIETY OF POST-PANDEMIC ADULT EDUCATION UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS IN THE MARITIMES

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Abstract

In this paper we examine how political influences and an ethos of pastoral care continue to affect university based adult education programs. While the precarity of university based adult education programs is not new, we have continued to see the neoliberal effects on programs that have been unduly affected by student attrition during the COVID-19 pandemic along with an increasing pressure to care for students. This has led to an increase in precarity in programs and teaching staff, while at the same time an increase in demands for pastoral care and multi-format delivery of programs. As we ponder the future, we wonder whether university based adult education programs will persist and the effects on the people who teach in these programs.

Keywords: Adult Education, Neoliberalism, Pastoral Care, Pandemic Teaching

INTRODUCTION

Two years ago, we wrote a paper for the CASAE annual conference about 'redefining' adult online learning practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time, as we navigated a shifting reality, the program we worked within was deemed to be in jeopardy. This was due to declining numbers that reflected the reality of adults' lives as they grappled with changing circumstances brought on by lockdowns, homeschooling, and challenging finances. Apropos to this year's theme of 'redefining adult education', this paper revisits how neoliberal political influences and an expectation of pastoral care continue to affect university based adult education programs, particularly online ones, like ours in New Brunswick.

When we first engaged with this discussion as faculty, contract instructors, and scholars of adult education, we considered what the landscape of adult online learning would look like post-pandemic, trying to project what we might see in the future. We noted how the pandemic was changing the way our community of educators viewed online learning and how students were experiencing online and distance formats. In 2024, we have more than just concerns about the sudden shift to online pedagogies (we were already online). Instead, we are threatened with our very existence. While Dunn (2020) highlighted how pandemic pedagogy led to precarity for those of us teaching, we have found that adult education as a university field of study is also mired in that precarity. The tension we seek to highlight in this paper relates to the financial constraints we are experiencing running an adult education program with mostly precarious staff, the concurrent expectation that we give of ourselves through an ethic of care, and the balancing of a student experience in an online context that we have yet to fully comprehend.

METHODOLOGY

We situate this paper as form of narrative inquiry. We think of narrative inquiry as meaning-making in hindsight, and storytelling that shapes life narratives (Kalaba, 2023). This discussion is a collaboration in story making. The three of us shared our stories with each other, it then became a dialogue, as we engaged with each other as a community of adult educators (Wenger, 1998). In line with Lyle (2013), we used narrative inquiry to unpack our experience as adult educators and our interactions with our learners. In keeping with Connelly and Clandinin (1990), who remind us that individuals lead storied lives, the discussion in this paper reveals the ways in which we have been experiencing teaching and caring, and the concurrent neoliberal influence, in adult education since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic through the stories we told each other which we have since turned into words.

NEOLIBERALISM AND ADULT EDUCATION

The research on the neoliberal influence on adult education in the Maritimes (Benjamin et al., 2013) tends to emphasize how our province is experiencing an increase in insecure and unreliable employment, as well as the loss of traditional employment bases. Neoliberalism, as we are using it, is concerned with shifting responsibilities from the institution to the individual alongside a belief in the market's ability to direct change (Baker & Burke, 2023). This raises questions as to whether education is a public or private good. Following in the work of Carpenter (2021), we acknowledge neoliberalism as a form of class struggle where undergraduate adult education programs negotiate between the needs of their students, who tend to be older and a mix of employed and unemployed, institutional requirements, defined by neoliberalism and globalization, and the marketplace (Grace & English, 2018). Unlike public school, neoliberal social policy has a more complicated relationship with adult education (Carpenter, 2021).

In adult education, neoliberal policies have shifted the conversation from improving the individual to responding to market needs, often seen through workforce development programs (Carpenter, 2021). When we teach our adult education courses, we often present an idealized version of adult education, directed towards social good, but our hope for adult education as a field comes into friction with the institutional expectations founded in neoliberalism. In our previous research, we found that many adult education programs have been moving away from an ethic of adult education for personal, social, and political change towards a neo-liberal skills agenda (Benjamin et al., 2013). To remain competitive, students must constantly learn, upskill, and reskill where "individuals with lower levels of education find themselves compelled to bridge the competency gaps at their own peril" (Roumell & Jabarkhail, 2023, p.6). The language of skills and job outcomes has entered our adult education classrooms. Moreover, as we are expected to recruit students to keep our numbers high, we are expected to provide skills, to be practical, and to continue to articulate how our courses are "experiential".

Examples of this neoliberal influence can be seen in all aspects of adult education programs, particularly as we try to identify and understand what comes next. For example, recent changes to GED testing in Canada has seen the retirement of the current program and a lack of cohesiveness between provinces and territories in the development of its replacement, namely, the Canadian Adult Education Credential (Schwarz, 2024). This new credential, which

was to launch in March 2024 has been given little attention or support in New Brunswick. This matters to us at the university because we often teach the GED instructors in our undergraduate program, and these learners are feeling the effects of this neoliberal market mentality that makes their very existence unstable and jobs questionable.

We see these trends of instability materializing within our workplace as well, as we experience threats to the existence of our program. Grace and English (2018) suggest these competing tensions lessen the historical, social, and cultural purposes associated with adult education. Adult education is often thought of as a site of resistance but also represents a place of advocacy, where scholars can resist or support the “encroachment of neoliberal social transformation” (Carpenter, 2021, p. 338). Thus, adult education, when considering both educator and student, represents what Carpenter (2021) describes as a paradox. Furthering this line of thought, Groen and Kawalilak (2019) wonder how a Canadian adult education professoriate can maintain relevancy while also championing values associated with community and social justice. How do we stay true to our social justice roots as set out by Lindeman (1926) in the face of these threats?

As institutions across the Maritimes find themselves under constant fiscal scrutiny – due to institutional budgets, reduced revenue forecasts, and lower student enrolments – programs serving marginalized students, such as adult education, have come under fire. Declining student enrolments during COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 - although our program is seeing an increase in enrolments - has placed adult education programs under the financial microscope, manifesting in a reduction of courses offered while also increasing mandatory enrolment minimums. In turn, this impacts student choice alongside contract academics, who traditionally facilitate these courses.

Our learners were not immune to the impacts of COVID-19, with many facing temporary and permanent lay-offs, downsizing, and elimination of positions. As the economy recovered and employment opportunities began to rise, learners returned to or entered post-secondary environments to re-skill and up-skill to meet the needs of the post-pandemic workforce. This matters to us a great deal, as many of our learners are experiencing university for the first time or returning after a prolonged absence. The stress that comes with being a first-generation attendee or returning after many years, has required instructors to implement caring pedagogies, even when teaching in spaces that are traditionally not built for face-to-face interactions, such as learning management systems for online learning.

TEACHING AND PASTORAL CARE

Adult education as a field of study is often constructed as less a job, and more a labour of love. The language used here is often typically seen with care work. English et al. (2004) highlighted how the concept of pastoral care denoted a shift in teaching practice to consider the whole person in their learning context. They argued that “when we think of pastoral care and education as a vocation, we orientate ourselves to our relationships, our work, our selves, and the natural world” (English et al., 2004, p. 35). As we wrote about in our previous paper, the COVID-19 pandemic brought our role as pastoral care givers into focus. Rio Poncela et al. (2021) draw attention to the ways teachers cared for their students due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They further note that teaching can be labour which extracts a “emotional, social, material and political cost” (p. 195). This cost is often devalued, unacknowledged and more

often undertaken by female academics and academics from traditionally feminized fields of study like adult education. They identified various forms of caring, including emotional (i.e., about the student's well-being), pedagogical (i.e., their education) and social (i.e., developing the culture of care).

The care work undertaken by adult educators, tenured and contract academics, largely goes unnoticed by the faculty or university community. We continue to see this rhetoric of pastoral care entering our teaching practice in a variety of ways. This includes expectations from university administration to fill in gaps in student support services, for example, tasks traditionally under the purview of administrative staff are taken on by academic faculty (Herzig & Subramaniam, 2021), from verification of graduating requirements to managing efforts to increase student satisfaction. For us, this includes adding additional contact hours, combining synchronous and asynchronous learning in traditionally online classes, and a "don't ask" policy for illness related absences. Learners within our undergraduate distance program require a greater amount of disengagement check-ins, wellness support, referrals to university services, and flexibility in completing their academic studies due to their increased caring responsibilities at home. As adult educators, we are often approached by our students and asked to provide flexibility in attendance, deadlines, and amended syllabi to meet their needs. We are viewed as being more flexible than other educational programs and as attending to student wellbeing and willing to show 'grace under fire' compared to their other instructors. This notion of showing 'grace under fire' is echoed by Dock-Filipek et al. (2023), who note that it's often women instructors who are expected to accommodate. They equate this kind of care to 'academic housework.'

To understand how teachers cared for students during the pandemic, Rio Poncela et al. (2021) found the most complex cases often occurred within adult education. In their study, an adult educator noted difficulty negotiating a balance between their personal and professional lives as they adapted, in response, their own schedules to meet student educational and social needs. Providing pastoral support can be costly to teaching staff if institutions do not recognise the existence of emotion work as pedagogy in the context of student support or learning development (Laws & Fiedler, 2012). The pandemic led to an increased invisible load in the form of caring for students.

In our discussion of pastoral care, we wish to call attention to the hidden aspect of our care work. Seary and Willans (2020) highlight the notion of a hidden curriculum of care. While often presented as challenging what they call neoliberal "audit culture", caring continues to be characterized in contradictory ways as both necessary in adult education classrooms and contrary to the neoliberal agenda. The contradiction that emerges for us is the need and requirement for pastoral care which is at odds with the influence of neoliberal forces that leave adult education programs at risk of being cancelled.

ADULT ONLINE LEARNING POST-PANDEMIC

Post-pandemic, adult online learning is undergoing a shift. Considering the neoliberal and caring dynamics we addressed above; we are experiencing a pedagogical paradigm shift in how we (our institution) approach online learning with adults. For some adult educators, the COVID-19 pandemic did not represent a transition from in-person to online. Instead, course delivery remained the same and familiar. However, the needs of our students changed.

Jeramic (2021) reminds us that, "Neo-liberalism is also the ideological backdrop onto which digital technology, social media, and online learning have emerged" (p.68), yet institutional recognition of these changes has not occurred at the same pace and seems to overlook the needs and responsibilities students have as individuals. Reflecting upon our own practices and a reduction in resources, we now face students with varying perceptions of what online learning *is* and *ought* to be. Popović & Nišavić's (2023) suggest this shift is caused by a fundamental change in how people seek to understand the "new normal" (p. 34). Part of what we experienced, speaks to a change in student expectations and adjacent demands placed upon them outside of their academic pursuits. Alongside this change in student, the requirements and expectations of instructors has evolved, often with conflicting messages and requests for their instructors.

When adults enter or return to the world of online formal education, they tend to arrive with personal and professional responsibilities that range from family obligations to underemployment. Often, these responsibilities encroach upon the requirements of academia, and the need to negotiate between institutional requirements and individual situations falls within the scope of an educator's responsibility. Instructors are seeing more and more requests to change online pedagogies from synchronous to asynchronous and vice versa. On the flip side students have started to step in and out of their learning spaces much more easily, as they are not worried about missing weeks of learning due to holidays, completing other course work, job and professional pressures, family issues or illness, which are treated the same reasonable expectation of absence. We also continue to see an increased ghosting of online classroom discussions and students coming in at the end of a course requesting pathways to course completion. Spears and Green (2022) note the "additional workload of supporting students to learn online, together with students' withdrawal, disengagement, and physical absences from online classes presented additional, hidden administrative and unexpected pastoral care workload for staff as they followed up, counselled, and supported students at an individual level" (p. 291).

Contract academic instructors are often at the centre of the pastoral care requirement in online and distance classes, as they are the 'boots on the ground' facilitating a growing number of courses. Increasing need for pastoral care efforts, as described above, often require additional commitment of instructional and non-instructional contact hours that fall outside of their typical contract. While full-time faculty also face student requests for flexibility and accommodations, contract academic instructors are often caught in a time-balance dilemma. The decision to or to not voluntarily increase contact hours with students has ramifications for the contract academic: financial as they are not compensated for the additional workload and when it comes to the completion of student opinion surveys which play a role in continued employment.

The ethos of care for our online students continues to pressure us to continue to be flexible and to be seen as caring, even when we know learners are taking advantage of this kindness. Rio Poncela et al.'s (2021) point about *pedagogical* caring, which is caring about students' learning and academic achievement, offers two significant factors for us to consider within our narrative inquiry: a need for balance between pastoral care and pedagogical care, and the notion of a combined pastoral and pedagogical care. The combination of these two forms of caring offers us a way back to adult education as a place of *social* care and advocacy.

CONCLUSION

The call for papers aptly notes that as adult educators we are experiencing “multiple intersecting crises and neoliberal crunch,” while simultaneously justifying our relevance. As we highlighted in this paper, we have continued to see high levels of pastoral care needed to support students. This is all happening in the face of diminishing supports for university based adult education programs. We continue to struggle to see how adult education programs will persist while, at the same time, working towards the social aims at the core of our practice. Jeremic (2021) aptly notes how “our ‘pockets and crevices’—our daily life activities and work, big and small—find themselves online” (p. 74), and we find ourselves at an online crossroads of neoliberalism and care. While neoliberal forces continue to place more and more pressure on our ability to provide the caring and social benefit aspect of adult education, we continue to balance this care work while simultaneously feeling the effects of neoliberalism on post-secondary education.

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REDEFINING ADULT EDUCATION THROUGH AN UBUNTU-INSPIRED APPROACH

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Abstract

Drawing on data from a qualitative study involving 45 African Canadian participants, we explore the influence, value, and importance of the Ubuntu philosophy in adult education. We conclude with an example an Ubuntu-inspired pedagogical practice in adult education, that includes intergenerational learning and Elders' varied teaching practices within a post-secondary institution.

Keywords: Ubuntu, Nova Scotia, African Nova Scotians, Lifelong learning, Adult Education, Elders

INTRODUCTION

The Ubuntu philosophy has much to offer in the field of adult education, as it resonates with many cultures, yet it is understudied in Canada. We single out Ubuntu as one of the many Indigenous African approaches that can help redefine adult education in Canadian contexts. Many participants in our study referred to values and practices in the African Nova Scotian communities that resonate with Ubuntu, even though they did not always refer specifically to the term itself. For example, participants consistently referred to learning through community engagement, learning from Elders, acknowledging ties to the past, and the importance of strong ties between formal educational institutions and the local communities.

As our participants suggest, for people of African descent, particularly those in the diaspora, including in Nova Scotia, aspects of Ubuntu manifests in the cultural identities and spirit of the African Nova Scotian communities. Our findings suggest that aspects of Ubuntu can inform adult education, including in formal educational settings to reclaim educational spaces that are more culturally and intellectually relevant and responsive. Such an Ubuntu-inspired philosophy encourages a perspective of learning as a lifelong passage, characterized by continual development and growth.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

Our study takes place in Nova Scotia, which can be said to be "the birthplace of Black Culture and heritage in Canada, boasting the largest indigenous Black community in Canada" (Black Culture Centre, 2024). Black settlers have connections to Mi'kma'ki (the ancestral and unceded lands of the Mi'kmaw) dating back over 400 years. Descendants of these early settlers are connected to 52 historic communities in this province.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ubuntu is a concept deeply rooted in the philosophical and ethical traditions of Southern Africa, (Ngomane, 2019). The phrase "Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu," meaning "a person is a person through persons," encapsulates the core sentiment of Ubuntu (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013, p. 84). It fosters a conscious effort to recognize humanity in each other

(Tutu 1999). The adage "it takes a village to raise a child" reflects the spirit and intent of Ubuntu. It reminds us that we belong to a community and that there are valuable learning resources, including Elders, from within the local community.

In practice, Ubuntu-inspired pedagogy prioritizes collaboration, dialogue, and shared learning experiences. It encourages educators to recognize the inherent worth and potential of each learner while also acknowledging the rich tapestry of knowledge and experiences they bring to the educational space. Kaya and Seleti (2013) state that Ubuntu encourages learners to tap into the rich cultural heritage and knowledge systems of African communities, including knowledge that is accumulated in cultural activities such as "folk stories, songs, folk drama, legends, proverbs, myths, etc." (p. 35). These cultural forms emphasize holistic learning, encompassing academic, spiritual, emotional, and practical aspects. Kaya and Seleti add that "...involving community knowledge holders in research, teaching, and learning enables students to learn across generations, hence making them appreciate and respect the knowledge of Elders and other community members" (p. 35). As with any philosophy or theory, Ubuntu is not without critiques. For example, Eliastam (2015) questions the usefulness of Ubuntu because of what he perceives as its vagueness, subjectivity and its adaptability to present-day realities.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study used one-to-one interviews and a focus group with three participant groups: community Elders, youth and professional educators. A total of 45 individuals participated in the research, comprising 20 self-identified community Elders, 10 professional educators, and 15 students. The participants were selected purposively to ensure a broader representation from various African Nova Scotian communities and age demographics.

Community Data Collectors from several African Nova Scotian communities assisted with the data collection. We acknowledge that the researchers' lived experiences and cultural backgrounds influence the interpretation of participants' experiences despite efforts to maintain reflexivity throughout the research process.

Semi-structured one-to-one interviews were conducted with community Elders and professional educators to understand their perspectives on the concept of Ubuntu and other Africentric concepts and their relevance to their lived experiences and professional practice. A focus group session included students between the ages of 15 and 18. The dynamic of the focus group allowed for the emergence of the participants' shared narratives and perspectives on communal values and relationships.

We used MAXQDA to help identify patterns, recurring themes, and nuanced insights within the qualitative data collected from the one-to-one interviews and the focus group. The analysis involved coding the transcripts to categorize responses and identify key concepts related to Ubuntu and other major emerging themes. Through an iterative process, themes were refined and synthesized to capture the richness and complexity of participants' narratives. For the purpose of this paper, we narrow in on three themes:

- *It Takes a Village*: Ubuntu in African Nova Scotian Communities,
- *Standing on their shoulders*: Learning from Elders, and

- *Learning at their feet*: Elder knowledge.

In the findings section below, we share our preliminary findings on the three themes, followed by a discussion and conclusion.

FINDINGS

Our findings, presented in three themes, demonstrate how Ubuntu manifests in the cultural identity and spirit of the African Nova Scotian communities.

Theme 1: It Takes a Village: Ubuntu in African Nova Scotian Communities

In this theme, participants share how the Ubuntu philosophy is embedded in their lives and experiences in the community. Some participants used the word Ubuntu, others referred to the proverb, 'it takes a village,' while others described the strong value of interconnectedness and the belief that collective well-being is the shared responsibility of the community.

For example, Mildred, an Elder but still young enough to have Elders older than her, explains that in the previous generation in her community, Ubuntu was a way of life. She asserts that it must be maintained in the current and future generations for the betterment of the collective. She explains:

For Elders [Ubuntu] was how they lived [in] their community. Collectively, they raised each other, supported each other, lifted each other up, and helped each other. When one did not have, the other would share. That really was the way of life. Many of us have adopted that, and it has spilled over hopefully into the education system. ...How will we continue to advocate and make things relevant for the next generation? ...It is important to pass things on. It is important to advocate for not only ourselves as individuals but for us as a collective of African Nova Scotian communities.

Nassor, an Elder, says:

What I have noticed with some of the Elders, and I have really admired, is their family connection...There is a kind of community living, you know. We talk about that [proverb] "it takes a village to raise a child"... but I've seen it in actual fact where there is this village where the Elders are helping. Where the grandmother helps, the grandmother helps, and uncles and aunts help. I think we can learn a lot from their kind of community spirit and their willingness in that way.

Asha, a youth in the community, gives an example of that sense of community that resonates with aspects of Ubuntu in the past when she was a child and which she still sees in her generation:

[The proverb] "it takes a village" [resonates] because, in our African Nova Scotian communities, everybody has a hand in raising you in a sense...I feel that in our Black communities, everybody looks out for each other and ensures that people are safe, respectful, and doing good. There is like uniqueness ... within the African Nova Scotian community. I'm thinking like, for example in the churches, we kind of tend to take on these motherly or fatherly roles. Even though they may not even be our blood family, they may be our grandmother's best friend or whoever. However, if we know them and

we establish a relationship with them or can somehow identify a connection, we tend to look at them as second mothers or close family members. ... there's a community understanding that anyone older than you, you respect them ... [You] refer to them as "Missus so and so or Mister so and so," making sure that you are being respectful no matter who they are or how you may know them. Like a consensual understanding of respect. We don't have to explain it to other people in the community. We just know about it. Being African Nova Scotian in general ... if you see someone who looks like you, ... it's just natural...that you say hi even if you don't know them.

She adds that the communal value is critical:

We, as African Nova Scotians, all share each other's power and pain in a way because when someone is doing good and being successful, we all celebrate that. Furthermore, when there's a loss in the community, we all feel it because even though we may not know that person personally, we always know somebody who knows them. So, I think we can always come together when we need to and when we want to create change within our communities.

Theme 2: Standing on their shoulders: The role of Elders

This theme highlights the pivotal role of Elders within African Nova Scotian communities, where their wisdom and guidance contribute to education and community development.

For example, Asha says,

I would say our Elders paved the way for many of us in education and knocking down barriers [with]their knowledge in terms of how to survive in a white world. Their ability to challenge systems and advocate knowing that there's going to be future generations behind them. I think the ability of Elders in the community to come together to form groups or committees creates change. The knowledge they were able to put together is the reason why we have the opportunities we have today.

She adds,

I think now the most significant thing will be the support from Elders. Elders break[...] down barriers to give us opportunities. And now that we have more opportunities than we did in the past. Elders being able to support us through those opportunities and give us guidance along the way and continuing to teach us and advocate for us... Having the support of the Elders [is necessary] because if we don't have the support of our Elders, that would not be good.

As Nassor explains, Elders understand the necessity of financial support combined with encouragement which can serve as a crucial bridge between the learning aspirations of younger generations and their future goals:

Elders are still involved in education, even if they are retired, ... and they try to be an encouragement to their children. Even though they don't have much money, most people put aside a small amount for the students. In most communities, they give scholarships. It's nothing big, but it's a way of encouraging their children to pursue

higher education. And they celebrate it when their children have done well too. It's not only celebrated in one community, but you would hear from one community to the next. So, I think that it is an encouragement for young people to do better.

Theme 3: Learning at their feet: Elder knowledge

This theme captures what the participants refer to as the invaluable wisdom and knowledge passed down through generations by Elders, which they say is relevant and essential for the current generation. They explain that Elders learned from the past, and in teaching now, they influence the present and future, reflecting the Sankofa concept. For example, Nassor says,

Elders' knowledge is very relevant because ..., I mean now it is being written, but before, a lot of it was oral. And so, that's why it was important because you want to hear from them. You want to sit at their feet and let them tell you about it... Elders' knowledge is, most of it, is an understanding of the past and how things used to be. The struggles that come true, and how they have gotten where they are... how they were able to thrive in spite of the challenges that they face.

He elaborates:

In the African Nova Scotia community, we have Elders who were quilt makers, so they passed that [skill] down. Elders who were basket makers; they passed that knowledge down to their children and their grandchildren, so it continues in the family. You have Elders who worked in the woods. They passed that down too. They have Elders who are singers. Yeah, the artists and that is passed down. A lot of them were activists, and some of that is passed on because they had to stand up for themselves. And of course, one of the big things for the Elders is they were very religious people. And that was passed down to their children and grandchildren.

Femi explains,

I live with my grandmother ...and [she and] other Elders... carry history, and they pass a lot of stories down too. ... Elders' knowledge is a way to get information passed down from those who are older than them and have lived through the experiences that I, being in my 20s, have not lived through. As an Elder ... she would go through experiences that I probably would never have.

Tallie, an Elder herself, says,

the key is to have the Elder ... impacting the knowledge. ... He or she would ... give others knowledge of his or her experiences and mentor those people. Those people then also go and mentor others.... The link has to have a way of growing... But they do not have to break ties with the [Elder]. Because once you break it and you think you know it all, that is when things break down.

Asha also emphasized the importance of intergenerational connections and the responsibility each generation has for being intentional about giving and being given opportunities for Elders in each generation to be heard:

one day we will grow up and become Elders teaching students ... We are [already] Elders to some people but one day we'll be older, and we'll have to make sure that we are continuing to share knowledge too. So, we need to continue to keep in mind [and] we will carry on these traditions and maybe even look for opportunities to do that, but we need to be presented with them too.

Thus, "learning at their feet" is not just about acquiring information; it is about honouring the past, taking responsibility for preserving traditions and developing a future guided by the wisdom of those who came before us. It also involves humility and an understanding that knowledge evolves over time and is connected to our ancestors.

DISCUSSION

The participants highlight the value of Africentric concepts of Ubuntu and 'it takes a village,' which includes the importance of listening to community voices such as Elders, whose knowledge, mentorship, guidance, and stories can contribute to reimagining adult education in Nova Scotia. An Ubuntu philosophy can inform ways that lifelong learning can be more inclusive and accessible to African Nova Scotian learners and to non-African Nova Scotians of all ages. What might Ubuntu-informed adult education look like in a university?

The Elders' Circle project (<https://www.msvu.ca/campus-life/student-equity-diversity-inclusion/black-student-support/programs-initiatives/elders-circle/>) established by author 2, is an example in a post-secondary institutional setting. The Elders' Circle provides a platform for Elders to share their stories, knowledge, and perspectives monthly at the Black Student Support Office at Mount Saint Vincent University. The storytelling circles are open to all students, faculty, and staff and feature Elders invited from the community to share stories on any topic of their choosing. The Circles often include displays of quilts, drumming, and artwork and all participants are allowed to engage with one another through dialogue and share in a meal together. The Elders' Circles validate the knowledge of African Nova Scotians, enrich the university's academic discourse, and broaden the interconnections between formal institutionalized knowledge and informal community-based knowledge while fostering a greater sense of belonging and empowerment among African Nova Scotian and non-African Nova Scotian students, faculty, and community members. Further, the Circles contribute to preserving and revitalizing African Nova Scotian communities' cultural traditions, values, and oral heritage while providing students with invaluable mentorship from Elders.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we emphasized the value and relevance of Ubuntu, which originates in Southern Africa, and found connections with the Nova Scotian research participants' narratives in our study. The African proverb, "A village without the *elderly* is like a well without water," reminds us that adult education programs and universities are the "wells" but without water, i.e. the wisdom of Elders and the African Indigenous philosophies, such as Ubuntu, they are not as culturally and intellectually relevant and responsive learning spaces as that they could and should be.

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INFORMAL LEARNING IN THE WORK OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT: EMERGING INSIGHTS FROM A SURVEY OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONALS

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INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest concerns facing workers, and those who employ and educate them, is ensuring that workers have the skills they need to remain employable. Economists, futurists, and others forecast the coming of Fourth Industrial Revolution, the successor to the current Information Age and a period in which automation and artificial intelligence will significantly reshape the economy, everyday lives and, most immediately to this study: jobs (Bloem, Van Doorn, Duivesteyn, Excoffier, Maas, & Van Ommeren, 2014; Schwab 2017). These economists, futurists, and others vary in their predictions about the impact on employment, with some anticipating extensive unemployment, others expect significant refashioning of existing jobs, and others anticipate a smaller effect (Schwab, 2017; World Economic Forum, 2016). However, the experts seem to be unanimous in their belief that ongoing education and training provides a cushion against upheaval in employment. Experts generally offer two broad categories of suggestions: (a) formal vocational retraining (retraining already-employed workers for substantially changed job responsibilities and new jobs; and (b) ongoing training and development, which helps workers adjust to incremental changes in their jobs and maintains their employability.

The primary means that most workers receive ongoing training and development is through informal learning which, in the context of the workplace, refers to “situations in which some combination of [the instructional] process, location [in which instructional activities occurred], purpose [of instruction], and its content are determined by the worker, who may or may not be conscious that an instructional event occurred” (Carliner, 2012, p.5, based on Malcolm, Hokdinson, & Colley, 2003 and Wihak & Hall, 2011). In fact, despite the skills challenges, Canadian employers increasingly rely on informal learning to provide their staffs with the skills needed to perform their jobs (Cotsman & Hall, 2018; Hall & Comeau, 2018). If workers rely on informal learning to develop new skills, then, how might training and development professionals—the people typically charged with developing skills in the workplace—effectively leverage it to benefit workers, and also identify advise on its limits?

This study is intended to support training and development professionals in addressing this challenge by gauging practices of professionals in the field regarding formal and informal learning. Specifically, this study intends to explore:

1. What forms do formal and informal learning take within organizations?
2. To what extent do training and development professionals perceive the effectiveness of formal and informal learning in their organizations?
3. To what extent do organizations promote formal and informal learning opportunities?
4. To what extent do organizations recognize formal and informal learning? How do they do so?
5. What is the perceived relationship between formal and informal learning held by training and development professionals?

METHODOLOGY

Because we sought the perspectives of a large group of practicing professionals, we used a survey. The survey specifically asked equivalent questions about formal and informal learning within organizations regarding:

- Examples of formal and informal learning
- Effectiveness of formal and informal learning programs as perceived by training and development professionals
- Promotion of formal and informal learning opportunities within organizations so people are aware of these opportunities
- Recognition of formal and informal learning, including both the extent to which organizations recognize the type of learning and methods used to do so

The survey was distributed through the Institute for Performance and Learning, the largest professional organization for training and development professionals in Canada. The organization distributed a Call for Participation to its members through direct email messages as well as through its newsletter. The primary investigator also posted the Call for Participation on social media. 102 surveys were fully completed and used for further analysis.

Because most questions were open, the analysis was primarily qualitative using two levels of coding: Open coding to find themes and axial coding to identify broader themes and relationships within responses. Each response was coded by each researcher and discrepancies were resolved to ensure that all codes reflect a consensus.

RESULTS

This section presents the preliminary results of the survey (analysis continues as we submit this.)

In terms of who participated, half worked for for-profit corporations and another 27.5% worked for government organizations. Table 1 shows the type of employer of the participants.

Table 1*Type of employer of participants*

Type of employer	Percentage
Education	10.5%
For-profit	50%
Government	27.6%
Healthcare	2.6%
Nonprofit	9.2%

In terms of the organization size, 61.8% worked for larger organizations, with 1001 or more employees. But nearly all size categories were represented in the results. Table 2 shows the size of organizations represented

Table 2*Size of organizations*

Size	Percentage
1 worker	1.3%
2-5 workers	1.3%
6-10 workers	0%
11-25 workers	3.9%
26-50 workers	6.6%
51-100 workers	2.6%
101-250 workers	10.5%
251-500 workers	6.6%
501-1,000 workers	5.3%
1,001-5,000 workers	21.1%
5,001-10,000 workers	9.2%
10,001-25,000 workers	11.8%
25,000+ workers	19.7%

In terms of roles that participants played, the majority had managerial roles and a third played two or more roles in their organizations. Table 3 shows the roles of participants.

Table 3

Roles of participants in their organizations

Role	Percentage
Instructional designers / developers	11.8%
Learning consultants	21%
Training executive	13.2%
Training Manager	21%
Held 2 or more roles	33%

In response to research question 1—What forms do formal and informal learning take within organization? the forms differed between the two. See Table 4 for details.

Table 4

Examples of formal and informal learning

Formal learning	Informal learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continuing professional development ▪ Cybersecurity training ▪ External courses/ designations that have been approved ▪ In-class or virtual training ▪ Indigenous training ▪ LinkedIn Learning ▪ NED Days ▪ Onboarding ▪ Technical training ▪ Videos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coaching ▪ Job shadowing ▪ LinkedIn learning ▪ Lunch and learns ▪ Mentorship ▪ Newsletters ▪ On-the-job training ▪ Policies and procedures ▪ Reading ▪ Rotational assignment mentoring ▪ Sharing curated articles / notes ▪ Team meetings ▪ User-generated content ▪ Videos

In response to research question 2—To what extent do training and development professionals perceive the effectiveness of formal and informal learning in their organizations?—participants seem to suggest that formal learning is a bit more effective than informal learning but, overall, participant found both forms of learning to be generally effective. Table 5 shows the results.

Table 5*Perceived effectiveness of formal and informal learning*

	Formal learning	Informal learning
5 – to a great extent	18.4%	17.5%
4	35.6%	16.25%
3 – somewhat	41.4%	48.75%
2	4.6%	10%
1- not at all	0%	7.5%

In terms of the amount of learning, when considering both formal and informal learning, the majority of participants felt that people in their organizations received either just the right amount (42%) or too little (32.5%) learning. See Table 6 for results.

Table 6*Perceptions of the extent of learning that people receive*

Too much learning	16.5%
Just the right amount	42%
Too little learning	32.5%
I don't know	15%

In response to research question 3—To what extent do organizations promote formal and informal learning opportunities?—responses suggest that formal learning opportunities are more widely promoted than informal ones. See Table 7 for the results.

Table 7*Extent to which organizations promote formal and informal learning opportunities*

	Formal learning opportunities	Informal learning opportunities
Yes	87.1%	46.25%
No	12.9%	53.75%

In response to research question 4—To what extent do organizations recognize formal and informal learning? How do they do so?—the data suggests that organizations are more likely to recognize formal learning than informal learning. See Table 8 for results.

Table 8*To what extent do organizations recognize learning*

Formal learning		Informal learning	
Yes	100%	Yes	49%
No	0%	No	51%

Although the extent of recognition differs, the means of recognizing learning do not vary as widely. See Table 9 for details.

Table 9*How organizations recognize learning*

Formal learning	Informal learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Badges ▪ In employee education record ▪ Internal database of skills ▪ Reimbursement ▪ Track completion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Badges ▪ Internal database of skills ▪ Reimbursement ▪ Track usage of materials

Another form of recognition comes with the willingness to invest funds. In terms of informal learning, many organizations do not appear to be investing. See Table 10 for details.

Table 10*Investment of funds in informal learning*

Yes	38.3%
No	33.3%
Not sure	28.4%

In response to research question 5—What is the perceived relationship between formal and informal learning held by training and development professionals? —the majority of participants either perceived that formal learning primarily leads people to engage in informal learning or that the two were interrelated. See Table 11 for results.

Table 11*The perceived relationship between formal and informal learning in participants' organizations...*

No relationship	15%
Completely interrelated	31.75%
Formal learning primarily leads people to engage in informal learning	36.5%

Informal learning primarily leads people to engage in formal learning	12.5%
Other	6.25%

We also asked participants whether they agreed with this statement: As far as learning for work goes, 70% of it happens informally on the job, 20% happens through coaching, and 10% through formal learning. This is the essence of the 70-20-10 formula that is popular among practicing professionals in the field but lacks any empirical evidence (De Bruyckere, Kirschner, & Hulshof, 2015). Table 12 presents the results.

Table 12.

Agreement with the statement regarding 70-20-10

Yes	60%
No	40%

Conclusions

Although data analysis continues, certain conclusions have begun to emerge. These include:

Formal and informal learning in workplace, with focus on recognition and effectiveness.

Study on informal learning in work of L&D professionals in Canada.

The first emerging conclusion is that no standard definition of informal learning exists. This study supports an emerging conclusion of our related integrative literature review that informal learning is a category of learning and development options and, therefore, not easily pinned down.

The second emerging conclusion is that informal learning activities tend to go beyond formal classes into on-the-job training, mentoring, job shadowing, and reading. It can also include courses, but taken at the learners' initiation.

The third emerging conclusion is that training and development professionals feel somewhat less certain about their informal learning efforts and these activities are somewhat more laissez-faire than for formal learning.

The fourth emerging conclusion is that informal learning is related to formal learning, with formal learning perhaps inspiring informal or further learning.

The last emerging conclusion is that the results of this study validate and illuminate results of other studies on informal learning.

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WINEMAKING AND WORKPLACE LEARNING: WHAT THE FUTURE MAY HOLD

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Abstract

This paper, which stems from a doctoral research study, focuses on Nova Scotia winemakers learning their way into their careers. Producing wine in the Atlantic Canadian coastal province has picked up momentum in the last two decades. The complexities of the industry emanate from the province's cool climate, unique geology, geography, economy, history, and culture. The data was gathered through public documents and analyzed thematically. Key insights in the findings suggest that winemakers in NS have learned their way into winemaking experientially, with formal education, and through communities of practice. Furthermore, most winemakers working in the province's 20 wineries grew up in Nova Scotia, suggesting that there are factors that attract individuals to return to or to remain in Nova Scotia. Those individuals would not have had opportunities to learn their craft locally when they were growing up. This suggests that winemakers in the province adopt a lifelong learning approach and draw on creativity and adaptability.

Keywords: lifelong learning, workplace learning, communities of practice, rural, winemaking

INTRODUCTION

Learning one's way into a new career involves considerable time and effort, and draws on an individual's prior knowledge, skills, and aptitudes (Caron, 2023). For instance, winemaker Gina Haverstock learned her way into winemaking through a blend of experiential learning and formal education that is motivated by a passion for wine. With limited wine knowledge, she began working at a winery while studying for medical school entrance exams. Rather than going to medical school, she worked at Jost ([Table 1](#)) for a year, then went to study viticulture and enology at Brock University. When she completed her studies, which included work terms at international wineries, she returned to NS and "was able to bring all the techniques...[she] learned home" (Augustine Brown, 2024). Winemakers' life histories, narratives, and identities shape their working lives and give them meaning just as other professionals experience (Olesen, 2001). The focus of this paper is on the experiences of winemakers learning their way into the wine industry in NS through document analysis. The number of wineries has more than doubled since 2005 and only two winemakers originate from international countries, while 12 wineries have winemakers from NS ([Table 1](#)). Given that most winemakers did not have opportunities to learn their craft locally while growing up, this paper asks how one learns all the skills and abilities needed to succeed in this burgeoning industry?

The paper begins with a brief literature review that includes an outline of the study that informs this work, and then an overview of the methods used in writing this paper. Findings are presented and then elaborated on in the discussion section that includes key questions for further research. This piece considers the experiences of learning one's way into a complex industry that demands various specific skills and competencies. Ideas for supporting the future of workplace learning are explored through the lens of adult and lifelong learning.

BACKGROUND

The research study, that is the basis of this paper, is a doctoral thesis that investigates the experiences of winery leaders and decision-makers (including winemakers) learning their way into the wine industry in NS. The study aims to understand how learning processes occur from the perspective of leaders and decision-makers. The current paper focuses on narratives of winemakers' learning their way into the wine sector of NS through public documents.

Only specific grapes will grow in NS and certain techniques and wines work well with those grape varieties. Even though NS shares the same latitude as the classic warm grape-growing region of Bordeaux, France (Jones, 2012; Shaw, 1999), it is considered a cool-climate wine region (Jantzi & McSweeney, 2019; Nova Scotia Community College, 2021). Some of the criteria for identifying cool climate wine regions include the number of hours of sunshine, the average minimum temperature, how many frost-free days and the number of intense cold days are there in the growing season (Jones, 2012).

The 20 NS wineries are logically located in non-urban areas that are ideal for growing and harvesting grapes. The province's rural "economy is primarily service-based" (State of Rural Canada 2021, 2021, p.95) where the industry both impacts and is impacted by tourism (Chesworth, 2016; Jantzi & McSweeney, 2019). Even though their core business is making and selling wine, wineries may maximize profits through tourism marketing (Sears & Weatherbee, 2019), restaurants, and other revenue streams such as weddings (e.g., Lightfoot & Wolfville, 2024). This aligns with other geographical jurisdictions (e.g., Güzel et al., 2021; Sigala & Robinson, 2019; Williams, 2013) with similar strategies.

Winemakers in rural NS must develop a wide range of skills that can include knowledge of winemaking, agriculture/viticulture/enology, strategic tourism marketing, and acumen for regional development (Sears & Weatherbee, 2019). As Pesme et al. (2022) show, some Canadian wine regions do form a shared identity by fostering relationships with the places and spaces they occupy through terroir (Van Leeuwen & Seguin, 2006); developing a set of shared practices, strategies, and institutions; and building trust through shared values, interests and understandings. Paradoxically, developing wine regions have been shown to both cooperate and compete with one another, sometimes referred to as cooptation (Crick, 2018; Crick et al., 2021). This phenomenon has been documented internationally (Bou et al., 2008; Gardner et al., 2018; Morrison & Rabellotti, 2009; Taplin, 2010; Vissak et al., 2017) as well as in Canada (Crick & Crick, 2023; Doloreux & Lord-Tarte, 2012; Pesme et al., 2022).

The complexity of the industry in NS leads to questions from an adult and lifelong learning perspective such as, to what extent does lifelong learning impact winemakers' development as they enter the multidimensional field of winemaking in the province? What motivates individuals to work at wineries in this corner of Canada? How have those individuals learned the variety of skills and aptitudes required to make wine? How do those winemakers continue to learn and adapt? Lastly, what will this indicate about the future of adult workplace learning?

THEORETICAL GROUNDING

Learning one's way into winemaking involves intricately developing several skills and competencies for winemaking that include approaches informed by formal, non-formal and informal learning (Carr et al., 2018). Winemakers are curious, creative, and develop their expertise through lived experience. All the knowledge needed to become a winemaker, through the viewpoint of adult and lifelong learning (Jarvis, 2014), is a commitment to continuous learning and improvement over the life course while taking risks. Much of the learning, therefore, occurs experientially (Fenwick, 2001) and through agency (Billett, 2004).

The uniqueness of NS' geology and the climate makes it difficult to grow just any grape variety; Diez-Zamudio and colleagues (2021) say that NS "is at the edge of the wine production zone" (p 9.). The specific knowledge – of how to successfully harvest locally grown grapes and how to make quality wine from them – is held by few. Winemakers sharing and exchanging knowledge in a defined geographical area involves cooperation with competitors which differs from a neoliberal-capitalist approach that values, individualism, competition, and the development of human capital (Overton & Murray, 2013; Yelvington et al., 2012). Rather, wineries take up a communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998, 2000) approach for continued learning.

Communities of practice are established when individuals engage in learning as a collective (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015), usually, this occurs for several reasons, a group looks to overcome similar challenges, a newly formed group looks to define a shared identity, a network of people aims to refine certain techniques, or, in this case, all the above. Two events that demonstrate the NS wine industry has a history of working cooperatively are (a) the formation of the Wine Growers Association (Wine Growers Nova Scotia, 2024) and (b) working cooperatively to initiate a local appellation called Tidal Bay (Lowe, 2016; Moss et al., 2021).

METHODS

Since the NS wine industry is relatively new and there are only 20 wineries, the data collection potential is narrow. For instance, peer-reviewed literature on NS wineries is scarce, and there are a select number of individuals who can be interviewed. The current paper focuses on winemakers experiences learning their way into winemaking by using document analysis from individual business websites of NS wineries, the Wine Growers NS website, and media interviews with winemakers (podcasts, blogs, news

articles, and magazine articles) as others have shown can be effective sources of data (Altheide, 2000; Bowen, 2009; Karppinen & Moe, 2012). Morgan (2022) calls document analysis a “valuable approach” and “particularly useful when researchers do not have opportunities to complete studies using other qualitative methods” (p.75). The analysis for this paper involves reading the public documents and listening to audio recordings, and podcasts, watching media videos, and reviewing a pilot

Table 1. Wineries and Winemakers

Year	Winery Name	Current Winemaker	Hailing From
1979	Grand Pré Wines	Jürg Stutz	CH
1984	Jost Vineyards	Gina Haverstock	NS
1989	Sainte-Famille Wines Ltd / lost bell	Tony Barkhouse	NS
1990	Blomidon Estate Winery Limited	Simon Rafuse	NS
2002	Benjamin Bridge Vineyards	Jean-Benoit Deslaurier	QC
2004	Bear River Vineyards	Susan Wong & Darren Carey	ON
	Gaspereau Vineyards	Gina Haverstock	NS
2005	L'Acadie Vineyards	Bruce Ewert	BC
2008	Casa Nova Fine Beverages	Piers Greenwood	UK
2010	Avondale Sky Winery	Ben Swetnam	NS
	Bent Ridge Winery Limited	Glenn Dodge	NS
	Luckett Vineyards	Mike Mainguy	ON
2012	Devonian Coast Wineries Limited	Gina Haverstock	NS
	Eileanan Breagha Vineyards	Kenneth MacLellan	NS
2014	Lightfoot & Wolfville Vineyards Ltd	Josh Horton	NS
	Planters Ridge Winery Ltd	John McLarty	ON
2017	Beausoleil Farmstead Winery and Cidery	Melani Eelman	NS
2018	Mercator Vineyards	Becca Griffin	NS
2021	1365 Church Street Vineyard & Winery	John Eikelenboom	NS

Table 1 adapted from (Weatherbee & Sears, 2024, tbl. 1)

interview to help in the identification of themes (Clarke & Braun, 2013), which are presented in the following section.

FINDINGS

Findings include emergent themes from public documents that provide insights regarding why people are initially interested in winemaking in NS; how individuals

describe learning their way into winemaking in NS; and how winemakers continue to learn and grow their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Why become a winemaker in Nova Scotia?

Nova Scotia's rich history with agriculture lends itself nicely to the wine industry (Campbell, 2016; George, 2013) as some individuals have grown up farming or have converted farms to vineyards (e.g., *About Beausoleil*, 2024). Kenneth MacLellan says "Growing up I was always working some sort of summer job on the land, whether in the blueberry fields or other farm work" (Wine Growers Nova Scotia, 2021, p. 10) and Josh Horton also "started in the vineyard because of [his] farming background" (Wine Growers Nova Scotia, 2021, p. 11). Jurg Stutz gets excited about "being in the vineyard in the spring and summer, literally harvesting the fruits of your labour in the fall, and then turning the grapes into something special for everyone to enjoy in the winter months." (Wine Growers Nova Scotia, 2021, p. 9). The agricultural connections with winemakers are strong as viticulture and oenology are essential aspects of making wine.

Some winemakers find the creative nature of winemaking appealing. Simon Rafuse, for instance, says, "I have always been drawn to the blend of science and art in wine, and the physical nature of the job. I like the idea of crafting something new" (Wine Growers Nova Scotia, 2021, p. 8). Rebecca Griffin says "Winemaking is truly a balance of science and art. It is an expression of the environment grown in and the people it's made by" (Wine Growers Nova Scotia, 2021, p. 16). For some, a career that challenges intellectually and creatively and demands a variety of skills and competencies is appealing.

Learning one's way into winemaking

The question of how one learns their way into winemaking in NS is unique to each ardent winemaker, however, narratives suggest that most winemakers engage in "wine education" to support their learning. Simon Rafuse, for example, says, "I had been working with grape growers in the South of France and became fascinated by the whole production process...[and] I enrolled in wine-making school the next year" (Taste of Nova Scotia, 2012). In a similar story, Bruce Ewert describes his wine education as starting "with a seemingly unrelated Engineering degree...[and] After graduation, I heard that there was an entrance-level position in winemaking...in the Okanagan Valley. I was taught by the prominent winemakers...[and then] I took [a course] at UC Davis..." (Pinhey, 2006). Susan Wong also enrolled in UC Davis's winemaking certificate program after starting her winery (Grapevine Publishing, 2018). This shows that formal education is a reliable method to complement one's experiences learning their way into winemaking.

Experiential learning is emphasized in the narratives and facilitates the development of individuals' learning winemaking such as the examples of Simon Rafuse, Bruce Ewert and Susan Wong above. Other examples of winemakers who have learned through experience are Jean-Benoit Deslauriers who "came to Benjamin Bridge after helming winemaking projects in Santa Barbara, California and Colchagua Valley, Chile" (Gertler,

2017). Rebecca Griffin “spent a year working and travelling in New Zealand...[and] quickly fell in love...The passion for wine followed soon after” (Wine Growers Nova Scotia, 2021, p. 16). Experiential learning through hands-on work that is informed by their formal education is a crucial component to initially learning the skills and gaining knowledge of the winemaking process. As noted by some of the winemakers above, it is an art and a science, therefore making wine requires experience, knowledge, creativity, and experimentation.

Continued learning (Learning in community)

Individuals hone their craft and continue to improve and expand their knowledge in Nova Scotia’s nascent wine industry by sharing knowledge and best practices that are specific to the province’s ecology, climate, geology, and geography. For instance, co-owners of Bear River Winery say:

The industry in Nova Scotia is fantastic. Everyone is so supportive and encouraging. You see very little competition and a lot of collaboration. The devastating frost that hit back in June really solidified that. There was great information exchange as we all tried to bring our vineyards back to life. Some areas were hit harder than others but everyone shared what they knew (Grapevine Publishing, 2018).

In their community of practice, NS winemakers help one another with problem-solving viticulture-related issues as well as winemaking techniques. Bruce Ewert for example says that “Eighty percent of our production [at his winery] is sparkling wine” and so he “consulted with several other Nova Scotia wineries, helping them produce traditional method sparkling wine because he did not want Nova Scotia to be known for carbonated wine” (Schreiner, 2017). This community of winemakers helps one another succeed by sharing knowledge and best practices for overcoming unique challenges for winemaking, viticulture and even sharing equipment (Lowe, 2016).

The original owner of Avondale Sky said “You work with other people. You don’t see other people as competition. Even if the same business is next door. If we had three other wineries next door, we would be thrilled...It’s community” (Lowe, 2016). Supporting a similar sentiment, Hanspeter Stutz, owner of Domaine de Grand Pré welcomes the idea of more wineries in the area saying that “there’s always room for more winemakers—especially those who have what he describes as the right attitude” (Robicheau, n.d.). This shows that even though there is an established community of wineries, winemakers are open to growth and welcoming new people to the industry. A community of practice includes members with a collective competence and shared interest as well as a shared repertoire of resources that include physical objects, knowledge and stories (Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). The NS wine industry contains all the elements of a community of practice.

DISCUSSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The data above, compiled from public documents, shows that winemakers in the province have experienced a pivotal moment influencing their decision to pursue a career in wine. For instance, Bruce Ewert took an opportunity to work with expert winemakers in British Columbia after his studies, Gina Haverstock, Rebecca Griffin, and Simon Rafuse were inspired while working at vineyards in NS, New Zealand, and France. A key insight from this data suggests that winemakers in NS have learned their way into winemaking experientially, with formal education, and through communities of practice. A deeper reflection of their aptitudes for lifelong learning and what motivates these individuals to continue to learn is of particular interest to the research project underpinning this paper. A greater biographical investigation into the influences and life histories of individuals may clarify motivations for learning throughout life.

The communities of practice that have developed in NS's wine industry are interesting as there is little to no mention of competition. Individuals in the NS farm-wine sector often describe the difficulties with the provincial regulations and restrictions (Laroche, 2024; Robicheau, n.d.). This demonstrates that competition does not necessarily exist between local wine producers, but rather with provincial industry regulators, and with imported products that are sold at lower prices. Working and learning together is beneficial for regional success (Crick & Crick, 2023) and as Taplin (2010) argues, when an industry is young, this strategy is crucial for its success and growth; however, gradually, cooperation becomes competition. Gina Haverstock says that "the community doesn't get together as often as they used to, but they've still got each other's backs" (Augustine Brown, 2024). Perhaps this suggests that a natural growth in the industry is occurring; more evidence is needed. Regardless, winemakers do work and learn cooperatively which is growing the industry and in turn positively impacts community, tourism, and other partner-industry such as restaurants (Back et al., 2021; Meler, 2015). More research will be needed to understand whether the industry is outgrowing its community of practice, as Taplin (2010) has suggested, and what that could mean for future winemakers entering the industry.

Unlike the stories of winemakers who were raised at wineries and who become second-generation (or greater) winemakers in international contexts (e.g., Dowling, 2024; VeroVino, 2023), most of the individuals who have learned their way into winemaking in NS have a deep connection to the communities, the place, and the people (Foster, 2022). As stated in the introduction, this paper identifies that most winemakers working in NS are from that province. What is it about NS that makes these individuals want to stay or return to the province such as Gina Haverstock, who says she was able to bring "techniques home" that she learned abroad? Is there a culture of lifelong learning that has developed in rural NS? Individuals' agricultural backgrounds raise interesting connections between those individuals, the places and spaces, as well as a culture of lifelong learning in rural Nova Scotia. Individuals show resilience, innovative thinking and adaptability to the changing economies and climates (Garbary & Hill, 2021; Jones, 2012). Are the connections between happiness, well-being, working with one's hands and working in nature that might be overlooked (Cottrell & Cottrell, 2020)? Are

individuals who are drawn to the wine industry naturally inclined to lifelong learning? More insights are needed to investigate these questions further.

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REDEFINING ADULT EDUCATION – TOWARDS A MORE CRITICAL COGNIZANT LEARNING MODEL

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Abstract

Adult Education can be defined as activities intentionally designed for bringing about learning of adults (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Adult Learning is defined as prompted or unprompted learning in an unstructured or structured environment (Groen & Kawalilak, 2014). It could be argued that the current adult education paradigm aligns with a liberal knowledge economy. A more critical perspective is Paulo Freire's banking education concept that removes criticality from a learner's repertoire and facilitates alignment with the prevalent liberal education and its hegemonic objectives. Drawing from Paulo Freire's (1990) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Flores (2017) suggested that banking education teaches the oppressed to accept the oppressor's social framework. In this paper, I propose a more critical cognizant adult learning model. Drawing from Habermasian theory, the need to cultivate humanity, and criticality as practiced by Critical Discourse Analysis, I propose a learning model construct of evolving criticality, emancipatory in intent, complex in its components and their relationships, with the intent of giving back agency to citizens.

INTRODUCTION

The role of adult educators is to point out all aspects of the learned material. The effect of media and commercial power needs to be neutralized to give agency back to citizens. Edward Said described the effect of power of the media as "the usurpation of the public space" (Said & Viswanathan, 2001, p. 205), so a rebalance is necessary. As a discipline, adult education is perhaps best positioned, to facilitate the rebalance. Adult education has interest in all areas of the discursive moment's six elements in an issue at hand: (a) discourse/language, (b) power, (c) social relations, (d) material practices, (e) institutions/rituals, and (f) beliefs/values/desires. The discourse facilitated by the educator challenges the commodification of that moment with the resultant dialogue fitting into a discursive space that is critically challenged between learner and educator. At the macro level, Habermasian theory suggests that the lifeworld is constantly subjugated to mediatized colonization by the economy and the state, in particular, money and market, power, and bureaucracy (Pusey, 1987). Adult education, with an emancipatory intent could manage to facilitate the discursive space situated at the interface between Habermas's society as a system and society as a lifeworld. A more critical cognizant learning model used as a framework could be used to facilitate the discursive space.

HABERMAS'S CONCEPT OF SOCIETY AS A SYSTEM AND THE LIFEWORLD.

In complex Western societies, individual freedoms are compromised (Edgar, 2005). Social processes "take over" and restrict the actions of members of the lifeworld. "In Habermas's terminology, this is the process by which society as a 'system' intrudes into society as a "lifeworld"" (p. 185) and colonizes the lifeworld and stymies democracy. The Habermasian framework offers a comprehensive multi-dimensional view of the interaction of societal structures. According to Sitton (2003), "Habermas employs a conception of society as a lifeworld" (p. 62). Society is a lifeworld "in which participants are immersed and which they reproduce in a characteristic way" (p. 61). Cultural continuity, sustenance of social relations, and socialization are key elements that keep the lifeworld coherent (Sitton). Reproduction of the lifeworld "revolves around the three structural components of culture, society, and personality. In those structural components, learning and meaning-making take place.

Society as a system is that part of society that "uncouples from communicatively shared experience in ordinary language and [is] coordinated, instead, through the media of money and power" (Pusey). Here is where the lack of criticality of citizens may result in hegemony taking hold of citizens through the discursive sphere being controlled by the media, money of corporations, and power, the state-corporate complex. Large areas of the lifeworld such as the public sphere, education, and citizenship have been "mediatized," dissolved and then reproduced as imperatives of the economic sub-system (Pusey). Gramsci (1971) explained that the method by which a capitalist state maintains control and power over its citizens occurs through the dominance of cultural aspects, processes, and norms. The ideology of the elite becomes subtly and overtly accepted by the ordinary citizens who normalize the ideology through their daily engagement and practice.

Dialogue and communicative action oriented to reaching a consensus in an uncoerced and free exchange (study circles, tutorial classes) has historically been pivotal to the adult education movement. Advancing the interest of reason may be limiting in Habermas's system if reason is captured in static institutional processes so that processes must be followed, and stakeholders of those processes are left without individual agency to contribute. In part, hegemony is tied to the established institutional processes. Built-in neutrality is part of the institutional processes at universities, "an ideological phantom, meant to create complacency" (Kincheloe et al., 2018, p. 247).

Universities and learning institutions could be seen as part of Habermas's system—an institution that generates graduates who meet employers' needs and are programmed to contribute commercially. To challenge the programming and hegemonic aspects of universities' contribution to society, Kincheloe et al. (2018) suggested "critical praxis orientation of critical pedagogy by engaging researching in learning from and within these communities" (p. 246) was necessary. This view challenges the Western notion that "knowledge is only produced in the academy" (p. 246). A favorite phrase of Ignacio Ellacuria was that the university should serve as the "critical and creative conscience of society" (Beirne, 1996, p. 43). Giroux (2001) believed that educators must be free to

explore the hidden curriculum, uncover assumptions, and interrogate culture because education is both embedded in society and influences social practices and mores. Critical pedagogy is vital to maintaining democracy by developing students into engaged citizens who question practices, people, and policies, and affirm the value of diverse knowledge and opinions.

Apple and Beane (2007) challenged educators worldwide to implement transformative education to nurture epistemological spaces essential to freedom, democracy, and social justice. They reminded educators to maintain their movement toward critical consciousness while confronting issues of power and privilege. These issues need to be repositioned in an evolving criticality; the capitalist "yoke" must come off. Reductionist objects created by the media, are taken at face value, superficial understanding do not promote the learning of complexity, so that focus on following systems, set processes, and objectivity, lead to a failure to in depth understanding.

Perhaps these are critical links between society and the lifeworld. Criticality and the insights generated therefrom would return agency to the lifeworld. Some members of the social system do not agree with society and the power of the state–corporate complex. The discursive space does not permit criticality. Agency is taken from some citizens and controlled by institutional processes such as legalese influenced by power; in a sense they feel shut out of an unjust, hegemonic society. Humanity needs to be cultivated more effectively and needs to go beyond a neo-liberal binary of "us versus them" or the objectivity of "right and wrong".

CULTIVATION OF HUMANITY

Nussbaum suggested three capacities towards the cultivation of humanity in an increasingly globalized world: (a) the capacity for critical examination, (b) world citizenship, and (c) narrative imagination would produce "Socratic citizens, capable of thinking for themselves, arguing with their traditions, and understanding with sympathy the conditions of lives different from their own" (Nussbaum, 2002, p. 302).

Nussbaum criticized the growth model of education because it ignores other social and educational problems such as "distribution and social equality, the preconditions of stable democracy, the quality of race and gender relations and the improvement of other aspects of a human being's quality of life that are not well linked to economic growth" (Nussbaum 2010, p. 14). Education should not package everything into books, giving students "a false conceit of wisdom" (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 34). If K-12 education and later adult education are permitted discursive spaces, and such spaces freely and in a non-power-influenced space can discuss local affiliations and loyalties to ethnic, religious, linguistic, historical, professional, and gender identities, these human elements need not be given up but discoursed, and transcended, Education becomes multicultural, so the history and culture of many groups are learned. Binaries of the world, "either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" as President Bush said, can then be neutralized and world citizens will be able to develop sympathetic understanding so that mutual respect will ensue between different cultures.

Nussbaum's (1998) three capacities for the cultivation of humanity correlate with Habermas's (Edgar, 2005) dialogue and communicative action. Both conceptions are oriented towards reaching a consensus in an uncoerced and free exchange and the creation of spaces that may be of one humanness, without the coercion of the state-corporate complex. Kincheloe (2008) spoke of a critical pedagogy as an empowering way of thinking and acting, enabling the critical thinker to take back agency on condition that the thinker take a stance on the various forces that affect the human condition.

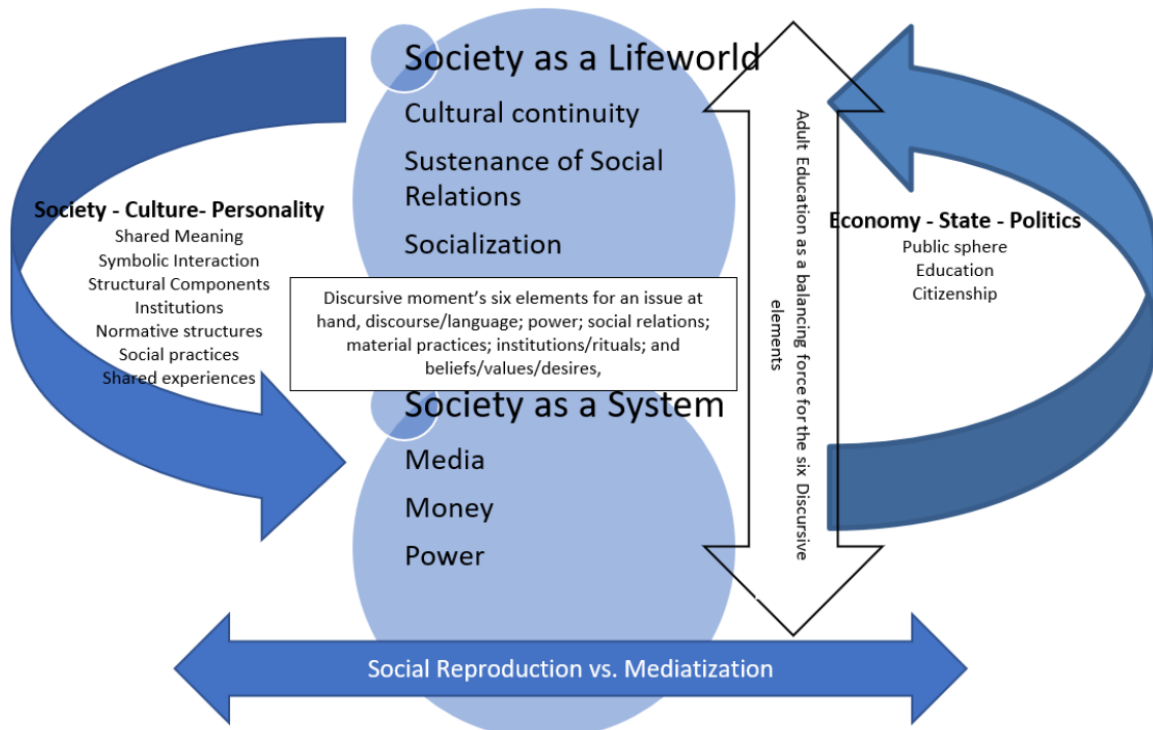
CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND THE MACRO FOCUS.

There can be no neutrality. Critical Discourse analysis textual analysis, and any text contains interpretations, so textual production is not apolitical but also object construction. A traditional researcher would expect to be neutral and objective. In Freirean terms, "critical research, as much as teaching, was a tool that created conditions for the oppressed to become empowered and to find the hope necessary to act toward liberation" (Kincheloe et al., 2018, p. 238). Becoming more fully human, humanization (Freire, 1994, 1990) requires (a) a problem-posing education, (b) continuous learning, (c) a continuous criticality, with liberation occurring through cognitive acts (Freire, 1990). Such a problem-posing approach in which students are challenged about their relationship with the world requires a dialogical setting and an interrogation of complex problems that intersect in several specializations: the psychological, political, theological, and social (Freire, 1990, 1985, 1994b). Freire (2000) suggested that the work of human liberation "is for radicals" (p. 37) with "radicalization, nourished by a critical spirit, always creative" (p.37). Empowerment towards removal of oppression means acting to confront structures of oppression primarily by liberating the mind through a pedagogy based on mutual trust and respect. It must be based on the "ability to recognize the 'other' as human, knowledgeable in diverse ontologies and epistemologies, and capable [of leading] us toward our common liberation" (Kincheloe et al., 2018, p. 238). By confronting a state-corporate complex via critical discourse it might be possible to recognize the "other" as human and perhaps unknown to us citizens of the state-corporate complex. We might understand the "other's" oppression. Such understanding would liberate both the unknowing supporters of oppression as well as the oppressed.

As Kincheloe et al. (2018) noted: We need to ask questions of all knowledge, Freire argued, because all data are shaped by the context and by the individuals that produced them. Knowledge, contrary to the pronouncements of many educational leaders, does not transcend culture, history, or social structure. (p. 239) Teachers may be oblivious to the "political inscriptions embedded in their practice" (p. 242). A more critical cognizant learning model could be a useful process to enhance pedagogical praxis for educators who need to adopt critical pedagogy first, and then the process of details, the "nuts and bolts" of contextual meaning-making. As consumers of the media and government proclamations, which we do not critique, we position ourselves, the subjective self, by accepting practices or discourses and the ideas that go with them, locating ourselves on

that conceptual map and taking on roles defined by the state-corporate complex. Then we think of ourselves in those terms. By adopting subject positions that make our identities or selves, the discourses create the subjective experience of ourselves.

Figure 1: A more critical cognizant learning model



What we need to liberate ourselves (first, our mind, and second, the oppressed) is criticality. This would allow us to challenge the state-corporate output of constructed objects and challenge, challenge, challenge. We must become more critical, and as noted by Kincheloe et al. (2018), we need: [To abandon] the quest for some naïve concept of realism, focusing instead on the clarification of his or her position in the web of reality and the social locations of other researchers and the ways they shape the production and interpretation of knowledge. (p. 244)

As Dewey (1916) reminded us, education is a continuous reconstruction of experience. As a thinking framework, the proposed learning model facilitates construction and reconstruction of experience and meaning making for both learner and educator. Education is life itself and enables every human to participate in the social consciousness of humanity. As part of humanity, we adapt our activities, resulting in social reform and progress (Dewey, 1897). We must all become “researchers.” Not just academics. As humans, we need to focus on the clarification of our position in the web of reality and the social locations of fellow humans and the ways in which they shape the production and interpretation of knowledge. In adopting criticality and realizing the

natural complexities of human situations and social relations, humans will have a much more active and less oppressed role, and more agency. Understanding the complexities as well as being inherently critical of texts produced by the state-corporate complex helps us understand the reality "as it is" rather than the reality as it is constructed. According to Chomsky (1989), the West's guiding principles are: (a) freedom of speech, (b) freedom of worship, (c) freedom from want, and (d) freedom from fear. Chomsky described a fifth freedom "the freedom to rob, exploit and to dominate, to undertake any course of action to ensure that existing privilege is protected and advanced," and this is achieved hegemonically, theoretically, and democratically. For a truly democratic society adult education's emancipatory aims must be realized. As this paper has demonstrated, discourse may manipulate and construct knowledge to serve the needs and interests of the state-corporate complex rather than humanity. If René Descartes is famous for his argument of 500 years ago, "I think, therefore I am," and Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince* is used as an instruction guide for new princes and royals on how to acquire and maintain political power, is it not time for humanity to move on and evolve to something like: "I am critical, therefore I am human," rather than living only in a personal lifeworld as a human being and a non-critical, accepting follower in a large undemocratic society?

CONCLUSION

By drawing from evidence in the scholarly literature and exploring connections and synergies between adult learning theories, Habermas's work, and Critical Discourse Analysis, I advocate for a more critical cognizant learning model that is dynamic, focused on humanity, and supportive in neutralizing the hegemonic effects of media power and commercial interests of a neoliberal society. Media and government policy shape discourses and realities and how objects are reduced and socially constructed. The complexities and interdisciplinary approach needed for understanding reality are negated necessitating a framework that enables the drawing from various fields crossing traditional subject specialization boundaries. Sociocultural critical perspectives drawing from social sciences, politics, linguistics, psychology, history, economics, law enforcement, and cultural fields would enhance meaning making and true understanding of reality. Most importantly, there is a need to emphasize humanness and criticality. As humanity, our wants, and needs are the same. We share the planet. We need to look through the manufactured objects and ideologies that distract from our humanness.

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EDUCATING ADULTS: HOW WE CAN ADAPT TO THE NEW STUDENTS

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Abstract

A study underway since 2017, supported by the Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture, examines the management practices of school principals that are likely to support perseverance and success at the primary and secondary levels. This article focuses on the general adult education sector. Common core basic education programs and diversified basic education programs are attracting more and more young people aged 16 to 24. Drawing on a reference framework inspired by Seashore, Leithwood, Wahlstrom et al. (2010), the objective is to study school management practices related to the pedagogical management of human, material and financial resources that may have consequences for the success of these young students.

Keywords: General adult education; perseverance; educational success; management practices; GAE administrations

INTRODUCTION

This article examines management practices that can foster academic perseverance and success in general adult education (GAE) centres. From the programs offered to adult learners, we chose the common core basic education (CCBE) program and the diversified basic education (DBE) program. We studied the actions taken by school principals in the management of human, pedagogical, material or financial resources.

In the next sections, we present the context of the research, its theoretical foundations and the methodology used to gather and analyze the data. The discussion addresses adult education from an equitable, sustainable and inclusive perspective, focusing on the primary concerns of principals and identifying avenues of research to further these reflections.

CONTEXT AND STUDY OBJECTIVES

The study addresses an education setting for students who are no longer obliged to attend. In GAE, there has been a remarkable increase in the number of students between the ages of 16 and 24, many of whom have special needs (Dignard, 2021; Dumont & Rousseau, 2016; Rousseau, Théberge, Bergevin et al., 2010).

One of the study participants effectively summarized the situation:

If I look back 20 or 25 years, adult education clients were on average 40 years old or older. And if a young person of 18 or 20 arrived, everyone stared at them. Now it is the reverse. The clients we have in adult education centres are primarily young people under the age of 25. We have some 50-year-olds,

but it is very, very rare. So those young people, as I always say to anyone who will listen, when they jumped off the school bus, when they dropped out in Secondary III (Grade 9), they haven't gotten any better when they arrive at adult education. If they had adaptive measures in high school, they didn't get better on their own... We are just putting our shoulders to the wheel and continuing the process that started in elementary or high school with students with adaptive measures. (P-3)

We should also mention the results-oriented management that was introduced into the Québec education system in 2002. In the *Politique de la réussite éducative* (educational success policy, MÉES, 2017), the graduation rate for people under 20 is a pressing issue for which the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur – MÉES) established targets that the school services centres must meet (MÉES, 2017).

The review of the GAE programs in 2021–2022 also raised the requirements. Finally, the period associated with the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022) influenced teaching methods.

The general objective of this study, from a phenomenological perspective, is to study the management practices of GAE centre principals that may foster perseverance and success. The specific objectives are:

1. To identify school management practices that may foster perseverance and success.
2. To understand how these practices can be operationalized within the school team, taking legal frameworks into account.
3. To identify strategies implemented by principals to launch and support these practices.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

A) MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

Any action that a school principal takes within an integrative and systemic design that has an educational goal related to the school's mission. We see in through the actions taken by the principal to support, guide and mobilize the school team in order to provide, stimulate or enrich activities that lead to the success of all the students in the school in relation to the three pillars of the mission: instruct, socialize and certify (Guillemette, 2011, p. 47). To this definition we have added a nuance put forward by Mintzberg (2009) asserting that management "is a practice, learned primarily through experience, and rooted in context."

B) PERSEVERANCE

Pursuit of studies to earn formal recognition of learning: diploma, certificate, attestation of studies. (Conseil régional de prévention de l'abandon scolaire, 2020)

C) EDUCATIONNAL SUCCESS

Aim for the overall development of students: at the physical, intellectual, emotional, social, moral (spiritual) level. Depending on the systems or actors involved in education, there are various emphases on educational success, including academic educational success and overall educational success. Academic educational success emphasizes the school's mission. The mission of the Quebec school is, "while respecting the principle of equal opportunities, to educate, socialize and qualify students, while making them capable of undertaking and succeeding in an academic career." Overall educational success "can include the action of the school, but takes into account the work of other authorities, the family, the media, the associative network, the community, sports clubs, etc. (Conseil régional de prévention de l'abandon scolaire, 2020)

To identify and try to understand the management practices used by our participating principals, we used and adapted the Seashore, Leithwood, Wahlstrom and Anderson framework (2010), as presented in Figure 1.

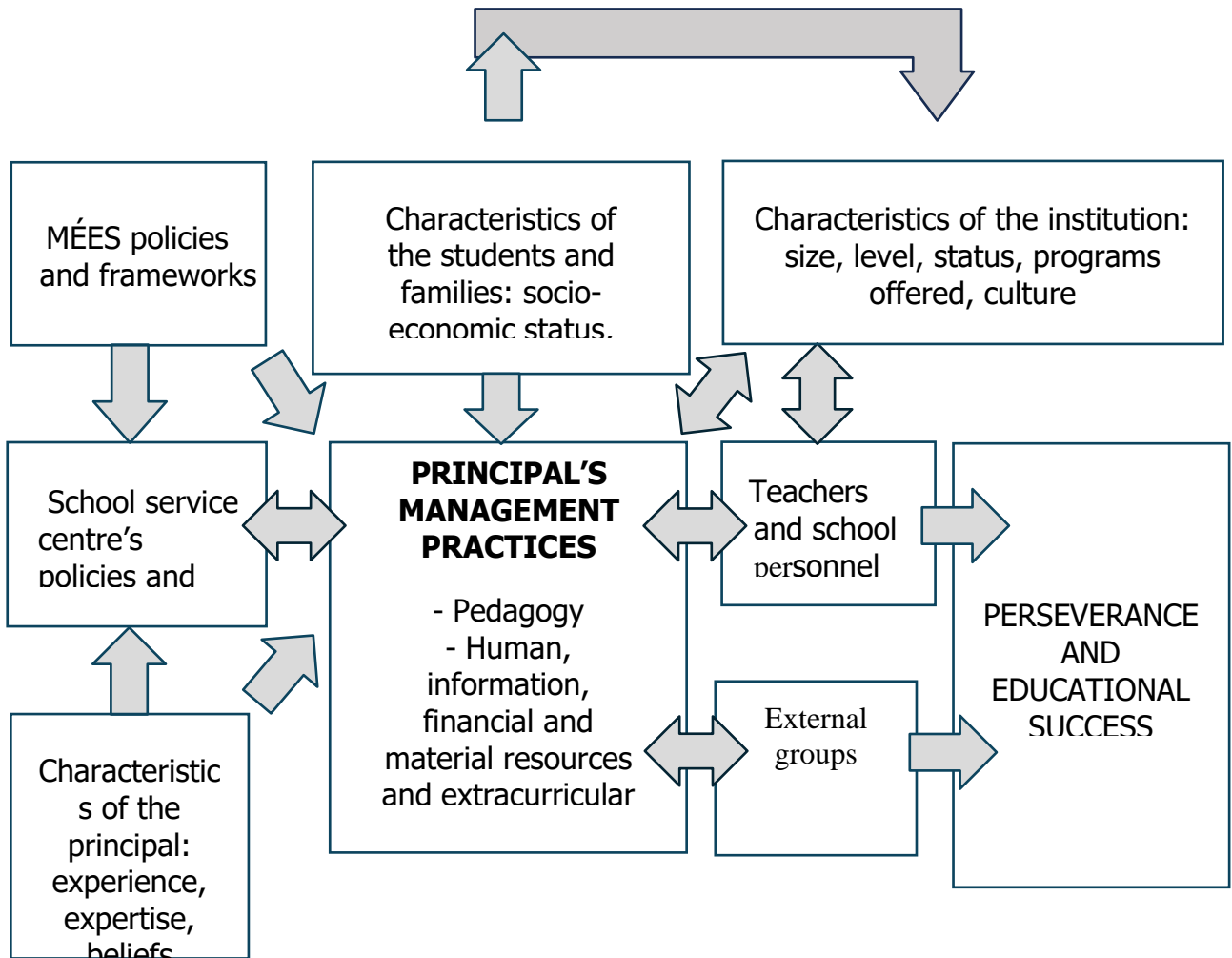


Figure 1: Theoretical framework of the study

(Adapted from Seashore, Leithwood, Wahlstrom and Anderson, 2010)

METHODOLOGY

In this section, we present the participants, data collection tools and data analysis process. We made email contact with the principals or assistant principals of GAE centres in Québec. In response to this call, 14 volunteer participants from 7 of the 14 administrative regions of Québec joined our purposive sample. The dispersion in different regions was intentional in order to expand the possibility of generalizing certain results to diverse settings. A semi-structured interview questionnaire was developed to gather the data. Due

to the geographic distance and the pandemic (2020-2022), the interviews were all conducted on the Teams platform, once the ethics consent forms were completed by the participants. The 60- to 90-minute interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the transcriptions were verified by the participants. For the purpose of an inductive analysis of the data, and because of the extent of the data collected, it was important to organize the data to identify highlights and trends. Based on an adaptation of the theoretical model of Seashore et al. (2010) and in alignment with our research questions, an initial code tree was developed before the interviews. A mixed coding strategy was used to bring out new codes or divide existing codes. The interview data were coded using QDA Miner, and an analysis identified the themes emphasized by our participants.

RESULTS

Five major themes were of greatest concern to our participants with regard to the perseverance and success of their students: encouraged pedagogical practices, development initiatives, support for the students, IT development and the teachers' task.

Encouraged pedagogical practices

Education reform led to a shift to competency development. Pedagogical practices had to adapt. In light of this change, a constant has emerged for school principals: leaving behind the individual work formula, with workbooks, in favour of periods lecturing or workshops in needs subgroups. The school services centres' educational project and success engagement plan are important pillars for this change in practice. Interactive whiteboards have been installed to facilitate collective teaching. Collaboration with pedagogical advisors has been sought, especially in math and science, and promising practices have been presented to the teachers. In general, the students at greatest risk tend to be in CCBE programs, which are longer, and this is why it is important to thoroughly review and differentiate pedagogical practices.

Development initiatives

The principals shared several innovations they had put in place. One of them created a discussion group with the youngest students to learn what they were hoping for in their education at the centre, particularly in terms of the organization of classes. Elsewhere activities of this sort are held at noontime, and the students talk together about their progress.

The students expressed their need to work in a safe, pleasant and welcoming environment, to take part in group activities and to feel they belong to a community. This observation was also raised in a Québec study by Dumont and Rousseau (2016) that underscores the importance of considering the need for belonging in interventions with students aged 16 to 24 in the adult education sector. In some centres, closed CCBE groups were created to encourage that sense of belonging, and a flexible environment was set up in the classrooms. Elsewhere things were taken even further: the students always stay in the same classroom and the teachers move among the groups. This fosters the students' involvement in various activities: student council, cafeteria management, student radio, etc. To encourage a

pleasant ambiance in the centre, one principal hired a music student to walk around the hallways with his guitar during breaks.

A great deal of caution was noted in teaching modalities. In-person or at least partly in-person pedagogical activities seem to be essential to avoid dropout. In some centres, the end of the pandemic led to the complete return of in-person teaching, while others chose a hybrid formula that combines part-time in-person activities and strict distance monitoring of the students. Initiatives to maintain connections have been implemented, including time freed up in the teachers' task to regularly make contact with students during distance education periods, mandatory presence at the centre for the first class and the teachers' presence at the GAE centre at defined times for students who want to see them. The students reported that their motivation declined when they were at home taking their course, but one centre successfully maintained its evening distance courses after the pandemic, paired with strict attendance monitoring. Whenever possible, the principals considered work-study balance when developing the students' schedule, while maintaining 30 hours of courses per week, as required by the funding body, Emploi-Québec.

Pedagogical tools have been developed, such as course plans in Google Classroom for every activity and pedagogical videos. Chromebooks are also used, although the participants mentioned the need to support the students in the independent use of these tools.

The curriculum is also subject to a variety of initiatives. The optional Committing to Success program is on the schedule of every GAE centre student and offered by the tutors of the student groups.

To support the young people's motivation, one principal started physical education and art classes (without funding) for students who wanted them and for which they could even earn credits. Exercise equipment was purchased for the workout sessions, and a room was equipped with musical instruments for during breaks.

A number of organizations enrich the educational pathway by offering complementary workshops.

Finally, there is considerable concern related to reaching out to students, whether they are about to finish high school or have broken away from the schooling system. Collaboration with youth centres is emphasized. Some centres send teachers to youth centres to allow for a differentiated response to the young people's educational needs.

Support for students

A greater need for psychosocial support is observed among 16-to-24-year-olds. Their life plans are often less clear. Various tutoring formulas are offered to support them.

To help his teachers, one principal created a tutoring workbook with standard questions based on different issues to address. In another setting, a teacher was relieved of 30% of her task to provide support to struggling students.

Adaptive measures from high school are taken into account, but this disrupts the teachers' practices. Consequently, considerable sensitivity about this reality is required. Intervention plans are consulted more frequently by the resource teachers working in GAE centres. The teachers are not all open to these measures, and sometimes the students themselves do not want to discuss them. To facilitate the transmission of information to the teachers, principals often use IT tools.

IT development

Principals want to expand the use of IT tools by teachers and students. Distance learning during the pandemic accelerated equipment purchases and staff training. Pedagogical advisors, digital pedagogy specialists and mentors were hired to support the teams. The vast majority of principals mentioned in-class use of laptops by students since the return to in-person classes. Some of them lament the underuse of interactive whiteboards, however. Two principals want to develop a collaborative workshop or FabLab in order to include virtual reality goggles in the teaching modalities, to boost the students' motivation.

Teachers' task

The teachers' task is eliciting reflections ranging from task composition to assignment, to support the emergence and continuation of encouraged pedagogical practices, innovative projects, student support and IT development. Confronted with administrative and union rules, principals have to be creative and daring. Discussions are held with certain teachers to suggest a new assignment, and task composition is used, to the extent possible, as a strategy for developing an assignment plan that will best serve the needs of the students. Where possible, the teachers who are the most enthusiastic and open to differentiation are assigned to the youngest clients. Task composition experiments have led to split CCBE/DBE assignments to raise the teachers' awareness of the needs of these students. Another initiative combined an assignment to teach youth with significant needs outside of the centre and a CCBE assignment. The principal reported that the teacher subsequently used more differentiation in CCBE. This teacher even positively "contaminated" his peers.

The unanimous intention to have the students work together collaboratively can be seen in task composition. Time is set aside in the task for intake meetings, team discussions about the students' progress, training, success committees, communities of learning and subject-matter meetings. From two to three hours a week are dedicated to these meetings, and one afternoon or even a whole day is made available. Time to provide tutoring activities is also integrated into the teachers' task.

DISCUSSION

Despite the limits of our 14-participant sample, fairly general findings seem nevertheless evident. In connection with Seashore's theoretical framework (2010), our results reveal the importance of the characteristics of young students (16 to 24 years old), particularly in terms of special needs. Taking these needs into account significantly influences the innovations introduced in terms of pedagogical practices, student support or the teachers' work (assignment and task composition). The actions taken reveal great creativity. These innovations reverberate on the centre's general activities and seem to nurture a flourishing life setting for the youth. Collaboration with community organizations is emphasized,

especially for recruiting potential students. The participants want to effectively support their students in digital development, and many actions are geared toward this. The local frameworks provided by school service centres seem to support the participants' management practices (strategic plan, Committing to Success plan), but some union rules hinder the optimal assignment of teachers based on the students' needs.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE AVENUES OF RESEARCH

Our results reveal avenues of research that merit further study in relation to the main themes covered and that point us in the direction of other aspects. In the context of the decreasing age of the student body, communication with the parents during their child's time in GAE has barely been explored in the literature. This concern offers an interesting avenue of research, as 12 of the 14 participants mentioned initiatives in this regard.

A number of the participants stated that GAE is starting to be addressed by school service centres, but that this sector of education should be promoted with the creation of links with other sectors and orders of education. The small number of GAE centres may make this inclusion in the school service centre difficult. The rooms assigned to the centres are not always attractive for the clients, especially for young clients.

The characteristics of the principals (experience, beliefs) were examined and will undergo analysis, but we can already identify the participants' concerns regarding the use of data, for which they lack tools. The participants also have questions about the definition of success, because the education department's quantified targets are not always consistent with its own definition.

Sharing these practices with the principals of other GAE centres could both enrich the practice in the wider educational community and help identify other promising initiatives.

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ÉDUCATION DES ADULTES : COMMENT POUVONS-NOUS NOUS ADAPTER AUX NOUVEAUX ÉLÈVES?

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Résumé

Depuis 2017, une recherche soutenue par le Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture examine les pratiques de gestion de directions d'établissements scolaires susceptibles de favoriser la persévérance et la réussite des élèves aux ordres primaire et secondaire. La recherche s'est poursuivie en Formation générale des adultes. Cet article s'intéresse aux programmes de formation de base commune et de base diversifiée où on retrouve de plus en plus d'élèves de 16 à 24 ans. En s'appuyant sur un cadre de référence inspiré de Seashore, Leithwood, Wahlstrom et al. (2010), l'objectif est d'étudier les pratiques de gestion des directions relativement à la gestion pédagogique des ressources humaines, matérielles et financières qui peuvent avoir des répercussions sur la réussite de ces jeunes élèves.

Mots clés : Formation générale des adultes; persévérance; réussite; pratiques de gestion; directions en FGA

INTRODUCTION

Dans cet article, les pratiques de gestion pouvant favoriser la persévérance et la réussite des élèves sont examinées auprès de directions de centres de formation générale des adultes (FGA). Parmi les programmes de formation offerts aux élèves adultes, nous avons choisi la formation de base commune (FBC) et la formation de base diversifiée (FBD)..

Dans les prochaines sections, nous présentons le contexte de la recherche, ses ancrages théoriques et la méthodologie utilisée pour recueillir et analyser les données. Dans le contexte des réflexions sur l'éducation des adultes, lesquelles s'inscrivent dans une perspective équitable, durable et inclusive, la discussion revient sur les principales préoccupations des directions et expose des perspectives pour poursuivre ces réflexions.

CONTEXTE ET OBJECTIFS DE LA RECHERCHE

La recherche s'inscrit dans le contexte d'une formation qui s'adresse à des élèves qui ne sont plus soumis à une fréquentation obligatoire. On constate un accroissement notable des élèves entre 16 et 24 ans, plusieurs d'entre eux présentant des besoins particuliers (Dignard, 2021 ; Dumont et Rousseau, 2016; Rousseau, Théberge, Bergevin et al., 2010).

Un des participants à la recherche résume bien la situation :

Mais si je regarde voilà 20, 25 ans, la clientèle de l'éducation des adultes, c'était en moyenne 40 ans et plus. Et lorsqu'arrivait un jeune de 18, 20 ans, il se faisait regarder gros comme ça. Maintenant, le processus est complètement inversé. La clientèle qu'on a dans les centres d'adultes, c'est majoritairement des jeunes en bas de 25 ans. On en a des 50 ans, mais c'est très, très rare. Donc, ces jeunes-

là, comme je le dis tout le temps à tout le monde qui veut l'entendre : « Lorsqu'il débarque de l'autobus jaune, notre jeune lorsqu'il a quitté en secondaire 3, il n'est pas guéri pour autant lui quand il arrive à l'éducation des adultes. » Donc, s'il avait des mesures adaptatives au secondaire, il n'a pas été guéri lui-même... On fait seulement mettre l'épaulé à la roue et continuer le processus qui a été enclenché, primaire, secondaire avec des élèves avec des mesures adaptatives.
(P-3)

Mentionnons également la gestion axée sur les résultats introduite en 2002 dans le système éducatif québécois. Dans la Politique de la réussite éducative (MÉES, 2017), le taux de diplomation des moins de 20 ans constitue un enjeu majeur à propos duquel le ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur (MÉES) a établi des cibles que doivent atteindre les centres de services scolaires (MÉES, 2017).

De plus, l'implantation de la révision des programmes à la FGA en 2021-2022 a entraîné un rehaussement des exigences. Finalement, la période associée à la pandémie de COVID-19 (2020-2022) a influencé les modalités pédagogiques.

Cette recherche, dans une perspective phénoménologique, a pour objectif général d'étudier des pratiques de gestion de directions de centres de FGA pouvant favoriser la persévérance et la réussite des élèves. Les objectifs spécifiques sont :

1. Identifier des pratiques de gestion de directions pouvant favoriser la persévérance et la réussite des élèves.
2. Comprendre comment ces pratiques peuvent s'opérationnaliser auprès de l'équipe-école, en tenant compte des encadrements légaux.
3. Identifier des stratégies mises en place par des directions pour enclencher ces pratiques et les soutenir.

CADRES CONCEPTUEL ET THÉORIQUE

A) PRATIQUE DE GESTION

Toute action qu'une direction d'établissement entreprend dans une visée intégratrice et systémique ayant une intention éducative au regard du projet d'établissement. Nous l'observons par les actions que pose la direction d'établissement pour soutenir, guider et mobiliser l'équipe-école afin d'assurer, de stimuler ou d'enrichir les activités qui conduisent à la réussite de tous les élèves au sein de l'établissement quant aux trois axes de la mission, à savoir : instruire, socialiser et qualifier (Guillemette, 2011, p. 47). À cette définition nous avons ajouté une spécification de Mintzberg (2010) qui indique que la gestion est une pratique « qui se maîtrise principalement par l'expérience et qui est ancrée dans le contexte ».

B) PERSÉVÉRANCE SCOLAIRE

Poursuite des études en vue de l'obtention d'une reconnaissance des acquis : diplôme, certificat, attestation d'études (Conseil régional de prévention de l'abandon scolaire, 2019).

C) RÉUSSITE SCOLAIRE

Met l'accent sur la mission de l'école québécoise, dans le principe de l'égalité des chances, d'instruire, de socialiser et de qualifier les élèves tout en les rendant aptes à entreprendre et à réussir un parcours scolaire. Les résultats scolaires et l'obtention d'une reconnaissance (diplôme, certificat, attestation d'études) sont des indicateurs de réussite scolaire (Réussite éducative Estrie, 2012).

Afin de découvrir et de tenter de comprendre les pratiques de gestion exercées par nos participants, nous avons utilisé et adapté le cadre de Seashore, Leithwood, Wahlstrom et Anderson (2010), tel que présenté à la Figure 1.

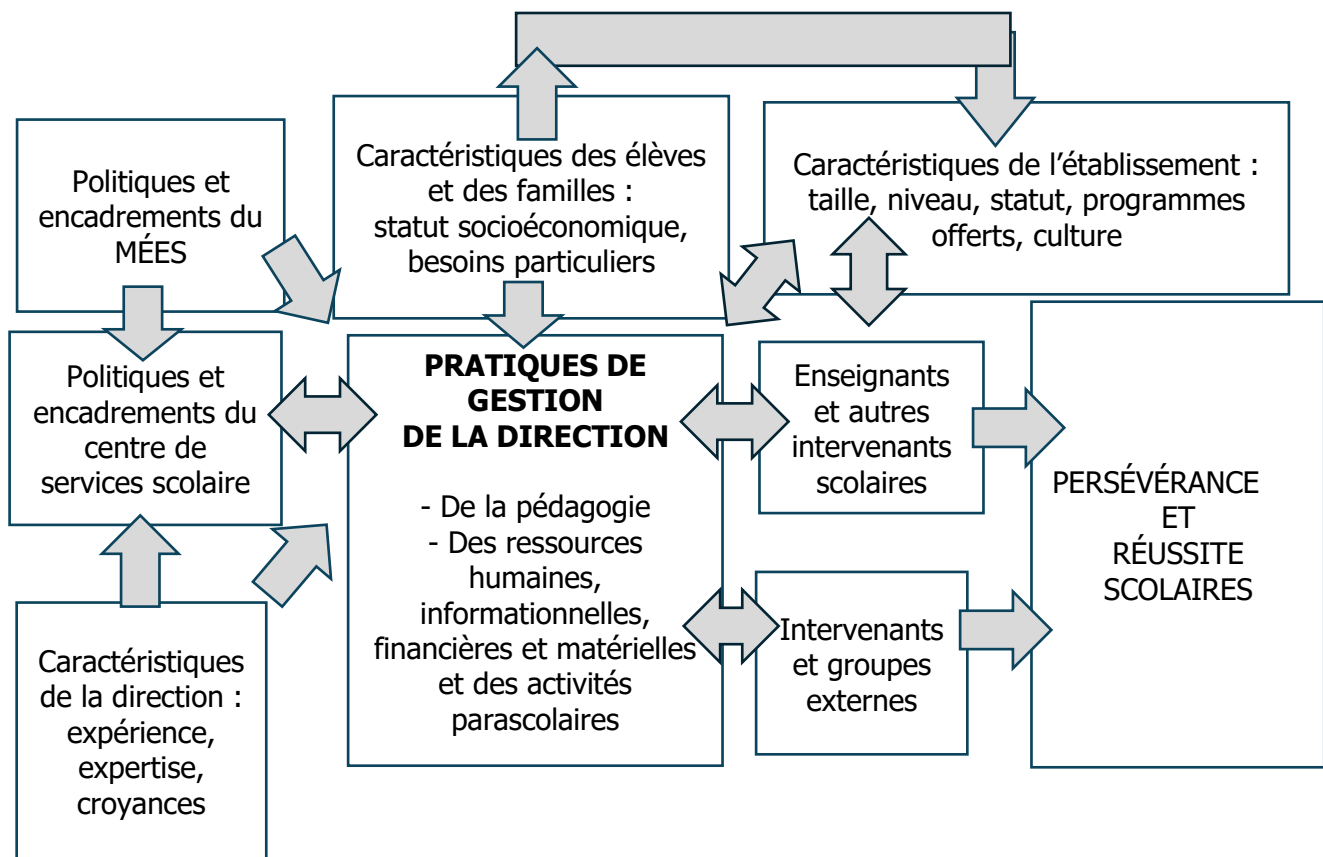


Figure 1 : Cadre théorique de la recherche

(Adapté de Seashore, Leithwood, Wahlstrom et Anderson, 2010)

MÉTHODOLOGIE

Nous présentons ici les participants, les outils de collecte et le processus d'analyse des données. Nous avons sollicité par courriel des directions ou des directions adjointes de centres de FGA du Québec. À la suite de cet appel, 14 participants volontaires provenant de sept des 17 régions administratives du Québec ont constitué notre échantillon intentionnel. Cette dispersion dans différentes régions était souhaitée afin d'accroître la possibilité de généralisation de certains résultats dans divers milieux. Un questionnaire d'entrevue semi-structurée a été élaboré pour recueillir les données. En raison de l'éloignement géographique puis de la pandémie (2020-2022), les entrevues ont toutes été réalisées à partir de la plateforme Teams, une fois le formulaire de consentement éthique rempli par les participants. Ces entretiens d'une durée de 60 à 90 minutes ont été enregistrés puis retranscrits et finalement validés auprès des participants. Dans une perspective d'analyse inductive des données et devant la somme de données recueillies, il était important d'organiser celles-ci afin d'identifier des faits saillants et des tendances. À partir du modèle théorique adapté de Seashore et al. (2010), et en cohérence avec nos questions de recherche, une première arborescence de codes a été élaborée avant les entrevues. Une stratégie de codage mixte a permis de faire émerger de nouveaux codes ou de scinder certains codes existants. Les données d'entrevue ont été codées à l'aide du logiciel QDA Miner, puis une analyse a permis de cibler des thèmes prioritaires.

RÉSULTATS

Cinq grands thèmes préoccupent davantage nos participants au regard de la persévérance et de la réussite de leurs élèves : les pratiques pédagogiques encouragées, les initiatives de développement, l'accompagnement des élèves, le développement informatique et la tâche des enseignants.

Pratiques pédagogiques encouragées

La réforme des programmes d'enseignement a mené à un virage vers le développement des compétences. Les pratiques pédagogiques ont dû s'y adapter. Une constante se dégage pour les directions, soit la volonté de délaisser la formule du travail individuel avec des cahiers d'exercices pour valoriser des périodes d'enseignement magistral ou d'ateliers en sous-groupes de besoins. Le projet éducatif et le plan d'engagement vers la réussite des centres de services scolaires constituent des appuis importants à ce changement de pratiques. Des tableaux interactifs ont été installés pour faciliter cet enseignement collectif. La collaboration avec les conseillers pédagogiques a été sollicitée, particulièrement en mathématiques et en sciences, et les pratiques probantes présentées aux enseignants. De façon générale, les élèves les plus à risque se retrouvent en FBC où le parcours de formation est plus long, d'où le besoin de revoir en profondeur les pratiques pédagogiques et de les différencier.

Initiatives de développement

Les directions exposent plusieurs des innovations. L'une d'elles a créé un groupe de discussion avec ses élèves plus jeunes pour savoir comment ils souhaiteraient vivre leur

scolarisation notamment sur le plan de l'organisation des classes. Ailleurs, des activités de ce genre se poursuivent le midi et les élèves échangent entre eux sur leur cheminement.

Les élèves ont exprimé leur besoin d'évoluer dans un environnement sécuritaire, agréable et bienveillant, de vivre des activités collectives et de sentir qu'ils appartiennent à une communauté. Ce constat a également été relevé dans une recherche québécoise de Dumont et Rousseau (2016) qui souligne l'importance du besoin d'appartenance dans les interventions auprès des élèves de 16 à 24 ans du secteur de l'éducation des adultes. Dans certains centres, on a constitué des groupes fermés en FBC afin de favoriser cette appartenance et aménagé un environnement flexible dans les salles de classe. Ailleurs, on va même plus loin : les élèves demeurent toujours dans le même local et les enseignants circulent entre les groupes. On favorise l'implication des jeunes dans différentes activités : conseil étudiant, gestion de la cafétéria, radio étudiante, etc. Afin d'instaurer une ambiance agréable un directeur a embauché un étudiant en musique qui circule avec sa guitare dans les corridors pendant les pauses.

Pour les modalités d'enseignement, on constate beaucoup de prudence. Les activités pédagogiques en présentiel, du moins partiellement, semblent essentielles pour ne pas décrocher. Dans certains centres, la fin de la pandémie a été marquée par le retour complet des modalités en présentiel, alors qu'ailleurs on a opté pour une formule hybride qui conjugue présentiel à mi-temps et suivi rigoureux des élèves à distance. Des initiatives pour s'assurer de maintenir le lien ont été mises en place, dont du temps dégagé dans la tâche des enseignants pour interpeller régulièrement les élèves lors des périodes d'enseignement à distance, la présence obligatoire au centre pour le premier cours et l'assistance d'enseignants au centre lors de moments déterminés pour les élèves qui le souhaitent. Les élèves indiquaient que leur motivation chutait lorsqu'ils se retrouvaient à la maison pour suivre leurs cours. Toutefois, un centre a maintenu avec succès les cours du soir à distance après la pandémie, mais avec un suivi rigoureux des présences. Quand cela est possible, les directions souhaitent favoriser la conciliation étude-travail au moment d'élaborer l'horaire des étudiants, mais elles doivent respecter l'exigence de 30 heures par semaine de cours de l'organisme subventionnaire, Emploi-Québec.

Des outils pédagogiques sont développés tel que des plans de cours pour chaque activité dans Google Classroom et des capsules pédagogiques. Des ordinateurs Chromebook sont aussi utilisés. On note un besoin d'accompagner les élèves vers une utilisation autonome de ces outils.

Le programme optionnel Enseignement vers sa réussite (EVR) est à l'horaire pour tous les élèves d'un centre de FGA et offert par les tuteurs des groupes.

Pour soutenir la motivation des jeunes, un directeur a introduit (sans financement) des cours d'éducation physique et d'art pour les élèves qui le souhaitent et pour lesquels ils peuvent même obtenir des crédits. Du matériel d'exercice a été acheté pour des séances d'entraînement et un local a été équipé d'instruments de musique pour les pauses.

Différents organismes enrichissent le parcours de formation des jeunes élèves en offrant des ateliers complémentaires.

Finalement, on observe une préoccupation importante d'aller à la rencontre des élèves, que ces derniers soient sur le point de terminer leur parcours secondaire ou en rupture avec le système scolaire. La collaboration avec les maisons de jeunes est soulignée. Des centres y envoient des enseignants afin de répondre de façon différenciée aux besoins de formation des jeunes.

Accompagnement des élèves

Chez les 16-24 ans, on observe un plus grand besoin d'accompagnement psychosocial; le projet de vie est souvent moins clair. Diverses formules de tutorat sont proposées pour bien les accompagner.

Pour aider ses enseignants, un directeur a élaboré un cahier de tutorat comportant des questions types selon différents éléments à aborder. Dans un milieu, une enseignante a été libérée de 30 % de sa tâche afin d'accompagner les élèves en difficulté.

Une prise en compte des mesures adaptatives du secondaire est présente, mais cet élément a bousculé les pratiques des enseignants. Par conséquent, une grande sensibilisation à cette réalité a été nécessaire. Les plans d'intervention sont consultés plus fréquemment par les orthopédagogues. Les enseignants ne sont pas tous ouverts à ces mesures et, parfois, ce sont les élèves eux-mêmes qui ne veulent pas les communiquer. Afin de faciliter la transmission des informations aux enseignants, les directions ont souvent recours aux outils informatiques.

Développement informatique

Les directions souhaitent développer l'utilisation d'outils informatiques par tous. L'enseignement à distance (pandémie) a accéléré l'achat de matériel et la formation du personnel. On a aussi embauché des conseillers pédagogiques, des technopédagogues ou de mentors pour soutenir les équipes. La grande majorité des directions soulignent l'utilisation en classe des portables par les élèves depuis le retour en présentiel. Quelques-unes déplorent cependant une sous-utilisation des tableaux blancs interactifs. Deux directions veulent développer un atelier collaboratif (*fablab*) et intégrer des lunettes de réalité virtuelle dans les modalités pédagogiques afin de soutenir la motivation des élèves.

Tâche des enseignants

La tâche des enseignants suscite des réflexions, de sa composition jusqu'à l'affectation, dans le but de soutenir l'émergence et la pérennité de pratiques pédagogiques encouragées, les projets innovants, l'accompagnement des élèves et le développement informatique. Confrontées aux règles administratives et syndicales, les directions doivent faire preuve de créativité et d'audace. Des discussions ont lieu avec certains enseignants afin de leur suggérer une nouvelle affectation tandis que la composition de la tâche est utilisée, dans la limite du possible, comme stratégie pour élaborer un plan d'affectation qui servira le mieux les besoins des élèves. On cherche à affecter les enseignants les plus dynamiques et ouverts à la différenciation auprès des plus jeunes. Des compositions de la tâche ont mené à des affectations à mi-temps en FBC et en FBD afin de mieux sensibiliser les enseignants aux besoins de ces élèves. Une autre initiative a jumelé une affectation auprès de jeunes ayant des besoins importants dans des contextes hors centre et une en

FBC. La direction rapporte que l'enseignant a ensuite déployé plus de différenciation en FBC. Cet enseignant a même « contaminé » positivement ses pairs.

De façon unanime, la volonté de faire travailler les enseignants de manière collaborative se reflète dans la composition de la tâche. Du temps destiné à la concertation est intégré à la tâche pour des rencontres d'accueil, des discussions en équipe sur le cheminement des élèves, des formations, des comités voués à la réussite, des communautés d'apprentissage et des rencontres disciplinaires. De deux à trois heures par semaine sont consacrées à ces rencontres et un après-midi, voire une journée sont disponibles. Du temps pour réaliser les activités de tutorat est aussi intégré à la tâche des enseignants.

DISCUSSION

En tenant compte des limites de notre échantillon de 14 participants, des constats assez généraux semblent toutefois se dégager. En lien avec le cadre théorique de Seashore et al. (2020), nos résultats indiquent une très grande importance accordée aux caractéristiques des élèves jeunes (de 16 à 24 ans), notamment à leurs besoins particuliers. Cette prise en compte influence grandement les innovations mises en place au chapitre des pratiques pédagogiques, de l'accompagnement des élèves ou du travail des enseignants (affectation et composition de la tâche). On perçoit une grande créativité dans les actions posées. Ces innovations rejaillissent sur des activités générales du centre et semblent favoriser un milieu de vie épanouissant pour les jeunes. La collaboration avec les organismes du milieu est soulignée, particulièrement pour le recrutement d'élèves potentiels. Les participants sont soucieux de bien accompagner leurs élèves dans le développement numérique et plusieurs actions sont ciblées à cette fin. Des encadrements locaux des centres de services scolaires semblent appuyer les pratiques de gestion des participants (plan stratégique, plan d'engagement vers la réussite). Toutefois, certaines règles syndicales freinent l'affectation optimale des enseignants en lien avec les besoins des élèves.

CONCLUSION ET PROSPECTIVES

Nos résultats ouvrent des perspectives à approfondir à propos des principaux thèmes relevés et nous invitent à examiner d'autres aspects. Ainsi, dans un contexte de rajeunissement de la clientèle, la communication avec les parents durant le cheminement de leur jeune en FGA ne semble pas avoir été beaucoup explorée dans la littérature. Cette préoccupation nous apparaît intéressante à examiner, car 12 répondants ont mentionné des initiatives à cet égard.

Plusieurs participants indiquent que la FGA prend de l'importance dans les CSS, mais qu'on doit continuer à valoriser ce secteur d'enseignement et à créer des liens avec les autres secteurs et ordres d'enseignement. Le petit nombre de centres de FGA peut rendre difficile cette inclusion au sein du centre de services scolaire. Les locaux attribués aux centres ne sont pas non plus toujours attrayants pour la clientèle, notamment pour les jeunes.

Les caractéristiques des directions (expérience, croyances) ont été examinées et feront l'objet d'une analyse ultérieure. Toutefois, on peut déjà mentionner les préoccupations des participants sur l'utilisation souhaitée des données, mais pour laquelle ils manquent

d'outils. Les participants s'interrogent aussi sur la définition de la réussite, car les cibles chiffrées ministérielles ne sont pas toujours cohérentes avec leur propre définition.

Une diffusion de ces pratiques auprès d'autres directions de centres de FGA pourrait à la fois enrichir la pratique dans la communauté éducative élargie et permettre de cibler d'autres initiatives prometteuses

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STORIES AND THEIR TELLERS: A GLOBAL EXPLORATION OF CRITICAL AND CREATIVE FEMINIST STORYTELLING STRATEGIES IN MUSEUMS AND ART GALLERIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper shares explorations of how feminists working in public art and history and women's and gender museums worldwide use storytelling as a pedagogical strategy worldwide. Through museum visits and websites I found a variety of critical and creative practices including herstorying, animating, remembering reframing, recentring, rescripting, reclaiming and revisualizing that aimed to forge new memories, consciousness, identities, and agency in the interests of gender justice and change.

INTRODUCTION

For millennia people have used stories and storytelling to invent, reinvent, and authorize individual and collective notions of who they were, are and might become. (Jackson, 2002). Since their invention as one of society's "most powerful genres of modern fiction" museums have played the role of storytellers (Preziosi & Lamoureux, 2005, p. 56). Through texts and images, museums tell stories about historical and contemporary figures and diverse social, political, cultural, aesthetic, and scientific innovations and thinking. While these stories entertain their primary aim is to educate and enculturate. Like all other stories, however, museum stories are never impartial because relations of power are always in play (Bergsdóttir, 2016; Jackson, 2002). Decades of feminist research have shown that for every story told in the museum countless others have been kept silent and this silence is gendered (e.g., Glaser & Zenetou, 1994; Sanford et al., 2021). The majority of museum stories exalt and celebrate masculine words, deeds and subjectivities and exclude or misrepresent the lives of women and LGBTQ2S peoples, denying them the same sense of history, identity, and agency.

Yet across the globe I found evidence that different stories are being told. In this paper I explore diverse practices of feminist storytelling in art and history museums and gender and women's museums. Using strategies of herstorying, animation, reframing, recentring, rescripting, remembering, reclaiming and revisualizing feminists are shattering entrenched masculine-biased narratives, shifting women and the gender diverse from the margins to the centre, transforming their experiences of oppression into critical insights and repositioning them as knowers, agents, and actors, historically and in the present. What I found was feminist adult education being enacted in critical and creative visual and textual forms.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Shaw et al (2013) remind us that as long as people have been sentient, they have told stories to give purpose and meaning to their lives at individual levels, to relationships, and

to wider social and political structures. Telling stories is how people record and remember history, how they make sense of the present and what they are able to envision as and for the future. As both a cognitive and emotional process storytelling shapes, persuades and assembles our ways of seeing and knowing and our senses of self, both individually and collectively (e.g., English & Irving, 2015; Jackson, 2002). Stories and storytelling are, however, never neutral and for “every story that sees the light of day, untold others remain in the shadows, censored or suppressed” (Jackson, 2002, p. ii).

Museums are both master storytellers and masters of light and shadow. Using authoritative textual, immersive, and visual storytelling strategies they story the world into being, into knowing. Problematically, as feminists have found, they tend to cast light onto masculine words, deeds, and histories, teaching their thousands of visitors that it is these which are worthy of preserving and showing casing. Conversely, they throw into the shadows the stories of women’s and others oppressed by gender norms, teaching visitors that these people have little historical import (e.g., McCormack, 2021). By whitewashing centuries of patriarchal privilege, control, and violence and excluding or misrepresenting other stories means museums have lost valuable knowledge and experiences and therefore, opportunities to learn from and continue their legacies (Olufemi, 2020).

Yet storytelling is a critical form of civic engagement and an empowering pedagogical tool. For Jackson (2002) the greatest power of stories is their ability to develop a sense of agency. Stories develop a sense of agency firstly when they pay attention to history, to its patterns of exclusion and oppression and expose its web of problematic assumptions and privileges. Secondly, a sense of agency comes when stories offer new and different ways to see and know the world. Thirdly, stories enable a sense of agency when they galvanize the imagination, that which makes a different world thinkable and actionable (Manicom & Walters, 2012).

Studies by feminist adult educators focus on the power of narrative and visual storytelling in the lives of women. English and Irving’s (2015) study, for example found that by using “embroidery as narrative” women in South Africa were able to depict their experiences “of both repression and resistance against apartheid” (p. 47). Working with Iranian women, Mojab and Taber (2015) explored the ability of storytelling to expose “the state as a patriarchal, racist, and authoritarian institution” but equally importantly “to dream for a better world” (p. 38). Butterwick and Selman’s (2003) findings illustrate the role feminist storytelling played in promoting ‘deep listening’ which allowed differences to be voiced and heard and form the basis of solidarity. For Desmoulins (2019) an exhibition the visualised the murder and disappearance of 100s of Indigenous women through ‘vamps’ (moccasin tops) brought to life for her students not only the lingering effects of colonialism on Indigenous women but their powerful acts of resistance. Discussing her experiences of curating an exhibition entitled *Pride and Prejudice*, Low (2019) argues that these stories of struggle and achievement inspire others to chart their own histories and put “LGBTQ history on the civic and community maps” (p. 235).

METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

While feminist research is a means to expose masculine bias and critique oppression it is also a way to bring to light to the lives and experiences of women and the oppressed. These experiences matter to history, to society and to the transformation of patriarchal social institutions (e.g. Cook & Fonow, 2019). Using a feminist approach, I explored the storytelling strategies of feminists in museums worldwide and how they are educating and making a different world imaginable. I focussed on public art and history museums because they are ubiquitous knowledge producers that have enjoyed a long, relatively uninterrupted history of perpetuating gender injustice (e.g., Bergsdottir, 2016; Sanford et al, 2021). I selected women's and gender museums as direct legacies of women's movements that are proliferating across the globe and therefore, becoming more pedagogically influential (e.g., Schönweger & Clover, 2020).

I collected the data firstly through frequent visits – keeping written and photographic notes -- to museum exhibitions and often took part in educational activities (e.g., Dulwich Picture Gallery, Manchester Art Gallery, Kvindemuseet, Denmark). Secondly, I mined museum websites because as Kabassi (2017) notes, websites are critical tools for museums which they update regularly with past and current activities and increasingly, reflections by scholars or visitors. Websites allowed me to go further afield (e.g., Korea, India and Zambia) but also added e more information to exhibitions I had visited.

FINDINGS

I lay out my findings using eight themes: herstorying, animating, rescripting, recentring, reframing, remembering, gender bending and revisualizing. Under each, due to limited space, I provide one example although many others exist.

Herstorying

Exploring history matters because it helps us to understand “the ideas, forces, choices, and circumstances that brought us to our current situation” (Little, 2020, n/p). For feminist Haraway (2016), it matters what ideas from the past “we use to think other ideas” (p. 12). There are two key aspects of feminist herstorying. The first is developing and showcasing stories that have never been told and the second retelling a ‘known’ (his)story from the point of view of women. My example comes from the Women's Active Museums of War and Peace (WAM) in both Korea and Japan. Their aim is to tell the stories of the ‘Comfort Women’ who were held prisoner for the sexual gratification of the Japanese military during the Second World War. For decades, these stories have been silenced and their tellers deemed ‘lies’ by the government. The WAMs provide a space for living Comfort Women to tell their stories through exhibitions and other activities. The use archival and oral history research to tell other stories. Individual stories honour the women and by weaving them together into a collective exhibition they illuminate the exploitation of women not simply as an individual trauma but a strategic political act across. They also juxtapose the women's testimonies “with the accounts of Japanese soldiers” (p. 256) to bring to light the complexities of historical memory but more importantly, ideological revisionism.

WAM Korea has an immersive experience. The museum constructed dark claustrophobic cells to replicate the military brothels known as ‘comfort stations’, where the abducted, and

forced in sexual labour were kept. As the experience brings the visitor in an experience of isolation, fear and helplessness, it allows for what Million (2009) calls “felt knowledge”, a means for “thinking and problematizing nuances of truth” (p. 20). It also captures the essence of this violent history without reproducing the violence on the bodies and minds of survivors and visitors. For Olufemi (2020) felt knowledge is a refusal “to ignore the pain of others” (p. 5). The WAMs facilitate a variety of public educational activities including public panels, performances and music making workshops. As the past is never the past, activities make links to current practices of sexual violence, enslavement and trafficking.

Animating

To animate means to give something life, zest and energy. Facing what they call a “dearth of documented knowledge and information in mainstream historical narratives of African women and from an African woman’s perspective” the Women’s History Museum Zambia has curated a permanent animated podcast called *Leading Ladies*. It tells the tales of African women from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries whose deeds and contributions were in danger of being lost and forgotten and would have no influence on future generations. As few actual images of the women existed, animation was critical to bring to life visual ‘characters’ whose stories are based on factual stories. Taber (2021) see work like this as ‘creative non-fiction’, a reality shared through imaginative expressive forms. The stories were gathered from ‘herstorians’, important women who had kept the stories alive by passing them down through the generations.

The historical figures in the podcast include military generals, feminists, warriors, politicians, peacemakers and more. A key pedagogical aim of *Leading Ladies* is to challenge “the idea that historically, women were not capable of being leaders” (para. 2). The podcast also aims to instil a new memory for African women by mapping the past and giving them possible futures and “to heal data gaps and cultural wounds through present day creation” (para. 5).

Rescripting

Museums have for decades presented claims about people and objects as ‘objective’ and ‘certain’. For feminists it is critical to interrogate this objective certainty for “the blatant and the subtle means by which an edifice of male supremacy [is] assembled” (Spender, 1980, p. x). A feminists artist working with the Manchester Art Gallery has created a series of curatorial statements called *Feminist Revisions* which deconstruct and rescript the biased and exclusionary language of the original curatorial statements.

For example, the original statement reads:

Improvements in European travel during the 1700s had a wide-ranging impact on British culture. A particularly significant influence was the Grand Tour, which became almost obligatory for young gentlemen. Grand Tourists were led across Europe by tutors to study art, history, and politics for two or three years.

The *Feminist Revision* fleshes this out to tell a broader tale:

A particularly significant influence was the Grand Tour, which became an almost obligatory part of any (rich), young fella's education. Grand Tourists were led across Europe by tutors (who were all men). Only in the later parts of the 1800s did it become (acceptable) fashionable for (barely any) young women and even then, only when chaperoned by a spinster aunt, or some other 'safe' and socially undesirable female. Divorced women were allowed on the Grand Tour!

By manipulating words this practice changes people's perspectives and assumptions of what is in the gallery and the past. It also challenges the trust visitors may have had in the museum's original story by drawing attention to its masculine bias.

Re-Centring

When Anderson and Winkworth (2018) state that "a lifetime's washing and cooking leaves no monuments" (p.130) they are drawing attention to what Mohanty (1989) called "the politics of everyday life" (p. 39). The aim of the storytelling work at the Frauenkultur Regional-International Museum in Germany is to centre the critical epistemic resources contained in women's everyday experiences by taking "seriously them seriously. Specifically, the exhibition explores the relationship between women's self-identities and knowledges and the performance of domestic work.

Walking through the exhibition provides the visitor with an embodied experience of personal lives as it constructs and reconstructs the hidden everyday experiences to make them cultural and socially meaningful. Because the everyday comes to light only in the details, the exhibition meticulously showcases practices such as sewing, cooking, mothering, and other domestic pursuits to convey the intricacies, complexities and time pressures which challenge widespread cultural assumptions of simplicity and mindlessness. The rhythms of women's everyday lives are storied through artworks (images), objects, poetry as well as dreams women have for their futures as they go about their daily tasks. The exhibition is also transnational in scope, linking similar stories of women across countries and cultures. The so-called 'unspectacular' everyday life of women, which is otherwise "not worth mentioning", as the curatorial statement notes, is transformed into a monument to women's critical life sustaining work.

Reframing

Harden and Whiteside (2009) define framing as "the process in which a 'point of view' on a given issue or event is used to interpret and present 'reality' - magnifying or shrinking aspects of that issue or event to make it more or less salient" (p. 312). Framing, like other storytelling practices has been used to "reinforce gender-related myths" (p. 312). *Re-framed: The woman in the window* was a multimedia exhibition curated by feminist curators at the Dulwich Picture Gallery, England. It consisted of three different types of storytelling. The first stories focussed on the "enigmatic and provocative artistic motif used for over 3,000 years" by male artists to frame women in contexts of "idealisation, protection, and confinement".

The second gallery included works by female artists who have taken up the composition of the frame to explore female identity, sexuality, and social expectations through very

different eyes. Here we see everything from acts of defiance to deep frustrations. The final gallery show works by feminist artists who were commissioned to take up the frame to tell stories of lock down experiences during the coronavirus pandemic. Works explored how door and window frames on one hand gave women access to the outside world whilst on the other, confined them to rising acts of domestic violence offering only tantalizing glimpses of escape and safety. This work also allowed visitors to add their responses in an activity called *Another Perspective* which were woven directly into the exhibition rather than set apart.

Remembering

For Pickering (2006) remembering is a practice that gives the past both “meaning and communicative currency” (p. 176). The ‘remembering agent’ takes what is absent and makes it present as a living memory. Remembering murdered women was central to the work of the Museo de la Mujer in Argentina through a storytelling and mask making workshops activity called *Mariposas* (Butterflies). Working collectively, artists and women from the community produced a series of spectacular masks to denounce male violence (murder) and pay homage to the lives of the 100s of women who have been victims of femicide from 2015 to 2022. The coronavirus pandemic with its increased rates of violence against women expanded the number of masks exponentially. Each of the masks is 20cm x20cm and individually embroidered and includes the names of the women killed.

A central aim of the project was to disallow the murdered women to disappear into ‘statistics’ of femicide. Yet the exhibition also responds to English and Irving’s (2015) belief that when one tells a story of violence against women it is critical to make it statistically significant to show that these are not just isolated/single events. The large-scale mask exhibition is an extraordinarily beautiful and powerful graphic exposition of statistics. The museum used the exhibition as the basis for discussion groups on violence against women. The masks have been worn in mass feminist mobilisations against violence and feminicide such as *Ni Una Menos* (Not One Less) and used in the campaign *Femicidios: Cry for Justice through Art*.

Reclaiming

While the category of ‘woman’ remains a critical space of social analysis and political struggle, to examine gender more broadly enables “a richer critical analysis of the gender system as a whole” (Scott-Dixon, 2006, p.19) and help people to go beyond ‘tolerance’ to understanding sexual differences with respect (Kabassi, 2019). Addressing the broader social construction of gender and providing a space of reclamation and learning is the Kvindemuseet (Gender Museum) in Denmark. The museum facilitated a series of workshops called *Gender Bender* that brought together LGBTQ and trans youth to tell their own stories of identity. Questions used to guide the storytelling workshops included: What does gender mean in our society? What does it mean to be transgender? What is normal? How am I doing with my body? What is equality? What does it really mean if I was born a boy - or if I was born a girl? From the stories participants produced artworks (drawings, poetry, etc.) which were curated into a permanent exhibition called *Gender Bender*.

Using *Gender Bender*, this museum like others facilitates public discussions the evolution of sexual education over the past 200 years and particularly, about norms, limits, and rights for gender, body, and sexuality.

Revisualizing

Feminist adult educator Bierema (2003) reminds us that “taking action in the name of women’s oppression involves making the invisibility of women’s oppression visible » (p. 7). This underlies the work of feminists in the Museum of Art and Photography (MAP) in India who curated an exhibition titled *Visible / invisible: Representation of Women in Art*. The exhibition explores the representation of women through artworks that address preconceived notions of femininity and gender. It speaks too to the little control women have had over the nature of their representation as it juxtaposes themes and counter-themes around complex ideas such as sacrifice, nourishment, aggression, abandonment, desire, and success. *Visible/Invisible* also addresses physical, sexual and emotional violence by displaying nudity and graphic imagery in ways that are “safe...for everyone” (para. 3).

Educational include public talks and round table discussions aimed to encourage multiple viewpoints, questions and “to provide the tools and contexts for audiences to form their opinions and challenge existing ones” (para 4). One major workshop titled *Abolition Feminism* invited participants “to explore [abolition feminism] as a framework and strategy for imagining alternative futures and praxis” (para. 1). The museum also hosts feminist theatre performances that question the health of a binary world.

Final thoughts

In the hands of feminists in museums storytelling is a powerful practice of purpose, sense and meaning making in the interests of gender justice and change. They not only challenge normative stories but tell new ones that address a range of issues. As feminists herstory, animate, reframe, recentre, remember, reclaim and revisualize they provide space where new ideas, memories and knowledge to emerge. They provide a blueprint to imagine the future.

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EDUCATIONALLY AND SOCIALLY ADDRESSING PSYCHOLOGICAL INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN VICTIMS IN QUÉBEC THROUGH A CHANGE OF CURRICULA

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INTRODUCTION

December 2019 marked the first detection of the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in China, which quickly became a global pandemic as declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020. The ramifications of the WHO declaration of COVID-19 being a pandemic led to drastic measures such as the mandatory wearing of masks, government lockdowns, curfews, and losses or instabilities of jobs, which catapulted a rise of mental health issues in society. As a result of fear, stress, anxiety, and the disruption of people's professional and personal lives, researchers observed an "increase in psychological problems, especially in women" (Indu et al., 2021, p. 1), which were attributed to cases of domestic violence, otherwise known as intimate partner violence (IPV). For the sake of this paper, I will be employing the term IPV, which encompasses the different forms of abuse committed by an intimate partner and includes but are not limited to, physical, sexual, verbal, psychological (Government of Canada, 2023), as well as financial (Woehrer et al., 2023) and spiritual (Dehan & Levi, 2009) abuse, which are forms of abuse I will be looking at, specifically psychological abuse. Moreover, because of my lived experience with psychological IPV, and my current role as an adult educator, I felt I was ideally positioned to conduct research on this subject and speak with others about their IPV experiences. In this paper, I will:

1. Introduce my topic through a personal connection to my proposed study.
2. Explain a shortened version of my methodology which includes the theoretical framework of my research; my qualitative methodology; my research problematic and research questions; my research participants; the methods I used for collecting my data; a brief overview of my data analysis; and a conclusion of my research findings.

PERSONAL CONNECTION TO THE PROPOSED STUDY

During the second wave of COVID-19 in August 2020, I experienced what seemed to be my first serious episode of IPV. I started living with my intimate partner in April 2020. At this moment in time, the world was in complete shambles, and apparently, so was my partner. His business was suffering from a lack of patients, he was having major issues with his staff, and as a result, he was experiencing extreme levels of stress that he had never endured before as both a healthcare professional and a clinic owner. These are not excuses for the despicable behaviour that he exhibited towards me, but rather a way to offer a contextual perspective. After a few months of repetitive government lockdowns, COVID-19 protocols, patients not coming to their appointments, and staff being terrified of coming to work out of fear of catching the virus, my partner who already suffered from anxiety before the pandemic suddenly found himself becoming overly anxious. He imposed

all his stress on me, and I had become his verbal and emotional punching bag. By August 2020, he had reached an ultimate low, and at the slightest disagreement of things, he yelled at me with profane language at the top of his lungs and continuously insulted and belittled me while attempting to permanently kick me out of our shared home. It was the most violent form of communication anybody had ever used with me. On this night at one in the morning, I found myself crying hysterically with trembling hands, all while packing fifteen bags of my belongings and desperately stuffing them into my sedan hoping they would fit. I had no clue as to where I would sleep the night – I nearly slept in my vehicle. Fortunately, I was able to sleep the rest of the night at my parents' house, despite the risk of not abiding by the Canadian government recommendations and putting my senior and/or immunocompromised parents at risk of contracting a virus, which at the time, we knew little about. Following this IPV episode, I was completely distraught.

I sabotaged myself with self-limiting beliefs, as my self-esteem was completely robbed from me, and this inevitably impacted how I socially viewed and interacted with others. I wondered if friends or family would question or judge me if I had told them the truth of what happened to me, and thus, at first, was more comfortable keeping to myself and not sharing too many details of my story. I felt that being alone in solitude was better for me because nobody would have the power to get close to me and hurt me. I lacked trust in not only my relationship but also in my friendships, while always second-guessing people's true intentions. This was a rather negative and unhealthy way to view the world as well as an unsustainable way to live. I later realized that being transparent about my story to close and trusting family members in addition to seeking out a clinical psychologist's services was what helped me immensely. This decision was beneficial for me because I had suffered from too much anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress following my abuse episode, compounded by the stress that the pandemic itself had imposed on me in addition to my school and work priorities. Evidently, although this intense scenario happened once, it was enough to completely disrupt my mental health and even personal relations. Thankfully, speaking with my family and a psychologist helped me reground myself. In addition, my partner was deeply apologetic towards me, he received the help that he needed through speaking with an honest friend and seeking meditative practices, and his ruthless behaviour ceased. I am aware, however, that just because I experienced one drastic episode of IPV amid COVID-19, that this is not necessarily the case for other women who have also experienced psychological abuse from their partners before or during COVID-19 or both, exemplifying the importance for further investigation into this topic. Using my own lived experience of IPV, I am curious about how education as a public facing institution, can serve as a preventative measure of IPV and bridge the gaps for psychosocial support for IPV victims.

Furthermore, since developing not only a personal connection to IPV, but understanding how important psychosocial supports are, I started collaborating with different Montreal women's shelters and centers, including *Chez Doris*, *Auberge Transition*, the YWCA - *Y des Femmes Montréal*, and the West Island Women's Center (WIWC). I have been involved with these organizations through different forms of volunteer work, where I have been exposed to many other women who have been victims of IPV as well. Given how psychologically and socially impactful even one episode of IPV was on my overall well-

being on top of being exposed to other women who have experienced IPV, and already putting effort into creating awareness, strategies, and solutions for IPV through my volunteer gigs, my goal was clear. I needed to conduct a qualitative study from a psychosocial and educational angle, which would explore IPV from the perspective of a few local women. In collecting data, I inquired not only about the psychosocial impacts such as stress, depression, suicidal ideation, low self-esteem, and general and social anxiety, but I was also able to ask for the recommendations these women have for how educational programming might raise awareness and even prevent IPV. I believe the data I found in my research will enable educators to understand how the experiences of these abuse victims affected them both psychologically and socially, and how the field of education can play a key role in diminishing the cases of IPV through offering relevant education, tools, and resources. Specifically, I recruited six women ($n = 6$) to interview of different ages and backgrounds, who were either abused by their intimate partners (especially psychologically), or who worked with clients who were abused by their intimate partners (primarily psychologically among other forms). I will discuss my research questions in the following section.

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this section, I describe my methodology section to help educationally and socially address IPV against women victims through a change of curricula in Québec; my methodology describing my qualitative study; the research problem surrounding my topic about IPV against women, and thus, my research questions regarding both IPV against women and education; who my research participants were, as well as how and why I chose them; the methods I employed in my research study including interviews and thematic analysis; a brief overview of my data analysis; and my concluding thoughts about my research study.

Methodology

Because I wanted to gather insights about IPV, I decided to employ a qualitative methodology to my study, which is a non-statistical and more subjective type of study, seeking to uncover a deeper understanding of trends and reasons behind certain phenomena, typically through means of observations or interviews, and with a relatively small sample size (Creswell, 2013). This methodology is a practical approach to gathering people's insights on a particular subject (Creswell, 2013). It is ideal for the topic of inquiry that I proposed because many women experience IPV, but their personal experiences and perceptions can differ, as well as what is recounted by those who work with women victims of IPV (e.g., clinicians across Montréal who work in an educational context), which are worth analyzing further to later apply them to educational practice. By directly and indirectly getting to know people's individual experiences of IPV, I developed a deeper and more contextual understanding of this psychological and societal issue that can help inform educational practice for IPV awareness and prevention.

Research Problematic and Research Questions

While there is much literature available on the topic of IPV, as an educator, I am interested in better understanding if and how education can play a role in raising awareness in the

prevention of IPV – a topic that lacks research, hence the purpose of conducting my study. The main research questions of my study are as follows:

1. According to victims of IPV, what role can education and curricula play in terms of prevention, if any?
2. What educational insights would victims of IPV like to see offered in education programs and society, more broadly?
3. What recommendations, resources, or supports do women who have experienced IPV need to have their psychosocial needs (such as the recognition and management of stress, anxiety, depression, social disruption, and limitations of daily routines), adequately met?

For these questions to be addressed, I needed to meet with my participants.

Research Participants

Following Gregory and Williamson (2021), who recruited research participants from their network for their qualitative study on domestic abuse, I partially initiated the same approach, to mitigate risks. Because I have been speaking openly about IPV for several years as it has been a concern of mine as a friend and family member, and wanting to do more good than harm, I initially wanted to interview only those with whom I already have a relationship. Therefore, when I was thinking of my research proposal and contemplating who I could potentially interview for my study, I thought of interviewing only four women with whom I had a personal relationship and whom I knew had all experienced psychological IPV (and in some cases, other forms of IPV as well). These women included a family member; a friend from high school; a childhood friend's mother; and my former teacher's daughter. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances, I was not able to interview my friend from high school or my childhood friend's mother. However, other opportunities for potential interviewees arose with time.

Luckily, I had become friends with a woman whom I met at a women's center I volunteered, and through time, she opened up to me about her abusive ex-husband. Discussing the topic of my thesis with her initiated her desire to be a part of my research. In addition, in one of my former classes during my master's studies, I met a peer who worked as a project coordinator at a sexual assault crisis center in Montréal. After speaking with her, she offered to connect me with a few social workers at a sexual assault referral center also in Montréal, whom she knew. She figured they may be more suitable candidates to speak with and gather more data from for my study, to which I agreed. I met all three women, initially to discuss my study and subsequently to conduct my interviews.

Speaking with social workers was interesting for me; since I had only interviewed actual survivors of IPV before, by interviewing individuals who work with victims of IPV, I was offered a different perspective for my study. Many points that the social workers were making (e.g., the ways in which victims of abuse respond to their abuse), were very similar to what my research participants who were victims of IPV were saying about themselves. This validated to me that what the social workers shared about their experiences with

client victims of IPV was congruent with what my survivor participants disclosed to me in our interviews.

Methods

For my method of collecting data, I conducted 1 hour-long audio-recorded interviews with willing participants who were interested in discussing their lived experiences of IPV or their experiences working with clients who are victims of IPV. The idea was that interviews would help me gain more insight into people's individual stories and enable me to connect with them in a way that I would not have been able to via a survey or quantitative research. I interviewed six Montréal women (n = 6) of different ages and backgrounds. For the location of interviews, the participants were the ones themselves who decided on a location that was most convenient and comfortable for them. I prepared six questions for my interviews. Sometimes, more questions were added on the spot during my interviews, as my conversations with my interviewees unfolded and took a natural course.

The following were some of my planned interview questions:

1. What measures did you (or your clients) take to help yourself (or themselves) psychologically and socially, during or following your (their) IPV experience(s)?
2. What resources and tools do you suggest are missing in our schools and society to meet the psychological and social needs of women victims of IPV more adequately?
3. What role can education and curricula play in terms of the prevention of IPV against women, if any?

By using a standard interview protocol, I was able to structure my interviews but also create new questions for my participants during our interviews. I was able to gain clearer insights on how sex education can play a role in the awareness and prevention of, and solution to, IPV, through the perspectives of women who have lived IPV experiences or have clients who have lived them. My research findings provided me with the opportunity to unveil patterns that came across in my different interviews. I was able to achieve these observations by re-listening to the audio recordings of my interviews several times each and more efficiently, by transcribing the interviews and coding patterns.

Data Analysis

After I conducted my interviews, I transcribed and analyzed each interview (with each interviewee's consent). I accomplished this by listening to my six interviews a minimum of five times each before I began transcribing. After this, I felt more confident in beginning my transcriptions. While I was listening to most of the recordings for a sixth time, I typed everything I heard from my recordings onto a Microsoft Word document on my laptop. This process was done in private, while I was alone in my office to ensure confidentiality. I then proceeded to read all the transcripts of my interviews and analyzed them through a process called, "thematic analysis" (Sundler et al., 2019). Thematic analysis is commonly used in qualitative research to draw out meaningful themes or patterns from data that was

collected for a study (Sundler et al., 2019). Given that my research study is a qualitative one, and that I aim to see if there are commonalities between my interviewees' stories to find plausible solutions for IPV against women and how this can be addressed educationally, it was most appropriate to use thematic analysis as well as coding as ways to analyze my data in response to my research questions. Coding is achieved by assigning a detailed classification that enables a researcher to pinpoint any related information to this classification within their gathered data (Illinois Library, 2024). To help me code, after the data from all my interviews was fully transcribed onto one Microsoft Word document, I used the 'CTRL (CONTROL) F' function on my keyboard, to further assist me in finding repeated words and discovering any missed patterns. Through thematic analysis and coding, there were several themes found in my interviewees' words, but four common themes emerged that stuck out to me: 1) Justice; 2) Trust; 3) Resources; and 4) Curricula.

CONCLUSION

By speaking with women victims of IPV as well as with women who work in professions dealing with women victims of IPV, it was made clear to me that women are so often victims in situations. Through my study, I was able to learn in an educational context, about what had been useful or what would have been useful that was missing, for these women victims to get through their lived experiences with IPV. The goal of my research was to draw out the psychosocial details regarding IPV against women which can: 1) result in more efficient awareness initiatives and prevention measures of IPV against women that would be accessible in educational institutions, 2) help women in need receive aid following their abuse victimization, and 3) help male perpetrators of IPV against women receive appropriate treatment for their abusive actions. These psychosocial details were the four highlighted themes revealed in the data analysis section: 1) Justice; 2) Trust; 3) Resources; and 4) Curricula. These themes were generated by doing something that had not been conducted before in the context of educational studies; by inadvertently bringing together in conversation, social workers, and victims of IPV, my participants' testimonies who were victims of IPV, were validated by my participant social workers who shared testimonies of their clients who are also victims of IPV. Because of this congruence, I believe my research findings are a reliable foundation for building up the sex educational curricula of our province.

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FACILITATING EMBODIED LEARNING FOR ADULTS: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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Abstract

This literature review explores contemporary adult learning theory and practice that address the mind/body split in education. It describes the many benefits for individuals and groups of adult learners who integrate the body in learning, along with the barriers they face in doing so. In particular, it examines the recommendation from scholars that a skilled facilitator be used to support adults with embodied learning (Forgasz & McDonough, 2017; Payne & Brooks, 2020; Taylor & Marienau, 2016) and the gap in understanding how this is done. Identifying the competencies of a skilled embodied learning facilitator requires an understanding of adult learning theory, specifically experiential learning, transformative learning, embodied learning and the practice of teaching adults. In summary, the literature chosen for this review was meant to provide a scholarly context for further research on embodied learning and facilitation to build upon.

Keywords: adult education, embodied learning, facilitation, experiential learning, transformative learning

INTRODUCTION

As adult education research and theory evolve there is a renewed interest in legitimizing the body's role in learning and knowledge construction (Freiler, 2008; Merriam & Brockett, 2007; Merriam, 2018; Vlieghe, 2018). Embodied learning theory, which describes learning that is "attentive to the body and its experiences as a way of knowing" (Freiler, 2008, p. 40), highlights the interplay between the mind and body in education. While integrating the body in learning has many benefits for adult learners, a number of barriers exist for both learners and educators wishing to do so (Forgasz & McDonough, 2017; Nguyen & Larson, 2015; Payne & Brooks, 2020; Vlieghe, 2017; Wagner & Shahjahan, 2015). To overcome these barriers and support adults to engage with embodied learning, scholars recommend the use of a skilled facilitator who can, for example, scaffold learning activities, use language to cue the body, and maintain a supportive learning environment (Forgasz & McDonough, 2017; Payne & Brooks, 2020; Taylor & Marienau, 2016).

This paper is adapted from a literature review completed in 2023 as part of a Masters of Adult Education at St. Francis Xavier University, in Nova Scotia. The review aimed to better understand how educators use facilitation to support adults with embodied learning. The review explores adult learning theory with a focus on experiential learning, transformative learning, embodied learning, and the practice of teaching adults. Works that provided a history and definition, contemporary perspectives, teaching approaches, and included a discussion on the role of the body, were chosen. The selected literature is a mix of journal articles, books, chapters, and conference papers published within the last 5-8 years except for seminal works. An understanding of this topic begins with a short history of the

mind/body split in education, some benefits and challenges adult learners experience with embodied learning, and an introduction to facilitation.

BACKGROUND

Contemporary adult education perspectives challenge the mind/body split in education which has had a profound impact on learning theory (Merriam, 2018). This mind/body split, which idolizes the mind as the primary site for learning and knowledge construction while disassociating from the body, has a history in Western philosophical bias (Jordi, 2011; Merriam & Brockett, 2007; Merriam, 2018; Vlieghe, 2018). Its influences, beginning in the 17th century, were Cartesian philosophy and Christian traditions that worshiped the rational mind and “defined learning as a cognitive process located in the brain” (Merriam & Brockett, 2007, p. 302). In contrast, contemporary adult education perspectives, influenced by neuroscience and the social sciences, reinforce that the brain is embodied, “The brain is not just inside the skull like a walnut in a shell. It is a body-brain, connected with and responsive to every part of the body by extension of the peripheral nervous system” (Taylor & Marienau, 2016, p. 34) and that learning is a whole-body experience.

The benefits for individuals and groups of adult learners who engage in embodied learning include access to insight and tacit knowledge, increased self-understanding, deepened cognitive growth, improved learner engagement and shared understanding, and the potential for perspective transformation (Forgasz & McDonough, 2017; Munro, 2018; Nguyen & Larson, 2015; Payne & Brooks, 2020; Vlieghe, 2017; Wagner & Shahjahan, 2015). Yet, integrating the body in learning is complex: “the aim is not to engage the body willy-nilly but to foster a deep-structure and a systemic engagement within the learning process” (Munro, 2018, p. 8). As well, embodied learning can elicit discomfort, vulnerability, and resistance in both learners and educators (Forgasz & McDonough, 2017; Nguyen & Larson, 2015; Payne & Brooks, 2020). This resistance occurs especially with learners unfamiliar with embodied approaches or in learning environments where they are not commonly used (Forgasz & McDonough, 2017; Taylor & Marineau, 2016). As a result, scholars have argued that a skillful facilitation approach can “disrupt learner’s traditional cognitive modes of processing” and thus support them to engage with embodied learning (Forgasz & McDonough, 2017, p. 64).

Facilitation, which is derived from the French word *facile*, is defined as “to make easy; to do” (Balfour, 2016, p. 1), and in the context of education involves the process of supporting learners to explore and grow (Smith, 2009). This process requires a number of educator competencies, defined as “clusters of interrelated knowledge, skills, attitudes and values” (Institute for Performance and Learning, 2016, p. 11), for effective performance and each educator brings a unique approach (Smith, 2009). Within the literature on embodied learning, facilitation competencies (such as scaffolding activities based on learner needs, using language to cue the body, and creating an inclusive environment where learners feel supported) are recommended, yet a gap exists in understanding how educators can skillfully apply them in practice (Forgasz & McDonough, 2017; Payne & Brooks, 2020; Taylor & Marineau, 2016). To understand this gap, the literature review explored adult learning theory (with a focus on experiential learning, transformative learning, embodied learning, and the practice of teaching adults) with a particular interest

in its history and definition, contemporary perspectives, teaching approaches, and the role of the body.

ADULT LEARNING THEORY

Although organized education with small elite groups of adults has existed throughout history, it was not until the early 20th century that learning in adulthood, identified as learning undertaken by those with the social roles of adults, was studied by behavioural and cognitive scientists (Merriam, 2018; Rubenson, 2011). By the 1960s adult education evolved into a humanistic approach, with an emphasis on personal growth, development, freedom, and authenticity, and became a separate field of practice (Merriam, 2018; Rubenson, 2011). Seminal adult education scholar, Eduard C. Lindeman (1926), described adult learning as putting “meaning into the whole life” as opposed to youth education, which is characterized as preparation for life (p. 120).

Adult learning is also described as critical for developing self-knowledge and essential for the well-being of societies (Gouthro, 2019; Stoltz, 2015; Taylor & Marienau, 2016). Adult learning occurs in a variety of formal, non-formal, and informal settings inside and outside of a classroom (Groen & Kawalilak, 2020). Formal learning takes place in educational institutions and typically leads to a credential; non-formal learning occurs within workplaces, organizations, and groups; and informal learning is incidental and occurs as a part of daily life (Groen & Kawalilak, 2020; Rubenson, 2011). Within the broad scope of adult learning, the four foundational theories of andragogy, self-directed learning, experiential learning, and transformative learning have held an important role in developing the field and highlighting how adults learn (Groen & Kaliwak, 2020; Rubenson, 2011). Of these foundational theories, this literature review primarily focused on experiential and transformative learning; however, andragogy and self-directed learning warrant a brief explanation.

Andragogy, developed by Malcolm Knowles in 1980, is made up of six assumptions about how adults learn: Adults are self-directed; their accumulated experience is a rich resource for learning; their readiness to learn is related to what matters to them; they gravitate towards problem-centered as opposed to subject-centered learning; they are internally motivated; and they need to know the context and value of what they are learning (cited in Groen & Kaliwak, 2020). Self-directed learning, developed by Tough between 1967 and 1982, emphasizes “the intentional and non-formal practices taken up by adults when learning” (Groen & Kaliwak, 2020, p. 75) with a specific focus on how adult learners take responsibility for their learning and its result.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING THEORY

Experiential learning, theorized by Kolb in 1984, shares similarities with andragogy and self-directed learning as it “highlights that much of learning draws from experience” (Merriam, 2018, p. 75). In addition, it emphasizes how experience transforms into learning and knowledge construction: “Truth is not manifest in experience; it must be inferred by a process of learning” (Kolb, 2015, p. xxi). Kolb’s learning cycle, described as learner-centered and innovative, employs a four-step framework that includes concrete

experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 2015; Morris, 2020). According to experiential learning theory, learning is a lifelong process in which our understanding of concepts is continuously modified with experience (Kolb, 2015).

TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY

Transformative learning theory, the most recent and most studied foundational adult education theory, shifted from the acquisition of knowledge to a process of perspective transformation and new action (Groen & Kaliwak, 2020; Merriam, 2018). In 1978, Jack Mezirow identified a ten-phase process that began with a disorienting dilemma, cycled through self-examination and critical self-reflection, onto the recognition of shared experiences with others, explored alternate ways of being, and planned and implemented a new course of action (Cranton, 2012; Mezirow, 2012). This voluntary process, influenced by humanist and critical adult education philosophies, inspires social responsibility, clarity, and greater control over one's life as adults' surface deeply held beliefs and critically reflect on their frames of reference (Cranton, 2016; Mezirow 2012). Notably, it is the action on the revised perspective that defines transformative learning (Cranton, 2012).

Although the foundational theories are associated with robust research, they have been criticized for being individualistic and lacking attention to the social and political contexts where learning takes place. "How self-directing can one be in their learning in an oppressive social context? Can transformative learning take place if one is not exposed to alternative ways of thinking about an issue or problem?" (Merriam, 2018, p. 26). In response, critical social science perspectives, which examine the role of social context in shaping and understanding adult learning, emerged in the later part of the 20th century (Merriam, 2018). These perspectives highlighted the role of context in learning, which contrasted with earlier adult education scholarship that focused more on the characteristics of adult learners (Merriam, 2018).

EMBODIED LEARNING THEORY

Instead of one model, theory, or definition for how and why adults learn, there is an "ever-evolving knowledge base" which comprises of holistic models that include the body (Merriam, 2018, p. 21). Embodied learning theory is one such pedagogical approach that connects the body and mind in learning and knowledge construction (Forgasz & McDonough, 2017; Freiler, 2008; Nguyen & Larson, 2015; Vlieghe, 2017; Wagner & Shahjahan, 2015). This theory encompasses a broader view of constructing knowledge than somatic learning, which similarly links purposeful body-centred movements and awareness such as in the case of tai-chi. What differentiates embodied learning is how it "engages the body as a site of learning, usually in connection with other domains of knowing (for example, spiritual, affective, symbolic, cultural, rational)" (Freiler, 2008, p. 39). Because of this connection, the experience and interpretation of embodied learning is more subjective as it inspires learners to construct knowledge through the kinetic and sensory experience of being in a body in the world (Freiler, 2008).

Embodied learning is described as having three primary characteristics. They are “bodily and spatial awareness,” “unification of mind/body in learning,” and “awareness of socialization in the body’s role as embodied text” (Nguyen & Larson, 2015, pp. 337-339). Nguyen and Larson (2015) explained that bodily and spatial awareness involves paying attention to the physical experience of body sensation in the learning space. Unification of mind/body in learning reinforces the connection between mindful body awareness coupled with reflection. Finally, developing an awareness of the body’s role in socialization highlights the social nature of learning and how bodies integrate and reinforce social norms that exist within specific contexts. Examples of activities educators can use to facilitate embodied learning include role-play, simulation, body-mapping, expressive and therapeutic dance, applied theatre, visual arts, yoga, and meditation (Forgasz & McDonough, 2017; Freiler, 2008, Nguyen & Larson, 2015, Wagner & Shahjahan, 2015).

Scholars have argued that embodiment is essential to both experiential and transformative learning and should be a focus of further research (Hamman, 2019; Kuk & Holst, 2018; Morris, 2020; Schlattner, 2022; Walker & Hornstein, 2018). In the case of experiential learning, Morris (2020) argued that “to secure deep and meaningful learning the body cannot be decoupled from the mind during the process of learning” (p. 1074). This critique was echoed by Kuk and Holst (2018), who highlighted the influence of Descartes in the dualistic learning cycle where the body experiences and the mind reflect. In the case of transformative learning, scholars have similarly argued that embodiment cannot be decoupled from the process of perspective transformation (Schlattner, 2022; Walker & Hornstein, 2018). According to Walker and Hornstein (2018), “our bodies alert us to disorienting dilemmas and, if we listen to them, they enable us to experience and then respond productively” (p. 8). Instead, a conception of transformative learning that is embodied highlights that physical movement, rationality, emotion, discourse and creativity are inseparable elements of creating new meaning perspectives (Schlattner, 2022).

THE PRACTICE OF TEACHING ADULTS

Contemporary teaching emphasizes a learner-centered and facilitative approach, in which educators help learners to identify and meet their learning needs (Brookfield, 2020). Within experiential learning, for example, facilitators support the development of learner expertise by valuing prior experience, using conversation as a tool for reflection and meaning making, and granting learners’ autonomy (Kolb, 2015). Within transformative learning, facilitators foster critical self-reflection and self-knowledge, and provide emotional support (Cranton, 2012; Kreber 2012; Mezirow, 2012). In instances of embodied learning, facilitators maintain an inclusive and safe learning environment, and a supportive, approachable, and insightful attitude (Payne & Brooks, 2020). They also use language that cues the body and introduce activities that challenge participants to try new things.

Best practices for facilitation in performance and learning involve several competencies. In the *Competencies for Performance and Learning Professionals*, a guide published by The Institute for Performance and Learning (2016), five core competencies for facilitating learning are outlined: prepare to facilitate (attend to logistics, check that the learning experience supports the outcomes), create learning environment (support the social and emotional needs of learners, model suitable behaviour, manage disruptive behaviour,

clarify learner responsibilities), engage learners (provide instructions, deliver materials, lead discussions, use differences to enhance learning, use visual aids and virtual tools), foster learning (provide expertise, facilitate individual and group activities, support transfer of learning), and assess learning (p. 74). While scholars argued that a skilled facilitator is important for supporting adults to integrate the body in learning, more research is needed to understand how educators can apply facilitation competencies to support embodied learning (Forgasz & McDonough, 2017; Payne & Brooks, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Current adult education perspectives highlight how learning is a whole-body experience that involves the interplay between the mind and the body (Freiler, 2008; Taylor & Marienau, 2016). This is in contrast to traditional perspectives, influenced by 17th century Cartesian philosophy and Christian traditions, that defined learning as an intellectual process in the brain (Jordi, 2011; Merriam & Brockett, 2007; Merriam, 2018; Vlieghe, 2018). A theory about the role of the body in learning, entitled embodied learning, describes how people come to know and understand their worlds through the instrument of the body (Merriam, 2018). An intuitive and unconscious approach, it can offer a unique access point for individuals to gain insight and understanding (Forgasz & McDonough, 2017; Snowber, 2012). For groups, embodied learning can break silos, support the sharing of perspectives, and enable a shared understanding. Together, with the development of individual insight and shared meaning in groups, embodied learning can support the process of perspective transformation and new action (Nguyen & Larson, 2015; Payne & Brooks, 2020; Vlieghe, 2017; Wagner & Shahjahan, 2015).

Due to the unique needs, characteristics, and experiences of adults, a field of practice that studies and develops models for adult educators has evolved (Brookfield, 2020). This learner-centered approach considers adult educators as facilitators who support the individual growth and development of learners by helping them to identify and meet their learning needs. Because integrating the body in learning is complex and can elicit discomfort in learners, scholars recommend that a skilled facilitator be used (Forgasz & McDonough, 2017; Payne & Brooks, 2020). To support learners, embodied learning facilitators create inclusive and safe learning environments, scaffold learning activities so that the level of unfamiliarity is titrated, and deliberately select and use language that cues the body (Forgasz & McDonough, 2017; Payne & Brooks, 2020; Taylor & Marineau, 2016). The benefits of further exploration on embodied learning and facilitation would be to address knowledge gaps and provide recommendations for educators wishing to facilitate embodied learning for adults.

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REDEFINING ADULT EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY BUILDING USING EMBODIED LEARNING METHODS WITH NEWCOMER WOMEN IN CANADA

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Abstract

In this paper, I share reasons and ideas for redefining adult education and community building with newcomers in Canada based on findings from my doctoral research project. This study utilized embodied learning theories (Ng, 2003; 2018; Simpson, 2017), situated solidarities (Nagar & Geiger, 2007), and transnational feminist scholarship (Alexander, 2005; Mohanty, 2003). Using embodied learning methods helped create a holistic and supportive learning environment by honouring and balancing physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of learning, which combined with solidarity building and the emphasis on learner's self-determination meant participants developed a deeper connection and relationship both with and motivation for learning and with each other. Methods for developing relationships among diverse community groups can be accomplished through situated solidarities and this does much to enhance the quality of learning experiences and the sense of collectiveness. The results and conclusions of this research suggest practical ways to promote solidarity among academics, practitioners, and communities.

Keywords: migration; adult education; embodied learning; solidarity; decolonization

INTRODUCTION

Redefining adult education in this paper means challenging the colonial underpinnings of Canada's education system and mainstream newcomer education models. Adult education scholars have long critiqued mainstream newcomer education models in Canada for devaluing immigrants' knowledge and skills and being imbricated with colonial ideologies of lifelong learning, which devalue and ignore the whole person in learning (Guo, 2010; Morrice et al., 2017; Ng & Shan, 2010). In response, Maitra and Guo (2019) theorize the need to decolonize lifelong learning contexts by redesigning curricula to include non-Western knowledges which would thereby challenge colonial systems. The research project discussed in this paper relied upon theories of embodied learning as a method to redefine adult education and community building with newcomers and presents a continuation and support of these calls for change in trajectory in adult education research.

Embodied learning is a conceptualization of learning that appreciates the involvement and interconnectedness of the mind, body, emotion, and spirit in learning, allowing for a holistic approach to learning (Ng, 2018). Educational systems shaped by colonial binaries, including Cartesian dualism, have historically favoured Western-centric knowledge based on the dominance of modernity and rationality while marginalizing Indigenous knowledges, affective and embodied theories, and alternative education perspectives (Abdi, 2012; Wong & Batacharya, 2018). Based on my doctoral research I contend that embodied pedagogical

methods are valuable yet insufficiently employed in decolonizing transnational migration learning contexts and building community with newcomers in Canada. This paper adds to the discourses by addressing the following questions: How do embodied learning methods improve newcomer education and community-building processes? How does this educational approach contribute to solidarity building and self-determination to enhance intercultural understanding and connections between researchers and community?

This paper begins with an introduction to the theoretical framework that guided my research. I then provide a brief overview of the study's methodology, illustrating the pedagogical approach and applications of embodied learning, while also explaining the types of data that inform my discussion and conclusions. Through my research it became evident that embodied learning methods can play a critical role in redefining adult education and community building with newcomers in Canada. I outline three specific ways in which this occurred in my study. The implications of these findings suggest that adult education practitioners have an important role to play by contributing to social justice through the redefining of newcomer education in Canada.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Embodied learning theories are exceedingly diverse (Hegna & Ørbæk, 2024; Shonstrom, 2020). My theoretical approach to understanding embodied learning is based on the scholarship of Roxana Ng (2018). I also respectfully engaged with and drew upon Indigenous scholarship and perspectives on embodiment (Simpson, 2014; 2017). Indigenous knowledges and worldviews are rich and diverse in the ways they define embodied knowledge (Dei, 2013). An important aspect of understanding embodied knowledge in Indigenous epistemologies is highlighting the spiritual dimension of embodiment and the relationship between spirit, land and body (Dei, 2012; Mojica, 2012). Understanding and healing the trauma of bodily dislocation in transnational migration is aided by theories of embodiment which expressly acknowledge the connection between bodies to land, as is done through Indigenous perspectives of embodiment. Furthermore, Canada's colonial immigration systems may further exacerbate the feeling of separation and isolation felt by migrants who are already uprooted from their homeland and community. Therefore, embodied learning strategies and solutions that strengthen the connection between land and body are highly relevant to the context.

In addition to embodied learning theories, I included situated solidarities (Nagar & Geiger, 2007), and transnational feminist scholarship (Alexander, 2005; Mohanty, 2003) in my theoretical framework to support the diasporic and community-building dimensions of my project. Situated solidarities encourage the co-creation of knowledge across borders and amplify the voices of marginalized individuals by dispersing power, questioning knowledge hierarchies, and examining geographical, political, and socio-institutional politics (Nagar, 2014; Routledge & Derickson, 2015). A transnational feminist perspective appreciates the political economic impact of globalization, supports solidarity and feminist political organizing, and recognizes the impacts of capitalism and colonialism with "racialized and gendered relations of rule to the state" (Alexander & Mohanty, 2010, p. 23).

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study followed a feminist and decolonial methodology (Mohanty, 2003; Smith, 2021). As principal investigator, I organized a training collective through which newcomer women in my community were invited to learn Muay Thai and engage in reflective discussions on topics related to life in Canada, Indigenous peoples and knowledges, decolonization, and reconciliation. The curriculum for the project consisted of twelve sessions. Two sessions were held per week over a six-week period. The methodological design of sessions was based on the embodied learning method by Ng (2018) which essentially featured an embodied movement practice (Muay Thai, which is a martial art from Thailand) followed by reflective discussion and journaling. I chose Muay Thai as my embodied activity for this project because of my experience teaching and training in this martial art. I included journaling, another embodied activity, in the second half of each session to enhance the reflective group discussion. Each session began with an opening check-in circle and each session concluded with a closing check-out circle, which came from the Indigenous conversation circle method (Kovach, 2010).

The participants who joined this project were nine women who self-identified and had been in Canada for 10 months to 3 years. I found them through community outreach efforts by sharing information about the project with community centers and newcomer organizations. I conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with every participant before and after the intervention. These interview transcripts provided one of the sources of data to determine the educational impact of the project. The complete data set used in my analysis of this project comes from three sources: 1) pre- and post-project interviews, 2) my embodied ethnographic fieldwork (Pink, 2015) and 3) participant journals. I analysed all three sources using thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006; 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

My research findings provide evidence for many important ways that embodied learning pedagogies and situated solidarity building created a generative learning space which is particularly significant for newcomers. In this paper, I share three themes that demonstrate the effectiveness of embodied learning pedagogies and situated solidarity building for redefining adult education. The first is that the embodied learning activities in the sessions helped build confidence and reduce stress and anxiety, which improved participants' learning experience. The second is that through situated solidarity-building practices we collectively developed a strong and supportive intercultural community, through which we learned about each other and with each other to develop connection. And finally, learning about Indigenous cultures and knowledges deepened participants' respect and connection to the first peoples of these territories and the land from a relational perspective. I will discuss each thematic area in more detail before my conclusion.

Building Confidence and Reducing Anxiety

During pre-project interviews, many participants shared they were motivated to join the project because they desired to build confidence, lose weight, and learn self-defense. In post-project interviews, participants commented repeatedly about how practicing the

embodied movement of Muay Thai made them feel more confident in their bodies and discover a greater level of self-appreciation and body awareness. The confidence came from the feeling that they had strengthened their bodies. From that knowledge they possessed and had embodied they felt more confident that they could protect themselves in the case of a potentially dangerous situation. In addition to increased confidence, participants experienced a reduction of felt stress in their bodies. Through practicing Muay Thai they were able to release their anxiety out of their bodies which they said had a positive effect on their mental health and their openness to learning. The journaling activities also provided a means for releasing anxiety as well as self-expression and deeper reflection, which enhanced their learning experience.

From my experience being a part of the collective, I witnessed transformation in the group from the beginning to the end of each session. I could feel the energetic shift in the space in my body during the Muay Thai portion. By the end of each session participants were noticeably more relaxed, yet energized and engaged, and even glowing by the closing check-out. Through the embodied learning activities, participants became more receptive to connecting and forming relationships. Beyond the physical, mental, and emotional benefits, the embodied learning experience also evidenced a spiritual dimension characterized by peace, presence, liberation, and a sense of being part of a greater whole which participants reported in their post-project interviews. Recognizing and understanding the four dimensions of learning – physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual – explains the deep, immersive learning experience created through this project.

These findings are significant when compared to the dominant pedagogical approaches in Canada's education-migration system. In contrast to practices of deskilling, which diminish immigrants' knowledge and the value of their skills, my project followed a strengths-based approach which improved participants' self-knowledge, connection to their whole selves, and acceptance of themselves for who they are. This was significant for their mental and emotional health and made participants motivated to learn and connect with others through the spiritual connection. The recognition and space afforded to the spiritual dimension in learning was crucial to cultivating the deep relationships that developed, which went beyond culture and nationality. The project's positive impact shows a shift towards a more compassionate and holistic approach to engaging learners in newcomer education. This has tangible results for student wellbeing, which I argue is crucial if newcomers are to become more engaged in their communities and thrive.

Situated Solidarities and Intercultural Community Building

Upon conclusion of the project, participants were astounded by the strong bonds of connecting formed with each other, despite their diverse backgrounds. I argue this felt connection through intercultural community building is a result of employing embodied learning methods and prioritizing principles of situated solidarity building in this research project. For instance, the opening check-in and closing check-out activities provided an opportunity for participants to share their feelings with others in an open and non-judgmental space. This practice was pivotal for participants. Sharing their feelings in this way felt good for two reasons. First, they sincerely appreciated having this space to feel listened to and respected and be recognized for their perspectives and opinions. Also, by

sharing, they discovered that others in the group were facing similar challenges as newcomers in Canada. Upon this discovery, they felt less alone.

Again, in contrast to neoliberal educational models and the system, which treat immigrants as individualized entities in need of upskilling, this project offers an example of how to redefine programming toward collective engagement and solidarity practices. Situated solidarities prioritize the co-creation of knowledge across borders, and our group discussions were the method for encouraging this kind of knowledge co-creation which was very positive for participants. Participants were amazed and even surprised by how everyone's responses were different. Because of the diversity in knowledge and worldviews that were shared, they felt they gained more knowledge collectively. From my experience being a member of the collective, I was continually amazed and inspired by the diversity of participant responses to discussion topics and questions I raised, and it felt very fulfilling to be part of the circle and share and contribute to the process.

Despite participants frequently discussing Canada and their own countries in nationalistic language, there were times in sessions when boundaries and borders became blurred and even dissolved. This can be understood through the lens of situated solidarities, which look for partial synergies and understand that solidarity is not homogenous (Routledge & Derickson, 2015). In post-project interviews, a recurring theme was the expression of sentiments to the effect that we were similar but different. While the number of commonalities among us were celebrated, and sometimes surprising to participants, this was always tempered with a respect and appreciation for our cultural differences. This dual recognition fostered intercultural community building and strengthened the bond among all individuals in our collective. As Mohanty (2003) writes, in transnational feminist terms, this is feminism and solidarity across borders. It is a more engaging educational approach that can be enriching for newcomer learning experiences and community building. Moreover, creating connections between communities and across cultural divides has the potential to strengthen resistance to assimilative colonialism forces.

In dominant soft skills training models, Maitra (2015) observes immigrant women in her research "remaking their personhood" (p. 75) to fit the normative Canadian identity. To challenge this expectation within the system, in my research project I invited participants to share their personal and cultural backgrounds with my approach that acknowledges the whole person in learning. By being open and acknowledging shared experiences as immigrants, participants formed solidarities and appreciated the diverse insights and backgrounds of each member. The circle activities at the beginning and end of each session provided a crucial moment and pedagogical driver for this kind of community building and for solidarity. Participants had the freedom to choose what they shared, in other words, their self-determination was prioritized. We practiced deep listening, respect, and sharing feelings. These principles encouraged the development of trust among everyone which is vital for relationship building. Educational practitioners can redefine adult education and community building with newcomers by prioritizing methods to build trust through solidarity and co-creating knowledge for richer more transformative learning experience.

Respect and Connection to Land, Indigenous Peoples and Knowledges

As a result of discussion, participants expressed a deeper appreciation and respect for the land and the environment and a responsibility to take care of both. There was also a curiosity to continue learning from and about Indigenous Peoples, and participants felt more confident and eager to discuss Indigenous knowledges and culture compared to the pre-project interviews. The concept of relationality from an Indigenous perspective, and realizing that all things are connected, was a pivotal learning for participants as reflected in journaling and post-project interviews.

Based on my findings, I infer more opportunities are needed for newcomers to learn about Indigenous Peoples and cultures than are currently being made. These learning experiences must be made personally meaningful and relevant so as not to be performative or tokenized (Stein, 2020). This learning, and reflecting upon what was learned, were pivotal for increasing participants' connection to this land and respect for living in harmony with others in the community and with the environment. The use of embodied learning methods in this project intensified personal attachment to the learning space, while discussions on Indigenous perspectives added another level of connection to the land. In the words of some, this knowledge and this deeper embodied connection to land made participants feel more at home. This intervention may only be an initial step, and there were many more topics and deeper issues than I could cover in twelve sessions, but it was a start and successful in achieving some level of consciousness-raising.

Typical immigrant training models prioritize learning skills to serve the needs of the labour force, valuing the knowledge about how to do a job or be an asset to the labour market to make a profit. However, in developing an appreciation for Indigenous perspectives and worldviews, participants came to value and respect the lands and environment more and feel a stronger level of connection and accountability to the lands they had come to. This improved their connection, comfort, and sense of belonging. I theorize that a connection to place is a motivating force for community engagement and will encourage more civic engagement. Participants became more knowledgeable and supportive of struggles for the self-determination of Indigenous nations in protecting and preserving their culture and knowledge, which made them reflect on their own ancestral and cultural knowledges and more confident and determined to maintain their own cultural knowledges and practices, rather than assimilate into the normative Canadian culture.

CONCLUSION

This research project was successful in its approach at enhancing intercultural understanding and connections between women with different diasporic histories and identities. This intervention helped the group along the journey to recovering a sense of balance, wholeness and belonging in a place that was not their traditional homeland, thus improving their transnational learning experiences as newcomers in Canada. Ultimately, the significance of this research is as an example of reimagining diasporic experiences and newcomer educational methods to encourage more positive migration outcomes through community engagement using embodied learning and situated solidarities.

The testimonials and evidence from my project demonstrate the extent to which participants in this project were able to thrive in a holistic sense. Through this intervention, participants become more comfortable and self-confident at individual and collective levels in expressing themselves and interacting with different cultures and nationalities. This supports both individual and community self-determination. Participants' eagerness and excitement to engage in learning, the perceived value they placed on their learning, and the knowledge that they gained through this process further relate to increasing self-determination as learners.

My recommendations for future research include continued investigation into the potential uses of embodied learning to support newcomers in learning and community building, particularly given my findings on how these approaches reduced stress and anxiety. Mental health concerns are raising concerns in Canada and, if unchecked, will negatively impact work, learning, and personal growth (CAMH, 2024). A shortcoming and advice for future research is for a longer program and intervention. This was the only suggestion participants had for improvement when I requested feedback. Program duration and sustainability is an issue for community programs.

While the findings of my research pertain primarily to adult education and community building for redefining newcomer education and curricula approaches, these findings have broader relevance to supporting future directions in community-engaged research with practical applications for solidarity building between academics, practitioners, and communities. Advancement of adult education research and practice in Canada will benefit from the ability to connect with diverse community members which is an important priority for redefining adult education in Canada and worldwide.

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AN EYE FOR THE HIGHEST AND BEST: EMBRACING APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

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Abstract

One of the challenges to and for educators and researchers in this era is the shifts in approaches to inquiry and teaching. A reductionist approach to educational research has resulted in overlooking latent essences, such as a butterfly within a caterpillar, or a tree within an acorn, which could be metaphors for embracing “an eye for the highest and best.”

Keywords: Appreciative inquiry, spirituality, reductionist

INTRODUCTION

Emergent scholarly inquiries about spirituality within education coincide with post-modernist paradigm shifts towards appreciative inquiry, a constructive mode of research and teaching that is a shift from vocabularies of deficit to conversations of possibility. It assists in the process of adopting an alternative approach from common modes of research; appreciative inquiry promotes transformative dialogue and action by presenting positive questions.

An eye for the highest and best is evident in this form of inquiry when educators and students begin to feel a sense of hope, excitement, co-operation, and ownership about the future. As noted within this paper, such a paradigm shift in scholarly inquiry and teaching requires re-thinking former ideologies that shaped reality and formulating new ways to discover truth: latent truths can be unearthed when Cartesian ideologies that separate head from heart are transcended by new ways of knowing. This research paper demonstrates how an evolution in thought and research can mean formulating fresh approaches to education and new ways of inquiry by introducing an “eye for the highest and best” ideology.

RESEARCH

Throughout her investigative research careers within the fields of education, journalism, and health care, Doetzel (2010) engaged in an “Appreciative Inquiry” process that resulted in a freedom to be positive and affirming while applying “an eye for the highest and best.” Introducing an appreciative lens with a 4-D Cycle: discovery, dream, design and destiny (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003) promoted a constructive approach to personal and professional interactions within her workplaces and community. Within this 4-D cycle: discovery involves seeking to “understand the best of what is . . . and what has been (p. 7); dream is an energizing exploration of what might be (p. 8); design is . . . statements describing what should be (p. 9); [and, destiny is] a series of inspired actions that support ongoing learning and innovation or what will be” (p. 9). By, selecting such a lens to examine one’s life through, the Doetzel (2010) noted that she was developing good habits

of mind, that helped her to view situations, like a glass of water that was half full, rather than half empty.

When employed by a community newspaper and radio and television station, Doetzel (2010) investigated some of the good news, with positive outcomes, found within major tragedies. Additionally, when working within a health care profession, she encouraged clients to "act as if" they were already healthy and to find purpose in their health challenges. Also, when engaging in educational research, she asked the study participants positive questions, related to their lives and workplaces. This appreciative inquiry approach to Doetzel's (2010) work assisted her to mute some "critical, problematic and deficit-based voices" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. xi) that tend to cultivate oppression and reductionism within workplaces....and replace them with "an eye for the highest and best."

A major finding noted within Doetzel's (2006) literature review and data addressing leadership was that when professionals practise appreciative inquiry, they can cultivate spirituality within their workplaces. Spirituality within the workplace is about connecting with the experience of re-awakening the sacred spark within oneself and others and developing "an eye for the highest and best." Establishing discourses about spirituality within educational leadership assists educators to re-discover their heart wisdom, empowering them to view learning through a fresh lens, and to perceive the highest and best (Doetzel, 2006).

By predicting a positive future within workplaces, appreciative inquiry is commonly preferred over research that suggests a repelling tomorrow (Doetzel, 2006). "Appreciation has to do with recognition, with valuing, and with gratitude" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 2). Like elements of hydrogen and oxygen "that combine to make water, the most nurturing substance on earth, appreciation and inquiry combine to produce a vital and powerful, catalytic effect" (p.4). An appreciative inquiry process has been used to enrich spiritual development, heal people's wounds, and enhance personal relationships (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003) by perceiving the highest and best within circumstances. Our choices of words within conversations assist in the creation of our reality. By embracing an eye for the highest and best, we should "speak of delight, not dissatisfaction; speak of hope, not despair. Let [our] . . . words bind up wounds, not cause them" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 60).

Examining the 4D appreciative inquiry cycle: discover, dream, design, and destiny (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003) within a literature review, assisted Doetzel (2006) to challenge assumptions that had distorted her previous views of research (Doetzel, 2006). Appreciative inquiry was a constructive approach to Doetzel's (2006) research that created space for new voices and expanded circles of dialogue to include discourses about spirituality. An appreciative inquiry approach encouraged the educational leaders participating in her study (Doetzel, 2006) to establish systems that nurtured educators within their workplaces.

An appreciative inquiry approach to research centres more on discovering the practical effects of a study, rather than developing new theoretical rigour (Gay & Airasian, 1992). The purpose of this form of inquiry is to improve work environments and "to combine the

research processes, habits of thinking, ability to work harmoniously with others and professional spirit" (Best & Kahn, 2003, p. 20). In this form of action research, the knowledge generated has been referred to as "practical wisdom" (Toulmin, 1997), which embraces "an eye for the highest and best."

Sharing stories within an appreciative inquiry approach to research is a primary step in breaking down stereotypes and connecting theory with humanity and a fresh vision. As noted by Vanier (1998),

stories awaken new energies of love; they tell us great truths in simple, personal terms and make us long for light. . . . When we tell stories, we touch hearts. If we talk about theories or speak about ideas, the mind may assimilate them, but the heart remains untouched. (p. 90)

To awaken hearts and increase understanding, Jesus told parables, Hasidic Jews and Sufi teachers told tales and Hindus introduced stories, which opened people's eyes to the highest and best.

"Storytelling can provide an opportunity for one to imaginatively engage in dissonant situations thereby increasing one's capacity to see the world through more than one window" (Shakotko & Walker, 1999, p. 207) and apply an eye for the highest and best. In Doetzel's (2006) study, she attempted to understand participants' truths from an appreciative inquiry standpoint, which is an approach commonly used in action research (Doetzel, 2006). Schratz and Walker (1998) point out that appreciative inquiry encourages reflection about life experience and storytelling, which are keys to learning. "Being able to speak to ourselves and others about what we experience provides a means of editing and rewriting scripts of everyday life, enables the building of a mental reference system . . . and allows us to build the narratives that give meaning and interest to our lives" (p. 197). Sharing stories is an important means of mentoring others, constructing knowledge, and creating teachable moments (Mishler, 1986).

Appreciative inquiry enables researchers to engage in a story-telling process that generates new insights and new knowledge and creates opportunities for participants to improve their own lives and the lives of others (Mishler, 1986) by applying "an eye for the highest and best". For example, in Doetzel's (2006) study, participants were encouraged to question what assumptions they took for granted about leadership and the effects of them muting discourses about inspirational experiences within the work environment (Doetzel, 2006). As one form of co-operative action research, appreciative inquiry supports a commitment and ability to collapse the division between objectivity and subjectivity (Pyrch, 1998a).

Appreciative inquiry "can be seen as a spiritual imperative" (Reason, 1998, p. 149) that objects to the Western worldview, as "based on a fundamental epistemological error that humans are separate from each other and the natural world" (p. 157). This form of co-operative inquiry is a means to obtain more accurate and more ethical data because the research is based on people's experiences and "engaged with people rather than did

research on people" (p. 149). Therefore, study participants are not treated like subjects. This approach to action research is a way of interacting with other individuals who share common concerns and interests; the goal is to make more sense of life, construct new and creative ways of viewing life and "above all to heal the alienation, the split that characterizes modern experience" (Reason, 1998, p. 162). Appreciative inquiry is a holistic approach to research and teaching that applies "an eye for the highest and best."

As a constructive mode of action research, appreciative inquiry illuminates factors that serve to nourish the human spirit and furnish new alternatives for social action (Ludema, Cooperrider & Barrett, 2001); asking positive questions during her research could have ignited transformative dialogue and action within human systems (Doetzel, 2006). For example, study participants may have been motivated to dialogue about and practise appreciative inquiry within their workplaces while being actively engaged in cooperative relationships during the data-collection process. Also, by sharing a divine story, they may have been "graced to breathe, " (p. 121) which could be an epiphany resulting in a true sense of connection with the divine. As stated by O'Murchu (1997), "meaning is embedded in story, not in facts" (p. 199). Research approaches such as appreciative inquiry help deepen an understanding of the spiritual aspect of human existence by introducing "an eye for the highest and best."

Paradigm shifts towards scholars seeking a more spiritual approach to their research and work practices, with an appreciative inquiry application, is gaining momentum in this century (Dallarie, 2001). Many researchers have acknowledged that only through a "reconstruction of a spirituality as communal and political can ways be found to reverse the damage of social and economic decline" (p. 34). They are recognizing their innate need to reconnect to the divine spirit and become more socially active in mentoring moral values (Simington, 2003) and embracing an eye for the highest and best.

An integral part of appreciative inquiry is social action, which aims to change the world (Park, 2001). This knowledge can be gained from the destiny step of the 4D appreciative inquiry cycle that involves inspired actions leading to continuous learning and innovation resulting in organizational changes (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). People engaging in political activities can feel empowered and experience changes within themselves that exceed their intellectual comprehension. "Through action, we learn how the world works . . .; we learn from the mind/heart" (p. 87).

Park suggested that by broadening epistemological frameworks to include a triangulated perspective of knowledge, researchers can gain competence from representational knowledge, connection from relational knowledge, and confidence from reflective knowledge, which truly reflects Appreciative Inquiry. Thus, a triangulated perspective of knowledge may empower educators to engage in a holistic process of awakening, signifying, and cultivating spirituality within their workplaces. By cultivating all three forms of knowledge, they may feel liberated to work towards becoming more human and enriching both themselves and their workplaces, while embracing an eye for the highest and best.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion: "appreciative inquiry distinguishes itself from critical modes of research by its deliberately affirmative assumptions about people, organizations and relationships" (Ludema, Cooperrider & Barrett, 2001, p. 191). Appreciative inquiry is a constructive approach to research that creates space for new voices and expands circles of dialogue to include discourses about spirituality. This approach invites organizational members to "co-create a future for the system that nurtures and supports . . . enthusiasm" (p. 191). It highlights and illuminates organizational strengths by commencing with an unconditional positive question. Appreciative inquiry is assumed to be a spiritual approach to conducting research that moves beyond the limitations of Cartesian dualistic models by initiating positive questions within an inquiry (Ludema, Cooperrider & Barrett, 2001) and embracing "an eye for the highest and best" within research and teaching.

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QUEER HEUTAGOGY: TOWARDS A THEORY OF UNLEARNING ANTI-QUEER TRAUMA

John P Egan

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Abstract

This paper considers how heutagogy, as a successor theory to andragogy, offers an useful heuristic for understanding how queer persons unlearn and learn. In particular, it reflects on how we as queers make sense of our experiences with queerphobic trauma and construct new queerphillic knowledges.

Keywords: queer, heutagogy, andragogy, trauma

SOMEPLACE ELSE

In the early 1980s it was mostly bars, few of which would overtly identify their venue as gay. Finding one of these ostensibly safer spaces required one to (discretely) investigate rumours, peruse listings in alternative newspapers and magazine, or interrogate other seemingly nice queer persons you met, "where do you go?"

If you resided in (or near) a big city like Toronto, Montréal, New York, San Francisco, or Amsterdam, you might have had more choice; enough that bars could cater to more specific sub-communities: women, leather, sports, piano music, even hustlers (male sex workers), in their own spaces with their own norms of inclusion and exclusion. However, in most contexts *the* gay bar would be more integrated out of necessity, which often meant both lesbians and gay men. It also often meant mostly White and cisgendered: trans or non-binary folk, bisexuals, and persons of colour were less likely to be granted insider status and made welcome.

My first gay bar was, literally, Someplace Else, in Syracuse New York. I attended university fifty kilometres north of Syracuse. I would have never found Someplace Else on my own: I was brought there by my first boyfriend. Many years later I could not tell you what part of town it was located in, but that part of Syracuse definitely felt grittier, less safe, and more marginal. Which is also what it felt like to be queer in the 1980s.

Someplace Else was also a place too far, for me. As a queer, working class student who could not afford a car—working multiple jobs to pay for my education—I only visited that bar twice. After graduation, I moved to New York City where public transport made accessing the much larger gay scene possible. It is there that my learning about queerness—mine and others'—accelerated.

LEARNING

"Coming out" is rather more of a series of experiences (or a journey) than a single moment or action. Some forty years after commencing my life as an out queer man, the most banal of social interactions can still present a dilemma: should I pronoun shift and say *partner* rather than *husband*, or should I outright lie and pretend I have a wife—or that I am

single? Whether the potential reaction is opprobrium, rancour, arrest, or physical violence, I get to keep coming out, or get to be ambiguous, or (briefly) return to the closet. There are, of course, often particularly important interactions—disclosing queerness to families of origin, friends, colleagues—but queer persons never get to finish coming out.

Coming out is fundamentally a learning—and unlearning—process. Some thirty years since publication of *Fear of a Queer Planet* (Warner, 1983), queerphobia remains ubiquitous in places like Canada and Aotearoa New Zealand, regardless of the many juridical gains in terms of human and familial rights. In such Eurocentric contexts, rigid notions of gender and sexuality continue to operate hegemonically (Egan and Flavell, 2006) via various specific manifestations of queerphobia, including homophobia, transphobia, heterocentrism and sexism, within and across cultures.

Despite these legal gains, queer persons—be they lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, transgender, non-binary, queer, two-spirited, takatāpui—experience and are subsumed in voluminous social discourses that frame queers as lesser, inferior, dangerous, diseased, demonic, or worthless. These discourses encourage our erasure, marginalization, criminalization, assault, or murder. They are a social and cultural legacy that burdens many queer folks with fear, shame and self-loathing, which can manifest as poor mental health. A primary mechanism to mitigate these is for us each to learn, and unlearn.

ADULT LEARNING THEORY

The theoretical tradition found in adult learning offers useful heuristics through which to examine our queer experiences, via andragogy and heutagogy.

Knowles (1980) differentiates adult learning (andragogy) from that of children (pedagogy). In particular, he argues for the importance of embracing the learner's lived experiences, their rationale or impetus for learning, and how their learning will transfer from any learning context back into the learner's life. (Knowles, 1980). In particular, two of andragogy's other important elements are a focus on self-directed learning (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2015) and on intrinsic (rather than extrinsic) motivations to learn (Knowles, 1980).

As an ostensive progeny of andragogy, heutagogy advances from andragogy's focus on self-direction, whereas the subject being learnt can be determined by others, as in workplace learning or a higher education context. In other words, in andragogy the content and delivery are often significantly externally determined, but the learner needs to find intrinsic motivations to learn.

Heutagogy's focus is on *self-determined learning*, where the learner chooses what and how they learn. Within a formal learning context, heutagogy often embraces an adult learner's intrinsic motivation to learn and extends this to a learner's ability to identify objectives and outcomes, even assessment methods. Heutagogy therefore "is concerned with learner-centered learning that sees the learner as the major agent in their own learning, which occurs as a result of personal experiences." (Hase and Kenyon, 2007, p. 112).

Heutagogy resonates well when endeavouring to unpack queer coming out as a learning journey. Each queer person has an unique positionality and context: each can curate their own curriculum based on their explorations, experiences, and reflection, and can cultivate their own, bespoke heutagogy practice. Queers also must each determine for ourselves, as individuals, the breadth and depth of our queer learning and unlearning.

QUEER HEUTAGOGY

There are perhaps two key aspects of a nascent queer heutagogy practice. First there is the self-determined need to examine—often to interrogate—the queerphobic messages learnt in life and replace these with queerphilic, affirming knowledges. This can be a daunting task, which requires the refutation of much of the social discourses on queerness. Mainstream society positions queer social exclusion is the result of being queer. In fact, queerphobia is what renders us marginal. Being queer is not the cause: the reaction of others to our queerness is.

Therefore, for a queer person to begin this unlearning they must be able to refute what they have been taught about queerness and consider: *if queer people are deficient, I am deficient*. This needs to (at least suppositionally) become *queer people are not deficient, I am not deficient*. In other words: queers must learn that all the negative social messages about queers are false.

For most queers this heutagogy journey often starts from an outsider position, sometimes described as “questioning”. Few queer people grow up with queer parents: even those that do, might not be able to rely on their queer parent(s) to advocate for them (MacDougall, 2004). Regardless, all grow up in a deeply queerphobic world, where their schools, neighbourhoods, and wider social relations problematize or stigmatize queerness. As a result, much of our learning is self-determined unlearning of the queer self as problematic. Even in a time when queer adolescence is becoming increasingly possible for some, few queers arrive in adulthood having wholly unlearned queerphobia. For everything unlearned, something new must be learned that is queerphilic.

Queers are resilient, resourceful, and nurturing—to our peers and ourselves. But for many, our nascent experiences exploring queer identity have inculcated in us a self-reliance that can be both empowering and isolating. That is particularly true, with respect to our queer learning and unlearning journeys. However, it need not be wholly a solitary pursuit.

MENTORING WITHIN HEUTAGOGY

Glassner and Back (2020) position heutagogy as “a teaching–learning approach in which the learners, facilitated by a mentor/teacher, determine their own learning” (p.2), Heutagogy itself is not limited to formal learning contexts: therefore such mentors need not be formally positioned in teacher roles, per sé. Within queer communities, informal mentorship can occur within a range of social relations across various social entities, to support adults’ heutagogy unlearning.

As we pursue relationships with our queer peers—including sexual or romantic, friendship, or kinship relationships—those with whom we connect often offer a form of mentorship, however informal. Most of us who establish a connection with someone early in their coming out journey understand that we have a duty of care to nurture and validate them as they engage in queer heutagogy. Embedded within these relations is a sense that we must demonstrate the benefits of putting trust in other queers: for many, queerphobia has expunged any sense of trust and a ability to feel safe as a queer person.

In many respects the nascent coming out period is a particularly challenging one in the queer heutagogical experience, which is also when social entities can become critical venues for this unlearning. Queer communities were often until recently primarily accessed via queer drinking venues: pubs, bars, and clubs were the primary identifiable spaces to socialize with other queers. The queer semiotics of venue names (or their being situated in gaybourhoods), were how such venues were often found. Today there are also queer community centres, support and counselling services (including information phone lines), cafés, religious or cultural groups, and other social venues. Each of these social entities can operate as a space for queer heutagogic practice. Equally important, there are now a diverse range of online queer spaces available. Today someone unlearning about queerness can find a plethora of information online, without having to enter a physical queer space.

There is a great deal of diversity of social entities that are queerphilic in some parts of the world. Engaging and exploring any of these social entities is where many of us advance our queer heutagogic practice. Sadly, our lived experiences as queers are frequently characterized by trauma: symbolic and physical anti-queer violence, and a dearth of safety.

TRAUMA

Trauma itself, meaning making around the root of queer traumatic experiences (Berila, 2016), and learning how to navigate around and through trauma can all be aspects of queer heutagogy. Many queer persons remain unsafe—or unwelcome—in their families or communities of origin, schools, or workplaces (Mehnick & Saunders, 2023). With the economic challenges of neoliberalism forcing more young adults to live longer with their families of origin—or to remain economically interdependent upon them during their post-secondary education and early working lives—it is increasingly uncommon for queer folks to finish secondary school and leave home. Younger queers who do leave home sometimes still situate themselves within their communities of origin, despite encountering further traumas, out of economic necessity. Today, fewer younger queer adults presume they must exile themselves (Egan, 2008) to be queer: fewer still can afford to exile themselves to expensive, city centre queer friendly neighbourhoods.

Regardless, removing ourselves from a physical proximity to those who have traumatized us does not end trauma or its impacts. Subsequently, as many queer persons begin to unlearn traumatizing beliefs, these can be replaced by alternative, liberatory frameworks that foment a heutagogic process, both cognitive and affective, to unlearn in order to heal.

For many there is a non-linear, untidy trajectory from shame through tolerance to acceptance and ultimately celebration of our queer selves (MacDougall, 2001). Other queers can contribute to the process through sharing their own insights and experiences, but for each queer person the journey is unique. It is this uniqueness that makes heutagogy an excellent characterization of the queerphillic unlearning process. Eventually, for some queers engaging with those who have caused trauma can be an important heutagogic experience. First, unpacking and examining past experiences through liberatory lenses can strengthen and solidify our emergent queer selves.

Second, an understanding that some—some—who perpetuate queerphobic trauma do so out of ignorance. Those who recognize their own ignorance and who endeavour to do better in the future will benefit from our sharing our queer heutagogical journey with them, if safe to do so. In particular, many parents come to realize that their queer children are deserving of love and acceptance, rather than trying to change us.

Finally, for some queers, challenging those who persist in their past queerphobia has heutagogic value. It offers us a chance to implement emergent knowledge by rejecting queerphobia upfront. Putting the onus on queerphobes to change can itself be a form of queer heutagogic self-care.

CONCLUSION

From the standpoint of newly out queer me, the life I live today—and the societies within which I have lived it—offer a potential for contentedness, hope and joy beyond my expectations those many years past. Society has changed, but so have I. For me, this has been significantly a heutagogic experience, though I did not have the language or perspective to delineate it as such. But there is no reason why today's nascent queers could not do so purposively.

Heutagogy requires learners to identify what they need to learn and how best to do so, which is often well served by mentoring relationships. Much of queer heutagogical learning is rooted in social traditions of feminism (Lorde, 2017) and queer theory (Egan & Flavell, 2006), increasingly incorporating intersectional analyses (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016). Expecting queer persons to compartmentalized multiple, integrated, complex inequities is neither necessary nor desirable. Rather, mentors who share these lived experiences of multiplicities of oppression are particularly well positioned to help others unlearn.

Ultimately, many queers must shape a quotidian heutagogic praxis across all aspects of our lives. In addition to navigating our own lifelong unlearning/learning journeys, our success is in creating more confident, assertive, and entitled subsequent generations of queer peers through mentorship: each less willing to accept what others previously tolerated.

As adult education practitioners and researchers, heutagogy has the potential to serve as an useful heuristic in multiple community education contexts. These could include liberatory non-governmental organisations, service provision within the public sector, and other social action contexts. If we can support, inspire, and validate adult learners' heutagogic experiences, it offers a rich trajectory for validation and care of the self, queer and not.

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**REDEFINING (IN) VISIBILITY OF WOMEN ARTISTS IN SOUTHWEST ASIA AND
NORTH AFRICA
DIGITAL LITERACY, AGENCY, AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION: A LITERATURE
REVIEW**

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Abstract

Women artists have been underrepresented and tend to be invisible in the art world, which extends to women artists from the Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA) region who face multiple challenges intensified by the political and social context. The rise of cyberspaces and digital art during the pro-democracy protests in countries like Egypt, Syria, and Yemen in 2011 has been a powerful tool for community development and raising awareness around human rights and socio-political issues. This paper provides insights into the struggles these women artists face in achieving visibility in a male-dominated field. Despite the rapid development of information communications technologies (ICTs), the digital divide remains significant for marginalized groups and women worldwide. However, women artists in the SWANA region use cyberspace as a platform to challenge and deconstruct societal norms, reclaim women's agency, and enhance the visibility of women artists. This paper emphasizes the vital role digital literacy and access to ICTs for social transformation. It also discusses the role storytelling can play in establishing collective memories.

Keywords: women artists from Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA) region, digital literacy, ICTs, media, social transformation

INTRODUCTION

In countries that witnessed pro-democracy protests in Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA) region, women in general, and women in leadership positions face enormous forms of unspoken challenges, such as low wages, unfair judgment based on gender, and social expectations of the ideal leader, (Bank, 2020; Elmeligy, 2022; Emejulu, 2011; Khamis & Mili, 2018). The invisibility and exclusion of women's voices even in the pro-democracy movements worldwide also raises many questions about the masculine image of leadership and gendered expectations of leaders (Bierema, 2016; Falardeau, 2020). This paper focuses on the role of digital literacy in SWANA women artists' learning experiences during conflicts and their art and cyber activism as tools to explore opportunities towards social transformation (Asalia, 2022; Alviso-Marino, 2017; Elmeligy, 2022; Tazi, 2021). In order to respect and acknowledge the cultural diversity, ethnicities, languages, and identities within these countries, the term Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) will be replaced with the decolonized term Southwest Asian and North African region (SWANA) (El-Zein, 2021; Khanmalek et al., 2022; Naber, 2012).

DIGITAL LITERACY AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

In 2010, the rise of pro-democracy protests in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, and later Syria led to the flourishing of online public spaces such as blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and

YouTube. Young people increasingly use these platforms to organize protests, share information, and document human rights violations (Alhayek, 2016; Khamis & Mili, 2018; Tazi, 2021). Social media platforms allow individuals to engage in critical discussions geared toward achieving social change and liberation. Literacy and digital literacy are intertwined, as individuals can only claim their digital rights if they are literate (Careless, 2015; Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021). Careless (2015) shed light on the potential of digital literacy to challenge power dynamics in everyday social interactions and broader socio-political contexts. Information communications technologies (ICTs) and digital literacy can amplify women's stories against authoritarianism and patriarchal power. Many scholars have demonstrated how cyber-activism symbolized women's resistance, and how digital media enabled women and marginalized groups to explore new tools to engage with each other, share their experiences, and document their experiences (Alhayek, 2016; Khamis & Mili, 2018; Tazi, 2021). In addition, using cyberspaces during the pro-democracy protests changed the styles of socio-political activism (Khamis & Mili, 2018). The rise of Facebook groups moderated by women leaders facilitated social transformation, created a sense of belonging, broke the stereotypical discourse about women's image, and challenged the taboos around feminism and gender relations (Alhayek, 2016; Bank, 2020; Elmeligy, 2022; Khamis & Mili, 2018).

Furthermore, these groups created regional connections between women to prioritize women's political participation, such as the Lebanese Facebook page, Kharabeesh Nisawiye, which in English means Feminist Doodles and used doodles and illustrations to deliver empowerment and resistance messages on women's issues. Similarly, the Syrian Feminist Lobby shared on their Facebook profile a graffiti from Syria to mirror the famous picture of the Sudanese "Nubian Queen" who led chants during the 2019 protests in Khartoum (Esposito & Sinatora, 2021). As described by Khamis and Mili (2018), this form of regional collaboration only existed after the pro-democracy movements and offered the possibility for deeper understanding of the issues and fostering empathy and connection with others. Online spaces reflect offline reality, and technologies are still associated with the patriarchal rule and are accessible to well-educated individuals (Alhayek, 2016; English & Irving, 2015). Cyberspaces played a central role in social change and made learning and transforming experiences accessible more widely (Khamis & Mili, 2018; Kraidy & Krikorian, 2017; Naamani & Simpson, 2021). Despite its many benefits, it is essential to acknowledge that cyberspaces also have disadvantages (Alhayek, 2016; Careless, 2015; Tazi, 2021).

Authoritarian governments, for instance, have taken advantage of technologies to limit freedom of expression, monitor pro-democracy movements and human rights activists, and control the flow of information. They have achieved this by blocking access to social media platforms and imprisoning community leaders and non-violent activists, such as in Syria, Egypt, and Tunisia (Alhayek, 2016; Tazi, 2021). Considering the varying socio-political contexts and the benefits some women artists gained from the rapid development of ICTs, the digital divide remains significant for marginalized groups and women worldwide. While various forms of art played an essential role in enabling women and marginalized groups to address gender dynamics and power imbalance in their communities (Bank, 2020; Elmeligy, 2022; Falardeau, 2020), women artists during the pro-democracy protests used art as a medium of to educate and challenge social norms and taboos in a male-

dominated field and within their communities (Asalia, 2022; Alviso-Marino, 2017; Bank, 2020; Elmeligy, 2022; Falardeau, 2020). Art activism was deemed to be a powerful tool during the pro-democracy protests (Khamis & Mili, 2018; Halasa et al., 2014); art is intertwined with the learning process, democracy, and participation (English & Irving, 2015; Halasa et al., 2014).

ART ACTIVISM

The ongoing protests inspired creativity in art, film, poetry, and music. During that time, art movements were contagious across the region to highlight women's issues, gender, and power relations (Alviso-Marino, 2017; Bank, 2020; Elmeligy, 2022; Halasa et al., 2014). For protesters, art activism is a peaceful act against the state's violence and an integral element of social justice. Learning with the involvement of art creation can take different forms, like storytelling, filmmaking, and crafting. Learning through creating art makes transformation possible (Butterwick et al., 2016). Adult educators benefit from art to facilitate knowledge sharing, empower marginalized groups, and foster networking among participants toward long-lasting social change. For example, the power of strengthening the voices of marginalized communities through visual arts provides opportunities for marginalized groups to see the commonality of pain and injustice and work toward finding solutions (Alviso-Marino, 2017; Bank, 2020; Butterwick et al., 2016; Elmeligy, 2022; Halasa et al., 2014). According to English and Irving (2015), the strong connection between art, knowledge, and sharing experiences is vital to mobilize grassroots communities to address social and political issues. Using the artistic approach as a medium for social transformation by women's movements and marginalized groups played a crucial role in restoring, leading, and building inclusive communities.

The emerging forms of art online and on the ground during the revolutions across the region were a foundational pillar to shift thinking about identities and discover the power of the body, voices, and emotions (Asalia, 2022; Elmeligy, 2022; Falardeau, 2020; Halasa et al., 2014). Undeniably, a strong connection exists between digital literacy, arts, media, and social transformation within communities (Alviso-Marino, 2017; Bank, 2020; Elmeligy, 2022; Falardeau, 2020; Khamis & Mili, 2018). For example, Bank (2020) clarified that a new generation of artists and filmmakers encounter the same strict censorship as their older colleagues, preventing their works from being publicly displayed in their country. As a result, alternative methods of expressing critical perspectives were employed. Some artists employed metaphors, while others experimented with storytelling and animation to guarantee that their work could reach a wider audience and be accessible both inside and outside their countries. For example, the street art campaigns in Yemen started with an open call through Facebook from graffiti artist Murad Subay, which was transformed into a collective work, encouraging the young generation to engage in political and social change (Alviso-Marino, 2017). In addition, the online anonymous group Comic4 Syria took advantage of the internet by utilizing social media platforms to share their stories of both fear and hope during the revolution and to advocate for freedom of expression in Syria (Halasa et al., 2014). Furthermore, Elmeligy (2022) analyzed how women's voices in the SWANA region were often associated with shame and how movement like BuSSy in Egypt aimed to create new spaces for marginalized groups to rewrite cultural narratives and

challenge society's normative and gendered understanding of shame through storytelling workshops on stage and online. Different artists have utilized their work to address socio-political issues, challenge gender norms, and reclaim their agency and visibility in the art world (Asalia, 2022; Bank, 2020; Elmeligy, 2022; Halasa et al., 2014; Khamis & Mili, 2018).

As shown above, art and cyber activism proved to be individual, social, and political and assisted in changing the representation of women's issues in private and public spaces (Khamis & Mili, 2018). Moreover, they are core tools for bridging the gap between the public and private spheres and giving women's issues more visibility (Elmeligy, 2022; Khamis & Mili, 2018; Tazi, 2021). The presence of various voices, identities, and interests in cyberspaces helped to amplify the unheard voices on the ground, like the rise of women cartoonists in post-revolutionary Tunisia and the emergence of new women-led grassroots organizations that contributed to the social transformation efforts in Syria and Egypt (Alhayek, 2016; Elmeligy, 2022; Khamis & Mili, 2018). Simultaneously, the freedom of expression and the opportunity to openly discuss various topics online have allowed women's movements to discover new regional possibilities. For instance, Tazi (2021) emphasized that women played a significant role in deconstructing the victimization of women by expressing their opinions publicly, exchanging strategic mobilization skills, and influencing their regional peers to promote a feminist agenda. Through these efforts, women challenged authoritarianism and gender inequality in their countries.

WOMEN (IN)VISIBILITY IN ART

To understand why only a few women artists are recognized locally and internationally while many remain in the shadows, Falardeau (2020) explained the roots of inequality between men and women in art. Women artists encounter gender-specific obstacles, such as self-censorship, sexual harassment, stereotyping, and marginalization, often intensified by the political and social context (Asalia, 2022; Bank, 2020; Elmeligy, 2022; Halasa et al., 2014; Khamis & Mili, 2018). Women face many challenges in pursuing a career in the arts, including discrimination, limited educational opportunities, and disparity in funding and exhibition spaces. Not being taken seriously is also one of the barriers they face (Asalia, 2022; Elmeligy, 2022; Falardeau, 2020). For instance, in Syria, women had few opportunities to pursue art careers due to societal and cultural barriers (Asalia, 2022). When the pro-democracy protests turned into a violent conflict, many women artists were displaced with limited access to resources and support for their artistic endeavours. Despite these challenges, Syrian women artists have persisted and used their work to address social and political issues, challenge gender norms, and reclaim their agency and visibility in art (Asalia, 2022; Halasa et al., 2014).

The states' perception of art as a symbol of freedom, capable of influencing the public, has significantly increased the risk to women's lives and safety when they position their voices at the forefront of social and political reforms (Asalia, 2022; Bank, 2020; Elmeligy, 2022; Falardeau, 2020; Halasa et al., 2014). Additionally, the patriarchal systems reinforce gender inequality in the art world, as in other societal sectors (Asalia, 2022; Falardeau, 2020). For example, Falardeau (2020) documented the daily struggles of the first generation of women cartoonists from SWANA, highlighting a few personal testimonies to illuminate their work and explain the origins of discrimination between men and women in

art. Moreover, political pressure and direct threats against freedom of expression forced various women cartoonists from the SWANA region to leave their countries and go into exile. Relatedly, Asalia (2022) conducted a feminist discourse analysis of Syrian visual arts and identified the challenges women artists face by exploring the work and experiences of five women artists representing different generations. The need for gender-sensitive data and archives in many countries is demonstrated by the fact that no accurate number of women artists is available. For example, Asalia (2022) elaborated on the need for more documentation because the visual arts are newly established in Syria. The forced displacement and spreading of Syrian artists worldwide after 2011 make it difficult to keep track of current production.

Women artists face another dilemma regarding the discourse and representation in the art world. Falardeau (2020) observed that men cartoonists have more freedom to explore sexual themes than their women counterparts. Exposure to Western art production, international art exhibitions, and conferences has played a crucial role in increasing the visibility of some regional artists. These opportunities have provided a platform for sharing experiences and barriers while connecting local and international art movements (Asalia, 2022; Bank, 2020; Falardeau, 2020). Interestingly, both Bank (2020) and Falardeau (2020) raised critical questions about the role of colonization in facilitating exposure to global art production. Falardeau (2020) explained how the French Belgian comics trend influenced the first local comics production in Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia due to their shared history under French colonization (p. 212). Meanwhile, Bank (2020) highlighted the role of foreign cultural centers in Syria, such as the Centre Culturel Français and the Goethe Institute, in opening new opportunities for a few artists, allowing them to exhibit their work inside these centers or participate in international art conferences. However, their works were often limited to particular social classes and audiences (Bank, 2020; Falardeau, 2020). Women artists can challenge patriarchal norms and stereotypes, question issues of sexual freedom objectification, reassert women's agency, promote social justice and equality, and contribute to broader social and political movements through their artwork (Asalia, 2022; Bank, 2020; Elmeligy, 2022; Falardeau, 2020; Khamis & Mili, 2018).

VISUALIZING THE CONFLICT

Over the last decade, social media and ICTs have significantly impacted how people communicate, connect, learn, and share knowledge. As noted by Careless (2015), social media platforms provide a decentralized space for users to share ideas and facilitate critical discourse around social justice issues on a global scale. Furthermore, marginalized groups, including women's movements, have utilized cyberspaces and visual arts to raise awareness of various challenges and advocate for socio-political change and community development (Bank, 2020; Butterwick et al., 2016; Elmeligy, 2022; Khamis & Mili, 2018). These activities empowered women to counter media discourse around preconceptions and taboos. For instance, Elmeligy (2022) brought attention to the issue of women's visibility, access to education, and social class, highlighting the Egyptian BuSSy project's initial focus on upper-middle-class issues, as they performed in English. However, the project expanded its reach beyond the capital after the 2011 revolution in Egypt, extending to other cities such as Alexandria and Aswan to represent the diversity of their communities. BuSSy's storytelling workshops and performances created a safe and free-of-judgment

space, allowing participants, particularly women, to share their stories and experiences, on stage, about harassment, rape, gender discrimination, motherhood, female genital mutilation, and other issues (Elmeligy, 2022).

Nevertheless, state censorship and limited freedom of speech have undermined the art movement in Egypt, Syria, and other countries (Bank, 2020; Elmeligy, 2022; Falardeau, 2020; Halasa et al., 2014). The decision-making in the newsroom directly influences the representation of marginalized groups, women, and refugees in the SWANA region. Media companies globally and locally are controlled and primarily managed by the powerful and social elite, which leads, in some cases, to reinforcing stereotypical images and traditional assumptions discourse about minorities (El Zein, 2021; Roy, 2012). For instance, El Zein (2021) examined the representation of displaced women's experiences during war and conflict in Arab television, highlighting how dominant media narratives, shaped by elitist and humanitarian discourse, influenced the framing of Syrian women and refugees' experiences in the media. In *Between Violence, Vulnerability, Resilience, and Resistance*, El Zein (2021) identified five dominant media frames used to represent Syrian women, such as women as a source of shame, as victims of their previous imprisonment, and as child brides (p. 183). Likewise, Roy (2012) mentioned the impact of media on the kinds of stories and voices that are intentionally ignored and thus unheard.

The emergence of new and alternative media platforms led by community activists after the pro-democracy protests allowed women and marginalized groups to gain more visibility nationally and worldwide, especially with forced displacement (Alviso-Marino, 2017; Bank, 2020; El-Zein, 2021). For instance, Syrian artists who left the country and relocated to safer countries benefited from the media attention to continue their professional art careers (Bank, 2020). However, this relocation came with greater interest from Western media to cover artistic production from conflict zones; Bank (2020) observed how Syrian artists are frequently expected to conform to a specific notion of their cultural identity and communicate the social and political conditions of their country of origin to Western audiences through their artwork. This shift towards emphasizing educational aspects rather than artistic and aesthetic considerations can result in losing the nuances embedded in the artworks. As a result, some artists may challenge this essentialization by presenting an alternative image of their homeland, leading to a narrower thematic focus. While Bank (2020) critically questioned this media interest in artists from war-torn countries and the future of these artists once international interest fades from one conflict zone to another, Alviso-Marino (2017) saw these international interests in artists from war-torn countries as an influential tool to provide access to broader visibility and recognition. According to Alviso-Marino (2017), the politicization of art can support the mobilization of social change in authoritarian contexts. Social media platforms and international media interests offered a space to increase visibility; therefore, Khamis and Mili (2018) explained how women and grassroots movements could benefit from these opportunities to maximize the impact of social transformation by creating a clear online visibility strategy, building a space for transferring learning to a new generation of women leaders, at the same time learning from other social movements.

CONCLUSIONS

Visual arts have been a valuable medium for women's movements and marginalized groups worldwide, enabling them to raise awareness around barriers, social-democratic change, and community development (Bank, 2020; Butterwick et al., 2016; Elmeligy, 2022). Various scholars have shown the effectiveness of using information communication technologies (ICTs) and visual arts to shed light on gender, human rights violations, and socio-political issues (Alhayek, 2016; Bank, 2020; Khamis & Mili, 2018; Tazi, 2021). Women in SWANA before, during, and after the pro-democracy protests have participated actively as agents of social and political reforms within their countries. Furthermore, digital literacy helped women to find ways to learn, amplify their voices creatively, and bring women's stories and a feminist agenda to the center of any social and political transformation (Asalia, 2022; Alviso-Marino, 2017; Elmeligy, 2022; Khamis & Mili, 2018). Being a woman and an artist in an authoritarian state comes with fear, risks, and determination to change this reality (Bank, 2020; Falardeau, 2020). Despite the socio-political barriers and threats, women's collectives across the SWANA region are still raising their voices and demanding their rights (Asalia, 2022; Elmeligy, 2022; Falardeau, 2020; Halasa et al., 2014; Khamis & Mili, 2018). The use of art as a pillar for freedom of expression and community development amplified the possibilities for women and marginalized groups to make their voices heard and experiences seen.

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UNDERSTANDING MY COMMUNITY: AN EXPLORATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION COMMUNITY IN MONTREAL

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Abstract

This paper is an effort to understand how I am positioned in relation to the human rights education (HRE) work already happening in Montreal as an out of province master's student completing a thesis at McGill University. The purpose of this paper is to catalogue and reflect upon my inquiry about where HRE may be happening in Montreal as an exercise in adult education. I spoke with participants who work at McGill's Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism and Equitas to learn about the HRE approaches the organizations are taking. I conclude by reflecting on this learning and complicate my assertion that the HRE community in Montreal is a community at all.

Key Words: Human rights education, community, research assignment, adult education

INTRODUCTION

This assignment is an effort to understand how I am positioned in relation to the human rights education (HRE) work already happening in Montreal as an out of province master's student completing a thesis at McGill University. The purpose of this assignment is to catalogue and reflect upon my inquiry about where HRE may be happening in Montreal as an exercise in adult education. HRE is education, *about*, *through*, and *for* human rights. This means that it includes teachable human rights (HR) content, considers and demonstrates HR principles in/ through the educational environment, and encourages the



Fig. 1: Types of human rights education, *Composito (n.d.)*

realization of HR, typically through encouraging taking action against HR injustice (Tibbitts, 2002). There are many types of education that fall under the HRE umbrella (Fig. 1), making it a broad educational field. This definition serves as a starting point in the process of understanding how and where HRE is happening in Montreal. This assignment will not comprehensively evaluate the quality of HRE being conducted by individual organizations, nor will it make judgements about whether an organization is in fact conducting HRE according to the definition I present as this is beyond the scope of the

assignment. To determine who to contact about HRE, I began with the HRE model I was most interested in: HRE for transformative action. This model focuses on agency and

solidarity building, fosters HR activism and social change, and typically happens in non-formal learning contexts (Bajaj, 2011). Therefore, I knew I wanted to speak with people from organizations that worked with other community partners and happened in non-formal educational contexts. I made sure to inquire about action during my conversations with those I spoke with.

POSITIONALITY

This assignment originated from the work I was doing to better understand what kind of HRE was happening in Montreal. I began doing this work because I am a HR educator who is writing my master's thesis on HRE and learner wellbeing. I am currently doing this work at McGill University, however my work in HRE began during my undergraduate degree at the University of Winnipeg where I completed a BA in Human Rights. While completing my degree, I realized that the way I was engaging in HR advocacy always involved education. I created presentations on the topics I would learn at university and adapt the knowledge for the general public. I presented at high schools and public libraries, and even began my own community organization called Low-Waste Winnipeg to unify people in Winnipeg who were trying to lessen their individual consumption habits and learn about the environmental and social impacts of capitalism. For a course called Human Rights Advocacy, my friend and colleague Magi Hadad and I created a HRE curriculum entitled *Human Rights Education for Newcomers, An Educational Curriculum*. We went on to teach the curriculum at Kurdish Initiative for Refugees where Magi worked at the time, and the curriculum continued to be used by Magi within the Newcomer community afterwards. After completing a practicum at Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties (MARL), I went on to work with the organization facilitating and creating HR and social justice education workshops and materials. These experiences have culminated in the beginning of a career in HRE and situates my work within the field itself. I have been situated within this field formally and informally for at least the last five years and have brought my interests with me here to Montreal.

I chose Montreal for graduate school to pursue new educational experiences and see what kind of HRE may be happening in this city. I had followed the organization Equitas for years and have always wanted to get involved in larger HRE projects, which led me to pursuing a master's degree here. Prior to leaving Winnipeg, my work at MARL revolved around mental health and wellbeing for HR advocates and activists. Though my research ideas have changed and shifted over time, I came to my masters interested in understanding HRE's relationship to learner wellbeing. I am particularly interested in what barriers to, and facilitators of wellbeing exist during or because of HRE programming. I slowly began to realize that wellbeing may be understood differently in HRE and/ or community spaces in Montreal versus where I am used to working in Winnipeg. Without a fulsome understanding of how and when HRE occurs in Montreal, it would be challenging to explore HRE's connection to advocate and activist wellbeing.

I am a McGill student who is learning to do research for my master's thesis, and I believe this is relevant to a discussion of my positionality. Since arriving and starting my degree in Montreal I have heard non-stop commentary on McGill's 'prestige', its (lack of) relationship to communities and spaces outside of the university, and its colonial legacy built on

slavery, and resource and knowledge extraction. In my experience, my institutional connections at the University of Winnipeg were something that facilitated connections to community, however starting my degree in this new context it felt potentially opposite. Notably, I am a white, anglophone, McGill student who is new to this city. As a result, I may be perceived as someone who is not here for the long term, someone who may not understand the political and cultural context(s) of Montreal, and someone who's priorities lie in an individualistic academic pursuit. Realistically, these are things that may be true about me, as I am not yet sure what my connection to this place will become. For this reason, as I contacted people to discuss HRE, I considered how it would be done and knew that there may be limits to who I was able to connect with based on my positionality. In hindsight, I have considered that those I spoke with are themselves in positions of power. I spoke with three McGill professors who all have more institutional power than I do. Some participants I spoke with graduated from the same institution I attend, or one like it. The organizations discussed in this paper are not community organizations, but larger organizations and knowledge institutions. Additionally, the majority people I spoke with were white presenting. Noticing these dynamics reveals who may be in positions of authority and power in the field of HRE and/ or the HRE community here in Montreal. These power relations may trickle down to community relations and at minimum demonstrate who I have access to speaking with as a white, anglophone McGill student at this stage of my inquiry.

ETHICS AND PROCESS

My actions described in this paper have been influenced by ethical approaches discussed by Mitchell et al. (2018) and McLarnon (in press) who both include discussions of positionality, power relations, and reflexivity as fundamentals of ethics. I reflect on all three as a part of this assignment. I interpret McLarnon et al. (in press) as demonstrating that the research process itself being ethical is possibly more important than the research outcomes. As such, I consider conducting this assignment as a process of learning to do research and doing research as learning. I have learned to do research through this assignment by considering ethics, creating consent procedures, conducting interviews, corresponding with participants, and using data to inform and create a final product. I view this learning process as a part of my own engagement in adult education.

For this assignment I chose to include the names of the organizations I have been directed to. Because this assignment functions to catalogue where and how HRE is happening in Montreal, identifying organizations is integral to showcase where HRE is happening. Pseudonyms have been used in place of participants' names. To get in contact with people doing HRE work, I spoke with my supervisor, Dr. Blane Harvey, who recommended I speak with Professor Sébastien Jodoin at the McGill's Faculty of Law. Professor Jodoin recommended I contact several organizations, including McGill's Centre of Human Rights and Legal Pluralism (S. Jodoin, personal communication, February 14, 2024). I contacted Equitas on my own. The following paragraphs recount what I learned by talking with people working at two different HRE organizations.

MCGILL'S CENTRE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND LEGAL PLURALISM

I spoke with Dr. Paige Sheedy at the Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism at McGill University. The Centre for Legal Pluralism conducts HRE through the International Human Rights Internships Program (the Program). The Program facilitates HRE for law students by placing them with an organization in Canada, or internationally. The Program centers learning about how HR manifest in the real world. It aims for students, who are future jurists, to observe and experience the gap between HR discourses and law, highlighting the reality on the ground. HRE takes place at every stage of the Program experience. After being interviewed, students begin work with an organization. The organization and those that work within it effectively facilitate HRE through experiential learning, a process that involves students and alumni. After the placement is over, the students take part in a student-centered critical reflection seminar. At the end, a working paper is published. The whole program was created with HR principles in mind. The organizations' needs play an important role during the matching process and are factored in to ensure the Program is working in solidarity with their partners. Dr. Sheedy explained that the Program has long-standing relationships with partners and is not an academic tourism project, stating it is seen as a privilege for students to be able to work with these organizations and learn in a real-life classroom by interacting with colleagues, experts, and advocates. The goal is to encourage discourse amongst the organization, those who work there, and the student. This means that learning is not unidirectional and that all involved can contribute their ideas to collective work. The program is about learning how to work in HR through understanding how to interact with one another using a HR lens, centering dignity, relationality, collaboration, and empathy. Overall, Dr. Sheedy said, the Program "is about how to be with fellow human beings [...] and how to work in solidarity" (personal communication, March 28, 2024).

EQUITAS

I spoke with Alan Grant, Erica Corrigan and George McGuire at Equitas. Equitas is a HRE organization located in Montreal and Vancouver where a range of educational approaches are taken. These include human rights-based, gender-based, localized, intersectional, and trauma informed educational approaches. The organization "enter[s] into partnerships with local civil society organizations and work[s] to co-construct HRE opportunities" internationally, meaning Equitas partners with civil society organizations, community leaders, and advocates already working in communities to deliver HRE (A. Grant, personal communication, April 17, 2024). This way, Equitas, which is not itself a community organization (G. McGuire, personal communication, April 10, 2024), can acknowledge its positionality in the HRE process by decentering itself in the learning environment while supporting HR learning and advocacy through knowledge facilitation, and providing tools and support (E. Corrigan, personal communication, February 28, 2024). Their focus is participatory HRE, which means that learners determine which localized circumstances connect with HR knowledge, and which HR topics they would like to discuss and potentially act on. This approach ensures that HR content, which has the potential to be de-contextualized because of its global scope, is relevant to learners, encouraging them to make connections between global HR values and localized contexts, and resulting in a "tailored" educational outcome (A. Grant, personal communication, February 6,

2024). "Equitas projects almost always involve opportunities for learners to take action after a learning opportunity" (A. Grant, personal communication, April 17, 2024). The organization can support that action through providing learners with funding to undertake a community action, or by supporting learners through creating a detailed action plan (A. Grant, personal communication, April 17, 2024).

HRE projects happening in Canada, including Montreal, are focused on youth and children's rights. Many of the same approaches are taken as Equitas does not work directly with youth themselves. George explained they

[...] train youth workers or people that work with youth. So youth workers in community centers, teachers, some people in municipalities or the government that are in charge of recreational services and everything. So it's people that serve indirectly or directly youth. Those are the ones we try to educate to empower them to empower their youth, kind of. I think it's like a two-step empowerment (personal communication, April 10, 2024).

Additionally, Equitas provides bursaries and coaching to their partners for youth-led projects. (G. McGuire, personal communication, April 10, 2024). It is particularly important to Equitas that learners can share their learning with others in their community or group organization (A. Grant, personal communication, February 6, 2024).

REFLECTION

As I reflect on my conversations with participants, I notice that HRE is being conducted by organizations and institutions in ways that ideally lead to community action. Many of the educational efforts outlined above engage with communities from a distance by organizing HRE experiences for future jurists, and by working with people already involved in communities to deliver HRE. However, I have also learned that communities themselves are integral parts of HRE. For example, the Program matches students with organizations, some of which revolve around specific communities of people. Additionally, without community leaders' participation, Equitas could not reach communities, nor would they have the ability to localize HRE. Taken together, I see how important communities are to creating meaningful, contextualized HRE experiences. As a result, I have begun wondering if HRE organizations function more as intermediaries, and sources of funding and HRE 'expertise', rather than organizations revolving around communities that are facing HR barriers. While this could be the case, it may be for a reason. For example, if law students do not typically learn about HR on the ground from their law programs, then experiential HRE may be necessary for adequate professional training. If communities have trouble accessing funds for action projects, HRE organizations may be a way to get funds to them. However, these reasons are not sufficient enough to forgo interrogating broader power structures dictating whose education, professional training, and action gets prioritized. As such, the field of HRE could benefit from interrogating the power structures upheld within and because of its practices. The field of adult education could be an academic space that allows this interrogation to happen.

Because of my interest in learners' experiences of HRE, the HRE learner's perspective is missing from this. Though conversations with participants revolved around the educational approaches they take, we did get to talk briefly about their partners who would constitute as learners. While my conversations with participants ended by talking about some organizations they worked with, they could not have started there. It did not feel appropriate to ask them to put me in touch with their community partners for further inquiry because the relationships between myself and the organizations discussed here are new. However, this is a place for further inquiry.

CONCLUSION

In response to me discussing this assignment, which is called Understanding My Community, Dr. Sheedy engaged me in thinking about what a community is. She talked about how even the smallest community has plurality and that a fundamental principle for HR work is working in solidarity with a community or communities. To work in solidarity, you must ask the question, *what is a community?* (Dr. P. Sheedy, personal communication, March 28, 2024). As I reflect on my 'exploration' of the HRE community in Montreal I want to complicate my assertion that it is a community in the first place. I originally envisioned it as such because in my experience, HRE was centred around community work in a variety of ways in Winnipeg. In a past context, HRE was something I had come to by doing my own small or community-oriented projects such as making educational presentations and curriculums for and with my friends and peers. Coming to a larger city and 'exploring' the variety of ways that HRE is conducted has revealed to me that this field is becoming my profession, even though my work within it started as non-professionalized advocacy. This is not to say that advocacy cannot or does not happen through professionalized work. However, it reveals that a potential tension exists between community and profession. I believe this is evident through my referral to HRE as a field, as work, and as a community throughout this assignment. Considering Dorothy Smith's conceptualization of work as "any action that takes time, effort, and intent" (2005, as cited in McLarnon et al., in press), I believe that community engagement, involvement, and participation is indeed work. I have turned to HRE professionally because it is something I began and continue to do because I enjoy it, it has brought me together with others, it has been a large part of my own life and education, and because I view myself as being a part of the global struggle for HR. Although a conception of a HRE community is broad and potentially both global and local, to me it constitutes a community that I do work for and within. Working within this community necessitates that I learn to work with and listen to others. As an HR educator, I am required to engage with and know about different HR struggles and barriers even if I am not actively participating in every struggle I have knowledge about. I have acquired this knowledge through working with different groups over shorter periods of time, through formal HR education such as university, non-formal education, such as community learning and trainings, and informal education through listening to others' experiences and paying attention to what is going on in the world, whether it be close to home or far away. While this is all necessary to engage in the work I do, I think it is possible to come across as a "Navigator & Floater" or "Academic & Intellectual", both defined by an unwillingness to stick around and engage with/ in communities of struggle or leveraging their resources to

further collective liberation (Rudy, 2014). I do not point this out in an attempt to define myself as the alternative “Accomplice” (Rudy, 2014), but because I think it is necessary to be aware of the space I occupy and be honest with myself and others about what I am and am not doing. I do not think I have deeply engaged in community relations through what I have achieved through this assignment, and though I am going to continue to talk with people about HRE work in Montreal (and beyond) who I become accountable to in this work will be determined by where I find myself and who I actually end up working with and/or forming longer-lasting relationships with. In sum, my work will continue to be rooted in HR knowledge. To me, this means my work will reflect what I and others who have come in and out of my personal, professional, and academic life have taught me and acknowledge the variety of ways HR can be fought for and achieved.

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A CRITICAL PEDAGOGICAL EXAMINATION OF MATERNAL CARE INEQUITIES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. A NARRATIVE REVIEW

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Abstract

The study's objective was to explore the complex factors affecting women's experiences in maternity care, focusing on identifying actionable solutions and changes communities require from the healthcare system. This paper critically explores the intersection of gender, power dynamics, and health inequities in maternity care during the COVID-19 pandemic. Employing a critical feminist pedagogical framework, the study underscores the complex challenges that women face during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period, particularly under the exacerbated conditions of a global health crisis. It adopts an intersectional approach to understand these multifaceted experiences better, emphasizing how social determinants influence maternity care outcomes. The research addresses two primary questions: How do gender, power, and health inequities collectively shape women's maternity care experiences during the pandemic? What strategies and transformative changes are necessary to foster an inclusive, equitable, and empowering maternal care system? The study synthesizes existing literature through a narrative review to offer fresh insights into these questions. The method involves a systematic search of scholarly databases, selection based on predefined criteria, and thematic analysis to identify patterns and gaps in the data. The findings highlight significant barriers to positive childbirth experiences, such as restricted access to preferred birth methods, increased fear and anxiety, disrupted prenatal care, and compromised postpartum support. The pandemic has intensified these challenges, disproportionately affecting marginalized communities through routine service disruptions, heightened risk of COVID-19 complications, and inequitable health resource distribution. Despite these adversities, community resilience has shone through virtual support networks and peer education, which have become vital in providing necessary support. Ultimately, the paper calls for transformative healthcare reforms prioritizing women's rights and participation in care decisions. It advocates for comprehensive, intersectional strategies that remove systemic barriers and ensure equitable access to quality maternity care, thus promoting gender equity and reproductive rights. This work contributes to ongoing dialogues about improving health systems to better serve diverse women's needs during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: critical pedagogy, maternal care inequities, covid-19, women's health disparities, pandemic response, social determinants of health, access to healthcare.

INTRODUCTION

This paper urgently and critically examines maternity care in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing the pressing need for equitable and empowering care (Arcaya., Arcaya & Subramanian, 2015). By integrating critical pedagogy (Freire, 2018; 2008; Giroux, 2010; Darder, 2014; hooks, 1994) the review brings to light the unique and immediate challenges women face in pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum periods, especially under crisis conditions. It underscores the role of power and health inequities,

adopting an intersectional approach (Crenshaw, 1983) to better understand women's multifaceted experiences. The review considered social determinants affecting maternity care outcomes. It advocates for transformative changes in healthcare practices and policies by amplifying marginalized voices and identifying systemic gaps (Crenshaw, 1983; Freire, 2018; Oetzel et al., 2018; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). The goal is to urgently foster an inclusive, women-centred care environment that respects and responds to diverse needs, promoting gender equity and reproductive rights (Oetzel et al., 2018; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

The method was a narrative review (Paré & Kitsiou, 2017), an interpretive and comprehensive analysis of existing studies designed to offer new insights. The process began with defining research questions - How do gender, power, and health inequities collectively shape women's maternity care experiences during the pandemic? What strategies and transformative changes are necessary to foster an inclusive, equitable, and empowering maternal care system? -. Secondly, a systematic literature search was performed using the following keywords - critical pedagogy, maternal care inequities, covid-19, women’s health disparities, pandemic response, social determinants of health, access to healthcare in Scholar Google, followed by a search in PubMed, Sage Journals online & Wiley online library. The Inclusion criteria ensured relevancy and methodological soundness, using the following indicators -published between 2020 and 2023, including studies published in peer-reviewed journals of women’s experiences and perceptions of maternity care during the COVID-19 pandemic-. The selected data was extracted and synthesized into a thematic map, as shown in Fig 1, highlighting patterns and gaps. The analysis and interpretation of this data provided context-specific conclusions. Finally, the review was compiled into a structured document, encapsulating the critical insights gained.

RESULTS

The pandemic led to numerous challenges in maternity care, including restricted birth options, heightened anxiety, disrupted prenatal care (Ahlers-Schmidt et al., 2020), and compromised postpartum support. Health inequities intensified, especially for marginalized communities, through disrupted services, increased COVID-19 risks, and inequitable vaccine distribution. Despite these adversities, community learning through virtual platforms provided crucial support, fostering resilience, and enhancing childbirth experiences with education and emotional support strategies.

Figure 1 Thematic map of results

Thematic map of	<i>1. The impact of the pandemic</i>	<i>1.1. Lifelong learning during the pandemic</i>
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		<i>1.2. Mental health perceptions</i>
	2. The childbirth experience	<i>2.1. Lifelong learning from delivery during the pandemic</i>
	3. The women´s learnings from delivering a baby during a pandemic	<i>3.1. Lifelong learning & Resilience</i>

1. The impact of the pandemic

1.1. Lifelong learning during the pandemic

According to Gangotena (2023), the pandemic exacerbated women's negative childbirth experiences in Ecuador, marked by fear, pain, and uncertainty. Concerns over infection and inadequate health facility support led to heightened distress. Inconsistent communication and perceived unpreparedness of health staff intensified these challenges, undermining support during this critical period.

Global evidence (Sweet et al., 2022) indicates that women's childbirth experiences during the pandemic did not align with the WHO/PAHO (2018) standards for respectful maternity care. Basu et al. (2021) found that 86% of women across 64 countries, including Ecuador, were significantly worried about COVID-19 impacts during pregnancy and postpartum. Common concerns included the inability of the family to visit, the risk of the newborn contracting COVID-19, and restricted choices in labour support. Wilson et al. (2021) and Ahmed et al. (2022) noted that social distancing and lockdowns disrupted essential antenatal care, leaving women isolated and underserved. Asefa et al. (2022) confirmed that these disruptions reduced healthcare benefits for mothers and newborns. Studies from other countries showed that there were adverse effects of the disruption of maternal and

newborn healthcare services, limiting fundamental rights for pregnant, parturient women and newborns (Akseer et al., 2020; Corthier, 2020; Human Rights in Childbirth. (2020); Jolivet et al., 2020; Pérez-Escamilla et al., 2020; Waller et al., 2020; WHO, 2020).

Basu et al. (2021) highlighted that while public health campaigns extensively disseminated preventive messages during the pandemic, they often neglected the mental health impacts on vulnerable groups like pregnant, parturient, and postpartum women. Ahmed et al. (2022) noted that in Belgium, pregnant women's uncertainty worsened due to inadequate guidance from healthcare professionals and confusing media messages. Most received COVID-19 information from non-medical sources like TV or the Internet, which posed risks of misinformation, adversely affecting their childbirth experiences (Choi et al., 2020; Jolivet et al., 2020; WHO, 2018).

1.2. Mental health perceptions

The evidence showed many examples of the consequences of the pandemic on mental health (Breman et al., 2021). Basu et al. (2021) found that a substantial number of women scored at or above the cut-offs for elevated post-traumatic stress (43%), anxiety/depression (31%), and loneliness (53%). A study from Ireland in April 2020 (Milne et al., 2020) found that 44 % of women reported low mood due to loneliness as they missed contact with friends and family. Gangotena (2023) found that women perceived that the pandemic had enormous consequences on their mental health; it was a time of intense suffering unlike any they had lived before. They experienced sadness and emotional distress, lack of control, uncertainty, and vulnerability during childbirth (Choi et al., 2020). They felt mental health constraints caused by the intense fear of contagion (Perzow et al., 2021). For most women, it was one of the most challenging situations they had ever had.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Sweet et al. (2022) documented increased post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, and loneliness among pregnant and postpartum women across 64 countries, exacerbated by missed medical appointments. Globally, many women were denied the choice of a companion during labour and childbirth, conflicting with WHO (a, b, 2020) recommendations that emphasize companionship for all pregnant women, including those with COVID-19 (Semaan et al., 2020). In Australia, Wilson et al. (2022) reported that public health restrictions led to feelings of isolation among women. Breman et al. (2021) found that loneliness significantly increased depressive symptoms, though not anxiety, from before to during the pandemic. This lack of companionship during labour was a common issue worldwide (Akseer et al., 2020; Corthier, 2020; ECLAC-UN, 2020; Hubner et al., 2022; Ilska et al., 2022; Jolivet et al., 2020; Pérez-Escamilla et al., 2020; WHO, a, b, 2020). In the study in Ecuador, during the pandemic, women faced heightened negative childbirth experiences marked by fear, pain, and uncertainty. Concerns over infection, poor access to prenatal care, and misinformation were widespread. They perceived healthcare staff as unprepared and unresponsive, exacerbating their distress and sense of inadequate support. (Gangotena, 2023).

2. The childbirth experience

2.1. Lifelong learning from delivery during the pandemic

López et al. (2021) found that Black, Latina and Asian women were more likely to report race, ethnicity, or national origin as a reason for differential treatment. The Human rights violations in pregnancy, birth and postpartum during the COVID-19 pandemic (Human Rights in Childbirth, 2020) said that women were subjected to labour induction and cesarean sections without clinical indication during the first months of COVID-19, presumably to reduce women's length of stay in health facilities, thereby decreasing the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Certainly, undermining rights exacerbates inequities and disempowers vulnerable groups (Corthier, 2020; Inversetti et al., 2021; Jolivet et al., 2020; WHO, a,b 2020; UNWOMEN, 2021).

Worldwide, cesarean sections increased, and labour induction was frequent without patients' consent. There was a lack of antenatal and postnatal care. Health staff at facilities feared contagion; maternal and child health protocols were altered without the support of evidence (Akseer et al., 2020; Corthier, 2020; Jolivet et al., 2020; ECLAC-UN, 2020; Pérez-Escamilla et al., 2020; WHO, a,b 2020).

Gangotena (2023) documented that in Ecuador, women's childbirth experiences were significantly negative, marked by prolonged unattended periods, routine but invasive procedures like episiotomies, and restrictions on food and water. Women reported a lack of informed consent for labour induction, absence during neonatal procedures, and delayed post-birth mother-infant rooming, contributing to a disempowering experience. Researchers like Semaan et al. (2020) found that separating newborns from COVID-19-positive mothers, not allowing breastfeeding, and reducing the length of stay were common during the first wave of the pandemic in LMICs. Early interim guidance emerged from WHO (April 16, 2020) and Ministries of Health that all pregnant women, regardless of their COVID-19 status, should be encouraged to stay with their newborn, commence breastfeeding early, and have SSC. Despite this guidance, some neglect of these practices continued. Furthermore, several countries' human rights violations in pregnancy, birth and postpartum during the COVID-19 pandemic report (HRCR, 2020) that protocols were not promptly adapted to comply with essential maternity care and were to separate mother and newborn, creating isolation and distress.

In Ecuador, Gangotena (2023) found that women instinctively attempted immediate breastfeeding but often felt alone and unsupported by health staff, leading to anxiety and difficulties such as sore nipples and discomfort. Post-discharge, ineffective breastfeeding counselling and scheduled feeding recommendations further compounded their challenges. The evidence reported by Brown & Shenker (2021) showed that at the start of the pandemic, mothers and babies were routinely separated in different countries, despite the evidence showing extensively that separation of mother and baby was not recommended for successful breastfeeding initiation and promoting stable newborn behaviour. Digital media reported the separation of newborns from COVID-19-positive mothers (Petit, 2020), not allowing breastfeeding, denying the dyad access to quality healthcare, and jeopardizing their well-being (Akseer et al., 2020; Brown & Shenker, 2021; Corthier, 2020; ECLAC-UN, 2020; Jolivet et al., 2020; PAHO, 2018; Pérez-Escamilla et al., 2020; WHO, a,b 2020).

Gangotena (2023) found that women and newborns rarely experienced immediate, prolonged skin-to-skin contact post-birth, often lasting less than five minutes before

separation. Health staff neither promoted this practice nor provided essential breastfeeding counselling or education, especially for first-time mothers.

3. The women's learnings from delivering a baby during a pandemic

3.1. Lifelong learning and resilience

Research worldwide showed the importance of lifelong learning and resilient coping strategies in women (Kaye-Kauderer et al., 2021; Preis et al., 2020). Taubman–Ben-Ari et al. (2022) suggested the importance of empowering self-reliance techniques, such as self-compassion, which is significantly associated with lower anxiety among women. In a study in England, women reported an under-reliance on healthcare professionals for support, instead turning to family (Silveiro et al., 2021). In a study in Australia (Sweet et al., 2021), pregnant and postpartum women also employed various coping strategies in navigating these challenges, including praying, reaching out to friends, and meditation. Several studies identified the family as the most crucial social resource (Jean-Baptiste et al., 2020). Hubner et al. (2022) reported that many factors influence the mother-infant bonding with stress levels caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gangotena's study (2023) found how women's experiences during childbirth amidst the pandemic led to significant lifelong learning and resilience. Women learned the importance of preparation for adversity and the value of sorority in supporting other women. Despite feeling neglected by the government and public health systems regarding their constitutional rights, over half of the participants felt empowered by their experiences. They expressed gratitude for the support from family and community, appreciation for life and health, and reported solid maternal-infant bonding at home despite their challenges.

CONCLUSIONS

This narrative review focused on women's maternity care rights during the pandemic's first wave, using critical theory to explore the impact of historical oppression and patriarchal systems on maternal health services. It applied critical pedagogy concepts from Darder (2014), Freire (2018, 2008), Giroux (2010), and hooks (1994) to examine dialogue's role in addressing social inequalities within healthcare. The study emphasized the importance of recognizing intersecting identities and power structures affecting women's access to maternity care, and advocating for an equitable and empowering healthcare system even during crises.

Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy and Liberation philosophy (2008, 2018) stresses the transformative potential of dialogue in challenging oppressive systems and advancing social justice. His ideas suggest that inequalities are socially constructed, not inherent. This perspective is aligned with findings from a study examining women's experiences with health services during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlighted how historical oppression and patriarchal systems shape these interactions. The study revealed that socio-economic challenges, including economic constraints and unemployment exacerbated by the pandemic, compounded systemic inequalities and economic oppression. It also identified patriarchal power dynamics in policy and decision-making that often marginalize women's needs and perspectives.

The study also drew attention to the neglect of maternal and child public healthcare during the pandemic, demonstrating a devaluation of women's reproductive health and well-being. This neglect perpetuated a historical pattern of inequity in women's health services. Through Freire's lens, these findings acknowledged women's experiences of oppression, including economic difficulties, limited healthcare access, and lack of recognition for their rights and agency. These oppressive power relations were deeply ingrained in historical and societal structures that deepen women's health inequalities and deny their voices and experiences.

Freire's principles of critical consciousness and conscientization (Freire, 2008, 2018) advocate for confronting oppressive healthcare systems that compromise women's maternity rights, like unnecessary labour inductions and restrictions on childbirth companionship. These practices undermine women's autonomy and well-being. Inspired by Freirean praxis, there is a critical need to challenge these power imbalances and promote policies prioritizing women's and newborns' well-being, ensuring that practices like immediate skin-to-skin contact and breastfeeding are upheld.

The lack of sufficient information and counselling emphasized the oppressive power dynamics in play. Freire stresses creating spaces where women's voices are heard, knowledge is shared, and respectful guidance is provided. Filling this knowledge gap empowers women in their healthcare choices and challenges unequal power dynamics. The insufficient breastfeeding support further revealed these oppressive dynamics. Freire's call for conscientization urges us to examine practices undermining women's reproductive rights.

Secondly, Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality theory (2006) highlights how overlapping social identities impact women's childbirth experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic's initial wave. This perspective emphasizes understanding and addressing the multifaceted oppressions women face within healthcare. These systemic power dynamics, rooted in patriarchal norms, perpetuate inequality and neglect in maternal healthcare, restricting women's rights and responsiveness to their needs. As the Human Rights in Childbirth Report (HRCR, 2020) noted, violations such as non-consensual labor induction and restrictions on childbirth companionship underscore a disregard for women's autonomy and well-being, reinforcing power imbalances and fostering their disempowerment and isolation.

Crenshaw's intersectionality theory urges a reevaluation of systemic discrimination in healthcare, advocating for prioritizing women's autonomy, rights, and well-being in maternal care. Highlighting the interplay of oppressions based on gender, race, and socio-economic status, her work underscores the need for an equitable healthcare system that is responsive to the diverse needs and experiences of all women. This approach emphasizes confronting and dismantling the overlapping systems of oppression that exacerbate the challenges faced by marginalized women.

Intersecting identities can lead to unique forms of discrimination and oppression, distinct from the discrimination experienced by individuals based on single aspects of their identity, advocating for understanding and addressing the interconnected systems of power and

privilege that influence healthcare experiences for vulnerable women (Atewologun & Mahalingam, 2018).

Crenshaw's theory supports the need for dismantling power dynamics in healthcare, highlighted by women's reliance on informal support networks due to mistrust and perceived inadequacies in formal care systems. This reliance, particularly pronounced among marginalized communities, reflects intersecting oppressions related to gender, race, and social identities. By recognizing and addressing these intersectional dimensions, healthcare providers can foster equitable care, empowering women and supporting their resilience against complex, overlapping challenges.

Thirdly, Nina Wallerstein's work (Abma et al., 2017; Oetzel et al., 2018; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006) emphasizes transformative social change in healthcare by prioritizing women's reproductive rights and addressing overlapping oppressions. Advocating for the dismantling of male-dominated structures, her approach aims to create a healthcare system that respects women's autonomy, promotes gender fairness, and safeguards their well-being. This necessitates a healthcare model that is responsive to the complex influences of gender, race, sexuality, and socio-economic factors on health outcomes.

The systemic oppression evident in the dismissive attitudes toward women's maternity health rights undermines their autonomy and ability to act, a concern underscored by Wallerstein's work (Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). Highlighting the failure to prioritize evidence-based practices such as immediate skin-to-skin contact and breastfeeding during the pandemic, her approach calls for confronting male-dominated power structures and advocating for women's reproductive health and well-being. The neglect of essential bonding and breastfeeding reflects oppressive dynamics within the healthcare system, compromising maternal and child health.

Finally, the study has clearly shown significant health disparities, particularly among marginalized communities, that demand immediate and transformative changes in healthcare policies and practices. Adopting a women-centred approach in maternal care and implementing comprehensive, intersectional strategies to eliminate barriers and ensure equitable access to quality care is crucial. This means advocating for women's rights and active involvement in their care decisions. Therefore, healthcare providers must increase their efforts to guide women effectively during emergencies, such as the past COVID-19 pandemic.

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CONCEPTUALIZING CULTURE CHANGE AS AN ADULT LEARNING PROBLEM IN THE CANADIAN MILITARY

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Abstract

The Canadian military is a large organization responsible for training and educating its membership. Alongside occupational training, military members are inculcated into the institution's ethos, history, and culture through formal learning and informal socialization. Problematic cultural norms are woven into the CAF as an institution and manifest throughout the training and education system. This raises the question about how military culture is taught, learned, and transmitted between generations. Here, as part of my ongoing doctoral research, I conceptualize culture change as an adult learning problem in the Canadian military context.

Keywords: Military Training and Education, Culture, Canadian Armed Forces

INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) is a large organization responsible for training and educating its membership. Alongside occupational training, military members are inculcated into the institution's ethos, history, and culture through formal learning and informal socialization. This starts in basic training and continues until they leave. However, a disconnect exists between the institution's espoused values, which speaks to an inclusive environment, and the experience of military members. It is in this space that longstanding systemic issues related to sexual misconduct, discrimination, and exclusionary practices exist (Deschamps, 2015). Problematic cultural norms are woven into the military's training and education system. These norms influence the ways institutional ethos and values are taught, learned, and transmitted from one generation to the next. My doctoral work aims to explore institutional culture as an adult learning problem by trying to understand how it is taught, learned, reproduced, and challenged. In this paper, I focus on what is being taught within the Canadian military, drawing upon ideas of organizational culture and learning.

INSTITUTIONAL SOCIALIZATION

According to the CAF, culture change is about developing an environment of mutual respect, dignity, and inclusion amongst all members. In this definition, culture is a shared set of values and assumptions that one must learn, adopt, and pass along to new members (DND, 2022). According to Schein (2016), there are three levels of culture: artifacts, espoused values, and taken-for-granted assumptions. These are not distinct entities as they blur into and draw from one another. Deeply held and taken for granted assumptions manifest as norms which often go unquestioned (Schein, 1996). These norms, which influence values and ethos, become more apparent within the visible aspects of an institution's culture. Schein (1996) suggested that members of a culture may not be aware of these deeper aspects until they discover another culture. For military members who are

othered, research demonstrates a consistent sense of not belonging (George, 2020). Schein (2016) suggested that our understanding of a culture influences how we will perceive, feel, and act in that culture. Given that taken-for-granted assumptions often go unquestioned, it is particularly important to both understand and question these assumptions. From there, we can start to understand how those assumptions chafe against the espoused and visible aspects of a culture.

A group's identity is formed through shared learning and when that learning is consistent, it contributes to who the group is and how their culture is formed (Schein, 2016). The CAF recognizes the need to socialize members with its ethos and values. Developing this identity is not an individual endeavour and should be viewed as a shared experience amongst adults. This raises the question as to where and when shared learning occurs and what constitutes shared learning. In the Canadian military, I suggest shared learning is both a formal (i.e., classroom lectures) and informal (i.e., observing peers and superiors) process.

In the CAF, members undergo an initial period of socialization upon entry into the institution as a whole and will continue experiencing various levels of socialization as they move throughout the organization. Reflecting similar ideas about accumulated learning, the CAF recognizes the importance of teaching new members the role of beliefs and values. The challenge posed by Schein (2016) is that one must "discriminate carefully among those [values and beliefs] that are congruent with the underlying assumptions" and those "that are rationalizations or only aspirations for the future" (p. 21). For the CAF, this means recognizing which values (i.e., inclusion) are aspirational so long certain taken-for-granted beliefs go unchallenged (i.e., universality of service, see: Taber & Shoemaker, 2024).

Examples of the CAF's espoused values and beliefs are contained within a series of institutional publications discussing (DND, 2005; 2012; 2020, 2022). These ideas manifest as artifacts (i.e., formal learning) within the CAF's education and training system. Schein (2016) described the way some values, turn into underlying assumptions. Considering the CAF's recent addition of inclusion as a value (DND, 2022), one might wonder when or if inclusion, as a value, will become an underlying assumptions? If not, at what point will it be or what is preventing it from becoming one? How is this new value affecting underlying assumptions?

Observable evidence (i.e., the artifacts) along with espoused values are not necessarily a culture in and of itself; instead, they might be better viewed as manifestations of culture (Lee, 2016). McCristall and Baggaley (2019) found the "top-down approach" (p. 123) to culture change does not work within the CAF because it fails to effect the less visible and more informal aspects of culture. This idea also reinforces the CAF's own admission that simply targeting the visible aspects of culture has not yielded the desired results (DND, 2020). This raises questions about how underlying or taken-for-granted assumptions are formed and how they subvert or support espoused culture.

LEARNING CULTURE

Learning is not a single experience and scholars acknowledge it is experienced in a variety of ways (Kawalilak & Groen, 2021). Schugurensky (2000) suggested there are three types

of informal learning that can be distinguished by the level of an individual's consciousness and intentionality – self-directed learning, incidental learning, and socialization. Self-directed learning occurs when a learner deliberately seeks out a learning experience and recognizes that learning is occurring. The idea of a self-directed learner can be found within Knowles' ideas on andragogy (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Incidental learning is the by-product of an experience which can be internalized and used to inform future decisions (Van Noy et al., 2016). Socialization occurs over a series of experiences rather than a single event and leads to tacit knowledge (Eraut, 2000).

Tacit knowledge is "that which we know but cannot tell" (Polanyi, 1967, as cited in Eraut, 2000, p. 118). Bennett (2012) drawing upon the scholarship of Polanyi, suggested people know more than they say, referring to tacit knowledge that can never be articulated. This idea speaks to a challenge in exploring informal learning. Tacit learning is unintentional. The learner is unaware that learning has occurred but may internalize values, behaviours, and beliefs unconsciously (Eraut, 2000). Unintentionally internalizing values and beliefs speaks to informal socialization and aligns with Schein's (2016) thoughts on culture and the invisible nature of taken-for-granted assumptions. Organizationally, tacit learning or socialization prepares employees to support institutional goals (Bennett, 2012). If this is the case, it represents an important area to understand culture change in the CAF.

The CAF expands upon the invisible elements and suggests these underlying assumptions and beliefs are either "implicitly or explicitly endorsed by the organization" (DND, 2020, p. 12). This helps explicate the disjuncture between the visible and espoused values and those experienced by individuals. As a result, unwritten rules are created, communicated, and enforced at an interpersonal and social level (DND, 2022) which aligns with Taber's (2005) discussion on a 'hidden curriculum' in relation to women's experience in the military. In a moment of institutional reflection, the Canadian military, speaking to sexual misconduct, notes that visible dimensions of culture are easier to address because they are tangible but do not necessarily lead to enduring change (DND, 2020).

MILITARY LEARNING

In contrast to civilian education, there are distinct aims to the CAF socialization process which includes adopting a professional identity and set of core values. Formal socialization is heavily emphasized within traditional models of military training and includes the following strategies: isolating new members; constant supervision of training, inculcating recruits with a common set of values and beliefs through various tactics (Wright, 2015). Building upon an understanding of *what* CAF culture is, from the visible to invisible, and *how* CAF culture is socialized, it is my plan to explore how these ideas manifest as learning within the military.

Basic or initial military training is a formative experience. It is designed to socialize new recruits (i.e., values and identity) and develop the individual into something distinct from their civilian self (Wright, 2015). The process of socialization starts when one enters the Canadian military but continues throughout their career as individuals move from being socialized to facilitating the socialization. Taber (2022) noted special attention should be given to military recruits and what they "internalize about the expectations of military

service” (p. 17) and that this attention should extend beyond basic training to capture employment within their first operational units. I suggest this attention should also examine who recruits identify as the ideal military member and how that relates to taken-for-granted assumptions.

Historically, military training and education focused on socializing new members, teaching job-related skills, and developing leadership through formal instruction, practical training, and experience (Cote Hampson & Taber, 2021). To achieve this, the CAF relied upon pedagogy drawn from technical and humanistic paradigms. Hampson and Taber (2021) asserted military training is more than one’s occupation and now includes education focused on preventing sexual harassment and racism. Scoppio and Covell (2016) suggested that while military education may have a unique purpose, it must respond to emerging pedagogical approaches. However, the underlying pedagogical approaches have not kept up to this expanded scope (Taber, 2023). Here, we see a disconnect between what one ought to learn and how the institution tries to teach.

Training and education (i.e., formal learning) support learning but do not, in themselves, mean learning is occurring (Purse, 2012b). The *how* and *where* of learning is not specific but entangled because it can occur in a range of formal and informal settings. This complicates the development of specific competencies because they often occur in the absence of formal learning but alongside other workplace experience with learning and development (Purse, 2012a). This aligns with Taber’s (2023) thoughts on using scenarios within education aimed at addressing problematic issues within military culture. Given learning occurs outside a classroom’s curriculum, I suggest it is necessary to probe those informal experiences. Are institutional values reinforced by what military members see and observe? Or are they subverted by the actions of their peers and superiors?

MILITARY IDENTITY

Military identity is formed by the ways in which leaders enact institutional ethics, customs, and traditions (Butler & Budgell, 2015). Throughout a member’s career, they will participate in professional military education. Professional military education aims to prepare individuals for their next level of responsibility by developing the necessary leadership, managerial, and supervisory skills (Legassie, 2014). Unlike individual training, which is often focused on individual occupations, professional military education is aimed at developing skills applicable across the CAF.

In their examination of senior officer professional military education, Mitchell (2023) suggested students “learn from each other” (p. 34). Students compared their “institutional world views” (p. 34), but they noted this does not just occur in the classroom in the context of formal learning. Instead, this occurs through many interactions that they experience in the hallways, residences, dining halls, and bus rides. This informal learning is where students confront the contemporary challenges they face. Drawing upon English’s (2004) work on CAF culture, Hachey (2020) noted that while military members will internalize the espoused ethos and doctrine, a challenge exists because issues of gender and diversity are not traditional concerns within the profession. Yet, a prescriptive framework of professionalism will “play an important role in shaping the profession and the conduct of military members” (Hachey, 2020, p. 1).

The changing attitudes and beliefs of society influence what is taught within professional military education (Mitchell, 2023). Hachey (2020) drew upon a practical and recent example of this. Earlier theories of military professionalism did not account for ideas of gender and diversity or the ways in which a male-dominated and oriented space, such as the CAF, influenced and shaped the socialization of its members. However, Hachey (2020) noted more recent theories of military professionalism have shifted from the perspective of the individual to recognizing both institutional requirements and community expectations.

Adopting an equity, diversity, and inclusion lens, Greco and von Hlatky (2020) reviewed how the CAF conceptualizes military professionalism within professional military education. This type of formal learning is particularly important because it represents an opportunity for the CAF to reach, teach, and address issues with future leaders. Therefore, Greco and von Hlatky (2020) suggested the CAF ought to consider both how and when ideas about equity, diversity, and inclusion are incorporated into formal curriculum (Greco & von Hlatky; 2020). In an examination of JCSP curriculum, Brown (2021) identified three areas in which social practices produced gender inequality and equality: (1) gender and cultural perspectives are often presented in an ad hoc manner; (2) a masculinist culture is privileged which acts as a "roadblock to thinking critically about unequal gender relations" (p. 33); and (3) inadequate explanations of gender and racial inequalities which led to apathy.

CONCLUSION

The CAF recognizes a need to socialize its membership with institutional values and ethos. Effective and inclusive socialization within the military requires open and honest discussion. Socialization occurs through formal education and informal learning. Formal learning, often drawn from humanist and technical pedagogical paradigms, must be understood alongside the informal learning and the ways interactions amongst peers and superiors beyond the classroom challenge or reinforce the status quo. My doctoral work aims to understand institutional culture as a problem grounded in the ways in which military members learn. Drawing upon ideas of visible and invisible culture, this paper focused on what is being taught within the Canadian military. As an adult learning problem, it is necessary to explore how culture is taught and learned to better understand how military members both reproduce and challenge the status quo.

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INDIGENOUS-SETTLER RELATIONS AND EPISTEMIC JUSTICE: THE CASE OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SURVIVORS

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Warning: This paper includes content that may cause distress, especially if you have experienced harm, abuse, violence, and/or intergenerational trauma due to colonial practices. Support is available 24 hours a day for anyone affected by the Indian residential school experience and for those triggered by the content dealing with residential schools, abuse, emotional trauma, and racism. The national Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line is available at 1-866-925-4419.

ABSTRACT

The largest reparations process for abuses that occurred at Indian residential schools just finished in Canada – 38,000 Survivors of IRS came forward and 26,707 gave oral testimonies to the abuses they suffered in an out-of-court adjudication process. Based on the testimony and records collected, adjudicators determined whether or not the Survivors were credible and therefore, whether they would be compensated. Studies suggested that when Survivors were *not believed* they felt revictimized. The process and study results drew attention to the notion of epistemic (in)justice as a form of colonial injustice. Our goal in the paper is to consider how epistemic (in)justice can be applied to Indigenous-Settler relations and the democratizing of knowledge systems as central to re-imagining adult education. The paper is based on a national study of IRS compensations and a Masters project with life history stories of Indigenous Elders. The authors believe understanding multiple knowledge systems moves us toward epistemic justice and pluralism; a decolonizing strategy at its core.

Keywords: epistemic, decolonize, reparations, Indian residential schools, life story, Indigenous

INTRODUCTION

The largest reparations process for abuses that occurred at Indian residential schools just finished in Canada – 38,000 Survivors of Indian residential school (IRS) came forward and 26,707 gave oral testimonies about the abuses they suffered in an out-of-court adjudication process (IAP Oversight Committee, 2021). This reparations process, known as the Independent Assessment Process (IAP) was part of the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA). While many Canadians are familiar with the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission's hearings that were also a part of the IRSSA, the IAP was different because it was not public and it was used to determine whether or not a Survivor would be compensated for serious physical and sexual abuses suffered at IRS. After hearing the oral testimony from Survivors, an adjudicator would determine whether or not the Survivor was credible and therefore, whether they would be compensated. Compensation was considered a form of reparations in the IAP and this continues to be the

way Canada deals with colonial wrongdoings as evidenced by the litany of settlement agreements that followed the IRSSA. Only in April of 2024 (Stefanovich) was the use of settlement agreements (class actions) seriously questioned by political parties as a way of resolving colonial injustices.

Two different studies (Hanson, 2016; Petoukhov, 2018) acknowledged that when the Survivor was *not believed* and/or had their claim rejected, it “revictimized Survivors by invalidating their suffering” (Petoukhov, p. 185). Fricker (2007) asserted that not being believed is a “normal feature of our testimonial practices” (p. 43) and Emberley (2013) stated that testimony can be akin to the concept of colonial violence. Drawing on our research with Indigenous IRS Survivors, this paper will explore the notion of epistemic (in)justice as it applied to the compensations for abuse at residential schools and how it might be understood in a wider context.

British philosopher Miranda Fricker (2007), coined the term *epistemic injustice* – a form of injustice connected to knowledge and power, which excludes or silences marginal knowledge as expressed in testimonial events. This is relevant in the context of decolonizing practices generally, and in adult education in particular, in this sense that Western colonization is maintained through a hegemony that positions the dominant Western epistemological positions on knowledge as superior (Hanson & Jaffe, 2021). This is done through what is valued in knowledge systems, how they are understood and in the case of testimonies and Indian residential schools, how the knowing is valued or judged. Our goal in giving this paper was to consider how epistemic (in)justice can be applied to Indigenous-Settler relations and the democratizing of knowledge systems (Hall & Tandon, 2017); as central to re-imagining adult education.

Epistemic Injustice

Epistemic injustice refers to the wrong done to someone in their capacity as a knower (Fricker 2007). In the IAP adjudication process, testimonial injustice could take place in the interaction between the teller and the listener during the giving of testimony – that is, where someone's credibility as a knower is judged without recognizing that injustice is embedded in positions of power and an ethic of knowing (Hanson et al. in press). Epistemic (in)justice asks why and how some voices are heard, and some stories and experiences are more easily believed. We further asserted that epistemic injustice is based on epistemic privilege and the honouring or valuing of some knowledge above that of others (Fricker, 2020; Janes, 2016). This leads to further inequality and undemocratic practices.

In the IAP, the main form of epistemic injustice would have been testimonial injustice which takes place in the interaction between the teller and the listener during the giving of testimony – that is, where someone's credibility as a knower is unjustly devalued, often due to prejudice and stereotypes. For the teller, in this case, the Survivor/claimants giving testimony in the IAP, that listener could be the adjudicator – the person making the decision about whether or not the Survivor would be compensated.

We use the notion of epistemic injustice to suggest that the IRS Survivors in giving testimony could be working from an Indigenous epistemology where interconnectedness, community and kinship are central (Levac et al. 2018), and thus, in giving testimony for the purposes of making a finding based on *individual* credibility (as in IAP adjudications) the intent may be epistemologically different (Hanson et al., in review). In other words, the listener, in this case the adjudicator would hear the testimony from their particular frame of reference and way of knowing and this might not always be done conscientiously. Fricker (2007) also says that testimonial injustice can happen without prejudice because injustice is embedded in hierarchies of power and an ethic of knowing and these are both evident in legal processes.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the national study Hanson led is not discussed in this paper. It involved a discourse content analysis of media and House of Commons debates (Hansard) and over 50 interviews. Instead, we focus on Heather Cote Soop's study which explored the life stories of two female Indian residential school Survivors, who testified in the IAP out-of-court reparations, felt that *being believed* was a component of their healing process and how their experiences informed how they understood colonization and their own experiences. Heather's qualitative study used life history methodology through storytelling and made connections to existing theories of epistemic injustice, colonization, healing and decolonization.

Life history allowed Cote-Soop to go more in-depth into the lives and experiences of two Elders, and storytelling facilitated a traditional transfer of knowledge from a life experience/history methodology in formal education. The methods involved meeting with the Elders on three separate occasions, holding long interviews, the telling of stories, and a validation process of sharing the data collected. Life history research makes space for storytelling, and develops a collective focus that gives the story validity and power (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), and it opens a window into an individual's life, a "portal into a culture different from that of the reader" (p. 374). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000) life history connects memories and history for self-understanding and creates "spaces of previously silenced persons to be heard" (p. 375). Life history researchers are required to listen deeply to the intricate details of life stories of the storytellers.

An understanding of the experiences of the Elders/Survivors could only take place by contextualizing their stories within the socio-historical realms of that experience. In this case, it was deeply embedded within colonial injustices lived through Indian residential schools. Those experiences needed to therefore be approached through a decolonizing lens, and this included looking at how the violence of colonialism was carried out. One way colonialism was explored in this study was by paying attention to epistemologies – that is, how the Indigenous knowledge of the Elders/Survivors was challenged through the processes of the IRSSA and specifically the IAP. Epistemic (in)justices begin at the core of one's philosophy (Fricker, 2007) and they are rooted in one's social identity and power. The IAP as a legal process offered a unique opportunity to examine epistemic binaries – Indigenous and Western – in operation. As a framework this helped me, (Heather) to respond to the two questions that guided the study: 1) How do Elders describe their

healing processes, especially from Indian residential schools? And how do these descriptions reflect epistemic injustice? 2) What role can adult education play in drawing attention to epistemic injustice as a form of democratizing knowledge?

Four main themes were derived from the life history data. First, the Elders/Survivors recognized that colonization produced trauma in their lives and they expressed a need to heal from its impacts. Second, the IAP provided Survivors with an opportunity to share their stories about the violence they experienced attending residential school. Third, Elders/Survivors experienced epistemic violence during their IAP hearing. Fourth, the Elders/Survivors believed that it was important to share Indigenous knowledge with non-Indigenous people. These four findings are discussed more in the results.

RESULTS

First, the Elders/Survivors expressed the need to heal from the impacts of colonization using an Indigenous perspective. They explained that healing processes are complex and journeys should be inclusive of traditional, Western, and alternative healing methods, and consider the holistic well-being of a human. A crucial part of their healing journey was the recognition that their stories of abuse must be believed, as this in turn validated the traumatic experiences suffered in Indian residential school. Second, the Survivors agreed that the IAP provided them an opportunity for truth-telling experiences about their own IAP hearing. They explained that the IAP felt like a process that could be healing when they got to tell their stories. They also acknowledged that it was helpful for their families, communities, and others to understand their truths about harm and healing. Third, the Elders/Survivors felt there were limitations in an IAP hearing, which included lack of validation/recognition of Indigenous knowledge during their IAP hearing and this was experienced as violence. The Elders/Survivors recognized that traditional knowledge systems are in a state of decline due to the influences of colonization and the allure of conveniences in the modern world. This lack of recognition of Indigenous knowledge was acknowledged as a form of (epistemic) violence. Fourth, they recognized the importance and challenges of sharing Indigenous knowledge in the process of healing. They spoke of Indigenous ceremonies and family traditions that were helpful with their healing, and how it may benefit others. The Elders/Survivors discussed ways in which Indigenous knowledge systems may be inclusive and shared with diverse populations. Surprisingly, each talked about similar concerns. Two concerns involved Elders: those who were responsible for knowledge dissemination; and the on-going loss of knowledge (epistemicide) in the areas of culture, language, and traditions. Epistemicide refers to the killing of knowledge systems. It becomes apparent that this loss of traditional knowledge systems leaves a gap, which often results in a violation of cultural practices. Hall and Tandon (2017) recognized this outcome as the result of a centuries-old conquest of Indigenous peoples of the Americas since the sixteenth century. It is vital to the Elders/Survivors, their communities and their descendants to understand how Canada's colonial structures of knowledge were created and how Indigenous pieces of knowledge fit were negatively impacted and are now working to fit within that structure. The historical process of discrediting Indigenous knowledge systems is deeply embedded in Canada's Eurocentric education and sociopolitical systems.

As authors, we suggest that in the context of the IAP, Survivors could be faced with a form of epistemic injustice – testimonial injustice. The IAP held risks for Survivor/claimants to experience epistemic injustice in several ways: 1) interruptions to oral story-telling or storytelling traditions which make the story incomplete; 2) a reliance on Western legal models that were framed around credibility; and 3) the framing of the IAP was based on a model of *individual* compensations. In addition, the lack of experience of adjudicators, who for example, may not have any knowledge of Indigenous communities, Indigenous epistemologies, or the protocols within them, resulted in a questioning process that the Survivors of Heather’s study described as confusing or adversarial. Thus, it was important to listen for instances where an experience might be made invisible because it was not understood.

Fricker (2007) refers to a type of epistemic injustice that can occur in situations such as the IAP, where the social positions of the participants are distinctly different and there are judgements of credibility and testimony (Godrie, et al. 2020). It is through these judgements that testimonial injustice occurs – Fricker (2007) writes that the “idea of being wronged in one’s capacity as a knower constitutes epistemic injustice” (p.69) thus when a Survivor/claimant is delivering a testimony the judgment of their credibility from a prejudicial position – i.e. a different epistemology or way of knowing – find them not believable or credible, it is considered testimonial injustice. There were clearly incidents of epistemic injustice when Survivor/claimants did not feel heard or understood. There were also incidents where the relationships between Survivor/claimants and other participants created a condition where some sense of epistemic justice was realized. This is a quote from Elder/Survivor Mary Rose in my study:

I had given up already, so it [the adjudication decision] really didn’t have an impact. [I was] waiting for over two years, I didn’t expect anything, but then when I did finally receive it you know I questioned why they took so long. Yep, but it’s not easy to describe or to hold back, like I did my story once, and I wouldn’t want to do it again. I did question why they didn’t believe me (MRN, Survivor/claimant)

The fear of not being believed was not just tied to epistemic justice; it was tied to the violence of IRS from the past and in the present. Several Survivors and support workers spoke about fear, noting that, “the fear of getting into trouble if you made a mistake is a residential school syndrome.” For example, one Survivor said:

At the school that we went to, if you made a mistake, you got a whipping, not a talking, but a whipping. And if you made another mistake, you get a whipping. Again, they were afraid to make a mistake in their testimony. We don’t ask what happened. That, we did not do. Can’t do that. What happened or who did this — we don’t do that. We asked them to tell us a story, and if they don’t want to talk about it, that’s okay. We don’t make them talk; it’s up to them to tell that story. I’ve never had to tell somebody, “No, this is how you tell that story”. You can’t do that, and

you can't ask them leading questions. So, you just have to be, you know, patient with them. (RT; Survivor/claimant)

Giving testimony as truth-telling was therefore complicated because the standard was based on Western legal systems not on story-telling as Indigenous testimonial truth-telling (Angel 2022). This study was important because it explored how epistemic (in)justice impacts testimonies and perceptions of truth-telling by Indigenous populations. It documented life histories in the form of a testimony from an Indigenous worldview, with intentions of adding it to the larger written history and narrative of Canada's Indian residential school Legacy. It was important that the narrative was written from an Indigenous perspective because much of Canadian history concerning Indigenous people is written from a Eurocentric perspective (Archibald, 2008). According to adult educator Budd Hall (2014), Eurocentric-based societies have given higher education institutions "the mandate to manage knowledge on its behalf" (p. 141). Education is meant to be shared in a safe, ethical environment, with the freedom to express oneself and ask questions. Heather's study assisted with understanding epistemic injustice because it created a critical engagement with Indigenous people's residential school experience. The results indicated that Survivors achieved a sense of closure or healing when their stories were believed. For adult educators knowledge of epistemic justice might generate additional motivation and practices that move from a level of awareness to decolonizing pedagogies.

CONCLUSION

Decolonizing approaches pay heed to marginal voices and epistemic variations. Understanding diverse and/or multiple knowledge systems moves us toward epistemic justice and pluralism. This is a decolonizing strategy at its core (Hanson & Jaffe, 2021). Decolonizing adult education involves deconstructing colonial systems of knowledge by rethinking, and reassessing how we teach, learn, and conduct research, including querying sources of the knowledge and how they are heard, listened to and responded to. Decolonizing can further strengthen the field of adult education because it builds on principles of equity, epistemic pluralism, and social justice. It also demands of the educator an openness to difference and vulnerability that sometimes cuts deep. This is the place however where solidarity, community engagement, and true settler-colonial relationships can open new possibilities for re-imagining adult education.

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HOW DIGITAL GAMIFICATION CAN EMPOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL LEAVERS

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Abstract

Feelings of shame can be counteracted through digital gamification. This article utilizes narrative accounts from documentary films to define pedagogical shame and peer marginalization. Theories of how gamification concepts increase engagement in adult learning are discussed. In the end, it is concluded that digital gamification can help secondary school leavers with nonacademic factors including a lack of internal locus of control.

Keywords: Gamification, eLearning, shame, secondary school, adult learning, emerging technology, digital media

INTRODUCTION

Delivering curriculum and having it fully received by students requires surgical-like precision. Pedagogy isn't linear and demands interpersonal communication and collaboration with students. Tactics including diminishment for incorrect answers and sequestering students by achievement, lead to students feeling shame (Monroe, 2008), and ideas of hidden curriculum are communicated. Adults who were continuously shamed as children will carry feelings of worthlessness and fear throughout their lives (2008). This is especially true for adults who have prematurely left secondary school and who are seeking a high school equivalency credential.

In her article *Shame Solutions: How Shame Impacts School Aged Children and What Teachers Can Do to Help*, Monroe discusses how in Erickson's Theory of Psychosexual Needs shame is an important part of childhood development (2008). Shame is considered a positive hindrance that combats impulsiveness and allows children to develop boundaries and discover a sense of danger (2008). However, what happens when one is hindered from pursuing academic endeavors? What happens when a test becomes synonymous with danger?

In addition to low self esteem, secondary school leavers also lack an internal locus of control (Donovan & Oddy, 1982). In their exploration of unemployed secondary school leavers, Donnavan and Oddy describe the importance of employment for those who have left secondary school (1982). Donnavan and Oddy explain that dropping out of high school causes psychological delays that prevent the ability to believe that one can control their outcome (1982). As a result, many students seek external sources such as money from employment, to display one's abilities (1982).

Digital gamification can combat difficulties faced by high school equivalency seeking students by providing a source of extrinsic motivation in the short term and by allowing for the development of an internal locus of control in the long term. Success gained through gamification currency can be an external source of achievement and a visual representation of growth. However, after absorbing concepts and being able to pass high

school equivalency exams, secondary school leavers will develop the understanding that their actions can result in their accomplishments.

However, to efficiently apply radical learning methods like digital gamification, it is necessary to evaluate the factors that caused secondary school students to prematurely leave secondary school. Through inquiry and investigation, this article will analyze the barriers to education held by secondary school leavers with standardized education, and then show how innovative learning practices can alleviate these barriers. An initial examination will discuss pedagogical practices and classroom cultural experiences that lead to marginalization and isolation. Through narrative accounts, we will also gain a perspective on the emotional manifestations of adults who've experienced shame and marginalization.

A shift to modern implementations in adult learning will show how gamification can build confidence and produce immediate gratification. Explorations in innovations implemented by Ontario Career Colleges will show how career focused adult learners are remaining engaged while preparing for the workforce. In this way, we can recalibrate high school equivalency preparatory courses with practices that benefit students holistically.

The Effects of Pedagogical Shaming and Marginalization

Shaming in secondary school

The documentary *Dropout Nation* depicts the difficulties of dealing with the responsibilities of being a student while handling socioeconomic obstacles (Koughan & Vargas, 2012). One subject, named Sparkles, had to grapple with motherhood and displacement while trying to maintain a secondary school course load. The plight of Sparkles eloquently describes how marginalization and a lack of pedagogical interpersonal communication can lead to feelings of shame.

Sparkles, a junior at Sharpstown High School in the United States, was depicted as being a teenage mother who moved to Texas after her home was destroyed by a hurricane. In addition to these circumstances, Sparkles was described to be without a home and lost custody of her child because of the instability. Due to these factors, Sparkles began to miss school excessively. While her educators gave her chances to complete missed assignments, they were unsympathetic to her situation.

In the film, we see one of Sparkles's teachers telling her that she must simply "want her high school diploma enough" to show up. Sparkles explained that her homework is secondary to finding employment and a permanent home. Her educators were dismissive and then berated her for wasting their time and not having the correct priorities.

Furthermore, Sparkles was completely isolated from her peers and couldn't relate to classroom activities. In an assignment where students had to research different colleges, Sparkles reflected on her feelings by claiming she was lost. In the film, Sparkles was visibly dejected, embarrassed, and distant. Her teacher in response instructed Sparkles to merely pay attention. Sparkles ultimately dropped out of Sharpstown High School.

While several socioeconomic barriers hindered Sparkles from completing her course work, pedagogical shaming and marginalization from her peers caused her to leave before graduating. Conversations in the film evidenced Sparkles's embarrassment and denigration. She was frequently chastised by her instructors for missing course work and classes; even after she explained her circumstances. Although Sparkles's endeavors were unknown after she left, her teachers made utterances that equated to her having to get a high school diploma to regain custody of her son. If Donovan and Oddy's external locus of control theory (Donovan & Oddy, 1982) is applied to this narrative, it would be understandable that Sparkles sought outside sources to regain stability and custody of her child.

One day Sparkles, or a student like her, may one day pursue a high school equivalency credential. However, when an adult student returns to school they may still have lasting emotional effects from shame. In their article *Shame and Transformation in the Theory and Practice of Adult Learning and Education*, Jude Walker describes the external responses to shame had by adult learners which include defensiveness, denial, deflection, distancing, dehumanization, denigration, doubt, deference, disappearing, and depression (Walker, 2017).

Post-secondary school shaming

A multitude of these behavioral actions can be seen in a subject named Melissa in the film *Night School* (Cohn, 2017). When meeting Melissa, a middle aged African American woman, the first words that she utters is "I feel like I shamed myself." In the United States, Indianapolis is one of the few states where adult students can receive a secondary school diploma, rather than an equivalent. After becoming pregnant, Melissa dropped out of secondary school. In *Night School*, viewers observe Melissa strive to complete an algebra course.

One of Melissa's educators explains that Melissa is struggling due to not being able to memorize formulas. Melissa also has major test anxiety. In the following scene, Melissa's instructor emphatically explained that the students must do well on the upcoming exam because it's averaged with their other scores. The instructor further exclaims "If you bomb that test, I can almost guarantee that you aren't going to make it to move up." We then see Melissa anxiously counting with her fingers, focused yet worried about her exam.

Near the end of the course, Melissa fails her algebra final exam. Additionally, Melissa discovered that she had to retake the math course for an additional time, in front of all her peers as students received the next term's course schedules. She uttered the phrase "I am trying to get the hell out of this damn shit, and they keep putting me back in this shit." In a conference with her educators, Melissa was visibly upset and throughout the film made statements implying that she had "failed herself" or that "her mind wasn't right."

As viewers, we don't know specifically how Melissa was treated in secondary school. We know that she has test anxiety and that she has feelings of unworthiness and failure. She *deflects* after failing her algebra course by saying the school keeps putting her back in the course. In the film we see Melissa *disappear* for some time, only to return after one of her instructors sends an impassioned letter. There are also evident signs of *depression* as we see Melissa crying and lying in a dark room.

Melissa is also deeply ashamed that she left secondary school because she became pregnant, which marginalized her from her peers. In her article, Monroe further explains that excerpts of shameful experiences live in our minds and are available to be played repeatedly (Monroe, 2008). When Melissa received her course schedule for the next term, another student looked behind Melissa's back and exclaimed "Girl you got a lot of classes." Not only had Melissa learned that she had failed but also that she was also different from her peers who had smaller course loads. Thus, further cementing her ideas about lack of worthiness and marginalization.

In addition to an educational intervention and guidance, Melissa could have benefited from eLearning tools employing the use of digital gamification to pass her algebra course. For example, the algebra formulas that she had trouble memorizing could have been converted into a quiz or matching game. Sound and image could have been implemented to make it more engaging and, thus easier to absorb.

Melissa could have practiced concepts from her exams in a simulation game. Familiarity with the types of questions being presented could have eased her test anxiety. Practicing the exam in an ungraded environment and succeeding could have also increased her intrinsic motivation and confidence. An analysis of gamification schematics and how it's being implemented in adult education will further show its relevance to secondary school leavers.

DIGITAL GAMIFICATION AND ADULT LEARNING

Defining Gamification

Mora et al. considered "that the purpose of gamification is to create or transform experiences so that they transmit the same feelings, the same engagement, as when playing.

games, even when the main purpose is not entertainment (Mora et al., 2016)." Because of its experiential nature, gamification has been introduced as a viable tool among academic and nonacademic sectors (Huotari & Hamari, 2012). In 2004, gamification became popularized in academia and began to circulate among the social sciences (2012). Regardless of the field, gamification is impactful because of the experiences that users have rather than the game elements employed (2012).

In Huotari and Hamari's article *Defining Gamification - A Service Marketing Perspective*, the authors describe the stock exchange dashboard as a tool that utilizes gamification (2012). Despite the intended purpose, the success of a gamification tool can be measured in user interaction and user intrinsic motivation (2012). These concepts can be applied to gamification tools for adult learning.

Gamification for adult learners

In their study entitled *Designing game-like activities to engage adult learners in higher education*, Mora et al. created a project simulation for a university computer science course (Mora et al., 2016). In a simulation, the team replicated project management tasks needed

to maintain a software program. Students were supposed to view a backlog task board and analyze pending tasks, that needed to be completed to maintain a software based product. While completing software management tasks, students were able to cross off different items on a digital project management board and organize items that still needed to be reviewed. Instructors also interacted with the game by organizing finalized tasks in a completion achievement folder.

Mora et al. explained that although this digital gamification activity deviated from standard game design principles, it allowed computer science students to practice organizational skills that they'd use in the future. Students received external motivation by getting points for achieving tasks. The implementation of interaction maintained engagement.

It should also be noted that while the targeted students were attending university, they were considered nontraditional. These students in Mora et al. were not enrolled in a traditional degree granting course, but rather a massive online open course (MOOC). Most students were above the age of 30 and were married with children. These mimic the demographics of many students who are trying to obtain a high school equivalency credential (Kist, 2003).

Gamification in Ontario Career Colleges

Nontraditional student demographics can also be seen in Canadian Career Colleges. Students who attend career colleges participate in diploma granting programs that allow them to immediately enter the workforce (2019). More than half of career college students are over 30 and over 50% have lived in a country other than Canada (2019).

Many Ontario Career Colleges are moving to online learning practices due to Ministry of Education requirements that require a learning management system (LMS) (2021). LMS platforms allow for the organization of course material so that students can access curricula online. Furthermore, student engagement and user interaction data can be tracked through LMS platforms.

With the rise of LMS platforms and virtual learning experiences, comes the need to incorporate more engaging activities for students that can be utilized online. The integration of instructional designers in academic departments has become commonplace for developing and adapting curricula (Stefaniak & Gilstrap, 2024). This author, who is also an instructional designer at a health care based career college, integrates digital gamification within review activities to simulate social situations and medical based practices.

In an online personal support worker program students are given access to recorded versions of module lectures. Full recorded lectures are approximately an hour in length and contain somewhat difficult concepts without pause. To make learning concepts more comprehensible for students, it became necessary to trim the length of lectures into ten minute segments. In this way student disengagement was limited and students better retained course material (Hsin & Cigas, 2013).

In between each segment, an interactive review was placed that utilized Huotari and Hamari's gamification ideology (2012). Video, sound, and interaction were united to create

engaging user experiences while simulating real world healthcare scenarios. Animation videos created with a cloud based software called Vyond were integrated into a html5 content type platform called H5P. Key ideas were extracted from segmented lectures. Consideration was given to how discussed practices could be integrated with real world experiences and replicated in a simulated game. Afterward, text based scripts were generated with animated characters, simulated medical backgrounds, and simple scenarios.

For example, in a client relationship lecture lasting an hour, six interactive review videos were placed in between ten minute lecture segments. Core concepts from each lecture segment were abstracted and placed in a script utilized to generate an animated simulation. One discussion topic included the concept of setting boundaries as a personal support worker. Students needed to learn that while clients may have requests, it's necessary to consult senior healthcare team members before making critical decisions.

After the recorded lecture topic students were given a scenario about a personal support worker with a temperamental home based client. An animated personal support worker named John, with an AI text-to-speech voice, appeared on the screen and walked the students through his daily schedule. Students were presented with questions such as "Mr. Alexander has been suffering from joint pain. What should I do?"

After questions were presented interactive multiple choice questions, generated with H5P, appeared on screen. Students had to choose from certain options that aligned with the boundaries of personal support workers. Correct answers resulted in students obtaining a point and the ability to move forward in the lesson. Incorrect answers resulted in students having to navigate back to the multiple choice questions and re-attempt the quizzes.

These interactive review games result in students being more engaged with online lectures because dense course material is fragmented into digestible components. Students are also given the ability to see how discussed topics apply in the workforce and get the chance to engage in simulated practice. Furthermore, emerging media and gamification elements improve user experiences and make scenarios more engaging and consumable.

CONCLUSION

Melissa from the film *Night School* eventually graduated with her high school diploma (Cohn, 2017). Despite the barriers, students who take alternative paths to receive secondary school credentials later pursue higher education. However, even as they push forward, many of these students face the shame related obstacles of other secondary school leavers (Kist, 2003). In his article *Non-Academic Challenges Faced by GED Scholars: A Report of the GED Scholars Initiative*, William Kist describes the fears of undergraduate students who have obtained a General Education certificate (2003). Challenges discussed in the qualitative study include not relating to peers and a fear of criticism.

In one interview, Kist discovered that students who have completed the GED have trouble working in group settings. One student mentioned 'wanting to scream and yell' when others gave her negative feedback in a group setting. Others felt like they couldn't relate

to their peers because they had alternative life experiences. Another student mentioned isolating herself from her other undergraduate students, even though she was of similar age because she felt like the other students couldn't relate to her life experiences.

While these students have navigated their way through high school equivalency coursework, they still haven't completely obtained the internal locus of control and value needed to ensure future success. Shame from both past and previous educational experiences still hinders their ability to feel confident and integrate themselves into mainstream academic culture.

Integrating digital gamification in high school equivalency course work can prepare these students for higher education opportunities by building confidence and an internal locus of control. By employing the use of digital gamification, high school equivalency seeking students can practice in real world environments and simulate interactions with diverse groups of people.

Introduced through engaging user experiences and external game-like motivation, secondary school leavers are eased into academic work. Rather than being reintroduced into familiar shame inducing scenarios, students are placed in environments that are hyper realistic and provide immediate gratification. In the end, students are better able to absorb educational concepts and pass equivalency exams. In this way, students can build an internal locus of control, because their retention of the course work will produce results that lead to successful outcomes.

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(UN)MASKED LEARNING: LIFE LESSONS FROM A PANDEMIC PRACTICE

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Abstract

I discuss findings from a narrative inquiry about the learning among *persistent maskers* who have continued to mask in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Attaching ideas of two critical scholars, I first develop the notion of *masked killjoy* and then consider the possibility that persistent masking can foster a form of *pedagogy for the privileged*.

Keywords: Public pedagogy, killjoy, pedagogy for the privileged, masking, COVID-19

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I share findings from a study with people I call *persistent maskers*, who continued to mask indoors through spring 2023. Following an explanation of my approach to masking, I outline the study. I consider two narratives that surfaced in eight transcripts, linked to two scholarly concepts: the *feminist killjoy* (Ahmed, 2010) and *pedagogy for the privileged* (Curry-Stevens, 2007). I close by commenting on the breadth and criticality of participants' learning and possible connections between those concepts.

MASKING AS PEDAGOGY AND ADULT LEARNING

Worldwide, political, social, cultural, and economic conditions have informed pandemic-related reactions (Agyapon-Ntra & McSharry, 2023). More locally, demographic characteristics and political affiliations affected support for masking and other measures. For example, masking was associated with left-leaning politics (Druckman et al., 2021; Young & Maroto, 2023) and older age (Cabot & Bushnik, 2022). In some countries, the response has been overseen centrally (Jung et al., 2021); in Canada, the United States, and other countries, responses have varied jurisdictionally (Cyr et al., 2021; White & Hébert-Dufresne, 2020). Trust in government and scientific expertise, the role of social and news media, and the presence of populist and social movements have affected pandemic-related information flow (DeCillia & Clark, 2023). Scientifically, knowledge and guidance have changed as people learned about the novel coronavirus and the virus mutated. Early advice focused on cleaning hands and surfaces, physical distancing, and avoiding indoor crowds expanded to include recommendations and, later, requirements for masking. Initial advice for surgical or two-layer cloth masks was replaced by advice for three-layer masks and, eventually, respirators.

I approach actors involved in knowledge-building about masking and COVID-19 as public pedagogues. Their public pedagogies have been shared through mass and social media, posters, graffiti, scientific reports and scholarly articles, public policy and advocacy statements, political speeches, rallies, and the behaviour of people in their sociomaterially contextualized everyday lives (Giroux, 2000; Jubas et al., 2021; Sandlin et al., 2011). Consistent with the view that literacy involves making sense of and using various types of

cues and information (Smythe, 2021; Taylor & Ghani, 2021), masking is a response to public pedagogy, evidence of a new literacy. Masking also functions as a process of public pedagogy, through which encounters with maskers become pedagogical. I treat persistent masking as both response and process.

OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

For this narrative inquiry, I conducted semi-structured Zoom interviews with people 18 and over, initially in Calgary and then in Victoria. Most participants were strangers recruited through social media; two were recruited in public spaces and two were pre-existing acquaintances. In recorded interviews lasting 50 to 90 minutes, I encouraged participants to share “tellings” (Connelly & Clandinen, 2006) of their experiences and learning about information sources, decision-making, responses of others, and lessons about self and others. Participants could choose a pseudonym or have one assigned. Participants could review their transcripts and request revisions to enhance clarity, accuracy, or completeness or to remove overly identifying or sensitive details. I use nVivo to store transcripts and highlight throughlines within interviews.

EIGHT PARTICIPANTS, TWO NARRATIVES

Here, I extend the original conceptualizations of Sara Ahmed (2010) and Ann Curry-Stevens (2007) to make sense of stories shared by eight Calgary-based participants (see Table 1).

Table 1. Key Details about the Included Participants

Pseudonym	Gender/ Sexual Identity	Age	Race	Family Status	Employment	Health Status
Brenda	Female, straight	50s	White	Married	Physician	Healthy
Andrew	Male, straight	20s	Mixed Race	Single	Student with couple of part- time jobs	Healthy
Beth	Female, straight	60s	White	Married, adult child at home	Healthcare worker	Healthy
DP	Male, straight	30s	White	Single	Retail worker	Healthy
Aspen	Non-binary	30s	White	Partnered	Postsecondary worker	Immuno- compromise d

Leah	Female, straight	30s	White	Married, young children	Childcare worker	Healthy
Stuart	Male, straight	30s	White	Partnered	Communications & marketing	Healthy
Wendy	Female, straight	40s	White	Married, young children	Art-making & education	Healthy

AHMED AND THE FEMINIST KILLJOY

First, I borrow Ahmed's (2010) concept of the feminist killjoy, who, in a happiness-obsessed cultural environ, "'spoils' the happiness of others; she is a spoilsport because she refuses to convene, to assemble, or to meet up over happiness" (p. 65). For Ahmed, killjoys can also be racialized or queer; they simply are "the ones who ruin the atmosphere, ... don't even have to say anything to be read as killing joy" (p. 65). In the rush to return to pre-pandemic norms of gathering in and moving through spaces, participants conveyed a sense of being seen by others as, extending Ahmed, masked killjoys.

Brenda's Story

As a doctor, Brenda understood that her age and gender, as well as her job, increased her risk for COVID-19 infection and outcomes, especially long-COVID. Convinced that—in her words—"the social contract has been broken" by the retreat of Alberta's public health experts and politicians from evidence-informed policy and guidance, she had recently resigned from her job.

I suppose that's why maybe a lot of people are choosing the opposite [of masking] because they don't wanna appear anxious. Maybe that's it, or fearful. ... Oh, that's so huge. Thankfully I haven't been accosted. ... [T]here's a little part of me that's always prepared for someone to say something. ... Let it happen and how am I gonna react? ... I would have a hard time just kind of staying calm. And there's a part of me that actually thinks about, you know, ... I have active TB, you know. I'm happy to take off my mask. ... [L]ike to make up some ridiculous thing. You know, you're gonna take me on about my mask? Let's see how courageous you are now.

Andrew's Story

As a fairly healthy, young man, Andrew was masked mostly to protect vulnerable community members, comparing masking to his practice of donating blood. Having recently given up alcohol, he was doubly motivated to avoid parties where there would be a lot of drinking and felt lucky to have like-minded friends when it came to COVID-19.

I tend to get a lot of weird looks throughout the day. It looks like confusion, but I'm not in their head. I don't really know what they're thinking. Since I'm masking and they don't versus when none of us are masking before COVID, I feel like people try to approach me

less to talk to me. And some of the people in my family that have stopped masking, one of them tried to make jokes about it saying that I was being paranoid.

Beth's Story

Beth talked about increasingly tense family relations, especially with her son and daughter-in-law. Tensions increased notably after her grandson started attending a preschool program.

It came to a head this April because they decided that we're being ridiculous and we're robbing him of his childhood and we can't even share meals and do things together. And so we have only seen them outside as of now and I don't know how winter's gonna go. ... I only have one grandson ... but I'm still not willing to compromise. ... So it's like, if you want us to come over to your place and we're allowed to wear our masks, then we'll come over. But if we're not, then I don't know what we'll do, right. ... They were very hurtful to me in April because ... it was their 10-year anniversary and I gave them a gift to go out to an event. ... [A]nd I said, And we'll babysit, right? And so then they said back, Thank you for the tickets, blah blah blah, but we're not gonna use you as a babysitter because we want [our son] to be able to have a pizza party and all these things. So that was very hurtful. So, they took the ticket, but they wouldn't even let us babysit.

DP's Story

A self-described introvert, DP did not miss the foregone social events, but encountered many people in his job. When mandates were dropped, masking declined, and plexiglass barriers were either abandoned or ignored, his concerns grew.

I've received a number of complaints at work because I've been asking people to stand behind the plexiglass. They're not saying anything about the mask, they're not saying anything about the plexiglass. They're just saying, He's rude, he's telling me where to stand. ... One complaint I've received ... is ... I made them feel like they were some sort of diseased urchin They shouldn't have disciplined someone for looking after their health. Our health and safety person, well she disagrees that COVID's an issue and she thinks I'm crazy.

Aspen's Story

With the support of a partner, family members, and friends, Aspen had a community who mirrored or respected their decision to continue masking, especially while on medical leave. Educated in the sciences, Aspen was a fan of science podcasts and articles, enjoyed reading and thinking about the philosophy of knowledge, and worked in the postsecondary education sector.

I recently had someone kind of confront me about wearing a mask so it has become more difficult in the last month. ... [B]ut yeah, physically not that bothersome. ... Yeah, it was a comment towards me. ... Yeah, it was on July 1st. ... Yeah, 'cause I'd like gone out to grab

a burger on Canada Day. ... And then someone made a comment at the burger place I went to.

Morals of Masked Killjoy Stories

Extending Ahmed's (2010) concept of feminist (or racialized or otherwise minoritized) killjoys, I understand persistent maskers as masked killjoys. A ninth participant, Stuart, described persistent maskers as "living reminders" of a hardship that, in most people's minds, has ended. Whether viewed as afraid and anxious or preachy and judgemental, participants learned that their presence might provoke mockery and harassment. In family, social, or collegial get-togethers, they risked being seen as the cause of tension that ruined otherwise happy occasions. Even if they had not faced direct conflicts, they had heard stories from acquaintances or on social media about such negative encounters. They were concerned about COVID-19, especially the still-unknowns of long COVID; those concerns were expected. What arose unexpectedly were the impromptu social challenges that followed their appearance as masked killjoys.

CURRY-STEVENS AND PEDAGOGY FOR THE PRIVILEGED

Next, I go to Ann Curry-Stevens's (2007) Freirian concept of pedagogy for the privileged, "which seeks to transform those with more advantages into allies of those with fewer" (p. 35). Unlike Curry-Stevens' focus on privileged community educators engaged in development work in the Global South, I return to the concept of public pedagogy and consider a form of unintended, everyday public pedagogy for the privileged that some participants described.

Leah's Story

Having studied child development, Leah started a home-based childcare business when the pandemic started, in part to provide the care and support her young children would need. She came to see the pandemic as a chance to learn how to be a better parent. Leah was the first participant recruited and, when I met her outside a grocery store, she was with her toddler and both donned masks as they prepared to go shopping.

It's so funny that I'm ... data-driven but in this particular instance I would say that ... my faith is not in the data. I would say my faith is in God and that he is gonna take care of me, but that doesn't mean that I don't mask because, like, God has said that COVID doesn't exist anymore. ... It's just a sad reality of, like, I don't know, the world we live in and capitalism and all of that, right. Like people have been taken advantage of forever and I think my eyes were, I have definitely learned a lot about the state of our world and ... the wealth transfer that happened during COVID, and the ethics behind it. ... [I]t's like, how much is enough people? Like I just don't understand how like, you know, millionaires became billionaires and there's people who are suffering and yet we just like don't really care. ... [W]e started riding our bikes around and ... I've been learning about city development and city planning and how our cities affect all this. Like this is definitely COVID-related, like how our cities are designed affects the way that we interact with people. And so part of the reason why I think we had such a hard time being inside is because we've designed a city that is an environment that is very isolating.

Stuart's Story

Initially motivated to follow experts on Twitter or podcasts for his own learning, he became increasingly interested in volunteering his time and skills to educational and activist groups, although he found it difficult to break into well-established circles. Articulate and clear-thinking, he described decision-makers and experts who abandoned public health priorities in favour of economic considerations as those with "economic skin in the game."

*It might be worth sharing that as a, like, highly privileged White dude, this has been an interesting perspective in being very othered. Like, ... I can empathize, or sympathize I suppose, not really empathize, but like that I've been able to intellectually understand those experiences. ... [I]t's like when ... you're the only person in the grocery store with a mask and you, true or not, you feel like the eyes are on you. It's been an interesting perspective to ... have, and again, I'm not at all trying to equate the experiences, but to have a moment where you're like, Oh wow! [Y]ou can have people who are suddenly like, Oh, I kind of get it, like holy s***! And then you can have that conversation, right?*

Wendy's Story

Wendy left her job shortly after the pandemic began, recognizing that "it was gonna take a lot of time to keep my children safe." Gradually, she became an advocate for indoor safety, especially improved ventilation in schools. By the time of her interview, she had a network of experts who shared material with her. Describing herself and her social circle as "progressive," she had a sophisticated analysis of COVID-19's links to social problems.

I think it's a human rights issue for us not to consider that there are clearly going to be people in society that ... the forces that be have decided are disposable, right? They sort of said, Oh, ... why should we sort of cater ... decisions of society towards this segment of disabled ... and elderly people. So for me, it's a moral issue. And also, I personally don't wanna get sick ... and like I don't want that for my children. I'm looking at these children as human beings that need to live in that body for decades and decades to come. ... So it's both personal—I want to protect myself, my children—and I think it's a moral issue to not protect, like I don't see a division between me and a person who has a chronic lung disease. I could be that [person], right? And if my child had that I would want people to care. ... I feel like my eyes are open to capitalism and just how incredibly ... at the mercy of it we are, like that ... indoor dining is as important to people as it is. That's very surprising to me. ... I would say that it's exposed ... this sort of intersectional thing going on with ableism and ... racism, right? Like if you look at the data for deaths in the US it's like much more people of colour. I think it is an enormously patriarchal and misogynist issue because if there will be the mass disabling event of long COVID, then it will be women predominantly who are the carers, right? ... Like, I think it's an extremely patriarchal win, ... to normalize COVID and to absorb COVID into our lives. It will remove more women from the workforce, ... into caregiving roles. ... So it's, yeah, it's all the big injustices are fired up, right?

Morals of Pedagogy for the Privileged Stories

Wendy, Stuart, and Leah were privileged in several ways: They were White, educated and middle class, straight, able-bodied and healthy, and could afford good-quality masks. They had access to two of the primary contemporary indicators of privilege: information technology and time to use it to investigate and learn. Curry-Stevens (2007) outlines several aspects of pedagogy for the privileged and they are illustrated in their stories. They all described intellectual and emotional changes. If their ideological stances were not changed, they were sharpened. Leah highlighted a spiritual dimension to her learning and Stuart's learning had a psychological dimension, as he came to understand himself in relation to minoritized people in a new way. The most activated of all, Wendy indicated behaviour changes, as she realized that "no one else is going to step up" on behalf of children and other vulnerable people. Aspects of Curry-Stevens' pedagogy for the privileged model were evident in each story, suggesting at least some movement toward the learning it implies.

DISCUSSION

Beyond technical lessons, persistent maskers have experienced learning with personal and social aspects, and intellectual, emotional, embodied, and spiritual dimensions. Understanding that others perceived them as masked killjoys, participants established how a health-related risk-mitigation practice brought social risks. In addition to understanding their identification as masked killjoys, the final three participants described a new or a deeper, more concrete understanding of their privilege. Clearly for Stuart, the embodied learning that followed his identification as a masked killjoy helped him relate to minoritized people, suggesting possible links between Ahmed's (2010) and Curry-Stevens's (2007) concepts. There are limits to the applicability of both Ahmed's and Curry-Stevens's concepts, though. Persistent maskers are not a social group and, unlike social identity, masking remains a choice rather than an assignment. Nonetheless, persistent maskers encounter or risk mockery or exclusion. I did not build the concepts of killjoy or pedagogy for the privileged into this study; however, taken together or separately, they help me make sense of stories that participants shared with me.

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BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: A COMPREHENSIVE LITERATURE REVIEW ON OLDER ADULTS EMBRACING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract

This literature review investigates the impact of digital technology on older adults, aiming to enhance their quality of life and tackle issues of social isolation. By examining recent research, the review identifies both benefits and challenges associated with technology adoption among older adults. It underscores the importance of understanding the diverse experiences and needs of older adults in integrating technology into their lives, providing insights for future research and practical applications to promote digital inclusion.

Keywords: Technology, older adults, benefits, challenges

INTRODUCTION

The introduction outlines the challenges faced by older adults in adopting technology, emphasizing the need to address these challenges to enhance their engagement with the digital world. It sets the stage for the subsequent chapters, which delve into the existing literature to explore the impacts, benefits, and challenges of technology use among older adults. As a second language teacher working with older adult learners, personal experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic underscore the diverse reactions of older adults to technology-dependent activities, informing the research questions and objectives aimed at contributing to their digital inclusion.

METHODOLOGY

Digital technologies have revolutionized various aspects of society, including communication and access to information. However, older adults' engagement with technology is not uniform, with challenges such as diverse accessibility levels, digital literacy gaps, and prior academic experiences influencing their adoption and usage patterns.

Research Question

The research questions explore the multifaceted relationship between older adults and digital technology, aiming to understand its impacts, benefits, and challenges. By synthesizing responses to these inquiries, the study seeks to determine whether technology serves as a facilitator or obstacle for older adults and identify strategies for addressing challenges.

Method of Inquiry

A comprehensive literature review approach is employed, focusing on studies published between 2017 and 2023 to include recent research findings. Various academic databases, including ProQuest, JMRI, ERIC, and Google Scholar, are utilized to gather relevant scholarly articles.

The literature review aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the relationship between older adults and digital technology. It identifies both the positive impacts and challenges associated with technology adoption among older adults, emphasizing the need for tailored approaches to promote digital inclusion and enhance their quality of life.

Literature Review

In examining older adults' relationship with technology, attitudes emerge as pivotal, echoing Lee's (2021) insights into their diverse perspectives. This review navigates three key areas: "Older Adults and Technology," "Older Adults Benefit from Technology," and "Challenges and Barriers to Older Adults' Use of Technology." Lee's work illustrates the complexity of older adults' attitudes, ranging from enthusiasm to skepticism (Lee, 2021).

The first dimension explores older adults' interactions with digital innovations, highlighting varied responses from embracement to reservation (Lee, 2021). Benefits like improved communication and well-being are evident (Chen et al., 2023). However, challenges such as the digital divide and usability issues persist (Lee, 2021).

Technological literacy is crucial, with tailored approaches needed to address diverse motivations and barriers (Benge et al., 2023). Training programs, family involvement, and financial support can enhance adoption (Haase et al., 2021). Recognizing older adults' unique needs and adapting interventions accordingly is essential (Astell et al., 2020).

The "gray digital divide" underscores demographic influences on adoption (McMath, 2017). Positive messaging and increasing computer self-efficacy are key to bridging this gap (McMath, 2017). Additionally, understanding motivational stages aids in designing effective interventions (McMath, 2017).

"Benefits from Technology for Older Adults" delves into the transformative impact of technology across social connection, education, collaboration, and well-being (Phillips, 2019). Technology mitigates isolation, empowers education, fosters collaboration, and nurtures social networks (Naudé et al., 2023; Koutska & Biniek, 2021; Hannan-Leith, 2022).

Effective technology training programs are vital for realizing these benefits (Phillips, 2019). By enhancing digital literacy, older adults gain independence, employment opportunities, and enriched social connections (Phillips, 2019). As technology evolves, so too will the scope of benefits for older adults, promising a more connected and fulfilling digital age experience (Phillips, 2019).

In exploring the intricate relationship between older adults and technology, attitudes emerge as a central factor, as emphasized by Lee (2021) in their examination of the diverse spectrum of older adults' attitudes towards technology. This literature review chapter aims to comprehensively delve into this multifaceted relationship by navigating three foundational categories: "Older Adults and Technology," "Older Adults Benefit from Technology," and "Challenges and Barriers to Older Adults' Use of Technology."

Lee's insights shed light on the complexity of older adults' attitudes, ranging from enthusiastic embracement to passive reservation. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing targeted strategies that cater to the diverse attitudes within this demographic. The first category, "Older Adults and Technology," serves as a canvas to unravel the dynamics of their interaction with digital innovations, revealing varied responses from embracement to reservation (Lee, 2021). While benefits like improved communication and well-being are evident, challenges such as the digital divide and usability issues persist (Chen et al., 2023).

To address these challenges, technological literacy emerges as a crucial component, with tailored approaches needed to overcome diverse motivations and barriers (Benge et al., 2023). The "gray digital divide" further underscores demographic influences on adoption, emphasizing the importance of positive messaging and increasing computer self-efficacy to bridge this gap (McMath, 2017).

In the realm of benefits, technology's transformative impact on social connection, education, collaboration, and well-being is profound (Phillips, 2019). Technology not only mitigates isolation and empowers education but also fosters collaboration and nurtures social networks, enhancing older adults' overall quality of life (Naudé et al., 2023; Koutska & Biniek, 2021; Hannan-Leith, 2022).

Effective technology training programs are crucial for realizing these benefits, enabling older adults to gain independence, employment opportunities, and enriched social connections (Phillips, 2019). As technology continues to evolve, the potential for older adults to lead fulfilling and connected lives in the digital age grows, promising a brighter future for digital inclusion and well-being (Phillips, 2019).

Lina Lee's (2021) dissertation, titled "Reconceptualizing the Engagement of Older Adults in the Use of Interactive Technology," delves into the underexplored realm of initial engagement among older adults with interactive technologies. Recognizing the impending "silver tsunami" and the transformative impact of technology on the aging population, the study employs a mixed-method approach to assess interventions and identify key factors influencing older adults' initial engagement.

The research contributes a novel model for understanding older adults' engagement with interactive technology, introducing an active-passive spectrum of behaviors and highlighting the critical role of initial engagement over need and usability. Emphasizing the social context, Lee argues for providing a positive and pleasurable technology experience for older adults, fostering self-efficacy, and gradually reducing resistance. The dissertation underscores the need for comprehensive perspectives in technology design, especially in the current COVID-19 era, and sets the stage for designing interactive systems that cater to the unique needs of older adults, enhancing their overall engagement with technology.

A Comparative Analysis

Within this thesis, two cases extracted from Lee's (2021) dissertation undergo meticulous analysis. These cases shed light on the attitudes of older adults toward technology adoption, with one characterized by a positive disposition and the other by a negative

orientation. Bob's case reflects a seamless integration with technology, driven by emotional connections and peer support. In contrast, John's aversion stems from physical discomfort and reluctance to explore new devices.

A comparative analysis highlights the significance of willingness and desire in shaping technology attitudes. Bob's positive engagement underscores the transformative potential of technology, while John's challenges emphasize the need for tailored interventions. Recommendations include personalized educational programs, user-friendly design, and addressing psychological barriers. Understanding individual preferences is crucial for fostering inclusive technology adoption among older adults, ultimately enhancing their well-being and quality of life in the digital age.

Acknowledging older adults as both beneficiaries and a significant economic force, the literature review advocates for tailored interventions, educational programs, and user-friendly interfaces as key strategies (Nguyen, 2021). Emphasizing a holistic approach, it stresses the importance of equipping older adults with skills and seamlessly integrating them into a digital society that fosters well-being and active participation across all age groups (Arieli et al., 2023). The profound impact of willingness and desire on older adults' technology engagement underscores the necessity of understanding and addressing these psychological aspects for a more inclusive and enriching technological landscape.

Impacts of Digital Technology on Older Adults

This chapter explores the profound impact of technology on older adults, both pre-pandemic and during and post-pandemic. It begins by examining the general influence of technology on various aspects of older adults' lives, including daily activities, social interactions, access to information, and overall well-being. The chapter then delves into the specific challenges and opportunities presented by technology during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the surge in remote work, telehealth, and virtual social interactions. Furthermore, it discusses how older adults have adapted to these changes, highlighting the importance of resilience and resourcefulness.

Pre-COVID Era

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, older adults faced challenges in adapting to digital technologies, with varying attitudes toward technology adoption. Active older adults showed enthusiasm for technology, while passive ones exhibited skepticism. Technology played a crucial role in facilitating social interactions and combating social isolation among older adults (Haase et al., 2021; Lee, 2021).

COVID-19 Pandemic

The pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital technologies across sectors, emphasizing their role in maintaining essential services, enabling remote work, and delivering healthcare (De' et al., 2020; Erben et al., 2023). However, language barriers posed significant challenges for older immigrants, hindering their access to and proficiency with technology (Xu et al., 2023).

Post-COVID Era

Addressing social inequality and the continued challenges posed by language barriers remain crucial post-pandemic. Recognizing factors influencing older adults' initial engagement with technology is essential for designing tailored solutions, considering aspects like desirability, social aspects, familiarity, cognitive activity, and peer support (Lee, 2021).

Strategies for Increasing Technological Literacy

To address these challenges, tailored training programs, hands-on learning opportunities, patient instructors, and accessible devices are essential (Erben et al., 2023). Peer learning, emphasizing real-world relevance, and providing continuous support are also crucial (Haase et al., 2021). Offering flexible learning options, encouraging regular practice, and promoting positive messaging can enhance technological literacy among older adults. Additionally, involving family members, and caregivers, and providing financial assistance can facilitate technology adoption (Lee, 2021).

RESULTS

In summary, digital technology profoundly impacts older adults, with significant shifts observed before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Addressing challenges such as social inequality and language barriers while recognizing factors influencing technology adoption is critical for promoting digital inclusion among older adults. By implementing targeted strategies and fostering a supportive environment, we can enhance older adults' technological literacy and improve their overall well-being in an increasingly digital society.

Limitations and Recommendations

In this concluding part, the culmination of the literature review on older adults embracing digital technology is reflected upon, considering implications, recommendations, and inherent study limitations (Johnson & Miller, 2023). The journey traversed the complexities of older adults' interaction with, benefits from, and challenges in adopting digital technology (Montepare & Brown, 2022). Key takeaways and implications for academia and practical application are distilled.

The implications extend beyond theoretical discourse into practical realms such as policymaking, technology design, healthcare delivery, and societal well-being (Smith, 2022). Understanding older adults' technology interaction empowers stakeholders to devise age-inclusive strategies and interventions. A user-centered approach in developing digital solutions tailored for older adults is emphasized, highlighting technology's potential to enhance their quality of life and mitigate feelings of isolation.

Recommendations are offered across various domains based on implications drawn from the literature. For policymakers, fostering a supportive regulatory environment to incentivize technology companies prioritizing older adults is crucial (Nguyen, 2021). Healthcare providers are urged to leverage telehealth and digital health solutions for enhanced accessibility and efficiency. Designers and developers should incorporate universal design principles, ensuring intuitive, accessible digital products and services (Lee, 2021).

Acknowledging limitations is imperative. While providing a comprehensive overview, reliance on secondary sources limits firsthand exploration or primary data collection, potentially impacting insights' depth. The rapidly changing nature of technology presents challenges in keeping pace with emerging trends and innovations.

CONCLUSION

This section serves as both a culmination and a call to action, marking the conclusion of the exploration into older adults' engagement with digital technology. It encapsulates the findings' implications and offers recommendations for a future where technology empowers and includes older adults (Johnson & Miller, 2023). By honoring older adults' wisdom and experiences, a commitment is forged towards enhancing the digital landscape for the aging population.

In conclusion, older adults' embracing of technology is a significant phenomenon with profound implications for their well-being and societal inclusion (Montepare & Brown, 2022). Tailored interventions, user-centric design, and collaboration among stakeholders are essential for creating a digital landscape where older adults thrive. Understanding nuanced psychological aspects is critical for designing technology solutions that align with older adults' needs, ultimately enhancing their well-being and quality of life (Arieli et al., 2023).

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ADULT FINANCIAL LITERACY EDUCATION CURRICULUM NEEDS TO BE REDESIGNED TO ADVANCE SOCIAL JUSTICE

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Abstract

This essay outlines the current state of adult financial literacy education in Canada. It considers some principles of social justice, and the specific goal of equity. Colonialism and capitalism are two prejudicial factors that affect the attitudes of adults. These concepts are explored briefly, noting how they in turn influence both the financial services industry and financial literacy education curriculum. The paper presents what adult financial literacy curriculum looks like in Canada and gives specific examples of why amended and updated curriculum is essential. Throughout, it elaborates on how redesigning and redefining financial literacy curriculum offerings reduces inequities through the promotion of social justice.

Keywords: financial literacy, equity, social justice, adult education, lifelong learning, curriculum

INTRODUCTION

Education is best when it is inclusive, relevant, and sparks discussion. Educational curriculum should raise awareness, provide accurate knowledge, and invite students to share their own anecdotal experiences. Burgeoning financial literacy research is considering how educational curriculum is developed, how financial confidence directs decision making, and how learners may begin to question the financial system as a whole. The incorporation of equity into financial literacy programs addresses all of these considerations. Redesigning adult financial literacy education curriculum will advance social justice, increase financial literacy, and help diminish inequities.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

The meaning of social justice has evolved. The Canadian government's definition of social justice, modified in 2022, reads: "...the concept of a society that gives individuals and groups fair treatment and an equitable share of the benefits of society. In this context, social justice is based on the concepts of human rights and equity..."(Government of Canada, 2010). Specific to education, Adams et. al (1997) wrote one of the first instructional sourcebooks, *Teaching for diversity and social justice*, declaring that "The goal of social justice education is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable..." (p. 3). Over the past quarter century, researchers in the domain of financial literacy education have coalesced their own definitions of social justice and declared it a relevant, influential concept (Adams et al., 2022; Barrett & James, 2018; Buckland & Spotton Visano, 2022; Pinto & Coulson, 2011; Tutters et al., 2018; Visano & Ek-Udofia, 2017). Social justice advocates aim to create greater equity within society.

Equity is a cornerstone of social justice. It strives to promote fairness and impartiality among all people. It recognizes that systemic prejudice (sometimes driven by colonialism and capitalism attitudes) prevents equal access. Whereas equality presumes to give everyone the same treatment, options, resources and support, equity necessitates a redistribution of resources within societal structures and institutions (Social Equity Working Group Curriculum Committee, 2022). Equity advocates that people disadvantaged by systemic prejudice and bias are provided with more substantial supports so that they can rise to the same level of open opportunities as people who do not face endemic barriers.

However, social justice is not always defined as a positive, equity-seeking movement. For those who benefit from the status quo - namely individuals, communities and political states with societal advantage in terms of wealth, ethnicity, language, education, age, ability and religion - it is understandable that some are reticent to favour a redistribution of resources. Social justice movements will reduce their societal influence, wealth and power.

STATUS QUO, CAPITALISM AND COLONIALISM

Proceeding with a more robust understanding of social justice and equity, it is also important to consider societal forces that extol the status quo. For adult financial literacy curriculum, colonialism and capitalism are especially relevant. They can be instruments of systemic prejudice and bias, and purposely resist social justice work. Capitalism is “an economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership of capital goods, by investments that are determined by private decision, and by prices, production, and the distribution of goods that are determined mainly by competition in a free market” (Merriam Webster, n.d.). Most economists accept the capitalist system. Economic discourse sometimes includes discussion of income inequality, racial inequality and gender inequality, but economic research continues to be focussed on income and wealth which can be measured with mathematics and statistics rather than social justice (J. Sawler, personal communication, November 14, 2023).

Capitalism has the potential to expand opportunities for everyone. Vast wealth is created through private ownership, entrepreneurship and free-market investments. In turn, this wealth allows for better services across society, particularly in employment, housing, health, and education. A progressive tax system helps to redistribute money from wealthy corporations and individuals to finance opportunities for those with lower incomes through education, health and social services (Piketty, 2022). There are advantages of moderated capitalism. However, while social justice and capitalism coexist in Canada right now, they generally have competing primary goals. Social justice strives for equity, and capitalism promotes wealth accumulation and the status quo.

Colonialism, defined as “domination of a people or area by a foreign state or nation: the practice of extending and maintaining a nation's political and economic control over another people or area...” (Merriam Webster, n.d.), also favours the status quo. Declaring superiority and then protecting it through directed policies and rules, guarantees the exclusion of others. Shamefully, some consider that being powerful in society, often from unearned privilege, is justification enough to delegate other groups to have less access, less opportunity, less wealth, and thereby diminished power. Institutions, policies, social

structures are overtly designed to include and advance members of the group that has declared superiority, and to exclude everyone else. This is systemic prejudice. This is Canada's status quo.

Colonialism and prejudice are inextricably linked. Embedded in colonialism is competition. I am better than you. I have more choices than you. I can do more than you. This dovetails well with capitalism. I have more money than you. I have more things than you. I have more power than you. Social justice is left in the cold.

Most adult financial literacy education curriculum replicates the status quo (Blue & Pinto, 2017; Buckland, 2010; Visano & Ek-Udofia, 2017; Williams, 2007) and encourages an approach to money management that projects capitalist principles (Arthur, 2012; Buckland, 2010; Harkins & Singer, 2018; Henderson et al., 2021; Tutters et al., 2018; Williams, 2007; Pinto, 2012). However, financial literacy education can evolve into an instrument of decolonization. By immediately reducing and eventually eliminating prejudicial curriculum, and instead offering education that is accurate, balanced, and inclusive of stories and perspectives from all groups, equity is emphasized. Critical thinking and open evaluation of our institutions and systems, along with the questioning of assumptions and biases (unconscious or not) are paramount. These are methods for advancing social justice. The inclusion of social justice values in financial literacy curriculum reduces the harms of colonialism, excessive capitalism, and prejudice (Daniels et al., 2021; Visano & Ek-Udofia, 2017).

FINANCIAL LITERACY EDUCATION

Independent of social justice, there is an increased emphasis on financial literacy education in Canada. Exacerbated by the 2008-2009 financial crisis, the call for improving Canadians' financial acumen grows louder. Businesses, schools, grassroot organizations, and government agencies are promoting the benefits of teaching skills that enable adults to responsibly and actively manage their money throughout their lifetimes. Whether for post-secondary education or parenthood, employment or retirement, financial literacy allows one to properly understand concepts like interest calculations, Canada's graduated tax system, budgeting, and basic effects of inflation. Elevated levels of financial literacy correlate with higher levels of education and greater propensity to save for the future (Rothwell & Wu, 2019). Ensuring that adults in Canada learn the fundamental skills of financial literacy is advantageous.

Much research on financial literacy education considers the offerings at elementary and secondary schools (Henderson et al., 2021; Henning & Lucey, 2017; Matheson, 2019; Visano & Ek-Udofia, 2017). Specific to lifelong learning, adequate research has been done to measure levels of financial literacy using quantitative data from Canadian Financial Capability Survey (Buckland, 2010; Nicolini et al., 2013; Rostamkalaei & Riding, 2020; Rothwell & Wu, 2019). Portions of financial literacy education research preclude social justice entirely. Instead, the foci is how expansion of financial literacy education programs allows for the proliferation of existing financial behaviors that perpetuate the status quo (Durodola, 2017; Jonker & Kosse, 2022; Rostamkalaei & Riding, 2020). This is not sufficient. Visano & Ek-Udofia (2017) caution:

The focus of financial literacy education on remedying an individual's knowledge and skills deficits raises a number of concerns, however. The premise that education's purpose is to remedy any 'deficit' of an already economically marginalised learner is, alone, problematic; in financial literacy education, such a premise risks socialising the marginalised learner into an acceptance of the very power structures that created their economic marginalisation in the first place. (p. 763)

Social justice must be imbedded into financial literacy education curriculum if Canada is to evolve into a more equitable society.

The vast majority of Canadian residents must interact with the financial services industry for basic banking, credit facilities and investments. Entry points for substantive change to the financial industry are narrow. Overtly, the industry may declare that people have equal opportunity to invest and earn profits; however, rules, corporate actions, and history foster exclusion of marginalized groups. When there is limited generational wealth (family assets passed down to younger generations) among Black Canadians, they lack an equal opportunity to earn interest and dividends alongside white families who have inherited wealth-producing assets. Using social justice as a fresh lens on policy-based decision making within financial institutions sheds light on where change is needed most and how to extend privileges to marginalized individuals.

Current financial literacy curriculum explains how Canadians interact with existing institutions such as banks, credit unions, and stock markets. Many adult financial literacy workshops focus on skill sets for budgeting, savings, and credit applications as though one size fits all. With an approach that advocates what is good for one is good for another in equal measure, therein lies a suggestion that the current financial system gives equal favour to all Canadians. (As established, equality is not equity.) If one has the impression through financial literacy curriculum that there are no biases within the Canadian financial system, there would be no reason to change the industry. If people interacting with the financial system accept that there are no inequities to be righted, and by consequence offer no opposition, the unfair system would continue. The status quo would be maintained and reproduced by complacency, again.

The bulk of current financial literacy courses and workshops discuss financial literacy using contexts of capitalism and the existing (predominant) status quo. Arthur (2012) expands on how questioning of the current system rarely occurs. "Financial literacy education texts and advocates too often promote a neoliberal equal inequality, justifying the financial outcomes of the winners and the losers without subjecting the (neoliberal) capitalist system, which restricts the possible outcomes in advance of the contest, to any critical scrutiny" (p. 168). Groups of marginalized people, even if they have full understanding of the financial systems in 2024, remain excluded from some or all power-bestowing advantages of wealth accumulation, property ownership, and entrepreneurship. Sexism, racism, ablism, morality and privilege are inherent in much of the present day curriculum (Arthur, 2012; Blue & Pinto, 2017; Henderson et al., 2020; Visano & Ek-Udofia, 2017).

Systemic prejudice is not seriously addressed in financial literacy curriculum, although it may receive passing comment. Redesigned financial literacy education must include an open, honest critique of social issues perpetuating financial inequality; curriculum designed to elucidate “an individual’s ability to obtain, understand and evaluate the relevant information necessary to make decisions with an awareness of the likely financial consequences” (Mason & Wilson, 2001). Social justice education is the active intension to design educational curriculum to improve the lives of marginalized groups or populations that are systematically discriminated against and socially, politically, and economically excluded by the dominant group or culture (Social Equity Working Group Curriculum Committee, 2022).

AMENDING CURRICULUM

Specific to financial literacy education, curriculum that advances social justice invites learners to explore systems, rules, and policies that prevent participation from all societal groups. While some exclusions within the financial system may be deemed necessary (people who are attempting to commit fraud or theft), other guidelines block equitable participation. For example, a bank dictates that a borrower must produce tax returns to qualify for a loan. There are legal provisions allowing some Indigenous people to not file taxes. They may legitimately never have filed their taxes (Government of Canada, 1999). By making tax returns mandatory, the bank excludes lending to these Indigenous individuals and businesses. The systems, rules, and policies in place within the financial industry are structured to preserve the current status quo.

There is extensive talk of equity, and its value, among educational, corporate and government organizations in 2024. Lip service to equity and diversity is insufficient to redress oppressive financial systems. By situating equity as a societal priority within financial literacy education, social justice principles are interwoven into new curriculum. Advancing social justice benefits the national community. Financial literacy curriculum should attempt to reduce capitalism’s influence so that the aspirations of social justice can be attained alongside equitable financial opportunities.

The Canadian government’s definition of financial literacy is “having the knowledge, skills and confidence to make responsible financial decisions” (Task Force on Financial Literacy, 2010). It follows that making responsible financial decisions needs to be predicated on what the individual or group of people themselves need rather than the action that the institution wants them to take. Financial literacy education should be designed specifically for the audience of each course. In-class adaptation of curriculum is required to elucidate the understanding and comprehension of learners. For instance, older adults wanting to learn about online banking options have different assumptions, approaches, and curriculum expectations compared to a group of international post-secondary students trying to detect fraudulent banking messages.

Financial literacy education curriculum must be practical and offer specific, universal money management skills (how to calculate interest on an outstanding credit card balance; how to create a budget; how to file taxes), along with contextual facts about the current structure of the financial systems. Pairing context and practical tools within the curriculum promotes

an individual's ability to challenge and question power dynamics. Sharing an accurate perspective of what financial structures look like in Canada ensures that the adult learner has an understanding of what is available and why, and gives them the tools to decide whether or not they are going to participate within that same financial system. This is a critical element of broadening social justice principles into financial literacy education.

A new dimension of financial literacy curriculum rebalances some of the power that comes with know-how and experience. Redesigning financial literacy curriculum will play a positive, influential role on calling out financial systems, and demanding that they respond to the needs and human rights of everyone. Buckland and Spotton Visano (2022) highlight this stating:

... the current market-focused economy, with its focus on economic growth, crowds out the principal of equity. Yet equity is central to creating an economy that can support the different challenges faced by financially vulnerable people. For equity to play a more central role in finances and economy, this principle must become more significant within the education system. (Chapter 7 abstract)

By creating financial literacy curriculum that addresses the systemic prejudice permeating existing financial systems, our entire society will be enriched.

Being 'financially literate' is one's ability to evaluate and inquire about available choices, and then consider the best option based on one's own financial well-being and priorities. Robust financial literacy education is more valuable to the learner than a list of instructions towards a predetermined course of action. For instance, financial literacy promotes individuals doing research on Registered Retirement Savings Plans (RRSP) to consider the benefits and downsides of such an account in context of their own needs and resources. This is a preferred critical evaluation compared to everyone opening an RRSP account "to save taxes" just because a financial literacy course directed them to. Pinto (2012) succinctly states two elements of financial literacy described above: "A financially literate individual, therefore, has some general understanding of financial systems and knows how to carry out routine tasks and transactions – but more importantly, the financially literate individual recognizes how his/her/[their] social position creates unique opportunities and challenges, and how financial systems can privilege and marginalize various individuals and groups" (p. 178).

Fostering awareness of probable financial consequences stemming from a person's decision making is urgently required across all financial literacy curriculum. Status quo education has a false emphasis: if one is financially literate, one will be successful through making appropriate, cost-effective decisions (Faulkner, 2022; Morris et al., 2022). It is the concept that appropriate and cost-effective decisions apply equitably to everyone. This perspective is erroneous. Consider mortgages. Having a mortgage amortized over a shorter period of time of 15 years is more cost-effective in that less interest is paid over the mortgage's duration than a 25-year mortgage. However, the 25-year mortgage has a lower monthly payment. Reduced monthly expenses may be a preferred choice for a home owner so that they can afford rising living costs, and still set aside some savings. What

each person considers financial success depends on a plethora of factors – individual, cultural, and societal. Financial literacy education must reflect this.

A social justice approach in financial literacy education confronts the detrimental consequences of colonialism, capitalism and prejudice. Who has access to having a basic bank account, borrowing money, earning interest, and accessing government benefits and credits (and paying taxes) through Canada's income tax system (Pham et al., 2020)? What groups do not have these options and why? What practices limit participation? What policies protect the rights of Canadians? These questions need to be answered within financial literacy curriculum. We must shift the emphasis of financial literacy education from wealth accumulation for its own sake to discussions on how individuals and groups can have equitable access to financial services.

CONCLUSION

A redesigned financial literacy curriculum would acknowledge that current financial systems give favour to some individuals and groups of people and less favour to others. "Without attention to such issues of equity, financial literacy education is reduced to replicating inequities, and contributes to the continued marginalization of already vulnerable populations" (Pinto & Coulson, 2011). Revamping adult financial literacy educational curriculum with principles of social justice - equity in particular - is paramount. Such action will enhance financial literacy among Canadians, reduce the prejudice inherent in the status quo, and diminish the inequities among marginalized groups in society.

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“REDEFINING” ADULT EDUCATION: COMMUNITY, PRACTITIONERS AND RESEARCHERS COMING TOGETHER TO ADVANCE AIMS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR WOMEN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN THE CITY OF LONDON, ONTARIO

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Abstract

Introduction and Study Objectives: In a Canadian context, lack of women-specific housing and supports drive women into emergency shelters and services that are not designed to respond to their needs, and are often underfunded and overwhelmed. As a result, many women remain trapped in traumatizing situations of homelessness and violence. Responding to the City of London, Ontario strategic planning, the purpose of this project was to centre women and girls fleeing gender-based violence (GBV) who need access to safe and affordable housing. This paper reports on the preliminary findings from year 3 of a study focused on homelessness and GBV. **Methods:** 50 women with lived experience participated in 7 semi-structured focus group discussions conducted at 5 community-based organizations across the City of London. Focus groups ran in person for 2-2 1/2 hours each and were then transcribed to maximize data collected. **Findings:** Preliminary thematic analysis revealed thirteen actionable recommendations, including funding for low barrier overnight resting spaces or temporary housing for women with children; providing training for coordinated access system and front-line staff; promoting landlord engagement and education, and establishment of a Safe House for sexually exploited and sex trafficked girls and women, to name a few. **Conclusions:** Study recommendations will inform the City of London policies and programming to improve housing services for women and girls experiencing GBV violence. Our study provides evidence and tools to inform practice of adult educators in engaging with communities to advance aims of social justice.

Key Words: Community-based participatory action research; community-university partnership; violence against women; housing for women impacted by gender-based violence.

INTRODUCTION

This paper presentation brings together community, practitioners and researchers to address the issue of homelessness affecting vulnerable women communities in the City of London. Directly reflecting the theme of the CASAE 2024 conference, as presenters of this paper we “redefine” adult education by creating and renewing “understandings of our practices... to enter a dialectical, practical, non-hierarchical, and potentially transformational space ... where we gather, exchange ideas and learn together”. This presentation will provide us with the opportunity, as researchers and practitioners, to “(re)construct multidisciplinary ways of knowing, being and doing adult education” as we work to advance aims of social justice for women’s homelessness in the City of London.

STUDY BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The report "State of Women's Homelessness in Canada" (Schwan et al., 2020) emphasizes the link between homelessness and gender-based violence, noting that homeless women are disproportionately likely to have experienced violence and abuse. According to the findings of this study, women are frequently forced to choose between staying in an unsafe home and becoming homeless, which can lead to additional violence and trauma. Women are forced into emergency shelters and programmes that may not recognise them as homeless, are not designed to meet their needs, and are frequently underfunded and overburdened. Women and people of colour suffer some of the greatest disadvantages as the demand for shelter beds rises. There are fewer women-specific emergency shelter beds in Canada; 68% of shelter beds are co-ed or dedicated to males, while 13 % are allocated to women (Schwan et al., 2020).

Furthermore, while 38% of beds in Canada's "general" emergency shelters are reported to be co-ed or open to all genders (Schwan et al., 2020), research consistently shows that many women will avoid co-ed shelters for fear of violence or because they have experienced violence within those spaces. As a result, many women continue to be trapped in traumatic situations of homelessness and violence (Schwan et al., 2020).

Different communities and neighbourhoods in London, Ontario are affected by housing insecurity in various ways, but typically for the same reasons. According to a City of London report (2018), about 37% of the homeless individuals who were surveyed on the street identified as female, constituting 45% of the homeless individuals surveyed in emergency shelters. The most frequently cited reasons for women's homelessness were eviction/being asked to leave (33%), family conflict/violence (28%) and financial difficulties (21%). After leaving an emergency shelter, only 34% of women experiencing homelessness had access to safe and stable housing, compared to 47% of men. These statistics illustrate the gendered nature of homelessness and the obstacles women in London face in gaining access to safe, stable housing (City of London, 2018).

The purpose of this project is to centre and amplify the voices of women and girls fleeing or experiencing violence who need access to safe and affordable housing in the City. We attempted to address the following research questions:

1. How does the housing system meet the needs of women and girls fleeing violence

2. What special support should be put in place to help women and girls fleeing violence access / retain housing?
3. What does the City of London need to put in place in order to address the risk for family violence and provide access to needed housing services?

METHODS

In 2020/2021, a partnership developed between Brescia University College at Western University and the London Abused Women's Centre (LAWC), a woman-centered service agency in London, Ontario. Over the past two years, our team has triangulated evidence by collecting data using diverse sources in order to strengthen validity of our findings. In year one, the study involved interviewing service providers; in year two one-on-one interviews with women with lived experiences and survivors were conducted. In its third year of operation, this study built on a new community partnership involving 13 violence against women sector leaders to run focus group interviews in order to identify the challenges and barriers that women fleeing gender-based violence face in finding safe and affordable housing. This paper reports on the preliminary findings from year 3 of the study.

The project received full ethics approval from Brescia Research Ethics Board, Brescia University College at Western.

PARADIGMATIC APPROACH

This community-university partnership was motivated by a need identified by the community, with community members actively participating in the research process. Participatory action research (PAR) is an approach that values diverse expertise, seeks to address real-world problems in local contexts, and pursues multiple avenues of social transformation. Through PAR, participants are able to reflect on how political, economic, and cultural structures influence their experiences and navigate these structures to effect change. In this approach to research, knowledge is generated by participant participation throughout the research process, resulting in decolonization and democratization of knowledge production. Ultimately, PAR's collaborative approach can contribute to a more just and equitable society (Brydon-Miller & Damons, 2019; Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon 2014; O'Neil, Kteily-Hawa, Janzen Le Ber, 2022; Park, 2001; Torre, Fine, Stoudt, & Fox, 2012).

SAMPLING STRATEGY

The present study employed purposive sampling with a non-probability approach. Participants are limited to women who meet the study's inclusion criteria, which includes identifying as an adult woman, experiencing gender-based violence, and having difficulty finding housing. As a committee member of the London Homelessness Coalition: Women's Priority Table for the past year, the first author RKH reached out to the committee to provide help with recruitment. The Women's Priority Table members who are leaders in the Violence Against Women Sector in the London community and co-authors on this paper, assisted in identifying and contacting women who meet the study's criteria for recruitment. From the pool of eligible participants, a total of 50 women with lived experience participated in 7 semi-structured focus group discussions conducted at 5 community-based

organizations across the City of London. Each focus group was 2-2 1/2 hours long and detailed field notes were transcribed. Data collection is still under way and an 8th focus group discussion will take place in May, 2024.

DATA COLLECTION APPROACH

Members of the London Homelessness Coalition: Women's Priority Table provided 13 recommendations to address the above research questions and based on their experiences serving women affected by and fleeing gender-based violence in the City of London. Focus group discussions were conducted in person with women who use local centres in the City.

Focus groups discussions are distinct from other methods of data collection such as individual interviews because they encourage spontaneous interaction among participants. The type and range of data generated by group social interaction are frequently deeper and richer than those obtained from one-on-one interviews (Thomas, 2006). The focus group method also investigates how the group members think and feel about the topic in depth (Dreachslin, 1999; Leitao & Vergueiro, 2000). The themes identified through the focus group approach will inform the development of interventions to improve access to safe and affordable housing for women and children fleeing gender-based violence.

During focus group discussions, participants were asked to share their perspectives on the local housing system's suitability for women and girls fleeing violence. Two to three recommendations were addressed in each focus group discussion and women provided additional insights on each recommendation. The goal was to triangulate the information gathered from service providers with the participants. See table 1 for the 13 recommendations provided.

DATA ANALYSIS

The researchers' field notes and summaries were included in the data analysis, as well as verbatim transcription and anonymization of interviews. Throughout data collection and beyond, analytical questions were posed and memos were written (Creswell, 2014). Because the analysis was guided by explicit research objectives as well as the data itself, a general inductive analytical approach was deemed appropriate (Creswell, 2014). The iterative and emergent process enabled the extraction of frequent, recurring, or central themes from raw data (Thomas, 2006). Data analysis is still under way.

FINDINGS

The study's preliminary findings are presented in accordance with the thirteen (13) recommendations provided by the Homelessness Coalition: Women's Priority Table members. These recommendations along with the themes emerging from the focus groups will be collated into a policy brief and presented to London City Council in Summer, 2024. See Table 1.

Table 1: Recommendations

1. Provide funding for space for a minimum ten to twenty low barrier overnight resting spaces for those who have barriers to traditional shelter beds and who identify as women. One of the Hubs should be specific to women/individuals identifying as women.
2. Provide funding for resting spaces or temp housing for women with children and/or have emergency funds available to shelter women with their children. One of the Hubs should be specific for women and children.
3. Provide training for coordinated access system and all front-line staff in the sector to ensure they are aware that diverting women away from existing emergency housing may mean that they are diverted to an unsafe space and that we are providing a trauma informed approach to all intakes, conversations, data collection with women. Streamlining intake process with CA with VAW shelter and emergency shelters in London.
4. Increase Housing Stability Teams capacity to be able to support more women in housing with supports.
5. Increase the amount of Violence against Women (VAW) shelter beds.
6. Increase the number of low barrier homelessness beds for women (including Emergency Shelter, transitional housing and housing with supports).
7. Increase access to affordable low barrier housing for women of all ages (youth, elderly, and women with children). Ensure that there are subsidized spaces so women can choose their neighborhoods and housing.
8. Work with Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU) to bring focus to youth who identify as women who are experiencing homelessness and increase available youth specific spaces.
9. Support for women to access rental housing (lack of references, identification, credit check, etc.) – Possible Head Lease Program expansion
10. Landlord engagement and education (example: City of Windsor – Rent Smart – work with Landlords to understand the program and benefits.)
11. Establishment of a Safe House for sexually exploited and sex trafficked girls and women ages 16 to 26 (planned by LAWC in collaboration with Habitat for Humanity).
12. Advocacy for an increase in the availability of the Canadian-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) and for the extension of the Anti-Human Trafficking Housing Allowance or for current AHT housing allowance recipients to be transferred to the COHB.
13. Advocacy for the average market rent for London to be frequently updated to ensure that benefits can be aligned with current trends in community to support women accessing housing.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ADULT EDUCATION THEORY AND PRACTICE

Study recommendations will be taken into consideration by leaders of the City of London to improve housing services for women and girls experiencing gender-based violence. This participatory action research came to light out of a real need identified by the community and the community was organically engaged in all steps of the research. Forging a community- university partnership promotes an understanding of housing needs for women and girls affected by gender-based violence in London, Ontario. Our study provides evidence and tools to inform practice of adult educators in engaging with communities to advance aims of social justice.

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REVISITING THE CULTURAL COMPETENCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNERS

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Abstract

Instructional designers face various challenges in navigating diverse cultures. This study explores the influences of culture on instructional design practices and the cultural competence that instructional designers demonstrate. Drawing from my work experiences as an instructional designer for higher education in both China and Canada, it examines how cultures impact instructional design and identifies essential competencies for instructional designers. Findings reveal the dynamic and multifaceted influences of various cultures on multiple aspects of instructional design, suggesting a preliminary cultural competence framework for instructional designers. Implications for recruitment, training, and professional development are discussed, as well as considerations for future research.

Keywords: cultural influence, cultural competence, instructional designer, higher education.

INTRODUCTION

The work of instructional designers is never easy as it requires navigation of diverse participant roles and backgrounds, often within dynamic contexts. For instance, an instructional design studio tasked with creating online mathematics courses for Indigenous primary school students in Canada. Here, designers face challenges of integrating the unique learning styles, linguistic nuances, and cultural experiences of their young audience. Moreover, adherence to Canadian educational standards, such as those outlined by the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), is necessary. Furthermore, within the design team, careful negotiation is needed because of the possible disagreement stemming from their varied educational and professional backgrounds.

These challenges are caused by diverse cultures. Just as cultures vary in people and environments, they impact instructional design in various ways. Therefore, instructional designers need to handle cultures effectively to do their job well. This means they should have the capacity, or cultural competencies, to work effectively in diverse cultural settings.

What cultural competencies are instructional designers expected to have? To answer this question, this study delves into the roles that culture plays in instructional practice, from which a cultural competence framework is derived. This study addresses two questions:

- a) How do cultures influence instructional design practice?
- b) What cultural competencies are essential for instructional designers to work effectively?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section situates the study into a body of literature about culture, cultural influence on instructional design practice, and cultural competence in the area of instructional design.

Definition of Culture

Culture has been defined and studied across a range of disciplines, such as business (Hofstede, 1984), psychology (Matsumoto, 2003), communication (Campbell et al., 2011), and science and technology (Godin and Gingras, 2000). Despite the lack of a unified definition, consensus emerges on several key characteristics:

- **Holistic Construction.** Culture is depicted as a holistic entity, encompassing diverse facets of human expression, including values, beliefs, ideologies, symbols, such as language and icons, and tangible artifacts like food, products, and media.
- **Dynamic Nature.** Culture is portrayed as constantly evolving, shaped by ongoing processes of interaction and meaning-making. It adapts to changing circumstances and influences.
- **Shared Characteristics.** Culture is marked by shared patterns and traits among specific groups, reflecting collective norms and customs. However, it also exhibits variations among subgroups and individuals.

Categories of Culture

Due to the dynamic and multifaceted nature of culture, this study focuses on three broad categories of cultures and their respective subcultures.

Cultures of Nation. It refers to collective characteristics “shared by the population of a sovereign nation” (Berrell, 2021, p.59) or the regions comprising several nations, such as Asia and North America. Forces like international trade, cultural exchanges, and immigration contribute to the flow of cultures. Within a nation, diverse subcultures emerge, including those based on provincial, ethnic, generational, and gender differences.

Cultures within a Society. This category refers to the collective characteristics shared within social groups distinguished by various variables like values, preferences, hobbies, and hairstyles. Examples include the graffiti and rap music of Hip-Hop culture, the values of freedom and adventure in surfer culture, and the dark imagery of Goth culture. Social culture studies also address demands for equity, diversity, and inclusivity among marginalized societal groups based on factors like gender, race, and disability, or those with intersected social identities (Crenshaw, 1989).

Cultures of Workplace. This encompasses the collective characteristics observed among individuals occupying job positions, primarily comprising organizational and occupational cultures.

Organizational culture refers to shared phenomena within establishments or agencies, such as governments, corporations, and schools. It is influenced by leadership (Trice & Beyer, 1993) and expressed through underlying assumptions, values, and behavioral norms (Schein, 2010). Its subcultures can be divided by formal and informal groups within organizations (Trice & Beyer, 1993).

Occupational culture refers to the collective phenomena shared by the people who "claim exclusive right to perform and control (Trice & Beyer, 1993, p. 179)" through special training in their jobs, professions, and academic areas. So, it is also termed as professional culture and disciplinary culture (Bhatia, 2004; Carliner, 2001a; 2012). It develops through professionalization processes and manifests through professional publications, conferences, and associations. Subcultures emerge within occupational cultures due to internal dynamics and interactions with diverse backgrounds (Trice & Beyer, 1993, p. 179).

Given the fluidity and complexity of culture, these categories may not exhaustively cover all cultural phenomena, and overlaps between them are inevitable.

Influences of Culture on Instructional Design

Cultural influences permeate various aspects of instructional design, impacting projects at large scales and specific practices. Studies suggest several key impacts:

Professionalism Enhancement. Cultural knowledge of organizations and professions bolsters designers' credibility and professionalism. This includes understanding subject matter content, ethical standards, principles (Guerra, 2006; Pershing, 2006), professional values (Molenda & Robinson, 2007), and organizational working patterns (Hart-Davidson, 2013).

Contextualization of Practice. Culture contextualizes instructional design practice. For example, motivational interventions may vary in effectiveness across nations or regions due to differences in attitudes toward individual motivation and social structures (Sánchez, 2000).

Culture as Subject Matter of Instructional Programs. Instructional materials often reflect local cultures, incorporating imagery and content that resonate with learners' cultural backgrounds (Simamora et al., 2018). Instructional initiatives may also tackle issues of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) (Corsino & Fuller, 2021).

Interactions with Colleagues. Instructional designers might be placed in conflicts stemming from socio-cultural differences with colleagues, such as hierarchy rules, age, and ranking (Marken, 2008), and professional backgrounds (Carliner, 2003).

Interactions with Learners. Strategies showing cultural sensitivity include creating personas (Getto & Amant, 2015) and audience analysis (Johnson-Eilola & Selber, 2012)

from diverse aspects such as the interactions between training design and employees' interactive demographics (Lyons et al., 2014).

Cultural Competence of Instructional Designers

Scholars and professional associations have attempted to map out the competencies of instructional designers regarding their cognition, behaviors, and attitudes. The knowledge of cultures includes the cultural backgrounds of individuals, cultures of communities, organizations, and nations (Davis & Cho, 2005; Rogers et al., 2007; Honnor, 2012; Subramaniam, 2015). The behavioral skills include tailoring learning design practices to various contexts (Rogers et al., 2007), effectively communicating and interacting with diverse parties (Vaccaro & Camba-Kelsay, 2018), and enhancing adaptability and accessibility of their products, technologies, and standards (Honor, 2012). The attitudes include acknowledging the existence of cultural biases (McLoughlin & Oliver, 1999) and differences between parties (Rogers et al., 2007), and maintaining open-mindedness, confidence, activeness, tolerance, and a sense of equality and fairness in the face of cultural diversity (Davis & Cho, 2005; Vaccaro & Camba-Kelsay, 2018).

Summary

Although the previous studies indicate variations regarding the roles that culture plays in instructional design and dimensions of cultural competence, this research aims to explore these issues in higher education context.

METHODOLOGY

The data for this study originates from my firsthand experiences as a higher education instructional designer between 2020 and 2021. These observations stem from various sources within my daily work routine, including:

- Face-to-face interactions with managers, colleagues, and clients through informal discussions, meetings, and collaborative work sessions.
- Communications on social media for various purposes, such as information sharing, notifying, and professional networking.
- Shadowing experiences where I observed and learned from colleagues and experts in the field.

RESULTS

This section provides descriptions on how cultures impact my work, the ways I handle these cultures, and a summary of cultural competence derived from them.

Influence of Culture on My Work

Please, do not number manually the sections and subsections; the template will do it automatically.

Cultures of Canada and China. Divergent work-life styles between China and Canada required tailored approaches in my professional interactions. In Canada, where

work-life balance is emphasized, I was approached only during standard work hours via platforms like Microsoft Teams (Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.). Conversely, in China, communication occurred at the convenience of professors through WeChat (a popular communication APP used for both professional and personal purposes in the country).

I also encountered a notable cultural distinction concerning modes of address. In Canada, it's ordinary to address individuals by their given names, except on formal occasions. While in China, people reserved specific titles in addressing each other on formal occasions, or for showing hierarchies because of seniority, position, and age, such as Dean Li, President Tang, Manager Zhang, and Xiao Liu³.

National cultures also influence course design. In China, where the main purpose of education is nurturing talents for national development, it is compulsory to incorporate patriotic and traditional elements. However, for Canadian universities such as integration was less common unless specified by professors.

Cultures of Diverse Professional Roles in a Team. The instructional design team of the Chinese corporation that I worked for mostly followed the ADDIE model popularized in the field of Learning and Development:

a) *Needs assessment.* Sales teams contact universities to learn about our services. Once a university shows interest in us, we hold meetings with the administrator and faculties to explore what they need.

b) *Design.* After a project is signed, instructional designers collaborate with faculties in reviewing and revising their teaching materials (such as syllabus, teaching plans, textbooks, and course slides), and selecting the chapters and knowledge points for developing course videos.

c) *Develop.* Instructional designers assist the faculty in preparing storyboards and recording and collaborating with production teams in producing course videos.

d) *Implement.* Instructional designers published all the videos onto the assigned competition platforms, waiting to see learners' responses and judges' evaluations and decisions.

e) *Evaluate.* The instructional design team collects the data from the responses, evaluations, and decisions, which will be used for the improvement of future courses.

Project-based collaboration introduced diverse professional roles such as instructional designers, project managers, and salesforces leading to conflicting priorities among them because of their distinct focuses and values. While instructional designers focused on course design and quality, project managers prioritized budget constraints and stakeholder relationships. Conversely, salesforces were more concerned with contract

³ *Xiao* means young, and *Liu* is my surname literally in English. "Xiao+ surname" is often used by the elders to call younger ones showing camaraderie.

settlements, even when project prices were lowered. These divergent priorities often resulted in conflicts within the team.

Cultures of Disciplines which We Design Courses for. Creating courses isn't a one-size-fits-all task; it must match different subjects. For example, humanities classes like Tea Culture and Cross-cultural Communication often use poetic and metaphorical language. On the other hand, natural science classes like math, biology, and chemistry usually use simpler, technical terms. Business courses often have slides with graphs and tables in navy blue and white, while literature courses often have a classic look with warm browns or light yellows.

Cultures of Organizations. The companies I worked with had unique ways of operating. The Chinese educational technology firm used a mix of centralized and decentralized management. While regional branches followed the same rules for things like reimbursement, they adjusted their business strategies based on local needs and the universities they served. The Canadian company kept consistent procedures, mainly because Concordia University was a major client. However, it adapted when working with other universities, considering their Learning Management Systems (LMSs) and branding.

The cultural environments of the universities we worked with also had a big impact. The diverse cultural groups within these universities played a key role. Faculty members had different attitudes toward course design projects due to variations in disciplines, positions, titles, motivations, and personalities. Some were assertive and eager to see projects completed, tying it to their titles or seeing it as a chance for promotion, especially in social sciences where research funding was tough to get. Others took a more hands-off approach, relying on instructional designers to handle the project, often because they saw minimal benefit from it.

Cultures of Social Groups. The Canadian company prioritized addressing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) issues, which is a common practice in Canada. In contrast, the Chinese company seldom encountered similar concerns. This difference can be attributed partly to the collectivistic culture prevalent in China and the individualistic culture in Canada. For instance, the Canadian company provided internal training on inclusive writing, where employees were assigned to design and write content that appropriately catered to diverse societal groups, including individuals with disabilities, women, sexual minorities, and indigenous communities. However, such considerations were less emphasized within the Chinese company.

The Influences of Cultures Reflected in My Case. Different cultures strongly affect how I work as an instructional designer, aligning with findings from previous studies. The procedures commonly adopted in instructional design guide my work. Cultural disparities between Canada and China- regarding work-life balance, communication, and course content creation- introduced variations to my work. These differences pose challenges, and they are further enhanced by conflicting priorities among diverse

professional roles within teams, discipline-specific course design considerations, and diverse working styles within both the companies and the universities that I served.

How Did I Navigate These Cultures? Navigating these cultures required me to discern their nuances and potential impacts, adapting flexible and appropriate strategies accordingly. Some cultural aspects, such as work-life patterns and governmental rules, were stable and non-negotiable, requiring conformity. In situations where diverse cultures intersected within work teams and organizations, my responsibility extended to managing conflicts and priorities effectively. Additionally, instructional products had to adapt to our clients' cultures, considering factors like disciplinary areas, and demonstrating respect and inclusivity, especially towards socially marginalized groups.

Cultural Competencies Derived from My Experience

This section provides an overview of the cultural competencies that include cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions derived from my work experience as an instructional designer for higher education, shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Cultural Competencies Derived from My Work Experience as An Instructional Designer for Higher Education

Category of culture	Aspects of practice	Cognitive dimension	Behavioral dimension	Affective dimension
Cultures of nations	Work and life balance	Identifying the differences in work-life balance expectations between different countries	Adapting work schedules and modes of communication to national contexts	Showing open-mindedness and sensitivity to different work-life balances
	Communication	Recognizing the cultural norms around modes of address in different countries	Addressing appropriately according to the cultural norms in each country	Showing respect and sensitivity for cultural norms around addressing
	Course design	Recognizing different requirements for integrating national culture into course design	Integrating national cultural elements into course design appropriately	Respecting the cultural priorities and values in education in a country

Organizational culture	Within-corporation management	Identifying the working patterns and management styles of an organization	Adapting to the work patterns and management styles of an organization	Showing flexibility to different organizational cultures
	Client management	Identifying the different work attitudes across client groups	Managing clients' different expectations and priorities	Showing empathy towards diverse attitudes and motivations of clients
Professional culture	On-the-job practice	Identifying work procedures, theories, values, and ethics within the profession	Following common practices and values required in the profession	Showing readiness for professionalism
	Team collaboration	Identifying the divergent priorities and concerns of team members in different roles	Collaborating effectively with team members with diverse priorities	Showing empathy towards the perspectives and concerns of team members in different roles
Disciplinary culture	Course design	Identifying the different cultural preferences in course design across disciplines	Tailoring course design approaches to suit the cultural preferences of each discipline	Showing respect for the cultural preferences and traditions of each discipline
Culture within society	Practices related to EDI	Recognizing EDI issues in workplace	Promoting EDI practices in workplace	Demonstrating a commitment to EDI

RESULTS

Implications

This study yields several practical implications. Professionally speaking, HR specialists are suggested to consider embedding competencies into the recruitment and training

processes for instructional designers. Moreover, it is essential for professional associations of Learning and Development to develop a distinct framework for cultural competence alongside the existing professional competence framework. In addition, instructional designers are recommended to constantly explore the roles of diverse cultures in their work and adopt appropriate and ethical strategies when engaging with these cultures.

Limitations

There are limitations to this study. First, given my cultural background and experience, bias toward cultural interpretations might exist. Second, the data are derived solely from my personal work experiences with particular organizations and countries in higher education, which might limit their generalizability.

Future Suggestions

Despite the possible personal bias and limited generalizability, future research is expected to gather richer data from diverse contexts and diverse perspectives to explore cultural influence and competence in instructional design more comprehensively.

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EXPLORING MASTER STUDENTS' INTRODUCTION TO ADULT EDUCATION THROUGH A CRITICAL REALIST THEORIZATION OF LIMINAL SPACE

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Abstract

This paper is inspired by this conference's call for proposal which invited pieces that redefine adult education. While it will not redefine adult education, this paper seeks to conceptualize the space that master students enter and pass through as a liminal space in which transformative learning opportunities may present themselves. This liminal space where transformative learning may be present will be theorized through a critical realist lens.

Introduction

As an adult educator in a university setting, I am privileged to teach and mentor students as they work their way through a master's of adult education program. For some students the journey through a master's of adult education program is relatively smooth, but for others the journey through the program is more uneven as it challenges their "frames of reference" (Kegan, 2018, *Transformational Learning and the Problem of its Success*, para. 3). Many I have taught have been out of the formal school system for many years and are unsure how they will navigate their classes. Others are surprised and/or confused by course content which challenges their preconceived notions of education and the education system. With the current influx of international students into Canadian university system, many are attending their first course(s) in the Canadian university system which differs from their education system.

As students journey through the space created by a master's program the challenges to their frames of reference mirrors the transformative learning process as described by Jack Mezirow. Thus, for some students it can be argued that they experienced transformative learning. The question that this paper confronts is not to identify if a true transformative learning occurs for some students but to contextualize the possible 'transformative' space through which they travel. Specifically, this paper will characterize the entrance and passage through a master's degree as a liminal space.

The concept of liminal spaces, which Land et al (2014) refer to it as a "spatial metaphor" (p. 199), in a university allows a researcher to depict it as an area of transition and change, which may lead to transformative learning. This idea was first suggested to me when I read *Learning the Unknown: The Potential of Liminal Space for Adult Education* (2019) by Maksimović and Nišavić. Inspired by this article, this paper seeks to add to this theorization by looking at liminal space through the lens of critical realism. Thus, the focus of this paper will start by considering liminal space and adult

education through a critical realist lens and then see if it has potential to inspire transformative learning.

Social Structure and Individual Agency Through the Lens of Critical Realism

As is the case of most if not all social theories, critical realism seeks to address the issue of individual agency and social structure and how they work to influence human behaviour. Margaret Archer (2000) contends that the dynamic relationship between social structures and agency lies "at the heart of social theorizing" (p. 1). How to understand this relationship presents a unique ontological problem: is individual agency molded by social structures or does individual agency create social structure?

To answer this question, critical realism provides a social science ontology based on an epistemic separation of individual agency and social structure. Careful not to conflate social structure and individual agency, the theory examines the intersection of the two as it suggests that they have causal powers on each other. Critical realism holds that individuals are presupposed by emergent social structures, and that individuals are capable of altering the social structures of which they are part of.

The point of intersection is complex as social structures are normatively constructed and have causal powers but lack reflexive ability. Agents also have causal powers and are imbued with reflexive abilities. Adding to the complexity, agents (individuals) are influenced by, and are part of, several normative social structures.

Agency can be viewed as the interplay between an individual and society. Elder-Vass (2012) explains that "an agentic subject is a person who has the capacity to experience, to reflect on his or her action by a social context, to act with some degree of autonomy" (p. 184). Social structures, as described by Douglas Porpora (1998), are "systems of human relationships among social positions" (p. 339). They act as nexuses for connecting groups of individuals, to coordinate agency. Furthering the discussion, Dave Elder-Vass' (2012) contends that social structures are composed of norm circles, which he describes as, "an entity with the emergent causal power to increase the dispositions of the individuals [agency] to conform to the norm endorsed and enforced by the norm circle concerned" (p. 26). Elder-Vass stresses that individuals belong to multiple norm circles, highlighting the complexity of relationships, as multiple nexuses exist to maintain the social order. Social structures are in a continual process of re-constituting themselves based upon the norm circles and individuals who create them.

There is a continuous dynamic tension between social structure and agency, both within and without the structure and the agent. This dynamic tension is conceptualized by critical realists as being morphostatic and morphogenetic. Using critical theorist Margaret Archer's (2012) descriptions, morphostasis accounts for the "contextual continuity" (p. 17) needed for people to organize their lives. Morphogenesis accounts for the "contextual discontinuity" (p. 23) and "contextual incongruity" (p. 31) that activates the reflexive properties of people. Emergent formation and reformation of social structure accounts for the contextual discontinuity and incongruity agents have to

contend with. "Reflexivity", according to Archer (2007), "is the regular exercise of the mental ability, shared by all normal people, to consider themselves in relation to their (social) contexts and vice versa" (p. 4). Reflexivity allows people to navigate their way through social relations and social structures in a knowing fashion.

Archer (2000) contends, that from the intersection of structure and agency "our 'social selves'" (p. 255) emerge. So how do we understand the emergent social self, and the possibility of transformative learning, in context of a student's entrance and journey through a master's degree? This is where the concept of liminal space offers a method to contextualize the journey of the student.

Adult Education

Plumb (2014) points out that "people learn" (p. 198), thus it can be argued that adult education has been around since humans were first able to educate one another. While this may be true, throughout most of human history adult education has lacked the constitutive properties that would have provided it with being considered a credible or sustainable social structure. In a review of the historical development of adult education in Scotland, Ian Bryant (1984) claims that "adult education is an amorphous entity and in no country has it followed a single line of development" (p. 1). Despite Bryant's amorphous claim, adult education has been able to maintain certain characteristics over time as it was able to develop properties that are both morphostatic (continuity) and morphogenetic (continuous change).

Thus, I argue that modern adult education is more than a simple unstructured entity; it is a socially constructed entity with emergent properties which allow for the development of a social structure with observable causal powers through individual agency. "An emergent property", according to Dave Elder-Vass (2011), "is one that is not possessed by any of the parts individually and that would not be possessed by the full set of parts in the absence of a structuring set of relations between them" (p. 17). Emergent properties and powers are attributed to the individuals that compose an entity as these individuals create a continuous and dynamic tension with one another. It is the individuals involved and the tensions that they create that lead to the morphostatic and morphogenetic nature of modern adult education.

Formal adult education is made up of two separate identifiable components. On one side are the originators and promulgators of adult education discourses, those who teach. On the other side are the adult learners who receive and act upon the discourses and teachings. Connecting the two components is the act of teaching: the intentional action of adult education, making it a social event. Dave Elder-Vass (2011) contends, "social events... are produced by the interaction of both structural and agential causal powers" (p. 4). The structural components include the variety of social structures and agencies that provide the causal power.

Aside from being a social entity, adult education is also causal mechanism, as it has the ability to connect and transform norm groups. As a causal mechanism adult education is used by norm groups to make claims that shape, or at least have the power to create, and legitimize knowledge claims. Norm groups, also known as normative social structures, are both morphogenetic or morphostatic as they produce or reproduce social conditions.

Normative social structures can be problematic to understand and examine as they are indiscernible but perceptible. Lewis (2000) refers to this as the, "causal criterion for existence, according to which unobservable entities can be known to exist through their impact on observable events" (p. 209). To be more precise these events are social events. Through the lens of critical realism, the actual teaching produced by adult education is a social event. The impact is discerned through the student.

Universities, which have been in existence for well over 1000 years, feature both the morphogenetic and morphostatic characteristics that allows us to identify it as a social structure. Over the course of their existence they have grown, changed, and have been altered by the educational demands of their time and place. Yet, they have maintained the characteristics of a place of learning, the student/professor relationship and institutional structure has remained intact.

Social structures, such as universities, are identifiable entities with observable emergent causal powers. They emerge from relationships and interactions among individual actors but are not reducible to the individual. We cannot say an individual holds a discourse or is a university, as this would be impossible. We can say individuals are influenced by the emergent and causal powers of a discourses or a university. We can also say that the causal mechanisms of discourses are the relationships among individuals. As Douglas Porpora (1998) maintains, a social structure is a "systems of human relationships among social positions" (p. 339).

As mentioned in the introduction, for many of students in a master's degree program the journey through it is a smooth step as the social structure, created by the agency of the staff and professors, is easily identifiable and the transition to a holder of master's degree is understandable process, but for others the journey is not a simple transition. The agency of the staff and professors may change the expected morphostatic structure making the transition to a master graduate more challenging. To conceptualize this passage through a university degree program I will evoke the idea of liminal space.

Liminal Space from a Critical Realist Perspective

Liminal space is a theoretical space of transition and change. Like social structures this theoretical space is made visible by its imagined causal powers. Edmonds, et al, (2016) describes it as "the juncture where the known and the unknown meet in strange territories and unfamiliar spaces" (p. 62). Adding to this, Maksimovć and Nišavić (2017) describe:

It is a space of contradictions, filled with doubts, often with turmoil and sense of loss. Liminality infuses a feeling of isolation from the outer reality; the space is foreign and strange while an identity is in the process of reconfiguration. The past is no longer possible, and the presence is unknowable while the new is not yet born. A person endures dramatic exposure to the unknown world, empty of defined structures, a self is floating and "a traveler" is full of questions. (p. 37)

If, as I am prone to do, imagine students studying for their master's degree as 'a traveler' through the world of academia then the idea of liminality can be used help and understand and plot the journey. The journey becomes a space where students encounter many thoughts, ideas, and viewpoints that may be new to them, and which either add to or challenge their knowledge base. It becomes a space of adjustment and change as these thoughts, ideas, and viewpoints may confront their frames of reference.

The term 'frames of refence' is used intentionally as it central to understanding the idea of transformative learning. Mezirow (2018) notes that they "are the structures of culture and language through which we construe meaning by attributing coherence and significance to our experience" (Transformative Learning Theory, para. 2)). Using a critical realist retroductive analysis, culture and language can be found in the tension and agreement found in individuals and the social relations they create.

Continuing with a retroductive analysis, the frames of reference in a liminal space are created by social structures, which are fashioned by individual agents. When the frames of reference produced by a university's social structure are familiar to a student the concept of liminality does not apply, as the students learning is enhanced but not challenged. But when a student's frames of reference are unexpectedly challenged then the concept of liminality applies. Thus, liminal space is subjective and socially constructed and, has the potential for transformative learning, which will be described next.

Transformative Learning

In 2007, Taylor contended that "Transformative learning in adult, higher and continuing education.....continues to be the most researched and discussed theory in the field of adult education" (p. 173). While dated, transformative learning continues to be popular in the field, a quick look on an internet search engine will confirm this. Due to its longevity and popularity, transformative learning has received a great deal of theorizing and critique, this short paper does not have the space to delve into that theorizing and critique.

Lange (2013) notes that there are "three dominant variants of trans-formative learning "the 'psycho-critical", the "social-emancipatory", and the "psychoanalytical" (p. 108). For this paper the first, pyscho-critical, which was first hypothesized by Jack Mezirow, will be used to look at the liminal space as a site of transformational learning for master students.

As noted above, Plumb contends that 'people learn'. Adding to this Kegan (2018) notes two different types of learning, informative and transformative. Informative learning adds to and increases our knowledge base and affects what we know. The second type, transformative, affects "how we know". Kegan argues that transformational learning fundamentally changes the frames of reference.

Digging a bit deeper, Kegan explains that "informative' learning involves a kind of leading in, or filling of the form...Trans-form-ative learning puts the form itself at risk of change" (Informational learning and transformative learning, para. 3) . They continue by noting that "both kinds of learning are expansive and valuable, one within a preexisting frame of mind and the other reconstructing the very frame". It is in the second, that the idea of transformational learning can be seen in a liminal space.

Imagining a Master's Student Journey Through Liminal Space

It is reasonable to suggest that most of the master students entering the learning space created by a university are expecting informative learning opportunities to help them meet their goals and expectations. They may encounter ideas and concept that they did not expect but their frames of reference remain intact. The space through which they journey is 'normal'. But what happens when what is learned challenges their frames of reference and has the potential to become transformative? Liminality can be used to explain what happens in the un-normal space some students journey through.

The journey being discussed here is not physical it is intellectual and social. Through it the student traveler is constantly testing what they know, their knowledge claims, against the new knowledge claims that they are experiencing. The student's knowledge claims, especially for adult students, have been built on a foundation of life experiences in which they are able to create a sense of normal for their agency. In their normal day-to-day life, this agency is being constantly balanced by the causal power of the social structures that surround them. In a liminal space their agency become unbalanced as the causal powers of the social structures are unfamiliar and they need to figure out put how to find a 'new' balance.

What seems to happen to the students is the normal gets confused and they enter a liminal space where the social structures, ideas, and ideologies that they depend on to configure their agency is unfamiliar, hard to identify, or mysterious. In this space they have two choices to play along and remain much the same person or they can change and adjust their thinking and how they view the world. If they decide to adjust their thinking they must develop new frames of reference. The expected informative learning has potentially shifted into transformative learning.

CONCLUSION

Clearly, this is only scratching at the surface of using critical realism and the metaphor of liminal space to further or to reconceptualize the possibility of transformative learning for adults. The strength of critical realism is its separation of structure and agency. While liminal space provides a metaphor of space in which we can theorize what

happens to individual agency when the causal power of social structures are unfamiliar and challenge their frames of reference.

How is individual agency affected? How much change do they feel? Have the causal powers of a social structure such as a university (created by individual agency) caused transformative learning?

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ARTISTIC LITERACIES: WORKING TOWARD CREATIVE LEARNING AND TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

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Abstract

This theoretical paper highlights the way artistic literacies, and in particular, transformative visual images can be used to enrich adult literacy learning experiences in English language arts and related disciplines like psychology, history, and world issues. New possibilities of creative learning can emerge. Visual art (e.g., paintings, murals, public art, photography, sculpture, environmental art) can complement other artistic literacies such as storytelling, poetry, creative writing, drama, music, and song. Hayes and York (2007) write that “the arts seem to create this kind of liberating space by assisting people in seeing past the psychological, social, and culturally imposed boundaries”(p.91). Diversity and difference are re-visioned in imaginative ways. Influenced by multiple fields in communication including, advertising, digital media, and photojournalism, visual literacy involves the skill to understand, analyze, decode, interpret, and negotiate meaning in the form of visual/artistic images (Blackburn Miller, 2020; Butterwick and Lawrence, 2023; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012).

Theoretical Connections Between Imagination, Creativity, and Transformative Learning

Transformative learning (TL) is a process “by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of references (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will provide a more true or justified to guide action” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 8). The process of “meaning making” reflects the individual’s relationship “both with the self and his or her sociocultural context” (Taylor, 1998 cited in Dirkx, 2006, p. 7). Elizabeth Lange (2015) uses the term “the ecology of transformative learning” to highlight the way theories from different disciplines dovetail and inform theories of transformative learning. Systems thinking, emotional intelligence, constructivist theories of learning, depth psychology, cultural studies, and critical pedagogies enrich our understanding of transformative learning. Theoretical perspectives of creativity are consistent with varied descriptions of transformative learning processes. Personality traits associated with creative individuals include curiosity, open mindedness, nonlinear thinking, flexibility, and the ability to appreciate different perspectives (Sternberg, 2012). New paradigms of knowledge emerge through a dynamic of play, invention, and exploration. The different streams of transformative learning highlight, in unique ways, cognitive, affective, experiential, and imaginative facets of learning that encourage personal agency and social change (Taylor & Cranton, 2012).

Engaging Imagination and Creativity through Artistic Literacies

Artistic Literacies embrace this sense of exploration, adventure, and creativity that have the potential to encourage transformative learning. A text (visual art, drama, memoir, etc.) might trigger a “disorienting dilemma” that challenges individuals’ preconceptions, beliefs, and assumptions. Through dialogue, critical reflection, and experiential strategies, individuals may adapt and integrate this new information to extend their meaning schemes. Mezirow (2012) writes that “inspiration, empathy, and transcendence are central to self-knowledge and to drawing attention to the affective quality and poetry of human experience” (p.75). Emotional intelligence skills such as awareness, empathy, intrinsic motivation, self-regulation, and communicative expertise also influence the potential for transformative learning.

Connecting literature and visual art from an ethnographic perspective can build empathy and awareness with a focus of the intersection about race, class, gender, ideology, etc. Extending “frames of reference” to include diverse cultures and experiences is also one way of nurturing peace and social justice. Themes of identity, power, belonging, family, and relationships can be explored through familiar 19th century Western Canon texts such as *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte or *A Doll’s House* by Henrik Ibsen, These texts can be juxtaposed with contemporary texts such as Tara Westover (2018)’s *Educated* and Isabel Wilkerson’s (2020) *Caste*. To what extent are women’s experiences influenced by socio-cultural norms? How are experiences shaped by the intersection of race, gender, social class, and power? A painting such as William Holman Hunt’s (1853) “*The Awakening Conscience*” can be compared to other artistic depictions of women throughout different historical time periods. Exploring social, cultural, and historical through fiction, art, memoir, and poetry through varied texts is a starting point for encouraging empathy and awareness.



William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), *The Awakening Conscience*, 1853, Tate Gallery, London, UK. Public Domain.
By William Holman Hunt - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/gandalfsgallery/5626470779>, Public Domain,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=760459>

Creative Connections Across Artistic Literacy Texts

Creative approaches to literacy learning would tap into the myriad of resources that visual arts can provide. A critical insight into art, architectural, and design forms can also sharpen learners' insights into cultural, social, and political analysis. Elliot Eisner (2002) suggests that research into visual arts can help students become more aware and observant of economic, structural, ergonomic, and aesthetic dimensions of design. Artistic images can complement the teaching of a particular text by providing valuable background knowledge. For example, the 1930s in America can be explored from a social, cultural, and historical lens by reading *The Grapes of Wrath* or *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck. Adult learners can build background knowledge by researching the works of photographer Dorothea Lange and other artists; Lange's 1936 photograph *Migrant Mother* captures the desperation and worry of many families who experienced tremendous hardship and tragedy during the Great Depression.

Literary themes such as beauty, perseverance, courage, friendship, loneliness, and resilience can be explored and analyzed through art, photography, and sculpture. Visual images can be a new window that can help expand a learner's interpretation and analysis of a literary or non-fiction work. Early photographs from 19th Paris as well as Impressionist art can help students visualize the setting for Guy de Maupassant's 19th century short stories like *The Jewels* and *The Necklace*. The 1925 Jazz Age setting of F.Scott Fitzgerald's short stories *A Diamond as big as the Ritz* and his novel *The Great Gatsby* can be explored using photographs and iconic images of art, fashion, and design from that time period art of the 1920. Perspectives taking and close observation are also involved in "reading" visual art, Jordan and DiCicco (2012) explain that "To analyze a painting, a viewer must use background, knowledge of the content and the artist; and, comprehend the overall meaning of the painting by understanding the colors, lines, symbols, etc. (much like a reader must decode a text by understanding the letters, words, sentences, and ideas of a text(p. 30). Poetry and visual images that are presented side by side can express stories, voices, impressions, and expressions, notes Jan Greenberg (2001). Limericks, haiku, ballads, sonnets, dramatic monologues, and free verse are among the poetic forms that, when complemented with visual art, can enrich creative responses to literature among students. Emotional empathy and self-awareness can be strengthened when learners have an opportunity to explore poetic and visual texts that present universal themes such as the fragility of life, aging, betrayal, compassion, character, and courage. The "the language of imagination" (Dirkx, 2007) found in art images, dreams, and poetry can unleash unconscious thoughts, feelings, images, archetypes, and metaphors:

Engaging emotion-laden images within the learning experiences in an imaginative rather than a literal way helps facilitate the movement of individuation rather than a literal way helps facilitate the movement of individuation by attending to the unconscious meaning-making processes at work within the human psyche. As such, it contributes to powerful processes of transformation (Dirkx, 2007, p. 20).

Poetry is the language of sense experience and emotion. Emily Fragos (2012) describes "ekphrasis" as the response a poet gives to produce a poetic text inspired by a visual work of art. The poem "Venus Transiens" by Amy Lowell (1915) was inspired by Sandro Botticelli's (1485) painting of *The Birth of Venus*, for example. van Gogh's letters to his brother provide an insight into the way his emotions and insights about nature, landscapes, and the human condition are visualized in his paintings (Auden, 1963). Learners may be inspired to create their own illustrated reflective journals or they might be motivated to further explore the way different artistic forms reveal emotional states such as joy, surprise, sadness, fear, and so on. Thinking visually can help strengthen learners' cognitive and creative capacities.



Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890). *Olive Trees* (1889). The Metropolitan Museum of art, New York City, NY. Public Domain. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/437998>

"The effect of daylight "The effect of daylight, of the sky, makes it possible to extract an infinity of subjects from the olive tree. Now, I on my part sought contrasting effects in the foliage, changing with the hues of the sky. At times the whole is a pure all-pervading blue, namely when the tree bears its pale flowers, and big blue flies, emerald rose beetles and cicadas in great numbers are hovering around it. Then, as with the bronzed leaves are getting riper in tone, the sky is brilliant and radiant with green and orange, or more often

even, in autumn, when the leaves acquires something of the violet tinges of the ripe fig, the violet effect will manifest itself vividly through the contrasts, with the large sun taking on a white tint within a halo of clear and pale citron yellow. (Vincent van Gogh, 1890, Auden, *Letters*, p. 39).

Exploring Alternative Perspectives

In *Rehearsals for Living*, Robyn Maynard and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2022) explore slavery, colonialization, ecological destruction and health crises. In an exchange of letters, Maynard and Simpson draw upon the collective memories of Black and Indigenous peoples in a way that establishes a basis for a visionary plan to “build worlds that affirm, rather than destroy life” (Maynard and Simpson, 2022, p. 25). Exploring examples of the way art can be used to explore “hidden” stories of historically marginalized groups can encourages critical perspective taking. For example,

Esi Edugyan (2021) writes in detail about the impact of colonization and the intersection of race, class, and gender in her exploration of John Martin’s famous painting “Dido Elizabeth Belle and her cousin Lady Elizabeth Murray (1761-1804),” Edugyan writes that “Dido’s portrait dredges up questions of how human migration, both forced and chosen, has shaped the West for centuries. In her inescapable gaze, she seems to say, we have always been here” (p.18),



David Martin, Portrait of Dido Elizabeth and her cousin Lady Elizabeth Murray (1760-1825), Scone Palace, Perth, Scotland. Public Domain. By David Martin - http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_k4TmJhJUAjs/S0qLFa40oBI/AAAAAAAAAUo/-3N85xeTve8/s640/dido+and+eliza+3.jpg, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=13677095>



Robert Seldon Duncanson (1821-1872), *Land of the Lotus Eaters*, 1861, Stockholm Palace, Stockholm, Sweden. By Robert Seldon Duncanson - scan of painting, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6663182>

Art can be a catalyst to challenge, trouble, and transform existing ways of thinking that may limit or constrain. African American artist Robert Seldon Duncanson's "Land of the Lotus Eaters" may have been inspired by scenes in Homer's *The Odyssey*, but the message he conveyed in his painting was one of hope that centuries of enslavement would end and a brighter future (representing in the lush detail of his painting) would emerge. A 19th century landscape painting by John Frederick Kensett (1816-1872), for example, can be viewed from one perspective as a stunning picture of Lake George and the lush Hudson Valley. At another level, this painting can be viewed from a critical perspective that examines the historical context of the way the land was ravaged, exploited, and destroyed. How have the geography, the people, the animals, and the environment changed throughout the centuries? What factors led to these changes?



John Frederick Kensett(1816-1872). *Hudson River Scene*, 1857. Oil on canvas, 32 x 48 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. From: www.metmuseum.org Courtesy: Metropolitan Museum of Art (open access website). Gift of H. D. Babcock, in memory of his father, S. D. Babcock, 1907 (07.162).

Canadian Indigenous painter Kent Monkman (1965-) emphasizes that art should not only be about presenting images of beauty, but rather, it should function to challenge and critique social systems. Drawing on the panoramic paintings of Caravaggio, Delacroix, Rubens, and Picasso, Monkman recasts the visual art of the "great masters" with an aim to provoke critical thinking about the impact that colonialization had on Canada's Indigenous people and the natural environment (Bascaramurty, 2017). Monkman's (2018) art exhibit "Shame and Prejudice: A Story of Resilience" (<https://moa.ubc.ca/exhibition/shame-and-prejudice/>) can be a catalyst that opens difficult conversations about racism, cultural genocide, and the resilience of Indigenous people in Canada. His work "The Scream" (2017, <https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/kent-monkman/key-works/the-scream/>) portrays the trauma of families disrupted when their children were forcibly removed from their homes to attend residential schools. Monkman's compelling murals speak to the flawed foundational myths surrounding Canada's historical foundations. Without acknowledging the violation committed toward the natural environment and the Indigenous Peoples, truth, reconciliation, and healing cannot occur.

Keeping the Wonder: Exploring Environmental Literacies through Art and Related Texts

"Deep transformation" from a planetary worldview involves a radical paradigm shift in thinking, feelings, and acting, O'Sullivan (2001; 2012) asserts. Environmental, political, and social crises in our world reflect "decisions and priorities" that do not affirm a reverence for life. The Anthropocene epoch reflects a fractured world where war and conflict seem constant and where toxic wastes and pollutants have contaminated the precious resources and matrixes of life—in the air, in the water systems, and in the land. O'Sullivan (2002) writes that a transformative shift involves:

Our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationship with other humans and the natural world; our understanding of the relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body awareness, our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of the possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy (p.xvii).

Transformative visual art images can be integrated with poetry about the environment as a way to encourage greater awareness and empathy for non-human beings and the natural world. Ecological art "inspires caring and respect for the world in which we live, stimulates dialogue, sparks imagination, and contributes to the socio-cultural transformations whereby the diversity of life forms found on earth, may flourish" (Graham, 2007, p.235). Fear, avoidance, and alarm about the environment can be replaced with hope, imagination, and engagement. Environmental artist Agnes Denes created "Tree Mountain--- A Living Time Capsule(1992-1996)" in Ylöjärvi, Finland (<http://www.agnesdenesstudio.com/works4.html>). For Denes, art can be a unifying force that might be a catalyst to creative problem solving within an ecological context. Eleven thousand trees were planted by eleven thousand people in an intricate pattern based on a mathematical formula that would effect a change in perspective based on the position

of the viewer. The trees are planted in an intricate mathematical pattern based on the pineapple and sunflower design.

Drawing on the work of David Gruenwald (2003), Mark Graham connects learning to authentic experiences so that learners can see connections between cultural, political, environmental, and social issues. "Place-based education is intended to develop expertise across many disciplines and prepare students to become actively involved in regenerating human and natural communities (p.377)". Examples of creative eco-art projects include illustrated journal notebooks describing walks in nature with close observations to the landscapes as well as indigenous flora and fauna, creating community gardens out of abandoned spaces, mapmaking of the local topographical environment, and cultural journalism. Cultural journalism "aims to connect [learners] to the cultural life of their community through local histories, stories, traditions, and the artifacts and performances of local cultural production" (p.38). These types of experiential activities both research and discovery that will help build empathy and awareness of the local ecology and bioregion. Mapmaking as an interdisciplinary learning activity/experience can build learners' visual thinking abilities and ecological awareness. Given that many adult learners have experienced multiple experiences of migration, dislocation, and relocation, inquiry and experiential learning activities that involves mapmaking can help them to become familiar with a new community.

Imagination and Engagement; Connecting, Storytelling, Drama, and A

John Dirkx (2001) writes that "personally significant and meaningful learning is fundamentally grounded and derived from the adult's emotional, imaginative connections with the self and with the broader social world" (p.64). Storytelling and process drama are artistic ways of knowing that tap into adult learners' experiences and imagination. Clark and Rossiter (2008) further write that "stories draw us into an experience at more than a cognitive level; they engage our spirit, our imagination, and heart, and this engagement is complex and holistic" (p.65). Storytelling can be viewed as the foundation of so many art forms: visual art, sculpture, novels, memoir, dance, music, drama, mixed media, and so on. Carl Leggo (2008) writes that stories are relational and reciprocal and as we tell our stories and listen to each other's stories "new steps on the living journey that shape a life" can occur (p.109).

-"The arts are not an end in themselves but an entryway for empowering people to author their own community involvement" (Hayes and Yorks, 2007, p.91). Winnipeg based Sarasvati Productions apply popular theatre to encourage personal agency and social change. Themes of identity, belonging, displacement, and overcoming adversity are explored dramatically. Artistic director Hope McIntyre (2024) describes the way in which these plays were grounded in the experiences of the participant-actors. *New Beginnings* (2017) is a play that featured remarkable stories of newcomers to Manitoba. In many cases, these individuals fled persecution, imprisonment, and death. *New Beginnings* featured music, stories, mural art, and dance performed by newcomers to Manitoba. This play can encourage empathy and awareness; misconceptions some people may have about newcomers are challenged. According to McIntyre, some of the

newcomers were gifted storytellers and had exceptional communication skills. Some were involved in theatre in their countries of origin. The play *Shattered* focuses on breaking through the silence of mental health challenges like anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and eating disorders. McIntyre and her team spent two years conducting interviews and workshops with local community groups and health centres. As a team, McIntyre explained that they were able to teach, mentor, coach, and support the participant-actors.

“Learning through soul” (Dirkx, 1997) involves a focus on “the interface where the socioemotional and the intellectual world meet, where the inner and outer worlds converge” (Dirkx, 1997 cited in Mezirow, 2000, p. 6). Artistic literacies tap into affective knowing, imaginal, symbolic, and spiritual dimensions. Literacy is dynamic, multimodal, and potentially transformative when learners have opportunities to create their own works of art such as a dramatic script or in the creation of a poem inspired by a painting or a visual collage which reflects important marker events in an individual’s life. Artistic literacies provide offer new directions and possibilities for creative learning in adult literacy education.

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TALKING ON THE STOOP: ENCOURAGING SOCIAL CONNECTION IN VIRTUAL LEARNING

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Abstract

Walking through the neighbourhoods of Halifax, Nova Scotia, during the lockdown period of COVID-19, I felt as though I could still see glimpses of locals who passed time with one another on their porches and stoops – before the worldwide pandemic, people would stop on the steps to talk to passers-by, or chat with friends sat beside them on the porch, or call out from their decks delivery instructions. Those interactions stopped due to contagion fears; porches fell quiet and stoops sat silent.

As I walked, I found that those interactions were happening nonetheless.

Although people were inside, they left traces outside through hand-lettered signs of notice and update, gifts of plants labelled, 'Free! From my home to yours!', cartoons demonstrating resilience, and pavement-chalked messages of encouragement.

I loved the ability of people to connect even when connection was not possible. Surmounting a worldwide virus, people had developed a lingua franca of space that reminded others of shared hardships and distanced support. Community was built and sustained.

As a new assistant professor, I've been reminded several times of that communal comfort despite enforced distance, of the ways that people talked easily on the stoop simply to catch hold of human connection. I teach asynchronous online courses, and I heard repeated messages from learners that their isolation and loneliness while pursuing virtual higher education was doing them harm. They missed saying hello to classmates, making easy enquiries about each other's lives and families, and having the chance to chat with new friends before we got down to the learning at hand. My experience with online asynchronous learning makes me concerned that casual, happenstance interactions have been designed out of existence.

Or are they?

That online or distance education poses challenges to social process and peer interaction has been well-documented (Cocquyt et al. 2019; Spencer in Foley, 2004), and there have been strong, ongoing needs identified to offer psycho-social supports for learners in online environments (Yarbrough, 2018). Early in studies of online learning, the challenges of social components in online learning were identified as the "lack of placedness and synchronicity in time and place, the mere absence of body language, and the development of social presence" (Anderson, 2008, p. 51).

The placedness and social presence developed despite isolation measures may also be replicated in a virtual learning environment. In this paper, I explore the challenges and possibilities of recreating or representing the easy affinity of 'stoop talking', that informal discourse that enhances social bonds which enrich learning practice, through online asynchronous learning delivery.

To establish better if not best practice, I draw on anecdotal evidence from other higher education teaching faculty about their perceptions of learners' social interactions in online course, and propose how casual learner interactions can occur in a virtual setting. It will take some imagination to bring the porch/step/stoop to an online environment, but the connections are there.

Keywords: Asynchronous learning, online learning, social connection, relational culture

INTRODUCTION

I've recently gotten into album art, thanks in part to Led Zeppelin's song, "In the Light", from their 1975 album, *Physical Graffiti*. The album cover shows brightly-lit individual apartments in a sepia-toned tenement building, where the front steps seem to guide one towards the space inside. The windows on each floor, distinct and isolated, makes me think of early 2019 and 2020 COVID-19 lockdown measures. People stayed indoors, and returning from short, necessary, masked trips was marked by a hasty run up the front steps towards the safety of their own enclosed space. Stoops and porches were liminal areas: inside and outside, safe and risky, known and unknown – real life was virtually non-existent.

I remember eerie solo walks around the neighbourhoods of Halifax, Nova Scotia, during this time. I was accustomed to seeing people sitting on their front steps, chatting with friends, or hailing an acquaintance on the street, who would come over with their bag of groceries and gratefully set them down for a welcome chance to breathe easy and talk. Before lockdown, delivery trucks and Subarus pulled to the side on main streets, loaded to the brim with packages and supplies to be dropped off or left on the front stairs if handoffs couldn't ensue. People in deck chairs would stare at their phones, but put them down quickly to greet a returning roommate or amiable dog passing by.

COVID-19 lockdown measures stopped these interactions, as the likelihood of friendly encounters was drastically minimized. But, interestingly, people in their homes and apartments found a way to connect: I saw chalked sidewalk messages, exhorting strangers to "Just Keep Smilig!", and inviting green shoots in seedling pots next to signs reading *If you need a new friend, take me!* Signs appeared in front windows, asking for deliveries to the rear of the house because the doorbell was "kind of broken", and 'Have you seen me?' posters advertising hugs appeared on streetlights. The pulley I made for a fifth-grade science experiment resurfaced in my mind, and I half-expected to see hand-over-hand ropes criss-crossing the spaces between buildings, carrying baskets in which half-folded notes or homemade cookies traversed the gap.

I would go for walks to be reminded that other people were in the world, and that the world was still out there. Each time I saw another note, or balloon tied to a balustrade, I thought about our resilience, and our temerity, in striving to reach one another. The eagerness for connection when those interpersonal moments were so circumscribed was courageously, beautifully on display.

Gradually, the world renewed its acquaintance with people and relationships in ways that permitted closer-than-six-feet interactions. For me, the change was also marked by my new role as an assistant professor, teaching in a program heavily dependent on online delivery and asynchronous learning. I had to become accustomed to reaching out to learners differently and in ways that worried and challenged me. In this capacity, I don't have a stoop or a porch, but a series of virtual transmissions occurring at different points in time. My ability to connect is done at a distance, with learners trying to acquire knowledge when a nod of the head, a smile, a brow furrowed in puzzlement, or a whispered message to the person beside them isn't possible. Where is their community? I want to offer them the casual, happenstance interactions that are social, and relational, and valuable for learning in the courses I teach. I want them to be able to interact for their learning. I want them to have a stoop.

LITERATURE

Online Learning

It is unsurprising, in addition to well documented, that online or distance education poses social process and peer interaction challenges, and produces higher rates of isolation and disconnection (Cocquyt et al. 2019; Phirangee and Malec, 2017; Spencer in Foley, 2004). Learners in online environments have compelling needs for psycho-social supports (Yarbrough, 2018), likely intensified because of the independence and self-discipline that online learning demands. I hazard a guess that since the pandemic, those psycho-social supports yielding encouragement and connection in learning have become ever more important. This is Knowles' (1980) affirmation in action that adult learners "become ready to learn something when they experience a need to learn it in order to cope more satisfyingly with real-life tasks or problems" (1980, p. 44).

The precursor to online learning, distance education – defined as "a system of teaching and learning where instructors and students are separated in time and/or place" (Ives and Walsh, 2021, p. 29) – incorporates technological solutions to overcome space and time asynchronicities (Johnston, 2020). The very name 'distance education' implies separation between learner-learner and learner-instructor. Among other social implications, studies on online learning identified the "lack of placedness and synchronicity in time and place [and] the mere absence of body language" (Anderson, 2008, p. 51). Seemingly, space is righted (and promoted to place) through materiality: "place is space filled up by people, practices, objects, and representations" (Gieryn, 2000, p. 465). Brown and Zhang (2024) note the tendency for adult learning instructors to define 'presence' as embodied and physically evident within a learning setting, and

caution that this perspective may inhibit holistic approaches to learning – such as attending and noticing – in favour of physical space-taking.

Asynchronous Learning

Asynchronous online learning courses are “temporarily and geographically independent and defined as more individually based and self-paced as well as less instructor-dependent” (Fabríz, Mendzheritskaya, and Stehle, 2021, n.p.). Cognitive achievement is indicated to be greater in asynchronous courses, as is satisfaction with learning and perceived learning based on “the quality of learner-content interaction (i.e., reading interactive texts, watching videos, and completing assignments), and learner-teacher interaction (i.e., providing feedback, providing summative and formative assessments, and documenting students’ progress)” (Ibid.).

For instructors, asynchronous learning challenges consist of fostering participation when assessing contributions in real time is removed, and relying solely on learners’ overall participation for course understanding (Northey, Bucic, Chylinski, and Govind, 2015). I also see this delivery mode as akin to Freire’s banking model of education, in which information is ‘deposited’ into learners; asynchronous learning impedes that kind of “Knowledge [that] emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (Freire, 2005/1970, p. 72).

The other main challenge I encountered in asynchronous learning is my lack of familiarity with online learning design using dedicated learning platforms. Personally, I have seen all kinds of academic technologies, from card catalogues to early VIC-20 computers, and although I’d rather consider myself adaptable to new resources, asynchronous learning design asks much in the way of correct pixel width and height for images, and videos linked through a single search tool, and only one key combination to insert a static blank line between paragraphs for easier reading. I did not study adult education for the love of computers; I loved chatting with and learning from those around me in excited anticipation of learning to come. Being bereft of that is what I am concerned about for learners doing their university courses asynchronously today. I want them to be on the stoop instead of inside their apartments, alone.

I asked myself a deceptively simple question: “How can asynchronous learning replicate that informal discourse (in the manner of stoop talking) that leads to social bonding?”

As adult learners do, I consulted my colleagues who were also faculty members and instructors in higher education, across disciplines and institutions. ‘How would you do this in your course?’ I asked, and invariably their wonderful suggestions of polls and presentations and Q&A sessions were thwarted by my logistical clarification, ‘But asynchronously?’ The methods common to many, if not most, of us in assessing engagement, monitoring knowledge acquisition, inviting social justice understanding, affirming communication skills, and promoting critical thinking depend upon interpersonal dialogue, or at least synchronous dialogue and feedback. I can only gauge

learners' understanding through assignments and discussion boards. But: I refuse to believe that asynchronous learning entirely dismisses my ability to connect with learners, and expunge their ability to connect with one another and fashion the social bonds seen so often when people are just talking out on the stoop. At this point in time, I have two ideas, one of which is being enacted currently, and one of which is a conceptual direction for the future.

Talking About Stoops

Online learning, and asynchronous learning in particular, lacks a stoop, which provide places and which are written of in historical, cultural, and loving terms.

Architectural features (e.g., porches, stoops, windows, and buildings sitting along sidewalks just above street level) are theorized to facilitate social interactions (Brown et al., 2008, p. 1300)

"Porch-sitting" is an activity in which people can participate from early morning until late at night. All they have to do is plop their bodies down, engage someone in conversation, and the activity is on. (Harris, 1996, p. 441)

The stoop was the most secure place on the outside. The stoop was the world or the center thereof. Without knowing it, the stoop group functioned in a Ptolemaic universe. All of the world that needed seeing could be viewed from the stoop. It was a self-contained and self-sufficient world--a unity. (Clark, 1967, p. 109)

In addition to these understandings, porches are and can be indicative of self-expression (Kent, Govan, and Madden, 2022), sites of power (Crouse, 2013), spaces for artful creation (Harris, 1996), and act as "an integrated learning centre" (Florey, 2011). A stoop is culturally and relationally mediated, and no easy feat to realize in an asynchronous learning setting.

METHODOLOGY

As a new assistant professor, I teach 2-3 asynchronous Adult Education courses per semester for 3 semesters of the year at a large Ontario university known for its student supports and experiential learning opportunities (Brock University, 2022). The courses, of about 25 enrolled students each, deal with academic learning, workplace learning, geragogy, and creativity. Generally, courses require 3-4 assignments and weekly Discussion Boards where learners upload 200-300-word postings of original commentary/observations and responses to other learners' postings. There is no synchronous classroom time, although I can schedule videoconference meetings. On average, I receive between 7-12 initial emails per week from learners with questions

about the course and assignment instructions. Anecdotal experiences comprises the evidence of this discussion.

I first noted a lack of social connection when I saw learners post their own introductions on the Discussion Boards, but rarely read others' postings. I raised my concerns about offering more opportunities for connection with my department Chair, who was very supportive and suggested various group formations for assignments. Unfortunately, learners' time zone differences, uneven workload perceptions, and monitoring identical communication from me to all group members prevented these successes. Moreover, I was looking for interpersonal social connections, and set out to imagine asynchronous learning in a humanist vein.

DISCUSSION

After much thought, I have two proposals for the means through which asynchronous learners may be encouraged to communicate freely and informally, in the manner of stoop talking. The first idea emerged when I considered how to adapt polls for asynchronous learning. In a second-year undergraduate course on adult learning and creativity, I created a Google spreadsheet, and inserted each course topic (10 in total) into a single cell. I asked learners to view the spreadsheet, and add their initials to two other carefully chosen cells: one to be coloured green and adjacent to a topic they felt they knew well, and the other to be coloured red and adjacent to a topic which with they were unfamiliar. Learners were asked to carry out this exercise by the end of the course's first week (Fig. 1).

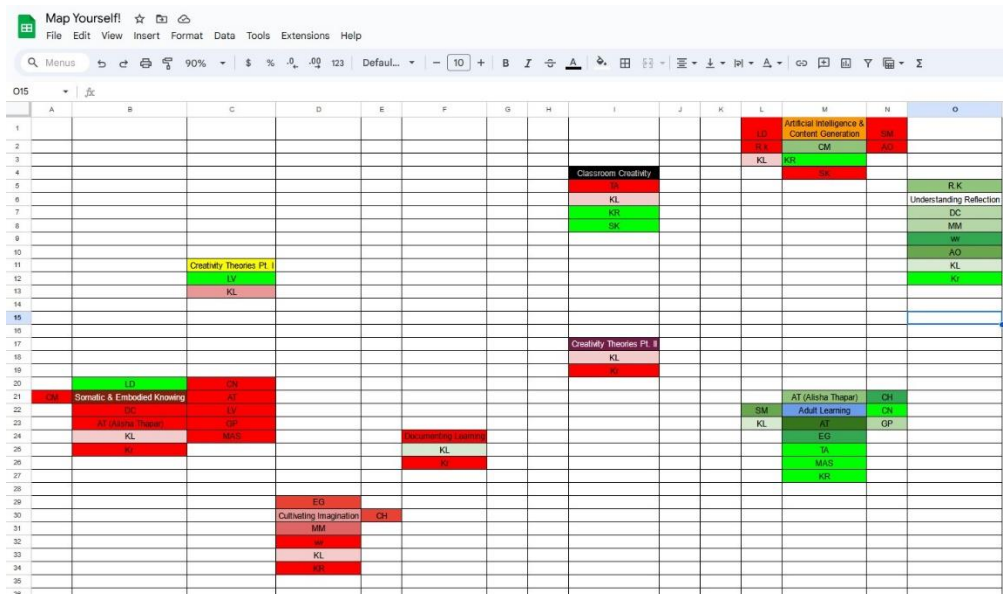


Figure 1. Google spreadsheet showing topic familiarity (in green) and lack of familiarity (in red)

This spreadsheet offers several advantages: first, it provides me with a general awareness of learners' prior knowledge at a single glance; second, it allows me to

ensure that learners are engaged with the course and completing its exercises; third, it permits learners to exercise self-direction and agency in determining for themselves their store of understanding; and fourth, the outcome normalizes knowing and not-knowing for learners lacking in confidence.

The other primary advantage for me is the degree to which this spreadsheet is a living document: should I choose, I can change each of the 'topic' cells to the names of authors from the course materials, or terminology, or, more casually, popular songs or movies or cities or even absurdities such as shoe sizes or favourite dinosaurs. I also have the option to hand over the changing of topic cells to learners, and letting them select the labels. This spreadsheet documents the act of belonging and interacting, I believe, even if asynchronously accomplished.

There is nothing remarkable about the physical appearance of a stoop. It is not structurally noteworthy and rarely makes its way onto the pages of a text in art and architecture. By an outsider, the stoop is seen only as an architectural appendage of the building behind it. But for the stoop group, the building was an appendage of the stoop. The small apartment where you ate and slept was significant of course because of the family. It was also significant because it gained you entry to the stoop. (Clark, 1967, p. 106)

The second proposed idea I have for fostering stoop talking in asynchronous learning is not as finely shaped, but draws from notions of ritual. I studied drama in my undergraduate literature degree, and I am fascinated by markers of routine and ceremony. Yes, as I have pointed out, that materiality cannot appear in online learning: asynchronous learning only permits cognitive connections, although perhaps materialities can be replicated through symbols tied to object permanence and relational culture.

Ritual [is] a powerful ideological arena in which symbolic images and gestures exercise a particularly persuasive effect on the participants' sense of identity and social reality (Bell, 1990, p. 299)

I see two potential directions for working with these symbolic images in asynchronous learning: the first is a simple instruction at the beginning of each week to place a cherished knickknack, or photograph, or drink coaster, or other arbitrary object near one's workspace. Although learners cannot see others' objects, nonetheless learners would be cognizant that others are also selecting and placing their object just so. That unity of action (coincidentally, one of the classical dramatic unities) could, perhaps, forge membership in the shared endeavour of asynchronous learning.

The second direction for ritualizing symbolic images for identity and social reality purposes would be the collaborative composition of an image or logo for that asynchronous course, at that moment in time and involving whatever circumstances learners see fit to include. As instructor, I could either provide a shared template (or

outline) to be populated, or give a short series of instructions for the logo development on a blank document; for example, 'All learners need to add a minimum of 5 characters or 2 colours or 1 slogan every other week.' At the course's end, the co-creation of a symbol collectively demonstrative of ongoing knowledge generation could represent alternative expressions of informal discourse and social bonding.

I like to think, though – and this is pure, unadulterated romanticism – that there are pockets of communities in the South where porch-sitting has survived whole, as Alice Walker would say. Where during the day as well as in the evening, people can engage themselves and their neighbors in the exchanges that reflect a way of life, a relational way of being, one that ties people to their families and their neighbors as well as to passersby. Where to "sit according to your family" is as much a cultural and creative imperative as a behavioral one. Where interaction is the norm (Harris, 1996, pp. 458, 460).

I am mindful of the responsibilities and accountabilities involved in developing these ideas: Crouse (2013) points out that porch culture is reflective of "the power that we give to those men in ... organizations on those porches" (n.p.). That is, porches have the power of the institutions which they adjoin. This invokes questions around oppression, underrepresentation, decolonization, and other disempowerments. Talking on the stoop can be a political act, and more investigation would shed light on resonant accessibilities, cultural capital, feminist practices, and Indigenous knowings through this discourse. Still, I feel that the loneliness of the asynchronous learner can be tempered by way of shared, ongoing, and occasionally easy-going documents and collective constructions resonant of talking on the stoop: "[The porch] is the space where the person sitting can control what is going on in the house even though he or she is not physically inside the house" (Harris, 1996, p. 447).

CONCLUSION

My own porch is festooned with Ikea string lights, and a soft yellow rope light wound round the top rail of my wonky lattice fence. I sit out there, in the lights, on most warm evenings, and watch dog walkers and kids on bikes go by. One older neighbour continually mock-threatens me with her eventual theft of my brilliantly-coloured deck chair. Last year I planted a cherry tomato plant. Because I'm part of the place. That's all I want asynchronous learners to feel and remember, too.

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CULTURAL PREPAREDNESS OF ADULT EDUCATORS

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Abstract

Drawing on educator experiences through the lens of adult learning and a transformative learning theoretical framework, I explored Canada's international dimension in teaching and learning in a Western university. The purpose of the study was to explore educator understanding of cultural preparedness in settings with international students and the central research question was *What does cultural preparedness mean in an adult learning environment in a higher education context?* Findings from this qualitative research study suggested that cultural preparedness is a community-wide endeavour in collaboration with students, administration, educators and begins with understanding one's positionality.

Keywords: culture, educators, internationalization at home, preparedness, transformative learning

INTRODUCTION

In my identity as an educator in Canada, I am aware of the importance of the role educators play in shaping our world. Canadian institutions of learning have been a choice for students worldwide for decades. According to Statistics Canada (2022), 2.2 million international students have chosen Canada as their host country for higher education. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) specified the number of students choosing Canada has grown exponentially from 22,000 students in 2007 to the 2022 figures (OECD, 2018; 2022). Given this growth in globally, culturally, and linguistically diverse student enrolment, it is crucial we explore educator experiences shaping the teaching and learning conversations.

What educators give meaning to is a research tenet of adult learning theory (MacKeracher, 2012; Mezirow, 1997). What is referred to as internationalization at home (IaH) brought attention to the mobility of students (Wächter, 2003) as evidenced by our Canadian statistics and the home campus's "intercultural and international dimension in the teaching learning process" (Leask, 2005, p. 17). Adult learning theory and educator reflections on experiences in the context of IaH helped frame this qualitative research study. The significance of the study not only identified a gap in our inquiry of educator teaching and learning experiences following exponential international student growth in Canada but also offered further insight into facilitating the stimulating international dimension of teaching and learning. The power of examining educator experiences teaching international students was evident in the research conducted by Carroll and Ryan (2005). How educators became self-aware and more knowledgeable about students' understanding in Western learning settings, Carroll and Ryan (2005) termed as "academic culture". Carroll and Ryan (2005) explained

many students would adapt to the Western academic culture without explicit help “by picking up clues and using feedback, observation and implicit messages from teachers to check out their own assumptions” (p. 27). However, they asserted that some students will not. While they acknowledged it is dangerous to generalize student experiences, they reinforced earlier research of Cortazzi and Jin (2002), who determined that educators best support their students once educators see their own academic culture as “systems of belief, expectations and practices about how to perform academically” (p. 77). At this point of awareness, according to Carroll and Ryan (2005), educators could offer explicit help to students who have chosen to learn in that academic culture. I posit that IaH requires a deeper level of awareness and understanding. Awareness and understanding were explored in this study, particularly surrounding conceptualizations of working alongside culturally and linguistically diverse international students.

While defining culture might appear problematic, it is a good heuristic to understand best what happens when people get together. To understand cultural preparedness in the context of this study, I began with the term “culture”, as it is a strong influencer in our daily lives and how we think and behave (Gay, 2018). However, culture, central in anthropology for many years, is contested, as the idea that “members of a society or social group all share the same cultural references has revealed its limits” (Frame, 2017, p. 3). I further examined Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory (Hofstede, 1980; Nickerson, 2023), Byram’s model of intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997, 2008; Hoff, 2014), Arulmani’s cultural preparedness model of equilibrium focused on the immigrant experience (Arulmani, 2018), seminal work of Nagel (1994), and Barth (1998), to help narrow down how I situated culture in my study in adult learning. These theories were each examined, and I concluded with a definition central to this study. Ultimately, I preferred the nuanced understanding of the term culture described by Nagel (1994) and Barth (1998), offering a more fluid and dynamic understanding of culture because we can change according to the variations and audiences we encounter. These authors suggested that through newly defined and constructed models, representant of the “creative choices of individuals and groups as they define themselves and others in ethnic ways” (Nagel, 1994, p.152), we often label ourselves and others in ethnic ways (Barth, 1998). Interestingly, our views on culture have expanded to the education workplace, including classroom settings where the audiences or actors negotiate their boundaries and establish identity (Nagel, 1994). Educators may experience international students negotiating their identity and boundary settings. Educators may, in turn, question their own identity and boundary settings. Using this fluid and nuanced view of culture combined with the term preparedness, I explored my journey of cultural preparedness.

I drew on educator experiences through the lens of adult learning and a transformative learning theoretical framework (Mezirow, 1997) to explore Canada’s international dimension in teaching and learning further. Outcomes from this study may further help educators promote best practices related to IaH in the 21st century.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the qualitative study was to explore educator understanding of cultural preparedness in settings with international students. The research setting was a public university in Western Canada offering applied and professional programming in graduate, undergraduate, and professional and continuing studies. Student demographics in the research setting include international and Canadian students working toward degrees ranging from undergraduate to post-graduate. This setting was ideal for this research as many potential participants had experience teaching and learning with international students.

Making meaning of a social or human problem is a principle of qualitative research and includes participants' voices and researcher's reflexivity (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). This principle aligned with my study's methods of collecting the participants' insight through focus groups and interviews. I reported the voices of my participants at one location, focusing on a small number of people at one site (Cresswell, 2016). This qualitative study enabled research into authentic meaning and interpretation of realities and accounts and aligned with my focus on better understanding educators' subjective experiences.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, I drew from the transformative learning theory represented in the works of Mezirow (1978, 1990, 1997, 2000, 2003), also referred to as transformational learning theory. Mezirow's work spans forty years of contributing to research, beginning with the seminal work in 1978 and, over time, joining other education researchers to continue contributing to the body of work. This adult learning theory was the right fit for the research, given the emphasis on reflection and reframing of knowledge to answer the research question, *What does cultural preparedness mean in an adult learning environment in a higher education context?*

Research Design

The design of two topic-driven, iterative focus groups followed by semi-structured interviews is fully commensurable with interpretivist underpinnings and allowed me to explore and better understand those who teach adults, my participants. Co-constructing realities and reflection are how I approached this research problem. In Fig.1, I demonstrated the alignment with my interpretivist and constructivist lens and extended to the methods commensurable with my research problem. Mezirow's work as a reconstructive theory aimed at better understanding how adults learn in various cultural settings framed this research so well, positioned with the qualitative research paradigm of transition (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), learning from individuals' views and experiences, and interacting with each other in my design.

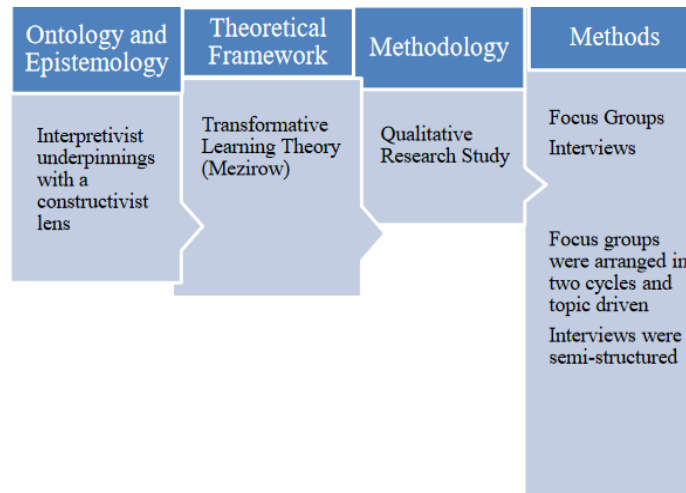


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework Alignment.

Data Collection Method and Data Analysis

Focus Groups and Interviews. There were seven educator participants in my study that met my criterion. Using focus groups, a form of group interview in which “reliance is placed on the interaction with the group ... yielding a collective rather than an individual view” (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 532), I asked specific questions. This helpful method enabled me to have greater coverage of issues given the participants' collective perceptions, viewpoints, and opinions as I offered questions. This method was further supported with a second follow-up focus group and then a last step in data collection by interviewing each participant individually. This iterative research design enabled me to ensure that saturation was achieved by continuously reviewing and refining emerging themes through the data-gathering process. This saturation of data was achieved because I designed a follow-up to the two focus groups with individual interviews to encourage more insight from each participant in the event they chose not to voice specific opinions in a focus group setting. I felt this demonstrated extreme care for the views and experiences of the participants in as many qualitative inquiry spaces available to me as the researcher. Individual follow-up interviews aligned with my aim to allow participants to clarify statements made during the focus groups (Creswell, 2016; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2008), the interviewer is not to give their opinion in any way and to “evade direction questions” (p. 136). I adopted that stance during both the focus groups and interviews. The iterative research design is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Questions and Methods of Data Collection.

Research Question	Research questions	Method of Data Collection
Primary Research Question 1	What does cultural preparedness mean in an adult learning environment in a higher education context?	PHASE 1 Focus Group
Secondary Research Question 2	What are educator perspectives on culturally prepared instruction?	
Secondary Research Question 3	What resources, supports, and learning tools are needed by educators to support their teaching practice?	
Topic-related Research Question	How does leading from a place of caring and compassion influence educator preparedness?	PHASE 2 Focus Group
Topic-related Research Question	What is the interplay of the partners in teaching and learning?	
Probe additional information	Individual semi-structured interviews of everyone following PHASE 2	PHASE 3 Individual interviews

The first three research questions in Table 1 are related to PHASE 1 Focus Group. The next two topic-related research questions, now in PHASE 2, occurred six weeks after PHASE 1 and were drawn from the PHASE 1 Focus Group discourse, thus enabling this iterative design to probe deeper into the research problem. Finally, in PHASE 3, participants were offered time and space in their individual interview to freely share their lived experiences and give meaning to those experiences throughout PHASE 3.

Data Analysis. I used a Thematic Analysis (TA) and followed the six phases of reflexive thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2022). The six reflexive phases are: Familiarization; Doing Coding; Generating Initial Themes; Developing and Reviewing Themes; Refining, Defining and Naming Themes; and Writing: Tell the Story. I explored reflexive thematic analysis using semantic coding (participant-driven, descriptive) and later in my analysis, latent coding (researcher-driven, conceptual) as per Braun and Clarke (2022, p. 57). Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 2003) aligned well with latent coding in my analysis. Mezirow's theory involved noticing evidence of rejecting ideas that fail to fit participant preconceptions, reframing a discussion topic, self-examining a viewpoint, or how a participant might integrate a new perspective, thus aligning well with latent-level coding, looking for deeper meaning and understanding. In this analysis, I carefully observed any evidence my participants offered that connected with these outlined dimensions of learning (Mezirow, 2003) through unconscious meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2002) to contribute to the gap in the literature on cultural preparedness.

RESULTS

Three Key Findings

The three key findings are as follows: Cultural preparedness begins with understanding our positionality as educators; Cultural preparedness occurs alongside our students; and Cultural preparedness is a community endeavour. These three key findings are independent and intertwined, as demonstrated in the Venn Diagram in Fig.2.

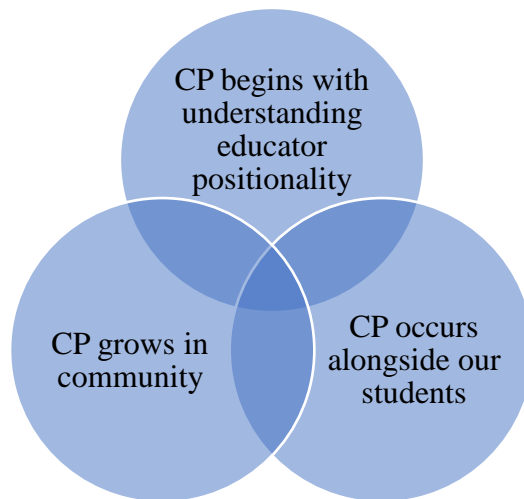


Figure 2. Full Engagement of a Culturally Nuanced Institution

When the findings are interlinked, at the centre of the Venn Diagram, where all three independent activities are working in harmony, is representative of the full engagement of a culturally nuanced institution. Following these findings, a second analysis was conducted to engage the study's theoretical framework and discover the additional nuances related to my participant journeys.

My analysis drawn from Mezirow's transformative learning theory, revealed findings related to four of the ten phases of transformation, particularly instances of a disorienting dilemma, self-examination, a critical assessment of assumptions, and an exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and action. Educator participants offered examples from some phases but not all phases of transformative learning theory in response to the research question of the cultural preparedness of adult educators. Transformations can be "epochal or incremental", as described by Mezirow and Taylor (2009, p. 23), who offered that these transformations may be task-oriented or self-reflective reframing. What was clear is that four of the ten phases of the adult learning theory emerged clearly. These four phases were also not linear, suggesting other less direct pathways to achieve transformative learning.

CONCLUSIONS

This study contributed positively to the limited adult learning research on educator experiences and IaH. While exploring the literature, the study of a model of preparedness for immigrants to a host country about integration, aspirations, and engagement (Arulmani, 2018) resonated with my findings – newcomers looking to regain a state of equilibrium in the host country is not a far leap from there to international students looking to gain the same footing as adult learners. The similarities suggest we can connect what we know about cultural preparedness in immigration settings and what we know about teaching and learning with international students. I discovered that cultural preparedness is a shared community endeavour of educators, students, and university administration. I also found that educator experiences bridged both negative and positive framing of their teaching while leading from a place of compassion and caring, professional knowledge, and how positionality has a role in framing our views. These examples of shared values of those working with newcomers, is a platform to extend this research. Drawing on this research, I see more opportunities for positively impacting society. The impact can include the broader social change outside of academia when we connect to more significant societal issues.

I was surprised to learn that discussions surrounding the Internationalization of Curriculum were not as abundant and embraced as I had thought they would be because while researching the literature on globalization and internationalization, IoC appeared prominently and as a leading discourse on how international students are supported. Indigenization, however, was well-known to all participants. This distinction tells me that where an organization's leaders focus, the people within that organization focus. Apart from Indigenization, participants were not generally aware of what exactly is meant by IaH, thus supporting the critique of some scholars that internationalization is a focus aimed at bringing in more students to bolster and drive university revenue and less about teaching and learning.

Cultural preparedness is a complex undertaking whereby responsibility takes the form of individualizing, leading, working alongside others, or being led by others. While this may sound overwhelming and unmanageable, the complexity allows us space to find a way toward cultural preparedness. In some instances, educators found specific strategies through professional development training, openly and critically addressing their assumptions while aiming to avoid working from a deficit orientation which views students as needing to be fixed. These findings suggest more work is required to improve our understanding of cultural preparedness as a community while advancing our educator's transformative lens. This research took place as world events brought equity, diversity, and inclusion, and soon after, an accessibility lens to the forefront for action and future learning, policy, practice, and research.

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REDEFINING ADULT EDUCATION AS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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"None of us is as smart as all of us." – Ken Blanchard

We define adult education as community development. Likewise, we believe community development practices can often be defined as adult education.

It can be said that perhaps some of the best-known examples of this is the Antigonish Movement or the Fogo Process during the 20th century in rural Atlantic Canada. With a keen interest in both adult education and community development, we have co-authored a work that provides a broad, brief overview of other adult education by post-secondary institutions for community development within the region.

We begin by examining the role of Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador (MUN), a post-secondary institution that has demonstrated adult education as being community development. It is a public university and was upgraded from a college in 1949 by then Premier Joey Smallwood. The extension department was established in 1959. Premier Smallwood had wanted "...an Extension Department with a university tacked on to it, not the other way round" (Gwyn, 1972, p. 293). The MUN Extension Service began to evolve when Donald Snowden, with experience facilitating co-operatives among the Inuit, came to Newfoundland in 1964 and became director of Extension in 1966. Snowden and his colleague, Tony Williamson, from the beginning, seemed to perceive Extension field workers as practitioners of community development and education. "Community development is essentially an educational process. The basic tenet of community development is involvement of local people in identification and solution of their own problems (Snowden & Williamson, 1984, p. 26). The staff of the extension service were critical to its success in communities, not only during the Fogo Process but in other communities through participatory learning practices and working closely with those who lived in the community.

"It can be seen that the University Extension worker is not task-oriented. He can work with greater flexibility because he is not under directives... He is primarily an adult educator and coordinator concerned with processes which enable the individuals of the community to develop, to choose their own priorities and tasks, to be self-determined" (Snowden & Williamson, 1984, p. 24).

Furthermore, MUN Extension was a principal supporter of the Newfoundland and Labrador Association for Adult Education. In 1991 (the same year the government and university closed the Extension Service) the association was active with members from the government, the university, and public colleges. Its 1991 conference was Adult Educators-Missing in Action. The conference featured recognition of neo-liberal

governance and focus on the “streams” of community development and adult education.

In addition to the work of MUN Extension, the College of the North Atlantic (CNA) in Newfoundland and Labrador has a role in adult education and community development in the province. Foley’s (2007) work on examining the adult education role of the College of the North Atlantic on community development provides a detailed, step-by-step process from individual learning to community transformation. The process begins with personal transformation in learning with emphasis on the importance of knowing oneself and the private and public aspects of one’s being. The next step is the realization that one can see themselves as having the ability to control one’s destiny. This step is crucial as it is where the individual builds confidence, gains new knowledge, and can appreciate their strengths (Foley, 2007, p.87). The third step is the move toward a group which involves acceptance of how group development is a conscious matter that can be learned and developed. Through this group development, it is essential to acknowledge group dynamics and the need for leaders who can guide the development of a healthy group. Steps 5 and 6 of Foley’s proposed process involve community organizers working towards a community plan followed by having group members realize they too can be the masters of their destiny (Foley, 2007, p.88). This is reminiscent of Moses Coady and the Antigonish Movement and his work on people becoming masters of their destiny. In his work in a particular region of rural Nova Scotia, Coady (1939) noted that people could share the belief they had the power to determine their future. The final 3 steps in Foley’s (2007) 9-step process involve the community taking ownership of itself by establishing the required environments needed to change the social and economic development, i.e. social action. With the desired changes to transform a community, the last step of the process is a permanent system owned and operated by the community. Foley (2007) emphasizes the permanence of the transformation and becoming “...an accepted part of the system,” (Foley, 2007, p.89).

Foley (2007) also discusses the overall role of CNA in encouraging people to enter college programs via a “prior learning achievement and recognitions” and an “open entry” policy. Such policies allow for previous formal and informal learning to be respected within the college system. In addition to this, CNA developed specific programs to help improve the literacy level through involvement in adult education programs. Foley (2007) discusses that CNA contributes to a positive lifelong learning culture in Newfoundland and Labrador through the use of informal, capacity-building workshops, sector-specific programs, and three-year diploma programs. He describes how CNA utilizes 6 strategies for influencing development in various regions which include enhancing accessibility, fostering business and economic development, increasing research and development, developing transition programs, increasing literacy, and creating a culture of lifelong learning (Foley, 2007, p.66). Here we see an effort by a college to increase participation in adult education by acknowledging previous learning, reaching people through workshops, and identifying strategies for development within their region. This demonstrates a conscious effort by a post-

secondary institution to engage citizens from various learning backgrounds while also endeavoring to contribute to the community's development. Arguably, this is similar to the previously described Memorial University Extension Service.

While our work has primarily discussed Newfoundland and Labrador and post-secondary institutions, it is also noteworthy to consider the use of adult education and community development in larger, urban settings. Large cities in the 21st century are diverse spaces; however, Gelpi (1985) points out that there is a role for lifelong learning in these spaces as they emphasize there are both creative human resources present as well as limited knowledge of the cultural practices and needs of those who live in the city. This reiterates the importance of learning from others and learning from those we wish to teach (Evans et al., 2022, p.55). Whether in an expansive metropolitan area or a rural community in Atlantic Canada, there is a role for lifelong, adult education that contributes to communities.

It is also critical to incorporate Freire's ideas on learning for and within a community. Over half a century ago, Freire noted the significance of dialogue among people. He notes that programs that have little or nothing to do with people should never be provided and that it is not the role of someone else to speak or impose on others our views of the world. One's view of the world reflects their situation and Freire emphasizes that when educational and political action is not aware of situational differences it runs the risk "banking education" or essentially preaching in the desert (Freire, 2018, p. 96). It is seemingly not helpful.

This brief composition provides a high-level overview of adult education as community development provided by post-secondary institutions in Atlantic Canada while also acknowledging that adult education for the community is not only beneficial in rural regions but also relevant in urban settings. Friere and Coady, and many others, are influential leaders in this field as they believe in learning relevant knowledge for one's own life and that people can be the masters of their own destiny. The quote at the beginning "None of us is as smart as all of us" is applicable here as we believe it demonstrates the power of individual strengths and abilities of people coming together for a shared cause (i.e. community development).

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BEYOND BEARING WITNESS: REFLECTIONS ON THE POLITICS OF SIGHT IN ANIMAL RIGHTS STREET ACTIVISM

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a philosophical critique of the “politics of sight” that are at play in the pedagogical work of Anonymous for the Voiceless (AV), a grassroots animal rights organization that focuses on street activism in cities around the world. I explore the political epistemologies which form the basis for AV’s principle curricular artifact: the Cube of Truth. In doing so, I aim to address the prospects and limitations for systemic change that are involved in ‘bearing witness’ to what Derrida refers to as “non-criminal putting to death,” institutionalized in the modern abattoir. The Cube of Truth, which capitalizes on contemporary digital technologies and videographic texts, represents the quintessence of the dominant educational model of animal rights street activism. This model is grounded in the supposition that presenting the ‘public’ with graphic footage/imagery of investigations into the (otherwise hidden reality of the) Animal-Industrial Complex will lead to political mobilization towards pro-animal transformations in our global food system. By exploring the sociology and philosophy of violence entrenched in the visualization of human-enacted interspecies violence, this paper puts forward a critical account of the educational tactics employed in Animal Rights Street Activism, and points to new directions in Critical Animal Pedagogies (CAP) for engaging in transformative pro-animal politics in the streets.

Keywords: Animal Rights, Philosophy of Education, Politics of Sight, Social Movement Theory

INTRODUCTION

Pro-animal advocacy groups tend to draw upon a common repertoire of pedagogical devices and practices in which knowledge is relayed through visual media in their educational communications with the public. In this paper, I contribute to the debate over the role of visual imagery that depicts violence against animals in the wider animal rights movement and argue that a shift in tactics is necessary for the realization of systemic change in human-animal relations toward the abolition of instrumental utilization of animals in the Animal-Industrial Complex (AIC) (Twine, 2012). In doing so, I aim to develop a critique based in philosophy of education that addresses the street activist work of Anonymous for the Voiceless (AV); a grass-roots abolitionist organization, which was founded in 2017 in Melbourne (Australia) and has grown to over 100,000 members (as of 2024), with chapters around the world. This philosophy of education revolves around the politics of knowledge systems that mediate the use of “unveiling” tactics which activists employ; that is, the “politics of sight.”

Many who live in urban areas are likely to have encountered AV demonstrations in public facing spaces with heavy foot-traffic. These demonstrations typically involve four masked activists who form a square (“Cube of Truth”) and hold digital screens displaying graphic video footage of socially and legally “invisibilized” (Dekha, 2018) spaces within the AIC (slaughterhouses, CAFOs, research labs, fur farms, etc.), which are meant to emotionally “shock” pedestrians. Simultaneously, a number of other activists (termed “outreach workers”) engage in conversation with anyone who pauses to observe the footage displayed by the Cub displayed by the Cube. As a contested site of education, the purpose of this activity is to offer the public political information which is otherwise obscured and concealed through an industry-governmental nexus that criminalizes the publication of critical information regarding the mass breeding, confinement, and slaughter of animals (such as through “ag-gag” legislation) (Martin, 2014; Sorenson, 2016; Bernatchez, 2022).

The argument I put forward in this paper aims to question the supposed correlation between AV tactics and the personal and systemic transformation which they aim to cause. As Martin (2014) has so aptly put it, “bringing down the walls of the factory farm is *not* the same as bringing down the walls and operations of speciesist ideology” (pp. 80-81). Here, my philosophical analysis operates at two levels. Firstly, I examine the sociology of violence and the politics of knowledge involved in our visual culture and what it means to “see” animals suffer/die (focusing on the Cube of Truth). Secondly, I consider the limitations of the programmatic pedagogical practices of AV outreach work and suggest alternative means of education for the movement. Grounded in Critical Animal Pedagogies (Pedersen, 2010), this analysis articulates the need for a transformation in our knowledge systems, particularly in terms of the symbolic economy of animal death and consumption, if humans are to establish non-violent political relations with other animals. Violence occurs at various levels – intersubjective, institutional, epistemic, etc. (see: Zizek, 2008; Spivak, 1988). It is the latter (at the level of knowledge) which I will address in the following sections.

EPISTEMIC VIOLENCE AND THE VISUALIZATION OF ANIMAL SUFFERING IN THE “CUBE OF TRUTH”

The reasoning behind the use of imagery that displays the suffering of animals in animal advocacy is often linked to the use of imagery depicting human suffering and oppression in promoting personal and political action towards the alleviation of said suffering (such as in cases of aggressive war, genocide, famine, human trafficking, etc.). This sort of “visual pedagogy,” has received renewed attention in the West following the Abu Ghraib torture and prison abuse controversy in the early 2000s. It is said that “the visual enhances moral perception,” and transforms abstract information into “knowledge that is *felt* and absorbed” (Jenni, 2005, p.2-3). “Seeing is believing.” AV activists show video footage of animals being exploited in industrial settings “to disclose a troubling reality, to rupture everyday food routines of production and consumption and to open the possibility of ethical revelation” (Martin, 2014, p.79).

However, there is a danger in equating the visualization of human suffering and that of non-human suffering, as it discounts the role of the discourse of species (Wolfe, 2013) and its structuring of hierarchical anthropocentrism, whereby human sovereignty (Wadiwel, 2015) over all other species is considered “peaceable”. In other words, systemic and intersubjective violence against animals is largely understood as *not* constituting violence. Simply put, animals are seen as incapable of being “victims”. Thus, participation in various forms of violence against animals is not a matter of *akrasia*, whereby humans know that it is “bad” but continue, nonetheless (through avoidance, negation, uncertainty, resistance, escapism, etc.). Rather, I contend that animal exploitation is generally considered acceptable and even beneficent by most viewers of the Cube of Truth. Thus, my critique is not simply a matter of the possibility that moral shock tactics are ineffective in general, wherein repeated shocks can become familiar and promote passivity if not accompanied by action, as Susan Sontag (2003) claims in *Regarding the Pain of Others*. Nor are the limits of AV’s tactics simply a matter of “separation,” whereby distance makes relations inconsequential, as Guy Debord (1967) argues in *The Society of the Spectacle*. Instead, I claim that when it comes to non-human suffering and death, the destruction of animal lives lacks moral relevancy within our dominant knowledge system, regardless of our proximity and exposure to their sufferings.

To understand the nature of our political relations with other animals, I believe we ought to center Dinesh Wadiwel’s (2015) thesis, that “sovereignty precedes ethics.” Here, I am interested in his use of Michel Foucault’s inversion of Prussian General, Carl Von Clausewitz’s aphorism: “war is policy pursued by other means.” Instead, we get from Foucault (2004) the idea that “politics is war pursued by other means.” That is, the apparent cessation of hostilities in military conflict often results in the conflict’s dispersion throughout the body-politic through forms of “biopolitics” and “governmentality”; or perhaps more appropriately in the case of animals, what Achille Mbembe (2019) calls “necropolitics,” that generate “death worlds.” These “death worlds” function within what Giorgio Agamben (2017) refers to as “states of exception” and reduce animals to “bare life,” caught between life and death (a “living death”). This status underpins the symbolic economy of sacrifice that is foundational to our social and political relations, which ultimately depends on the tacit acceptance that subjectivity is coterminous with the species barrier (*homo Sapien*) (Wolfe, 2013), and animal death is absent of violence... or what Derrida (2008) calls “non-criminal putting to death.”

In the context of “death worlds,” in which the reproduction of daily life is constituted by contemporary forms of “subjugation of life to the power of death” (Mbembe, 2019), Wadiwel’s (2015) multispecies conception of sovereignty illuminates the basis for our political relations with other species. Moving our understanding away from the Westphalian model, we can understand sovereignty in this case as Von Clausewitz (2006) does in his treatise *On War*: as “an act of violence to compel our opponent to fulfil our will.” This sovereignty is baseless, as Jens Bartleson (1995) puts it in *A Genealogy of Sovereignty*. It does not come from any innate or biological state of superiority, nor does it reflect a rational “just” intention. Rather, as Derrida (2011)

argues in *The Beast and the Sovereign*, it is founded on "stupidity." In other words, "sovereignty involves the violence of overcoming and appropriating another entity, which in this process declares a superiority over this same entity" (Wadiwel, 2015, p.62). Interestingly, we see this logic at play in John Locke's (2009) *First Treaties on Government*, whereby the conquest of animals becomes the foundation for systems of property relations (only in so far as humans are capable and willing to subdue other species).

Regarding the "stupidity" of human sovereignty, Wadiwel (2015) considers the fact that "we make animals suffer even though we know they suffer, in spite of their own suffering" (p.57). This stupidity is rationalized through the perpetuation of "epistemic violence," (Spivak, 1988) which involves crafting the "other" discursively, and simultaneously creating the terms by which the other can be heard. The epistemic violence of producing "the animal" (a term which Derrida (2008) refers to as *Asinine* – given its use as modernist binary – man versus everything else – as if the earthworm were equivalent to a dolphin, or hummingbird, etc.), "produces animal as an inferior entity, and therefore susceptible to all guises of human utility – reproduced, extinguished, made captive, hunted, companionised, tortured, and experimented upon" (Wadiwel, 2015, p.34).

Returning to the "Cube of Truth," one might ask what "truth" means in this context of anthropocentric politics of knowledge, wherein human sovereignty precedes ethical veridiction. While the efforts of AV activists might be considered a form of *parrhesiastic* communication, whereby they are "detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time" (Foucault 1980, p.133), and taking significant personal risks in doing so – are their efforts clearly and intentionally delimited by such a "politics of truth" (Barrett, 1991)? This hardly seems to be the case in practice – at least when it comes to the "Cube" itself. There is nothing in the visualization of animal suffering, in and of itself in and of itself, which would prompt a critique or transformation of dominant knowledge systems which mediate viewing. Rather, as Randy Malamud (2012) might suggest, looking at animals in the films used by the Cube, as with any visual media, "circumscribes animals' existence in relation to the human gaze, appraising them only in terms of their usefulness or threat (to us)" (p.75).

Thus, in a context where sovereignty precedes ethics, and humans are prone to sociopathic and sadistic visual relations to animal suffering (Malamud, 2011), what processes would be necessary to disrupt knowledge systems which maintain human dominion over other animals? Do AV street-outreach workers engage in a process of integrating the witnessing of "crisis in a *transformed* frame of meaning" (Felman, 1992, p.54)? I will address this question in the following section.

AV STREET OUTREACH WORK AND THE SHAPING OF COUNTERDISCOURSES

Today, most people already know about the conditions of factory farms, but this knowledge is disconnected from value/moral systems in which animal subjectivity might hold ethical and political significance. Hence, those who do stop to ponder what they are viewing, and are then approached by outreach workers, may simply be shocked by the fact that the food they consume is produced in an environment which warrants human health concerns. Animals living their "bare lives" in swamps of their own feces may simply be seen as unappetizing. Even the very questions which form the programmatic dialogue between outreach worker and pedestrian observer may not disrupt the concept of "food-animal", animals' legal status as *property*, or the cultural hegemony of meat in any meaningful way.

The outreach worker begins by asking whether the viewer has seen this type of footage in the past and makes clear that what they are watching is standard industry practice, free range (in the context of poultry and egg production), and SPCA approved. They then proceed to ask whether the viewer supports animal abuse – which most viewers respond to with a "no" - and then engage in a pre-formulated program of purportedly Socratic questioning to reveal the inherent inconsistencies in the dominant discourse of animal edibility (i.e., if you don't support animal abuse, then you should be vegan).

This program is admittedly a significant piece of curriculum, which continues to be developed using the feedback that outreach workers have received in cities across the world. Outreach workers' questions and answers are pre-configured and rehearsed, and are designed to refute and discredit most of the common beliefs around meat consumption that viewers are likely to put forward in their own defense. Individual outreach workers may personalize their pedagogical approach and vary their language depending on who they are speaking with. However, it would seem to me that the framework which is universally employed is a *perverted* form of *elenchus*-dialectic. While the hortatory aspect of Socratic philosophical education takes on different modalities across the Platonic dialogues, and does not comprise a unified method (Brickhouse & Smith, 2002), what is clear is that instead of attempting to engage in the *protreptic* component of *elenchus*, whereby the dialectic aims to encourage people to "want to pursue virtue despite, and indeed because of, lacking the requisite knowledge," (Magrini, 2018, p.83) through the *activity of questioning*, what occurs at AV demonstrations in practice is more along the lines of *eristic* argumentation, whereby interlocutors are forced into a position of intellectual and moral inferiority. Generally, this latter form of argumentation is considered inferior to the *protreptic* dialectic, as it is largely destructive rather than constructive (Gonzalez, 1998). Inevitably, this tends to result in a breakdown of the interactive aspects of AV demonstrations, with viewers often leaving the scene annoyed at the activists who have pointed out the contradictions/inconsistencies in their beliefs, widening the "moral chasm" between AV and the public. The prevalence of this defensive reaction is in line with Mika's (2006) findings: that animal activists who rely on moral shocks often alienate their audience, who see their efforts as an offence, resulting in backlash and loss of credibility for the

movement. On the other hand, still falling short of vegan abolitionist aims, many of the seemingly amicable interactions conclude with viewers committing themselves to the consumption of "higher quality" sources of meat, adopting a quasi-welfarist stance regarding the improvement of welfare and sanitary conditions.

While perhaps seeing themselves as "gadflies," I argue that unlike Socrates at the Agora, AV activists do not exactly engage in *Parhessia*, nor a *protreptic* form of dialectic. In order to do so, activists would need to place greater emphasis on the role of the receiver/listener and the building of relationships in the process of learning (Foucault, 2011). To begin with, the receiver must be willing to listen and learn. Secondly, activists must take a great deal of care when engaging with listeners. As Plato makes clear regarding the *protreptic* component of *elenchus*, Socrates considered his work as philosophically analogous to "midwifery," and he explicitly offered palliatives for difficult aspects of the dialectical process in pursuit of the "good life" (Magrini 2018 p. 82-3). This would seem utterly impossible now, given the practical limitations of street-activism in a high velocity world of hyper capitalism, which rarely offers the space for the "slow-learning" (Spivak 2014) that is essential to transformative moral education.

Furthermore, unlike the AV "instant soup," (Spivak, 2014) Socrates' *elenchus*-dialectic is a *process* which may never be complete, as it has more to do with "examining," "inquiring," "investigating," "questioning," or simply "philosophizing" (Brickhouse and Smith, 1994) than the transmission of "truth". Thus, I question whether AV's pedagogical model involves this form of learning, or whether it operates in the *protreptic* guise while simply offering propagandic indoctrination, which is largely interpreted by their interlocutors as an act of shaming. Either way, the current "one-sized-fits-all toolkit," is unlikely to be effective, given that it is uncondusive to the building of relationships between interlocutors.

As Wadiwel (2024) suggests, there is an urgent need for community building in the movement, if we are to engage in transformations of knowledge systems. Here, the potential of the political party (Gramsci, 1971) in developing new truths that were previously inadmissible within contemporary knowledge systems should be centered. While there are a growing number of electoral parties which have organized around animal protection and/or welfare, and aim to influence governmental processes in a number of countries around the world, Wadiwel is accurate in asserting that what is needed is more along the lines of a communist party in the Gramscian formulation. That is, we need a structured environment (radical political party) in which democratic processes and "internal intellectual cultures," are established in order to develop "a shared vision of alternative societies" (Wadiwel, 2024, p.13).

The Gramscian style party may indeed function as a vital democratic space for the development of countervailing knowledge systems that are necessary for pro-animal transformations at the structural level. Furthermore, such a democratic space, if accountable to the imperatives of imagining a multi-species political theory must move

away from what Lauren Corman (2016) calls “the ventriloquist’s burden,” in which animals are positioned as “voiceless” in their struggles for liberation. In doing so, we must take seriously not only animal agency and resistance (Hribal, 2010), but also various forms of animal communications, cultures, and politics (Meijer, 2019). The opening of such a space would affirm the role of other animals in co-creating our world – a recognition that they are denied in contemporary society.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have argued that the visual methods employed by Anonymous for the Voiceless, and other pro-animal street-activist organizations who engage in similar tactics, are largely ineffective when it comes to promoting both individual and systemic change towards the abolition of animal exploitation, given the discursive practices which shape political relations between humans and other animals. In a context where “sovereignty precedes ethics,” and the discourse of species renders animal exploitation as non-violent, the mere visualization of animal suffering and death within the depths of industrial systems is unable to prompt transformations in our dominant knowledge systems. While the interactive component of AV demonstrations (i.e., verbal exchanges with outreach workers) may open the door to alternative readings, their pedagogical model falls short in terms of the creation of relationships between interlocutors. While it is possible to tweak this model, there is ample evidence to support a foundational shift in how animal advocacy/activism is carried out. Here, I agree with “political turn” scholars in animal studies, that a democratic space for cultivating countervailing knowledge systems is a pre-requisite for transforming how (human) political communities incorporate other species within a political system. Finally, I assert that such a shift would also require the repositioning of the political agency of animals themselves, away from the status of “voiceless.”

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DEVELOPING “DIGITAL DECODINGS”: FACILITATOR REFLECTIONS ON THE ORGANIZATION OF A DISCUSSION-BASED GAMING CIRCLE

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Abstract

In this paper, I share my experiences developing and organizing a Freirean-inspired gaming circle for my Master’s research. Drawing from my personal planning notes, journal entries, draft correspondences, and other written notes, I describe how the logistical and ludological elements of a gaming circle intersect in a way that is unfamiliar to other forms of critical media literacy. Using critical discourse analysis, I identify my research as being located within a larger academic metagame, creating logistical and emotional *quests* that one must embark on to move forward and “win”. Attempts to peel apart these sticky layers of work and play may be tempting, but ultimately work against efforts towards deepening *conscientization*. Instead, embracing both my academic *and* gaming communities allowed me to fulfill not only the material but the spiritual requirements involved in doing adult education research in a dynamic landscape of play.

Keywords: critical pedagogy, popular culture, Freire, video games, critical media literacy, culture circle, discussion-based learning.

INTRODUCTION

What does it mean to be an adult educator?

I keep mulling over this question in front of a blank screen, cursor blinking. It’s been a long day and I am tired. “Are we all work and no play?”

I close my laptop and get up from my desk, moving towards the couch. I sit down, then I lay down, and sigh. I reach for the controller on the coffee table, and in doing so, begin an intimate ritual that is somehow profoundly unique yet still shared by millions of others. I need only press a single button for worlds upon worlds to unfurl before me and beckon for me to come play.

Yes, I am a gamer, it is true. I am also a researcher, a writer, a mentor, and a friend. And in all of these forms, I am an adult educator.

Indeed, to be an adult educator is to take on many forms, many of which are marked by elements of play that often go unnoticed. Drawing from my own lived experience developing a Freirean-inspired gaming circle for my Master’s thesis, I provide a novel case of critical pedagogy in praxis where the logistic and the ludic reveal themselves as inseparable. I will discuss some of the unique material, methodological, and moral considerations that arise when popular video games are applied to Freirean pedagogy. Finally, I present an understanding of my research as being situated within a larger

research metagame, which I was able to navigate through playful acts of resilience upheld by both my academic and gaming communities.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

A discussion-based gaming circle is my (quite literal) play on Paulo Freire's traditional cultural circle. Freire encouraged a discussion-based, problem-posing pedagogy to help develop conscientization, or the deepening of one's awareness of the "reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality" (p. 452, Freire, 1970). In the cultural circle, a facilitator engages participants in critical dialogue around images that depict a shared reality. The circle's aim is to reveal the images' underlying socio-cultural themes and relate them back to the participants' own lives in order to foster conscientization.

While Freire himself most often used photographs or drawings in his cultural circles, contemporary adult educators have since applied his methodologies to a range of novel environments centered around different forms of popular media, including: books, (A. Brown, 2011), movies (T. Brown, 2011; Charlebois, 2008; Taber et al., 2017; Tisdell, 2008), TV shows (Jubas, 2023), and music (Akorn, 2009; Wood, 2017). Little, however, is known about how a discussion-based, Freirean approach might work with popular video games.

The use of video games in discussion-based learning is not an entirely under-researched area, however. There exists a wide body of literature on the use of video games in the English language arts (ELA) classroom. Nash & Brady, (2022) as well as Bacalja, (2022) both discussed more critical types of play in their research on the existing literature on video game use in ELA education. However, the literature they consulted focused on middle and high school experiences, and none were identified as centering the political experience of a Freirean framework.

More political Freirean gaming research follows the legacy of early games scholars Mary Flanagan (2006, 2009) and Gonzalo Frasca (2001b, 2001a). Inspired by Freire's understanding of praxis, they emphasized the design and creation of video games that are more socially just. Critical games researchers following in Flanagan and Frasca's footsteps (e.g. Keating, 2021; Mendels, 2020; Prax, 2020; Santos et al., 2019) have since largely focussed on the development and evaluation of new critical games rather than interventional strategies for critical discussion around existing, popular games. One exception is Love, (2017) who designed a unique instrument to assist adult educators in problematizing video games with their learners — however, their research does not expand on the unique material, logistic and cultural needs that arise in organizing video games-based group learning with adults.

In response, I decided to develop and facilitate a discussion-based gaming circle for my Master's thesis research called "Digital Decodings". Myself and four other participants spent three hours per week, for a period of six weeks, playing and discussing our way through the introductory scenes of seven popular role-playing video games (RPGs). My

goal with the project was to reveal some of the benefits and challenges of working with popular RPGs in a Freirean-inspired discussion circle.

When I began developing “Digital Decodings”, I didn’t have in mind the idea to analyze my experiences organizing the project. As an avid gamer myself, many of the particularities related to developing a discussion-based gaming circle seemed self-evident and uninteresting. It was only after I started discussing my research-in-progress with people who don’t play video games that I came to see the value in sharing my experiences.

While educational researchers have written on the reflexive process involved in integrating popular culture in the classroom (Kelly & Currie, 2021), the material and organizational requirements of doing so are not discussed. This may be due to the ubiquity of film and television in our current media paradigm relative to video games. Indeed, many of the insights I myself had taken for granted as being “common knowledge” were shaped by my belonging to a larger “gamer” community — one that is, at present, relatively disconnected from our more academic communities of adult educators. However, working with video games presents specific material, moral, and methodological challenges when compared to more “traditional” forms of popular media.

METHODOLOGY

I understand the Freirean cultural circle as an epistemological space of being where the physical, relational, material, and intellectual merge. As such, I locate this research as a constructivist undertaking in which I engage with my own material experiences of developing a Master’s-level action-research thesis in a critical and reflexive way.

I would like to thank Prof. Jennifer Burton for introducing me to critical discourse analysis (CDA), which helped shape my analysis. I am a person with an incessant need to write things down. I document my thoughts, my feelings, my daily plans, my long term-goals — it all ends up either on paper somewhere or in a text editor. CDA is a qualitative analytical approach that sees meaning in all language use, even in texts that might be considered as mundane. In educational research, CDA can be useful to “explore connections between educational practices and social contexts”, specifically in uncovering “implicit or concealed power relations” (Mullet, 2018, p. 117).

For my analysis, I gathered every text I wrote while developing and organizing “Developing Decodings” and imported them into a qualitative analysis software (MAXQDA). These included personal planning notes, research journal entries, draft correspondences, proposals, etc. I analyzed, working inductively from in vivo codes, not only the content of my texts, but how I wrote as well as what I didn’t write. This included shifts in my writing style or voice, the punctuation I used (and didn’t use), my use of caps lock, of idioms, expressions and slang, typos, and other mistakes, as well as tense and narrative point of view. I grappled with how my written records at times

clashed with how I remembered the developmental process and entered in a cyclical process of negotiation with my words and memories.

RESULTS

My results revealed themes in the form of loosely concentric circles, playfully interacting with one another. I will describe these themes in the inductive order in which they became apparent, starting from the outer layers and working inwards to the core of my findings.

The outermost themes relate to the unique qualities of video games as multimodal texts. Simple lists of these qualities appeared frequently in my notes and danced along the peripheral edges of my analysis. Looking a bit deeper, questions of how these qualities affected logistical issues such as access to physical materials, space, and the general planning or scheduling of the sessions began giving shape to my more personal experiences and concerns developing the gaming circle.

Digging into these logistic experiences revealed deeper concerns hidden under a protective, impersonal writing style. Nestled deeply between the lines laid my intimate, vulnerable emotional reactions to the realities of being an unfunded graduate student researcher. These recorded moments of emotional tension not only illustrated my challenges in coping with the numerous logistical and emotional hurdles I faced in the development of my project, but my own struggle of conscientization in witnessing myself as a player in a larger academic metagame.

However, among it all were moments of levity that kept me anchored to my communities. It was this playful resilience that shaped the core of my findings, highlighting the vital importance of community in this kind of work. Virtually all thematic paths in my analysis eventually led me back to community — it was my ability to play within both my academic and gaming communities that ultimately ensured I had the material access, emotional fortitude, and spiritual capacity to see this project through.

Peripherals on the Periphery: Materials and Logistics

Video games are unlike books and movies in many ways. They differ both in terms of their actual mediatic presentation, as well as in the physical materials, and cultural availability of those materials, required to access them for educational or research purposes. I wouldn't have to be a huge film buff in order to set up a movie or TV show discussion circle, for example. There are a good number of free resources available to the average unfunded graduate researcher when working with movies or TV shows. Most university libraries now have extensive DVD or Blu-ray disc collections, with some even offering subscriptions to educationally licensed video streaming services. Scenes must be selected in compliance with the Canadian Copyright Act, which can be difficult to interpret without appropriate legal counsel, but many universities have their own Fair Dealing policies which clearly delineate the permitted viewing time (usually up to 10% of a protected work). University classrooms and research spaces are often equipped with TVs or other displays with the proper peripherals required to quickly set up a

movie or TV show for viewing from one's computer, and many university libraries have USB-powered DVD players for rent should they be needed.

As universities across Canada begin recognizing video games as a legitimate medium of study, some are beginning to make video games available through library rental services. However, current offerings vary significantly between institutions. In addition, rental periods for video game equipment, such as consoles and controllers, are often limited in length and non-renewable. This makes multi-session projects more challenging to coordinate with rented equipment. While setting up a console in a classroom or research room usually isn't too complicated — an electrical outlet and TV with an HDMI port is usually all that's needed — gaming consoles are both heavy and fragile, which makes frequent travel with one's personal unit a challenge.

Even more challenging, however, is accessing specific scenes in video games. Unlike movies or TV shows, which can be scrubbed with a media player to find the beginning and end of scenes, video games cannot be "played back" in the same sense. Most video games use save files to record a player's progress in-game, and once a certain point in the game has been passed, or too many save files have been made, it is impossible to return without starting a new gameplay entirely. There are ways to circumvent this, such as by creating multiple player profiles on the same console, which effectively increases the number of save files one can choose from. However, this doesn't solve the issue of needing to actually physically sit down and play through a video game in order to access certain scenes. It is possible to use mod kits to "scrub" though video game footage (see Dixon, 2023); however, these are challenging to access and use for researchers without a programming background, such as myself.

Because video game playthroughs often change with player choices, it could take two different people a very different amount of time to arrive at the same scene in-game, and, depending on the game, they may never even arrive at the same scene at all. This makes determining Fair Dealing exemptions for video games all the more challenging as there are no official "runtimes" for video games the same way there are for movies and TV shows. Websites like howlongtobeat.com provide polled estimates of expected video game "playtimes", but even then, they divide their findings between different playstyles, as someone who wants to explore every inch of a virtual world (a "completionist") will spend more time with a video game than someone only interested in the main story.

Community at the Core: Unveiling the Academic Metagame

The logistical and material considerations detailed above notably affected how I approached the planning and scheduling of each session. I initially wanted to choose a number of scenes I felt represented strongly coded objects in-game; however, it quickly became apparent that there would be too much overhead involved in playing through each game to get to a specific scene. I wondered about other ludic elements of video games and how I might integrate them into my research, too. Character creation, for example, is an important element of many RPGs that I wasn't sure how to approach. I

wanted participants to have the freedom of choice, to be able to collaborate earnestly, authentically, and play each game in ways that felt true to them.

However, these values of authenticity, collaboration, and even fun often clashed with preoccupations that I might not be able to maintain my desired level of methodological rigour in the amount of time I was afforded if I “gave” participants “too much” choice. I began to feel increasingly overwhelmed. Even just in writing these words now, I feel a deep pit, an angry howl in my stomach, a reminder of the institutional pressure I feel to situate myself as “researcher”, as the one with the authority to not only “give” but also to “take”. This was not how I wanted to run my study. I wanted things to be fair, collaborative, equitable. But I also wanted to preserve a modicum of my sanity in the organizational process given my financial and temporal constraints. I vacillated between periods of rigidity and doubt. I reacted with frustration, perfectionism, self-criticism, and disappointment towards my efforts. This was the beginning of my own process of conscientization as I began to witness my own position within a larger academic metagame.

The goal of this paper is not to get too technical with understanding what can be understood as “play” and a “game”. However, there is an important distinction to be made in understanding what I mean by an “academic metagame”. A metagame can be understood as a game about a game, or how a game interfaces beyond or outside of itself with life in general (Garfield, 2000). When discussing the difference between “play” and a “game”, Frasca, (1999, 2004) distinguishes between *paidia* and *ludus*, where *ludus* involves games that have a clear winner and loser, while *paidia* is a more open-ended, loose form of play. The academic metagame, then, is the institutional power structure of rules, levels, points, and achievements that separates academic “winners” from “losers”. It is a ludic endeavour, one that, as university-affiliated adult educators, we must “game” in order to succeed: to graduate from our programs, to see ourselves get published, to apply for professorships, to achieve and maintain tenure. We “play the game” in not only a figurative sense, but a literal one.

It was not just my anxiety, my fears and disappointments with the academic metagame (and my own realization of my role within) that marked my journey of conscientization. My texts revealed moments of humour, of joy and laughter, of pleasure that kept me attuned to the needs of both my academic and gaming communities. In these instances of rebellious play, I showed resilience in the face of the institutional barriers that challenged me on my quests to become a “winner”. None of which would have been possible without my communities. When I needed a space to conduct my sessions, my academic community was there for me. When I needed participants to join my sessions, my gaming community was there for me. When I needed a PS4 and games and controllers and a bag to carry it all in, my own unique positioning as a gamer/academic had been ready and waiting for me all along. Together, my academic and gaming communities provided not only the material requirements to make my research happen but the spiritual support I needed to be able to fully see it through.

CONCLUSION

When I decided to develop a discussion-based gaming circle for my Master's thesis research, I did not anticipate that I would choose to study my very own experiences developing the whole dang thing on the side. For fun.

"Are we all work and no play?"

Perhaps it is both. Perhaps, there is work in our play and play in our work. We belong to systems that spawn us into games with rules, with win-conditions, with barriers and challenges and hardships and inequalities. And still, we have opportunities to play, freely, with our communities, with friends, on our own terms, joyously.

What does it mean to be an adult educator?

The question brings me back to another part of my self. I feel my body on the couch and take note of the physical world around me. How long have I been gaming? I put the controller down and bring the ritual to an end. I sigh, sit up, then stand up from the couch. I make my way towards my desk, open my laptop, and begin to write:

"Indeed, to be an adult educator is to take on many forms, many of which are marked by elements of play that often go unnoticed..."

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ANTI-RACISM TRAINING: FROM UNCONSCIOUS BIAS TO RACIAL CAPITALISM

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Abstract

This paper explores unconscious bias training which is sometimes implemented to challenge sexism and racism within organizations. Critics have noted that such training can facilitate a dangerous cover-up of systemic and historical factors which have given rise to modern-day racism and sexism within organizations. Drawing on the example of Starbucks, which initiated widespread unconscious bias training in response to an incident of gendered racism, I propose a need for organizations to a shift from unconscious bias to racial capitalism to develop anti-racist training.

Keywords: Anti-racism training, unconscious bias, racial capitalism, Starbucks.

INTRODUCTION

Unconscious bias training can facilitate a dangerous cover-up of systemic and historical factors which have given rise to modern-day racism and sexism within organizations. There is an extensive critique of such approaches and feminist theorists have noted the need for alternatives. In this paper, I explore one possible approach to critical anti-racism education in organizations - one that draws on racial capitalism. The paper provides an analysis of the ways anti-racism training can focus on how the reproduction of contemporary capitalism is dependent on certain groups holding privilege while others are oppressed. I explore how theories of racial capitalism provide insights for the possible development of systemic change in organizations through anti-racism training. Racial capitalism highlights systemic, historical inequalities in relation to contemporary capitalism (Bhattacharya, 2018; Go, 2021; Prasad, 2023; Robinson, 2019). The unpaid work of social reproduction within capitalism is often relegated to poorer and racialized women who are oppressed both within national contexts and transnationally (Mezzadri, 2022). Drawing on a case study of Starbucks, the paper explores how anti-racism approaches to training could draw on theories of racial capitalism. Such a shift could allow for the emergence of alternatives to the mainstream focus on diversity and inclusion within organizations, much of which focuses on unconscious bias training.

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

Unconscious bias training is frequently proposed as a way to challenge discrimination within organizations. Such training draws on ideas of "inclusion," focusing on the need to create organizations in which all individuals can fully participate (Nkomo, 2014). Yet, the focus tends to remain on individual change rather than changing systemic organizational power structures. Noon (2018) characterizes programs that focus on unconscious bias as "Pointless Diversity Training" (p. 198) because these programs

assume that an awareness of racism will lead to a change in behavior amongst those in positions of power—a connection that is far from automatic. Others argue that unconscious bias training can in fact validate discriminatory acts because people come to recognize that “everyone has biases,” masking the historical systemic disadvantage that arises from racism or sexism (Correll, 2017). Unconscious bias training is often seen as the solution to inequity, irrespective of any measurable outcome on the experiences of racism, sexism or exclusion within an organization. As Ozturk and Berber note, despite decades of diversity initiatives, “racialised workers routinely experience bullying and harassment; denial of opportunities in recruitment and selection, training and development, network access and promotion processes; and receive lower performance ratings, pay and other rewards” (2022: 214). Other theorists note that unconscious bias training can, in fact, conceal sexism, racism and deepen inequality since the existence of initiatives are assumed to signal organizational commitment to equity (Ahmed, 2012). Unconscious bias training can be framed as an act of accommodation, kindness, or good intention that may co-exist with, and have limited effect on, the organizational inequality regime (Romani et al., 2018). Berrey (2014) argues that there is a class bias in diversity management approaches; many training programs are aimed at full-time, regular employees while in many cases marginalized workers are clustered in short term, irregular, non-unionized or contract jobs within organizations.

In her ethnography of the oil and gas industry, Williams (2021) argues that unconscious bias training and organizational diversity statements are a form of “gaslighting” which serve to enhance company image and mask the role of the organization in entrenching gender, racial and class inequality. During periods of economic downturn, women and racialized people experience disproportionate levels of layoffs, and gender and race inequality is therefore maintained in this sector. Unconscious bias training results in individual women feeling like they have to take responsibility for the organization’s diversity failures while managers who are responsible for layoff policies escape scrutiny. Since workers face continuous threats of layoffs, and are forced to sign non-disclosure agreements when laid off, programs such as unconscious bias training represent symbolic approaches to diversity which entrenches systemic inequality through gaslighting.

In these ways, unconscious bias training can represent a form of symbolic diversity where, as Ahmed has noted, “a symbolic commitment does not necessarily represent an institutional commitment”. (2012:141). A symbolic commitment to diversity can be made, and training can be deemed successful even in organizations which fail to challenge sexual harassment, racism, exclusionary practices of promotion and homogeneous senior leadership. Despite these critiques, unconscious bias training is widely used within health care (Hassen et al., 2021), higher education (Barnett, 2020), police forces (Gillis, 2018; Machado and Lugo, 2021) and retail services (Abrams, 2018).

THE STARBUCKS CASE

In 2018 there was a video recorded incident of anti-Black racism at a Starbucks store in Philadelphia. The manager called the police because two Black men did not place an order while they sat in the store during a business meeting. The two Black men were handcuffed and arrested by police, while other customers videotaped the incident. The video of the arrest was viewed 9 million times and protests followed. Amidst widespread publicity, the CEO of Starbucks issued an apology, referring to the incident as “reprehensible” and saying that customers “can and should” expect more from Starbucks. He closed stores for a day so 175,000 employees could receive unconscious bias training, identifying this as a “starting point” (Abrams, 2018). As Wittmann summarized, “The training consisted of four-hour intensive workshops conducted by experts. The focus of the training was on racial bias, preventing discrimination, promoting conscious inclusion and methods of making sure every customer feels safe and welcome in their stores. External consultants and experts from institutions such as The Equal Justice Initiative, NAACP Legal Defence and Education Fund, Anti-Defamation League, among others, helped create the curriculum of the training sessions” (2019:11). The training included a documentary specifically commissioned by Starbucks. Filmmaker Stanley Nelson Jr. described the long history of discrimination which African Americans have faced in accessing public space (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o__5xvIE3bU?feature=oembed). Black and white footage of the civil rights movement documented the struggle for equal access. The documentary interspersed this footage with present-day testimonies from a large number of Black people reporting the intense scrutiny and physical violence many experience when they navigate public spaces, which served to emphasize the fact that there had been a limited amount of change in the experience of Black people in the past decades. Starbucks also fired several white employees at Philadelphia stores in order to signal its commitment to eliminating “bad apples” although later the company was required to pay a large settlement for unfair dismissals (Shanahan, 2023). Collectively, although there were mixed reviews on the efficacy of the training, it did result in widespread publicity for Starbucks’ anti-racism training initiative.

RACIAL CAPITALISM

Theorists argue that racially segregated organizational hierarchies are key to the reproduction of contemporary capitalism within which certain groups hold privilege while others are oppressed. While some researchers have examined the ways in which lawyers, health providers, adventure educators, service learners, and librarians incorporate racial capitalism in their work (Irwin and Foste, 2021; Vong, 2022; Brito et al., 2022), thus far few have examined how anti-racism trainers incorporate these ideas to create new approaches to training aimed at fostering systemic organizational change.

Racial capitalism frameworks highlight the relationships between race and class, which explains and structures contemporary racism. These approaches examine the ways in which capitalism requires racial inequality and relies on racialized systems of expropriation to produce capital (Brito et al, 2022). The connection between

racialization and capitalism is intertwined with other systems of oppression such as gender. For example, the unpaid work of social reproduction is relegated to poorer and racialized women who are oppressed both within national contexts and transnationally (Bhattacharya, 2018, Mezzadri, 2022). Racial capitalism approaches allow analyses that are both global and historical, and focus on the material and persistent ways in which systemic inequalities are produced and reproduced. Collectively, theorists of racial capitalism advance three key arguments, which are often explicitly referred to in biographical or promotional materials of anti-racism trainers who claim their intellectual roots within these traditions.

First is a focus on the **historical basis for contemporary configurations of racial inequality and the need for redistribution**. Historically, the establishment of the factory system was funded through the Atlantic slave trade, the appropriation of Indigenous lands and raw material extraction through colonialism (Prasad, 2023). As a result, as Prasad has noted, being white has “cash value” because of the symbolic and material benefit that is derived from race (2023:1118). Those writing within the racial capitalism framework recognize a connection between the dispossession of Indigenous lands and racism especially in the context of the centrality of private property within capitalism. As Byrd (2011) has argued, settler colonialists could flourish because Indigenous people were dispossessed and land was turned into property. New forms of dispossession include the so-called inclusion of Indigenous people in mining industries, which are sometimes part of diversity initiatives (McCready, 2013; Hall, 2022).

Second, the notion of racial capitalism highlights the connections between racialization and capitalism. Dawson has argued that “capitalism does not simply incorporate racial domination as an incidental part of its operation but...those marked by race within the United States and elsewhere have been denied a basic feature of capitalism...the ability to sell their labour on an equal basis” (2019:149). Capitalism is perpetuated through **unpaid and unrecognized social reproductive labour**, which includes domestic work as well as the work of creating people for work. Racial capitalism theorists focus on histories and material consequences of racial differences, rather than adopting identity-based approaches to race. Rather than a “bias” (that is, a psychological flaw that needs to be corrected), theorists of racial capitalism note that racism also has an economic basis. Accordingly in his book *Black Marxism*, Robinson argued that race-based and class-based politics cannot be separated. While there is some debate amongst theorists of racial capitalism on whether racism predated capitalism, and whether all capitalism is inherent racialized (Go, 2021), the overall tenor of the approach suggests that combatting racism requires a move away from capitalism. As Kelley (2019) summarizes, “we can’t undo racism without undoing capitalism.” Profit-making and race-making are intertwined in facilitating the oppression of marginalized people (Gonzalez and Mutua, 2022). As a result, as Bhattacharya (2018) has argued, racial oppression cannot be challenged by diversifying capitalism. Rather diversity is a veneer. Capital operates hand-in-hand with state bordering practices and migration policies, which results in the relegation of racialized people to low wage, exploitative jobs (Tilley, 2021).

Theorists of racial capitalism also note that different racial groups occupy different positions. People are treated as racialized subjects and in North America, Indigenous and Black workers are structurally positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy (Cox 2021). As Du Bois (1935) noted, white workers receive a “psychological wage.” Rather than being incidental, racial capitalism theorists note that capitalism requires racism to rationalize the exploitation of workers and race is therefore linked to wealth. The exploitation of racialized people, through the promotion of racist ideas of inferiority, serves to facilitate capitalist expansion. White people hold a large share of global wealth, which is accrued due to racial capitalism. Leong has noted that contemporary examples of racial capitalism are manifest when organizations place photos of people of colour in their promotional materials to give the **appearance of diversity even though deep structural racialized divisions may continue to exist** (in Illing, 2019).

ANALYSIS

The discussion above raises the question - How would a training program, such as the one offered by Starbucks, be designed and implemented if it were informed by racial capitalism rather than unconscious bias approaches?

First, training would focus on strategies for the inculcation of principles of social and economic redistribution rather than just the need for individuals to act in non-discriminatory ways. Training curricula would historicize attempts and challenges to redressing racial inequality. Starbucks, for example, has a long history of anti-Black racism as well as campaigns which have attempted to challenge racism. In 2009, for example, a lawsuit was launched and settled by an African American employee who reported facing constant racial microaggressions. In 2012 a number of Starbucks employees were reprimanded for drawing racist caricatures on cups. The 2018 training program at Starbucks would need to be situated within the failures of the 2016 Starbucks Race Together initiative where baristas were asked to engage customers in conversations about racism, and open forums were held on race (Carr, 2015).

Such historicization would allow trainers and organizational leaders to articulate how current efforts both build on earlier ones but also explain how they represent a marked departure given critiques of the limited efficacy of earlier approaches.

Training would also need to be situated within redistributive practices. One of the main ways in which economic redistribution can be achieved is through the creation of more sustainable jobs for the most marginalized within the organization. This is most likely to occur when workers have a collective voice through institutions such as unions. Corporate practice, however, has not supported unionization trends and there is evidence that the company has closed 16 profitable stores citing safety concerns. Included in the closures are stores which were in the process of unionization (Cronkleton, 2022). In addition, workers engaged in unionization efforts have faced reprisals including the loss of their jobs (Isidore, 2022).

It should also be noted that while Starbucks spent a considerable sum on training, the main financial benefactors of this effort were the economic elite. Workers received their regular pay for attending the training, and the construction of this as a benefit undermines the fact that attending mandated training is in fact work. The primary financial benefactors were training firms who had lucrative contracts, including some who ironically supported policing (Tai, 2018).

Second, training and corporate practice could challenge the masking of the social reproductive work which is involved not only in dealing with racism, but also in managing care, home and community engagement. Theorists note the irony of the situation where racialized people are deemed responsible for doing the work of providing training and diversity programming within organizations (Wingfield 2019). While Starbucks' training was led by Black-owned enterprises, it is uncertain what the organizational commitment and accountability to this community was, beyond the provision of an employment contract. Further, practices such as "clopening" (where an employee is required to close and open the store) and erratic scheduling (Scheiber, 2015) make it challenging for workers to provide care for their families. Such practices undermine opportunities to create communities and spaces outside the dynamics of market exchange.

Finally, Starbucks could use training to shift away from promotional capitalism. The company's use of the language of "it's a start" is situated within a progress discourse and difficult to contest. Making a start suggests movement, and promise for greater changes to come. Overall, rather than being limited to one day, or to a workshop, "training" would need to be accompanied by shifts and changes in organizational practice itself.

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BUT WHAT'S HER NAME? REDEFINING THE ANTIGONISH MOVEMENT THROUGH WOMEN'S LIVES

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Abstract

In 1921, 50 men and one woman attended the first people's school at St. Francis Xavier University (St. F. X.) in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Father Jimmy Tompkins' (1921) report of this milestone features testimonials of 16 male learners, including E. J. Martell (20, Sailor and Fisherman), J.L. MacPherson (26, Railwayman), S.J. MacKinnon (29, Farmer), and L. Timmons (23, Miner). Most reports of the People's School only indicate numbers, with some authors ignoring the one woman altogether. The invisibility and inconsistencies of women in historical records are not new and remain a challenge for many academic and lay historians. Regarding the first People's School, we are left wondering - who was she?

This presentation highlights the preliminary findings of 'What Can the Women Do?': A case study of women working for the StFX Extension Department in Nova Scotia. This archival and oral history feminist research project explores women's paid and unpaid work with the StFX Extension Department and the Antigonish Movement in rural northern Nova Scotia. The paper will describe the project and then share the stories of three women, Kay Thompson Desjardin (Extension employee), Sister Vicentia/Sister Monica Doyle (Sister of St. Martha) and Mary Laben (community volunteer).

Keywords: Women, Extension Department, Antigonish Movement, Feminist Case Study, Archives

INTRODUCTION

Women, as study group leaders and participants, authors, handicraft and home economics instructors, administrators, secretaries, organizers, entrepreneurs, innovators, caregivers, cooks, and the cornucopia of activities considered 'etc', are significant to the Antigonish Movement and the St. F. X. Extension Department (Extension) (Cameron, 2000; Delaney, 1985; English & Irving, 2015; Irving, 2016; Neal, 1998, 1999). From its start Extension employed women, early women employees included Kaye Thompson Desjardin, Sisters Marie Michael and Irene Doyle, Ida Gallant Delaney, Ellen Arsenault, and Zita Cameron (Irving, 2016; *The Women of the Antigonish Movement*, nd), yet in the early decades, most women supporting the cooperatives and study clubs were unpaid and volunteers. For many women, their activities remain unknown and invisible to the public, and for many their identities as well. We are not only left asking "who was she?" in the singular, but we are also asking "who was she" in the plural (our attention to gender is intentional).

To appreciate the nuances and significance of the work and lives of the women who worked with Extension, it is helpful to understand the conditions of their lives with attention to the socio-cultural, political, economic, and gender realities. This study infuses the women involved with the Antigonish Movement and Extension and their work with these into the local and broader gender realities and women's movements at the time. The intentions are to contextualize their experiences through a gender perspective, identify the synergies, conflicts, and nuances of these women's experiences in social change, and co-create a rich and accurate narrative of women's community development and adult education work in rural Nova Scotia. To set the scene, this paper looks at 1921, the year of the first People's School at St. F. X., as a prelude to the years leading into the formal start of Extension. Attention is given to national, provincial, and local Antigonish events.

In 1921, Agnes MacPhail was elected to the Canadian Parliament thus becoming the first woman Member of Parliament in Canada. This was the first federal election in which women over 21 had the right to vote and stand as candidates. Mary Ellen Smith, the first female Member of a Legislative Assembly (elected in 1918 in British Columbia) was appointed a cabinet minister (without portfolio) thus becoming the first woman in Canada and the British Empire to be appointed a cabinet minister in 1921 (Carstairs & Higgins, 2004). Nellie McClung was elected to the Alberta Legislative Assembly (Carstairs & Higgins, 2004). Jeannie Kidd Trout, the first licensed woman medical doctor in Canada (licensed to practice in 1875) died (Raymond, 2020). British Columbia is the first province to pass legislation on maternity leave, women can take 6 weeks before and after giving birth (Karr, nd).

By 1921, Mount St Bernard College (MSB), the women's education institution, run by the Congregation of Notre Dame, affiliated with StFX college (the precursor to St. F. X. university), had been granting degrees to women for over 20 years. In 1897, the first four women graduated with bachelor's degrees from MSB, Florence MacDonald, Mary E. Bissett, Lillian MacDonald and Margaret MacDougall (Cameron, 1996). Antigonish had two successful women's hockey teams, the Ice Sickles and the Fleet Foot (Stanley-Blackwell & MacLean, 2004). Most women in Nova Scotia could vote in municipal (1887), provincial (1918 if property owners and 1920 universal suffrage achieved), and federal (1918) elections. The year prior, in 1920, Grace MacLeod Rogers (Liberal Party) and Bertha A. Donaldson (Labour Party) were the first women to run for political office in Nova Scotia, in Cumberland and Pictou counties respectively (Cameron, 1966; Nova Scotia Legislature, nd). Donaldson was active in the women's suffrage and labour movements (Cameron, 1966). Grace MacLeod Rogers was an accomplished fiction and historical author (Canadian Writing Research Collaboratory, nd).

In the Antigonish area, many women worked on mixed farms and in businesses with their husbands and fathers. Women worked as teachers, 'Hello Girls' for local telephone companies, midwives, healers, country vets, and domestic workers in homes, glebe houses, and at StFX (Stanley-Blackwell & MacLean, 2004). Young women were students at Mount Saint Bernard College. Many women were entrepreneurs selling handicrafts

and produce. Also, women were involved in their churches, Red Cross societies, Women's Christian Temperance Union, horticultural societies, and other associations. This snapshot of women's lives in 1921 highlights women's work in the public domain including in paid and volunteer roles, as well as in politics, education, athletics, business, agriculture, and community.

METHODOLOGY

'What can the women do?' is a feminist case study drawing upon archival and oral history research methods to explore women's work with the St. F. X. Extension Department (Extension) in rural northern Nova Scotia from 1928 to the present. As "fragments of the past", archives, are powerful, political, and "complex fields of meaning" (Subotic, 2021, pg. 342). The curated documentation and artifacts of archives have long been held as holding 'historical truths' (Kaplan, 2000; Manoff, 2004). Critical scholars on ethical archival research highlight bias as inherent in the creation and maintenance of archives (Balcells & Sullivan, 2018; Chaudhuri, Katz & Perry, 2010; Subotic, 2021). Archival researchers must acknowledge the limits of archives and complement their research with other forms of storytelling, such as oral history. Oral history connects the personal and the social by giving space to the tacitly held stories and knowledge told first person, concerning the particular, the contextual, and the complex (Conle, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Regarding feminist oral history, Anderson and Jack (1991) write "oral history interviews provide an invaluable means of generating new insights about women's experiences of themselves in their worlds" (pg. 11). To date, the focus has been on reviewing artifacts, including documents and recordings, in the StFX and Sisters of St. Martha's archives, and the Beaton Institute at Cape Breton University. We are also reviewing public sources, such as books, films, newspapers, websites, and social media. The next step will be to conduct oral history interviews.

THREE WOMEN

Here we introduce three women, key to the Antigonish Movement and Extension. Kay Thompson Desjardin was the first woman employed by the Extension Department in 1931. Sister Vincentia/Sister Monica Doyle was a Sister of St. Martha who served in Canso, Dover and Margaree, and Mary Laben, a resident of Reserve Mines.

Kay Thompson Desjardin

Kay Thompson Desjardins was the first person to be hired by Extension in 1931. She graduated from Mount Saint Bernard College in Antigonish and pursued a brief career in education after studying at the teacher's college in Truro (Desjardins, 1990). While working in New York as a governess, she was recruited to Extension by St. F. X. university president Msgr. H. P. MacPherson, who wrote her a letter detailing the program's goals (Desjardins, 1991). Dr. Coady would boast that hiring her was the smartest move he ever made (Masters of Their Own Destiny, n.d.). Although she was hired as a secretary, her role at Extension went beyond that. She was a skillful mediator

as well as a talented writer and editor (Masters of Their Own Destiny, n.d.). She produced many pamphlets and study materials that responded to the needs of the study clubs (Desjardins, 1991). When the Extension office in Sydney opened, she moved there for a change of scenery and began writing the labour pages for *The Maritime Co-operator* while she was there (Desjardins, 1991).

Kay later returned to Antigonish to take on her new role as managing editor of *The Maritime Co-operator* (Masters of Their Own Destiny, n.d.). She held this position until her retirement in 1970 and didn't sway from her steadfast beliefs regarding co-operation and women's involvement in labour (Desjardins, 1991). She faced criticism from big news companies and a local Member of Parliament; however, she did not allow these complaints to get under her skin (Desjardins, 1991). She knew that to keep publishing her punchy editorial she had to be certain that everything she said was backed by sound research (Desjardins, 1991). The Maritime Co-operator employed many women and Kay considers it to have been the most interesting job of her life (Desjardins, 1991). Her contributions to The Maritime Co-operator and other local sources of literature on co-operation communicated the movement's mission to larger audiences, allowing them to take their education into their own hands and learn through action.

Kay's lengthy and influential career was exceptional, particularly regarding her continued involvement while having a family. She was married in 1942 and had four children, yet this did not stop her from taking on her various roles in the promotion of co-operation (Desjardins, 1990). As editor of The Maritime Co-operator, she found the work-schedule suited her lifestyle quite well (Desjardins, 1990). With the help of the full-time housekeeper she employed, she could go into the office as the children went to school and was able to work from home at times (Desjardins, 1990). This arrangement was not typical for most women at this time, but she kept on with the promotion of co-operation and edited the bi-weekly publication that she was passionate about. She spoke very highly of her colleagues, notably Zita O'Hearn Cameron and Ida Gallant Delaney who remained some of her closest lifelong friends (Desjardins, 1991). She loved the work and couldn't imagine doing anything else after Extension, saying that "It developed all of us who were in the program into people who were thinking people and caring people." (Desjardins, 1991). Her commitment to her career and the promotion of co-operation and self-help were remarkable.

Sister Vincentia/Sister Monica Doyle

Sr. Monica Doyle, also known as Sr. Mary Vincentia, was a sister of St. Martha who dedicated her life to using her skills to help those in need. After becoming a sister in 1931, she was called to her first mission by Fr. Jimmy Tompkins in 1933 (Doyle, 1989). On a cold day in January, she travelled to Canso by boat and then to the community of Dover where the people were suffering from the Great Depression (Doyle, 1989). Left with only a handkerchief and a rosary in her pocket, she was welcomed by a family in Dover for a week as she collected more information about each household's needs in the community (Doyle, 1989). She was a resourceful woman, managing to scap

together tools from what she could find in the community to share her handicraft skills and teach the people of Dover to help themselves (Doyle, 1989). Through hard work and dedication, she assembled twenty-three knitting groups and taught both men and women the skill of weaving, giving them the opportunity to make textiles for themselves and earn some money through sales (Doyle, 1989; CSM Archive, 1950).

During her twenty years of service in Canso and Dover, Sr. Monica Doyle also spent two years in Margaree Forks (Doyle, 1989). Although she spent less time in this community, her impact was significant. She stayed at St. Theresa's Convent from 1940-1942, teaching handicrafts and canning at the neighbouring school Dr. Coady had organized (Doyle, 1989). She oversaw the use of the new pressure cooker and sealer for canning that had been purchased through the organization of a savings club (Chiasson, 1990). One year, she oversaw production of over 3800 cans using this new tin can method (Doyle, 1989). In 1968, she was asked to serve at the St. Martha's Convent in Antigonish, where she spent the rest of her life continuing to use her skills to serve her community (CSM Archive, 1991). She sewed for the clergy and sports teams at St.F.X., and made warm clothing for the students who came from abroad to learn at the Coady Institute (CSM Archive, 1991). She was truly devoted to the philosophies of the Antigonish Movement, always serving her community and helping the less fortunate to help themselves.

Mary Laben

Mary Laben was one of the founding members of the Tompkinsville housing cooperative. This community, built in 1938 by miners and their wives, was the first of its kind in Canada (Nova Scotia archives). The Labens moved into their house ahead of the other Tompkinsville residents in order to connect electric power to their housing development. Mary got to work immediately, preparing a stew, bread, and apple pie for the men out working on the homes, serving the first hot meal in Tompkinsville (Laben, 1989). She, alongside the other women of Tompkinsville, embodied the spirit of cooperation and made sure their community was fed. She and Mabel Reed would often feed the men of the housing cooperative breakfast, as they were aware that there was very little money to go around (Laben, 1989). The women of Tompkinsville also organized cooperatively for themselves, frequently pooling their skills and resources to make quilts and clothing, as well as putting together \$1.50 to go into Sydney and watch *Gone with the Wind* at the movie theatre (Laben, 1989).

Mrs. Laben shared a heartwarming story about the very first Christmas in Tompkinsville. The floors had not yet been put into the eleven homes, but they persevered in their celebration and set up an outdoor Christmas tree trimmed with candles (Laben, 1989). They had very little, but Mary and the other women of the community came together to breathe life into this new community they built. They pooled together some money to get fruits and candies as a treat for the children (Laben, 1989). That first Christmas also brought forth a choir of the 48 children, living in Tompkinsville, lifting their voices in celebration around the community's Christmas tree (Laben, 1989). Mary took an active role in turning this cooperative housing development into a tightknit community, coming

together with the rest of the women to cooperatively create an inviting and hospitable community full of familial support. Despite her significant contributions, she rarely speaks of her own importance, always celebrating group actions of Tompkinsville or highlighting her husband's importance in the development of cooperative housing communities and his work with Extension.

Mary Laben exemplified the impact of women's involvement in the Antigonish Movement as community members. From the earliest developments of the Tompkinsville housing cooperative, she led by hosting study clubs in their company house and participated in both women's and general study groups (MacKinnon, 1996). She had a formal education up to the twelfth grade and used her knowledge to uplift others, teaching her husband, a miner, who had not had the chance to complete as much formal education writing and arithmetic so that he could continue to learn independently from the library (Laben, 1989). Her commitment to the cooperative movement was remarkable, continuing her support by hosting students from the Coady Institute to visit Tompkinsville and hear her and her husband's stories of pioneering cooperative housing development (Laben, 1989). Her eagerness to share her stories in promotion of Tompkinsville and the Antigonish Movement are a testament to her commitment to cooperation and community.

CONCLUSIONS

Kay Tompson Desjardin, Sister Monica Doyle and Mary Laben are three of many women who worked with the St. F. X. Extension Department and the Antigonish Movement to address community concerns and needs through co-operation and adult education. Their efforts and experiences demonstrate the vital role of women in community building. Also, examining their work within the dynamic gender realities over time opens areas of exploration into the long story of women's work in adult education over time and in a specific geographic area. In the early stages of this research, we see that their work represents broader societal gender realities of women as active community organizers, educators, and leaders. To date, we have not concretely been able to identify the woman who attended the 1921 People's School. 100 years later, who she was remains a mystery. Looking forward to 2028 and the 100th anniversary of the founding of the St. F. X. Extension Department, we see the opportunity to continue to explore 'who was she' – the women who worked with Extension, and what did they do.

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'RABBIT HOLE' LEARNING: FOLLOWING THE LEAD OF OLDER WOMEN IN REDEFINING ADULT EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper presents research findings from a recently completed doctoral thesis in adult education and shares insights into how older women may contribute to the project of redefining adult education. This qualitative study engaged ten Nova Scotian women ranging in age from their late 60s into their 80s in the development of an online audio podcast. The research integrated a feminist methodology to explore women's learning experiences, their sense of identity and personal histories, and their ability to represent themselves to others through a podcast. The feminist methodology was informed by critical geragogy, which encompasses pedagogical approaches to the education of older adults that challenge normative, limiting constructions of older learners' agency, capacities, and interests. Some striking findings in this study included the extent to which learning emerged as an ongoing, daily endeavour for participants. One woman likened her approach to learning as going down a 'rabbit hole,' embracing a simple joy in the process of discovering something new. Participants also spoke about learning—and unlearning—gender roles, an undertaking which for some has become a lifelong project. Other women emerged as important learning mentors in both formal and informal learning contexts and participants revealed some ambivalences about past formal learning experiences, iterating the value of exploring older women's histories to understand them better as learners. The findings highlight the importance of understanding older women as a unique learner group and appreciating aging women's capacities, and personal and social histories. Some approaches to creating older-women friendly learning environments are offered, including suggestions for how educators who work with older women may benefit from following them down the 'rabbit hole' of yet-to-be-discovered knowledge.

Keywords: Older women's learning, Older women learners, Critical geragogy, Feminism and older women's learning, 'Rabbit hole' learning, Redefining adult education

INTRODUCTION

Population aging is the dominant demographic trend in most industrialized nations. A significant contributor to this trajectory is the advancing age of so-called baby boomers, that is, people born between 1946 and 1965 (Statistics Canada, 2022). Within the next 50 years, as much as 30% of the Canadian population is projected to be over the age of 65 (Statistics Canada, 2023). Women represent the fastest growing segment of the older adult population, and this trend is expected to persist for the foreseeable future (Statistics Canada, 2016, 2023).

Despite these demographic trends, aging women remain sidelined in society and academic research, including feminist research (Hooyman et al., 2002). Some feminist theorists understand this marginalization as emblematic of the pervasive invisibility imposed on older women within broader ageist and sexist social and political contexts (Calasanti et al., 2006; Carney & Gray, 2015). The paradox of older women's presence in society and relative absence in research was a motivator for this study. As a 'baby boomer,' a feminist, and an academic researcher, I wanted to challenge that invisibility by providing a platform for older women to be heard through an audio podcast.

Conceptualizations of Older Adult Learners

Older adult education is considered to be in a "pre-paradigm stage of development" (Kern, 2018, p. 339) within adult learning as a whole (Creech & Hallam, 2015; Stromquist, 2013). Questions of what is meant by older adult learners, and whether they should be regarded as a unique group, remain unresolved (Formosa, 2011; Hachem, 2020). Where older adults are represented, there is a limited presence of gender-differentiated research. Research tends to focus more on middle-aged adults and qualitative research exploring the experiences of later life learners is scarce (Schmidt-Hertha et al., 2019).

Older people may pursue learning to help them adjust to significant life changes or make sense of a life lived, find a means of self-expression, or stay connected to community (Bjursell, 2019; Findsen, 2006; Formosa, 2019; Istance, 2015; Tambaum, 2019). Older adults may undertake learning to support employment or self-agency through the acquisition of technical or other skills (Istance, 2015; Jackson, 2012; Talmage, et al., 2015). Later life learning can signal a return to an earlier, disrupted educational trajectory (Istance, 2015), especially for women, whose education can be truncated by gendered caregiver roles in their younger years (Gouthro, 2007; Jackson, 2012).

Although a definitive understanding of the benefits of late life learning remains elusive (Schmidt-Hertha et al., 2019), links between older adult learning and community engagement have been established (Merriam & Kee, 2014). Later life learning can support independence and emotional wellbeing and may help older adults work against cognitive decline (Creech & Hallam, 2015; Schmidt-Hertha et al., 2019).

Research insights into older adults may be obstructed by lurking ageism that focuses on a "misery perspective" (Talmage et al., 2015, p. 233) where decline and death are represented as the most pressing concerns or in framings of later life adults as, at best, passive learners (Creech & Hallam, 2015). Ageist constructions of education and learning as the domain of the young may frame older people's lives as bereft of intellectual aspirations and interests (Istance, 2015). Older adults may internalize these ideas and come to regard themselves as 'too old to learn' (Findsen, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

A feminist perspective prioritizes women's, knowledge, experiences, and self-representation (Dupuis et al., 2022; Hooyman et al., 2002; Rayaprol, 2016). Feminist methodologists challenge patriarchy by engaging in "the politics of asking questions" (Wigginton & Lafrance, 2019, p. 12) and situating women as the focal points of research. Kelly (1984) argued that understanding women's histories can reveal the ways that the personal has been political for women throughout the course of recorded human experience.

Data Collection and Analysis

Ten women aged 65+ from across Nova Scotia were asked to share their insights through two semi-structured, audio recorded interviews. The interviews generated approximately 19 hours of audio, which were transcribed and then analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Audio excerpts from the interviews were selected to produce five podcast episodes that were uploaded to the internet in late 2022.

The feminist methodology was informed by critical geragogy and feminist gerontology. Critical geragogy encompasses pedagogical approaches that challenge normative, limiting constructions of older learners' agency, capacities, and interests (Creech & Hallam, 2015; Formosa, 2005, 2019; Solomon et al., 2015). A perceived neglect of aging women within feminist discourse and a limited critical perspective in the field of gerontology have contributed to the development of feminist gerontology as a framework for understanding the unique and complex experiences of aging women (Hooyman et al., 2002). A number of viewpoints may inform feminist gerontology, among them, a life course perspective (Doheny & Jones, 2021). The life course perspective situates individual experiences within specific historical contexts to explore links between age cohorts and the understanding of aging (Doheny & Jones, 2021; Wellin, 2018).

Snapshots of Participants

The women taking part in this research ranged in age from 67 into their 80s. All of the women identified as white or as of European origin. Only three of the women were born in Canada; the rest immigrated from the United States or Europe. Two participants identified as lesbian: one woman as cisgender and another as transgender. Participants lived in both rural and urban settings, and four of the women were doing paid employment at the time of the interviews.

FINDINGS

Participants shared their significant experiences of learning in life and the value they perceived in this learning. They spoke about the influences that have shaped their experiences as learners and the barriers and enablers that have impeded and supported their engagement in learning. Some key findings in these areas are offered below.

Continuous, Spontaneous Learning

Participants uniformly described themselves as enthusiastic, everyday learners with a lively curiosity and eagerness to take in new knowledge. Marilyn, at 73, said: "I feel like I'm constantly learning. But not in a formal way." Roberta, who was in her 80s, said, "There's always something [to learn], and like the old expression goes, if you don't learn something every day then it's a day wasted." For Eva, learning developed "an expanded consciousness, a heightened awareness." Susan spoke of her natural curiosity about the world and an intuitive approach to unearthing knowledge in her everyday activities, like thrift store shopping. She said,

I'll buy a little thing for 50 cents, go home, and do my research and find out all about ceramics in Germany pre-World War II or whatever. And then I don't want the thing anymore. I just wanted to find something out. I go into that rabbit hole kind of thing.

Anne obtained a certificate in silviculture later in life to build practical skills for maintaining her family property. She described this learning as an extraordinary personal accomplishment:

I don't have a high school [diploma], I don't have a university degree, but hot damn! Somewhere in this house there is a certificate from my six-week Silviculture One training course where I learned to run a chainsaw.

Other Women as Mentors

Participants spoke about the importance of educational mentors in both formal and informal learning environments. Most of these mentors were women who in some way guided participants to a deeper understanding of themselves, the world, or possibilities in life. Marilyn recalled her mother-in-law's influence:

I didn't have any really strong female models and it wasn't until I got married that my mother-in-law became that strong female image in my life, moral image. She was a self-made woman, and she achieved a lot and I really admired that.

A local woman who worked in the woods and who was "older" and "tinier" than Anne inspired her to take silviculture training. Jan recalled a beloved piano teacher with a deep passion for music:

[She was] super expressive. Where I grew up, people in my home, everybody was totally reserved. This piano teacher was so vibrant and so in love with the music and I would just practice my heart out for her. I think that joy opens a person up, makes you more open to learning.

Three participants spoke about growing up under the influence of mentoring relationships with Catholic nuns. Janet described the strong and lasting moral influence of these women:

We didn't even know the word [mentor] in those days. Nobody ever used that word, but they were so wonderful to us, and they really set us on a good path for the rest of our lives. Those sisters were probably the most crucial in terms of my formation.

Eva recounted the early influence of local women in the rural farming community where she grew up:

I think my first strong mentors were teachers in the one room country schoolhouse, the ordinary women from the neighbourhood who were teaching. They were tremendously important. We had so few other influences.

Women's Histories as Learners

Some women had strong, and sometimes, unpleasant, memories of their time in school dating back 50 or 60 years. While Eva described an early zest for learning in a supportive classroom, Susan, who had recently arrived in Canada as part of newcomer family, recalled a negative experience:

The lady that was the principal did not like little boys and she basically beat my two brothers. Both of them had terrible, horrible experiences in school and if it happened today that woman would be in jail for how she treated us.

Jan, raised in a family whose radical politics caused her to be "isolated and sort of excommunicated" from her community, shared how "school wasn't making much sense" to her and how "it didn't seem relevant." Zoe graduated from university with a feeling of not knowing much of importance to her and shared how she had to find her own way after leaving school:

We were the first-year baby boomers born in 1946 so I think that's when a lot of us got a big realization that the world wasn't as it had been portrayed to us growing up. And we just needed to get in there and learn our own lessons.

Learning—and Unlearning —Identities

Participants described learning about gender roles as a kind of osmosis where they absorbed, rather than were explicitly taught, what the expectations were for them in life as women. Eva said she was "outraged" in her youth about the instructions she received through a teen magazine:

The advice for teenage girls in *Seventeen* magazine [was] you shouldn't participate in sports, because boys don't like girls with muscles. And I was a farm girl, I had muscles. I mean we *worked!* [We] could toss hay bales. [And] *Seventeen* magazine said if you're smart, don't let on, you can't keep a boyfriend if you let on that you're smart.

As a young woman living in a small rural, Francophone community, Jan “got to see how women were stifled” in social situations. She recounted some strong signals she received about a woman’s place in the family and society:

Women were not allowed to speak up when the men were speaking. I was speaking up all the time because I was learning French. The men would look down on my husband because he couldn’t control me.

Some women provided a glimpse into the pervasive, limiting responses women of their generation faced in seeking higher education. Eva recalled the snickering derision she encountered about women’s perceived goals in attending university. She said, “the joke was that the only reason girls went to university then, the degree they were looking for was the MRS [degree].” Susan, who grew up in a family living with a low income, recounted the point-blank prohibition against higher education that she received from her father:

I was told so many times, ‘We’re not sending you to university or to teachers’ college because all you’re gonna do is get married and have kids.’ Now I also realize that it was a pride thing for my father. He couldn’t say, ‘We can’t afford it. I’m sorry, you’re smart enough, but we can’t afford it.’ So, his anger came out at me by telling me, ‘All you’re gonna do is get married and have kids.’ So, what did I do? I got married and I had a kid.

Some women spoke of the active work of dismantling their early learning about gender. Zoe reflected on how she saw herself as a younger woman as a kind of “appendage” in her relationships with men, and spoke about her ongoing efforts to undo that sense of identity:

I feel like now I’m not in a relationship because I’m so unwilling to put myself into a situation that I have to lose what I have, that’s been so hard to learn and gain in how to be myself.

Anne shared a lasting childhood memory that had become a touchstone for her in thinking about her understanding of gender roles. She said, “there’s still huge sections of me that have never recovered from the early programming [about gender].” Anne remembered as a child taking in messages about who she was through popular films at the local theatre. She said:

The movies were always [depicting] the man [as] key and the woman as [needing] to be protected. And I remember I would get down on the floor and peer between the seats to watch the movie. And I wish I could re-watch those movies. Because I think a tremendous amount of my view of myself as a person was probably formed in that little gap between the seats.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In speaking with these women, learning emerged as an ongoing, daily endeavor. An important perspective was the notion of learning for no particular reason at all; the idea of learning in itself as having inherent value and purpose, like breathing. Early learning experiences were shown to have had an enduring impact. For some of the women, formal education was wanting in its inability to inspire, or in its failure to provide desired practical skills or answers to life questions. The classroom could be a site of deep contradiction, where learning and violence might come together. Susan's comments about witnessing her brothers' beating by a teacher brought to mind scenes from my own school experiences as a child where I, and most of my peers, regularly witnessed the everyday, normalized violence of "corporal punishment." I recall teachers administering "the strap" – a flat strip of black leather used to repeatedly strike small children's hands; I remember a teacher washing a child's mouth out with soap, a teacher hurling textbooks, a teacher slapping and kicking children to maintain order—the kinds of things that were seen as 'normal' then; the kinds of things, as Susan said, teachers would "be in jail for" today. Susan's framing of her experiences as "terrible, horrible" riveted my attention to the fact that entire generations of school children were exposed to teacher violence as a classroom norm.

I discerned a kind of acceptable, ongoing verbal assault in the regular, rigid imposition of gender roles: the expected child rearing (applied as a cudgel-like rationale for excluding other possibilities); the social injunctions to be seen and not heard; the running gag about women being at university to snag a husband. All of these elements persist to varying degrees for women today; what's notable is the freedom and openness with which this occurred for women growing up in the 1950s and '60s.

This study uncovered the role of other women as mentors who inspired participants—inside and outside of formal learning environments—to learn more, and to know themselves more. Recognizing the role of female mentors is a way to assert alternative, suppressed histories of learning and relationships. Hearing women speak about their mentors and the impacts that other women have had in their lives is like sipping "an antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 19); it can help to free us from the "notion that the history of women is the same as the history of men" (Kelly, 1984, p. 3). These insights iterate the value of considering older women's personal histories to understand them better as learners. In formal educational environments, older women will bring their pasts into the classroom, and these pasts are influenced by educational and social norms that may be hidden or no longer exist.

Implications of this Study for Redefining Adult Education

In conclusion, returning to the question of how older women might contribute to the project of redefining adult education: The literature review for this study raised questions about whether older people should be regarded as a unique 'type' of adult learner. My research with older women suggests there are some aspects of their capacities and needs as learners that should be regarded as distinct. Educators could benefit from exploring histories with older women to consider how attachment to specific age cohorts may contribute to their needs and preferences

as learners. Acknowledging the value and importance of other women as mentors could be integrated in learning in creative ways. Susan's approach to "rabbit hole" learning describes a pursuit of knowledge for the love of knowledge, with no clear goals or expected outcomes. Letting go of an implied requirement for specific learning outcomes opens up other possibilities and draws attention to the subtle ways that an instrumental approach to learning may become embedded in educational discourses about older adults. Part of the role for educators in working with older women may be learning how to better follow them down the rabbit hole, instead of imposing expectations about their needs and interests.

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GENDER IDENTITY AND EXPRESSION IN PRE-SERVICE EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE PROGRAM CURRICULA: AN EXPLORATION FROM THREE PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

This paper explores the integration of 2SLGBTQI+ issues within the post-secondary curriculum in Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) diploma programs. Anchored in queer theory, a synthesis of research is drawn from queer theorists, as well as early childhood and K-12 scholars, to underscore the significance of incorporating gender identity and expression in pre-service Early Learning and Child Care program curricula. The overarching goal is to foster an inclusive and affirming educational environment in adult education, to ultimately support young children in childcare settings. The foundation of this discourse lies in recognizing that current ELCC programs often neglect the nuanced aspects of 2SLGBTQI+ identities. Leveraging queer theory as a theoretical paradigm, this paper supports the need to move beyond conventional paradigms, challenge heteronormativity, and foster a more expansive understanding of gender and sexuality. Drawing upon insights from early childhood scholars, the research contends that ignoring 2SLGBTQI+ issues in educator preparation perpetuates an exclusionary narrative and impedes the cultivation of a safe and supportive space for diverse identities within early learning settings. This paper delves into the practical dimensions of integrating gender identity and expression into the ELCC curriculum. It explores existing gaps in pre-service teacher education programs and highlights the transformative potential of incorporating 2SLGBTQI+ perspectives. By examining exemplary practices, concrete suggestions are offered on how educators can infuse inclusive content seamlessly into their pedagogical approaches. In addition, potential challenges that educators may encounter in implementing 2SLGBTQI+-inclusive practices are addressed and recommendations to overcome these obstacles are provided. It proposes strategies for infusing 2SLGBTQI+ issues into ELCC curricula, emphasizing the significance of ongoing professional development to ensure sustained commitment to inclusive pedagogy. By synthesizing insights from a diverse array of perspectives, this paper advocates for a paradigm shift in early childhood education, urging stakeholders to recognize and prioritize the integration of 2SLGBTQI+ perspectives into adult education. The proposed approach not only aligns with contemporary societal values but also contributes to the creation of an educational landscape that fosters empathy, understanding, and respect for all individuals, accepting of all sexual orientations and gender identities. In conclusion, this paper seeks to inspire adult educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers to collaboratively work toward a more inclusive and affirming Early Learning and Child Care curriculum for the benefit of both educators and the young minds they nurture.

Keywords: Early Childhood, 2SLGBTQI+, Post-Secondary, Curriculum, Queer Theory

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the need for 2SLGBTQI+ issues to be incorporated into the post-secondary Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) diploma program curriculum. Early childhood educators work with the youngest members of society during a crucial time in their development. Young children have a right to be exposed to childcare environments and educators that allow them to explore their gender identity and expression freely. This is only possible if the educators are knowledgeable about 2SLGBTQI+ topics such as gender identity and expression. This paper argues that 2SLGBTQI+ issues need to be taught at the post-secondary level when pre-service educators are completing their education. Faculty must incorporate these issues holistically and meaningfully into the curriculum. Suggestions for how to achieve this goal are determined by examining three research perspectives. Research from the early childhood field supports the need for educators who are well-informed about 2SLGBTQI+ topics. Research from K-12 pre-service education programs is used as a precedent to support this movement in pre-service early childhood education programs. Finally, queer theory is used to disrupt the status quo of heteronormativity and challenge how post-secondary ELCC programs are being taught, to become more inclusive.

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE PERSPECTIVE

Research in the early childhood field has a robust discourse on the importance of creating childcare spaces that challenge gender binaries. Callahan and Nicholas (2018) discuss implicit gender binarism, meaning the traditional binaries of female and male, are perpetuated in early childhood without realizing it. This happens in a variety of ways including categorizing children by their gender, using language that encourages gender binaries, and holding differing expectations for children based on their gender (Callahan & Nicholas, 2018). Educators may not be aware that they are supporting gender binarism, as this is likely the model they have experienced and that has been modelled in their post-secondary education. Chapman (2021) coined the term gender-expansive, saying that it is not enough to be gender-neutral. Gender identity and expression are present in early childhood classrooms, therefore denying its presence by being gender-neutral does not support children; educators need to create gender-expansive programs that include and celebrate all forms of gender identity and expression. Lyttleton-Smith (2017) further discusses how gender roles are challenged or supported by how the childcare environment is set up, how the play materials are presented, and how play is facilitated. Educators can be intentional in setting up an environment that works against implicit gender binarism by offering gender-neutral or gender-expansive play opportunities but they require conscious intentionality to do so.

Heteronormativity is defined by Loutzenheiser (2022) as “the pervasive and systemic assumption of heterosexuality as the norm” (p.126). This term underpins the notion of gender binarism discussed above and provides the foundation for the subsequent arguments. Early childhood spaces need to be gender-expansive to protect children’s mental health and well-being. Lyttleton-Smith (2017) eloquently describes the need to disrupt heteronormativity in early childhood education by saying:

The heteronormativity of education throughout childhood and the teenage years has been located as a damaging phenomenon through the rigidity of identities it supports. The hegemony of heteronormative masculine and feminine identities lead to non-normative experiences, feelings, and performances being ignored, invalidated by a lack of recognition, or actively discriminated against. Many researchers and educators have expressed concern regarding the negative impact that the heteronormativity of schooling has on children's self-esteem, levels of social tolerance, and attitudes towards relationships and sexuality. (p. 5)

Early childhood educators must disrupt traditional gender roles in their classrooms for children to be able to construct and understand gender in unique ways (Chapman, 2021). Without this disruption, space is not made for children who sit outside of the binary to feel like they have a place and are seen. The work of creating gender-expansive spaces is not easy, due to years of ingrained messaging, and is often not taught in post-secondary programs. The onus is placed on educators to change their practices as well as those of their fellow educators to challenge heteronormativity. Many educators have not been taught how to disrupt heteronormativity, let alone the meaning of gender identity or expression. Therefore, the expectation that it is up to educators to shoulder the responsibility once they are working with children is unjust. Further unjust yet, is that if heterosexual, cisgender educators are not creating gender-expansive spaces, then the responsibility of this work falls on the shoulders of queer educators. As Britzman (1995) identifies, this is often a trap individuals fall into where it becomes the burden of queer people to remedy homophobia. The message that it is the responsibility of all educators to disrupt heteronormativity and create gender-expansive spaces needs to be built into the foundation of post-secondary ELCC diploma programs, yet there is very little research to support this notion. Research has been done for pre-service teachers in K-12 schools which can be explored as a precedent to be appropriated in the early childhood education system.

TEACHER EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE

Pre-service teacher education has made strides to include 2SLGBTQI+ issues in their Bachelor of Education programs. These programs are perfect places for social justice issues to be resolved; “based on their positioning, faculties of education can be ideal spaces to foster awareness, understanding, and support for LGBTQ+ youth at schools” (Mitton-Kukner et al., 2016, p. 20). As Freire (2018) espoused, education is political. Building upon his work and other influential social justice scholars, Coulter et al. (2021)

suggest that “theorists have long proposed that the chief purposes of education are to advance democracy, equity, and justice” (p.235). Pre-service educators must be prepared to deliver socially just educational experiences to their students because inaction maintains the status quo. Scholars have identified the role education plays in supporting social justice in the classroom, and this has translated into concrete initiatives that are seen in pre-service education.

There is documentation in the research literature of some post-secondary institutions intentionally incorporating 2SLGBTQI+-inclusive teaching to prepare their teachers better to support minoritized students in their classrooms (Coulter et al., 2021; Mitton-Kukner et al., 2016). Mitton et al. (2021), urge that “while Canadian teacher education programs generally espouse a commitment to equity education, there continues to be a need to provide explicit education on how to create safe and inclusive classrooms and schools for LGBTQ+ learners” (p. 32). One example of explicit education was the inclusion of the Positive Space program in a pre-service teacher classroom (Mitton-Kukner et al., 2016). This program included two half-day workshops where pre-service educators learned 2SLGBTQI+ terminology, awareness, how to interrupt homophobia and transphobia, and how to become an ally. Upon initial glance, this program appears to suit the needs identified by this paper well, however, using a queer theory lens to inspect this approach reveals that some initiatives may be tokenistic, as described in the following section. A deeper look at 2SLGBTQI+ issues in post-secondary education using a queer theoretical approach is discussed next.

QUEER THEORY PERSPECTIVE

The issue of incorporating 2SLGBTQI+ content including gender identity and expression is complex. The example given above of including Positive Space training into pre-service teacher education might seem to some as a step forward in championing 2SLGBTQI+ inclusivity. A queer theory perspective, however, looks at this initiative from another perspective. Loutzenheiser (2022) suggests that adding in one-day seminars and classes to cover diversity topics has good intentions, but results in an “Othering” (p. 138) of queerness. These add-in sessions become tokenistic and a checkbox on the road to inclusivity. Britzman (1995) notes that “arguments for inclusion produce the very exclusions that they are meant to cure” (p. 158). Providing one-time seminars and guest speakers is not the solution to including meaningful discourse about 2SLGBTQI+ issues. Rather, queer topics need to be incorporated intentionally and pervasively across the curriculum.

Queer theory calls for a disruption of heteronormativity. Post-secondary early childhood education programs present an opportune starting point to expand the perspectives of the students before they enter the workforce and begin working with young children. Sumara and Davis (1999) argue that there is an even greater social responsibility for this work because “curriculum has an obligation to interrupt heteronormative thinking—not only to promote social justice, but to broaden possibilities for perceiving, interpreting, and representing experience” (p. 191). Students, especially those from the

dominant culture, need to be presented with opportunities to interrupt the notions of gender and sexuality that they have been exposed to in their lived experience and gain empathy and understanding of those outside of the dominant culture. Sumara and Davis (1999) explain that heteronormativity teaches that “‘normal’ and ‘heterosexual’ are understood as synonymous” (P. 202). Therefore, heterosexual students without exposure to 2SLGBTQI+ individuals or direct instruction on the complexity of diverse gender identity and expression will inherently assume that heterosexuality is the normal way of being and that anything else is abnormal. Interrupting these assumptions not only “assist in the important work of eliminating homophobia and heterosexism in society, but they also create some conditions for the human capacity for knowing and learning to become expanded” (Sumara & Davis, 1999, p. 205). The greater purpose of including 2SLGBTQI+ issues in the curriculum is to increase awareness, tolerance, and acceptance, to reduce homophobia. By engaging in teaching that dismantles heteronormativity, students can work toward reducing homophobia, which centres heterosexuality as normal (Britzman, 1995), and move to a wider understanding beyond the traditional gender binary.

SOLUTION

Considering the three perspectives presented, a solution can be suggested. Including 2SLGBTQI+ content within post-secondary ELCC programs from a queer theoretical approach is necessary and important, yet the answer is not simple. Although well-meaning, as seen in the teacher education program initiatives, tokenistic displays of inclusion are not enough to fully disrupt heteronormativity. On the contrary, the curriculum must be analyzed holistically from a queer theory lens. Each course, and all content within it, needs to be examined to look for assumptions of heterosexuality as the norm. This requires a reframing of how the faculty is approaching the language used to describe children and families, assumptive statements about mother and father, rather than families, rethinking images and books used in class, and the many other ways we ‘other’ those who are not heterosexual within the binary classification imposed for far too long. This work is challenging yet rewarding. It requires disrupting one’s power and privilege and must be undertaken to meaningfully integrate the discussion of gender identity and expression into the curriculum, for all students to feel valued and enjoy the basic human right of respect.

CONCLUSIONS

Through the perspectives of scholars in early childhood education, K-12 education, and queer theory the issue of including 2SLGBTQI+ topics of gender identity and expression was examined. There is a need for early childhood educators to provide gender-expansive and inclusive childcare settings to provide security and comfort for children to be able to create and explore their unique gender identities and expressions. The precedence of 2SLGBTQI+ content being taught in pre-service teacher education has been set, with many institutions intentionally and explicitly teaching these topics to prepare their students to support children in the school system. This can be expanded

further through a queer theory framework by reducing tokenistic one-day workshops and superficial inclusion of 2SLGBTQI+ topics to thoughtfully re-examine the curriculum to identify and disrupt heteronormativity. Through these efforts, early childhood educators graduating from Early Learning and Child Care diploma programs will have a broader perspective, a chance to challenge their assumptions, and will be prepared to offer childcare programming that is inclusive for all children.

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LEARNING STORIES, STORIED LEARNING: PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF POPULAR FICTION IN CRITICAL PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

Discussing findings from a study about the use of popular culture in university-based professional education, we focus on how encounters with popular cultural texts related to two issues: seeing oneself and others and dealing with the challenges of discomfort and complexity. In mimicking aspects of what students might face in real-life, fictional characters and stories helped students learn in the classroom and prepare for practice.

Keywords: Adult education, critical pedagogy, popular culture, professional education

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we respond to the conference theme of redefining adult education by illustrating how bringing popular culture into pedagogy and curriculum can illuminate the complexities of contemporary education and work. We link education and professional practice, as well as the classroom and workplace, as learning spaces. Through story-sharing processes, connections between and relevance of those contexts can become apparent to students and workers, teachers and employers (Edwards & Usher, 1996; Rossiter, 2002). Popular culture, especially popular fiction, engages people in creating and circulating stories that enter their lives, as make-believe characters and scenarios develop real meaning.

We discuss findings from our study into the use of popular culture in university-based professional education courses. Following a literature review, we explain the study. Then, we present examples from the data, highlighting how participants interacted with popular cultural stories and with peers about cultural and scholarly texts. We close with thoughts about the study's contributions to adult learning and education scholarship and the implications of our findings for the professional education classroom.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this short review, we outline scholarship on two topics: critical professional education and the use of story and popular culture in the postsecondary classroom.

Critical University-Based Professional Education

The ongoing commodification of professional education is a noted phenomenon across primary, secondary, and post-secondary education. Professional education offerings are increasingly guided by institutions' revenue-generation priority and students' priority of pursuing continuing professional education to become more competitive in the job

market (Wheelahan et al., 2022; Wittnebel, 2012). Alongside declining public support for post-secondary education, these two factors have led to an emphasis on pragmatic, applied professional education (Gouthro, 2019; Kreber, 2016; Wheelahan et al., 2022; Wittnebel, 2012). Still, critically oriented instructors continue to interrogate the structures and ideologies that produce inequality but remain silently, if not deliberately, present in today's dominant discourse of education and promote critically reflective and analytical approaches to practice (Brookfield, 2009; Gouthro, 2019). For students in professional studies, engaging in education based on a critical-humanistic framework can foster a belief in "the contribution professionals can make to civic life, civil society and greater social justice" (Kreber, 2016, p. 1).

Stories, Popular Culture, and Learning

As an approach to adult learning, storytelling gained prominence among adult education researchers in the late 1980s (Clark & Rossiter, 2006). Interest coincided with the recognition that adults bring significant experiences and perspectives to their classrooms that greatly influence how and why they approach their learning (Caminotti & Gray, 2012). Students incorporate stories about themselves and their experiences into their learning experiences, through a socialization process of story-sharing with peers and instructors (Edwards & Usher, 1996). Some instructors use popular cultural texts to extend storytelling in classrooms, creating an opportunity for students to respond to narratives within cultural texts, reflect on the decisions, experiences, and circumstances represented in the texts, and relate (fictional) texts to their (real-life) experiences. In recent decades, increased interest in this use of popular culture in adult education (Jubas et al., 2021; Sandlin et al., 2010; Tisdell, 2008) has built on the recognition that engagement with popular culture can be transformative, incorporating cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions of learning (Litawa, 2021). Synthesizing the commitment to critical professional education with the pedagogical potential of popular culture, we note that inserting popular cultural texts into curriculum can extend opportunities for critical analysis of hegemonic ideas and social relations through purposeful engagement with texts and about those texts with peers in the learning community (Perry et al., 2019; Tisdell, 2008).

THE STUDY

The study consisted of 12 case courses at the undergraduate or (post-)graduate level, delivered on campus, in a blended format, or online (including two courses that pivoted to online delivery) at the University of Calgary (UCalgary; 8) and the University of Technology Sydney (UTS; 4). Following ethics approval, we conducted interviews with instructors and, ideally, small focus groups with students. A brief, open-ended follow-up interview conversation with every participant was optional and a short demographic form was given to participants. We also compiled course outlines and conducted some in-class observations to see how popular culture was used in a course. A total of 39 students and 10 instructors participated in the study. We note two anomalies: Three case courses had no student participants, and three were delivered by the study's Principal Investigator (Kaela).

Participants employed various forms of popular culture, including fictional film and television series, novels, non-fiction documentaries, songs and music videos, and video or online games. Texts were shared in class, assigned as core “readings,” or incorporated into assignments by instructors or selected by students to share in presentations or discussions. Although participants explained varied pedagogical aims, we were especially interested in the value of popular culture in teaching and learning about critically oriented theory and sensitive issues.

We have used nVivo to store and work with transcript data and explored several themes (Jubas, 2020; Jubas et al., 2023). In this paper, we share selected examples of how working with popular culture was helpful in teaching and learning about theories and issues and in enriching students’ preparation for practice.

FINDINGS

Participants recounted experiences of introspection and learning as they encountered and created stories that mimicked the people and scenarios they might encounter in their practices. We highlight two types of encounters: intra- and interpersonal encounters and encounters with the human conditions of discomfort and complexity.

Encountering Self and Others

Stories invite students to reflect on perspectives and narratives that are both familiar and unfamiliar. In an educational context, stories can provide an accessible point of entry to key course concepts as they contain cultural and contextual elements that students can relate to in their own lives. Encountering oneself in stories presented in the classroom is the first type of encounter we consider. Suzanne, a student in a master’s course on work and learning at UCalgary, found popular cultural texts valuable because they provide a relatable or familiar point of entry into the study of new terms and concepts; after all, “popular culture is something that we can all relate to.”

What is absent from a text matters as much as what is present. Linda, a student in a UCalgary master’s course on community in adult education, commented that, for students like her who learned and worked in English as an additional language, a film shown in class could help them understand course ideas. At the same time, she admitted that, for students from a non-dominant cultural background, “it will be a little hard to connect, [not] as easy as like those people coming [from] within the culture.” The relatability of popular cultural texts, like any course material, is contextualized and contingent on how people can insert themselves into a story.

Still, well-constructed popular cultural texts can reach audience members on some level. According to Dr. Anderson, instructor of a UCalgary master’s counselling course, the popular culture industry is adept at representing “the human connection,” and “just gives [students] this point of engagement that is really powerful.” Cameron, a student in the UCalgary course on community, highlighted how the emotional connections

fostered through compelling stories can defy or cross differences in perspectives or backgrounds:

Regardless of ... the different cultural influences that impact you as a person, like we do share kind of common emotional experience, even though we would probably describe it differently. ... To me anything that is rooted in human experience, like a cultural text, comes from a person's creativeness. It comes from their experience ... so that ... even if I don't relate entirely to the situation or the context, I can relate to the feeling, to a degree.

The emotional resonance of popular cultural texts appeals to common human qualities.

In the critically oriented classroom, differences are not masked or overlooked and the experience of engaging with a text does not become a substitute for direct lived experience. Still, engagement with these texts can foster an appreciation for how differences in people's lives and sociocultural milieus inform decisions, behaviours, and outcomes. Trinity, a student in a doctoral survey course on adult learning, noted that *Moonlight*, a film used in class, extended space for reflection on perspectives that differed from cultural norms with which she was raised: "Being in class and watching it, and then the movie addressing some topics that would be a cultural taboo, for example in my own family or in cultural heritage."

Turning to popular culture could contribute to recognizing and welcoming cultural diversity in the classroom itself. For one exercise in her educational design innovation master's course, UTS instructor Emma asked students to share a song that was somehow innovative. As she explained, "It's quite accessible [because] ... every culture has music. So, even if your English language skills are not great or you're not confident with them, you can still pick a song from your cultural background." By finding songs that resonated with them, students began to co-create a class where they could encounter themselves and know that others would encounter them.

That sentiment was echoed in comments from student participants. Drew, a student in the UCalgary doctoral adult learning course, described the classroom as a learning community where engagement with popular culture could help him gain insight into the perspectives of his peers through their emotional reactions. In his words,

I thought that the atmosphere and watching the movies with our classmates also enhanced the learning experience because you witnessed areas that your classmates might have had a reaction to and then you could almost engage, like, why didn't I feel a reaction to that?

Similarly, Fred, a student in a UCalgary master's course on work and learning, noted that reflecting on the popular cultural texts, in juxtaposition with other material, in discussion activities brought forth the perspectives of his peers. He commented,

I think what was interesting was the dialogue and conversation that happens after watching the episode, because many people in the class seemed to view the episode with a very different perspective and lens, as far as what they picked up on, as far as character interaction and dialogue, things like that. So there was a real diversity of thought.

Recognizing the presence and value of diversity is an important lesson for professional practice. For teacher education students, such as Alyssa in a UCalgary undergraduate course on literacy education, using popular culture texts was “helpful just because they really pushed [the idea] that approaching pedagogy from a popular culture lens is just a fantastic way ... to respect what students [in the K-12 classroom] bring to the table.” In her UTS midwifery course with a strong feminist underpinning, Lottie used the Barbie doll franchise, including the quickly discontinued pregnant Midge doll and what has become known as the “Barbie monologue” from the blockbuster film. Students explored those popular cultural texts and icons “as women living in Australia I said, You know, just imagine you’re a pregnant woman reading the monologue. It says you can be this and not that.” Students preparing to enter the woman-centred midwifery profession need to learn or confirm an understanding of the impacts on them and their future patients of mainstream refrains about, in the words of the monologue, needing

to be thin, but not too thin. And you can never say you want to be thin. You have to say you want to be healthy, but also you have to be thin. ... You're supposed to love being a mother, but don't talk about your kids all the damn time. (Gerwig, 2023)

Sometimes, encountering others can seem interesting as well as mind- and heart-opening. Sometimes, though, encounters with others might give rise to feelings of discomfort and realizations that the complexities of communities create challenges in the course of learning, life, and work.

Encountering Discomfort and Complexity

Stories provide an opportunity to engage with topics that students might avoid for myriad reasons, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Students might avoid texts with sensitive themes or topics, which can foster discomfort or other negative feelings. Still, engagement with those texts in supportive, facilitated classrooms can create learning opportunities. Wendy, a student in the doctoral adult learning course, tended to avoid emotionally charged films “because I’ve had such a busy stressful work life.” For her, watching the demanding *Moonlight* in the classroom setting encouraged her “to focus on the story within the story or the story, the parallel stories that were happening at the same time and the different meanings around those pieces.”

Sometimes, professionals simply must confront stories that produce profound discomfort. James, an instructor at UTS in management studies, discussed his use of the film *Glengarry, Glen Ross*, which portrays a crudely, mercilessly cut-throat workplace culture, and protest singer Billy Bragg’s song “No Power Without

Accountability” to teach about the challenges of responsible stewardship in a neoliberal climate of efficiency and fiscal bottom line. Samantha, a UCalgary teacher education instructor of a literacy education course, raised the value of incorporating carefully selected popular cultural texts in reconciliation-related education in K-12 classrooms:

Pop culture is often a way of ... teaching sensitive material ... or teaching material in a sensitive way. So, for instance like ... the history of residential school is not an easy thing for students to imagine teaching especially if it’s not part of their story or their history. And so I find that helping them to identify good resources, cultural texts, picture books—that would help them to take these big ideas and difficult histories and put them into practice.

The use of emotionally evocative popular cultural texts is not risk-free, though. Just as engaging with emotionally provocative stories can spur deep learning, it can also “to traumatize and the potential to re-traumatize or trigger,” Dr. Anderson explained. That possibility is something that instructors wanting to insert popular culture in their courses must prepare for in their own work-related learning.

While it can be challenging and uncomfortable, dealing with emotions and sensitive topics is a component of practice that students will need to contend with at work. Stories offer an opportunity for them to gain exposure to social conditions, attitudes, and behaviours that will figure in their work. Dr. Anderson realized that even fictional stories offer “an authenticity, an immediacy” as they represent “a whole range of emotions” that then might be summoned in students. In so doing, they build memorability of both the stories and the scholarly ideas attached to them in the classroom. Moreover, Dr. Anderson observed that fictional stories mimic the real-life complexity of practice. For students preparing to enter the service sector, such as those in his counselling course, that creates an opportunity to experience “the ethics around caring” that are necessary in their profession.

Popular cultural texts work not just on an emotional and an intellectual level, but also on a sensory level as they include images and soundscapes. Working together to pull people into stories, those dimensions can foster deep engagement for students, both in conversation with others and in individual reflection. Students witness a spectrum of complex human experiences and social conditions. The process of dealing with the texts resembles the psychic and interpersonal demands that they will face as practitioners. Dan, the instructor of a UCalgary undergraduate course on family counselling, praised *Fences*, the film that he assigned because of its representation of “how complicated life can be in social work contexts. And that they need to be willing and able to address, you know, people’s complex issues, rather than just work on a single behavioural problem.”

Students in that course did not necessarily share Dan’s love of the film, but they recognized its usefulness in their learning about scholarly concepts related to discomfort and complexity that would figure in their practices. Moreover, the experience of using popular culture in the classroom could extend to work-related learning beyond the

classroom, because everyday cultural engagement brought encounters with all sorts of discomforts and complexities. In this bit of dialogue, two students spoke to those points:

Maryanne: I would say [one concept illustrated was] multi-partiality for sure. Around Troy from *Fences*. He's a very dislikable character and ... he was such a good character to understand that concept from because everyone started the class hating him. And then by the end of it I feel like we all had ... empathy towards him. And we could ... understand how ... we had to build that around our clients as well. So it was ... such a solid example of that.

Sherry: For me, the one question I remember on the last day or second last day of class, we talked about is pop culture fully representative of the family dynamics we will be working with? And I remember it was divided in the class. But for me I thought, ... I've started to, when I watch TV, I'm like, wait, is the stereotypes in this show actually going to harm someone, ... work towards lowering self-esteem?

In engaging with stories, students participated in exchanges with their peers and instructor in developing a practice of listening in, reflecting on, and imagining an always complex, sometimes uncomfortable classroom and workplace.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Stories and narratives present opportunities for students to engage with people, perspectives, and contexts that may be familiar or unfamiliar to them. Popular culture can help students find their identities, circumstances, and perspective present but not exclusive in lessons learned and insights developed. Without diluting the intellectual, emotional, and psychic demands of dealing with theory and challenging issues, popular cultural texts can ease students' engagement with relevant material, make ideas more memorable, and help students clarify the importance of such content. With this study, we contribute to research into the intersection of popular culture with critical professional education. On a practical level, we offer a glimpse into how instructors in professional education programs can preserve a commitment to a pedagogy that is both critical and engaging.

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ADULT EDUCATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: AN UNFOLDING CASE STUDY OF A SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRE

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Abstract

A key site of public adult education provision in South Africa is the Community College (CC). One of the core mandates of these educational spaces is to contribute to the transformation of society and social cohesion through first and foremost promoting education and social justice. These contemporary adult education spaces however are shaped by multiple and competing forces reflecting both their historical antecedents as well as varying crises impacting on South African society. Educators, staff, students and the communities from which they come experience first-hand the contradictions, tensions and failures in the system while also having insights into the possibilities that these spaces hold for both individuals and society. Given that CC's are to serve particularly our most marginalised, resource poor, communities in struggle, questions of social justice are pressing in terms of how adult education is unfolding in these spaces. The research project to be presented asks the question: what are the perspectives of, practices towards and possibilities for social justice-oriented adult education in these still developing institutions? To investigate this, I employ exploratory and normative case study research in one Community Learning Centre (CLC), a teaching and learning site in a small agricultural town in South Africa. The case includes both the CLC and its surrounding community. Research methodologies will include: interviews with educators, students, support staff of the centre, community leaders in the area; and observations of classes, staff meetings and CLC engagements with the community. Borrowing from ethnographic approaches I have also practiced 'hanging out' in the community to deepen my understanding of the context and have gathered documents to support an understanding of the social, political, environmental and economic dynamics in the area. The research also draws on critical reading of CC related policy to understand how social justice is being conceptualised by the state. In this paper I will report on the emergent findings of the fieldwork undertaken thus far. These point to a disconnect between the CLC and community context, an impact of insufficient education opportunity and youth unemployment on adult education provision, an instrumentalist ethos framing adult education provision, the undervaluing of the adult educator who is being cast in an instrumentalist role, and to a changing perception amongst community members of the relevance of these public adult learning spaces for their learning needs.

We are in a crucial moment in which public provision of adult education in South Africa is being consolidated in policy and practice, this research project seeks to contribute to a critical reflection on this sector to support this work.

Keywords: Community Colleges, adult and community education, social justice, small town.

INTRODUCTION

A key public adult and community education institution in South Africa is the Community College, gazetted in 2015 (DHET, 2015). A core mandate of this institution is to contribute to the transformation of society and social cohesion through promoting education and social justice (DHET, 2017). Educators in Community Learning Centres (CLCs), the teaching and learning sites of the Colleges, experience first-hand the contradictions, tensions and failures in the system while also having insights into the possibilities that these spaces hold for both individuals and society. Given that Community Colleges (CCs) are to serve particularly our most marginalised, resource poor, communities in struggle, questions of social justice are pressing in terms of how adult education is unfolding in these spaces and how the work of these centres are interfacing with the communities in which they are situated (Pottier, 2020).

In this paper I present emerging findings from my doctoral research, which explores the question: what are the perspectives of, practices towards and possibilities for social justice-oriented adult education in CLCs? The findings presented here are key community role players' descriptions of the community context and educators shared experiences of working in the CLC. The paper starts by introducing how policy describes the role of these centres in relation to the communities they serve. I then describe the research methodology. A 'snapshot' of the community is then presented based on the community role player interviews, followed by a portrait of the CLC through the interviews with CLC educators and centre manager.

THE 'COMMUNITY' IN COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRES

Leading up to the institutional change toward the CC system, there was a recognition that the focus on general education alone as offered by Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs) was not meeting the learning needs of South African adults and youth (DHET 2013, p.21). In particular, those who were "unemployed, poorly educated and not studying" (ibid.p.20) and "interested in gaining labour-market and sustainable livelihoods skills, and those interested in learning for general self-improvement or cultural and community development" (ibid.p.21) were not constructively engaged by the previous system. To this end nonformal education "geared to the needs and desires of local communities and their organisations" (ibid.p.22) was identified as a priority area for the new colleges. The task team report informing the development of this policy, drew on Lynn Tett's conceptualisation of community. The authors write "we suggest that 'community' be understood as a geographically-based human relationship between a number of people who may or may not know each other, share a sense of purpose and values, interact in their work and family and share power to shape their lives" (Baatjes & Chaka, 2012, p.5).

Within a community education framework a key purpose of the CC's, and by extension CLCs, is "to strengthen and expand popular citizen and community education" (DHET, 2013). To this end the policy makes a "commitment to establish pro-poor institutional structural frameworks and funding modalities", these "key elements" it argues are

fundamental to work toward the national “agenda of an egalitarian and prosperous society” (DHET, 2015, p.4). The shift from PALC’s to CLC’s, under National administration of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), promised a renewed centring of local communities as part of a broader developmental and social justice mandate.

METHODOLOGY

The interviews presented in this paper represent in-process findings as part of my PhD research. To investigate institutional social-justice oriented practice, I use descriptive and normative case study (Schwandt & Gates, 2018) to develop a nuanced, descriptive and in-depth profile of a single CLC in its community context.

The selection of study site was core to this work. Based on current research on CLC’s in South Africa (e.g. Rule, Chatty, Baloyi & Daniels 2016) and my own research focus I drew on ‘best practice’ qualifiers, in selecting the CLC (see caveat in Rule et al. 2016, p.10). In this way the selected site was to represent a unique case (Yin, 2003, p.40).

While a range of methods are employed in this research, this paper presents findings from open-ended interviews with 9 residents active in the community: 3 educators (Ezelda, Carine and Riaan) and the centre manager of the CLC, an auxiliary social worker (and NGO coordinator), the town Community Development Worker (CDW), the local head librarian, the Social Policing Officer and the Ward Councillor.

As the CLC staff are undecided as to whether the centre may be identified in the final study and as many respondents wish to remain unidentifiable, pseudonyms are given for the town, community and all interviewees.

INTRODUCTION TO STUDY SITE

Hoopsruit is situated in a region of great natural beauty and sandwiched between farmlands. Historically, the area was inhabited by indigenous groups of Khoe until the early 1800’s. Land dispossession reached its peak in the late 1880’s by which time most of the land in the region was leased to Dutch farmers (Reference unavailable*). The town itself was established in the early 1900’s as a parish of the Dutch Reformed Church and later segregation was entrenched under Apartheid. The town remains marked physically and socially by Apartheid spatial planning and social engineering.

Hoopsruit is described as a small-town functioning as an agricultural service centre. The majority of those employed in the community of Sonstraal, the study site, are seasonal workers. There is a high level of unemployment and nearly all those employed in the community earn around \$169.50 per month (Oanda, 2024 converter).

Literacy and political education that took place in the community from the early 1990’s coalesced, into a PALC and then later into Sonstraal CLC, which is the study site.

EMERGING RESULTS

A Snapshot of Life in the Community

The most widespread description of Sonstraal, was of a poor community, with high unemployment and few opportunities. The majority of employed adults were seasonal farmworkers. Farm labour was characterised by long hours of physically demanding work, with low pay and no benefits. The harshness of life as a farmworker was discussed in terms of alcohol abuse, domestic abuse, parenting struggles and reticence toward trade unionism. The rhythms and demands of seasonal work came through strongly as shaping community life. One participant referred to the town as a "ghost town".

Stillness and quietness were used interchangeably, as a positive attribute of peacefulness and as one of desolation, where one participant, cautioned "don't underestimate the silence". Beneath this, in all interviews, respondents shared what was often described as a love of the community and of the town. This was even reflected by the participant who only recently moved to the town and who in speaking about the difficulty of the transition because of the nature of poverty in the area, noted: "I came to actually love and understand the people here" (CDW).

While a feeling of connectedness came through strongly so did historical divisions. There is, what was described as a "huge gap" financially, politically and spatially running through the town. This referred to those historically classified as "white" and "coloured" remaining separated, living on either side of town. Commenting on this, the Councillor noted that "business is in the white man's hand". Within the "coloured" side, there also seemed to be a division between those who lived in the community for generations and, those one respondent termed, 'uitlanders' [foreigners], African migrant workers from the continent who moved into the town. Divisions were also created through allegiances to several gangs territorially spread throughout the small community. This complexity of relationships was also noted at the family level. While respondents characterised the place as a "family town" issues of jealousy and conflict between families were also identified as sources of violence and crime within the community, made more complex by historical alcohol and substance abuse. While this paints a heavy picture, respondents were deeply hopeful about the potential for change.

Several factors seemed to converge in concerns raised about challenges facing children and youth. Narratives were around bad behaviour, alcohol and drug abuse, "drop-outs", lack of pathways and opportunities for matriculants, children from the informal settlements and farms and the particular challenges they faced, sports, crime, teenage pregnancy and weak political education. Most respondents placed these challenges strongly within the context of the town and its problems.

Amidst these challenges several strengths and resources were identified. Strong leadership and capacity for organising, knowledge about community work, networking and generally positive relationships amongst community role players were noted. Knowledge and skills amongst the residents were also identified as local strengths put to use toward improving the living conditions for those in the community.

An interesting element that emerged from the interviews with the community partners was related to a core disposition of these role players. Rooted in an ethic that placed responding to the context at hand as central was an orientation and practice of “uit ons self uit” [giving from ourselves]. This was around giving, whether financial, psychological or physical etc., beyond what was formally expected of one’s position. This phrase was taken from a discussion with the librarian where she spoke about the decrease in municipal funding and that as a result she and her fellow librarian paid for and prepared food for children when they had events. This ethic was reflected in other community partner interviews. On the flip side though, this spoke to a deeper issue of insufficient resources to do the work at hand, particularly in terms of small budgets, unfilled positions, and ongoing structural inequality which required service workers to absorb these shortfalls.

Lastly, the political dynamic in town as related to decision-making, placed the community of Sonstraal not only physically but also in terms of political power, at the margins. In several examples the exclusion of community members from meaningful involvement in decisions that would impact on their community was evident.

An Emerging Portrait of a Small Town CLC

The functioning of the CLC as a community institution, follows the contours of the dynamics sketched above. Drawing on the refrain ‘uit ons self uit’, I start by presenting the work of the educators and centre manager. This is then placed within the institutional context of the CLC in relation to the administration of DHET. I then discuss concerns about youth and adult learners respectively. Next, I present findings pointing to the growing distance between the CLC and community and impacts of this on building community centred education programmes. Lastly, I present on injustice in the college sector as discussed by the educators.

The community work ethic of, ‘uit ons self uit’ permeated educator stories and responses. All the educators grew up in, studied for all or a large part of their schooling and worked for nearly all of their adult lives in the community. One educator, had for a period as a young adult worked on a nearby farm, another was involved in political work in the area and is part of a farming cooperative. Two of the educators taught on farms while public adult education was under provincial administration. The Centre Manager also had a history of literacy and political work with farm workers. While educators and the Centre Manager collectively had over 77 years teaching and work experience in adult and community education, they expressed a keen interest in further learning to improve as educators and to meet the changing community context. The commitment to learners and the work and application of professional and personal

knowledge beyond what was required of their roles was widely reflected in their accounts.

Against the backdrop of being instrumental in the centre's development, teaching and management staff felt increasingly cut-off from decision making. This related both to the present functioning of and plans for the CLC which were unfolding at a national level. Their experiences of the shift from Provincial to National administration, included a shrinking of programme offerings, increasing centralisation and a concomitant decrease in autonomy, cumbersome bureaucracy and an undervaluing of their knowledge and expertise. In reflecting back to the time when they were informed via a DHET 'Road Show' of the significant changes that would be coming to the sector, one educator recalled the response of an older educator, who was furious and swore under his breath:

"according to how he sees things, they were taking us for fools because they were mentioning stuff that is never going to work. They didn't think it through and if we all listened to him at that time, we would have realised that ... he's actually talking the truth because we are still struggling" (Ezelda)

According to the educators, the shift brought with it an impetus toward second chance education for out-of-school youth and CLC activities were redirected to meet this need. Youth coming in to the centre were identified as "young adults with a lot of problems" who were "[getting] lost in the mainstream" (Carine). Educators were deeply aware of the lack of opportunities for youth and the danger of the current system of education giving rise to a 'lost generation', as one educator noted "it is the future generation that I am concerned about ... 20 years from now where are we? If change is not coming." (Riaan). In addition to teaching the formal curriculum educators strove to provide teaching environments that prioritize building positive interactions and relationships and a sense of learners as knowledge makers through a focus on research. Motivating learners to believe in themselves and to believe that they could chart their future, were also core to the educator's pedagogies.

A consequence of the redirected focus toward youth and their predominance in the classroom, along with the shift in funding and governance structure, has reportedly overtime displaced adult learners from the CLC. In reflecting on the changed profile of CLC learners, one educator commented:

"In the 90's and early 2000's education was for any adult in the community, the people who cannot read and write. The people who didn't finish their schooling in the past. It was not for youngsters. ... They are taking our elderly away" (Carine).

Concurrently, it was suggested that the way education is viewed by adults in the community has shifted, in that the belief in the promise of education to contribute to individual and social change has somewhat dissipated. This was reflected in community partner interviews where education need was often described in terms of youth

although through further conversation nonformal education focussing on gender-based violence, white privilege, political education amongst other topics, were identified as important adult and community learning needs.

Largely due to the scenario sketched above there was a pervasive sentiment that in the current system "important issues are being ignored" (Riaan). Educators sat with a belief that the education being provided and ways of working should be different. One area that this came up strongly was in relation to the curriculum, where disheartened by the top-down approach one educator noted: "we only focus on curriculum" according to "what the department needs and wants...what does the community need?! Do you understand?" (Riaan) The dissolution of the School Governing Body in 2016 was still felt as a loss by all interviewed. This was summed up by one educator "No, it's not better now because ... there's no connection between us and the rest of the community" (Ezelda). This lack of formal community participation in the affairs of the centre, impacted on educators' knowledge of what was happening across the community and on the potential for sustaining community partnerships toward shaping the work of the Centre. In considering the relationship between transformation and education, two educators spoke strongly about transformation as being a collective project and driven by community needs and problems. Without multiple voices shaping and supporting educational work and building a collective understanding of what is driving community problems, serious community issues get overlooked. One educator argued that by not addressing community needs in this way, community institutions were colluding in invisibilising some of the serious challenges facing the community. He suggested that to have an educational response that "[tackles] injustice in [the] community" their work must be informed by a historical, contextual and collective approach.

The last aspect of this CLC portrait stems from a discussion about social justice at a sector level, where I asked if whether the way the current community college system is structured supports the work of social justice. The educator responded, "It doesn't because they are still doing us injustice" (Ezelda). This was linked to outstanding salary payments which was a recurrent problem and which was sorely felt during COVID. Aside from salary payments being delayed, procurement policies were not suited to a small town context, there were insufficient learning and teaching support materials, and introducing new courses and programmes was an onerous and sometimes unsuccessful process. The autonomy and flexibility required to do the kind of community centred education work that educators identified was needed seemed out of reach. There was a general feeling, in the words of one educator that "The system is operating separately from the CLC" (Riaan).

CLOSING COMMENTS

Nine years in, public provision of adult education through CC's in South Africa is still being consolidated in policy and practice. The experiences and perspectives represented above, provide insights into just one instance of how administration of CC's interfaces

at the level of the CLC and its community. Juxtaposed against the explicit policy intentions of providing community centred curriculum, processes and structures, serious questions are raised by the educator testimonies. While still unfinished, the window opened by these findings point to the deep need to consider CLCs in relation to context. The findings suggest that if CC's want to aim toward contributing toward social justice in the communities they serve, educator, centre manager and community knowledge and experiences must be drawn on to help chart the way forward.

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CAREER ACTIVITY: USING FACILITATED DIALOGUE TO ASSIST MIDLIFE CAREER TRANSITION

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Abstract

Despite the importance of work for survival, identity, learning, relationships, and independence, people make career choices with limited information. Research focuses on testing and categorizing inexperienced youth rather than midlife transitions, which must navigate the complex tensions between inertia and change arising from identity, habits, relationships, economic catastrophes, and dissatisfaction. Career guidance incorporates counselling but may lack guiding theory or assessments of impact, and may be treated as expertise to be consumed by participants rather than a process of engaging in data-gathering and meaning-making with real-world resources. This article reports an alternative whereby a facilitator used a systemic framework to interview Peter about his career path and desired transition. He'd lost his business and marriage, passed through grad school, and settled for a series of unwanted sales jobs, certain he had no other transferrable skills. The facilitator prepared Peter to use active listening techniques, and they co-interviewed Wanda, a relatable midlife transition completer, who also had faced family problems and business collapse but had taken targeted training to leverage her experiences for consulting. Each career path is presented and then readers are guided through key interactions among Peter, Wanda and the facilitator during the joint interview. Their dialogue included questioning, relating, synthesis, challenges, and trouble-shooting. Both participants described their future before and after interviews, and shared reactions and plans in a survey. The case reports their insights from the dialogue and how their envisioned futures changed. Two other cases and a conceptual analysis of transition and dialogues will be reported elsewhere.

Keywords: midlife, career transition, systems theory, informational interview

INTRODUCTION

Although work enables survival and provides identity, learning opportunities, relationships, and the potential for power (McMahon, 2017), people make choices using limited information (Swanson & Fouad, 2015). Research on career guidance focuses on testing and categorizing youth with little life experience (Patton & McMahon, 2014), while midlife transition lacks attention despite encompassing self-limiting habits, family breakups, and economic catastrophes. Such complexity could be addressed through personal data-gathering, such as informational interviews, which help with networking and discovering options (Plakhotnik, 2017; Mulvaney, 2003), while leveraging tendencies to informally consult others (Cort, et al., 2015). However, risk-averse contacts may be stifling (Motulsky, 2010), and chats without theoretical guidance or measurement may over-simplify transition, and have unknown impact (Stead & Davis,

2015). In contrast, this case introduces facilitated conversations about midlife transitions using the Systems Theory Framework to explore individual, social, environmental, and chance influences (McIlveen & Midgley, 2015; Patton & McMahon, 2014), and uses Future Career Autobiographies (FCA) to capture changes in how participants described their futures (Rehfuss, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

I recruited employed English-speakers who had completed a career transition while aged 35-60 ("Completers"), and those seeking such a transition ("Seekers"). Participants responded to ads through a social services organization in eastern North America, and a listserv for organizational development. I met candidates on Zoom to explain the study, obtain consent, and request CVs and a demographic survey. I matched participants based on life experiences, and scheduled three recorded Zoom meetings. First, I interviewed the Seeker to explore their career and life decisions while inquiring for systemic influences. Second, I demonstrated active listening for the Seeker and evaluated their ability. Third, the Seeker and I jointly interviewed the Completer. During interviews, I noted life events in one column of a timeline, and individual, social, environmental, chance, and decision-making influences in adjacent columns. To measure impact, participants completed a future career autobiography (FCA) before and after each interview, and an exit survey. I transcribed recordings and wrote cases for the Seeker, Completer, and our interactions during the Completer interview. I examined FCAs for changes in length, detail, and systemic factors, and reviewed surveys for reactions and plans.

RESULTS

This section reports Seeker and Completer stories, our interactions during the Completer interview, then measurements of impact.

Seeker's Dilemma

I always knew that I wanted to start a business and be a boss.

A Seeker in his mid-40s, Peter was born to entrepreneurial parents. Despite no experience, he began his career by getting a loan and starting a multimedia business. Over 15 years he was the sole breadwinner. As his main industry declined, he dabbled in parallel businesses, and lost everything. Unable to get a highly-paid job, he became a homemaker while his wife got work and their relationship declined. He enrolled in an MBA "looking for hope" but focused on applying for sales jobs. When a classmate hired him into an energy company, he finished training then decided to end his miserable marriage. He enjoyed his salary and travel but found the extensive preparation, failure to make sales, and lack of belonging in a youthful, structured environment demotivating. He quit, and a friend connected him with a family business in construction that needed purchasing. The owner's micromanagement drove Peter "crazy." When a major supplier referred by Peter's MBA classmate failed to deliver, the owner and Peter parted ways. Peter spent a year applying for jobs on LinkedIn. He

rejected opportunities to turn interests into work, fearing he couldn't make money or would start hating them. When a services company hired him into sales, he felt "they took me in... it was nice." However, selling for someone else was just paying bills and unmotivating. Although the firm wanted him to take a leadership role, his excitement was undermined by fear of failure. He wanted to start a new business and again experience "how you feel when you're in love" but his girlfriend preferred stability and he lacked financial resources. He avoided asking contacts for help because "I'm scared... like a wounded animal."

Completer's Transition

It was all about creating income and being able to stay home with my kids.

A Completer in her 60s, Wanda began her career as a homemaker with an artistic education. Wanting to supplement her husband's income while homeschooling her children, she and friends started a home-based business selling natural-materials juvenile clothing. Business boomed until competitors slandered her products. Wanda adapted, replacing her partners, and taking her products to trade shows to get them sold in stores. She helped trigger a second boom, leading to worldwide growth and travel. Too busy to homeschool, she enrolled her son in a public school where he encountered drugs and became an addict, triggering a sense of "personal failure" and a loss of confidence. Additionally, her mother fell terminally ill (leading to frequent travel for caregiving), and her longtime accountant died. Wanda's "life and business were so enmeshed... it was basically responding to crisis" and she stopped deciding on her own, and started acquiescing to her partner and advisers. They wanted "very expensive" investments based on anticipated government policies. She admitted "I kind of went along with it... I was completely over my head." Unfortunately, the investments were never reimbursed. Worse, her new accountants had made errors leading to "catastrophic losses," and her distributor responded to a mistake with a crippling lawsuit. Her partner couldn't support the ongoing debt, so despite decades of success, "incredible products... great customer base... really good reputation," her business collapsed. Wanda "felt a terrible loss of purpose" because "it was me; I was it." The new owners didn't ask for her help, "and that made me crazy." She helped a friend's nonprofit shift from grants towards consulting, providing strategy, social media, and a website. She realized she wanted to "help people run their businesses better" but wondered "how am I going to package myself... regardless of the failures?" She sought theory, mentoring and practice focused on people rather than spreadsheets. She chose an organizational development Master's that trained her to become a "coach" who helped people develop "their own solutions." Although she resisted classroom hierarchy, she enjoyed collegial research with a professor. She reflected on her latest project: "I love figuring it out... my brain is lighting up" by "empowering" people to "solve their own puzzles." She noted, "it was incredible, the changes that can happen."

Three-Party Interactions

That was like [laughs] wow. Thank you for listening so carefully... it sounded like a crazy discombobulated story... so many factors - Wanda

Wanda's story emerged from her interview with me and Peter. Interactions beyond my basic interview questions are shared here. Peter's initially perfunctory introduction had Wanda respond, "It feels a little strange... to not know anything about [Peter]... he'll know everything about me." Peter then described his business loss and unfulfilling sales jobs. Wanda responded, "Thank you... Many things you said resonated."

Wanda described her current work then related to Peter: "I also went back to school." She described a project about staff retention, and they agreed the topic was complex. Wanda said it was "fascinating, I love it," and Peter responded, "It shows that it comes from the heart." She added, "it really satisfies my brain, too." Peter asked about her other work. She described her business collapse and its inspiration for her Master's, then hesitated: "I hope I'm not saying too much." Peter admitted, "Wow there's just so much."

She described the initial growth of her business, and Peter resonated: "You didn't expect it to grow... that quick." Wanda clarified, "I hoped," which he echoed. She said, "As you know, having your own business is extremely stressful." Peter agreed. She described differences with a new partner: "We brought really different lenses." Peter resonated, "You balance." She contrasted her partner as "nitty gritty" versus her own "big picture." Peter resonated, "There's a bird's-eye view."

As Wanda described overcoming competitors then suffering catastrophe due to poor advice and her "being out of control of the company," Peter refused prompts to ask questions: "I want to let her go ahead." She said, "Sad story." When she described losing confidence and surrendering control to experts, Peter interrupted: "I can totally understand... I saw... my industry dying... I should have concentrated on what was there, and I didn't... At what point did you start losing that trust in you[rself] and saying... I'm going to leave all that stuff to other people?" Wanda clarified, "I would argue... but I acquiesced."

Wanda detailed the end of her business and her "terrible loss of purpose." Peter resonated, "It's like it's your baby, right?" Wanda agreed, "Yeah, it was me, I was it." She described business and family challenges, "basically responding to crisis... not a bird's-eye perspective as you said." She hesitated: "I hope this is helpful" and laughed. Peter refused my prompt. Wanda asked, "Does it help you, Peter, to hear about other people's catastrophes?" Peter responded, "We have a lot of similarities... I admire what you did."

I paused for comments. Wanda hoped to see a synthesis of her career influences. Peter reflected on the process used here and in his Seeker interview as "a new way to see my parcours... It's very interesting."

Wanda then explained her desire to help clients "solve their own puzzles" and "wishing that I [had] had that myself... not... an expert but—" Peter interrupted, "A mentor." Wanda corrected, "Somebody who helps you do it... like a good coach." I offered that Wanda rejected being an expert because she didn't trust them. Wanda replied, "Interesting point." She and Peter laughed. "I only thought about it in terms of 'I don't know anything' but you're correct."

Wanda noted that her business and Peter's differed, but both depended on people, which was why she chose organizational development rather than an MBA. Peter responded, "I think you were lucky to find that... I didn't give it too much thought." Wanda asked, "did you feel [the MBA] would give you the credentials that you needed?" Peter agreed, "You're right... I couldn't get a decent job with a decent salary... at the same time... I was looking for hope, answers, skills, something." He retold the death of his business and Wanda empathized, "Sounds terrifying." They agreed to chat following the interview.

I contrasted their studies: Peter had sought missing skills, but Wanda had pursued a role she valued for herself. Wanda responded, "I never thought of it like that. I thought, how do I use all these years of experience?" Peter agreed. I described Wanda's experiences as resources for clients. Wanda responded, "It's not just compassion... but also that deep understanding of how these things can happen." I suggested that her choice of Master's helped her navigate others through similar challenges. Wanda responded, "thank-you for helping me to think about it like that... I didn't put those things together... stress really narrows your vision... it's really interesting to be asked those sorts of questions." Peter agreed. Wanda said, "You can look back and see how what you are doing resonates with the rest of your life... move forward more authentically."

Wanda described her resistance and vulnerability to experts in classrooms. I suggested she must be angry about experts because they undermined her business. Wanda responded, "I don't think I'm angry enough... which is really funny." Peter laughed. "I wouldn't have thought about how the experts failed me... Which sounds dumb, but I didn't."

I paused for comments. Peter noted, "she utilized all her experiences... which I had never really thought about... I always thought I need to start another company." Wanda gasped. "But no... I need to find a job that fulfills me, but how? Maybe you were lucky... to connect those two parts."

Peter wondered how to change his sales-heavy resume. Wanda described using sticky notes: "I put down every single bloody thing I'd ever done." Peter reacted, "You did a Kaizen." Wanda said, "It took me weeks... a very chaotic experience, and exuberant." Peter responded, "I'm sure it was... so it was a new resume about?" Wanda said, "Trying to present myself more as a consultant... to get me a job at [FIRM]." Peter responded, "You don't fit in that box, right?" Wanda said, "I think I can work anywhere

with anybody." Peter responded, "Of course, me too... it's just my resume now screams sales."

Wanda said, "It's hard to sell something that you don't feel passionate about." Peter responded, "When you have to have a job... you can sell anything. But... when it was your company, when you were going out and selling, I'm sure it was from the heart... Now I'm doing sales, but it's not me." Wanda suggested, "That's interesting, how entrepreneurs get pegged as salespeople." Peter asked, "What else can you transfer... I wore all the hats." Wanda said, "I was a good systems person" looking at the whole business. Peter said, "Exactly, or master puppeteer... But... they're looking for this specific type of person... one skill that you've been doing for 10 years. You're not a specialist, so therefore you don't fit."

I contrasted Wanda's repackaging of diverse experiences against Peter's chasing sales jobs on LinkedIn. I suggested our meetings were "training wheels" to encourage more exploratory conversations. Peter responded, "We need to find the people, and the time, and they have to be willing." I offered Wanda as an example. Peter responded, "But [Wanda] is not somebody I'm trying to get a job from."

Wanda suggested he ask people "doing interesting things to have a coffee," and describe himself and ask about them. "Every time... you present yourself a little bit differently... a more accurate picture... You're hearing all the possibilities... that you never heard of... [and] building a more robust network." Wanda noted, "People love to do it... That's what shocks me." Peter protested, "You have to find people that you have things in common." Wanda disagreed, "I also want to know about everybody else... things that I never even thought of that people are doing." Peter said, "You're right."

I thanked the participants, and they agreed to talk more with each other later.

Measurements of Impact

Both Future Career Autobiographies (FCAs) from Peter expressed hope for change, a desire for meaning, and an openness to being an employee or boss. His post-meeting FCA decreased 52% to 34 words. He removed details about recognition, and authority, and shifted from work he loved to something fulfilling. He added a desire for adventure, and alignment with his values. Both FCAs from Wanda expressed a desire to work as a consultant, travel and save for retirement. Her post-meeting FCA increased 53% to 133 words. She shifted from building her reputation and network and getting regular contracts towards more certainty about consulting, continual expansion of her network, and collaboration on different projects. She noted increased confidence because consulting now seemed more coherent with her past.

In comments, Peter was surprised at "blaming ourselves for things we don't control. How other people have similar experience where there's lots to learn from. How stubborn I am wanting to fit somewhere I don't belong." He planned further chats and to survey contacts about "how they see me and what my skills are." Wanda said, "What a gift... a new way to look at my work, both past and future." She planned to present

her career transition differently, "how I wanted to think about it before, and kind of struggled with.... it was all a revelation to me, and super interesting... It's great to have learned something about [Peter]... the kind of sharing elicited... is so intense that knowing his story helped me to feel connected and safe." She planned to use results to "think more confidently about how I present myself," and noted, "how important it is to meet with people... it is an integral piece of how we shape ourselves. I am inspired to get back to it."

Table 1 shows how participants rated the intervention on a five-point scale. Peter's satisfaction decreased one point, which may reflect concerns about putting new learning into action. Wanda explained the asterisked rating based on already speaking to others frequently.

Table 1. Participant Perceptions of Meetings.

Criteria for Meetings	Seeker	Seeker-Completer	
	Peter	Peter	Wanda
Understandable and satisfying?	5	4	5
Addressed the complex influences in your life?	5	5	5
Supported interaction and collaboration?	5	5	5
Changed how you FEEL about career and transition?	3	5	5
Changed how you THINK about career and transition?	4	5	5
Helped you develop SKILLS in gathering life experiences and discovering how they affect career transition?	4	5	5
Helped you develop CONFIDENCE in gathering life experiences and discovering how they affect career transition?	4	5	5
Affected your likelihood of talking to people in your community about career transition?	4	5	2*

CONCLUSIONS

The dialogue helped seeker and completer make sense of their past using a systemic framework. The dialogue required trusted networks of referrals to find volunteers willing to share. Facilitation assisted by prompting for life events, systemic influences, and questions, and offering syntheses of influences and decision strategies for reaction. Resulting insights demonstrated the value of Systems Theory Framework (Patton & McMahon, 2014) using guided facilitation, which contrasted with expecting participants to understand and apply theory using booklets (Yim, et al., 2015).

The Seeker's sharing of his story enabled participants to expand a group career assessment (Alexander, et al., 2010) to embrace relating, contrasting, raising challenges, problem-solving and seeking further contact. Emotions played a key role

through sharing, expressing doubts, empathizing, confirming value, and laughing. In FCAs, emotions related to increased confidence or rethinking and expressing hopes. The results confirm emotions as signals for life themes (Meijers & Lengelle, 2015). Like support groups, the dialogue provided support, information, networking, new perspectives (Chen & Yang, 2015) and improved confidence (Neville, 2014) but facilitation avoided dominant voices (Chung & Chen, 2018), and venting without problem-solving (De Leon, et al., 2010; Meier, 2002).

FCAs and surveys captured changes in how participants saw themselves, others, and their future, including shifting desired relationships from harmony towards practical learning, and networking. Results support using life stories to identify barriers and create new understandings (Savickas, 2015; Swanson & Fouad, 2015). The three-party dialogue reflected coauthoring of lives through relationships (Richardson, 2012), highlighting the need to meet new people to coauthor fresh insights (Motulsky, 2010), develop supportive connections, and learn helpful practices (Bourdieu, 1986).

This case was limited by a small, convenience sample. Future research could use cases to prepare participants and deepen discussion; encourage sharing and relatability to improve depth; try different pairings of participants; and prompt for systemic factors as part of FCAs.

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EXPLORING THE PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AND PROFESSIONAL AGENCY OF NON-NATIVE ENGLISH–SPEAKING TEACHERS WITHIN TESOL PROGRAMS IN CANADA

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Abstract

In the context of TESOL programs, this research explores how NNESTs navigate and negotiate their professional identity and agency. Recognizing the significance of identity and agency in teachers' commitment, involvement, and personal autonomy, this study aims to investigate the development of transformative professional learning experiences for NNESTs. By addressing the challenges in defining NNESTs' professional identity and reevaluating current notions of their growth, the study uncovers the interconnectedness of identity and agency. Drawing on transformative learning theory, the study proposes strategies for facilitating NNESTs empowerment and realizing their full potential in international education programs, specifically in TESOL. Additionally, the research highlights the importance of creating supportive environments that foster critical reflection and validate multiple identities, demonstrating how professional development can facilitate transformative learning. The findings have implications for promoting positive identity construction and professional integration among NNESTs.

Keywords: TESOL, NNESTs, professional identity, teacher agency, transformative professional learning experiences, professional development

INTRODUCTION

In our increasingly interconnected world, effective cross-cultural communication stands out as an essential element of global interactions. This recognition has brought the roles of language educators and the cultivation of their professional identities to the forefront of educational discussions. It's crucial to acknowledge that the professional lives of educators are intricately situated within the complex landscape of local, national, and global educational policies. Their intentional actions (referred to as agency) and their self-perception and understanding of their roles as educators (referred to as identity) dynamically interact within these diverse contexts. This dynamic interplay significantly influences the effectiveness of language instruction in our progressively globalized society (Lord, 2016).

In recent years, there has been an increasing emphasis on delving into the professional identity of language instructors within language education research. This heightened focus is evident in numerous scholarly inquiries, such as those by Duff and Uchida (1997) and Pavlenko (2012). Presently, there is widespread recognition that the identity of a language teacher significantly shapes the approach taken in language classrooms. As highlighted by Varghese et al. (2005), a thorough comprehension of language

instruction necessitates a deeper exploration of teachers' realms. This involves gaining insight into the multifaceted professional, cultural, political, and personal identities that teachers either assert or are attributed to them.

The concept of teacher agency has increasingly become a focal point in the realm of language education (Bao et al., 2020; Huang & Yip, 2021). Scholarly works indicate that the development of agency is intricately intertwined with individual attributes and the educational environment, shaping the ability of teachers to make autonomous decisions (Bonner et al., 2020; Jiang & Zhang, 2019). Educators who possess agency tend to perceive themselves as proactive learners capable of making well-informed choices and engaging in reflective practices (Priestley et al., 2015). Moreover, this sense of empowerment in exercising agency is closely linked to their perception of the teaching profession as meaningful (Priestley et al., 2015), thus reinforcing their dedication to becoming effective instructors and enhancing their commitment to professional development. Consequently, teacher agency serves as a crucial catalyst in advancing the professional competencies of language educators (Bao et al., 2020). Given the enduring prominence of English in diverse spheres of human interaction and knowledge dissemination, addressing the agency of English language instructors holds particular significance.

The global increase in English language learners has created a growing demand for proficient English instructors (Wright, 2010). Notably, non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) comprise a significant majority of English educators in the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) field worldwide (A. S. Canagarajah, 2013). NNESTs are often commended for their nuanced understanding of grammatical nuances and heightened awareness of cross-cultural intricacies, stemming from their own lived experiences (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Phillipson, 1992). Some proponents argue that non-native speakers, having undergone the process of mastering a second language themselves, may possess unique qualifications for teaching compared to native speakers (Braine, 2018; Phillipson, 1992), owing to their profound insight into the challenges and requirements faced by their students.

Nevertheless, numerous highly qualified NNESTs encounter the ongoing struggle of affirming and navigating their identity as credible English-as-a-second/foreign-language (ESL/EFL) educators, largely due to the persistent influence of the native speaker myth (Phillipson, 1992). With the prevalent discourse promoting the authority of native speakers in TESOL programs and mainstream applied linguistics, there arises a pressing need to emphasize research that delves into the identity dilemmas confronting NNESTs, as evidenced by various scholarly inquiries (Braine, 2013; A. S. Canagarajah, 2013). The dynamic interaction between identity and agency within the realm of language education stands as a pivotal aspect in comprehending the challenges and prospects encountered by NNESTs and the broader implications for the field.

In the domain of language education, teacher cognition has long been a focal point in conversations pertaining to teacher learning and the development of second-language

educators. Nevertheless, a notable evolution in learning theory has emerged over the past twenty years, transitioning from cognitive frameworks towards social perspectives (Pennington, 2014). This shift has underscored the significance of incorporating identity into our understanding of the foundational elements of teaching and teacher development (Pennington, 2014).

Given these reflections, it is imperative for the education domain, especially within TESOL programs, to underscore the deep interplay between the shaping of professional identity and the proactive utilization of agency, facilitating NNESTs in reaching their maximum capabilities. Lack of support addressing the deeper aspects of NNESTs' professional identities and agency underscores the need for extensive research to comprehend how teacher agency and identity contribute to professional development, especially among NNESTs. To address this, this study aims to conduct a comprehensive review to explore NNESTs' awareness of agency and their ability to make informed choices in their educational roles, aiming to enhance support for their growth and development. The central question guiding this inquiry is as follows: Within the context of a TESOL program, how do NNESTs navigate and negotiate their professional identity?

By addressing this question, this study endeavours to enrich the existing body of knowledge on teacher identity and teacher agency, offering insights for advancing the professional growth and well-being of language educators, particularly non-native English-speaking teachers.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

The data collection procedure followed a standard systematic review approach. Searches were conducted across various electronic academic literature databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Education Source, ERIC, and Google Scholar, as well as specific journal issues. Keywords such as ESL, TESL, TESOL, English as a foreign language, teacher, identity, agency, and more were utilized. A total of 130 relevant articles were identified, including journal articles, theses, and book chapters. Only empirical studies published in English and peer-reviewed sources were considered. After applying inclusion/exclusion criteria, 71 articles were systematically reviewed to address the research questions.

Data Analysis

The data analysis encompassed three main steps: screening, full-text review, and data extraction, supported by Obsidian software. In the screening phase, articles were evaluated based on predefined criteria to select relevant ones. The full-text review involved a thorough examination of selected articles, analyzing factors like methodology and relevance. Obsidian facilitated organization and annotation, aiding in note-taking and linking related ideas. Data extraction systematically collected information, supported by structured data tables. This process enabled the identification of key themes, theories, and findings across the literature.

RESULTS

Within the framework of a TESOL program, investigating how NNESTs navigate and negotiate their professional identities emerges as a pivotal research inquiry. It becomes essential to reevaluate the notion of NNESTs and their roles within both professional and societal contexts, while also acknowledging the agency and expertise they contribute to the field (Zhang & Zhang, 2014). The comprehension of identity formation and deconstruction intertwines with the communication patterns utilized by NNESTs (Zhang & Zhang, 2014). This line of investigation gains additional significance within the broader scope of globalization and the ever-evolving landscape of the English language (Zhang & Ben Said, 2014). These transformations extend beyond linguistic dimensions, encompassing aspects such as vocabulary, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, as well as the affiliations NNESTs establish with specific user groups who assert ownership over their unique variations of English (Rubdy et al., 2011).

Agency and Identity in TESOL

Within TESOL programs, it's essential to understand how NNESTs navigate their professional identities. Zhang and Zhang's (2014) ethnographic study focused on two NNESTs facing challenges in establishing themselves professionally. Their analysis, rooted in the concept of agency, delved into how agency influences the construction and deconstruction of identity. Despite the Chinese participants' eagerness to integrate into the workplace using Singapore English, their attempts to do so for bonding and professional purposes were not acknowledged by native Singaporean speakers. This clash of norms between NNESTs and native speakers of Singapore English reveals an intriguing dynamic. While the NNESTs stressed the importance of excellent prosody in English, this aspect went unnoticed by native Singapore English speakers. The exercise of power by a native Singapore English speaker reflects their perspective on discourse as a socially accepted framework that encompasses language use, cognition, emotions, beliefs, values, and actions, influencing identification with a specific social group (Zhang & Zhang, 2014, p.2). This process of perspective-taking contributes to the complexity of identity formation within TESOL programs.

TESOL Programs and Agentive Action

The findings of a Canadian study conducted by Ilieva and Ravindran (2018) underscore the significant impact of TESOL programs on the professional development of international graduates. These programs provide a platform for fostering agentive action through a continuous reinforcement of agency, supported by program materials, theoretical knowledge, and interactive academic engagements in a flexible learning environment. Notably, within this academic setting, authoritative discourses hold considerable sway, aligning with Bakhtin's (1981) notion of persuasive power within academic contexts. The study reveals that professional identities, particularly for NNESTs, are intricately linked to specific contextual factors and evolve over time through reflective self-awareness of opportunities for agency and the performative expectations within professional arenas. Graduates actively engage in context-driven

counter-discursive actions, shaping their professional identities as they navigate and negotiate their roles within the TESOL program.

Factors Influencing Identity Development

Swearingen (2019) conducted an extensive literature review examination of the development of Language Teacher Identity (LTI) among Nonnative-English-speaking teacher candidates (NNES-TCs) enrolled in graduate TESOL preparation programs. This systematic review scrutinized 17 studies focused on NNES-TCs' LTI development in graduate-level TESOL programs across the United States, Canada, and Australia. The primary objective was to delve into the factors influencing NNES-TCs' LTI development and to assess how teacher preparation programs contribute to fostering positive LTI development. The review identified four key categories: (1) the influence of (non)native speaking and the native speaker fallacy, (2) the impact of racialized and gendered identities, (3) conflicts between academic identity and professional identity, and (4) the emotional dimensions of LTI development. NNES-TCs encountered challenges in navigating their personal and professional identities, often grappling with reconciling their own expectations with those imposed by their graduate programs and future teaching contexts within TESOL. Despite facing persistent discourses promoting native speakerism, NNES teacher candidates asserted their legitimacy by embracing counter-discourses and integrating them into local teaching practices. The findings underscored the crucial role of teacher preparation programs within the TESOL context in actively challenging native speakerism, fostering empowering environments for NNES-TCs through narrative reflections, addressing linguistic goals and needs explicitly, prioritizing practical experiences, and promoting reflective practices among teacher educators.

Redefining Identity Constructs

In Aneja's (2016) article titled "(Non)native Speakered: Rethinking (Non)nateness and Teacher Identity in TESOL Teacher Education," a fresh perspective is offered on native and non-native speaker identities, viewing them as negotiated social subjectivities shaped by (non)native speaking. The study delves into narrative portraits of four language teachers, two conforming to conventional (non)native speaker categorizations and two challenging them. It explores how these teachers navigate, reconstruct, and resist their (non)native speaker identities, emphasizing their complexity and fluidity. For instance, an Indian student encountered confusion when labeled an English learner by a Chinese peer despite having acquired English naturally. Concerned about perceptions related to her identity, she actively sought to Americanize her accent, potentially reinforcing the marginalization of Indian-accented English. The author advocates for creating classroom spaces where teacher candidates can explore diverse identity possibilities, drawing inspiration from scholars like Canagarajah (2004) and Park (2012), thereby providing avenues to evaluate strengths and navigate evolving positionalities as language users and emerging educators. This approach offers NNESTs opportunities to assess their strengths and navigate evolving positionalities within the TESOL context.

Building Inclusive Language Teaching Environments

Comprehending how NNESTs navigate their professional identity in TESOL programs is crucial. The research underscores the intricate dynamics of identity construction, shaped by factors such as agency, conflicting norms, context-driven counter-discourses, and the influence of linguistic, racial, and gendered identities. NNESTs often struggle to reconcile personal expectations with program requirements and future teaching obligations. Empowering NNESTs in their professional identity journey requires fostering awareness, challenging stereotypes, and creating supportive environments. By acknowledging the fluidity of identity in TESOL, educators and administrators can play a pivotal role in cultivating inclusive language teaching environments.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study sheds light on how NNESTs navigate and negotiate their professional identity within TESOL programs. It emphasizes the importance of transformative professional learning and the need to empower NNESTs to realize their full potential. The research highlights the challenges faced by NNESTs in terms of identity and agency, calling for a critical examination of power dynamics within TESOL classrooms. By addressing these power imbalances and valuing diverse perspectives, educators can create an inclusive environment that enables NNESTs to shape their professional identities and become empowered language educators.

The implications of this study for TESOL educators are significant. It underscores the need for clear objectives, individualized support, and adapted teaching materials to meet the diverse needs of NNESTs. Modifying the structure and content of TESOL programs can enhance the development of language teaching knowledge and abilities among NNESTs. Additionally, the study suggests that NNESTs should employ resistance strategies to challenge the dominance of native speaker discourse in TESOL teacher education programs and ESL work environments. By addressing challenges related to language proficiency and advocating for themselves, NNESTs can shift from linguistic marginality to a position of empowerment in their teaching careers.

By embracing a holistic view of NNEST development, numerous opportunities for further investigation emerge. Expanding upon the literature review undertaken in this study, future research endeavours could delve into the diverse ways in which NNESTs' personal experiences and reflections demonstrate their role as agents of change. Investigating how these NNESTs implement teaching strategies within their specific local environments could offer a deeper insight into whether the viewpoints articulated in their portfolios merely mirror program ideologies or genuinely embody a sense of empowerment.

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PRODUCING COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH FACILITATORS WITHIN POWER RELATIONS: A PEDAGOGY OF THE SUBJECT

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Abstract

This paper explores the formation of Community-Based Research (CBR) facilitators through a post-structural lens, drawing on Foucault's concepts of power/knowledge and subjectivity. It argues that the dominant humanist tradition in understanding the formation of facilitators overemphasizes formal and non-formal education and overlooks power mechanisms in everyday life. By embracing a post-structural perspective and drawing from the experience of a CBR facilitator, this paper proposes the notion of a pedagogy of the subject, acknowledging the pedagogical role of power/knowledge relations in producing CBR facilitators.

Keywords: Community-based research, facilitation, facilitators, pedagogy of the subject.

INTRODUCTION

This paper employs a post-structural lens to explore how Community-Based Research (CBR) facilitators are formed. I draw from Foucault's notions of power/knowledge and subjectivity to argue that the dominance of a humanist tradition in understanding the formation of facilitators, and consequently, the overemphasis on formal and non-formal education and their pedagogies, overshadows many of the mechanisms of power in everyday life that produce facilitators. Enticed by a post-structural perspective, I seek to address this gap by proposing the notion of a *pedagogy of the subject* as a more comprehensive concept to understand the experiences of those who become CBR facilitators.

In this paper, I discuss the lived experience of Sari (they/them), a non-academic CBR facilitator from Indonesia with extensive experience in facilitating participatory methodology processes. The data and analysis presented in this paper regarding Sari's story were produced through narrative inquiry and diffractive collaborative analysis with them as part of my doctoral work.

To bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and lived experiences, I begin by exploring the notion of human beings within the humanist tradition, demonstrating its presence in the work of Paulo Freire and Robert Chambers, and its implications for understanding the formation of facilitators. Secondly, I introduce Foucault's concepts of power/knowledge and self, illustrating their utility in comprehending the experiences of CBR facilitator formation. Then, I relay Sari's story and analysis, which culminates in the idea of a pedagogy of the subject. Finally, I examine the implications of this concept.

HUMAN BEING AND PEDAGOGY IN THE HUMANIST FORMATION OF FACILITATORS

The formation of community-based research facilitators appears to be a topic heavily based on a humanist notion of human beings and a strong emphasis on nonformal and formal educational processes. From a humanist perspective, a human being is defined as “an epistemological, knowing, rational, conscious, a priori, grammatical doer who exists ahead of the deed” (St. Pierre, 2011, p. 40). Rooted in the Enlightenment, this idea of the human being assumes an essentialized and stable self, who builds knowledge and learns through reason, using it to achieve human freedom, progress, and consequently, societal benefits (Flax, 1987). This premise provides much of the foundation for the pedagogies we employ in contemporary CBR processes within adult education and community development circles. Pedagogy is broadly defined as a group of theories and purposeful educational practices informed by an ontological and epistemological perspective (Butterwick, 2005; Jarvis & Wilson, 1999). Examples of this are the works of Paulo Freire and Robert Chambers.

Freire’s Critical Pedagogy

Paulo Freire seems to be concerned with “the introjection of the oppressor into the psyche” (Burawoy, 2012, p. 110). Freire implies that oppressed people hold two selves: false and true selves (Burawoy, 2012). The former represents the oppressor, and the latter, the humanistic individual. This is evident when Freire (2005) argues that the structure of thoughts of people who experience oppression is “conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped” (p. 45). He explains that the oppressor is internalized throughout the lived experience of the oppressed to the extent that they cannot step outside of this reality to discern the oppressor. Consequently, the oppressed cannot fully embrace their humanity.

Freire’s critical pedagogy aims to remove the oppressor within the oppressed and consequently allow the individual to exist authentically; it is a process towards liberation and humanization. For that reason, facilitators or educators support oppressed groups in going through a process of critical reflection to become aware of the internalization of dominant ideology and expel this false consciousness from within. This process commonly occurs in learning circles and is mediated through questions around a generative theme to produce dialogue and knowledge to inform action (Schenck et al., 2010). Achieving critical consciousness through this process is a condition for a person to dismantle structures of oppression (Ledwith, 2020), make genuine choices, and live a life driven by their own consciousness (Lake & Dagostino, 2013).

Robert Chambers’ People-Centred Development and Participatory Methodologies

Robert Chambers’ work on people-centered development and participatory methodologies (MPs) has significantly influenced nonprofit organizations and international development circles worldwide since the 1980s (Kapoor, 2002). In response to the shortcomings of top-down development, Chambers (1997) proposes a

paradigm shift, advocating for the empowerment of community groups and their active engagement in knowledge production about their reality and decision-making processes that affect them. In this context, participation and a focus on learning and process become essential for the efficiency and sustainability of development projects (Hickey & Mohan, 2004). Stemming from Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA)/Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), many participatory methodologies have emerged, aiming to enable people to “do things themselves interactively.” This encompasses “appraisal, analysis, planning, action, learning, change, monitoring, evaluation, and other activities” (Chambers, 2010, p. 8). As a result, there has been a proliferation of manuals and participatory workshops worldwide to equip practitioners to work effectively with community groups.

While Chambers’ work draws from Freire’s pedagogical process of reflection and action (Chambers, 1994), its primary aim does not directly address structural power imbalances and oppression (Hickey & Mohan, 2004). Nevertheless, Chambers proposes a decentralizing politics (Kapoor, 2002) by recognizing that people experiencing poverty can investigate, analyze, and act to change their reality (Chambers, 1994, 2010). This process is often facilitated by an outside facilitator responsible for convening an inclusive public space and utilizing visual participatory tools such as mapping and rankings for analysis, dialogue, and consensus-building on directions to take (Chambers, 1994; Kapoor, 2002). Consequently, facilitators should be equipped with a repertoire to lead people in participatory workshops, including taking time to engage, offset biases, remain unimportant, listen and learn, and use various methods to investigate the same questions (Chambers, 2008).

In Freire and Chambers’ frameworks, a robust humanist premise is evident, emphasizing the rational, conscious, and autonomous nature of human beings who actively transform their reality. Their pedagogy aims to emancipate (Freire, 2005) and nurture (Chambers, 1994, 1997) these inherent attributes, thereby enabling individuals to embrace their humanity fully. Consequently, facilitators must acquire the necessary skills to implement these pedagogies effectively, guiding individuals toward realizing their full potential. However, I argue that embracing a post-structural perspective helps deepen the understanding of the dynamic process of producing CBR facilitators, and the power relations that shape their existence in the world, which a humanist perspective may fail to capture.

POWER/KNOWLEDGE RELATIONS AND SUBJECTIVITY

Post-structuralism is broadly defined as the body of knowledge rooted in linguistic constructionism. In other words, discourse composes reality and defines the subjects that exist in it (Hekman, 2010). From this perspective, human beings are not essentialized beings but defined in terms of subjectivity or what they do. In line with this understanding, subjectivity is “relational, dynamic and restless, potentially unruly and unpredictable” (McGushin, 2014, p. 134-135). Consequently, explains McGushin (2014), people are not an essence but always becoming.

Foucault pays particular attention to how individuals become subjects and how subjectivities are formed within power relations, particularly during his genealogical ontological period (Capello, 2021; Feder, 2014), highlighted by his exploration of the power/knowledge (*pouvoir-savoir*) doublet. According to Foucault (1995), "there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (p. 27). In this context, power no longer denotes something one possesses, as commonly portrayed by humanist scholars; instead, power is relational. As such, power forms a network whereby people become its vehicle and effect (Foucault, 1980).

As people circulate between the threads of power, they become subjects by manifesting "certain bodies, certain gestures, certain desires" (Foucault, 1980, p. 98). From this perspective, power is productive, disciplining, constraining and freeing people (Taylor, 2014), based on a state of knowledge (*savoir*) through which people articulate their subjectivity (Spivak, 2009). In this sense, as people move from one discursive field to another (Weedon, 1997), their power network expands, providing modes of subjectivity through which people use to navigate social spaces (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

Further clarifying how power circulates, Jackson (2013) suggests that power circulates through practice. In this context, practice seems to be closer to Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* (Flynn, 2005). Being a problematic concept grasped empirically (Nowicka, 2015), the effects of *habitus* are observable through people's practices, including "thoughts, perceptions, expressions, and actions" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 55). Simply put, practices are actions; they are what people do in relation to one another. In this sense, power is exercised when people act upon other people's actions (Foucault, 1982), creating tension, advancing knowledge and producing subjectivity (Foucault, 1995; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

Departing from a humanist perspective and considering the formation of CBR facilitators through a post-structural lens proves beneficial to me in two ways. First, it helps me in understanding the facilitator as a subject position. Second, it directs my attention to power dynamics that extend beyond formal and nonformal educational spaces. In other words, individuals are embedded in larger power/knowledge relations, of which invited spaces are just a part. Together, they contribute to imprinting a "law of truth" (Foucault, 1983, p. 212) on one's body, allowing the manifestation of marks and gestures that compose a facilitator.

THE PRODUCING SARI AS A COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH FACILITATORS: A PEDAGOGY OF THE SUBJECT

Considering these post-structural premises, I utilized narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, 2013) to explore the lived experiences of CBR facilitators. Sari shared with me how they became a CBR facilitator, and then we engaged in collaborative diffractive analysis (Barad 2007; Jackson & Mazzei, 2018; Mazzei, 2014) using Foucault's concepts of power/knowledge and subjectivity. The following narrative

and subsequent analysis were inspired by and is a small part of the original narrative I composed in collaboration with Sari.

Sari's Story

Sari (They/Them) is an Indonesian queer person who was greatly influenced by scholars associated with the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex. Sari met Madu, an IDS scholar, shortly after graduating from university. Madu was looking for a translator and potentially someone who could become a community-based researcher. Madu interviewed Sari in the hotel lobby. She asked Sari not to call her Madame or Miss, but by her first name as they talked. Sari resisted the request, as it's not common in Indonesia to address people in positions of authority by their first name. It took them a week to become comfortable with this new practice.

Sari was hired, and Madu worked closely with them for three years. Madu became both a mentor and a friend. Sari felt that Madu was genuinely interested in them, which came as a surprise. They began to open up! One day, Madu asked them to join a meeting to discuss a study design with a commissioner. During the meeting, Madu intentionally gave Sari opportunities to provide insights into the study and made sure they were comfortable contributing. Sari felt empowered and heard. They also met other scholars associated with IDS who had the same intentionality in making others feel like equals and actively engaged in whatever they were doing.

During a digital storytelling workshop in preparation for fieldwork, Madu asked the group to be open and participate actively. The exercise involved sharing something profound. Sari accepted the challenge and began sharing about home problems, including their parents' divorce. Sari realized that their peers were shocked, which made them feel that perhaps they had overshared. Sari went to the bathroom and stayed there for a long time, wondering why they felt bad if the exercise was about being vulnerable. When they returned for a second round of storytelling, Madu asked the participants to turn their personal stories into stories about animals. This shift helped people to be vulnerable and engaged without feeling awkward. The exercise was meaningful to Sari, and it equipped them to engage people in difficult conversations while producing knowledge for change. Over time, Sari saw themselves relating to others and creating equalized spaces, just like they had learned from Madu and other IDS friends.

Power/Knowledge Relations as a Pedagogy of the Subject: Producing Sari as a Facilitator

In Sari's story, various practices can be identified through which power circulated and was exercised to position Sari as a facilitator. In power relations with Madu, practices such as asking Sari to call Madu by her first name, Madu becoming personally acquainted with Sari, and Madu soliciting insights into research projects disrupted Sari's foundational knowledge about themselves, creating new knowledge. Madu's practices resonate with techniques aimed at building rapport, which seek to foster "openness and trust as well as to reduce power distance in groups working together" (Jupp, 2007, p.

49). As a vehicle of power, these practices, while provoking tension, incited, induced, and seduced (Foucault, 1982) Sari to exist in a more egalitarian manner within the social space. In this process, Sari's subjectivity is not deterministically defined but rather responsively; it is an interpretation of the situation amidst disruption, contestation, and re-signification (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). These practices are also reinforced by other scholars associated with the IDS.

Establishing relations with others, including authorities, in a more egalitarian manner was crucial in rendering Sari's body malleable enough to be "manipulated, shaped, trained" (Foucault, 1995, p. 136) to comply, respond, and develop proficiency. The digital storytelling workshop worked to produce Sari as a "subjected and practiced [body]" (Foucault, 1995, p. 138) to facilitate knowledge production for action. Within the workshop's dynamic, Sari displayed evident traits of a facilitator, actively engaging by demonstrating vulnerability, authenticity, and presence in the moment. However, other participants' responses to Sari's story and the atmosphere it engendered required a corresponding adjustment from those leading the workshop to recalibrate both Sari's body and the body of the other participants. In essence, while Sari may have felt constrained in sharing their narrative in relation to others, the transformation of story characters into animals once again liberated Sari, while simultaneously keeping others engaged in achieving the activity's objectives. This wasn't solely about Sari's actions but rather their intensity within the social space.

The relationship between Madu and Sari is mediated by practices that, as Foucault (1980) describes, represent "the [point] at which discourses are transformed in, through, and on the basis of relations of power" (p. 70). Through the exercise of power in everyday life, individuals are categorized, marked, and attached to their own identities, while discourse, or "a law of truth," is enforced upon them, thus composing them as subjects (Foucault, 1983, p. 212). In Sari's story, the formation of her subjectivity begins in everyday life and further unfolds and is reinforced during the digital storytelling workshop. In this sense, Sari is defined as a power/knowledge effect while simultaneously evoking a different subjectivity or a new way to participate in the social space. They are produced as a facilitator, a subject position embodied and lived within international development circles.

The power/knowledge relations between Madu and Sari also suggest a learning relationship that resonates with Ironside's concept of informal learning. Ironside (as cited in Moreland & Lovett, 1997) defines informal learning as "the lifelong process whereby all individuals acquire attitudes, values, skills, and knowledge from daily experiences and from the educative influences and resources in their environment" (p. 203). In this context, learning is not planned or organized but occurs unconsciously and tacitly through interaction (Hrimech, 2005; Javis & Wilson, 1999). Considering Ironside's concept of informal learning, Madu's practices exercised upon Sari, besides being a medium through which power circulates, are also pedagogical techniques to contain and free Sari; consequently, they responsively define the contours of their subjectivity.

From everyday life, this pedagogical process unfolds into a nonformal educational space where Sari's body is further trained. Together, they establish a power/knowledge network, which is indeed a pedagogy of the subject that produces and seeks to maintain Sari as a facilitator.

PEDAGOGY OF THE SUBJECT: A FEW IMPLICATIONS

Sari's story illustrated various practices enacted upon their body, shaping their subjectivity. These practices operated within power/knowledge relations that originated in everyday life and extended into invited spaces. Working as a pedagogy of the subject, these practices trained, equipped, and molded Sari's body into a facilitator; this process is known as discourse embodiment, or the shaping of individuals into subjects so they may exist in specific ways within social spaces. This understanding carries several implications:

Firstly, by acknowledging the pedagogical nature of power/knowledge relations both within and outside invited spaces, educators are continually involved in the vehiculation of power and are inherently engaged in shaping the subjectivity of those with whom they interact, particularly learners.

Secondly, serving as points of articulation and mediums of power, educators contribute to a network of power that produces a particular type of body, manifesting specific desires, gestures, and other marks, all manifestations of discourse.

Thirdly, these assertions echo Foucault's (1984) statement that "it's not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous. If everything is dangerous, then we will always have something to do" (p. 343). According to him, this perspective does not lead to apathy but to "hyper- and pessimistic activism" (p. 343). Thus, facilitation to produce other facilitators is not inherently negative but dangerous; it demands prudence and reflexivity.

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LEARNING TO SHARE GENDERED MILITARY EXPERIENCES: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION OF EXPRESSIVE WRITING IN TRANSFORMING MILITARY CULTURES

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Abstract

This paper discusses the autoethnographic exploration of my learning experiences planning for, facilitating, participating in, and reflecting on Writers Collective of Canada's *Her Story* workshops for women-identifying Canadians who have served in the military. I explore how the intersection of expressive writing, feminist transformative learning, and feminist antimilitarism can inform understandings of individual's military service, the collective institution of the military, and transforming military cultures. I detail my methodology of autoethnography and present a found poem that emerged from my thematic findings. I conclude with recommendations for adult education in the context of working toward transforming military cultures.

Keywords: Autoethnography, expressive writing, feminist antimilitarism, feminist transformative learning, military culture

INTRODUCTION

Research about the Canadian military demonstrates that its culture at a structural level is steeped in ableism, colonialism, homophobia, racism, and sexism (Eichler, George, & Taber, 2023). The military's total institution values a warrior ideal that privileges white, able-bodied, male, straight, and cisgender members while marginalizing personnel who are viewed as "other" (Taber, 2020). Equity-seeking personnel often experience structural barriers as well as discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual assault (George, 2020; Eichler, 2016). Writers Collective of Canada (WCC), a charitable organization that engages in arts-health exploratory expressive writing in community, created a *Her Story* workshop series for women-identifying Canadians who have served in the military with this context in mind. I became involved as a co-facilitator with WCC due to my experience and background as a retired military officer; feminist academic with expertise in the intersection of gender, militarism, and learning; and, fiction author who conducts writing workshops.

This paper discusses the autoethnographic exploration (Reed-Danahay, 1997, 2019; Williams & Jauhari, 2016) of my learning experiences planning for, facilitating, participating in, and reflecting on a WCC's *Her Story* workshops, first called *Healing Unseen Wounds: Her Story* and subsequently renamed *A Force for Women: Her Story*. I explore how the intersection of expressive writing, feminist transformative learning, and feminist antimilitarism can inform understandings of individual's military service, the collective institution of the military, and transforming military cultures. I detail my methodology of autoethnography and present a found poem that emerged from my

thematic findings. I conclude with recommendations for adult education in the context of working toward transforming military cultures.

EXPRESSIVE WRITING, FEMINIST TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING, AND FEMINIST ANTIMILITARISM

Expressive writing is personal writing which assists with working through emotions, reframing experiences, giving coherence to memories, and creating a strong narrative identity (DeSalvo, 1999; Pennebaker & Smyth, 2016). Fitting experiences such as a life disruption or traumatic event(s) into a storyline that one can accept as one's own can enable a writer's cohesion with past, current, and imagined future selves, which has positive implications for both physical and mental well-being and health (Adler, 2012; DeSalvo, 1999; McAdams & McLean, 2013).

WCC's use of expressive writing is based on Pat Schneider's (2003) Amherst Writers & Authors method. The structured workshops (WCC, n.d., 2023) allow learners to articulate their experiences, receive affirming comments on how their stories are heard, and examine their sense of self in a supportive environment. Writers share first-draft writing, practice deep listening, and offer feedback to others about what resonates with them. WCC workshops help participants share their stories, hear one another, and foster caring relationships. Writers often work through and claim their own stories, develop relationships with one another, and foster empathy and understanding for self and others. All writing in WCC workshops is treated as fiction, even if writers identify a piece of writing as memoir or write from a first-person perspective. The positioning of writing as fiction keeps the focus on the writing, not the person, and can free the writer from worrying about sharing something personal, in that nothing in their stories will be attributed to themselves. Unfortunately, the experiences of military women who are survivors of military sexual violence have too often been problematically dismissed as "stories," in that they are perceived as fictional and not true. In WCC workshops, however, all writing (whether positioned as narratives, stories, experiences, memories, memoirs) is taken seriously and respected in a non-judgemental way. The aim is not to evaluate for truth, but to engage with each other's writing.

When engaging in expressive writing, as a co-facilitator and writer, I am continually awed by how telling one's own story, from one's own everyday experiences, so often challenges ableist, gendered, classed, colonial, patriarchal, and racialized ruling relations (see Smith, 1987, 2005, for a discussion of how grassroots experiences can illuminate societal relations of power). It is this aspect of expressive writing that most interests me when I am working with writers from military communities, as it holds much potential for transforming military cultures. If they so choose, writers can engage with the complex ways their military service both benefitted and harmed them. Indeed, this is what often occurs, even with writing prompts that, on the surface, may seem to have nothing to do with the military. Writers choose to explore what they feel is most compelling to them in the moment, and those who join a group of woman-identified

Canadians who have served in the military often write about and share their military and veteran experiences.

As an adult education scholar, I take a feminist transformative learning lens (English & Irving, 2012) to expressive writing, in that I am most interested in the ways in which writers can engage in a societal critique of power, connect self to society, claim their own stories, and build community with one another (see hooks, 1994, for her foundational discussion of feminist pedagogy that explores the intersection of class, gender, and race). Although positioning oneself within and critiquing power relations is not a stated aim or element of expressive writing, it is linked to WCC's assertion that "social change happens one empowered voice at a time" (n.d., last para).

In many ways, expressive writing starkly contradicts military values, which is why it is so useful for transforming military cultures; deep creative exploration helps writers think differently about the military and their connections to it. Expressive writing can promote deep creative exploration in an emotional celebration of each writer's authentic voice and unique identity in an egalitarian space (WCC, n.d., 2023). In contrast, military values demand conformity, uniformity, obedience, discipline, stoicism, and deference to the collective (Enloe, 2016, 2023; Soeters, Winslow, & Weibull, 2006; Taber, 2020). Feminist antimilitarism (Enloe, 2016), a theory and praxis I use in my academic work and one that I have come to integrate into my work with expressive writing, problematizes how these military values tend to promote ableism, colonialism, homophobia, racism, and sexism due to the ways in which they encourage binary thinking in relation to man/woman, masculine/feminine, protector/protected, and friend/foe, with the former of each pair privileged over the latter. Feminist antimilitarism is thus not inherently anti-military; rather, it analyzes how military norms, structures, and values benefit certain groups of people over others, at individual, organizational, national, and societal levels.

Women are the most underrepresented designated group in the CAF (Taber, 2021). Additionally, they experience discrimination, harassment, and assault in the Canadian military at greater percentage rates than men (Cotter, 2016, 2019; Cotter & Burczykca, 2023), as do those in the Regular Force "who are younger, who are Indigenous, who have a disability, or whose sexual orientation is not heterosexual" (Cotter & Burczykca, 2022, p. 4). Learning more about women's experiences can assist with understanding, challenging, and transforming military cultures.

METHODOLOGY

Autoethnography is a qualitative research methodology that explores the intersections between the self and the social within specific cultural contexts (Anderson, 2006; Reed-Danahay, 1997, 2019). Depending on the type of autoethnography conducted, the focus can be more on the self with interpretation left to the reader (i.e., evocative autoethnography, see Ellis & Bochner, 2000) or more on the social with clear analysis and findings (i.e., analytic autoethnography, see Anderson, 2006; critical autoethnography, see Reed-Danahay, 2009).

There is a small subset of autoethnographies of military and veteran life written by academic researchers (i.e., Dunlap, 2021; Greenwood, 2016; Higate, 2023; Thornton, 2015). They are rare because the number of retired military academics who work in the critical social sciences is relatively low percentage-wise (see Antrobus, Bulmer, Caddick, & West, 2023) and the number of those who identify as women and feminists even lower (West & Antrobus, 2023). Also, military personnel are taught throughout their service not to question their experiences or the organization (Higate & Cameron, 2006; Taber, 2023), both of which are key elements of an autoethnographic exploration of the self as connects to the social. I have previously used analytic autoethnography to explore my own military experiences (Taber, 2005, 2007, 2010). Since then, I have further examined how the backgrounds, experiences, minds, and bodies of scholars—their whole beings—are inextricably connected to their research, whether acknowledged or not (Taber, 2012). When I read how Williams and Jauhari bin Zaini (2016) combine analytic and evocative through the use of various forms of narrative that produce a “layered account” of experiences and subcultures, I was enthralled with their approach, to which I now subscribe.

For the analytical-evocative autoethnography discussed in this paper, my research question was: What are my autoethnographic learning experiences with respect to the intersections between myself and the social in relation to the Fall/Winter 2023/24 Writers Collective of Canada *Her Story* expressive writing workshops for woman-identified Canadians who have served in the military, my own military service, and my feminist antimilitarist scholarship? My data sources include a field note journal I kept during the 6-week workshop series in Fall 2023 and a 5-week series in Winter 2024—each with a one 1.5-hour workshop/week—as well as my workshop writing. The numbers of writer-participants in each workshop ranged from one-ten.

My open, axial, and selective thematic coding (Neuman, 2006) resulted in two thematic findings: reclaiming military identity, memories, and story through imagination; and building community through story-telling inspired by shared gendered military experiences. I then used the data from my workshop writing as the source material for a found poem. Due to reasons of scope and space, I have chosen to present only the found poem here, as this creative representation seemed most appropriate for an autoethnography on the potential of expressive writing for learning about the self and the social.

FINDINGS: A FOUND POEM

In creating this found poem, I selected sentences and phrases I marked during my coding process (written in first-, second-, and third-person points-of-view as well as past and present tenses) from the twenty stories I wrote during the workshops. As a reminder to readers that these lines were written as fiction, as well as for consistency and coherency, I changed the point of view throughout to third person. I corrected tenses to work within the poem and changed minor words for clarity. I ordered the lines

into a narrative arc, then re-ordered and revised as needed, to demonstrate my overall autoethnographic findings.

A Place Safer than Castles Surrounded by Moats

Anyone who looks at her, knows where she belongs. But not if she belongs.

Green for army, blue for air force, black for navy. Bruises in a camouflage pattern.

Conform. Fit in. Don't stick your neck out. Do not get noticed.

Don't trust.

It's just a joke, they say, as they put themselves in the good guy category.
But a joke is never just a joke, when it's aimed at her.

So she created a smoke and mirrors illusion by acting tough, talking rough, jostling with elbows out and shoulders squared.

Contradictions that were somehow true.

A collective.

Protectors.

For operational effectiveness.

She forgot that it's fucked up.
Or maybe decided not to see it.
Easier to cope.

How good she was at shoving away anger, fear, and sadness. Distrust.

She learned.

Put the emotions in a box, in a corner of her brain.
Click, click, click, and presto, nasty memories, scary thoughts disappeared.
Dusted off her hands and walked away.
Experience taught her to leave it all behind.

But memories' superpower is their staying power.

Her experiences followed her. Haunting, stalking, reminding.

Tapped her on the shoulder. I'm here, they whispered.

Memories cascaded out.

Suspended in mid-air, twisting.

Is she screaming into the void?

A hand stretched out, just when she needed it.

Fuck the void.

She wasn't the only one.

She took her memories out of the box, peered at them, reframed them, in her own words.

Incorporated them into who she was.

With a form of acceptance

She gave the memories words

Realizing, as she wrote

That those experiences, those memories were, after all, what made her.

She gave the words to the group.

And those memories had less power over her.

The group, they saw her.

Created a place safer than castles surrounded by moats.

So she took that thin gruel of experience, added a heap of oats.

Cinnamon, just a dash.

Soaked it in a vat of empathy, stirred it up, like a witch with a cauldron.

Cackling, as others added a listening ear, an understanding look, a chuckle well-placed, even if the humour was hidden.

In a patch of belonging.

She created space to tell women's stories, to listen to them.

A force of women. Made of words.

Strong, difficult, brave, complex.

Stories about women, by women, for women.

We are here, they called.

Unstoppable.

Stories of fiction, of truth, of how the two intersect.

Words on the page, in the ether, in the world.

Where her own true self lives
She makes her own fairy tales.
She spews fire and brimstone.

She makes her own path.
She lays the stone with every step she takes.
She sets the direction.

She decides.

Which memory to pay attention to, and when, and which to let go.

For the wicked witches of the world are not wicked, but defiant.

The anti-hero walks in the minefield.

She creates a world where her whole self flies.

Immersed in story.

When she creates, she is free.

We are free.

IMPLICATIONS

My work with expressive writing has several pedagogical implications. Expressive writing can result in transformative learning experiences as writers learn to work through and claim their own stories (Lepp, 2019). In the context of those who have served in the military, writers often learn to reflect on and explore the interconnections between their military and veteran/civilian selves. Working through memories and situations with which one may be in conflict by changing one's perspective on the military and one's own service is not easy. Facilitators must be properly educated in expressive writing theory and practice; writers must choose to attend with an understanding of the tenets of the workshop, if and when they themselves feel ready. Especially for those trained in military culture (Higate & Cameron, 2006), choosing to engage in feminist transformative learning can be both freeing and difficult (English and Irving, 2012).

Second, individual military experiences are tied to collective ones (Taber, 2007, 2020), in that the ruling relations of the military—what is expected, normalized, valued, and rewarded, along with what is devalued, denigrated, and punished—have profound effects on individual life. In the *Her Story* workshops, I shared stories about the wide variety of my military experiences, demonstrating a gamut of emotions from pride, joy, and amusement to anger, frustration, and sadness. The expressive writing workshops allowed me to express these emotions, some of which I had never voiced before, and certainly not in the presence of military members or veterans; military training in conformity and stoicism (Soeters, Winslow, & Weibull, 2006) has a long legacy in my body and mind. But, by learning to give these stories voice, I felt as if I could claim and control them, so they would not claim and control me.

Third, military service can isolate women, as anything associated with femininity is often perceived as weak or less than (Kovitz, 2000). While I was in the military, I would never have sought out a community of military women, something that caused me hesitation when I was first asked to co-facilitate the WCC *Her Stories* series (Lepp & Taber, 2023). Military women are taught not to bond with each other (West & Antrobus, 2023). If we did not share the difficulties of our service with each other—if we did not see them as “deeply odd,” as described by West and Antrobus—then we were neither likely to see similarities in each other nor a pattern in our experiences. The WCC workshops further demonstrate the commonality in military women’s service and give women the opportunity to learn from one another’s whole selves (hooks, 1994).

Fourth, understanding a commonality of experiences is central to transforming military cultures, in order for the CAF to move away from its current individualized approach to change. Recently, in the media, there has been much discussion of the need to root out sexual assault and racism in the CAF, but it continues to be positioned as something that can be achieved by changing individual behaviours only; military culture, it is problematically argued, must stay the same, based as it is on British traditions and the service of straight white men (see Duval-Lantoine, 2023, and Saideman, 2023, for a discussion and critique of this argument). Continuing with an individualized approach and leaving culture intact will never stop the harm caused by colonial, patriarchal, and racialized norms, policies, and practices in the CAF (Arbour, 2022; Deschamps, 2015; Eichler & Brown, 2023).

Finally, while the aim of expressive writing workshops is to share stories within the workshop itself, which can result in individual transformative learning (Lepp, 2019), opportunities for publication and presentation serve a valid function, in assisting others to learn from the experiences of those who have served and are reflecting on that service. For instance, I have published aspects of my stories in blogs (Lepp & Taber, 2023; Taber, 2024) and in these conference proceedings because I believe in the importance of sharing what I have learned through expressive writing. Additionally, WCC is planning a Write On! series, where those who participated in the *Her Story* workshops will be invited to revise their workshop writing for publication in a chapbook. Sometimes, writers learn from writing their stories and sharing with no one, others from

sharing in a small group, and others from wider dissemination. As humans learn through story (Cron, 2012; Leggo & Sameshima, 2014), the goal with wider sharing is to enable social transformative learning about the need for transforming military cultures.

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MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PRIVILEGES: A CRITICAL CASE STUDY OF MIXED RACE WOMEN EXECUTIVES' LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

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Abstract

This case study explored how mixed race women leaders in the Canadian federal public sector developed their leadership philosophy and practice to better our understanding of feminist leadership practice, and the roles of race, gender, and lifelong learning in executive leadership development. The study also considered the congruence of the descriptions of their practice with current equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives. An interpretivist, constructivist approach centred on feminist leadership theory is the dominant theoretical frame and basis of inquiry, focused on leaders who simultaneously embody racially oppressed and privileged identities. Participants were identified using a two-tier sampling strategy and data collection included semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Findings were compared and contrasted with the researcher's experience using critical auto-ethnography, for example, journaling and analysis of the researcher's comments from interview transcripts and audio recordings. The study findings expand understanding of the nature of mixed race identity; of feelings of belonging in a country of immigration; and of how simultaneous lived experiences as members of underrepresented groups and members of the dominant culture influenced participants' leadership philosophies and practice.

Keywords: feminist leadership, transformative learning, mixed race, leadership practice.

INTRODUCTION

This study is based on the argument that the dominance of competitive individualism as a governing ideological paradigm, and its associated strategies, is preventing progress in advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion in leadership practice and broader participation in leadership in public institutions. Further, it is argued that competitive individualism has stunted the potential for governance structures to be truly equitable, innovative, democratic, and participative (Blackmore, 2013; de la Rey, 2005). Modelled on Cristina Bettez's (2012) and Minelle Mahtani's (2014) qualitative research on mixed race women in the United States and Canada respectively, and Carolyn Ellis' (2018) work on the importance of storytelling and narrative inquiry, this study endeavoured to explore "women's stories for what they might tell us about cross-cultural communication and comprehension" and how connections with others that take privilege into account can serve to minimize oppression (Bettez, 2012, p. 11). The research focused on developing a better understanding of how mixed race identities shape and influence the leadership philosophies and practice of mixed race women leaders in public service, and explored how these practices can be understood against broader goals set out by current equity, diversity, and inclusion strategies in the Canadian federal public service.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Despite principles, values, and initiatives championing integrity, neutrality, respect, and equity, public institutions and dominant socio-economic and political paradigms continue to generate outcomes whereby minority groups and visible minorities are underrepresented and face harassment and discrimination—as employees or as clients—whether it be due to class, race, age, religion, or sexual orientation (Batliwala, 2010; Fraser, 2012; Government of Canada, 2023; Preece, 2002). The extent to which increasing representation in leadership of racialized and multiracial individuals effectively addresses racial, social, political and economic tensions is a relatively unexplored area in the field of executive leadership in public service, particularly in Canada (Bettez, 2012; Telles & Sue, 2009). While considered a reasonable measure of success in mixed race cultural studies and demography studies, authors focused on critical feminist and critical race theory are reproving of an approach championing increases in representation alone. They argue instead for a method that can assess how agendas are established, and how power relations are determined.

The literature that formed the basis of this study was influenced by English and Irving's (2012) call to pursue how we understand women's learning and participation. This study brings together scholarly work focused on transformative learning theory, feminist leadership theory, and active citizenship practice for social justice, as well as aspects of critical race and critical mixed race theory. A feminist leadership theoretical framework provided insight into how leadership philosophies and practice might be influenced by racial identity, and the experiences of mixed race women in their leadership journeys. A key outcome of the literature review underscored the need for additional feminist analyses of women's leadership and the importance of documenting the untold stories and experiences of women to build a collective social practice (Batliwala, 2010; Belenky et al., 1997).

METHODOLOGY

A case study methodology was selected for this research, which allowed for in-depth study of a particular expression of leadership in public service; constrained the context of 'executive leadership' within a bounded system; and allowed for two-tier sampling for recruitment from the executive community (Creswell, 2003; Johns, 2008; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To increase the credibility of the study, document analysis and critical auto-ethnography were used as comparisons between data elements.

The case for this research was the community of 7,000 executives in the Canadian federal public service (Government of Canada, 2023). Participants met the following criteria: female participants were first-generation mixed White/visible minority; children of immigrants; and had a minimum of three years of experience in an executive position in the federal public service. Data collection included five interviews; journaling and field notes made up the critical auto-ethnography content; and documents analysed included key federal policies and guidelines. Participants shared their backgrounds, their trajectories in public service, their leadership philosophy and practice, and their

reflections on being mixed race. Each evoked a journey marked by its own characteristics and unique experiences.

FINDINGS

Study findings provided insight into how mixed race identities shape and influence the leadership philosophies and leadership practice of female mixed race leaders in public service. Viewed together, interviews provided five narratives that describe the *who*, *why*, *what* and *how* dimensions of mixed race identity and how it shapes leadership.

The Meaning of Mixed Heritage

In her 2012 publication, Bettez (2012) sought to learn more about how mixed race women describe their experiences in communicating cross-culturally by exploring the meaning of mixed heritage to expose the systemic workings of privilege and oppression. The participants in this research study ascribed to the role of 'integrator' based on their experiences of living simultaneously in worlds of privilege and oppression, their exposure to multiple cultures through their childhood and youth, the influence of their family values, their own values and principles, and their experiences of discrimination. Further, participants referred to mixed race identity as a 'superpower' that allowed them to cross boundaries and increase communication across diverse groups and communities. These findings are consistent with Catherine Hall's (1992) assertion that where mixed race status is not a problem, it is a potential solution. Bettez's (2012), findings, however, complicate this thinking in that the author found "a complex relationship between cross-cultural communication ability, desire, and need... Although they embodied the races of both their parents, the mixture created a third positionality—being mixed" (p. 220). Participants described feeling comfortable moving through different spaces to connect with others, despite having lived experiences themselves of being 'othered'. Tactics and behaviours described by participants included collaboration, active listening, learning, and empathy, consistent with a more 'feminine' leadership, as per Batliwala's (2010) description, wherein the author notes that "gender construction processes result in women negotiating inter-personal and collective processes differently" than men (p. 6). Such a model of leadership, which is also cooperative and flexible, was attributed to "knowledge and experience learned from overcoming difficult circumstances," and to considering leadership as a collective rather than individual process by de la Rey (2005, p. 6).

Managing power relations surfaced in the context of how individuals from underrepresented groups face challenges interacting with broader workplace and corporate cultures. Participants shared that they take care in their exercise of power because they previously had experiences being less powerful, or powerless. Such examples illustrated the importance of leaders aligning their values with their decision-making power and influence, actively seeking diverse perspectives, providing respectful and constructive challenges, and upholding ethics. Batliwala's (2010) composite definition of feminist leadership resonated here, as it speaks to managing power dynamics, and the use of power, resources and skills to mobilize others to transform

the relations of power in society. Participants stated they felt well placed to challenge social norms and enhance inclusivity, building bridges for those more isolated and underrepresented, echoing Batliwala's sense that "alternative models of power that amplify the visible form to the maximum extent possible" are feasible and actionable (p. 17). This finding also reinforces Bettez's (2012) assertion that the comfort level of one's identification in the mixed race space impacts perceptions about communicating cross-culturally. Whereas findings of this study spoke more generally to the concept of moving through and navigating different spaces as well as bridge-building, findings from Mahtani (2005) showed a more nuanced contrast: the author found that women who situated themselves between the majority view and the margin could "provide a perspective from which to consider the complexities of difference" (p. 89). The following section brings forward these observations to consider study findings as they relate to leadership development and practice.

Discovering Their 'Why'

Batliwala (2010) refers to leadership, and feminist leadership, not as a means to an end, but as a craft and a process. According to this author, leadership as a process makes imperative the need for leaders to discover their purpose—their 'why'—where "women assert their rights by continually evaluating relevant experiences, questioning their roles in society, challenging power structures and effectively catalysing social change" (p. 12). Findings from this study confirmed that intention can build societal, institutional, and organizational awareness, in addition to an understanding of power and politics, which in turn can influence social change and social transformation. Participants' leadership motivations and how they lead as women revealed a practice of decision-making based on values, a strong commitment to service to the wider public, and championing diversity and inclusion by working to assist individuals from underrepresented groups. While they did not explicitly ascribe to being feminist leaders, participants shared examples of advocating for social, cultural, and organizational change with the goal of transforming the relations of power. These elements are congruous with feminist leadership as described by Batliwala (2010, 2013) and Jay Conger (1992), both of whom underscored the connection to self, and what one brings to the leadership role.

Values such as empathy, authenticity, humility and adaptability were consistent with de la Rey's (2005) article on gender, women and leadership, which stated that women's leadership approaches are characterized by a democratic or participative style, and caring attitude. Participants underscored the importance of authenticity in decision making, communications and the presentation of self (e.g., hairstyle, types of dress); revealing (again) how the personal continues to be political; especially when one's authentic style has feminine, and therefore, 'weak' characteristics (Clover et al, 2017). There were similarities among participants with the overarching messages in the document analysis, which emphasized treating people with respect and dignity, working together and encouraging engagement, collaboration and communication, fostering an environment that promotes teamwork, learning and innovation, challenging convention,

being open to alternatives, embracing difference, and attracting and developing a diverse workforce (Government of Canada, 2016). That said, a disconnect was observed in study findings between expected behaviours based on overarching guidance promoting diversity and inclusion, and the primacy of delivering results from senior management direction (Government of Canada, 2021). Participants questioned how this guidance could be genuinely incorporated into corporate culture if it was not reinforced and observed in the behaviour of senior management teams.

In their 2017 publication, Clover et al. further developed the notion that “collaboration is central to the political intentionality of feminist leadership” (p. 2), which is congruent with leadership behaviours prioritized by participants in this study, such as clear communication; openness to learning and feedback as well as alternative perspectives and different approaches; and establishing and maintaining strong relationships. The importance participants placed on communication and strong relationships also echoes Batliwala’s (2010) article on feminist leadership—which included the practice of bringing information, decision making and institutional systems into the light, and communicating clearly to make institutional power visible and accountable. Openness to learning and feedback highlighted in study findings reinforced the connection between transformative learning and continuous and lifelong learning in the workplace (Mezirow, 2012).

Leadership style as conveyed by participants also had connections to the notion of empowerment. Given that participants attest to having leadership philosophies that assist them in negotiating the types of marginalization they themselves had faced, study findings appear to support the notion that women’s leadership styles are not congruent with the “testosterone–driven male” normative style (Batliwala, 2010, p. 6). How these asymmetries are acted upon is an important element of empowerment, a “set of knowledge, skills, and conditions that women must possess in order to understand their world and act upon it” (Stromquist, 2015, p. 308). If the leadership styles of participants are not based on the dominant male leadership paradigm, they appear to share objectives with the Government of Canada’s Policy on People Management (2021). This policy supports high–performing employees, attracting and developing a representative and diverse workforce, and supporting and promoting a continuous learning environment that enables employees to acquire and maintain knowledge, skills and competencies.

Transcendent Leadership for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Findings also coalesced on the *what* of the case study; participants communicated their goals of increasing diversity and inclusion, and shared a positive outlook about learning how to navigate and execute EDI strategies. Aspects of transformative learning theory such as the disorienting dilemma and the role of self–reflection can assist in identifying specific experiences and events which represent transformative moments for leaders in understanding themselves, and their leadership principles and motivations (Mezirow, 2012). This theory emphasizes critical reflection, presumes adaptability, a growth mindset, and exercising empathy to understand what is seen from different viewpoints

and how it can advance understanding (Alhadeff–Jones, 2012; English & Irving, 2012; Gouthro, 2019).

Participants noted that applying critical thinking to managing sensitive discussions is increasingly important for public service executives, including challenging systemic assumptions of neutrality. While policy and program lenses are increasingly used to evaluate policies and programs at the federal level (e.g., Gender–Based Analysis Plus), their apolitical approach bureaucratizes and oversimplifies the reconceptualization of rights and excludes different identities and experiences in the current predominant economic framework (Fernandez, 2016; Gouthro, 2009; Louis, 2021). Myriad alternatives seem feasible; for example, the literature supports documenting the stories of different lived experiences and challenges to the norm (Batliwala, 2010; Butterwick & Elfert, 2015; Choudry, 2010; Freire, 2000; Mallette & Rykert, 2018; Rao et al., 2017). In this way, interethnic identity is influenced by experiences, ability, culture and social protocols, as well as physical appearance. Observations in the research findings revealed that participants felt some autonomy and choice within their identity to adjust and adapt.

Participants also shared examples of when they felt the need to move beyond their singular decision-making power and raise issues up as individuals accountable to broader corporate commitments. Experiences highlighted by participants as they challenged norms reflected Fraser’s (2012) sense that “feminist women are struggling ... to redistribute and democratize access to, and control over, discursive resources” (p. 45). This behaviour shares features with feminist leadership; for example, Batliwala’s (2010) description of “functioning with a greater consciousness not only of others’ but of one’s own power, intentionally moving away from how leadership and power have intersected in mainstream organizations and structures” and transforming the relations of power (p. 15).

Beyond Representation

In the final step of the research journey, participants described *how* their mixed race identity shaped their thoughts around leadership and identity. The question of what lies beyond representation for mixed race women leaders revealed itself; participants shared how they have come to trust their *why* and take up their leadership space, knowing they have something valuable to offer. Understanding the practice of their leadership philosophies as it related to the literature was impactful because it amplified the meaning of the results of their actions. For instance, participants described how they shifted their thinking, and how their physical presence brought down barriers, changing the culture of the organizations they work in. As the analysis coalesced around participants’ *why*, *what*, and *who*, the value of representation could be appreciated and a core dimension came to the fore: essentially, the work participants were describing was going *beyond representation* to increase diversity and inclusion and had several dimensions (Bettez, 2012).

How did they achieve this? Firstly, going beyond representation was a personal journey—how a leader reacts to adversity, and manages their own context in cross-cultural communication is critical. Values and relationships are anchors to steady themselves. Secondly, a leader's principles are at the root of what motivates them, they are the foundation of their leadership philosophy. Thirdly, a leader's practice of authenticity and openness to listening and learning are important. Transcending the structure of increasing representation is consistent with an element of the adult learning process as elaborated by Mezirow (2012), which focuses on "how we learn to negotiate and act on our own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those we have uncritically assimilated from others" (p. 76). It also speaks to Bettez's (2012) assertion that recognizing cultural differences and respecting others' ways of being are key to "uncovering ways that oppression is created and reproduced" and gaining acceptance (p. 219).

CONCLUSIONS

Bettez's (2012) findings underscored that advancing social justice through women in leadership is rooted in understanding how women build relationships across lines of difference, through effective cross-culturally communication, which was an insight revealed in this study's findings. Additionally, findings confirmed that participants engaged in what Batliwala (2010) called transformative feminist leadership, given descriptions of attempting to transform the structure or institution to be more socially equitable, whether through their comportment or their decision-making. Findings support continued efforts in research to integrate feminist, transformative, multiracial, and embodied leadership theories and socially conscious leadership to better understand meaning-making (Arora et al., 2019). Continuing to build research and theory in feminist leadership literature and adult education that incorporates the views and experiences of mixed race people can add valuable perspectives to critical race theory, diversity and inclusion, social stratification, and social justice.

Research findings have contributed to better understanding the extent to which being mixed race as a woman leader tends towards leaders who serve as integrators that challenge social norms, and in their own way, contest what mainstream leadership looks like. The study gives voice to mixed race women leaders' experiences and illustrates how leadership practice brings about change from a feminist as well as inclusive and organizational perspective. Understanding of the phenomenon of living simultaneously in privilege and oppression was broadened, including the ways this co-existence influenced participants' motivations and their leadership practice; the ways in which they distinguish their purpose from others and from the system they work in illustrated this phenomenon. Findings revealed that the changes they sponsor as leaders can contribute to institutional and systemic change, a stated priority of the federal public service as it relates to anti-racism, equity and inclusion (Schugart, 2023). This study provides insight that may shift workplace and corporate perspectives and advance ongoing discussions on defining success in diversity and inclusion beyond representation.

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USING LEARNERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES TO REIMAGINE THEIR ROLES

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Abstract

This paper explores the integration of learners' lived experiences with curriculum and pedagogical design in post-secondary education (PSE) to enhance mental health resilience and academic success. Addressing the disproportionate impact of mental health challenges on Canadian youth, especially those transitioning to adulthood and PSE, it underscores the need for educational reforms that are responsive to the unique needs of Generation Z. Through a qualitative grounded theory approach, the study involves phenomenological interviews with learners at a private college in Ontario, focusing on their interactions with curriculum and pedagogy. Employing pedagogical journey mapping (PJM) as a methodological tool, this research aims to identify, analyze, and integrate learners' experiences into curricular and pedagogical design and development to foster a more inclusive, engaging, and supportive learning environment. Preliminary findings suggest that incorporating learners' voices and experiences can significantly contribute to curriculum relevance, pedagogical effectiveness, and the mental well-being of learners, thereby reducing educational stressors. The paper concludes by highlighting the importance of a learner-centric approach in PSE, advocating for educational policies and practices that prioritize the well-being and success of all learners, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds.

Keywords: adult learner, mental health, journey mapping, curriculum, lived experience, learner partnerships

INTRODUCTION

Go into a forest, you see the birch, maple, pine.

Look underground and all those trees are holding hands.

We as people must do the same.

- Charles Labrador of the Acadia First Nation
Mi'kmaq spiritual leader, healer, chief

Adolescence represents a pivotal phase in human development, characterized by two significant transitions: the progression from secondary to post-secondary education (PSE), and the subsequent transition into adulthood, including integration into the workforce (Malla et al., 2018; OECD, 2020; WHO, 2017, 2022). Recent data indicate a rising incidence of mental health challenges among Canadian youth, which can pose an impediment to their future achievement and well-being (jack.org, 2020; Porter, 2019).

Specifically, evidence suggests that adolescents are disproportionately affected by mental health conditions when compared to the broader Canadian context. Estimates indicate that approximately 25% of individuals encounter such conditions by the age of 20, escalating to 75% by their mid-30s (Malla et al., 2018; Porter, 2019). This disproportionate impact is further exacerbated by global systemic challenges, including but not limited to, colonialism (Brown, 2019; Shain, 2020; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), racism (Fitzgerald & Rice, 2020; Gajaria et al., 2021; Jones et al., 2020), and climate change (Cianconi et al., 2020; Hayes et al., 2019; Hickman et al., 2021). Given the critical role of the current adolescent cohort, often referred to as Generation Z, in the transmission and advancement of collective global knowledge (OECD, 2020), it becomes imperative for the international community to expedite support mechanisms for this demographic.

The conventional narrative depicting an adult learner's trajectory within PSE typically involves admission, orderly course completion as per a structured program of study, graduation, and subsequent smooth transition into related employment. However, these journeys are rarely as straightforward as perceived, frequently entailing various challenges. Irrespective of jurisdiction, institution, program, or other variables, every learner engages with curriculum and its corresponding pedagogical approaches. The curriculum constitutes the principal and most extensive component of learner engagement activities within a university setting. It necessitates active participation from learners through attendance at lectures, seminars, and tutorials, as well as successful completion of assessments throughout their academic program. For numerous learners, engagement with the curriculum may represent their sole interaction with, and thus the entirety of, their learner experience at the university (Lowe & Wright, 2024).

Pedagogical journey mapping (PJM) in a curricular context refers to the process of visually or descriptively outlining the pathway and experiences of learners throughout a course or program. This technique involves identifying key milestones, interactions, and touchpoints that learners encounter as they progress through their educational journeys. By mapping these elements, educators can gain insights into the learner experience, identify potential areas of improvement, and design or adjust curricula to better meet learners' needs, enhance engagement, and support successful learning outcomes. Journey mapping helps to ensure that the educational process is learner-centred, coherent, and aligned with desired educational goals and outcomes.

Respecting and honouring the spirit of the slogan 'nothing about us without us,' popularized in disability activism in the 1990s, this paper highlights the methodology and preliminary findings of a doctoral study exploring means by which to integrate learners' lived experiences of key touchpoints with curriculum and pedagogy to inform their design and development (White, u.p.). In particular, the study employs a pedagogical journey mapping approach at one private college in Ontario. By doing so, this approach seeks to redefine the roles of and involve adult learners more equitably in processes that affect their learning. The working title of the study is '*Minding Their*

Minds: Using Learners' Lived Experiences with Curriculum and Pedagogy in Support of Learners' Mental Health, Resilience, and Hope for the Future.'

LITERATURE REVIEW

Generation Z

Individuals belonging to Generation Z, defined as those born between 1995 and 2010, are increasingly becoming prominent on the global stage, engaging actively in post-secondary education and integrating into the workforce (Broadbent et al., 2017; Parker & Igielnik, 2020). As these individuals attain the legal age for voting and begin to assume leadership positions within various sectors including government, corporate environments, and non-governmental organizations, they are poised to significantly influence the direction of both human society and environmental stewardship, effectively acting as a bridge to future generations. This cohort, often termed 'digital natives,' has been characterized by an inherent familiarity with advanced technology, having been raised in an era dominated by the Internet, mobile communication devices, cloud computing, and extensive social media networks. They have matured in a period marked by significant geopolitical and social upheaval.

The Global Citizenship Survey (Broadbent et al, 2017), thought to be the most extensive examination in recent years of the happiness and prospective outlook among individuals within Generation Z, reveals a prevailing happiness index of 59% for this demographic. The data indicates a notable gender disparity in self-reported happiness levels, with 62% of young men reporting happiness compared to 56% of young women. At first glance, these findings suggest a relatively optimistic sentiment, with approximately sixty percent of the youth expressing a sense of happiness. However, a deeper analysis illustrates a compelling and robust inverse relationship between happiness and age among this cohort.

This trend raises concerns about the emotional and psychological well-being of Generation Z as they transition through various life stages. Despite this worrying decline in happiness with age, it is noteworthy that the adolescent population maintains a hopeful stance regarding their future. This juxtaposition of declining happiness with enduring optimism highlights the complex emotional landscape faced by Generation Z and underscores the importance of further research into the factors influencing their well-being and outlook. Parker and Igielnik (2020, para. 2) summarize it this way: "[T]his new generation was in line to inherit a strong economy with record-low unemployment. That has all changed now, as COVID-19 has reshaped the [world]'s social, political and economic landscape. Instead of looking ahead to a world of opportunities, Gen Z now peers into an uncertain future."

Academic Stressors and Outcomes

The *Youth Voice Report* (jack.org, 2020) presents a comprehensive overview of the primary concerns among Canadian post-secondary learners, aiming to amplify the perspectives of an often-underrepresented group specifically to influence the decision-making processes of policymakers and educational administrators in the realm of

mental healthcare provision. The report underscores the recognition by Canadian youth of their central role as stakeholders in their own mental health management. Despite this, nearly half of the young Canadian demographic report feeling excluded from discussions and decisions impacting their mental health, highlighting a disconnect between learners' needs and policy implementation.

Furthermore, the report identifies a critical gap in the accessibility of mental health services and support structures, which contributes to heightened levels of stress among the youth. This is substantiated by data suggesting that an overwhelming 94% of post-secondary learners across all Canadian regions acknowledge the direct correlation between academic pressures and the mental health challenges faced by them and their peers (jack.org, 2020). This consensus points to a pressing need for educational institutions and policymakers to reevaluate and enhance the support systems available to post-secondary learners, ensuring that mental health services are both accessible and responsive to the nuanced needs of this demographic.

Lived Experience as a Legitimate Unit of Analysis

In academic discourse, the concept of 'lived experience' emanates from the intersection of 'experiencing'—the active engagement with events or phenomena while one is alive—and 'experienced'—the residual knowledge or impact that persists following the cessation of these events. This construct delineates a profound and enduring impression left by significant occurrences, as articulated by Frechette and colleagues (2020).

Dieumegard and colleagues (2021) champion the inclusion of lived experiences as a cornerstone for academic research, asserting that such perspectives yield deep insights into learning. They argue that lived experiences, unique yet influenced by wider contexts, provide a rich, individual-level understanding crucial for examining one's construction of meaning from societal interactions. This emphasis on individuals as primary data sources marks a shift toward more introspective and nuanced analysis.

The Healthy Brains Global Initiative (2023) underscores the significance of incorporating lived experiences for both scientific robustness and ethical integrity. This approach not only makes research outcomes more meaningful and culturally inclusive but also addresses equity by valuing personal expertise. Typically, this has positive outcomes for mental health and well-being. Moreover, it presents an economically sound strategy by potentially reducing healthcare costs, showcasing the comprehensive benefits of integrating personal experiences into scholarly inquiry.

Pedagogical Journey Mapping

Just as the concept of customer journey mapping emerged from design thinking, focusing on creating products and services that are meaningful and appealing to consumers (Luu, 2020), PJM specializes in highlighting learners' experiences while interacting with curriculum and pedagogy (Rains, 2017). PJM visually represents learners' experiences, portraying their narratives, emotions, thoughts, and actions at

distinct touchpoints and interactions with curriculum and pedagogy. Essentially, PJM elucidates a learning journey from the learner's viewpoint, thus pinpointing obstacles, impediments, and other elements obstructing academic success (Rains, 2017; Sperano et al., 2019). Once identified, these details can guide initiatives within PSE institutions intended to streamline and adjust the learning journey to enhance academic outcomes. Consequently, by potentially alleviating or eliminating academic stressors, PJM may contribute, at least in part, to addressing the mental health challenges faced by learners in higher education.

The theoretical underpinning of PJM is grounded in constructivist learning theories (e.g., Piaget, Vygotsky) which posit that learners construct knowledge through experiences. This perspective aligns with Kolb's experiential learning model, suggesting that learning is a process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. PJM synthesizes these theories by mapping a learner's journey, thereby providing a holistic view of their educational experience as a continuous, heuristic cycle. This methodological approach serves as a lens to scrutinize the nuances of learner interactions, emotional responses, and engagement levels across different touchpoints within the educational ecosystem.

By adopting a pedagogical journey mapping approach, educational institutions can transition from an inside-out to an outside-in planning perspective, prioritizing learners' needs and experiences in their operational and strategic planning. PJM provides a visual representation of learner experiences, incorporating narratives, emotions, cognitions, and actions at various critical junctures, or touchpoints, within their respective educational trajectories. This learner-centred approach enables the identification of barriers and obstacles that impede academic success, thereby allowing educational institutions to refine and enhance the educational journey, potentially mitigating factors contributing to academic stress and mental health issues among learners (Rains, 2017).

In essence, PJM acts as a comprehensive tool for evaluating and enhancing various aspects of the educational experience, from curriculum content and teaching methods to technology use and inclusion efforts. By addressing these insights, educational institutions can create a more engaged, effective, and inclusive learning environment, ensuring learners are well-equipped for their future endeavours.

For example, a study conducted at the University of Montana employed journey mapping to determine its effectiveness as a tool to enhance research and learning experiences when using Mansfield Library from learners' respective vantage points (Samson et al., 2017). By exploring learner-described touchpoints when accessing such services, Samson and colleagues were able to compare individual and aggregate learners' experiences with the university's conceptualized 'ideal' journey to identify opportunities for change that would improve learners' library research experiences, thereby improving their overall learning experience and outcomes.

In another curriculum application, the University of Oklahoma-Tulsa School of Community Medicine used journey mapping as a tool to overcome the systemic

challenges of teaching patient empathy and the effects of social determinants of health on patients' respective healthcare needs. Based on a case study, learners worked in small groups to create journey maps of a patient's healthcare experiences. Almost half of the groups created a journey map that highlighted the socioeconomic, sociocultural, and sociotechnical experiences rather than simply focusing on biomedical concerns. Park and colleagues (2020) concluded that this indicates the potential value of journey mapping as a tool to broaden awareness of patient-centred care.

METHODOLOGY

The current study does not endeavour to corroborate a specific theory or hypothesis. Instead, its purpose is to gather, collate, and analyze the narratives shared by Canadian post-secondary learners regarding their lived experiences, with a particular focus on their interactions with curriculum and pedagogy. This study aims to unearth concepts and patterns within learners' experiences, especially as they relate to their mental health outcomes, derived from their engagements with educational pedagogy and curriculum. Through the application of reflexive thematic analysis to the collected data, this research aims to illuminate underlying theories pertinent to optimal practices in curriculum and instructional design.

Grounded theory, as a methodology, posits that social phenomena—such as the effects on mental health from academic interactions—can be effectively explored through the lens of participant experiences (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). These experiences are examined iteratively to identify emergent patterns potentially culminating in theories that elucidate the causative dynamics of these adverse effects. Fifteen phenomenological interviews will be conducted with learners at a private college in Ontario seeking to learn from their stories and better understand their respective experiences based on interactions with curriculum and pedagogy. Following a detailed interview protocol, the data collected will undergo iterative reflexive analysis to identify themes. The research process is iterative, oscillating between data collection and thematic analysis, which serves to continuously refine and validate the research methodology, thereby ensuring theoretical rigour (Braun & Clarke, 2019; McCall & Edwards, 2021).

Research Question

In weaving together various bodies of knowledge, four components of a problem statement emerge. First, learners with mental health conditions and mental illness often become disenfranchised, resulting in disadvantage and marginalization due to various stressors that affect them while on their academic journeys. The cumulative and magnifying effects of stressors can create untenable situations that may inhibit academic success. Second, current literature addresses the connections between the stressors that learners experience on their academic journeys with their mental health and academic success (Baik et al., 2019; Cunningham & Duffy, 2019). Third, the variety of factors, circumstances, and relationships that have the potential to destabilize the mental health, resilience, and hope of post-secondary learners—and, in turn, to affect

their academic success—must be problematized for the current study. Finally, there is a critical need for research into specific solutions, including curricular and pedagogical solutions, that help support learners experiencing challenges to their mental health or mitigate stressors that can cause mental health conditions.

To help fill that gap, the current study relies on the following preliminary research question: *How can best practices in curricular and pedagogical design and development be adapted to best support learner mental health and well-being?*

Significance of the Study

Previous studies have established a correlation between the stressors encountered by post-secondary learners and a subsequent increase in mental health problems, negatively impacting their academic endurance and achievement. In response, educational strategies, including the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), have been progressively refined to bolster the academic performance of diverse learner cohorts across varying contexts. This grounded theory research aims to identify innovative and effective methods for enhancing academic achievement by exploring optimal or promising practices in the application of UDL to alleviate educational stressors potentially detrimental to mental health.

The findings from this investigation promise to offer valuable insights for professionals within the field of education, including teachers, curriculum developers, enrolment strategists, educational leaders, and administrators. Moreover, this research is poised to inform the efforts of related support roles, such as learner advocacy groups, mental health professionals, families, NGOs, unions, professional bodies, and Indigenous organizations. Additionally, this study is likely to interest those engaged in educational policymaking.

Given the universal aspect of mental health, interventions designed to improve mental health outcomes for specific learner groups may have broader applicability, benefiting the mental well-being of the entire learner population. Consequently, this research could provide strategies to better support the academic success of learners from marginalized backgrounds, encompassing racial, Indigenous, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, mobility, linguistic, immigration status, and other identities.

Government entities at all levels, particularly those focused on the escalating expenditures related to healthcare—including the direct and indirect costs of mental healthcare—may find this research beneficial. Furthermore, this study underscores the significance of pedagogical collaborations and the value of incorporating learner feedback and experiential knowledge into institutional planning and decision-making processes.

CONCLUSION

Pedagogical journey mapping (PJM) has been illuminated as an instrumental methodology within the discourse of PSE enhancement, signifying a paradigmatic shift

towards a learner-centric approach in curricular and pedagogical development. This analysis, grounded in a comprehensive exploration of learners' lived experiences and their intricate interactions with the educational framework, positions PJM not merely as a methodological tool but as a transformative lens through which educational institutions can reevaluate and refine their educational offerings and relationships with learners.

The findings from this study are anticipated to underscore the multifaceted nature of the educational journey, revealing the profound gaps between institutional intentions and actual learner experiences. Through the meticulous application of PJM, educational stakeholders are afforded a nuanced understanding of these discrepancies, particularly in areas concerning curriculum relevance, pedagogical approaches, assessment methods, and learner support services. This methodology has proven pivotal in identifying misalignments and has catalyzed targeted interventions aimed at reconciling these divergences, thus enhancing the overall educational experience.

Moreover, the PJM process extends beyond the pragmatic realm of educational improvement, venturing into the ethical imperative of inclusivity and accessibility. By foregrounding learners' voices, particularly those from marginalized or underrepresented backgrounds, PJM champions a more democratic and equitable educational landscape. This alignment not only addresses the educational disparities but also contributes to the broader discourse on social justice within educational contexts.

The implications of this study are manifold, suggesting that the integration of PJM within post-secondary education can serve as a cornerstone for institutional reform. It advocates for a radical rethinking of educational design, urging stakeholders to prioritize the lived experiences of learners as a fundamental basis for curricular and pedagogical decision-making. In doing so, it aligns with the broader objectives of educational equity, learner well-being, and the preparation of learners for the complexities of the contemporary world.

In conclusion, PJM emerges as a beacon of innovation in the quest for educational excellence. It calls upon educators, administrators, and policymakers to embrace a learner-centric paradigm, thereby ensuring that post-secondary education is not only responsive to the needs of today's learners but also anticipatory of the demands of tomorrow's world. As we forge ahead, the principles encapsulated within PJM should guide our collective endeavour to cultivate an educational environment that is both enriching and transformative, fostering the development of learners who are not only academically proficient but also resilient, adaptable, and prepared to navigate the multifarious challenges of the global landscape.

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RAISING CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS THROUGH POPULAR EDUCATION: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

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Abstract

This autoethnographic study investigates the phenomenon of critical consciousness raising, as proposed by Freire, through popular education. Situated in the critical pedagogy field, it analyzes a personal transformative experience of *conscientização*, to explore how critical consciousness is developed in practice, what are the factors, conditions, and dispositions that can contribute to raising critical consciousness, and what can be the consequence of critical consciousness raising to one's life and one's communities. Employing a narrative method of inquiry and analysis, the main findings of the study were that dialogue and praxis are main elements in the process of developing critical consciousness in popular education; desire for change and dialogical communication aligned with practice, are required for raising critical consciousness; the consequences of the process of *conscientização* including greater autonomy, responsibility, and leadership, fostering collective organization and social transformation.

Keywords: Critical consciousness, popular education, autoethnography.

INTRODUCTION

in 2012, I have been introduced to Freire's (1974, 1998, 2005) work. Through the participation in a popular education adult literacy project with the Homeless Workers' Movement in Brazil, I had the opportunity learn Freirean approaches concomitantly in theory and in practice. Since then, I have been interested in learning and reflecting on everything related to the field of education, from the individual cognitive process of learning to the historical development of policies, to its philosophical conceptualizations and sociological implications, from varied approaches and contexts. In a hindsight, I realized that this could have been a process of *conscientização*, as conceptualized by Freire (1974).

Paulo Freire was a Brazilian popular educator and philosopher, considered one of the founders of the field of critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2010). While his insights were developed through his reflections and practices in popular education and adult literacy, his radical approach became influential to different formal contexts, from elementary to higher education, and impacted other areas of knowledge, including social work, community development and community health. One important point of Freire's (2005) work is that the proposal for a liberating pedagogy was not limited to teaching methods, techniques, or to the curriculum. Rather, he questioned the very concept of education and how political and ideological relations inherent aspects of any educational system and are capable of perpetuating domination, and oppression in societies.

Despite it having been 55 years since the first publication of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and all the impacts it made in educational systems around the globe, its contributions are still relevant and necessary, considering that the sectarianism and conditions of oppression that he denounced persist. As Apple (2019) argued, “we still have much to learn—and relearn—from Freire” (p. 370). Even though multiple books and articles were produced inspired by Freire’s (2005) work, using his language and concepts, many of their authors did not actually engage in putting them into concrete practice, which is contradictory. For example, while the Freirean pedagogy was intended to overcome the teacher-student dichotomy, some works suggest that teachers can employ techniques to develop students’ critical consciousness (e.g., Watts et al., 2011; Diemer et al., 2016). For Freire (2005), liberation cannot be a deposit made into people, and “[t]hose truly committed to the cause of liberation can accept neither the mechanistic concept of consciousness as an empty vessel to be filled, nor the use of banking methods of domination ... in the name of liberation.” (p. 79).

In the regard to misconceptions, contradictions, and the occasional depoliticization of Freire’s work, Jemal (2017) demonstrated that there are theoretical inconsistencies in how critical consciousness is understood in the academic literature. There are divergences, for example, on whether it is an outcome or a developmental process, and if tools, strategies, and techniques are inherently part of the concept. Furthermore, there is no consensus on whether the concept of critical consciousness is applicable only for oppressed groups and if it also incorporates the notion of privileges (Jemal, 2017). Although this lack of consensus may appear to be a problem in terms of academic knowledge, in a critical perspective it means that the critical pedagogy field is never finished, but always in the process of becoming, as pointed out by Apple (2019). Because of the importance he gave to the dialectical unity of objectivity and subjectivity, Freire (2005) was aware that there would be misinterpretations of his work—by those who he called “sectarians” (p. 39). Even so, through the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he proposed to open a dialogue.

Considering the incompleteness of the critical pedagogy field, in this study I investigated how *conscientização* (the process of consciousness-raising) occurs. For that, I conducted an autoethnographic study, in which I use my lived experience in popular education together with previous research on critical consciousness raising, as further described, to elaborate on: (1) How is critical consciousness developed in practice through popular education? (2) What are the factors, conditions, and dispositions that can contribute to raising critical consciousness? (3) What can be the consequence of critical consciousness raising to one’s life and one’s communities?

METHODOLOGY

In this study, I employed autoethnography as critical research methodology. More than just a qualitative method of inquiry, autoethnography is an approach in which the researcher uses their own personal experiences to describe, interpret and analyze

cultural experiences, beliefs, and practices (Ellis et al., 2011). Thus, as a critical methodology, it challenges the traditional research methods by not pursuing an absolute objective truth in human and social sciences and by recognizing the importance of self-reflectivity in knowledge production. Furthermore, it acknowledges the consequences of attempting to separate research from researcher and, rather than denying any possible subjectivities in research, consider them as a valuable form of knowledge.

Data Collection and Analysis

For data collection, I used mix strategies, having personal memory, self-reflective and external data as sources. As a practical choice to minimize the overlapping of data collection and analysis processes, I recorded myself speaking about my past experiences with popular education, as a form of self-interview. The reason why I decided to do that is because when trying to write directly about them, I tend to focus on the style, grammar, and the physical process of writing, reducing my focus on my expression. According to Tagg (1997), writing is less natural and “makes us spread out the process of expressing ourselves.” (para. 3). Especially when recalling memory, it flows more effectively with the spoken language than with the written one. (Heesen, 2021). In this case, being both the researcher and the participant, one of the most important aspects of the data collection process was spontaneity, which is the main difference between spoken and written language (Yabuuchi, 1998). While writing I could be thinking about theoretical concepts and expected findings and influence my data, it was more difficult to make these arrangements during the speech—although I cannot deny it also happens in some degree. Also, to maximize the spontaneity, all the speech was done in my first language, Portuguese. Further, to confirm some factual details and to support my narrative, I gathered external data, such as personal communication, documents, and past writings related the periods mentioned in the recordings.

After transcribing all the recordings, I used MAXQDA 2024 (VERBI Software, 2023) as a tool to assist in coding, classification, and analysis of the qualitative data. Considering the autoethnographic approach I chose to employ in my study and the nature of the data, I used narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993) as a method to interpret it. First, I read all the transcriptions to find the main topics and themes. After that, I started the coding process with an initial set of topics, but open to add, rename, or remove some of them, ending up with a set of 14 topics: childhood, education, popular education, identity, autonomy, leadership, worldview, work, political engagement, transformation, praxis, social relations, collectiveness, and relationship. I refined the set of topics and organized them in themes to focus on the research questions that I proposed to investigate. The topics of popular education, transformation, and social relations helped me to answer the first research question, while childhood, education, and identity helped me on the second research question, and autonomy, leadership, and political engagement were useful for the third research question. During the analysis, I followed Chang’s (2008) recommendations, observing the cultural themes present in it, making connections between the past and the present and in my relationships with others, and

comparing my case with other people's cases as surveyed in the literature review process to broadly contextualize it.

RESULTS

Through the analysis of my personal experience, I concluded that it was indeed an experience of critical consciousness raising according to Freire's (2005) dialogical theory of action. In this theory, the author proposed essential elements of an authentic and critical consciousness, which include "consistency between words and actions; boldness which urges the witnesses to confront existence as a permanent risk; radicalization (not sectarianism) leading ... to increasing action; courage to love ...; and faith in the people." (Freire, 2005, p. 176). All these elements were present in the process I narrated in my autoethnography. It is also worth noting that, for the author, liberation and domination, humanization and dehumanization are permanent and ongoing processes, so is *conscientização*. This means that there is not a simple binary of having or having not achieved critical consciousness. Since my first participation in a popular education project, there were situations throughout the years in which my actions could be considered more radical, but at the same time may have been more sectarian. To keep raising critical consciousness always involves critical reflection with radical action. It requires freedom, and freedom is praxis.

In the following sections, I review the main topics that I observed in the analysis to provide answers to my research questions.

Critical Consciousness in Popular Education

For the first research question ("How is critical consciousness developed in practice through popular education?"), I identify that dialogue and praxis were fundamental for my *conscientização*. And, as mentioned before, although I focused on my individual experience in this study, the process of raising critical consciousness is always collective.

Through dialogue, I was able to have a better reading of the objective reality of the world, while I also became aware of the subjectivity of other human experiences. It is worth remarking that, while the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* may be interpreted as a method for adult literacy to liberate students from their condition of oppressed, one of the main characteristics of its philosophy is the overcoming of the contradiction teacher-student, oppressor-oppressed. Thus, true liberation—and consequently, critical consciousness—only occurs collectively, with all people involved. This means that an authentic popular education work must involve all the elements of dialogical action in its whole process, not only "in class." According to Freire (2005), consciousness cannot be another deposit made in people. And, as the author also emphasized, dialogue can only happen if there is love. Love for the humanity and love for the world. Establishing affective relations through dialogue, I became able to see human beings as human beings and to love them.

Through praxis, I started to see that reality is unfinished. That, with critical reflection and radical action, transformation occurs. One interesting discussion we had in the collective was about the capitalist relations within the social movement. We observed people who were part of the housing movement fighting because one of them put a personal belonging on the other's space in the occupation. The movement being founded on a socialist perspective did not change notions of private property, even though they were occupying a land that legally belonged to another person. But through the radical action of establishing affective relations, we were able to transform it and maintain shared collective properties in the occupation. As Freire (1998) asserted, "[t]he reading and writing of the word would always imply a more critical rereading of the world as a route to the rewriting—the transformation—of that world." (p. 34).

Conditions for Critical Consciousness

For the second research question ("What are the factors, conditions, and dispositions that can contribute to raising critical consciousness?"), popular education caught my attention and interest because I have been giving large importance to education my whole life, but the conditions that led me to the process of critical consciousness raising were mainly the anguish and desire to restore the creative power, and a dialogical communication aligned with the practice. Then, a continuous process of collective reflection and action—which means authentic praxis.

There has always been a kind of anguish on me because of the unfairness of the world. According to Freire (2005), this is rooted in the inhibition of human's creative power, in the frustration of the efforts to act responsibly. Although I was in a privileged social situation when I got to know the popular education project and did not think much about the greater political and economic relations, I had the "biophily" (p. 77), the interest in life. I wanted to become part of the project because I wanted to help people.

I was in a limit-situation. Until that moment in my life, most choices in my life were prescribed. I took my master's degree as a natural pathway to continue my studies, and the PhD was a continuation of the same pathway. Then, feeling lonely and anguished by my inability to act made me want to reject my impotence. In 2012, still before getting to know the popular education project, I participated for the first time in a demonstration. It was a populist manifestation against corruption, without much specific objective or target. In some way, I was already desiring to act, but without dialogue and critical reflection, it was not effective, even for any individual transformation. That was a key difference to the popular education project.

Consequences of Critical Consciousness

Finally, the third research question ("What can be the consequence of critical consciousness raising to one's life and one's communities?") can be divided into two parts: the individual and the collective consequences.

For the first part, the main consequence to my life was a personal transformation in terms of autonomy and responsibility. As mentioned in the last chapter, there have been a great change in my capacity of taking risks. And no transformation happens without risks. While before 2012, most of my life was guided by trying to attend others' expectations to feel belonging, this has progressively changed after that. In Freire's (2005) terms, I started to seek to become increasingly "fully human" (p. 92)—to make and remake, to create and re-create, to transform situations rather than adapting to them. Before, I preferred to remain silent and wanted to be invisible. After that, I want to be part of changing. This leads to the second part of the question.

To be part of changing means that I am aware that no real transformation happens only individually. To change situations means impacting collectively, and collective impacts require collective action and collective reflection. I observed that another important consequence to my life was assuming a leadership role in different situations, not hierarchically but as a means for collective organization. As Freire (2005) pointed out, critical consciousness cannot be egoistic. It restores the power of transformation of the world for the increasing liberation of humankind. Once again, I want to reinforce that this study focused on my individual case for ethical reasons, but my most radical actions were always collective. Thus, the process of *conscientização* always has communitarian and social impacts.

CONCLUSIONS

In this study, I employed autoethnographic research to investigate the development of critical consciousness in practice, based on a personal experience. Through a narrative analysis, I identified the conditions, how the process occurs, and the consequences of *conscientização* as conceptualized by Freire (1974). As the main points, I pointed out that dialogue and praxis were the most important elements in my process, and that autonomy, responsibility and leadership were the most important consequences of it, producing collective impacts.

The process of developing the study was challenging especially because of the use of the autoethnography methodology which is new to me. At first, I did not feel confident to employ this approach. However, as a transgressive movement in research and knowledge production, doing autoethnography is also a form of practice and reflection. It also requires critical thinking and consciousness on the action and the risks one is taking when doing it. For me, it involved a continuous reflection on the reasons and the consequences of exposing my history, while also making it through this work. The critical analysis of my own experience allowed me to get more aware on my own incompleteness.

The main contribution of this study was to provide practical evidence of concepts proposed by Freire (1974, 1998, 2005), not only objectively, but mainly subjectively. By not separating research from researcher, I was able to inform the point of view of a subject that experienced the process. Although the facts narrated can be insightful for readers to understand how the process was developed, the main purpose of the

autoethnographic study is to provide a perspective on the subjective aspects of the experience and to inspire reflection and action.

Limitations and Further Research

The case explored in this study must be considered in context—my experience as a post-graduate Japanese-Brazilian man, moving to a different state within Brazil in the years 2010. As an autoethnography, it has no purpose of generalization, what would need the use of other approaches for investigating the phenomenon. Furthermore, for being written more than ten years after the experience, it was not feasible to collaborate with all the people that were involved in the project. Due to the nature of the phenomenon investigated, my individual process of critical consciousness raising is not completely described as I had to omit information that could lead to the identification of other people, for ethical reasons.

As one of multiple approaches to study the phenomenon of critical consciousness raising, autoethnography can provide one perspective of the process, but it is complementary to other methodologies. For further research, I recommend expanding the questions that I approached here to a greater context, by employing empirical research on the processes of critical consciousness raising among different people involved in one or more popular education initiatives within a community.

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ROUNDTABLES

ENGAGING WITH INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES ALONGSIDE WESTERN KNOWLEDGES: THE POSSIBILITIES OF TWO-EYED SEEING IN ADULT EDUCATION

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Abstract

The purpose of this roundtable paper is to explore the spaces in post-secondary education for bringing Indigenous and Western knowledges alongside one another in adult education. Two-Eyed Seeing may provide a framework for Indigenous and Western knowledges to come alongside one another as equitable knowledge systems, while also providing a conceptual approach for seeing the world through both Indigenous and Western perspectives. The roundtable will focus on the roles and responsibilities among educators as well as methods of balancing curriculums to engage directly with Indigenous voices and perspectives in the classroom.

Keywords: Indigenous knowledges, western knowledges, two-eyed seeing, post-secondary education.

INTRODUCTION

Within the Canadian post-secondary education system, there has been rising interest in bringing Indigenous knowledges alongside Western knowledges in the classroom (Barkaskas & Gladwin, 2021; Mitchell et al., 2018). At the same time, there are significant concerns and disagreements among non-Indigenous educators when it comes to how to engage with Indigenous ways of knowing when the educators themselves have limited awareness of Indigenous knowledges and experiences (Davidson & Davidson, 2018; Gorecki & Doyle-Jones, 2021; Marsh et al., 2015). What is required is ongoing relationship building and collaboration among Indigenous knowledge holders and non-Indigenous educators, with non-Indigenous educators positioning themselves as learners alongside their students (Battiste, 2013; Martin, 2012; Handayani et al., 2018). Two-Eyed Seeing is a framework that may be useful for not only bringing Indigenous and Western knowledges alongside one another in the classroom, but it may also provide guidance for non-Indigenous educators to follow when engaging with Indigenous knowledges in the post-secondary classroom.

TWO-EYED SEEING

Two-Eyed Seeing is a framework that may be useful for not only bringing Indigenous and Western knowledges alongside one another in the classroom, but it may also provide a framework to overcoming feelings of anxiety and disqualification among non-Indigenous educators in adult education environments. By exploring discomfort and anxiety, and addressing feelings of disqualification, we can explore what it means to bring Indigenous knowledges alongside Western knowledges in the classroom.

Indigenous knowledges are as valuable as Western knowledges and more than deserving of a permanent and equal space within the classroom curriculum, but until we address how to bring the two knowledge systems together equally, we risk continuing to relegate Indigenous knowledges to only part of the learning experience.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF EDUCATORS

Non-Indigenous educators should not be solely responsible for bringing Indigenous education into the classroom, nor can Indigenous content be handled with a single workshop or lecture hosted by an Indigenous knowledge holder (McKinley, 2020). While programs are in place to introduce non-Indigenous pre-service teachers to Indigenous ways of knowing, there needs to be an increased focus on moving educators “out of their comfort zone and Western-centric way of thinking and to reconceptualise new knowledge from Indigenous perspectives” (Yip & Chakma, 2024 p. 294). Relationship building between non-Indigenous educators and Indigenous community members and knowledge holders is a key part of this process, as is providing educators with the necessary tools to develop relationships with Indigenous community members in respectful ways (Gorecki & Doyle-Jones, 2021). Non-Indigenous educators, even those who have undertaken training related to Indigenous studies, may still experience feelings of anxiety or concern over engaging with Indigenous perspectives in the classroom (Carroll et al., 2020; Scott & Gani, 2018; Yip & Chakma, 2024). There are misconceptions related to sharing and engaging with Indigenous knowledges within the larger scope of Western curriculums, as well as feelings of discomfort or fear among non-Indigenous educators which could lead to a preference of avoiding Indigenous content in the classroom (Carroll et al., 2020; Donald, 2009; Scott & Gani, 2018; Yip & Chakma, 2024). The fear of making mistakes, being involved in professional controversy, offending others, showing their ignorance, or stepping out against the dominant colonial discourse are all concerns cited by non-Indigenous educators in current literature (Carroll et al., 2020; Scott & Gani, 2018; Yip & Chakma, 2024). An additional concern is that non-Indigenous educators do not feel culturally qualified to speak on topics of Indigenous perspectives and experiences, and that in fact, they are culturally disqualified from teaching Indigenous knowledges (Donald, 2009; Scott & Gani, 2018).

CONCLUSIONS

Two-Eyed Seeing is a framework that may be useful for not only bringing Indigenous and Western knowledges alongside one another in the classroom, but it may also provide a framework to overcoming feelings of anxiety and disqualification among non-Indigenous educators in adult education environments. By exploring discomfort and anxiety, and addressing feelings of disqualification, we can explore what it means to bring Indigenous knowledges alongside Western knowledges in the classroom. Indigenous knowledges are as valuable as Western knowledges and more than deserving of a permanent and equal space within the classroom curriculum, but until

we address how to bring the two knowledge systems together equally, we risk continuing to relegate Indigenous knowledges to only part of the learning experience.

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POLITICALLY AGENTIVE COMMUNICATIVE SILENCE IN ADULT EDUCATION WITH IMMIGRANT STUDENTS

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Abstract

The aim of this roundtable is to discuss *politically agentive communicative silence* in non-profit and community-based (NPCB) education with adult immigrant students. In a globalized world where speech equals visibility, silence often results from the way an individual, group, or perspective has been marginalized by oppressive political regimes, structural exclusion, majoritarian institutional practices, and white cis-heteropatriarchal and settler colonialist discourses. Silencing in such contexts constitutes a form of epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007; Kristie Dotson, 2012; Medina, 2012a), where speakers go unheard while testifying about their experiences or whose speech is not interpreted as meaningful. However, the decision by individuals to be silent in multivocal and strategic ways is less often discussed or theorized. A 2018 multiphase study conducted in a New York City non-profit ESL organisation with adult immigrant students employed questionnaires and interactive focus groups as data creation/construction methods. The five participants, immigrants from a range of racial/ethnic, linguistic, gendered, and national backgrounds, were invited to share their experiences in adult education in the past and present. Importantly, the participants were also told that non-participation, a choice they could make by selecting “I prefer not to answer” on the questionnaires or choosing non-response in the focus groups, was legitimate and valuable. The results of the study uncovered insights into how these students strategically used silence in learning and research dominated by power asymmetries, pre-set social categories of race or ethnicity, and unquestioned best practices. A core conclusion that was drawn was the reconceptualization of the agentive language practices and subjectivities of multilingual adult immigrant students in educational research and practice, setting forth the novel concept of *politically agentive communicative silence*. This work signals a valuable contribution to a reconceptualization of adult education with immigrant students, by identifying “unintelligible” forms of meaning-making (Santos, 2018) that disrupt discourses of passivity and gratitude usually associated with these learners as well as tried-and-true pedagogical practices of adult educators that may cause offense or harm (Entigar, 2022).

Keywords: silence, agency, adult education, newcomers, immigrants, multilingual

INTRODUCTION

In education, silence can take various forms and functions. In mainstream, Euro-descended North American schooling, which emphasises verbal communication as the core means by which learning is tracked, silence references students’ cognitive processing or linguistic development (Hu, 2021; Krashen, 1995). Critical scholars add to

this discussion by suggesting that *silencing* can take place in education and other politically charged activities, as the contributions of racialized, multilingual, and otherwise marginalized people (Alcoff, 1991; Emerick, 2019; Medina, 2012b) are discounted or invisibilized. While these perspectives are important, it remains that silence as a meaningful contribution in education and research is relatively undertheorized compared to verbal forms of communication (Entigar, 2020).

This concern is not only linguistic but also epistemic, ethical, and political. Social philosophers like Kurzon (2007) (Kurzon, 2007) suggest that in North American education, teachers and students co-generate a “text” in their interactions based on teachers’ prompts and students’ responses in learning activities. Such activities confer authority to teachers over the educational process on epistemic (meaning-making) and ethical (the rules of appropriate behavior in the learning space) terms; as a result, teachers retain epistemic, ethical, and political authority in the classroom. While the inclusion of culturally and linguistically dynamic students in learning is central to approaches such as culturally responsive/sustaining pedagogy, funds of knowledge, translanguaging and plurilingual strategies (Carter-Jenkins & Alfred, 2010; Galante et al., 2020; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lichtenberger & Caraballo, 2020; Moll, 2015; Wu, 2015), teachers are the final arbiters of the cultural, linguistic, and ethical values that predominate in the classroom (Kotzee, 2017), including in terms of how students themselves are “included” in learning (Entigar, 2022).

An interesting question emerges in the case of silence, then: can silence also contribute to the educational “text” of teaching and learning when selected actively by students? And what meaning or meanings can this have? It seems there is a range of single and overlapping reasons, some of which may be quite elusive or hard to track. Students, particularly racially, culturally or linguistically minoritized students, may use silence as “a strategically respectful way to ignore teachers in class” (Ha & Li, 2014, p. 242), a form of protest against cultural or linguistic stereotypes their teacher’s use of stereotypes to cast them as culturally and linguistically inferior (Resch et al., 2021), a means of noncompliance with teachers’ expectations that they would accommodate their plan (Bao, 2021), or a form of communicative disobedience (Rodriguez, 2011; Sulzer, 2022). These forms of resistance can overlap with different desires in learning, including to maintain membership as a learner in the classroom (Bao, 2021; Coombs et al., 2014; Hao, 2011). Students’ agentic choice of silence may be complex, meaning that it can operate to communicate as well as to protect its user. This kind of multivocal silence (Choi, 2016), particularly when employed by adult newcomer students in heterogeneous classrooms in NPCB classrooms, has not been examined. Adult newcomers are discursively constructed as “passive” and “grateful” recipients of learning, and so such communicative contributions are mostly likely disregarded, even as they can indicate harm or problematic teaching practices. In fact, *politically agentic communicative silence* (Entigar, forthcoming) has powerful epistemic, ethical, and political implications in how scholars and practitioners could reconsider inclusion, safety, responsibility, and anti-racist, anti-oppressive education with culturally and linguistically dynamic students like adult newcomers.

METHODOLOGY

The present discussion alludes to the generation of theory based on a “happy accident” in the researcher’s doctoral research, which took place in 2018, and the developing line of inquiry that emerged from it. Thus, this work constitutes theoretical research, defined as “original explanatory formulations advanced without the benefit of systematic and originally collected empirical data” (Thyer, 2019).

A 2018 multiphase study conducted in a New York City non-profit ESL organisation with adult immigrant students employed questionnaires and interactive focus groups as data creation/construction methods. The five participants, immigrants from a range of racial/ethnic, linguistic, gendered, and national backgrounds, were invited to share their experiences in adult education in the past and present. Importantly, the participants were also told that non-participation, a choice they could make by selecting “I prefer not to answer” on the questionnaires or choosing non-response in the focus groups, was legitimate and valuable.

RESULTS

Participants in the study made important contributions to current thinking about silence in educational research and practice, insights which have formed the foundation for an application for a SSHRC Insight Development grant by the researcher. First, participants observed that they and other adult newcomer students had employed silence at times when practitioners asked questions about their refugee backgrounds, a strategic response that pushed back against teachers’ assumed authority over the information exchanged in the classroom as a part of the educational “text” as discussed above. Interestingly, participants specifically used the phrase “I prefer not to answer” from the questionnaires and focus group preparation to discuss these experiences. Second, participants suggested that teachers’ capacity to judge what learning should look like and on what epistemic and ethical terms it should take place were wrongheaded assumptions. Participants saw themselves as active contributors to learning, and when they employed silence strategically, it expressed a form of political agency—as transnational adult people building their next chapter of life in North America—that communicated powerfully.

CONCLUSIONS

Much is yet to be concluded. The next step in this theoretical research project is to conduct the aforementioned research project to explore more examples of *politically agentive communicative silence* strategically deployed by adult newcomers to North America, specifically in NPCB education organizations in Toronto. It is hoped that this continued exploration of multivocal silence as contestation, as resistance, as self-protective, as disruption to teacher authority, will lead to the creation of new theory grounded in empirical data that continues to disrupt racist, xenophobic stereotypes about newcomers as docile and quiescent in learning and beyond.

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RECIPROCAL MENTORSHIPS: REDEFINING ADULT EDUCATION IN A DOCTORAL JOURNEY

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Abstract

In this roundtable, three adult educators from various disciplines share their reflections on the value of reciprocal mentorships that emerged through relationship during their doctoral journeys in adult learning. These reciprocal mentorships ultimately created a relational space where transformative learning (Illeris, 2016) took place, shaping the research they produced, the people they became, and redefining their understanding of adult education. Using a narrative inquiry approach (Clandinin, 2020) to explore and examine these relationships, they provide insight into how the co-creation of reciprocal mentorships helped them navigate the challenging context of a pandemic while engaging in doctoral studies. Utilizing a holistic transformative learning lens (Illeris, 2016), the authors will delve into the three commonplaces of temporality, sociality, and place inherent to their stories and put forward implications for both doctoral students and educators to consider as they embark on their doctoral quests and redefine adult education for the future.

Keywords: Reciprocal mentorship, relational learning, transformative learning, narrative inquiry, doctoral studies.

OUR NARRATIVES AND INTRODUCTION

In June 2020, an overwhelming mix of fear, excitement, and imposter syndrome marked the beginning of our journey as doctoral students. Immediately we were thrust into our new reality, one that featured an ongoing and unprecedented global pandemic, a sharp and less than smooth shift to online learning, and more reading than hours in a day. Individually, we each questioned our suitability, and at times sanity, for voluntarily signing up for the endeavour. We were left with a choice to exist in isolation and uncertainty or open up to the only people who could understand our circumstances: our classmates. Fortunately, we chose the latter. Despite differences in professional backgrounds, locations, and personal paradigms, we decided to forgo our usual competitive tendencies and instead collaborate with, celebrate, and support one another as we worked towards completing our credentials. Together, we crossed the stage in November 2023, having received far more than a doctoral degree. The relationships cultivated through our academic pursuits have seeped into the many realms of our lives, as we continue to support one another.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Formalized peer pedagogies such as cohort-based delivery models, peer mentoring between more senior and junior students, and assigned group work, are a common approach found in doctoral programs (Flores-Scott & Nerad, 2012). Comparatively, informal peer pedagogies, where learners engage with each other in more casual ways, allow doctoral students to see one another as learning partners toward achieving success (Mardjetko & White Prosser, 2022; Noonan et al., 2007). In alignment with social constructivism, reciprocal mentorships can arise from these informal interactions between students navigating similar experiences simultaneously. When a willingness to seek camaraderie and collaboration is present, active dialogue and shared critical reflection inform the co-construction of knowledge through collective learning experiences (Garza, 2020). Each member engaging in these behaviours takes turns to shine as an expert in their own domain, and, over time, a reciprocal mentorship is established.

However, reciprocity in mentorship is not just about showcasing individual strengths; it is about building capacity and empowering each other to navigate the intricate terrain of academic pursuits. Mardjetko and White Prosser (2022) shed light on this, emphasizing that having candid conversations, producing desired results, and building capacity within members is essential. Additionally, all members must attend to power dynamics. As Garza (2020) notes, true reciprocity thrives in an environment where authenticity reigns supreme and power differentials are acknowledged and balanced. As these facets intertwine, they weave a tapestry of equitable participation and rich relationship-building filled with transformative potential, where knowledge is not just exchanged but co-created through ongoing conversation (Flores-Scott & Nerad, 2012). In this way, reciprocal mentorships between classmates become more than an exchange of ideas; the relationships themselves serve as a conduit for deep learning (Groen & Kawalilak, 2020). Within the nurturing embrace of reciprocal mentorship, individuals embark on a journey of self-discovery and transformation.

Illeris (2016) aptly captures this essence, painting a picture of learning that transcends cognitive, affective, and social boundaries. Reciprocal mentorship is not just about imparting knowledge but also fostering continued growth and nurturing the seeds of transformation. Within the safety and comfort of such relationships, individuals are supported to self-reflect and experience various degrees of change, undergoing holistic transformative learning (Illeris, 2016).

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Throughout our roundtable discussion, we intend to weave together our stories and existing literature to illustrate how reciprocal mentorship sustained each of us through our doctoral journeys, reflecting upon moments where the role of mentor and mentee was blurred as learning flowed freely within our trio. We will delve into these anecdotes to explain how this dynamic shaped our process and research, and how we view ourselves. Through our shared reflection, we hope to shed light on the profound impact

such connections can have on academic spaces. From refining research methodologies to nurturing individual well-being, the symbiotic relationships that we established have served as a cornerstone for our achievements. Based on the success we have found, we recognize the importance of fostering similar bonds. Thus, we will offer suggestions born from our lived experiences that can guide educators and students as they work to cultivate these invaluable connections, whether within physical classroom spaces or online.

CONCLUSION

Reciprocal peer mentorship is not just beneficial but transformative in the realm of doctoral studies. It is a force that not only enhances the quality of research but also nurtures the researcher's whole being. Through this dialogue, we hope to inspire others to embrace this relational strategy, fostering a community where learning and growth flourish hand in hand.

"I'm new to this ..." *"One time I had this happen to me ..."* *"Help me understand."*
"Have you thought about this idea?" *"That's not the way I see it."* *"Tell me more."* *"I didn't think about that!"* *"Maybe I should consider ..."* *"You are better at this than you think."* *"I will light a candle for you."* *"Congratulations, Doctor!"*

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RURAL COMMUNITIES AS LEARNING COMMUNITIES: EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL

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Abstract

Rural communities in Canada are undergoing a social, economic, cultural, and demographic transformation, and rural life in the twenty-first century is changing rapidly as a result (Banack & Pohler, 2023; Foster & Jarman, 2022). The purpose of this roundtable is to explore how collective participation and inclusive rural development can be fostered through community-based adult education principles, practices, and programs.

Keywords: Rural communities, community-based adult education

INTRODUCTION

Canada's rural communities are becoming increasingly more diverse (Bollman, 2023), continue to experience the out-migration of young adults to urban centres (Sano et al., 2020), and are aging faster than urban and suburban communities (Channer et al., 2021). Rural schools have been identified as an important tool for attending to the complex challenges faced by small peripheral places by fostering social cohesion (Domingo-Peñafiel et al., 2022), developing responsible citizenship (Seto, 2022), and promoting rural economic revitalization (Hadley, 2022). While the formal education of children and youth is an integral component in the development of sustainable rural societies, the potential role of informal community-based adult education to contribute to the socio-cultural development of Canada's rural communities is yet to be explored. This roundtable discussion speaks to this gap.

RECLAIMING COMMUNITY-BASED ADULT EDUCATION IN RURAL SOCIETIES

Increasingly, contemporary mainstream discourses of adult education focus predominantly on education and skills development tailored for the labour market, often dismissing the field's historical roots in community and community development (Evans et al., 2022; Sousa, 2021). However, while it often goes unrecognized, adult learning, especially in its informal manifestations, substantially contributes to citizen participation within a vibrant democracy (English & Mayo, 2012; Foley, 1999; Newman, 2006). Against the backdrop of profound changes reshaping rural communities (Foster & Jarman, 2022), the imperative to reclaim community-based adult education becomes evident (Evans et al., 2022), particularly concerning its resonance with people living in rural settings. By creating a common space for learning, this roundtable aims to explore the interplay between community-based adult education, inclusive rural development, and the nurturing of rural citizenship.

Community-based adult education, often referred to as critical pedagogy, popular education, or emancipatory education, is described as a cultural interaction between educators and learners, one that is deeply rooted in the dynamics of dialogue and collaborative knowledge production, as advocated by Paulo Freire (1973, 2006). Initially formulated as a counterpoint to conventional educational systems, the essence of emancipatory education lies in its celebration of adult learning as a democratic and experiential practice within communities and of its role in catalyzing mutual exchanges that are meant to foster societal change (Torres, 2013). This approach begins by tapping into the existing knowledge that adult learners bring to the educational setting, subsequently promoting pedagogies that provoke critical thought with the ultimate goal of effecting personal and collective transformation (Brookfield & Holst, 2011). Unlike prevalent discussions surrounding lifelong learning that centre on vocational training and skill enhancement to meet the demands of the labour market, critical perspectives on community-based adult education introduce an alternative narrative. Within this narrative, the notion of citizenship is reimagined as a vision of collective engagement within a broader social context, thereby transcending the confines of purely market-driven ideals and education geared towards human resource management (English & Mayo, 2012; Lima, 2022). The notion of lifelong learning is thus expanded to encompass a more holistic outlook whereby learners are regarded as individuals equipped with the capacity to actively and critically participate in public discourse (Fraser, 1990). Consequently, learners are thus seen as active contributors to the mechanisms of an ever-evolving democracy (English & Mayo, 2012; hooks, 1994).

The history of adult education in Canada is marked by a struggle to build what has been referred to as a just learning society, emphasising how adult learning takes place informally within the domain of everyday social interaction, including most notably within civil society (Welton, 2005). This historical narrative of adult learning in Canada has been characterized by the efforts of those on the periphery to challenge and expand societal discourse, and underscores the liberating influence of pedagogy, especially among marginalized groups (Perry, 2021, 2022; Welton, 2013). While this commitment to community building arguably lies at the heart of Canadian adult education practice and scholarship (Sousa, 2021), the implications of this in relation to contemporary rural communities are rarely considered (Neustaeter, 2015). Rural communities are complex and dynamic and are shaped by social, economic, political, and cultural factors that include migration, geographic mobility, aging populations, and economic development (Balfour et al., 2008; Banack & Pohler, 2023; Lionais et al., 2020; Marsden, 2006; Woods, 2010). Common notions about rural areas being culturally homogeneous can mask the wide range of identities and experiences that actually shape rural life (Banack & Pohler, 2023), especially with increasing Indigenous populations and more immigrants and refugees settling in Canada's rural areas (Bollman, 2023). To honour this reality, for this roundtable, rural communities are viewed as entities that are both socially constructed through everyday social interactions that produce shared meanings and collective identities, as well as physical entities that are embedded in geographic place (Liepins, 2000). This relational and embedded perspective on rural communities foregrounds ideas of connectivity and

interdependency, and allows for an exploration of rural spaces as heterogeneous, contested, and ever-changing societies (Woods, 2023). It also facilitates an understanding of adult learning that is socially situated and as something that is a fundamental aspect of people's participation in the lived social world (Lave, 2019; Lave & Packer, 2008; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

CONCLUSION

By focusing on the importance of situated and practice-based learning through the coming together of community members to foster connection across cultures and demographics (Shan & Walter, 2015), the roundtable endeavors to shed light on the capacity of rural communities to emerge as vibrant learning communities.

Consequently, this roundtable will explore the pivotal role played by informal adult learning in the ever-evolving and continuous negotiation and formation of rural places in the Canadian context (Neustaeter, 2015; Woods, 2007).

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REDEFINING PLAR/RAC PRACTICES IN A QUEBEC POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTION TO PROMOTE SOCIAL JUSTICE: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON OUR CURRENT PRACTICES.

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Abstract

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) have significant potential to promote social justice in adult education because it can be a tool for closing equity gaps in postsecondary achievement and positively impact students of color and lower-income adult learners (Klein-Collins et al., 2020). In this round table, three pedagogical counselors at an anglophone college in Quebec will share their experiences with PLAR/RAC in adult education. They will also share the challenges and difficulties that adult learners have while demonstrating their acquired competencies and how they overcome them. Additionally, they will show how Champlain College Saint-Lambert has implemented unique innovative practices that support adult learners in PLAR/RAC. Finally, they will discuss the challenge of incorporating critical PLAR/RAC practices with the purpose of finding new ways of doing PLAR/RAC that could potentially contribute to advancing social justice at the College level for adult learners.

INTRODUCTION

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) have significant potential to promote social justice in adult education because it can be a tool for closing equity gaps in postsecondary achievement and positively impact students of color and Lower-income adult learners (Klein-Collins et al., 2020; Osman, R., 2004)). However, PLAR practices are still very limited in some settings, such as universities. In Quebec, post-secondary institutions such as CEGEPs have successfully implemented PLAR services (known as Recognition of Acquired Competencies, or RAC) throughout the province. At Champlain College Saint-Lambert, RAC services are available in the Continuing Education Department for adult learners in two government accredited certifications: DEC (Diploma of Collegial Studies) and AEC (Attestation of Collegial Studies) (Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur du Québec, 2021).

A program done through the RAC pathway looks different from what we think of as traditional education. Instead of teachers, there are content specialists, and instead of taking courses, candidates attend short seminars that focus on a particular competency, and then they are evaluated on that competency by the content specialist. Evaluations can take many forms, such as a demonstration, a written response, or an interview. Evaluations can be invigilated by a content specialist or candidates can download materials, work on it on their own time, and then submit it when they are ready - it depends on the program and the evaluation.

Candidates who are suitable for the RAC pathway have experience in a particular field, but they do not have a certification in that field. Because they already have experience in the field, they do not need to complete a whole training program to learn something new, but rather, they need validation of their already existing competencies.

We are three pedagogical counselors helping to deliver RAC services in the Continuing Education Department at Champlain College Saint-Lambert. The role of pedagogical counselor can vary widely, depending on the institution and the department. Our role in delivering RAC services is to oversee the program for which we are responsible. This includes recruiting new candidates, creating a schedule of seminars and evaluations, approving timesheets, supporting candidates in completing their program, and working with content specialists to update evaluations, to name a few of the tasks.

DISCUSSION

Benefits and Practices of PLAR/RAC

PLAR/RAC services allow Quebec residents or newcomers residing in Quebec to have their prior experiences, informal learning or foreign credentials recognized and validated with the purpose of getting an official Quebec certification. Normally, adult learners look for RAC services because they want to advance their career and the lack of certification is a barrier. For example, there are institutional barriers that prevent them from finding a job because their credentials or experiences from another country are not recognized. In this case, the RAC pathway is an efficient option to get a recognized certification.

Another benefit is that it is cost-effective because it is largely financed by the province of Quebec (Moss, 2018). Candidates do not need to pay for a whole training program, and they can also usually stay in their current job while doing the program at their own pace. This means that they can usually get their certification more quickly and will be able to benefit from it sooner.

Additionally, it recognizes the experience or credentials that candidates bring with them from other countries or from prior informal experiences. Coming to a new country and learning that your work or education experience is not recognized is a demoralizing experience, and RAC services can help bolster a feeling of belonging in a new country or recognize that they have already contributed to a particular field without having received prior recognition. This ties into the history of RAC in Quebec, which was supported by the feminist movement to demand recognition of prior learning that was acquired through work in the home in order to access higher education (Berger, 1991, cited in Alves, Schmidt-Lauff, Doutor, and Campos, 2020).

Finally, the unique method of delivering RAC services that Champlain College Saint-Lambert offers is helpful to candidates, particularly those who are new to Canada or returning to school after a lengthy break. In our department, we offer seminars and class activities linked to particular competencies that candidates can access if they choose. These short, three-hour seminars or activities are designed to provide a

reminder of the main aspects of a competency. Importantly, they are not designed to teach candidates anything new - for example, candidates will not be able to learn everything about using and offering technical support for Microsoft Excel in three hours. However, having these short seminars or class activities help give candidates confidence that they will be successful in their evaluations and gives them a chance to meet and network with content specialists in their field. This contrasts with many other institutions, whose services offer just the evaluation without the seminar or class activities.

Limitations and Reflections on PLAR/RAC

While there is great potential for PLAR/RAC to promote social justice for adult learners, it is also clear that adult education goes beyond skills and competencies for employment. The challenge for adult educators and education administrators is to incorporate critical experiential learning that goes beyond training. Developing assessment tools that promote critical reflection and meaning-making is a strong way to develop critical awareness. It is also crucial that PLAR/RAC practices take into account a variety of knowledge backgrounds and that assessors/content specialists be capable of identifying, accepting and valuing different forms of learning and knowledge (Browning, 2020; Conrad, 2013).

PLAR/RAC can also be seen as a conservative practice because it contributes to a system of needing ever-increasing credentials instead of questioning the status quo by challenging power. Post-secondary institutions, pedagogical counselors, and content specialists/assessors all play a role as gatekeepers in making decisions on what counts as knowledge and learning, what kind of knowledge and learning is acceptable, and most importantly what kind of assessment and evaluation tools are appropriate to measure learning and knowledge (Browning, 2020; Conrad, 2013). Developing self-awareness and promoting social justice-oriented practices in PLAR/RAC is a way of challenging the status quo.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that PLAR/RAC is an important route for adult learners to engage with their education to have their life/work experience validated. Additionally, it promotes equity by recognizing and providing a faster pathway for foreign trained newcomers to be certified and integrated into the job market, which is so important to settle down in a new country. PLAR/RAC is also a powerful instrument to promote social justice because it also challenges established assumptions of what counts as learning and who has the right to formal education. As PLAR/RAC practitioners in a post-secondary institution, we believe that PLAR/RAC in Quebec has great potential to promote social justice in adult education, but it also needs to address important challenges along the way.

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REDEFINING ADULT EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY: CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS, OVERCOMING RESISTANCE AND CREATING MORE COMPELLING NARRATIVES

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Abstract

This Roundtable will explore new approaches to adult education for sustainability, with the aim of challenging old assumptions, highlighting and overcoming resistance, and working toward more compelling narratives that will resonate with adult learners.

Keywords: adult education for sustainability, Chinese traditional culture, ecovillages, local wild food

INTRODUCTION

Across Canada and around the world, humans are facing rampant unsustainability in the form of climate destabilization, water scarcity, plastic pollution, uncontrollable wildfires, income disparity, ultra-processed food, neo-colonization, growing polarization, increasing discrimination and ongoing war. These threats make it clear that becoming more sustainable is one of the most important interdisciplinary projects of our time. However, sustainability does not come naturally to human beings – it must be learned (Sumner, 2007). This learning needs to be life-wide and life-long in order to mitigate the worst effects and potential threats to human and more-than-human health, well-being and survival from the repercussions for our planet of living unsustainably (O'Connor & Kenter, 2019; Yin et al., 2023). Adults can learn sustainability in many places through formal, informal, and non-formal means, at home, at work, while traveling, in communities, online, in educational institutions, through land-based pedagogies, via policy documents, and in urban and rural settings. Unfortunately, adults may often resist making the changes to adopt more sustainable ways of living and working for fear of losing comfort and convenience and the implications of scarcity (McCowen, 2023). How can adult education challenge assumptions and overcome resistance while transforming and creating more compelling narratives and engagement in learning sustainability?

In keeping with the 2024 CASAE Conference theme of “Redefining Adult Education”, this roundtable features participants who put forward their ideas about the roles adult education can play in helping us to learn to live more sustainably – environmentally, socially, culturally and economically. This includes a plurality of perspectives entering into dialogue on how the field of adult education not only is uniquely positioned but also can better position itself through (re)developing pedagogy and practice to support

learners in a world that is more than ever being defined and redefined by the growing climate crisis. This includes both theoretical as well as methodological discussions about how to improve research, teaching and learning about sustainability in the field of adult education.

ILLUSTRATION 1. EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL OF CHINESE TRADITIONAL CULTURE FOR TEACHING A MORE HOLISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF SUSTAINABILITY

Mengyuan Guo will explore the intersection of adult education and sustainability through the lens of traditional Chinese culture, specifically Confucianism. This perspective offers a non-western understanding of sustainability that encompasses both environmental and cultural dimensions. Confucianism, renowned for its profound local and global influence, is viewed as a way of learning, learning to be human (Tu, 1998). The presentation will delve into the transformative potential of Confucian ecological ethics and moral self-cultivation in fostering value and behavioral reform related to sustainability challenges. By integrating Confucian principles with adult learning and educational theories, the presentation aims to promote a more comprehensive understanding of sustainability for individuals and collectives.

ILLUSTRATION 2. WILD AT HEART: HOW TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY OCCUR AT THE LOCAL WILD FOOD CHALLENGE

Ingrid Kajzer Mitchell and Will Low will explore the processes of adult learning that occur during a wild food festival, which might spark a greater understanding and appreciation of nature and sustainability. Our case study considers how relational learning processes at the festival contribute to instrumental and communicative learning, which in turn can lead to transformative learning. We draw on interviews and personal observations with festival attendees and organizers at the Local Wild Food Challenge (LWFC) - a culinary adventure competition. This provides empirical evidence of the multiple ways in which multi-sensory festival activities and experiences enable attendees to engage in different transformative learning processes.

ILLUSTRATION 3. ECOLOGIES OF SUSTAINABILITY LEARNING AND PRACTICE: LESSONS FROM FOUR ECOVILLAGE CASES

Lisa Mychajluk will pose considerations for educator-facilitators who aim to foster spaces for learning sustainability. These considerations stem from case study research of four ecovillages engaged in sustainability education, which suggests that learning sustainability necessarily occurs in, with, and from communities practicing sustainable living, and further, that such learning and the environment are indivisible. Findings align with theoretical understandings of adult education for sustainability as a constructive,

organic, dynamic, relational, and continuous process of simultaneously *learning our way out of* and *into* sustainable living, involving participation, negotiation, and capacity-building by agents engaged in constructing such lifeways.

CONCLUSION

Although under-researched, the topic of adult education for sustainability is quickly gaining traction as we face the undeniable consequences of our effects on the earth, and each other. More research and practice at the interface of adult education and sustainability will help to redefine and emphasize the relevance of adult education in the Anthropocene. This learning and scholarship must be open to recognizing and appreciating diverse perspectives and worldviews, as reflected in the examples from contributors to this roundtable. More open-minded approaches and perspectives are the means to recognize possibilities and devise strategies for challenging our assumptions, overcoming resistance and forming the basis for creating more compelling narratives for the future. These three calls to action constitute important priorities specifically in adult education for sustainability and have wider relevance and applicability for redefining adult education as we know it now and for the future.

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DÉVELOPPER ET DÉFINIR L'INTÉGRATION SOCIALE ET PROFESSIONNELLE D'UN POINT DE VUE ÉDUCATIF AU QUÉBEC : UNE AUTRE FAÇON D'AFFIRMER LA PERTINENCE DE L'ÉDUCATION DES ADULTES

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Résumé

Incorporant les perspectives de personnes praticiennes et chercheuses, cette table ronde offre une occasion d'échanger autour des thèmes suivants : 1) contours du champ de l'éducation des adultes au Québec, 2) professionnalisation de l'intégration sociale et professionnelle (ISP) et 3) conditions pour la formation du personnel enseignant en ISP. La discussion sera ponctuée d'exemples tirés de la pratique, du développement d'un nouveau programme de formation ainsi que de recherches récentes menées au Québec. La table ronde se conclura par l'identification de pistes de recherche à prioriser pour soutenir le développement et la professionnalisation de l'intégration sociale et professionnelle d'un point de vue éducatif au Québec.

Mots clés: intégration sociale et professionnelle, formation générale des adultes, formation initiale et continue du personnel enseignant, professionnalisation

INTRODUCTION

Depuis longtemps, l'éducation des adultes s'intéresse à un espace scientifique vaste qui couvre des situations et des pratiques diversifiées en s'appuyant sur d'ambitieuses visées. Bien que de nombreuses définitions cohabitent pour désigner ce champ d'études (Fejes et Nylander, 2019), les chercheurs et chercheuses, tout comme les personnes praticiennes, parviennent assez bien à s'identifier à lui et à déployer ses pratiques dans un espace suffisamment défini au Québec. Cependant, l'émergence de nouveaux domaines de spécialisation à proximité de celui de l'éducation des adultes et la montée en popularité de notions nouvelles – éducation tout au long de la vie, éducation tout au large de la vie (Wildemeersch et Olesen, 2012) - laissent voir que les contours du champ de l'éducation des adultes doivent possiblement être repensés, mieux justifiés ou réaffirmés. Or, définir ou redéfinir l'éducation des adultes ne peut se réaliser sans un dialogue constant et renouvelé entre les personnes issues de la pratique et celles issues de la recherche.

Combinant les perspectives de personnes praticiennes et chercheuses, cette table ronde offre une occasion d'échanger autour des thèmes suivants : 1) contours du champ de l'éducation des adultes au Québec, 2) professionnalisation de l'intégration sociale et professionnelle à la Formation générale des adultes (FGA) et 3) conditions pour la formation du personnel enseignant en ISP. La discussion sera ponctuée d'exemples tirés

de la pratique, du développement d'un nouveau programme de formation ainsi que de recherches récentes menées au Québec.

THÈMES ABORDÉS

Cette table ronde s'intéresse, tout d'abord, aux facteurs émergents qui modifient les contours du champ de l'éducation des adultes au Québec. Par exemple, la dernière *Politique gouvernementale d'éducation des adultes et de formation continue* (MEQ, 2002) a plus de 20 ans, ce qui entraîne un certain manque de direction dans le développement de nouvelles initiatives. Des compressions importantes au niveau du financement de la formation tout au long de la vie, que ce soit en milieu communautaire, en milieu formel d'éducation ou en entreprise, ont aussi limité la portée d'action du champ ces dernières années (Roussel, 2023). Voyer, Potvin et Bourdon (2014, p. 200) ajoutent que :

Plusieurs développements récents au secteur de la formation générale des adultes, – les changements démographiques, le renouvellement du curriculum de formation, la modification des règles d'autorisation pour l'enseignement – ont bouleversé l'exercice du travail des enseignants.

De plus, Voyer, Potvin et Bourdon (2014) notent que le sous-financement de la recherche dans le champ de l'éducation et de la formation des adultes par les organismes subventionnaires du Québec et du Canada, fragilise aussi l'avancement des connaissances et les liens entre la recherche et la pratique. Malgré certains efforts de financement des dernières années, provenant notamment du Québec, pour la production de recherche sur la réussite éducative, la situation persiste

La FGA fait partie du système d'éducation formelle au Québec, sous la responsabilité du ministère de l'Éducation (Voyer, Potvin et Bourdon, 2014). La FGA s'incarne à travers les centres de services scolaires de la province et plus spécifiquement dans des centres d'éducation des adultes, ainsi que d'autres organisations avec qui ces centres ont des partenariats (p. ex. un organisme communautaire, une entreprise de formation, ou un centre d'hébergement et de soins de longue durée). Elle se situe à l'ordre secondaire et s'adresse aux personnes âgées de plus de 16 ans, âge à partir duquel les personnes ne sont plus assujetties à l'obligation de fréquentation scolaire. Elle compte plusieurs services d'enseignement (p. ex. pour l'obtention d'un diplôme d'études secondaires) et services éducatifs (p. ex. éducation populaire) (Voyer, Mercier, Ouellet et Ouellet, 2023).

Une expérience qui témoigne de la pertinence du dialogue entre la pratique et la recherche est le développement et la professionnalisation de l'intégration sociale et professionnelle d'un point de vue éducatif au Québec. Déjà mise en œuvre en milieu communautaire, l'intégration sociale et professionnelle est bien présente dans les services d'enseignement à l'Intégration sociale (IS) et à l'Intégration socioprofessionnelle (ISP) au secteur de la FGA (MEES, 2018).

Dans le programme d'études *Intégration socioprofessionnelle : Domaine de la vie professionnelle* (MEES, 2018, p. 10) il est précisé que ce programme : « [...] constitue une réponse à la nécessité de diversifier l'offre de formation auprès des adultes qui désirent intégrer le marché du travail et se maintenir en emploi. » Du côté de l'IS, le programme d'études

[...] permet l'atteinte d'une plus grande autonomie, les compétences développées favorisent l'accomplissement des activités courantes et l'exercice des rôles sociaux susceptibles d'être confiés à une citoyenne ou un citoyen membre d'une famille, producteur ou consommateur de biens et de services et membre d'une collectivité (Ministère de l'Éducation, 2022, p. 5).

Dans les deux programmes d'études, les enseignantes et les enseignants ont un rôle d'accompagnement, puisque c'est la personne apprenante qui doit être au centre de la formation (MEES, 2018; Ministère de l'Éducation, 2022). Le travail des personnes enseignantes en IS et ISP, selon les programmes d'études, ne se situent pas dans une vision traditionnelle de l'éducation selon laquelle la transmission des savoirs est privilégiée. En fait, les deux programmes misent plutôt sur le développement de compétences à travers l'expérience et la résolution de problème. Dans le programme d'études d'ISP (MEES, 2018, p. 36), on mentionne :

L'enseignante ou l'enseignant exerce une fonction déterminante dans la construction de connaissances par l'adulte. Les mises en situation contextualisées sont capitales pour lui permettre d'utiliser les ressources dont il dispose déjà, pour les opposer aux éléments complexes de la situation et les adapter en vue d'élever son degré d'adaptation à la situation.

De ce fait, le personnel enseignant en IS et ISP doivent faire preuve d'une très grande capacité d'adaptation et d'une connaissance pointue des besoins, des conditions et situations de vie ainsi que des ressources offertes aux personnes avec qui elles et ils travaillent. Les personnes apprenantes en IS et ISP sont des publics très variés : des personnes âgées en CHLD ou des adultes avec une déficience intellectuelle et un trouble du spectre de l'autisme en IS, en passant par des jeunes adultes ayant interrompu leurs études (« décrocheurs »), des personnes issues de l'immigration récente, des jeunes mères, des personnes en situation de précarité ayant des défis d'ordre personnel (p. ex. santé mentale) en ISP et bien d'autres groupes.

Comme pour l'ensemble du personnel enseignant du système éducatif québécois (Harnois et Sirois, 2022), il y a une pénurie d'enseignantes et d'enseignants en IS et en ISP à la FGA, ce qui pousse les milieux à embaucher du personnel dit « non légalement qualifié ». Il y a plus de dix ans, Voyer et al. (2012) notaient déjà qu'une proportion importante du personnel enseignant en FGA n'était pas légalement qualifié, ce qui engendrait de la précarité d'emploi et des situations sous-optimales en classe dues au

manque de connaissances sur l'andragogie et l'approche individualisée. Considérant les attentes des programmes de formation ainsi que la vulnérabilité et la grande diversité des publics visés, la formation initiale et continue du personnel enseignant est importante.

À ce jour, il n'existe aucune formation universitaire visant spécifiquement à qualifier le personnel enseignant en IS et ISP alors que ce personnel enseigne à des adultes ayant des situations de vie complexes et des besoins très variés. Ces enseignantes et ces enseignants doivent, entre autres, bien saisir la nature éducative de leur intervention, qui se distingue d'une intervention purement psychosociale ou de relation d'aide. Voyer et ses collègues (2012, p. 128) proposaient que les voies de formation universitaire se basent sur « le champ d'études de l'éducation et la formation des adultes (andragogie) tout en prenant en compte l'état des connaissances propres aux différentes didactiques. » L'Université du Québec à Montréal s'est engagée dans une démarche de création d'une offre de formation pour combler ce besoin. Il sera question de l'avancement des travaux ainsi que de la réaction des milieux de pratique face à celle-ci.

CONCLUSION

Nous constatons le manque de recherche scientifique sur l'intégration sociale et professionnelle d'un point de vue éducatif au Québec. La présente table ronde offre une opportunité de définir ce domaine de spécialisation en développement et d'explorer les contours du champ d'études en éducation des adultes. Les panélistes tenteront finalement d'établir des pistes de recherche à prioriser pour soutenir la démarche de professionnalisation déjà entamée dans ce domaine.

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SYMPOSIA

FOR THE PEOPLE: DOROTHY SMITH AND ADULT EDUCATION

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Abstract

This symposium highlights contributions from the forthcoming special issue of the Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education, *For the People: Dorothy Smith and Adult Education*. We focus on how her reformulation of sociological inquiry has influenced the political consciousness, theoretical orientation, and empirical work of generations of adult education scholars. We highlight the theoretical interpretation of Smith's work in our field, an empirical application of institutional ethnography in an informal adult learning context, the merging of PAR and IE in a grassroots struggle, and a personal reflection on the influence of Smith's work on the development of feminist and political analysis in our field.

Keywords: Dorothy Smith, sociology, knowledge, institutional ethnography, Marx(ism/ist), feminist

INTRODUCTION

The recent passing of Professor Dorothy E. Smith is an apt moment to reflect upon the influence of her tremendous body of scholarship within the field of adult education. Professor Smith's sociology for people had a profound influence on adult education and the sociology of education more broadly. The approach to inquiry developed by Dr. Smith, and her collaborators, allows researchers to connect the local, including forms of experience and consciousness, to trans-local social relations and to understand more deeply how ideology and power coordinate the everyday reality in which adult learners live, work, learn, and struggle. She has influenced not only the study of organizations and institutions, but a multiplicity of modes of resistance from policy change to discursive struggle to community-based mobilization. Her development of institutional ethnography as an activist ethnography allowed adult education researchers another means through which to make transparent the political nature of all inquiry and to connect with communities through pursuing meaningful knowledge that advanced demands for social change.

In 2024, the Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education will publish a special issue on Dorothy E. Smith's contributions to our field entitled *For the People: Dorothy E. Smith and Adult Education*. The special issue includes articles from Himani Bannerji, Sara Carpenter & Shahrzad Mojab, Shauna Butterwick, Hye-Su Kuk, Jayne Malenfant & Naomi Nichols, and Mitchell McLarnon. This symposium highlights four articles from this

special issue, focusing on how her reformulation of sociological inquiry has influenced the political consciousness, theoretical orientation, and empirical work of generations of adult education scholars. We highlight the theoretical interpretation of Smith's work in our field, an empirical application of institutional ethnography in an informal adult learning context, the merging of PAR and IE in a grassroots struggle, and a personal reflection on the influence of Smith's work on the development of feminist and political analysis in our field.

Smith not only challenged the conceptual economy of sociological analysis, but persistent problems of reification, fetishism, and ideology within even critical scholarship and analysis. Those who imagine adult education as an essential process in global struggles for radical social change will find in her work necessary tools for reflexivity, accountability to communities of knowledge, and the connectivity of local places with trans-local relations of power. In addition to discussing the special issue, this symposium will pose key questions for consideration and discussion by attendees, asking us to seriously consider what Smith's critique of sociology means for the redefining of adult education in our contemporary moment. Smith's work opens an important conversation about not just what we think about in our work as adult educators, but how we think and how modes of conceptualization open or foreclose our understanding of dynamic, dialectical social relations.

SARA AND SHAHRZAD SPEAK TO MARXIST FEMINIST PRACTICE

Dorothy E. Smith's first book was entitled *Feminism and Marxism: A Place to Go, A Way to Begin* (1977). Her own work was characterized by the argument she continuously made to scholars: knowledge of the social is social knowledge, emerging through the relational forms of being and knowing that we create in our communities, our homes, and our institutions. From the outset, her work was based in the struggle to address feminist questions within Marx-ist movements and scholarship, however her explicit arguments concerning the struggle to actualize Marx's epistemology in an empirical mode of inquiry (Smith, 2004), and shift sociology away from its reifying ontology, are often lost in technocratic and constructivist readings of her later work in the development of institutional ethnography (Bannerji, 2022). Much like Marx himself, this form of engagement with the corpus of her writing results in a truncated interpretation, limiting the application of her work.

In this paper, reprinted from our 2017 collection *Revolutionary Learning: Marxism, Feminism, and Knowledge*, we argue for an intentionally Marxist feminist reading of Smith's scholarship. We locate her within a tradition of other dialectical, historical, materialist, and feminist readers of Marx, who have investigated, above all else, his *method* of inquiry. Following Marx and Engels' critique of idealist and 'contemplative' materialist modes of inquiry in *The German Ideology* (1968), Smith repeatedly argued for an 'ontological shift' in sociological scholarship. This shift was grounded in addressing the ideological and reified modes of reasoning that produced concepts and categories that "render invisible the actualities of people's activities in which those

relations arise and by which they are ordered” (Smith, 1990 p. 36–7). The project was to shift sociology away from the objectification of people and towards a sociology that was *for* people; that allowed them to make visible the forms of activity, social organization, and power that ultimately produce differentiated, hierarchical, and objectifying social relations.

We argue that within Smith’s scholarship is a path to the study of praxis. Through institutional ethnography we can understand ideological modes of reasoning and doing, described by Smith in her extensive theorization of how institutions coordinate the ‘doings’ of people, and which can also be understood reproductive or uncritical modes of praxis as described by Paula Allman (2010). However, through doing the work to produce forms of knowledge about social relations in order to change them, we can also understand forms of critical praxis, that is the ways in which we learn in and through struggle (Kinsman, 2020). We argue that Smith’s work offers adult education a way to conceptualize and understand learning as a social relation and process and to reject reifying, objectifying, and individualizing modes of analysis that fragment people from the social relations that constitute their lives.

SHAUNA SPEAKS TO RELATIONS OF ACTIVISM & LEARNING

I have used Dorothy Smith’s ideas as an interpretive framework guiding my reflections on my geopolitical location, earlier life and career, as well as my academic journey. Her theorizing and methodology have been transformative, particularly in relation to gaining deeper insight into my orientation towards community-engaged scholarship (CES) which has involved working a particular paradox, that of undertaking CES within an institution which ignores and devalues its power and contribution to knowledge.

Smith regarded women as subjects (not objects) and experts of their lives, theorizing how women’s local everyday experiences are connected to complex relations of ruling. In my earlier career, feminist activism and academic life, I have frequently experienced what Smith called a peculiar eclipsing’; as she noted: “our interests, our ways of knowing the world ... [have] not been represented” (1987, p. 18).

Smith explored local-extra-local relations through her feminist methodology called Institutional Ethnography or IE (2023). This approach begins with women’s everyday/everynight worlds and continues to examine the extra-local webs of ruling relations shaping the everyday. Texts were of particular importance; Smith regarded them as material and always existing in social relations. Texts “play their part in ongoing sequences of action coordinating them with action going on at other places or at other times (Smith & Turner, 2014, p. 5).

Smith’s notions of authorized or ‘boss texts’ helped me to make visible the power of particular boss texts (academic CVs and so on), mandated in the tenure and promotion (P&T) process. Regarding these texts as key instruments of ruling relations has helped me to recognize how the judgment of my academic labours, reflected exclusionary and narrow institutional notions of scholarship, not my own poor performance. In my own

ongoing process of decolonization Smith's ideas regarding boss texts have also illuminated the persistence of dominant narratives which erase Canada's colonial politics. This 'single story' has shaped who I am, a white cis-gendered settler who has lived most of her life in settler ignorance and innocence, disconnected for the most part, from the land and my more than human relations. As Nadeau (2020) points out, settler decolonization involves "the body, spirit, mind and emotions, [are all] necessary" (p. 264).

Guided by Smith's ideas, through my reflective process, I have acquired new insights, making visible interconnected webs of ruling relations. Smith encouraged me to explore and narrate my everyday. As she argued "actualities remain to be spoken or written: they don't speak for themselves." (2003, p. 62)

MITCHELL SPEAKS TO THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF GARDENS

In this session, I bring into view the social relations that emerged from an informal adult education internship/community-based garden project in Montreal. Guided by institutional ethnography (Smith, 1999; 2005), I investigated different ways gardens are being textually and politically used: to advance global sustainability goals; to enable adult education and employability training; to support local food security programs; and to contribute to neighbourhood "greening" and "revitalization." I traced my own and others' experiential knowledge into the vast political and institutional terrain of relevant texts and policies that coordinate our educational and gardening efforts, paying attention to the cumbersome bureaucratic work that enables the physical labour often associated with gardening. Through this tracing, I extend sociological interpretations of policy and governance issues in relation to neoliberal funding schemes that enables adult education and gardening in community contexts while constraining the overall social and environmental justice potential of these kinds of projects.

The interpretations that I share are based on years of fieldwork that I conducted as part of a broader inquiry on the social and environmental relations that emerged from school and community gardening in Montreal. My findings were grouped into four main themes that shape garden possibilities: funding, labour, land, and history. For the purpose of this symposia session, I will discuss funding and labour as key garden considerations through my ongoing community-based research with a local organization whose mandate is to support people experiencing homelessness, food insecurity, and barriers to education/employment. In collaboration with front-line community-workers, we established an adult education/employment program called *Gardening for Food Security* where the garden served as the central site for project activities (popular education and food production). I used photography, voice memos, field notes, informal conversations and interviews to document issues and institutional contrivances that shaped my gardening work and the gardening work of community workers. Proceeding from people's actual everyday experiences (including my own) working to organize gardening opportunities for social, educational and environmental purposes, my findings contest dominant and over celebratory discourse encircling community gardens while

also attempting to complicate ideas about how gardens in educational and community contexts are beneficial to all.

JAYNE AND NAOMI SPEAK TO IE, PAR, AND CRITICAL ADULT EDUCATION

We highlight the work of the Tio'tiáke/Montreal based Youth Action Research Revolution (YARR) team, who documented the institutional histories of young people experiencing homelessness in Québec and Canada from 2017-2021. The team, made up of the authors and young people with lived experience of housing precarity, undertook a participatory institutional ethnography with other youth navigating homelessness. This work was undertaken in partnership with a youth-serving organization based in Montreal. Interviews with youth focused on their experiences with education, child welfare, healthcare, and criminal justice institutions. The interviews were historical and multi-institutional in focus. Our intention was to discover what these institutions could do differently to prevent youth homelessness. Situated at the intersections of critical adult education (CAE), participatory action research (PAR), and institutional ethnography (IE), we will reflect on our use of IE to ground learning and action within our team. We document the different phases of learning that we undertook, as a means of illustrating how CAE, PAR, and IE can be mutually supportive frameworks for praxis and activist learning. Dorothy E. Smith developed IE as a way to ensure that sociological research was accessible and useful to everyday people; this vision for IE is impossible to realize if people do not actively resist the institutionalizing pressures of post-secondary education. We have found that coupling IE research with a commitment to pedagogy, social action, and care enables us to push back against some of the performative and individualizing rationalities that permeate higher education at this time. We propose that doing IE *with* young people affords unique opportunities for mutual learning – and a means of resisting top-down conceptualization of youth empowerment through participatory research. In our presentation, we will share how we used IE to address our primary research questions *and* also to review some of the problematic institutionalizing processes at work in post-secondary contexts that undermine IE's activist potential. We reflect on the importance of mutual aid as essential to realizing the social justice potential of participatory research. We suggest that co-creating IE research with young adults who have lived experiences of homelessness constitutes a unique opportunity to mobilize CAE values and tangibly support community research that seeks to positively influence the lives of those implicated by the problems we study together.

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ADULT EDUCATION IN THE PROMOTION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING:

ANTI-OPPRESSIVE, TRAUMA-INFORMED, AND MINDFULNESS-BASED PRAXES

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Abstract

This symposium aligns four related studies examining innovations in adult and higher education to promote psychological, social, and community wellbeing through transprofessional (educational, community, clinical) practices in adult education. Each case or study presents an emerging form of praxes helping to redefine adult education in the 21st century. The four papers presented cover specific cases, contexts, and topics relevant to addressing trauma and wellbeing through adult and higher education. They are, in order of presentation: i) Professional and higher education I: Trauma-informed praxis in professional and higher education; ii) Professional and higher education II: Introducing for-credit mindfulness courses; iii) Community-based adult education: Mindfulness and compassion education in response to the cumulative trauma of racism; and iv) Mindfulness as anti-oppressive praxis.

INTRODUCTION

A confluence of factors has resulted in a re-orientation on oppression and wellbeing in adult education. First among these are research on the impacts of identity on oppression (Kira et al., 2021; Munjee & MacPherson, 2023) and of adverse childhood experiences (Leung et al., 2022) as cumulative developmental traumas affecting the lifespan. Added to these are adult distress arising from exposure to traumatic stressors like conflict-affected forced migration (Hou et al., 2020), climate change (Lawrance et al., 2021), and increasing mental health problems in youth aged 18-24 and in college students, particularly in women and transgender and gender non-conforming students, with implications for emerging adult populations (ACHA, 2019, 2022; Campbell et al., 2021; Garriguet, 2021; Wiens et al., 2020). Research indicates traumas are further exacerbated by social issues such as poverty, unemployment, racism, and gender inequity (DeRiviere, 2019), as well as stressors associated with the initial spread of COVID-19 and its aftermath (Etowa et al., 2021).

Because barriers exist to accessing effective mental health services (Moroz et al., 2020), attention has shifted to adult and higher education. Of the 32% of Canadian student respondents to the ACHA (2022) survey who reported a diagnosed clinical anxiety

disorder, only 72% reported contact with a healthcare or mental health practitioner that year. Adult, higher, and professional educational interventions like mindfulness (Hoge et al., 2022), compassion (Munjee & MacPherson, 2023), and trauma-informed practice (Kim et al., 2021) are emerging as viable alternatives to clinical treatments. This has led to considerable interest in the promotion of transprofessional praxes straddling health and educational professions (MacPherson et al., 2022). Given the implications of improving access to health and wellbeing, such innovations are critically important to promoting social justice through education when access is otherwise unevenly distributed and based on income and other privileges.

Despite these current and imminent needs in adult and higher education for strategies and programs to promote mental health, trauma resilience, and wellbeing, there is a dearth of research on the topic in the field. Arguably, of notable exception is the field of professional education, where studies offer many examples of best practices in promoting resilience in the health (e.g., Wald, 2020; Wheeler & Phillips, 2021) and language teaching (e.g., Wilbur & Damji, 2022) professions. To address this gap, this symposium paper considers and presents four research-based studies designed to offer insights into issues, applications, and cases affecting trauma-informed and mindfulness-based praxes in adult and higher education. The following four cases and components are presented: i) Professional and higher education I: Trauma-informed praxis in professional and higher education; ii) Professional and higher education II: Introducing for-credit mindfulness courses; iii) Community-based adult education: Mindfulness and compassion education in response to the cumulative trauma of racism; iv) Women's "liberation" through adult education: Mindfulness as anti-oppressive praxis.

PROFESSIONAL AND HIGHER EDUCATION I: TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE

Trauma-informed pedagogy and practice is an emerging area in the field of higher education with the potential to transform how educators engage with students. Trauma-informed instruction recognizes that past and ongoing trauma can impact student success; it employs strategies to foster a supportive environment, reduce barriers to learning, and address inequities. Research indicates that trauma is prevalent in students conducting post-secondary studies and demonstrates that the severity of trauma symptoms is significantly linked to social issues such as poverty, unemployment, racism, and gender oppression (DeRiviere, 2019). Trauma-informed approaches promote hope, social justice, equity and responds to trauma with empathy, solidarity, and support.

For many adults, trauma is not in the past; it is in the present. As van der Kolk (2014) writes in *The Body Keeps Score*, "trauma is much more than a story about something that happened long ago. The emotions and physical sensations that were imprinted during the trauma are experiences not as memories but as disruptive physical reactions in the present" (p. 206). Given the lifelong impacts of trauma, educators can create opportunities for learning and transformation through students' encounter with suffering. In addition to the individual traumatic and adverse events that many people

experience throughout their lives, there is a growing magnitude of trauma, adversity, crisis, loss, and inequity shaping our world today. In post-secondary contexts, we collectively experienced the traumatic stressors of COVID-19 and the associated global pandemic, which presented professors, staff, and students with new tasks, obstacles, and much emotional labor (Detwyler, 2022). Alongside the pandemic, concurrent violence against racialized people, experiences of war and conflict, climate change, and the discovery of unmarked graves at residential schools in Canada have added another layer of collective and cumulative trauma to student experiences. Studies show that between 66-85% of youth report lifetime traumatic event exposure by the time they reach college (Carello & Thompson, 2022), a rate that may be higher for marginalized groups of students.

As a result, educators need to create learning spaces and methods that are sensitive to the complexities of our current world while fostering resilience, possibility, equity, and belonging. One recent response has been an increase in American literature published on trauma-informed practices and equity-centered approaches in post-secondary education (Carello & Thompson, 2022; Imad, 2020; Stromberg, 2023; Venet, 2021). This presentation and associated research can add a Canadian perspective to this broader literature and conversation about trauma-informed teaching.

This small-scale qualitative research project explored the use of trauma-informed pedagogy with adult learners in British Columbia (BC). The intention was to understand how post-secondary educators are contemplating the impacts of trauma and their responses to trauma in learners. Using a phenomenological approach via interviews and a focus group, we explored the barriers and methods instructors used to identify and respond to trauma and ongoing crises. We investigated the experiences of educators from six different BC institutions and how they supported post-secondary students with trauma, as well as their recommendations regarding how institutions can take actions to become more trauma-informed. To capture the participating educators' experiences, we conducted 12 individual interviews and two focus groups. This research will benefit and support the work of Canadian post-secondary educators, administrators, and students. The presenters, professors in the fields of adult education and social work, also developed an adult education course on trauma-informed pedagogy and practice and will share their experiences in both researching and teaching this topic.

PROFESSIONAL AND HIGHER EDUCATION II: INTRODUCING FOR-CREDIT MINDFULNESS COURSES

The ACHA (2022) survey of students attending 16 Canadian colleges and universities (N=11,322) found 85% of respondents were experiencing moderate to severe psychological distress, 17% reporting "languishing" mental health, and only 5.7% assessed as resilient. Mindfulness, a transprofessional clinical and educational intervention used to address these troubling trends, is supported by mounting clinical and educational evidence indicating that it can reduce mental distress and increase resilience. Mindfulness is demonstrated to help all top five of the 51 listed impediments to academic performance in the ACHA study that were identified by over 30% of the

respondents: procrastination (61%), stress (51.5%), anxiety (43.3%), sleep (31.9%), and depression (30.4%) (pp. 5-6).

Mindfulness practices or courses, including evidence-based standardized courses like mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT), are not new to higher education; however, to date they have tended to be used as informal practices or non-formal courses outside of the academic curriculum, often taught by counsellors or student services. The evidence on record suggests these courses have had challenges, including low enrollment, high attrition (often 50%), and low adherence and engagement in home practices. The researchers, both professors and certified mindfulness teachers, recognized the value of bringing these courses into the curriculum to provide an evidence-based approach to justify dedicating curricular time to learning and practicing mindfulness. They saw potential benefits for student mental health and ultimate application in their personal and professional lives after graduation.

With these needs in mind, this research study was designed to investigate the introduction of two evidence-based mindfulness programs - MBSR and MBCT - as discrete, for-credit upper-level courses in two Canadian universities, each course offered in 12 weeks during the Winter 2024 term with 25 students in each course. The research questions guiding the study investigated: i) the impacts of the course on students' stress and wellness, mindfulness, and academic performance; ii) students' experiences of institutional supports for wellness and of the supports offered through the mindfulness course; and what students learned in such discrete mindfulness courses.

During the first class of the term, a research coordinator presented information about the study to the students in both courses. A comparison group of upper-year undergraduate students who were not enrolled in a for-credit mindfulness course was also recruited through an online participant pool. All participants were asked to complete online surveys assessing their psychosocial and academic functioning at the start, middle, and end of the term, and one month after the term. Participants included 31 people in the mindfulness courses: 18 at University of Waterloo (UW) and 13 at University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) started the study. In addition, 60 UW students were recruited for a comparison group outside of the for-credit mindfulness course and participated in the start-of-term survey and consented to participate in the subsequent surveys. Attrition from the start to the end of term was 19% and 30% for the mindfulness course and non-mindfulness course students, respectively. At the end of the term, students in the mindfulness classes were given the option to contribute their final course reflections anonymously for qualitative analysis, and 23 students consented to do so.

Analysis of covariance (ANCOVAs) examined differences between the groups in final questionnaire scores at the post-term controlling for pre-term scores; supplementary paired sample t-tests were also conducted. Together, the results found that, compared

to students in the comparison group who were not enrolled in a mindfulness course, students in the mindfulness courses reported decreased maladaptive functioning and increased adaptive functioning over the term. Specifically, after controlling for pre-semester levels, students in the mindfulness courses experienced reduced stress ($p < .05$), a reduced sense of feeling isolated in their struggles ($p < .05$), and decreased avoidant coping with regards to academics ($p < .01$). In addition, students in the mindfulness courses experienced increased mindfulness ($p < .05$), increased overall levels of self-compassion ($p < .05$), increased sense of purpose in life ($p < .05$), increased approach coping with regards to academics ($p < .05$), and increased use of self-care practices ($p < .001$). There were no differences between the mindfulness course students and the comparison students with respect to other mental health (e.g., depression, anxiety) and academic (e.g., academic self-efficacy) variables. Thematic analyses will soon be performed on mindfulness students' end-of-course reflections and summarized at the conference.

These findings indicate that for-credit mindfulness courses in higher education can offer specific forms of psychological and academic supports for post-secondary students whether offered as open elective (UFV) or closed professional (UW) credits. Given that both courses were upper-level (designated 400-level) credit, students were disproportionately facing particular stressors associated with program completion. The link between psychological and academic impacts is worth noting as are the presumed benefits - to be determined with the qualitative data analysis - of the added benefits of attendance and participation provided by locating the course inside, rather than outside of, the formal curriculum in higher education contexts.

COMMUNITY-BASED ADULT EDUCATION: MINDFULNESS AND COMPASSION IN RESPONSE TO RACISM

This component presents findings from a qualitative research study of the impacts of racism on racialized mindfulness practitioners and teachers. The focus groups considered how these adult learners and educators from across Canada applied compassion and mindfulness education and practices as resources for recovery and resistance, so as to respond to these adverse experiences both personally and professionally. The study was a response to the growing recognition of the need for greater diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) in mindfulness education programs and organisations in Canada. The researchers recognized the dominance of a narrow demographic of primarily White, middle-class to affluent, middle-aged people serving as teachers, accessing courses and retreats, and establishing practices (Fleming et al., 2022). This excluded racialized people living in Canada with various intersectional identities who felt excluded, under-represented, and uncomfortable in mindfulness settings (Beshai et al., 2023; Proulx & Bergen-Cico, 2022; Munjee & MacPherson, 2023).

Applying ecological theories of mind and critical phenomenology, the research investigated the key features and themes of BIPOC experiences of racism, oppression, or marginalisation leading to, or in the process of, using mindfulness- and compassion-

based strategies as a potential response. To do so, the researchers drew on the self-reported experiences of 30 adults organized into five focus groups of practitioners and teachers of mindfulness and compassion from BC, the prairies, Ontario and Quebec. These participants were organized into four affinity groups (Indigenous, Black, South Asian, and E./S.E. Asian) and one contrastive White group to offer a dominant population perspective. Using distinct racial affinity groups enhanced participant safety and comfort in discussing difficult topics.

Resulting data were clustered under seven salient topics: identity, racism, oppression, trauma, motivation, mindfulness, and compassion. These were organized into five themes, with mindfulness and compassion as a common thread. Participants described mindfulness and compassion as impactful in their responses to, and recovery from, racism through identity (authenticity and belonging); the unlearning of internalized oppression; empowerment (cultural reinvigoration); and social change. Compassion was associated with reversing of self-coldness and opening to reconciliation. Participants named resources that helped them cope with, process, and transcend experiences of racism or oppression. These resources included mindfulness or compassion practices and practice communities, connecting with like-minded and relatable others, and reconnecting with traditional, cultural and ancestral practices in safe environments. Access to these resources helped participants establish healthy boundaries against racism and oppression.

Participants often viewed racialized identities as threats imposed through harmful stereotypes that limited their capacity to flourish, be authentic, and/or envision hopeful futures. One Indigenous participant recounted “remarks from teachers . . . inflicting labels on me” so as to reinforce a racialized identity and limit her self-confidence and goals. When identity was described in the context of culture and community, however, it became a source of strength, as in the case of a participant who considered her traditional upbringing “in the longhouse” and Indigenous identity as a source of “privilege.” A participant from the UK reported: “Kids chased me and my sister home from school calling us Blackie.” An Indigenous participant was constantly reminded of his racialized identity as destiny: “You can take the boy of the Res, but you can’t take the Res out of the boy.” Another Indigenous participant movingly recounted navigating life with recurring “grief and trauma and pain . . . being dehumanized.” Likewise, a Black participant reported: “When it’s dark out, I panic about the thought that this oppression is unending . . . part of black life.”

The results of this study also added a perspective on how teaching and learning of mindfulness and compassion can be made more inclusive and accessible for racialized people. Currently, mindfulness and compassion education are delivered in secular educational, clinical, and more traditional contexts with increasing emphasis on the secular variant (MacPherson & Rockman, 2023). In this study, participants identified feeling uncomfortable in some White-dominated secular mindfulness contexts, including feeling excluded or marginalized, which led some to seek alternatives in segregated affinity groups or with teachers from racialized minority groups. Some South Asian and

Indigenous participants also described turning to traditional contexts to practice adapted forms of mindfulness.

Figure 1 (reproduced from Munjee & MacPherson, 2023) illustrates the ecology of mind in the context of racist experiences. The ecological niche is where we navigate our living, in the dynamic third space between the organism and its environments, a zone in which we are both autonomous and interdependent with the social and biological worlds. Here, the environment exerts power over the organism, leading the organism to adapt, resist, or alter the environment to better serve the needs of the organism. Mindfulness and compassion appear to function to empower the agency, health, and vigor of the organism supporting its capacity to respond.

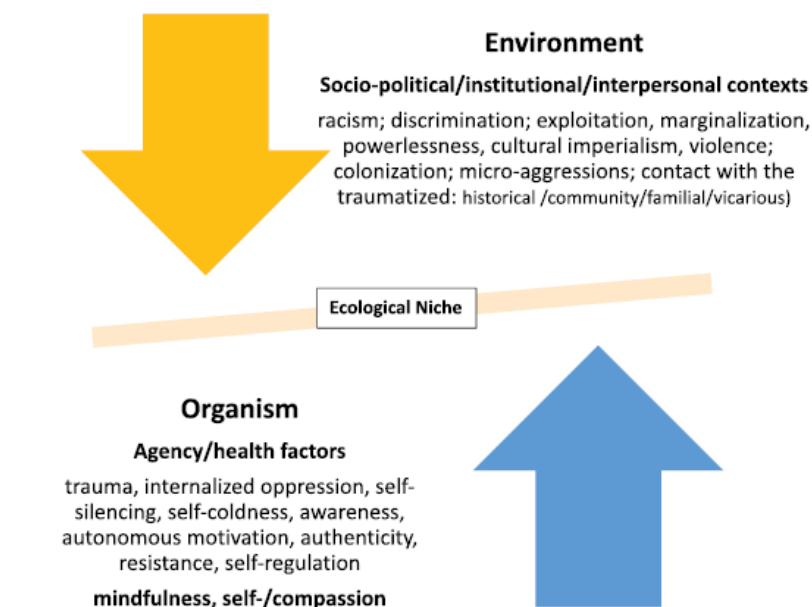


Figure 1. An ecological model of racism and its impacts.

Although organizations have started to recruit more diverse teachers, several participants who were mindfulness teachers expressed concerns with tokenism in mindfulness education. Still, recruiting and training more diverse teachers is clearly key to enhancing access to mindfulness education. The theoretical framework in Figure 1, implies that mindfulness classes, groups, and organizations are social environments that impact how mindfulness is learned. If those contexts are reproducing racist habits that add to the distress of those trying to recover from racism, then no technique is going to overcome the potential threat they pose. Key is creating safe and hospitable spaces, practices, and communications. This necessarily includes White people examining and addressing their own assumed privilege.

MINDFULNESS AS ANTI-OPPRESSIVE PRAXIS

Adult education has long been identified with social justice and anti-oppressive praxis (e.g., Freire, 1970/2005); however, recent anti-oppressive research has shifted attention from the political to the psychological impacts of oppression on learners' mental health and wellbeing as critical agendas for both adult and higher education. Motivating this, in part, is the troubling increase of mental health challenges and diminished wellbeing experienced by young women v. men (ACHA, 2019, 2022; Campbell et al., 2021; Garriguet, 2021; Wiens et al, 2020). This component of the symposium explores the potential role of mindfulness in deepening the longstanding anti-oppressive praxes of adult education, with a particular emphasis on its implications for empowering women.

Theoretically, this shift in the interpretation marks a disciplinary shift from a sociology to psychology or social-psychology, where oppression is understood as the inhibitory suppressive and repressive experiences arising from the internalization of abusive social systems through their impacts on personal identity, agency, autonomy, and, ultimately, consciousness itself. In this respect, the oppressed develop a preconscious complicity with discriminating social systems and their oppressors through processes of internalization (Freire, 1970/2005) and appropriation (Versey et al., 2019). In the process, structural inequities become internalized as psychological obstacles affecting the agency, autonomy, and intentions. So, although conditions may be oppressive, to manifest as oppression they are necessarily internalized psychologically through identity dynamics.

Trauma may or may not overlap with oppression; however, research suggests that a strong direct relationship exists between oppression and trauma disorders. For example, Kira et al. (2019) used pooled data sets (N=2471) to demonstrate that, as collective identity stressors and traumas (CIST), oppression had a direct effect on three trauma-related disorders: post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), cumulative trauma disorders (CTD), and existential annihilation anxieties (EAA). On the other hand, Tseris (2019) cautioned that trauma orientations can divert attention from oppression and socio-cultural contexts by medicalizing distress and minimising gender equity issues. Nevertheless, linking social and psychological manifestations are key, as Gale et al. (2020) found in their meta-analysis (26 studies) that concluded that the internalization of oppression generated the most significant harms to mental health.

The oppression of women is critical to understanding the broader dynamics of the psychology of oppression given the distinctive role of women in biological reproduction and the heteronormative family. Successive waves of feminist theories from second through fourth wave iterations (deBeauvoir, 1949/2011; Firestone, 1970; Moi, 2005; Manne, 2018), women's oppression is interpreted as situated in her social position as the means to the ends (flourishing or wellbeing) of others. Most recently, Manne (2018) argued in her definitive philosophical study that misogyny doesn't dehumanize women so much as turn them into narrowly-defined human beings who are morally obligated to serve others, as nurturers and givers, while men are morally entitled to be served. So long as women accept this class-specific subservient position and the idealized virtues

that rationalize it, they are protected from the reprisals of patriarchy. Where they deviate, they become vulnerable to sanctions that include harassment, social stigma, isolation, and violence (p. 20; pp. 146-147):

Misogyny takes a girl or a woman belonging to a specific social class...then threatens hostile consequences if she violates or challenges the relevant norms or expectations as a member of this gendered class of persons. These norms include (supposed) entitlements on his part and obligations on hers. ...Women's role as givers, and privileged men's as takers, is internalized by women as well as men; some women who are full paid-up members in the club of femininity are no less prone to enforce such norms, at least in certain contexts. Indeed, when it comes to third-personal [*sic*] moralism as opposed to second-personal [*sic*] reactive attitudes, they may be *more* prone to do so, because women who appear to be shirking their duties, in being, for example, careless, selfish, or negligent, make more work for others who are 'good' or conscientious.

As an example, in 1993, I interviewed a group of Indian village women in the Himalayas (Himachal Pradesh) involved in a WHO-sponsored village-based forestry initiative. Curious about the absence of men and their experiences *as women* and working on the project for very little compensation, I asked their spokesperson about her experiences *as a woman*, and she responded (through a translator):

We cry every time we give birth to a girl because we know she will face a life of misery and constant work and little more. That is all we do – work, clean, cook, and care for children. To be born a woman is a curse. While it is true that some of our daughters have hopes for more, there is little way for them to make these hopes come true. My daughter, for instance, dreams of becoming a Bollywood star. That is all she wants, but I don't see how that can happen.

In contrast to this direct testimonial, the story circulating in the academic and development communities at the time depicted these women quite differently, as motivated by ethical and moral superiority focused on sustaining village-based forestry practices and caring for their families and the earth.

In a later exchange during an English class with Tibetan refugee nuns in the same Himalayan region, I introduced the vocabulary phrases: "A nun is a woman; a monk is man." One student stood up, incensed: "No, no! A nun is not a woman. A nun is like a monk, not like a woman." She was speaking in Tibetan, so another nun stepped in English to translate:

Teacher, she is saying that nuns are not women; they are like monks and not like women. We don't marry or have children, so we are not women. Monks are not men either. I'm not sure I agree, but this is what she is saying. ...When we become nuns, we give up being women. No babies. No husbands.

This awareness of identity dynamics in the psychology of oppression goes to the heart of mindfulness as an anti-oppressive praxis. In defining a path for mindfulness as anti-oppressive practice in higher education, Berila (2016) reiterates:

This mindful embodied learning is a crucial component to anti-oppressive pedagogy because it teaches us how to meet our responses with clarity and compassion. Only then can we begin to unlearn these deeply embedded responses. ...This work cannot be done at a merely analytical level. It MUST be done at the level of our hearts, bodies, *and* our minds. (p. 22)

I used these theories to inform an upper-level university course's readings, mindfulness practices, and a final project to teach and instil the following seven protocols of mindfulness as an anti-oppressive praxis:

1. *Theorize* oppression as a form of suffering arising from identity struggles and dysfunctions.
2. *Re-orient* on the experience of identity within the lived body v. the narrative construals of identity.
3. *Decenter* from constricting, low status, negative, and habitual identity beliefs.
4. *Resist* internalizing ongoing social identity projections based on harmful norms or expectations.
5. *Reconstruct* more authentic identities consistent across inner experience and outer expression.
6. *Self-regulate wellbeing* through empowering autonomy and agency.
7. *Cultivate ecological awareness* in recognizing how identity, oppression, and wellbeing are all enacted across biology, psychology, consciousness, and social systems.

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PUTTING OURSELVES ON THE LINE: CREATING DANGEROUS DIALOGUE WITHIN ADULT EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper features four scholars at varying career stages who each take up challenging, dangerous topics in adult education. Each comes to the work from a place personal and professional importance. We recognize the significance of teaching contentious topics head on and know the real risks of doing so. As adult educators, we engage in dangerous dialogue to provoke and investigate how media, teaching, and dissemination are created to promote the smoke and mirrors of political domination and oppression. Each author engages with their particular interest and concern within Adult Education and pushes boundaries to open authentic dialogue and confront Britzman's difficult knowledge. We ask, how do we embrace this difficult knowledge, and utilize it for analysis and growth in our courses?

Keywords: dangerous dialogue, social justice, decolonization, verbatim theatre, media, human trafficking

THE EVER-SHIFTING CHALLENGES OF TEACHING INDIGENOUS EDUCATION TO PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

Jennifer Markides: I have been teaching Indigenous Education for nearly ten years and work now across two faculties: Education and Social Work. While I sense that, overall, the students come into the course more knowledgeable and open to the decolonizing experience, year after year, they continue to surprise me with new challenges and resistance to the content that I have not anticipated nor seen before.

In previous self-studies (2018, 2022), I have reflected on my experiences of teaching Indigenous Education. My apprehensions and hesitations to take the students through the necessary litany of stories—truths, they have rarely heard before—necessary to create transformative learning. The course has the potential to shake them to their cores, with realities and realizations they might never be otherwise exposed to. It changes them.

Britzman (1998) describes "difficult knowledge" as the kind that disrupts a person's existing conceptions. So much of the learning in Indigenous Education are instantiations of difficult knowledge. Students across all the years will describe being angry, feeling cheated for not having learned these things before. They also express feelings of guilt, shame, and sorrow, for the wrongs of the past and present, all stemming from colonization.

This last year tested my resolve to continue teaching this important and difficult course.

Each year I pour my heart into teaching Indigenous Education, and recently I was met with a series of papers written by ChatGPT. It was like a sucker punch to the gut. It made me question if I would want to ever teach the course again. It is so much emotional work, and yet not enough to have every student bring themselves fully to that assignment, the only paper is a 2–4-page visual essay about their connections and learning from the course. It was heartbreaking to read them because they missed the mark. They did not do what the assignment asked of them, and it was painfully obvious in the end. But at first, it just crept in as a feeling. A sinking feeling. How did they misunderstand the assignment so terribly? It is an academic paper, but I did not hear their voice in there. They were not sharing their struggles or realizations. Their honesty. AI was simply reflecting back the concepts addressed through the reading list. There was no meaningful engagement or reflexivity.

If it weren't for their honesty and apologies after the class, I would have left that course defeated. But it reflects our time. Our technology. Our values. And the competing realities about what is important in the world. There are wars and genocides going on, and yet we go about our business: teaching, and writing, marking, and grading. Don't get me wrong, I am not condoning the cheating. I am just being realistic in my acknowledgement, that for some, the papers aren't the most pressing things in their worlds.

What can we do about it? Maybe more importantly, what should we do about it?

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS AND INTERVENTION WORK: DANGEROUS DIALOGUE IN EDUCATION

Julie Morin: Julie Morin: I write this paper inspired by Madeleine Grumet's (2005) talk *Where Does the World Go When Schooling is About Schooling*. I am here to urge people to critically consider the why and how we must take up human trafficking preventive education. The resistance to learning such difficult knowledge (Britzman, 2000) is understandable and the potential dangers that we as educators face cannot be overlooked, nor can those of our students.

I come to this work after an optional workshop entitled Human Trafficking in Ontario as a foster parent in 2021. I was the only parent in the session. In three short hours I learned that my province and many more in Canada have incredibly intelligent traffickers who pretend to be the boyfriend and/or best friend of children and youth, for the sole purpose of eventually sexually exploiting them, as do many family members, for financial gain. Human trafficking is the exploitation of people for the purpose of labour, drugs, and/or sex, often overlapping with one another.

I learned that many young people are exploited while still attending school regularly, as their trafficker can bring them to the procurer of sex during lunch hour and after school. I am grateful for the opportunity to have been in a private session, to let my

heart break open in a safe space. The trainer was a compassionate, knowledgeable person with lived experience and patiently waited until I was ready to continue. I was perplexed as to why this workshop was optional and why no other foster parent signed up, since our young people in care are one of the many vulnerable groups.

I next grappled with how to explain this danger to my children: my then seven-year-old biological child whose highly sensitive temperament mirrors mine and if not shared carefully, would send him into a downward spiral of inability to trust anyone, and eight-year-old foster child, whose story echoed what had just been unearthed for me, cautioning how I shared my learnings. This difficult knowledge could have easily left me in a state of inaction because of how challenging it is to even think about, yet I have this innate desire to raise awareness in hopes of preventing any other innocent children, youth, and young adults from falling prey. I have attended numerous training sessions and listened to countless survivors, because no two stories are alike. Their experiences, while raw and horrific, fortunately end with them standing today, the lucky ones to be alive who ask us to muster up the courage to help.

In the fall of 2023, I co-developed and facilitated seminars for all our teacher candidates, alongside our now provincial trainer. She has been collaborating with Ontario's Ministry of Education (2023) to inform the K-12 curriculum and the recent Policy/Program Memorandum 166 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2021). PPM 166 states all provincially publicly funded schools must create an anti-trafficking protocol and all staff receive training. If in-service teachers are expected to embrace this curriculum, then teacher candidates need to know what they will be tasked with. While I recognise this is difficult knowledge, I also see why teachers have been assigned this responsibility; students spend most of their weekdays in schools and so teachers are perfectly positioned to notice warning signs since they build and maintain trusting relationships year-round.

Reassured that mental health supports are available to them through the university, our participants received the message from our survivor-led seminars and expressed a range of emotions in how they are digesting it. Some feel empowered and confident in their ability to cover the curriculum and support their students, while many were left wanting. There is a real anxiety-inducing danger in learning about this prevalent crime.

I have also been warned about the personal risk associated with doing this work, since traffickers will not take kindly to me coming between them and their flow of money, thus potentially putting myself in danger. Ethically, I cannot sit idle. As Shirley Steinberg (2022) states, teaching contentious topics in the fight for social justice is "for those who are concerned with creating safe and just spaces which embrace equity, responsibility, sharing, and authentic educational pursuits...doing what humans should be doing" (p. 211). I'll wrap up Grumet's (2005) hopes that echo mine:

If we could flood [education] with the stuff of the world and explore the links that the academic disciplines and curriculum make to the stuff, with all its grit, confusion and

promise, perhaps schools and the work we do in them could change from teaching what we know, to teaching what we want to know (pp. 53).

And, teaching what we need to know, for a safer, better world.

VERBATIM THEATRE FOR A SOCIALLY JUST SOCIETY

Sarah Green:

The arts are more than mere entertainment.

In my view, they should also be the vessel which houses the conscience of a nation; they should ask the difficult questions others would rather leave unasked.

(Hammond & Steward, 2008, p. 10)

The most visceral and paradigm-shifting experience I've had with verbatim theatre was *My Name is Rachel Corrie*. I was twenty-seven years old, just four years older than Rachel was when she died. Based on the diaries of Rachel Corrie and edited by Alan Rickman and Katharine Viner, *My Name is Rachel Corrie* is the story of a young activist from Olympia, Washington who was killed in Gaza defending a Palestinian home from demolition. Rachel's words, lifted directly from her diary, are soul-piercingly relatable:

I'm Rachel. Sometimes I wear ripped blue jeans. Sometimes I wear polyester. Sometimes I take off all my clothes and swim naked at the beach. I don't believe in fate but my astrological sign is Aries, the ram, and my sign on the Chinese zodiac is the sheep, and the name Rachel means sheep but I've got a fire in my belly. It used to be such a big loud blazing fire that I couldn't hear anybody else over it. (Rickman & Viner, 2008, p. 9)

The audience is captivated by only Rachel on stage for the entirety of the play's ninety minutes. During this time, we are the confidant of her inner-most thoughts, the keeper of her darkest secrets, and the witness of her untimely death. *My Name is Rachel Corrie* is verbatim theatre at its most socially just and scrutinizing.

We never seem to fall short of stories to tell. I've often thought of the theatre as the epitomical, dangerously safe place for reflection. In its seamless way of conventionalizing the unconventional, theatre allows for exploration of darkness in the light of community. The turbulence of the world is too much to bear. The collective weight we're carrying is incomprehensible. As Hammond and Steward (2008) remind us, "The world seems to have become a more serious place, and we want our theatre to help us understand it" (p. 11). Might the commentary of the world's goings on be more easily accessible if presented in the convention of verbatim theatre? Indeed, some might argue that we have no need for more theatrics; we are overwhelmed by the theatre that has become our reality. I would argue; however, that the sense of unity in verbatim theatre is undeniable, and just the right antidote to these troubled times.

Verbatim theatre does not call for the imposition of an angle or approach; rather, it tells a story based on facts and first-person narratives. The dramatist, then, has the privilege of curating the myriad sources into a throughline to share the collective story with an audience, offering an open-hearted lens through which to view a reality of our time. The scripted words are those of the interviewees exactly as they were captured at the time of the conversation. Then there's the rehearsal process. This is where the heart of verbatim theatre lives. The product is a metabolization of the nuanced granularities that unfold throughout the curating, devising, and rehearsal processes. Whereas genre can be defined more broadly as a category of form or composition, convention is, quite simply, *how* something is *done*. Verbatim is a particular kind of way theatre is *done*. The verbatim way does not lean on credibility, artistic merit, or experience in the realm of theatre; rather, it leans heavily on process where, one might contend, the organic magic of theatre truly surfaces. The process of verbatim theatre makes space for us to come to know ourselves by way of exploring the lived experience of another. That is to say, "It is human activity with a very, very wide embrace" (Gallagher & Booth, 2003, p. 249).

Verbatim theatre stands out in the dramatic landscape by embodying an active process that allows participants to delve into the depths of human experience. Jonathan Neelands (2019) emphasizes that conventions "are the palette of colours, but they don't make a picture . . . it's how you then put the brush in and make the picture which is the point" (Cooper, p. 101). The art of conversation, the meticulous method of transcription, and collective, communal creation are the colours that make up the process of verbatim theatre. Then we disruptively play, and verbatim theatre embraces play in its most fluid form. The process of creation encourages experimentation while maintaining the integrity and authenticity of the unfiltered, verbatim text. Engaging with the conventions of verbatim theatre is to immerse in all elements of crafting a story, piece by piece. Words are collected, texts are analyzed, and dialogue is brought to life as those engaged in the process are given permission to disrupt and play, embracing the unique approach to verbatim theatre creation.

Theatre need not be restricted to the confines of fictional storytelling. Some of the most powerful experiences I've witnessed in the theatre have been those of a verbatim nature. In the way it effortlessly gives voice to the voiceless, verbatim theatre is the beautifully provocative bridge we need to help us come to better know ourselves, as well as each other, on a deeply human level. In this sense verbatim theatre defies containment. The process – the ceremonial nature of the conventions within the creation of verbatim theatre – make space in the classroom and applied settings alike, offering opportunities to collaborate, (de)construct, and connect.

UNDERSTANDING THE REALITIES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND RACIALIZATION WITHIN PALESTINE AND GAZA

Shirley Steinberg: I intend to share insight realities of social justice and racialization within Palestine (which includes the Gaza Strip and the West Bank), creating two

Palestinian territories, a current venue in conflict. What is and is not revealed in existing conditions? In working with adult students, it is important to note media-created terms and news reports which ignore the intricate truths of why the conflict continues. Using a critical theoretical lens, I will go through the importance of social theory within Adult Education and ways to engage students and colleagues to create reasonable considerations and analysis that uncover how language and media create discourse to replicate power and oppression within world conflicts. As the session is done as a panel, my intent is to generate discussion and questioning about the horrors happening in Palestine.

On October 7, 2023, Hamas (known as a terrorist group within Palestine) along with the Islamic Jihad (PIJ) launched a full attack, by air, by land, and by sea on Israel. The terrorist group claimed responsibility.

Following the shock of the October 7th attack, many leaders spoke out in support of Israel. The president of my own university noted that he spoke for the university as he assured the media that the school stood for Israel. This enraged many who felt the rush to defend Israel was premature. In a short period of time, the notion of Israel became about the Jewish people and the notion of Palestine became about Muslim people. These simplistic and without merit alignments began to tear apart as clarity revealed this was not a religious issue, but was about the issues of power, land, money, and international alignment.

How do we understand ways in which to articulate our political understandings of Palestine and Israel? A lack of clarity set in quickly after the attack in how global observers began to move from assumed support of Israel to the acknowledgment that Palestine was being erased by the violent response of Israel in the ensuing months following the Hamas attack. This change in support was not expected by Israel or the global audience. As a Jewish woman, I learned to succumb to the notion of Israel, to support it at any cost, using the Holocaust as a model for reasons of Israeli aggression and dominance. Certainly Great Britain and the United States became the watchdog guardians for anything Israeli. However, within a few short weeks, the retaliation of Israel revealed a frightening drive to annihilate the entire population of Palestine. Those that weren't killed were forced to leave their homes and we began to see a dangerous split within the Jewish community. While Israel trumpeted the tragic capture of 253 hostages and used the hostages as their *raison d'être*, many Jews realized that Palestine was quickly becoming an extinct country...within six months over 32,000 Palestinians had been killed and over $\frac{3}{4}$ of the remaining population had fled their homeland, left without shelter and food, starvation and insecurity began to be the status quo.

When we examine the tenets of social justice through a social theoretical construct, we identify how power works, thrives, and how it is often hidden. In understanding the languages of different media we are able to examine the way untruths and exaggerations play different fields. Naming power within ordinary circumstances

challenges us to understand how power enters quietly into cultures and dominates in order to persuade changes in local and global attitudes. Along with understanding power, it is essential to note the financial stakes within Israel and those countries who “stand tall” in supporting a Palestinian genocide. How do we have pedagogically social theoretical discourse within the adult education context? Interestingly, it is more challenging to create fair and balanced discourse with adults than it is with children and youth. Adult lives are often fixed and fixated to *what has been* and *what probably should be*. In relation to the recognition of genocide by the one country that has been protected and nurtured, we find restlessness, fear, confusion, and inability to clearly chose “a side,” which is usually the way global conflicts play out. This discussion is important not only for global understand and advocating peace, but to illustrate that we cannot remain rooted and fixed within paradigms and myths that we have often defended. These are dangerous dialogues.

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THE CIRCLE KEEPS GETTING BIGGER: THE ROLE OF INFORMAL LEARNING IN INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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Abstract

In this symposium, we explore the role informal learning has the potential to play in the lives of newcomers to Canada, with a focus on the interrelationship between English language acquisition and social/cultural connections with the local community. The three members of this symposium panel have engaged with newcomers in different capacities: as professors and teachers, qualitative researchers, community organizers, and friends. Two of us work in a rural community and one in an urban environment. From these multiple perspectives and from our own personal experiences, we have come to share a core belief in the importance of community connections in newcomers' settlement experience.

Keywords: English as an additional language; newcomers, immigrants, refugees, informal learning

MARY MCPHERSON'S PERSPECTIVE

Several decades ago, I traveled from Maine to Montréal to participate in three-month immersion course at the Université de Montréal. I arrived with a basic French vocabulary and reading ability, but with a painfully limited ability to converse. After three months, I was speaking almost as quickly in French as in English – about politics, social justice, even deeply personal experiences; and I could understand what others told me, even complex subject matter. I could even eavesdrop on the conversation at the next table in a restaurant.

This transformation occurred primarily because of my language instructor, Michel, who said, "you can study grammar and ... pass a grammar quiz; or you can go out on the streets and talk to people. That's how you'll expand your vocabulary, improve your accent, and learn about the culture around you." He sent us out to randomly poll people on the street: What was the last movie they saw? Did they like it? Or which Chinese restaurant did they like best? Or where were the best hot dogs? If students were embarrassed to do this, he suggested they call the "time and temperature" phone line or watch a television show and report on the weather or the show in the next-day's class – but everyone was encouraged to engage with the world outside the classroom. He applauded when we had a dynamic exchange with another passenger on the bus or went to a movie in French (no subtitles!). I thrived.

Fast forward to 2018. I was accepted into the master's program in Adult Education at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. In the years between, I had thought of Michel and my Montréal experience often. It was the most powerful hybrid (class/community) experience I ever had, and I saw my Adult Education thesis as an opportunity learn more about the experience of inter-cultural learning in an academic context.

My research project explored the role informal learning played in five newcomers' settlement process in small towns in Nova Scotia. The participants provided rich stories and observations about their learning process as they made connections and found support in their small-town communities. As Foley (1999) and Rogers (2014) observe, informal learning infiltrates nearly every aspect of our lives. This is especially true for immigrants and other newcomers for whom an understanding of local social and cultural norms and, for many, language acquisition in the dominant culture, are learned through "unaltered naturalistic environments" (Cervatiuc, 2008, p. 67) and spontaneous daily life interactions.

When learning a new language, practice and interaction with proficient English speakers improve communication skills, even when the learning is tacit (not recognized as learning). Every conversation, small or large, may contribute to English proficiency. Cervatiuc (2008) suggests that second-language acquisition is "the outcome of interaction among a complex set of environmental factors, innate learning abilities, sociocultural identity, personality tendencies, and strategic choices" (Cervatiuc, 2009, p. 255). Both Cervatiuc's study and this one focus on the strategic informal learning choices that the study participants have utilized and their motivation for choosing these strategies. Similarities between the studies emerges, even though Cervatiuc's studies are situated in urban areas rather than in small towns.

None of the participants enrolled in language classes when they first arrived in Canada, but later four of them addressed specific language issues with an ESL teacher. Based on their experiences there, the participants highlighted two recommendations for adult educators who work with newcomers. They stressed the importance of one-on-one classes, especially for newcomers with limited English, and for all students in the first year. As one participant explained:

When you have four or five students who don't speak English in a classroom, it's hard to understand. Even two, it's hard ... most newcomers are shy. Even if they don't understand, they will [act as if they do] ... People are at different levels and learn at different rates. Some people have heavy memories ... Many worry about being corrected by other students.

They also advised teachers to be clear that classes in the language school are only one piece of the language learning process, because "if you aren't going to use the English that you learn that day out[side] of the class, it's not going to be a help. You have to talk more with people to learn."

They point out that each newcomer will have a unique learning style and life situation that should be taken into account in their language school participation, for example: if they will be comfortable and successful studying in a classroom of students, and if they will be able to fit classes into their work or family schedule. The participants raised these issues in order to emphasize the importance of considering each student both individually and holistically as part of a community.

In any multi-cultural interactions, Merriam and Kim (2011) counsel us to remember that our dominant Western (non-Indigenous) perspective in Canada is only one of many systems of learning and knowing – and a late-comer at that. They advocate looking at learning as it is experienced through a non-Western cultural lens. *Non-Western* learning perspectives are complex and diverse, but Merriam and Kim (2011) enumerate three general themes that help illustrate differences between non-Western and Western ways that people learn. In non-Western learning: 1) Learning is communal. Individuals' identities are interwoven with the communities, so learning is not done to benefit that person but rather so the entire community can develop and thrive. 2) Learning is lifelong, informal, and community-based. While the West privileges abstract, theoretical knowledge, non-Western traditions prioritize real life experience. Learning is structured around the community's needs and problems, and solutions are worked out collectively. 3) Learning is holistic. While the West has historically emphasized cognitive learning, non-Western learning consistently involves the body, spirit and emotions along with cognitive thought. Stories, myths, rituals, music, and art are all sources of knowledge.

I believe the participants in my study would wholeheartedly agree.

SUSAN BRIGHAM'S PERSPECTIVE

In this section, I refer to my research studies involving newcomers to highlight the importance of informal learning in the acquisition of the English language. I refer to the voices of the participants to provide examples the varied informal ways that people learn.

I have been working with newcomers in Canada for over 30 years in my capacity as an English as a Second Language teacher in Edmonton, AB and then after moving to Halifax, NS as a researcher. Reflecting on my teaching and research experiences with newcomers, as well as my experience teaching English as a Foreign language in Kuwait where I also was studying Arabic, the interrelationship between language acquisition and social/cultural connections with the local community is clear.

In my own efforts over the years to learn French, Arabic, Tagalog, and German, the formal learning of the languages was made richer and proved more successful for me if there were connections made to the community in which I was residing, especially if the language I was learning was the dominant language of that community. Additionally, if the informal learning included meeting other people and doing fun activities together the learning was more holistic and engaging. Because of the hegemony of English, (English is my first language), and my sojourner status in these communities, the urgency and necessity of learning the language is not comparable to

the experiences of language learners who are moving to a country as a final destination where the official language(s) is not their first language and their first language is not easily understood by the majority of people in this country.

Informal learning, as Mary notes above, is part of everyday life. Informal learning involves learning through for example, experiences with friends, in workplaces, and in communities (Brigham et al, 2018). It is the learning we gain from doing something (Jeffs & Smith, 2005). The newcomer participants in my studies with refugee and immigrant youth share that informal learning includes learning English through the arts and through watching movies, and engaging with social media (Brigham et al, 2018). For example, Hissan shared:

When I was getting myself used to be like to speak fluent English I used to watch a lot of videos on YouTube with no translation, no subtitle, no anything, only English, so I get my ears used to listening to English because we have no TV at home. The only thing that I can use to learn English is through YouTube. (p. 8)

In a different study in which I involved 10 newcomer participants over a period of 16 months in a participatory photography research study (Brigham, 2015) several participants from the Bhutanese community in Halifax shared photos of their neighbourhood community garden explaining that it was a significant informal learning site not only for language learning but for intergenerational engagement and community building. For example, participant Kul explains:

This is one of the best things to build community. People really neglect farming here ... In this garden, we come together once or twice a week and share our sorrows and happiness. We worked together to make this garden. ...Some [people] are from these [different areas of Halifax] to make garden like these. Not only we, there are many of the Canadian's families. That brings us happiness, see? (p. 60)

The community gardens were the places where the Elders in the community were appreciated as respected teachers (about for example, plants, medicinal herbs, and agricultural practices) to fellow newcomers and Canadian neighbours without having proficiency in English.

In my most recent qualitative study in Halifax, (Brigham, et al, 2024) involving one-to-one interviews with 25 refugee youth (22 women and 3 men) between the ages of 16 and 26 years old many of the participants expressed that informal learning through peer groups, sports, and free community-based programs made the biggest difference for improving their English language proficiency. Many felt the formal English language classes at public school was not able to adequately help them learn English. For

example, Abdul who is 17 explains it was outside the classroom where he learned the most:

We went to the school [where] there were two other Arabic kids I could speak Arabic to. It was hard at first because I couldn't speak English at all, so they translated for me, so I started learning from my friends because I had to keep talking with them.

However, even the informal learning opportunities that involve groups of people gathering (like sports or social activities), were restricted for some of the young women in the study because of gendered roles and expectations. For example, 23-year-old Zuri shares,

I have four brothers and one sister, so you know, African things. If you are a girl, you have to do chores and stuff like that which boys don't have to do anything. So yeah, it is sometimes up to me to do [household chores].

All the young women in the study say they have very little time to socialize, and some explained that sports were seen by their families as inappropriate for women and girls (cf. Nathan et al, 2013). Their voices remind us that understanding language learning experiences requires an intersectional analysis. Gender is a critical social identity to consider.

These examples remind us of the power of informal learning and the importance of community connections in newcomers' settlement experience. It also reminds us that informal learning can take place in creative ways that may involve the arts, learning in nature, intergenerationally, in groups or individually, with technology, or in sports and recreational activities. Yet there is no one size fits all approach, rather the informal learning activities will vary depending on one's interests, social identities, community context, migration status, and motivation.

CONCLUSION

Adult educators are uniquely positioned to facilitate newcomers' informal learning experiences and opportunities – and many already do so. More research is needed regarding successful strategies for encouraging informal learning both in and outside the classroom that recognizes the importance of successful “dialogue across difference” (Brigham, 2011, p. 41) between newcomers and locals. Providing opportunities to explore multiple identities and to build trust and mutual understanding among immigrant and local community members through informal learning allows for the potential to help, not only with newcomers' language learning but also to create richer social and cultural communities, reduce stereotypes and contribute to building communities of solidarity and long-term integration (Suárez-Orozco, 2018). Adult educators are strategically positioned to play a significant, pro-active leadership role in this work.

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REFLECTING ON ACTIVISM: CONVERSATION ON AUTOETHNOGRAPY

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ABSTRACT

There is an increasing interest in the use of autoethnography as a research methodology in adult education. In this symposium, we discuss the impetus, data collection and analysis, and rewards of engaging in autoethnography studies about various forms of activism and engagement in movements for social justice. Our interest stems from the crucial role reflective practice plays in facilitating learning in informal settings as autoethnography is a powerful process that requires critical self-reflection. We reflect on the impetus for our individual autoethnography and move from activism before postsecondary studies to engagement while doing undergraduate studies, then to the possibility of autoethnography itself as an effort of decolonization and identity reclamation, to finally reflect on the evolution of research and publication as a form of activism to provide a bridge between community and university.

Keywords: activism, autoethnography, community, decolonization, identity

INTRODUCTION

Reflective practice has gained much attention in the last two decades, and as we currently witness several crises, from climate change with its increasing frequency of forest fires, floods, and severe and destructive storms, to the growing chasm between rich and poor, lack of affordable housing, near-collapse of health systems, increase in addictions and an aging population, adult educators are presented with momentous problems. Faced with such a magnitude of problems, valuing and engaging reflective practice, individually and collectively, can provide a means to remain grounded in values and approaches that foster criticality. This critical approach is not a luxury, but a requirement for engaged educators to sustain themselves and foster needed changes. In the last decade, there has been increasing interest in the use of autoethnography as a research methodology in adult education, and in social sciences, in general. In this symposium, we will discuss the impetus, data collection, analysis, and rewards of engaging on autoethnography study in our different approaches to activism in community settings. Our interest stems from the crucial role reflective practice plays for educators facilitating learning in informal settings. We have found that autoethnography is a powerful process to engage critically with movements for social justice. While autoethnography includes autobiographical analysis, it goes beyond telling one's story to analyzing cultural, social, and political factors within a specific historical period. Autoethnographies can encourage critical thinking and broaden our worldview. At this time, when faced with serious challenges, critical self-reflection can stimulate hope,

openness, and individual and collective imaginations for preferred futures. Inspiration comes from people who, at the edges of their wisdom, communicate their experience.

PROVOKED BY A PHOTOGRAPH: ARTEFACTS AS IMPETUS FOR AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Carole Roy

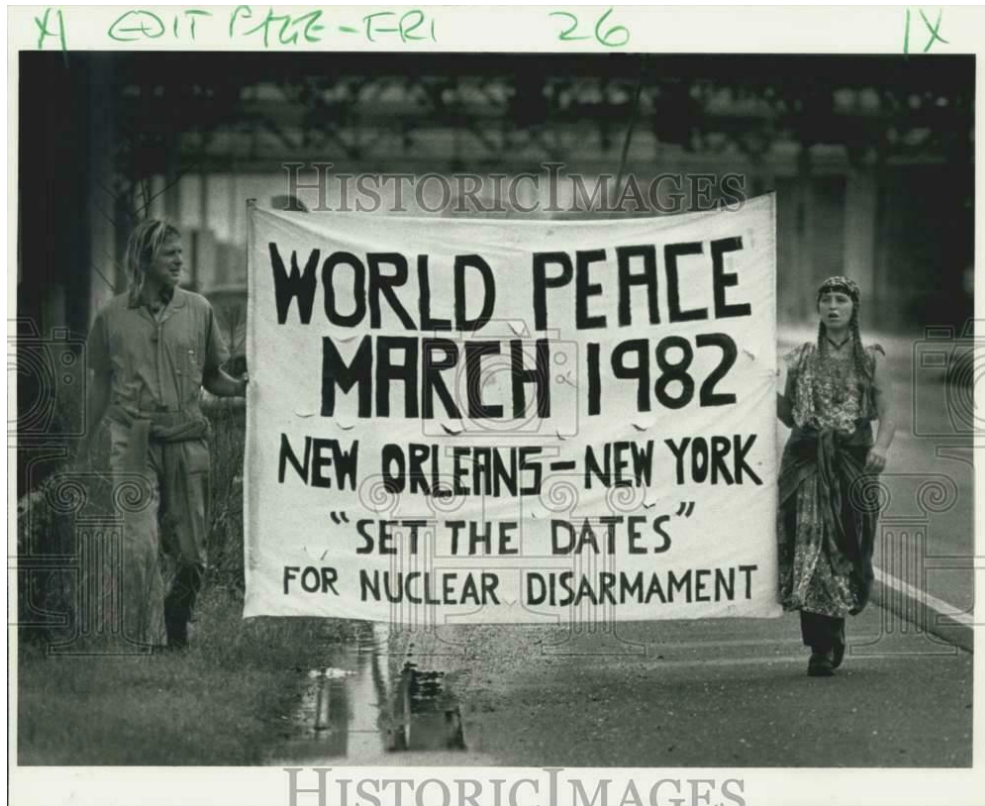


Figure 1. People carry banners.

1982 World Peace March for Nuclear Disarmament New Orleans to New York. Historic Images noc45753.

Photograph of me carrying the banner, World Peace March 1982 New Orleans to New York.

Imagine my surprise! In 2020, I found this photograph on the internet and immediately recognized my then-partner; but it took a few moments to realize that I was the other person in Historic Images photograph! In 1982, I participated in the World Peace March for Nuclear Disarmament, a 5½-month walking journey from New Orleans to New York. While six of us started in New Orleans, ten in San Francisco, and ten in Los Angeles, one million walked in New York City on June 12. There were media all along, but no Internet then. Now, 40 years later, this photograph was the first item discoverable in a search about the peace march.

Impact of the Photograph

The photograph of me holding the banner generated emotions: it was strange to not immediately recognize myself. But once I did, I felt a sense of validation for participating in that action decades ago. I felt oddly embraced decades later when seeing that a concrete image taken by someone who felt it was worth putting on the internet. As Hernández Hellín (2023) wrote,

Objects are inextricably linked to identity and its construction; they are often seen as extensions of the self (Belk), provocations to thought (Turkle), carriers of past into present (Pearce), or triggers for autobiographical memory (Berntsen). It is no wonder... that objects play such a fundamental role in life writing.... Essentially, objects encapsulate autobiographical information that, when arranged into a story, take on a new significance. (p. 262)

I had thought of writing about this peace march, but never did: it seemed self-centered, it had taken place so long ago, and more importantly, I had no record of it except my memories and a few personal photos. Now I understand that objects like photographs legitimize memories: “the people we tell our stories to are more likely to trust our accounts when there are physical traces (photographs, mementos) that represent such anecdotes. Objects, then, authenticate our narrative, prove our story” (Hernández Hellín, 2023, p. 269). I found more photos and articles about the peace march.



Figure 2. June 12, 1982 Largest protest in New York City.

"On June 12, 1982, the largest protest in American history converged in New York, as an estimated one million protestors marched ... to demand an end to nuclear weapons."

<https://activistnewyork.mcnyc.org/exhibition/environmental-advocacy/nuclear>



Figure 3. World Peace March for Nuclear Disarmament Protest in Central Park, June 12, 1982.

One million people demand nuclear disarmament in Central Park, New York City, June 12, 1982. Photo by PL Gould/Images/Getty Images.

Discovery of a Diary

Even more astonishing than the unearthing of the photo was the discovery of Andy Rector's diary. Andy was a War Resister League American who was a member of our core group of six from New Orleans. I had no idea that diary existed; his handwritten diary was typed by friends upon his return in 1982. Apparently, Andy died in 1994, yet here I was in 38 years after the peace march, and more than a quarter century since his death, reading a detailed 200-page diary of our peace march. I *loved* reading Andy's diary and only read a few pages each day to make the pleasure last as long as possible; I did not want it to end. I laughed, I was touched, I had tears. And most of all, I was immensely grateful for Andy's generosity of spirit, his attention to details, his depth of knowledge that helped put into perspective the experience in the socio-political and historical context of the Deep South, and other aspects I never knew or had forgotten. I realized that these were his memories, not mine. I was trying so hard to remember to no avail. I recalled feelings and certain situations, the lessons I distilled from the experience, but often I could not bring to mind the scenario he described.

Importance of Artefacts

The photograph and the diary launched me into an autoethnography. During the march I was in my 20s and my attitude was 'Be Here Now', like the unofficial 60s motto. Through an autoethnography I realized that 'Be Here Now' is a strategy that worked to counteract uncertainty, but it also prevented me from documenting my experience as my focus was the immediate. Through an autoethnography I recognized that artefacts like journals and photos are precious years and decades later as they stimulate memories. As I read Andy's diary, I was overjoyed when I remembered; and it brought a tinge of pain when I could not recall some of the moments he described. I did not know until doing an autoethnography that the absence of memories could be experienced as a longing and a sort of pain. "The author may uncover knowledge

through the process of writing their lived experience” (Custer, 2021, p. 341). Through the photograph and Andy’s diary, I was privileged to experience another learning opportunity about the New Orleans to New York peace march; it was such an intense experience that I could still learn from it 40 years later.

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VALUING UNPAID WORK: SOLIDARITY AND ACTION RESEARCH WITH MOTHERS ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Cindy Hanson

My story is about solidarity, feminism and co-learning. Freire et. al. (2014) spoke of solidarity as the partner of a critical mind. In other words, they co-exist and are connected – *covivencia*. He posits that solidarity does not happen without effort and conviction (Freire et al, 2014) – feminism involves solidarity. Similarly, love and solidarity speak to values people hold in relation to each other - relationality. In writing a recent autoethnography, I explored critical parts of my life history of activism. In telling these stories, the goal, as part of an autoethnographical process, was not to just tell the story, but to analyze the stories and to think about how they encouraged critical thinking.

Reflections on Action Research with Mothers on Social Assistance

The story I am sharing in this symposium is based on action research I conducted with mothers on social assistance in the province of Saskatchewan. The project explored solidarity, feminism and co-learning – it is the story I will share in this symposium. It was about using feminist praxis and thus, provides an example of reflexivity in action.

Since my 20s, I have been involved in grassroots feminism, including work to protect reproductive choices, legalize midwifery, end violence, and fight for universal childcare. It was during my tenure as the president of Canada’s only bilingual, national, feminist organization dedicated to research, the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, that I realized many of the issues we are still fighting for emerged from the Royal Commission on the Status of Women way back in 1974. While we have won some battles, new struggles have also emerged.

A struggle that culminated during the COVID-19 pandemic was unpaid caring work. It was however an issue that arose decades before. A strong proponent of valuing unpaid work was New Zealand's former parliamentarian, feminist, and academic, Marilyn Waring who demanded that world accounts become accountable to women. In her seminal book, *Counting for Nothing* (1999), Waring critiqued global economics because they devalue work mainly done by women – she asked why oil spills and wars contribute to economic growth while child rearing and housekeeping do not. She asked why a woman in Africa, for example, might toil 18 hours a day, but is classified as “unoccupied.” She further queried, “Why, does water going through a pipe have a market value but not water carried on a woman’s head?” (Waring in Roberts, 2019 para 13).

As a feminist familiar with community-based organizations, our team of researchers was contracted to work on a community-based study with mothers of small children who lived on social assistance. The study concerned social policy which stated that when children turned two years of age, parents needed to prove they were looking for (paid) work. Using a project advisory committee and creative research methods such as a time use 24-hour clock, and drawings of a house that demonstrated what supported and/or created challenges for unpaid work (see picture), we documented the work 28 women living on social assistance were already doing (Hanson & Hanson, 2011).



Figure 4. Barriers and Supports

Creative methodologies allowed the women to envision the home as a place of work. Data was collected as they explored the things that enabled or supported them in doing this work.

The findings demonstrated that structural inequality is not remedied by neoliberal solutions or low-income jobs.

Women in 'Who Benefits' [the study] noted that if they obtained part-time work, the low wages, lack of supports, and clawbacks often meant any work they did obtain, did not change their financial status. So, although participants abhorred the stigma of being on welfare, they agreed that moving into low paid jobs did not increase their family's economic security or overall well-being; instead, it placed a huge burden of child welfare concern on mothers. (Hanson & Hanson, 2011, pp. 193-194)

The action research resulted in meetings with social services, press conferences, and an uptake of recommendations by advisory group organizations. Perhaps the greatest "finding" of the research, was that the participants learned to value their unpaid work; they wanted to form a group and to continue meeting after the study concluded. Pushing the project from research into action had served as a catalyst for bringing people together, for activism -- this was solidarity in action. Further, it was a way of dismantling the power of the researchers who then stepped away from the group once the study concluded.

Insights From the Study

Using a reflexive process, I searched for patterns of what this study meant for feminism and/or solidarity. Issues of risk, reciprocity, and creativity were challenged by class, hegemonic patterns, and conflict. But hope and courage formed through bonds of conviction, relationality, and belonging continued to surface. There were also examples where privilege was used to equalize unequal examples of power. For example, the researchers were able to get meetings with policy-makers when the recipients of social assistance did not have access. The recognition that agency and voice are not experienced equally; in many circumstances, people are at risk when they speak up, which went beyond theories of oppression. For example, relying on women on social assistance to change public policies is not realistic. Importantly, once the women were provided with opportunities to understand and value their work and then to name what needed to be changed, they were empowered to be agentic as evidenced by the women on social assistance who started a group after the research project finished.

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AUTOETHNOGRAPHICAL JOURNEY: BUILDING A FOUNDATION FROM WITHIN

Melissa Joy Granovsky

In my Master of Adult Education research, I embarked on an autoethnography to delve into my Métis genealogy and history, aiming to heal and renegotiate various facets of my identity as an artist, researcher, and educator. This form of self-study, prevalent among educators, promotes a sense of "self-care in professional practice" (Klein & Miraglia, 2017, p. 25), enhancing personal and professional capacities. This research has challenged damaging misconceptions, prompting me to question prior assumptions and engage in rigorous re-evaluation grounded in research and experiential learning. As Denshire (2013) explained, autoethnographers integrate lived experiences to derive meaning through a structured, introspective process that "reads the social and cultural through the personal" (p. 12). Completing my autoethnography led me on a journey of decolonization, unlearning, and ultimately, a path towards inner reconciliation.

Recognizing the value of critical self-reflection, I strive to create learning environments for my students that foster self-reflexivity, authenticity, and meaningful connection. Pinnegar and Hamilton (2019) note that self-study methodology lets researchers document what they learn about teaching and tap into their tacit and personal practical knowledge, enriching their understanding of teaching practices. Within my teaching practice, I aim to cultivate learning spaces prioritizing introspection, relational dynamics, and soft-skill development alongside academic pursuits, aligning with Leddy's (1997) concept of a third space for research and learning. This approach bridges Western and traditional knowledge systems, fostering holistic healing and mutual understanding.

The autoethnographic process allowed me to explore my history, integrating creative elements that facilitated deep reflection and analysis. Azzarito (2023) stated, "images can enable participants to think about and create representations of their own experiences in meaningful, thoughtful, and culturally relevant ways. As creative methods, visual approaches enable participants to think about themselves, their words, and their lives" (p. 20). Choosing three art pieces of my creation as data sources led me into unfamiliar artistic terrain, requiring a deliberate slowdown in thought processes. Loveless (2019) highlighted that art as research-creation

Encouraged modes of *temporal* and *material* attunement within the academy that require slowing down in a way that does not fetishize the slow but in which slowness comes from the work of defamiliarization and the time it takes to ask questions differently. (p. 107)

Approaching research through an arts-based lens allowed me to perceive my narrative from a new perspective and become more intentional in my introspection while attending to the artmaking process. I see the importance of balancing structured methodologies with the creative expression of various mediums. The transformative potential of using creative expression data sources surpassed my expectations, leading to exciting new ideas and opportunities for exploration and discovery.

This journey propelled me to pursue a PhD in Art Education at Concordia University, where I am currently in my third year of study. My research aims to decolonize qualitative research practices, using visual life writing and photography to foster dialogue, understanding, and connection. Completing the autoethnography expanded my perception of the learning environment's potential and deepened my understanding of the transformative power of creative methods in self-healing, teaching, and learning. Through this process, I realized that self-study is a foundational step in academic and personal exploration, shaping my position and informing my relationship with myself and others.



Figure 5.

Autoethnographical Culmination Ceremony. Photographer: Melissa Granovsky
A ribbon skirt, shawl with a Hebrew prayer, sweet grass, sage, and a handmade bowl with affirmations from colleagues within the Master of Adult Education cohorts. All items were used to embrace and integrate all facets of my identity to foster a holistic sense of belonging.

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IF YOU GIVE AN ADULT EDUCATOR A COOKIE, WHAT WILL COME NEXT?

Wellington Sousa

This article is a brief autoethnographic exploration of my experience as an emerging adult education and community development academic-practitioner. It presents a self-reflection through re-visiting the texts I published during my doctoral journey to understand how I have navigated the academic political economy while being committed to community-led knowledge production for change and where I am going. My reflective exercise that led to this presentation did not begin with the articles per se but by watching cartoon with my daughter, making me reach into memory for a better glimpse of how my journey is characterized and where it is taking me.

I enjoy watching *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* with my four-year-old daughter while brushing her hair in the evenings. This cartoon is based on Laura Joffe Numeroff's best-seller children's book, published in 1985. The story starts with a boy giving his friend, the Mouse, a cookie. The cookie incites the little rodent to ask for a glass of milk. After that, Numeroff (1985) suggests that he will possibly be enticed to ask for a straw, then for a napkin, and as the theme song suggests, "one thing will lead to another, and you never know what is next" (Loeb, 2017, 00:27). While watching it, I always catch my mind diving into the post-structural identity, framed in terms of subjectivity; it is "relational, dynamic and restless, potentially unruly and unpredictable" (McGushin, 2014, pp. 134-135). I use the word catch to evoke the notion that thinking is not something one does, but that happens to one's body; "a body is 'forced to think'" (Massumi, 2002, p. xxxi). In line with that, it provoked an analysis of my experience as an academic-practitioner between the university and the community.

As the Mouse goes from one request to another in a responsive manner, my publications mark my transition from the community-based practitioner to the university while revealing myself juggling different subject positions between these worlds. I go from the community development worker to the researcher (e.g. Sousa, 2021a), from the adult educator to the academic (e.g. Sousa, 2021b), forming a circular tale of subjectivities enabled and constrained by discourses that compose the academic political economy and social justice efforts overtime. By holding the print copies of the papers in my hands, I feel again the rush of a doctoral student to produce and enhance his competitiveness in the academic market, but I also feel embraced by a sense of hope. In essence, the articles are in themselves an act of resistance to university-centric community engagement and an invitation to dialogue around how we can better support community-led knowledge production for change (e.g. Sousa, 2022a, Sousa 2021a).

Hope, generated through resistance against an "individualistic and capitalist academic culture" (Sousa, 2022b, p. 406) through writing and dialogue invitations, constitutes a practice aimed at loosening the constraints (Taylor, 2014) that relegate the community to the margins (Spivak, 2009) in the community-university relationship. Viewing this as an act of resistance, I find myself continually striving to position community-based research not merely as an approach to research but primarily as a community-led

practice. Despite my endeavors to promote the notion of community-based research as inherently belonging to the people (Sousa, 2021a), I have also come to recognize a strong individualistic focus in my texts, particularly in the emphasis placed on the role of the community member as the facilitator. This may perhaps be attributed to the pervasive influence of an academic culture centered around the researcher.

In the wake of my PhD defense, as I delved deeper into collaborative work with community groups, I began to grasp the essence of community-led facilitation as a collective endeavor. This epiphany resonates with Stoecker's (1999) assertion that the objectives of community-based research are realized through the collaborative efforts of the participatory researcher, the popular educator, the animator, and the community organizer. Investigating how these roles come together to drive change has become my glass of milk after enjoying a delicious cookie.

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ADULT LITERACY IN CANADA: FROM 2015 TO 2024

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Abstract

This paper represents the inaugural presentation of CASAE's newly formed Special Interest Group (SIG) on Adult Literacy. Across four panellists, we offer reflections on different aspects of adult literacy in relation to policies, practices, trends and events from over the past decade. Specifically, we start by presenting the landscape of adult literacy policy at the federal level in relation to new initiatives and foci followed by reflections and insights taken from research and practice from those working in the field in Ontario and Saskatchewan. We take 2015 as a starting point as this was the last time a dedicated adult literacy panel was organised as part of CASAE's programming, which was offered in conjunction with the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) World Assembly in Montreal where we now gather again in 2024.

Keywords: Adult literacy, Access, Pathways, Policy

INTRODUCTION

In 2015, when CASAE last met in Montreal, some of us convened a panel on adult literacy with leading researchers and practitioners from government, civil society, and academia. The mood was sombre. The field had suffered a series of blows over the previous nine years of Conservative rule. There were many places and spaces of adult education that had recently been abandoned (Käpplinger & Elfert, 2018) which had once been part of a thriving landscape of adult literacy in Canada: the National Literacy Secretariat, the National Adult Literacy Database, the Movement for Canadian Literacy, World Literacy of Canada, to name a few examples (see Elfert & Walker, 2020). Even the not-so-stellar results of the latest OECD International Large-Scale Assessment (ILSA) of adult literacy, the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), had had little to no impact on the country's investment in adult literacy (St Clair, 2016). Yet 2015 was also a time for cautious hope: the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) had recently been launched, which, unlike their predecessors the MDGs, encompassed industrialised and Western countries like Canada and had a specific target of improving adult literacy (4.6) and other targets related to it (i.e., 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, and 4.7) (see <https://apa.sdg4education2030.org/sdg-4-targets-and-means-implementation>); and, closer to home, the Truth & Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action had just been launched (TRC, 2015) as the culmination of a series of legal hearings in response to Canada's shameful educational legacy of government and church-sponsored residential schools for Indigenous Peoples.

We return now, a decade later, as representatives of a newly formed Special Interest Group (SIG) within CASAE on Adult Literacy to reflect on events, policies, trends, and practices in adult literacy in Canada. We live in a world which is arguably even more VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, & Ambiguous, see Bennis & Nanus, 1985), and where adult education is needed—perhaps more than ever—to help us to face an increasing array of wicked problems (Sork, 2019). We have all lived through a ~3-year pandemic which brought unprecedented changes in online education and needs for digital literacy. Similarly, climate change, changes in the labour market, and Canada’s commitment to Indigenous rights and decolonisation (Government of Canada, 2023; TRC, 2015) all have important implications for adult literacy.

As we show in our paper and panel, literacy for work and for skills development may have—yet again—become a concern of the government, but there remain many challenges in providing literacy programs that meet the needs of all learners and that offer support for more than just employment. There are also continuing challenges in providing and communicating clear pathways for learners to move along their educational journeys from more basic to higher education. We start our paper with Jude’s contribution in which she provides an overview of the policy landscape, tracing changes and continuities in the adult literacy field over the past decade. Following this, Annie, on behalf of two other fellow literacy practitioners, brings us some stories from the field as a literacy educator in Ontario. Following this, Stacey takes us to Saskatchewan and shares some of the changes and challenges that have occurred in her province which had long been thought of as a leader in Canada. Finally, Paula shares some of her recent research into access to adult literacy and educational pathways for adult literacy learners in Ontario. Overall, the panellists point to limitations of the continuing neoliberal model which prioritises work over community and fails to support the most vulnerable of adult learners in Canada. They also offer recommendations for how adult literacy may be strengthened over the coming decade.

AN ARRAY OF POLICY INITIATIVES (WITH A NARROW FOCUS) – JUDE

Adult literacy continues to be undersupported and there has been no rebuilding of the National Literacy Secretariat, World Literacy of Canada or the National Adult Literacy Database. At the same time, the past ~9 years have seen the creation of major policies, organisations, and initiatives connected to adult literacy under a federal Liberal leadership (in power since late 2015), all which relate directly to skills and the economy.

Shortly after being elected, the Liberal government struck a new Advisory Council on Economic Growth which proposed the creation of a Future Skills Council, a diverse group to advise the government on “national and regional skills development and training priorities,” plus a Future Skills Centre, which would support adult education research and programming (see Walker, 2022). Both were launched in 2018 (though the former is now defunct). The Future Skills Centre—cofounded by Metropolitan University, BluePrint (a research organisation), and the Conference Board of Canada to “foster a more responsive skills development ecosystem”—currently has nine areas of

focus (Table 1); as of April 2024, it had funded over 240 skills development projects across the country:

Table 1: Priority Areas of the Future Skills Centre

1. Core skills (e.g., literacy, numeracy)
2. Tech & Automation (e.g., digital skills)
3. SME Adaptability (e.g., supporting skill and labour shortages)
4. Inclusive economy (e.g., supporting historically marginalised groups)
5. Innovation & Scaling (e.g., future focused innovation in skills)
6. Pathways to jobs (e.g., retraining & upskilling)
7. Quality of work (e.g., to support worker productivity, engagement, motivation)
8. Sectors in transition (e.g, reskilling & upskilling for industry change, due to, e.g., climate change)
9. Sustainable jobs (e.g., skills & training to support net-zero targets and transitioning workers into new industries)

Source: Future Skills Centre, <https://fsc-ccf.ca/research-insights-key-themes/>

Much of the recent focus on adult skills and literacy, federally and interprovincially, has been on developing national skills frameworks. In 2018, the Council of Minister of Education, Canada (CMEC) endorsed six pan-Canadian global competencies to be cultivated by all 13 provinces and territories.

Table 2: CMEC Global Competencies

1. Critical thinking and problem solving
2. Innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship
3. Learning to learn/self-aware and self-directed learning
4. Collaboration
5. Communication
6. Global citizenships and sustainability

Source: Council of Ministers of Education, 2018, www.globalcompetencies.cmec.ca/global-competencies

And, in the same year, Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC—previously HR(S)DC), the main federal ministry supporting adult education and training, funded a program known as Futureworx to “explore the need for and how best to develop a pan-Canadian soft skills framework” (Walker, 2022). Then, following the attested “largest investment in Canadian history in training for workers” in 2020 (Walker, 2022), the

2021 budget earmarked more than \$300 million over the following three years for programming delivered by a newly proposed Office of Skills for Success within ESDC.

Launched in 2022, the new Skills for Success framework can be seen as a follow-up to the previous Essential Skills Framework (Walker, 2022) and comprises 9 skills “needed for work, learning and life”:



Figure 1: Skills for Success

Source: <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/jobs/training/initiatives/skills-success.html>

Thanks to its sizable budget, the Office issued a call for proposals in early 2022 for organizations to undertake major research projects and develop new tools and programs. Currently, the Office/initiative offers links to 11 assessment tools (e.g., Employability Assessment Tool; self-assessment tools on reading, writing, numeracy, and for the trades; numeracy and reading indicators for employers) and 17 training guides (e.g., for employment preparation, including a variety of curriculum and training resources from ABC Life Literacy Canada; and problem-solving, vocabulary, math and trades workbooks provided by the Government of Canada) (see <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/jobs/training/initiatives/skills-success/tools.html>). Among the selections is the First Nations, Inuit and Metis Essential Skills Inventory Project FIMESIP, “a knowledge-sharing platform for those working in literacy and essential skills (LES) for Indigenous people, allowing individuals and organizations to share best practices, learn from each other’s innovations, and support development of the field.” Indeed, what we can see across policies and programmes on adult literacy is, in general, an increased sensitivity to and focus on Indigenous skills and training (seen also, e.g., in the recent Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) program, co-developed with Indigenous partners to help “Indigenous people improve their skills and find employment.”).

In conclusion, though not as comprehensive or substantial, the recent influx of funding for frameworks, skills, and literacy echoes an earlier time—the 1990s (see Elfert & Walker, 2020); as mentioned, much of this previous infrastructure was subsequently dismantled. It is yet to be seen how these more recent initiatives will translate to program funding and support for literacy learners across the provinces and territories, and how sustainable the new policies and programs will be.

WORKING UNDER PRESSURE: PERSPECTIVES FROM THREE ADULT LITERACY PRACTITIONERS IN ONTARIO—ANNIE (on behalf of Annie Luk, Judy Perry, & Phylcia Davis-Wesseling)

As practitioners in the field of adult literacy in Canada with experiences spanning over the last three decades, we have witnessed many instances where the education system does not meet the needs of learners. In the province of Ontario, where we all work as adult literacy practitioners, we see an ongoing shift of adult literacy to being seen and used as a labour market tool for global competitiveness and human capital (Elias et al., 2021). This shift towards the economic emphasis, which predates 2015 and has continued and, in some cases, intensified since then, has implications both at the policy level and for individual learners accessing adult literacy programming in Ontario. For government policy, the social justice aspect of adult literacy has been increasingly marginalized as an issue for government policy (Elfert & Walker, 2020). For adult learners, the literacy-for-employment model for programming continues to devalue their contributions in society beyond employment, and place them on lower hierarchical positions in society (Elias et al., 2021). Similarly, the accountability measures tied to program funding lead to the selection of learners who are deemed as more likely to succeed, leaving out those who may have a greater need for literacy education but who are seen as less likely to pass certain program requirements (e.g., moving up to the next level or into a job) (Elias et al., 2021; Pickard, 2021a).

Our stories highlight our own learning, unlearning and relearning of how we define adult literacy as educators. As we witness the ongoing oppression facing adult literacy learners and as we reckon with our contradictory role in supporting and resisting government mandates, we hope that the stories we share in this panel will offer further understanding of how practitioners work with learners in order to push for policy change that challenges the status quo and furthers social justice. We also hope that our stories will spark future research on the experiences of learners and practitioners to fill in the growing gap in academic literature (Babino et al., 2020; Belzer, 2022; Crooks et al., 2021).

COMMUNITY-BASED LITERACY WORK AND PRACTITIONER NETWORKS IN SASKATCHEWAN – STACEY

Literacy defunding and policy shifts over the past decade (and more) have impacted different provinces and communities in different ways. Looking closely at the impacts on Saskatchewan may give us some sense of the challenges faced by rural and sparsely populated areas.

In the early 2000s adult literacy work in Saskatchewan was supported by diverse and seemingly robust networks of practitioners and programs, and the field in the province was characterized by cross-sector relationships (Horsman & Woodrow, 2006). Adult literacy, family literacy and English as an Additional Language (EAL) programs worked together. Community-based literacy programs partnered with schools. Learners were active participants in these networks as well. Further, the provincial government worked closely with the field through their partnership with the Saskatchewan Literacy Network.

Of course, there were tensions. The province's message about the inclusion of EAL work in adult literacy programs was inconsistent; Partnerships between adult literacy programs and schools were shaped by the inequalities of the power of the organizations. Over the years, there was an increasing narrowing of definitions of literacy in government policy that centred workplace literacy and pushed other literacy practices to the margins. Significantly, the field had not grappled with the legacies of colonization and Indigenous genocide that shape the reality of literacy work in Saskatchewan (Crooks, 2017). And although many organizations had worked in the field for decades, few programs had what could be called core funding and practitioners were precariously funded.

By the mid-to-late 2010s, federal defunding and the narrowing of mandates, at both the federal and provincial level, exacerbated these tensions and exposed cracks in the field (Crooks et al, 2023). Today, adult literacy work continues in Saskatchewan but the sense of adult literacy as a field of practice has been significantly undermined. Unlike some other provinces, Saskatchewan has maintained a provincial literacy organization that supports the field but its funding and mandate have been reduced significantly, and at the local level programs, practitioners and learners often feel isolated.

Looking today at the field of adult literacy in Saskatchewan, the web of connections and relationships that once appeared so vibrant is hard to make out. As we move forward with new provincial and federal focuses, I believe it is critical that we also fund new places to connect and create new spaces for critical conversations about literacy work.

ACCESS TO ADULT LITERACY & PATHWAYS TO FURTHER EDUCATION – PAULA

There is no denying the ongoing chronic neglect and underfunding in local adult literacy programming. In Manitoba, for example, funding for total expenditures for its Adult Literacy Program have declined "in real terms by 23 percent since 2016" (Silver, 2023, para. 2). In Ontario, new streams of project-based funding to create opportunities for adult learning (like micro-credentials) are out of reach for Literacy and Basic Skills providers (Literacy Link South Central, 2022). Canada-wide, the federal government's dismantling of core-funding for literacy organizations in 2014 continues to impact their ability to coordinate and support adult literacy work, with local programs subject to both provincial/territorial decisions about the distribution of funds through Labour Market Development Agreements and a loss of literacy worker expertise in research and advocacy (CUPE, 2018; Crooks et al., 2021). In addition, the recent loss of the GED in

Canada raises alarm about the remaining options available for adult learners to transition from basic literacy programs to other forms of further and higher education. After ten years of negotiating among provincial ministries to update or replace the GED, an easily recognised universal credential across North America, the company has ceased operations in Canada with no immediate alternative available to adult learners (an Alberta-based Canadian Adult Education Credential is promised but currently unavailable) (MLITSD, 2023; Teotonio, 2024). Thus, each province will be individually and differentially responsible for credentialing those who wish to earn a minimum of a high school diploma, adding further confusion to adult learners already on the periphery of sites of formal education. The loss of another pathway to education and work for adult learners illuminates their experience of material inequality in literacy programs.

Adult literacy learners, like those in the Greater Toronto Area, find themselves enrolled in programs that have inconsistent routes into post-compulsory education. In my research (Elias, forthcoming), adult learners received inadequate information about pathways between literacy and postsecondary sites despite programs sharing the same neighbourhood or institution. Adult learners found themselves either leaving literacy programs too soon or lingering in programs longer than they desired as they struggled to comprehend the variety of educational options available to them. Some literacy learners described repetitive, boring, or general learning while others sought out predatory private career colleges after struggling to qualify for postsecondary education. Many found themselves in limbo between adult high schools and workforce development classes or continuing in basic literacy, without the resources or supports to plan a transition out of adult literacy.

At the same time, these adult learner experiences cannot be reduced to abstract narratives of individual readiness or resiliency, nor can we review adult literacy programs outside of their constitutive social and material relations. Frontline literacy workers continue to be overwhelmed with the institutional organization of a neoliberal capitalist state that places the onus on the public sector to maximize returns on dwindling state funds through performance management metrics (Atkinson, 2019; Pickard, 2021b). Competency-based pedagogical frameworks – which categorize skill and knowledge in ways that mute the realities of racialized, immigrant, and Indigenous literacy learners – continue to thrive as models for tracking adult literacy learners and their development (Pinsent-Johnson, 2015; Yasin, 2023). The return of adults to literacy programs, when access to such education addresses material inequality on an individual basis only, raises important considerations about breaking from the reproductive praxis of literacy as human capital development.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

Adult literacy and foundational adult education continue to sit at the margins of government policy, and the voices of adult literacy learners and practitioners are still inadequately accounted for (Belzer, 2022; Walker, 2022). While the past decade has not witnessed a devastating decimation of the field as the previous decade had, many

organisations that played a vital role in supporting literacy research and the cross-sharing of information are still missing (Käpplinger & Elfert, 2018). Further, while increased funding of certain workplace and training initiatives is welcomed—especially in supporting Indigenous communities—this has generally occurred through the capacity of project-based funding without core funding commitments or support for non-employment related, community-based programs. Moreover, an increased focus on skill frameworks, assessment and accountability measures appears to be a double-edged sword: they may allow learners, educators, and employers to identify learning/skill needs and to assess progress, yet at the same time, such measures and frameworks can often fail to account for learning gains and skills that aren't so easily assessable. They can also result in the continued sidelining of learners who may be deemed too difficult and less likely to achieve the outcomes required of government funding. Despite the challenges, there continue to be tireless literacy educators and learners doing wonderful work across the country with success stories that need to be shared.

In this vein, we see this panel as the first of many to come where we can shine a spotlight on adult literacy at CASAE in relation to policies, programs, and practices as well as the experiences of practitioners and of the learners themselves.

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POSTER ABSTRACTS

DIFFICULT DREAMS: UNPACKING THE MYTHOLOGIES OF HUMAN CAPITAL

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Human capital theory (HCT) has moved from a core tenet of neoclassical economic theory to a normative and prescriptive policy position that guides our understanding of economic growth across multiple scales, from the individual to the national. Clearly, claims and assertions around human capital have taken center stage in adult education policies, but also are increasingly present in the decision making of adult learners. In this research project, a diverse group of graduate students interrogate their experiences of accumulating and realising 'human capital.' We argue that HCT holds at its centre an abstract and falsely universal subject that obscures how transnational relations of patriarchy, race, and coloniality constitute class relations and thus create a reality in which investments in human capital cannot be realised by all. This project further elaborates how this group of adult learners developed an understanding of class as a socially constituted relation within capital and thus foregrounds the need for adult educators to work from a more nuanced articulation of class that recognizes relationality with other forms of oppression.

A SITE FOR COMMUNITY AND ADULT EDUCATION: EXPLORING AN ONLINE COMMUNITY FOR GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN WITH WIVES

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In *heterocentric* societies, how do gay and bisexual men with wives learn to construct their queer identity, find community, and learn how to navigate the complexities of coming out? Being in a heterosexual relationship can be a structural barrier that impedes gay and bisexual men from exploring their sexual identity.

Although research has documented how the Internet has been an influential avenue for queer identity development, little is known about specific online communities for married gay and bisexual men. Using a qualitative approach consisting of semistructured interviews with eight individuals, this study explores an online support group known as Husbands Out to Wives (HOW).

The findings indicate that HOW serves as a critical lifeline for members. HOW not only provides a sense of community, belonging, hope, and agency but also facilitates the development of one's sexual identity. Further, participants noted that HOW has helped them shift from a shame-based outlook of their gay and bisexual identity(ies) toward a proud-based perspective. HOW also provides members with meaningful opportunities to learn about different queer identities; sex practices; pathways to coming out to their wives, families, and friends; different models of relationships; and best practices for divorcing their wives.

UNE RÉFLEXION SUR LES APPORTS DE L'HUMANISME TAOÏSTE À L'ÉDUCATION TOUT AU LONG DE LA VIE

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Historiquement, la perspective humaniste a fortement influencé l'éducation des adultes. Selon cette perspective, les êtres humains seraient libres et autonomes avec un potentiel pour la réalisation de soi. Toutefois, dans le dernier siècle, les valeurs néo-libérales ont pris de l'ampleur (p. ex. standardisation, utilitarisme et productivisme). Cette présentation par affiche vise à explorer, de manière théorique, le débat entourant l'éducation tout au long de la vie en s'appuyant sur la perspective humaniste sous l'angle de la pensée taoïste. Le Tao représente une totalité indivisible en transformation continue et qui gère l'équilibre dans la nature. Pour suivre le Tao, il est recommandé de se détacher des mots et des concepts, de suivre le processus naturel des choses et de respecter l'autonomie personnelle et la diversité. Il est possible de faire des liens entre ces notions et des concepts humanistes (p. ex. autonomie) et des concepts de la phénoménologie heideggérienne (p. ex. être-dans-le-monde). Ces concepts peuvent aider à créer et expérimenter des processus d'apprentissage et de transfert plus holistiques, naturels, fluides, créatifs, flexibles et autonomes. Finalement, la notion d'équilibre, centrale au Tao, s'avère aussi importante dans le domaine de l'éducation. Elle peut aider à faire face aux excès du néo-libéralisme.

SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING AND TEACHER DECOLONIZATION

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Teachers in all provinces are expected to possess a foundational knowledge of Indigenous peoples and apply that knowledge in the classroom. In Alberta, a new teaching quality standard was introduced in 2018 requiring teachers to “understand the historical, economic and political implications of treaties and agreements with First Nations; legislation and agreements negotiated with Métis, and residential schools and their legacy” (Alberta Education, 2018, p. 6).

In 2020, Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers from eight Alberta teacher education programs came together to examine teachers’ perceptions of possessing foundational knowledge about Indigenous peoples and their method of acquisition. Findings revealed that 56% of teachers believed they possessed such knowledge, while 37% indicated they might have a foundational knowledge. When asked how they had acquired their foundational knowledge, teachers reported taking advantage of a variety of learning opportunities including workshops, courses, learning from Elders and self-directed learning. Engaging in self-directed learning provided teachers with the option of engaging in a journey of personal decolonization.

EXPLORING FACULTY RESILIENCE AT NSCC

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This qualitative study investigates the resilience resources utilized by faculty members at Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) to navigate challenges and maintain well-being. Resilience resources, crucial for coping with stress and adapting to adversity, encompass various domains including structure, consequences, interpersonal relationships, identity, feelings of power and control, sense of belonging, positive thinking, and physical and financial well-being.

Drawing on data from 26 semi-structured interviews with continuing full-time faculty from various programs and NSCC campuses, this research identifies and explores the resilience strategies most employed by faculty to foster adaptation and resilience.

Research suggest that the application of specific resilience resources positively influences mental and physical well-being, fosters a more optimistic outlook towards work, and promotes adaptive behaviors and cognitive responses, enhancing flexibility and problem-solving capacity.

The study aims to disseminate these identified resources among faculty to facilitate their integration into their own personal and professional well-being strategies, thereby influencing to a culture of resilience within NSCC beyond to the post-secondary teaching community.

AMPLIFYING VOICES: TRANSFORMING EMERGENCIES RESPONSE IN MATERNITY HEALTHCARE THROUGH CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

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The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated global inequalities, mainly affecting maternity healthcare services in low- and middle-income countries. This study, which focused on vulnerable women's pregnancy and childbirth experiences during the first year of COVID-19, utilizes Community-based participatory research (CBPR) and a critical pedagogy approach in Quito. It engaged groups of Mestizo, African Ecuadorian, and Indigenous women in discussions on healthcare biases and gender roles through storytelling and women's participatory dialogues. The aim was to promote social change, advocating for improved maternity healthcare in future emergencies. The results heightened the vulnerabilities of women to the disruptions in sexual and reproductive health services, mental health issues, and gender-based violence (GBV). A negative childbirth experience emerged as a significant problem reported by most women, highlighting the need for urgent interventions. To improve maternity healthcare in emergencies, it's recommended to integrate mental health services and GBV interventions into prenatal and postnatal care. Engaging community voices in policy development can ensure culturally sensitive and practical solutions.

HARM REDUCTION AS COMMUNITY-BASED ADULT EDUCATION

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Harm reduction can be understood as a set of practical strategies and education interested in reducing the negative consequences associated with drug use, situated within a social movement based on the belief in, and respect for, the rights and well-being of people who use drugs (National Harm Reduction Coalition, 2023). To understand how we got to the point of Naloxone, the medicine to reverse opioid overdoses, being available for free in pharmacies across Canada, we must go back to the beginning and recognize harm reduction as a movement for the rights and well-being of people who use drugs that began with community-based adult education and grassroots organizing by people who use drugs. While societal moral panic soars about the existence and health care needs of people who use drugs, returning to the original goals of the harm reduction movement with the emphasis on lived-experience acting as a guide, we can forge a path forward that honours the life-saving education and medicine we have access to now because of the efforts of people who use drugs. This poster will explore the history of advocacy by people who use drugs in Canada, the methods of community-based harm reduction adult education and how educators can learn from the efforts of people who use drugs to create connected, critical and hopeful learning environments honouring lived experience.

CREATIVE ART THERAPY AS AN INTERVENTION FOR IRANIAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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Introduction:

The ongoing revolution in late 2022 has left Iranian international students grappling with emotional damage, impacting their academic success. This proposal seeks to investigate the effectiveness of creative art therapy as an intervention to help these students overcome emotional harm and enhance their academic achievements. Academic success, encompassing learning accomplishments and employability skills, is crucial for these students' future (Cachia, Lynam, & Stock, 2018).

Understanding the impact of creative art therapy on emotional and academic development is crucial in providing effective support for international students affected by socio-political upheavals. Addressing emotional well-being is fundamental before focusing on academic success, aligning with the notion that traumatic events can impede students' achievements (Kar, 2019).

Methodology/Modes of Inquiry:

This study employs a qualitative case study approach, emphasizing the lived experiences of Iranian international students. A snowball sampling technique will be used to recruit four participants, engaging them in ten weekly sessions at Concordia art hives. Data collection includes interviews, observations, and guided workshops, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the participants' emotional and academic journey.

Research Questions:

The research aims to answer the following questions:

- A) How can participation in art hives help students deal with emotional damage?
- B) How can art hives assist students in crisis in achieving academic success?
- C) How does overcoming emotional harm impact students' academic success?

Literature Review:

Previous studies highlight the role of internal and external factors in academic success, emphasizing the importance of interpersonal skills and a supportive learning environment (Cachia et al., 2018). Creative art therapy has been shown to reinforce mental health, providing a non-verbal outlet for emotional expression and community support (Hannigan et al., 2019; Reed et al., 2020).

Theoretical Framework:

The theoretical framework draws on Kar's (2019) assertion that traumatic events can cause emotional damage, impacting academic achievement. Walton and Wilson (2018)

argue that addressing emotional issues is essential before focusing on educational success. The research explores how art hives create an environment for initial changes in students.

Results/Conclusions:

Anticipated outcomes include uncovering the meaningful relationship between art therapy, art hives, and students' academic success. The study may pave the way for integrating creative art interventions into the curriculum of international students' academic programs, acknowledging academic success beyond grades.

By exploring the impact of creative art therapy, the research contributes to fostering a supportive environment for international students affected by political upheavals, promoting social justice and well-being.

In conclusion, this research seeks to provide insights into the transformative potential of creative art therapy as an intervention for Iranian international students, contributing to their emotional healing and academic success in the aftermath of the 2022 revolution.

(RE)VISUALIZING DIALOGIC INFORMAL LEARNING: POLITICAL WEBCOMICS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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This artistic poster explores the transformative potential of political webcomics as a form of public pedagogical practice. Presented in the format of a one-page comic and leveraging social media as dynamic spaces for counternarrative-making, this session aims to foster cross-community conversations. It delves into the power of multimodal storytelling, which enables trans-contextual counternarratives and dialogic meaning-making in public pedagogical spaces.

As social media platforms offer unparalleled opportunities for adult learners to engage in dialogic meaning-making, this research advocates for broadening the scope of dialogic pedagogy beyond formal and non-formal classroom contexts to encompass informal learning settings. Political comics, such as the webcomic series *Just This Toast*, presented in this research, serve as vehicles for exploring dialogic learning in informal spaces.

Through a semi-autoethnographic analysis of *Just This Toast*, this research project investigates the unique opportunities and challenges presented by the integration of webcomics into lifelong learning practices. It addresses issues such as algorithmic information dissemination and digital echo chambers, contributing to ongoing discussions about redefining adult education practices in the digital age while underscoring the importance of dialogue and critical reflection in contemporary learning environments.

Keywords: webcomics, social media, informal learning, dialogic learning, public pedagogy, algorithmic information dissemination.

MOTIVATION AND MASTERY: EXPLORING IRANIAN MA TEFL HOLDERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THESIS PROJECTS

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This study investigates the attitudes of Iranian MA TEFL holders towards their thesis projects in the field of English as a foreign language (EFL). It also explores the factors that impact their motivation throughout the thesis process. Using a qualitative approach, which involved both focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews, 21 enthusiastic MA TEFL holders were selected by four English professors from Hakim Sabzevari University. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the same participants until data saturation was achieved. The analysis of participants' experiences throughout the MA program revealed a high level of motivation at the beginning and end stages of their thesis work. The findings indicate that participants generally hold positive attitudes towards their projects, considering them as sources of motivation. Furthermore, factors such as topic selection, work quality, supervisor support, and data significance emerged as key influencers in maintaining participants' motivation levels. For future research, examining how Iranian MA TEFL holders' experiences with their thesis projects can inform innovative approaches to adult education within the context of English language learning and teaching could contribute to the ongoing discourse on redefining adult education.

WHAT LIES WITHIN: A LEAKY BUCKET APPROACH TO ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

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Funded community development projects are often driven by the need to demonstrate “deliverables” with detailed measures of impact in the community. Implementation and reporting schedules rarely offer space for organizations to reflect on the impact of the project on their own health and learning. “Engage: Women’s Empowerment and Active Citizenship” is a five-year program that, in addition to supporting many community-led initiatives, strives to foster co-learning and organizational strengthening amongst the six partners from Bangladesh, Canada, Ethiopia, Haiti, India and Tanzania. How this co-learning is explored is the topic of this poster.

The “Leaky Bucket” is a popular education tool for households and communities to track the incomes and outflows of assets to identify opportunities for local economic growth (Fairbairn, et al., 1991, Cunningham, 2011). Adaptations exist, such as assessing partnership effectiveness in development assistance (Vargas-Hernandez & Noruzi, 2010). The Leaky Bucket tool was modified for the Engage project for staff to identify the energy filling and draining activities and events, discuss the effects of these inputs and outflows on their staff and organization, and note questions emerging. We invite discussion about popular education tools well known to practitioners that are used in different ways.

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LEARNING SOLIDARITY, BUILDING POWER: EDUCATION AGAINST PRECARIETY IN SOCIAL JUSTICE CAUCUSES

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In the paper outlined in this poster, I explore how educators in the UCORE (United Caucuses of Rank-and-File Educators) network have countered precarity (Means, 2019) by forging solidarity with each other and their students, communities, and other workers. In particular, I consider how educators in this network conceptualize solidarity and advance this principle through educational processes. This project builds on the growing transdisciplinary body of research on social justice caucuses (Maton, 2018; Dyke & Muckian Bates, 2019; Maton & Stark, 2021), social movement learning (Choudry, 2016; Haller & Clover, 2005; Kuk & Tarlau, 2020; Niesz, 2021; Stark, 2023; Taylor, 2001), and critical/ radical adult education (Brookfield & Holst, 2010; Costa et al., 2021). Using the methodology of movement ethnography (Stark, 2023), I draw on over four hundred hours of field work within this network, as well as over forty interviews. I find that educators build solidarity and counter precarity through both formal and non-formal education within and across social justice caucuses. In doing so, this poster presentation contributes to the conference's discussion of redefining adult education, shedding light on how educator organizers have built solidarity through educational processes within the UCORE network, building their collective power and countering the precaritization of public education.

LES FEMMES RACIALISÉES AYANT BRISÉ LE PLAFOND DE VERRE EN POLITIQUE MUNICIPALE À MONTRÉAL – FACTEURS DE SUCCÈS POUR LES FUTURES CANDIDATES

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L'émergence des femmes racialisées sur la scène politique municipale défient des obstacles singuliers. Ces femmes sont issues de la diversité culturelle et classifiées comme « minorité visible ». Pour cela, s'interroger sur leur parcours, leur historique sociodémographique devient nécessaire. Réfléchir sur comment elles font pour réussir à se faire élire, à prendre en charge les destinées d'une ville de cette grande métropole québécoise qu'est Montréal, est bénéfique à plusieurs points de vue. Certaines d'entre elles occupent ou ont assumé les plus hautes fonctions, à savoir : Présidente du Conseil de ville, Présidente du Comité exécutif ou Mairesse d'une grosse agglomération ou simplement comme Conseillère d'arrondissement ou de ville. Elles affrontent les préjugés et les incompréhensions. Ce phénomène nous intéresse, parce qu'il est question de percer le secret de leur réussite, de leur implication et d'en déterminer les facteurs de succès pour les générations futures.

QUEBEC LABOUR UNION REVITALIZATION: WHAT ROLE FOR UNION EDUCATION?

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Despite its large membership base, owing to Quebec's high union coverage rate (38.8% in 2022; Statistics Canada, 2023), the labour movement in Quebec continues to experience setbacks orchestrated by successive governments with a neoliberal agenda. Quebec unions are not immune to the global trend of union decline (marginalization), a phenomenon accentuated by globalization and government austerity policies. Union revitalization aims to counteract this trend; one of its key strategies involves democratizing the movement and broadening its reach to diverse groups of its membership, such as young, gender-diverse and/or racialized workers. Labour organizations in Quebec, such as the Fédération des travailleurs et des travailleuses du Québec (FTQ) which represents 600,000 workers, have an established and structured province-wide union educational program that trains thousands of unionized workers every year (FTQ, 2013). Even with its large educational capacity, in recent years the FTQ's influence has been waning which has generated an internal debate focused on the relationship between its educational strategies and its social and political influence in Quebec society (FTQ, 2016). My research proposes to explore this tension by studying the role of education in union revitalization, with a focus on the inclusion of under-represented workers.

LEARNING, UNLEARNING, RELEARNING: A DECOLONIZATION JOURNEY AMONG HISPANIC IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN TEXAS

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The landscape of adult education is multifaceted, which shaped by historical legacies, cultural dynamics, and systemic biases. Within this complex context, the experiences of Hispanic immigrant women in the United States represent a unique intersectionality with race, gender, and class relations. This study explores the decolonization journey of Hispanic immigrant women by focusing on the transformative processes of learning, unlearning, and relearning within the local community of Texas. Three research questions are investigated. They are: 1). What role does adult learning play in shaping the perspectives and aspirations of Hispanic immigrant women, and how does it impact their engagement in the local community? 2). What are the key challenges and barriers rooted in colonial influences that Hispanic immigrant women encounter in their pursuit of lifelong learning? 3) How do Hispanic immigrant women navigate and challenge biases, stereotypes, and colonial legacies within educational systems, and what strategies do they employ for unlearning?

This poster presentation draws on critical pedagogy (Freire, 2000; hooks, 1994; Giroux, 2004), postcolonial theory (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Smith, 2012), and feminist theory (Hanson & Jaffe, 2021; Manicom & Walters, 2012; Zhu, 2023) for analyzing the learning experiences of Hispanic immigrant women. Based on semi-structured in-depth interviews with 14 Hispanic immigrant women in Texas, this paper aims to understand the decolonization journey of Hispanic immigrant women and how they learn, unlearn, and relearn knowledge and navigate themselves into the local community. Through this exploration, the study aims to contribute to the discourse on decolonized and community-centric approaches to education, offering insights that go beyond traditional paradigms and better align with the needs and aspirations of Hispanic immigrant women in the United States.