

# TABOO

Volume 19, Number 2, Spring 2020

**Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education**  
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### Special Issue Dedication

This issue of *Taboo* is dedicated to the memories of Joe L. Kincheloe, Jesus “Pato” Gomez, & Paulo Freire . . . it is dedicated to those who continue to create different critical pedagogies, ways of knowing, and meaning making. Many thanks and much respect to Alan Jones and his commitment to continued support of *Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education*.

## Introduction

### 50 Years of Critical Pedagogy and We Still Aren't Critical

Shirley R. Steinberg

A new millennium, and a quarter of a century since Paulo Freire died...

Paulo engaged us with *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* sometime after 1970, '68 in Brazil. When we acquired our first copy of Freire, many of us stayed up all night, we were energized...astonished that someone finally *got it*. Those early days of critical pedagogy were full of answers, we knew them all, we read copiously, and sent out our prose, expounding upon what had become the obvious: education was not about an *it, a thing, a lesson*...it was about our schools, our students, the context in which we all found ourselves. We were ready to rumble, we heard those cries from the corridors, practiced the practice, taught to transgress, drank bitter milk, we would become intellectuals, understand our exiles and communities, make our road by walking, and that as teachers, well, we were cultural workers. We knew it all, we did it all, we had the answers. Oh, the smugness with which we breezed through hallways, our qualitative, critical theoretical, neo-Marxist, post-modernized selves. We could juggle our Aronowitz with our Foucault, our Bourdieu with our Bowles and Gintis, we grew taller explaining the first Giroux, and shared our *Women's Ways of Knowing*...in the bag, a new pedagogy, we would change the world.

In the cold winter of 1991, Donaldo Macedo invited us up to Boston to meet

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Paulo Freire, as little Muhammads, we would go to the Mountain, meet the source of our strength...so much to say, to ask, to hear. The day/evening didn't disappoint, Joe Kincheloe and I have told this story many times, and so it goes. We met Paulo at his favorite Portuguese restaurant, overwhelmed by this tiny bearded man, his enthusiasm, passions, and love emanated from his warm embrace and, well, frankly, his love of food. Paulo insisted we order soup pots filled with boiling chicken, vegetables and broth, each of us having our own pot, we ate most of the afternoon. As I have noted before in my writing, Paulo loved to eat. He said that he could never trust someone who didn't like to eat. He relished food, the look, scent, and taste...consequently his conversation at dinner often went to food...the food of the people. And when he spoke of food, he drew it to the context of emancipation, of knowing, of reading the world.

I was primed for my life to be nourished by critical pedagogy; not only had I been blessed with amazing mentors, (David G. Smith, Julie Ellis, Kathleen Berry), I had dined with Paulo...the real deal. Teaching my first courses in the foundations of education, I was invincible, had the answers, could pose the questions. My students were psyched, they were engaged, I was a changer...I would make a difference.

Soon after my first set of classes, my students were sent into the field, ready to continue the gospel. I shudder at the first phone call I received by one of my students...she was dashed to the wall by a cooperating teacher who told her how to categorize the class by race and economic status. She was sobbing, how could this be? Standing up to the teacher, she gave her "Freirean" response, the oppression, the reading the world, the whole bit. She cried to me, "how could you do this to me? You taught me things I can't use, the schools don't want to know about justice and empowerment, they want us to follow directions." A week later, the students returned to class...where were the triumphs, the testimonies of wonderment, the emancipatory way they had all paved? Didn't "it" work? Actually, no, it didn't. My work was so obsessed with Freire's words, that I didn't encourage them to stop to contextualize and read the words of others. Teachers and administrators weren't interested in emancipation, they had standards, rules, tests, and running records to deal with. Context? Context was the classroom, the teacher-proofed readers with the red paragraphs telling us how to answer questions. How could I have been so wrong?

Tapping into my inner Giroux/Grumet/Pagano/McLaren/Britzman soul, I revisited every discussion we had. All the fun, laughter, tears, the coming-to-Jesus moments we sought in order to be the revolutionary teachers we were meant to be. Teaching is not as simple as eating a pot of chicken. Reading the world means to read the world we don't like or agree with as well...nothing is ever "in the bag." Teaching, critically teaching, is hard work. It requires us to rise above the petty annoyances of those who *aren't like we are*. We are the interlopers, we are the minority, most don't want to have liberatory, critical students...they want obedient, grade-getting quiet students to pass the tests and make the curriculum look good.

My teaching required a redux. I had to understand the context. Not the context of the mango tree, or ebonics, or gender equity...I had to understand the context of a capitalist country, an anti-intellectual environment, a standards-based curriculum, and the obsession with being #1. I am still learning, my frustration grows, with colleagues, students, parents, and the corporate takeovers of our universities. Like Sartre's existential hell, we burn with other people: educators, administrators, and politicians...incinerated by frustration and exhaustion. I'm not going to stop, give up... but it sure as hell is hard to keep that pedagogy of hope Paulo told us about. So here we are, 50+ years later, the oppressed still don't have a pedagogy...and we still keep on keepin' on.

That's what this issue of *Taboo* is...keepin' on. Different voices, different pedagogies, all trying to make a difference. With critical pedagogy, there is no "there" there. It isn't a thing, a method, a way, it's not a philosophy, not a curriculum. Critical pedagogy is a spirit, an image of what can be if we are able to see what is. It is a commitment to be teachers as activists, to be unpopular, to be humble, but be shit-stirrers, and to create pedagogical uncoverings of what we can do...what our students can do.

About three years ago, I ceased using the singular term, critical pedagogy... it isn't a thing, it's a vibe, and there are so many critical pedagogies. Freire didn't have a method, a taxonomy, he had a way of being...a way of doing...a way of reading. In this special issue, in the journal I started with Kincheloe two decades ago, I invite you to delve into the words of those who care to make that difference...knowing full well that it may never come to be. Freire didn't create *a* critical pedagogy, he presented multiple ways of knowing, critical pedagogies which may or may not succeed, given the context of the class, of the teacher, of the "rules," and of the heart. It ain't easy, but it's nice work if you can get it.

## After Positivism

### 3 Scenes in a Bricolage

Scene 1: Gene Fellner

Scene 2: Helen Kwah

Scene 3: Peter Waldman

#### Abstract

In this article we explore the use of arts-based methods within a bricolage research approach (Kincheloe et al., 2011) for exposing and reflecting upon power, relationships, and meaning-making in educational settings. As three teacher-researchers oriented towards critical pedagogy and inspired by Joe Kincheloe and Ken Tobin's (2009) critique of the endurance of positivist onto-epistemologies in education, we present a bricolage of three narratives that employ drawing, collage-making and fiction in order to critically examine and evoke, in non-linear and

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visual ways, our experiences and struggles within positivist educational regimes. Through our explorations, we hope to challenge the dualistic and objectifying views that underlie positivism, and to situate arts-based methods as a powerful tool for engaging in a bricolage approach to critical pedagogy research.

### Introduction

In 2009, Joe Kincheloe and Ken Tobin described how positivist onto-epistemologies remained tacitly embedded in Western culture and within the fields of educational research and practice. Following a critical pedagogical framework, they argued that alternative voices and views were needed and best situated to challenge crypto-positivism's hold on power and knowledge systems. We recognize Kincheloe and Tobin's critique and seek to continue their discussion by taking up arts-based research methods (Barone and Eisner, 2012) as alternative and critical means for exploring how power and difference mediate our experiences of teaching and learning. Kincheloe, McLaren and Steinberg (2011) advocate for bricolage as the central research approach of critical pedagogy because it entails the use of multiple perspectives, logics, methods and modalities for analyzing and producing knowledge in response to the complexities and conditions of social life. We situate arts-based research as a powerful tool within a bricolage approach, and the particular forms of drawing, collage-making and fiction as evocative and particularly apt modalities for critically exposing and reflecting upon power, relationships, and meaning-making in educational settings.

In this article we share three arts-based research narratives that critically explore our experiences as teachers and participants within positivist educational regimes through the modes drawing, digital collage and fiction. Our arts-based narratives are presented as three scenes in an unfolding research bricolage where each scene plays with the conventions of research methodology (e.g. autoethnography and mixed methods) in order to refuse a naïve concept of realism. In so doing, we challenge the dualistic views of subject-object/ knower-known that underlie crypto-positivism. We found that the artistic modes of drawing, collage-making and fiction provided us not only with means for critically exploring questions of power and difference, but they also provided us with evocative and non-linear ways of *sensing* the subjective and intersubjective meanings we enact with each other in educational spaces and institutions. We recommend further explorations of arts-based research modes for any bricolage approach to critical pedagogy research.

## After Positivism: Scene I

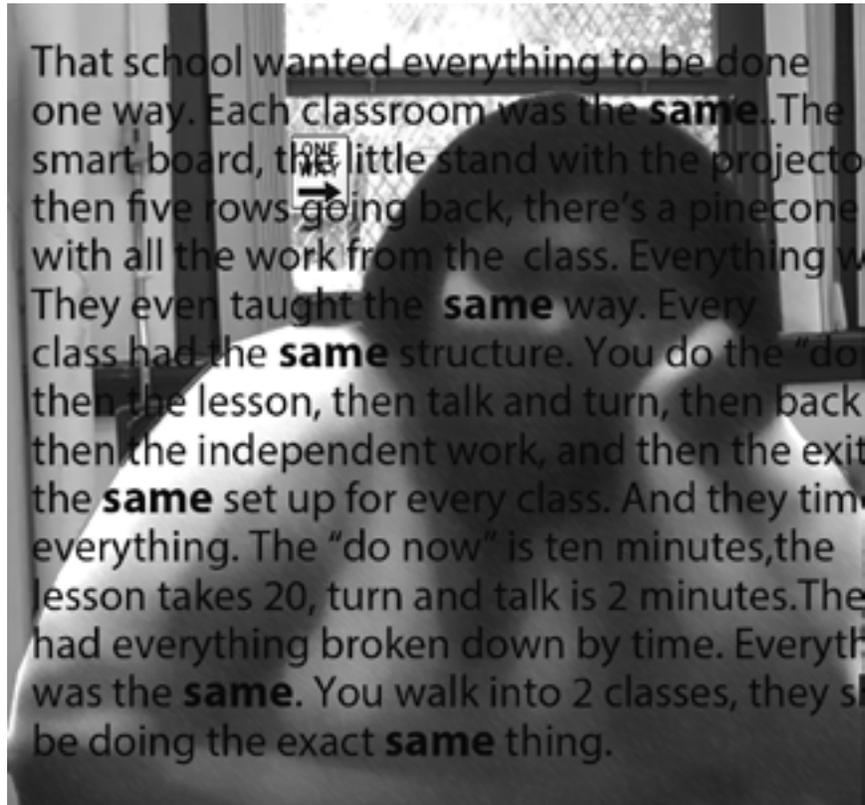
*Gene Fellner*

Figure 1

The power of positivist thought to worsen the lives of our most undeserved students remains alive and well in the school system, hence the legitimate claim by Joe Kincheloe and Kenneth Tobin that the death of positivism has been “much exaggerated” (2009). Alysha, an 18-year-old African-American student living in one of the poorest communities in the United States, understands this well. (Mis)diagnosed with ADHD in the fifth grade, Alysha was suspended at least once a year between 4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Though her image above is blurred, estranged as she is from the institution that is supposed to nurture her abilities and help her know herself better, she understands that there is a negative relationship between her daily confinement in school and her aspirations as a human being. “I so hated school,” she tells me, “Everything was the same... Every class had the same structure.... Everything was timed. You walk into two classes, they are supposed to be doing the exact same thing.” Smothered under the imposition of sameness and the

accompanying drudgery, categorized and ranked only by standards that could be measured and which consequently ignored her spiritual health and the depth of her thinking, and overwhelmed with lessons that seemed irrelevant to her situation and far removed from the context of her life, Alysha failed every class year after year. Her transcripts only report failure.

What a different Alysha reveals itself when, by chance, we begin to talk about art. Alysha shares that her favorite artist is Frida Kahlo and her favorite painting is *The Two Fridas*:

It was deep. Like you really have to look at it, analyze it. Like in one of the pictures she has on regular Mexican attire, and she has a broken heart, she's basically suffering from a broken heart. You see like arteries bleeding out, scissors in her hand, blood all over her clothes, and then next to her is another Frida, but she has on like very nice clothing and her hair is done, and like her heart is healed. It touches. [You know] to notice there's like two sides to everybody, and I feel like she was the one with the broken heart, but she wanted to be the nicely dressed Frida with the healed heart. She wanted to be a strong woman but she was broken in some way.

Asked if she thinks she understands Frida so well because of her own struggles as a woman she pauses for a few seconds and then, looks distantly outward before making eye-contact with me, smiling and replying, "You know, I do. Yes I do think so." Nowhere do the official transcripts that represent Alysha to the world admit the searching sophistication of her thought. Nowhere in those documents can you find clues to her potential. Nowhere in the transcripts can you hear how Alysha connects her own life as a third-world woman with a disability to that of the famous Mexican painter who also had a disability—a human connection over time and space that makes her understand herself better.

Alysha is not alone. Ana, an African-American 7<sup>th</sup> grader reading at a 4<sup>th</sup> grade level, wants to know "If god and the bible is on my side." Her conversations at home with her mother's friend seem like "heaven," "A place I can ask questions and feel alive asking them." She contrasts this feeling of aliveness to the dullness of school, "All we do here is sit, listen to this, listen to that, do this, do that. I don't want to step into the school building."

Meanwhile, Laritza, 14-years-old, was placed in a self-contained class for students with special needs in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade because, "I was slow." She tries to resist her official categorization as "special" which she sees as disabling, "I don't have to be what they label me as," she insists, "I can prove them wrong." Laritza, officially defined by her disability rather than seen as a whole person, understands her situation and seeks to "emerge" from it (Freire, 1970, p. 109), but official policies are unable to see her expansively or represent her according to her many abilities that can't be measured—her great capacity for reflection and self-reflection, her artistic talents, her persistence in defying expectations, her anger at injustice, her caring for others. Why should she be defined only by her measurable academic



Figure 2

weaknesses rather than recognized and respected for her strengths and her personhood?

Schools are to so many of our students what factories are to the traditional worker. The work they do is “external to them,” it does not “affirm” them but “denies” them, dehumanizes them, renders them “unhappy,” and “mortifies” their bodies and “ruins” their “minds” (Marx, 1964, p. 30). It is the “recognition of dehumanization” as a “historical reality,” and the “central problem” of humanization, clearly apparent in our schools, that Paulo Freire wrote about in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). Freire argued, as did Marx before him, that in order to become fully human we must “intervene in reality,” by becoming conscious of “of our situation” (p. 109) and then by transforming the forces that stultify our humanity. The dialectical world of Marx and Freire contests the positivist vision of the world. It understands reality not as an inert thing whose truth can be contemplated and deciphered from afar but a dynamic world that is constantly negated by the forces that comprise it and transformed by the activity of men and women as they seek, together, to better their lives. Half a century after Freire’s text and almost 150 years after Marx, the tension between the demands of a system fueled by dehumanization and the quest to become “fully human” remains the overwhelming challenge confronting us in schools and in society. The stories of Alysha, Ana and Laritza highlight this situation.



Figure 3

### After Positivism: Scene 2

*Helen Kwah*

#### Past, present, future

"...in a positivist framework the mind is separate from both the physical and social world of phenomena, and anytime this boundary is crossed in the research process the objectivity of the inquiry is contaminated" (Kincheloe & Tobin, 2009, p. 11).

#### Speaking out loud:

There is experiencing and bringing focus to the stream of sensations, perceptions, thoughts, feelings—my own, and from others—other beings, other things, in any given moment of time, space, place... All entities—appearing and disappearing.

#### Aug. 3, 2016:

We park the car in the lot and enter the brick building from the side entrance. A hot summer day. Sunlight glinting on black gravel. We walk in. I am nervous,



and have dressed deliberately—wearing a brightly colored shirt and earrings, wanting to generate liveliness. Alysha is there and we are introduced. Orange, red, and pink stripes of her shirt. Pink drink – strawberry smoothie. She smiles but is watchful. I want to connect, and comment on how her drink matches her shirt.



Figure 1

### Knowledge and research methods

Positivist research assumes that “there is one true reality that can be discovered and completely described by following the correct research methods... It is profoundly difficult to escape this culturally conditioned way of seeing that simply takes for granted the veracity of the Western gaze as well as dominant socio-cultural ways of being in the world” (Kincheloe & Tobin, 2009, p. 7-8).

#### Speaking out loud:

The world and all of its objects do not exist out there in some fixed, permanent, absolute way. It and we are all aggregate phenomena, changing, and vibrating with life. ‘Knowing’ is an emergent and interdependent event, it is not the property of the knowing subject. We need different research methods for this kind of knowing. Collage is an arts-based method that exposes the indeterminate space between objects by juxtaposing seemingly disparate images. In so doing, collage allows new meanings to arise and disrupts the power relations that render appearances seamless:

Collage apprehends the unstable and shifting images and ideas that deconstruct assumptions that are historically and socially determined (Garoian, 2008, p. 4).

**Aug. 3, 2016:**

I speak with Alysha. I say that in many ways we are different but we share some common ground in being women of color. I tell her that I was inspired when I heard her talk about Frida Kahlo. I brought up the painting of the “Two Fridas” that she had described to Gene, including her ideas about the broken hearted Frida on one side and the healed Frida on the other. The two Fridas, broken and healed, are joined their hands meet at the center. I realize I am talking too much, and Alysha has said very little.

### Making relationships

“This slipperiness of knowledge is well illustrated by positivist-based objectivist claims to the separation of the knower and the known, specifically the researcher and the researched” (Kincheloe & Tobin, 2009, p. 13).

**Oct. 5, 2016:**

Months later, I am recalling my meeting with Alysha. I start a series of collages and drawings. The meeting left me with impressions of my inability to know her and the intense longing to heal my feelings of being broken and outside, of not belonging in the spaces of dominant (white, male, capitalist) culture. I speak with Gene about the collages:

There are certain traces of images that are important, like the image of hands meeting. I guess the whole thing started as this encounter with me wanting to reach out to Alysha, through the actual meeting and the image of meeting in the two Fridas (painting), the joining hands and healing in that way... I also started drawing because my own hands, the longing for my hands and body to be present in the research process and the object of research... to make my body and our non-white, Other bodies materially present in a resonant way.

**Speaking out loud:**

Eve Tuck and C. Ree (2013) are critical of academia’s demand for the pain narratives of the colonized Other. In resistance, they posit Desire:

I am invited to speak, but only when I speak my pain (hooks, 1990). Instead, I speak of desire. Desire is a refusal to trade in damage; desire is an antidote... Desire, however, is not just living in the looking glass...

Desire is complex and complicated. It is constantly reformulating, reconfiguring, recasting. Desire makes itself its own ghost, creates itself from its own remnants. Desire, in its making and remaking, bounds into the past as it stretches into the future (p. 648).



Figure 2

**Speaking out loud:**

The relationship between knower and known is an illusion-like arising of interdependence. The post-humanist philosopher Timothy Morton (2013) asks how we know what an object is—for example, a spider web:

If we could only read each trace aright, we would find that the slightest piece of spider web was a kind of tape recording of the objects that had brushed against it, from sound wave to spider's leg to hapless housefly's wing to drop of dew...

Although the two worlds don't intersect—the spider can't know the fly as the fly, and vice versa—there are marks and traces galore... (and even if the spider web existed on its own) it would exemplify how *existence just is coexistence* (pp. 112 – 3).

**The haunting of positivism****Speaking out loud:**

There is no conclusion to this research, that's beside the point. No summary, no thing in itself to hold onto. Only the un-ending collage of Desire, making with and traces of our collisions with one another. In this, new appearances are possible



Figure 3

and resistance is staged against becoming objects for positivist/humanist/colonialist/capitalist consumption. In this, we haunt our past, present and future. Tuck and Ree (2013) see the presence of Others within the spaces of settler colonialism as a form of haunting:

Haunting... is the relentless remembering and reminding that will not be appeased by settler society's assurances... Haunting doesn't hope to change people's perceptions, nor does it hope for reconciliation. Haunting lies precisely in its refusal to stop. Alien (to settlers) and generative for (ghosts), this refusal to stop is its own form of resolving. For ghosts, the haunting is the resolving, it is not what needs to be resolved (p. 642).

And again: “Desire makes itself its own ghost, creates itself from its own remnants. Desire, in its making and remaking, bounds into the past as it stretches into the future” (p. 648).

September 8, 2017:

There was a chance to have an exhibit of the collages and drawings inspired by my meeting with Alysha last year. She refused permission to have her images be shown. Is her refusal generative of her desire not to be consumed? Does her refusal give her time and space for desire to become urgent? Or maybe she is dying. I don’t know. The traces of my meeting with her haunt me. There is no conclusion.

### After Positivism: Scene 3

Peter Waldman

“Confessions of a Wayward Positivist”

#### I. Observations

“Just the facts, ma’am.”

That was the motto for the Conference of Hardboiled Detective Fiction (CHDF) in beautiful Sausalito California. Earlier in the evening, a pasty-faced Encyclopedia Brown ghostwriter asked Sam Spade’s granddaughter, our closing speaker, to elaborate on the distinction between a fact and The Truth. This little pallid gentleman was escorted from the premises to jeers of “Lock him up!”

“That’s what you’d call an ‘academic question,’” was Samantha Spade’s muffled reply to the banished one. “Give me a cup a joe, a pack of smokes, a .357 snub-nose and I’ll take it from there!”

Did they forget? ‘Just the facts, ma’am’ was stolen, no pun intended, from *Dragnet*, a show about *cops*? Let me ask you, who hates private eyes more than cops? That’s right, *nobody*! And why...? Exactly, because a P.I. can’t cut it on the force.

So, I rotated back east on the Silver Star and was waiting to purchase my week’s-worth of organic TV dinners when I recruited my first subject. In between impatient smirks—the teenaged assistant manager had misplaced the register key—Cory (pseudonym) and I discussed the lazy benefits of prewashed salad.

The following Monday night and the diner on Boyd Ave. is nearly empty. Outside it’s rainy and cold and Cory isn’t in the mood to cook. Neither was I in the mood to preheat the oven for my organic mock duck. From my booth where I’m enjoying a large plate of *sarmale* on a bed of spiced quinoa I wave him over.

Cory is recently divorced and sad, sad, sad in the way that a basset hound seems sad. Truth be told, I was sad, too, as my cat Lenny was dying of late stage kidney failure.

~~“But if I must die, I will encounter darkness as a bride, and hug it in mine arms.”~~

~~“That’s beautiful,” Cory says with choked sarcasm as I’d quoted the Bard’s words involuntarily. But since I could neither quantify the effect of his sarcasm nor deduce a correlating postulate from which to generalize, I redacted the exchange as you can see.~~

## 2. Hypothesis: is not a Greek philosopher.

Cory is a grey and morbid-looking middle-aged, middle school English Language Arts teacher with the bathetic eyes, again, of a basset hound, and a Ph.D. in adolescent education.

~~Apropos of nothing he says, “Brackets are for bookshelves!” referring, I assume, to Husserl’s Eidetic reduction. Turns out I’m a great guesser! I tell him I’m trying to be philosophical about Lenny but not in the sense that I think he thinks I mean, i.e., 20<sup>th</sup> century Continental gobbledygook. Then I slap myself hard in the face (but not really) because I’d just broken the blood-brain barrier (again!) between researcher and researched, knower and known, dick and mark, and I’d brought myself (and poor sweet Lenny!) into the theater of operations, as it were. I must learn to keep my big mouth shut!~~

By the time Amanda’s (pseudonym) name arrives so has dessert and an early/rude presentation of the check. I’m working over a toothpick in between mouthfuls of gratis pineapple chunks when Cory says we should meet, Amanda and me, because of my interest in the comparative case study as a plot device.

“You’d definitely get along,” he says. “I can tell about people.”

“Yeah, well, I don’t cotton to intuition.”

“What do you cotton to?” he says, the wiseacre.

“Facts, sir, facts. Social facts, and to the logical interpretation of social facts to arrive at positive truths. Truths that are, nonetheless, falsifiable. After all we are not savages.”

“I had you all wrong,” Cory says. “You’re not Philip Marlowe, you’re Thomas Grandgrind.”

“Who?”

“Well, well, another dick who doesn’t read Dickens. Can’t say I’m surprised.”

“I read Dickens...”

“I mean, what do you make of all this?” he says, indicating the *cosmos* with a broad sweep of his short arms. “What are your pre-theoretical givens and your historical biases, your cultural commitments and sociopolitical obligations to scientificity?”

“I don’t know what you’re...”

“In this world,” he says, “There are winners and there are losers. Which are you?”

I try talking him down with logic: “It’s called metaphor, Cory, and a metaphor cannot be verified. That sentence has meaning only within a set of signifiers that ferry meaning across diverse fields of representational signification, but without a necessary relation to objective reality.”

“No,” he says returning to his flan, “That’s how Amanda thinks, ‘winners and losers.’” Then he insists on a 33% gratuity, which is absurd given the service.

I indulge him, however, since I am (a) starved for company and (b) still trying to scrounge up a case. Also, I have nothing on the calendar except to watch my cat die, so I’m thinking an after-dinner drink might be salubrious.

“Drink?” I say. “I’m buying.”

“Sure,” he says. “Why not?”

### 3. Experiment

The rain has let up but the bar across the street from the restaurant is empty too. A small group of pool players populates the area in the back by the jukebox and four shadowy regulars genuflect over boilermakers at the bar. Cory’s drinking beer, says his stomach can’t handle anything stronger. I order a single malt scotch, neat, which is part of a contractual obligation I have with my imaginary publisher.

“That’s Amanda’s drink,” Cory says.

“Sounds like you’re very close friends.”

“We’re friends,” he says simply. But when he turns to face me his eyes are wet and flashing with tears.

#### 3a. Proceeding then...

Both human subjects are middle-aged teachers (*homo pedanticus*) in large, urban public school districts in the Northeastern corridor of these United States, on Earth as it is in our solar system, among the frothy cosmic dust of the Milky Way, part and parcel of the Uni- and Multiverses during the unseasonably warm autumn

of 2017, *après les deluges* (Harvey, Irma, Maria). ~~A distinct tone of madness in the air.~~ The interviewer/principal investigator, hardboiled detective fiction author, \_\_\_\_\_, begins the study with that most general of questions:

“What in God’s name has happened to our country and to the world, more generally, because I’m getting very upset?”

Cory and Amanda, isolated in separate soundproofed booths, pantomime their answers. The first round of coding will excise all allusions (gestures) of ‘hope’ (smiling, laughing), ‘indifference/apathy’ (sleeping, watching screens), and/or ‘despair’ (weeping, howling psychotic break, catatonia, death).

Thank you very much.

—The mgmt....

#### 4. Results

...oh, sweet Lenny! Sweet, sweet Lenny. His meows going unheard for hours while I ran my useless experiments! While I pursued...while I pursued...*while I pursued I don’t know what!* I’m weeping into my corn flakes. I’m asking, *why?* I’m asking unanswerable questions, *metaphysical* questions, God help me!

Meanwhile, in between mixed martial arts bouts—the only truly violent aspect of my methodology, all other violence is strictly symbolic—Amanda gives moving testimony to chemistry’s causal coercions and readies her seniors for high-stakes tests. Later in the afternoon, Cory lectures his middle schoolers on that hideous 20<sup>th</sup> century invention, the H-bomb, and scares the nightlights out of them.

“The ultimate ‘achievement’ of the positivist philosophy of science and of the method of natural science,” he proclaims. “Observation, hypothesis, experimentation, replicability. ‘Replicability’ as in Hiroshima *and* Nagasaki. And quantifiable, *always* quantifiable, as in two hundred and forty thousand murdered within the first four months of the bombings. Such numbers are quaint, however, compared with the millions that Teller’s fusion device would yield.”

He dismisses his charges with dark thoughts of annihilation in their little heads and tells me in unambiguous terms that he feels unsafe. He says I’m not looking out for his ‘best interests’ and that I don’t give two shits whether he lives or dies. He threatens me with official sounding names and a half dozen acronymic agencies.

#### 5. Discussion

Inquiry aborted.

I don’t want to discuss it.

## 6. Conclusion

How could I have known that among the urine-scented upholstery of the cat lady's apartment (sexist/misogynistic term, 'cat lady') and the chirp-like mewing of kittens, that Lenny was *mine*? All mine and that I was *his*? No doubt about it, as he'd already burrowed deep into my corduroyed lap and was purring contentedly.

Fast-forward twenty-one years, the best twenty-one years of my life, and I'm weeping until my eyes are red and swollen shut. I'm weeping for those twenty-one years ripped from my prune-shaped heart...

As he lost strength Lenny sort of hunched around splayed and spread with his shoulder scruff up like a buffalo full of woe. Later that night, I found him shivering in the foyer, without the strength to make it back from the litter. I wrapped him in my arms—he weighed four or five pounds at the most, down from fifteen—and I laid him across a cushion of fresh towels. I stroked his fur, which was beginning to smell of something dark and unfamiliar. But for his shallow breath, then, he hardly moved at all. When I awoke at dawn Lenny was gone.

He looked beautiful, though, like an orange angel, still swift in death's burgeoning embrace. Quartz and emerald of eye...

“Goodnight sweet prince,” I cooed, knowing nothing else to say,  
“And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.”

Good old Horatio, the sentimental simp.

'Time to hang up the fedora,' I mused and set alight my hardboiled bona fides: My gumshoes and my Luckys and my noncommittal street-smarts. I bury the ashes in the woods with Lenny's remains, which I conceal in an old beach towel. Then I tamp down the dirt and go home.

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## Sensors, Metal Detectors, Cement Barricades, and Extra Security

How “Studying-Up” Reveals the Tensions  
in Accessing Whiteness in Educational Research

Teresa Anne Fowler

### Abstract

What occurs when one seeks to research male White privilege and the “culture of power” (Nader, 1972, p.5)? As a White female, I have been socialized unconsciously by the ideologies of Whiteness; thus, when researching with White participants (Bourdieu, 2004; Bowman, 2009), multiple points of tension arose surrounding the study. As Nader (1972) described in her essay which made a call to anthropologists to shift their focus from studying the “low hanging fruit” (Fine, 2015) towards “studying up” (Nader, 1972, p. 1), the barriers within educational research also shift, as do the questions posed. This article explores the barriers and roadblocks that emerged during a research study on White athletic boys’ experiences in schools using photovoice to better understand how boys disengage in school. Through the process of studying-up, what emerged were understandings of strategies Whiteness uses to maintain its’ dominant hold of the research process and also recommendations of tactics needed for researchers seeking to study Whiteness (deCerteau, 1985).

Keywords: *Whiteness, power, masculinities, elite studies*

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## Introduction

Over three decades ago, Nader (1972) made an appeal to study the “culture of power” (p.5) as a way of better understanding the quality of life, as life is shaped by the elites, the powerful; the heteronormative White male. Social institutions such as schools, are historically shaped by the elite and the powerful (Kenway & Koh, 2013; Nader, 1972) and the make-up of this select group of people Nader (1972) refers to as “the culture of power” (p.5) tend to be Cis/heteronormative White men (Howard & Kenway, 2015). Social institutions inform every person’s quality of life. Thus a critical examination into how Whiteness avoids penetration into the inner sanctum needs to occur to begin to move towards a post-racial society. Through revealing the protectionist strategies and tactics (De Certeau, 1985) Whiteness evokes offers those denied membership a means to infiltrate and begin to force an awareness of the ways in which institutions reproduce, and protect Whiteness.

Navigating the barriers and roadblocks within educational research is not a new process, however when attempting to access Whiteness, not only does the context shift but within this navigation other dominant ideologies are exposed. The invisibility (Gusterson, 1997) of the elite seeks to remain, thus barriers are thickened and extra security is added. What does emerge then through this revealing are layers of patriarchy, misogyny, privilege, and Whiteness that each has a deep history in our social institutions. Through the process of accessing Whiteness attitudes, ethics, and methodology adjust to protect and maintain their elite status (Bowman, 2009; Howard & Kenway, 2015; Kenway & Koh, 2013; Nader, 1972; Ortner, 2010; Undheim, 2003). However, to critically engage with anti-racist work, a radical turn needs to occur as marginalized and othered groups have been researched to the bone while the privileged remain largely unexposed (Green, Sonn, & Matsebula, 2007; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998). To move towards a post-racist society, the tensions and sites of conflict that prevent researchers from accessing the elite need to be interrogated to better understand how Whiteness manifests and continues to enforce domination on others. As such, this paper will navigate and expose these tensions that Nader (1972) outlined as barriers to “studying up” (p. 5) including accessing the cultural elite, attitudinal shifts, ethics, and tensions that emerge within methodology.

This article, based on a research study conducted with an elite male youth hockey team, brought forth unintended outcomes: an insight into the culture of power and the tension and resistance through numerous barriers in accessing Whiteness. First I will explore Whiteness as the culture of power and then use Nader’s (1972) framework of access, attitudes, ethics, and methodology to unpack the strategies and tactics (De Certeau, 1985) Whiteness used to shift the research study and protect itself from being accessed. If we hope to move into a post-racial era, then we need to uncover the ways in which Whiteness uses its tools and push those in positions of power to recognize these actions of intention, or through their complacency, as means to maintain racism.

### Whiteness (*aka*, The Culture of Power)

According to Frankenberg (1993), “whiteness refers to a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced and, moreover, are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination” (p. 6). Whiteness acts as an all-encompassing “racial template” (Lund & Carr, 2010, p. 231) and researchers need to examine how Whiteness as a culture of power, continues to produce racial disparities and profit off its’ reproduction (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998). Accessing Whiteness in educational research not only takes on the expected challenges with respect to *doing* research, but when Whiteness is the focus of the research, access becomes especially problematic (Conti, & O’Neil, 2007; Gusterson, 1997; Howard & Kenway, 2015; Kenway & Lazarus, 2017; Underheim, 2003).

To access Whiteness, I not only ‘studied-up,’ but in multiple directions (Bowman, 2009). Data for this study was informed through a photovoice project (Wang & Burris, 1997) completed with an elite male youth hockey team over three months which sought to gain insights into their expressions of disengagement with schooling and the curriculum. Participants were attending a specialized sports academy that balanced practice times with educational programming housed within a regular high school. This program offered members of the hockey team consistent access to a central teacher, open communication between the teacher and coaches, as well as the ability to move between spaces with ease. Branded as elite hockey players, the boys occupy a top position that in Canada, represents a position of power and cultural symbol of our national identity (Conti & O’Neil, 2007; Giroux, 1997a, 1997b; Green, Sonn, & Matsebula, 2007; Messner, 2005).

Canada’s national identity is explicitly tied with hockey culture as elite hockey players represent Canadian cultural symbols (Elkins, 1984; Giroux, 1997; Green, Sonn, & Matsebula, 2007; MacDonald, 2014; Messner, 2007). Sport offers a site for research into the reproduction of power, but by looking at a hypermasculinized sport such as hockey, there are also windows into the normative hegemonic environment, patriarchy, and the complacency of masculinity (Connell, 2005; Drummond, 2002; Hickey, 2008; Messner, 1989). White boys, in White positions of power through their symbolic and cultural status as hockey players (Bourdieu, 1986; Messner, 2000 & 2007) as well as their accrued cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Green, Sonn, & Matsebula, 2007) provided insights into the protected realm.

What emerged throughout this study, were the multiple ways Whiteness would be difficult to access as ‘studying-up’ revealed processes of protectionism and domination (Gusterson, 1997; Lather, 2013; Underheim, 2003). Protectionism emerged and aligned with Nader’s (1972) framework that shifted expected barriers in research towards becoming more inaccessible to keep the elite hidden (Bowman, 2009; Nader, 1972; Priyadharshini, 2003; Underheim, 2003). The four shifts began and remained throughout the study, but also cut through the culture of powers’ strategy to remain hidden (Hyttén & Warren, 2003; Underheim, 2003).

The culture of power represents Whiteness and those that have accrued power and class through their status historically over time (Elkins, 1984; Frankenberg, 1993; Giroux, 1997a, 1997b; Green, Sonn, & Matsebula, 2007; Nader, 1972; Moret & Ohl, 2018; Undheim, 2003).

Despite the resistance, and resilience of the culture of power, this ought to not excuse researchers from seeking to understand the ways that power influences the daily life of society. Once past the protective layers, the role of the culture of power in “domination, power, and authority” (Undheim, 2003, p. 105) is rendered visible, as well as through a reading and analysis of the subliminal. Through ‘studying-up,’ and an interrogation into Whiteness, the ways that racism and the oppression of Others persist in everyday experiences present a turn in anti-racist work. A turn away from examining the way marginalization and oppression perpetuate towards the ways that the culture of power resist being decentred (Green, Sonn, & Matsebula, 2007; Harding, 1987; Hytten & Warren, 2003). I argue that through an unpacking of this resistance, and the ways in which Whiteness is reproduced (Hytten & Warren, 2003; Moret & Ohl, 2018), anti-racist work can begin. Through the teasing out of the “unconscious forms of racism” (Green, Sonn, & Matsebula, 2007, p. 390) by studying the culture of power, not only is Nader’s call being answered, but exclusion through racist complicity may be negated (Giroux, 1997b; Ortner, 2010).

### Sensors (Access)

A paradox of Whiteness presents itself through a visible and vast landscape with people in positions of power and yet, locating and accessing Whiteness in educational research remains a challenge (Bowman, 2009; Conti & O’Neil, 2007; Green, Sonn, & Matsebula, 2007; Gusterson, 1997; Hytten & Warren, 2003; Nader, 1972; Ortner, 2010; Pryadharshini, 2003). Sensors were first triggered during the ethics approval process with the University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). The question of accessing participants arises through the IRB processes intended on not causing harm to participants, but also to protect the University and the culture of power (Harding, 1987; Wynn, 2011). However, by not studying the culture of power, or granting access to the culture of power, forms of knowledge are being denied (Harding, 1987) and through this denial, IRB’s become complicit with the protectionism of the elite (Green, Sonn, & Matsebula, 2007). If generating knowledge uncovers truth, whose truth then matters? Truth that reinforces or disrupts Whiteness and the culture of power (Green, Sonn, & Matsebula, 2007; Nader, 1972)?

The IRB sensor sounded loudly. Not only was accessing Whiteness signalling a thickening of the resistance, but so too was a methodology that did not conform to what aligned with the understandings of members of the IRB (Harding, 1987). Photovoice (Wang, 1992; Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, & Redwood-Jones, 2001) is a qualitative methodology that combines participatory based forms of research with feminist theories and critical pedagogy. Through examining gender in relation

to power a critical consciousness can be raised both within the participants and through dissemination of findings. Photovoice offers a different pathway to reveal male students' expressions of disengagement by "providing a more intimate and nuanced examination" (Biag, 2012, p.66). Through engaging in research using photography, the boys in this study were not only engaged participants, but also active in the data analysis and photography also provided a means to deeply reflect on their schooling experiences. Photovoice reveals what may be hidden from us, those on the outside of student experiences and the culture of power (Sontag, 1977).

While the methodology itself offered barriers including boys taking pictures while active in their daily lives within social intuitions such as school, photography also calls into question who the subjects and objects are. Participants in this study were using photography to elicit a means to share what disengagement looks like, when they became disengaged, and how does disengagement feel. Here, not only were participants the subjects, but they used objects in their daily lives to express their manifestations of disengagement. When the object becomes unbeknownst to IRB's, access may be influenced by the unknown object and what may be revealed in participant images. Photographic artifacts become "social documents" (Sontag, 1977, p. 142), and in this case a means to visually see "characteristics of hegemonic masculinity" (Allen, 2013, p. 361). This venture into the unknown, may risk an objective disruption of Whiteness, however by not giving access to the elite, a lack of critical consciousness remains as Whiteness continues to be disconnected and empty of what is being protected (Freire, 2015).

Accessing the cultural elite (Howard & Kenway, 2013; Kenway & Koh, 2013; Nader, 1972) had hidden systems of protection. When participants do not fit a marginal or othered identity, access stretches nearly out of reach as accessing powerful, White, heteronormative young males with a methodology that digs deep, shifts the access points. Whiteness does not want to be studied (Conti, & O'Neil, 2007; Nader, 1972; Ortner, 2010; Pryadharshini, 2003), Whiteness feels threatened when questioned (Giroux, 1997b), Whiteness is difficult to locate because of protectionism and the busyness of being White (Hyttén & Warren, 2003), and it presents dangers to the researcher (Conti & O'Neil, 2007; Nader, 1972; Pryadharshini, 2003; Undheim, 2003). Protection to remain the "least examined" (Semali, 1998, p. 177) and to preserve the status quo (Bowman, 2009) act in opposition to documenting the "privileged position of whiteness" (Kinchloe & Steinberg, 1998, p. 14) that 'studying-up' provides. Locating Whiteness and accessing Whiteness causes risk to those in that group by losing the preservation of how they hold onto their power (Ortner, 2010).

The sensors rang at the first hint of seeking access and continued. Ethics was but one sensor firing a warning. In total, twenty-six White, heteronormative males and 10 White heteronormative females were interacted with before access was granted with potential participants. In one instance, a White cisgender heteronormative male high school principal shared the essence of my study with potential

participants rather than let me speak. At one school which had a predominately White middle-upper class family population, ten potential participants self-selected to participate in this study, however parents did not consent as this may have meant the school would be aware their children were disengaged with school and their cultural capital was at risk. When recruiting through extra-curricular sports clubs, the White male coaches were remiss to grant me access to their players as they did not want to risk the status and reputation of their club if the players revealed they were disengaged with schooling.

While Whiteness remained protected, another side of the patriarchal identity emerged; one that cares for the female. The hockey coach of the club where I was able to potentially meet participants offered to help as he knew the struggle of educational research, thus out of a desire to care for me, offered access to the team. This caring Messner (2002) states arises from a masculine need to care for mothers and sisters; female family members. However, this shift then places a female researcher at risk in also being complicit in allowing the reduction of personal autonomy to become dependent on the White saviour for access to participants. These “entrenched aspects of gender identity” (Adkins, 2003, p. 28) demonstrates how gender roles are embodied, unconsciously performed and reproduced in social spaces.

### Metal Detector (Ethics)

After submission of the ethics application, my study was deemed high risk due to multiple factors including accessing White participants, the methodology, and exclusionary criteria resulting in a full ethics board review. The board consisted of seven male members and six female members, all White. During the review, questions were raised regarding the language used on the informed consent forms and a need for transparency in communicating with parents and participants, while not calling out Whiteness. As such, final consent forms defined the inclusion parameters as: “specifically male students who have access to additional learning opportunities provided by their parents outside of school that support their boys’ education. Such opportunities come through access to books, tutoring, extracurricular activities (arts/athletics), and/or family trips”. To name and call out Whiteness is to disrupt the clandestine outcome of its domination (Frankenberg, 1993) and yet while not naming Whiteness, it remains invisible and left me in a precarious position of deception (Conti & O’Neil, 2007; Undheim, 2003).

Here, doing harm again shifts. By not calling out Whiteness overtly in the accessing phase, I took on an almost adversarial role rather than a participatory role with the boys as I seek to disrupt what sustains them (Bowman, 2009). Building relationships within a participatory methodology is crucial for participants to reveal their feelings in school, however when the researcher is forced into not being open and honest and practice deception risks trust. As well, within a feminist

framework, there is little room for complacency, thus causing an ethical dilemma with researchers themselves (Conti & O'Neil, 2007; Ortner, 2010). The ethical space protects Whiteness while placing the researcher in harm and under threat (Priyadharshini, 2003). By restricting researchers from accessing the culture of power, this leaves the status quo preserved as IRB's seek to preserve their autonomy, rather than allow the researcher to have autonomy (Wynn, 2011).

I was forced into complacency and submissiveness, proceeding under a veil of deception, which causes the informed consent process to be unclear (Priyadharshini, 2003). However, to remain silent and centred, Whiteness is left to continue its hold and domination in the culture of power simultaneously, placing me in a position to compromise my values (Conti & O'Neil, 2007; Priyadharshini, 2003). Being in a place of vulnerability as a female is reminiscent of my daily life, and within the social structures of schools and sports, this also means to be subjected to the will of patriarchal power. In this place, researchers are not occupying the same horizontal space as participants and not only loose autonomy, but they begin to question their role in the research (Conti & O'Neil, 2007). This critically reflexive stance needs to proceed with caution as there risks emerging bias during data gathering, but also moments where patriarchal power would go challenged in daily life need to remain silent. This also begs a need to question the role of IRB's when researching Whiteness: are there ethics for those in power and ethics for those that are marginalized (Nader, 1972)?

### Cement Barricades (Attitudes)

The role of protectionism and domination within the culture of power has been shown to manifest in a denial of access, shifting the ethics towards the preservation of Whiteness but also within educational research itself. Researchers seem to value the story of the underdog (Nader, 1972) and those that are marginalized and oppressed (Fine, 2016; Priyadharshini, 2003) rather than question the foundations of which we, White researchers have benefited from. IRB's thus have a duty to protect themselves and the role of the institution in the reproduction of the culture of power and its' cultural capital. Educational institutions reproduce the culture of power through privileging the status quo and creating opposition towards those that seek to interrogate its' protectionist stance (Bourdieu, 1986; Tarlau, 2014). The active role of IRB's and institutional politics concerning self-preservation provides less resistance to studies that operate from a study-down approach (Nash, 1990; Priyadharshini, 2003) than those that study-up (Nader, 1972; Wynn, 2011) creating a hierarchy within ethical research.

As a White female researching within masculinities studies, I need to acknowledge my privilege and that I have benefited from, and been discriminated against, the systemic and institutional forms of power which the culture of power seeks to protect and reproduce. This then makes me also question, again my role

as a researcher (Priyadharshini, 2003; Undheim, 2003) as studying-up not only involves revealing how the culture of power reproduces and protects itself, but must take a reflexive turn on the part of the researcher (Lather, 2013). Through this interrogation into power, one must also examine the role between the subject and the self (Undheim, 2003). This reflexivity needs to not only arise on reflections of the fieldwork or the position of the researcher but on the “epistemological unconscious” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 41) of educational research and IRB’s as perhaps they are unaware of the role played in the protectionism and dominance of Whiteness.

Entering into this study, Whiteness and the culture of power was not even conceptualized at the start, which then forced me to reflexively consider their influences on my own life and practice as well as to question the role of research and knowledge production (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; May & Perry, 2017). As knowledge is produced, and IRB’s detect which knowledge ought to be produced, whose truth then matters (Green, Sonn, & Matsebula, 2007; Hytten & Warren, 2003; Sontag, 1977)? The culture of power un/consciously prefers to reproduce the imbalances rather than disrupt what lies behind the iron curtain (Hytten & Warren, 2003) and risk revealing how dominance can be dismantled.

### Extra-Security (Methodology)

When studying-up, not only will this influence which methodology is chosen, but the methodology itself (Bowman, 2009; Gusterson, 1997; Priyadharshini, 2003). The intentions with my study were always to centre the voices of the boys and their experiences and seek ways to disseminate their stories to elicit an emotional response. The boys used photographs to document their lived disengaged reality and relationships with the curriculum, however, the tenets of photovoice including participant active engagement, engaging in dialogue about strengths and concerns, and bringing about change shifted to meet the needs of the boys.

The site of the study took place where the boys lived and included the school, their homes, school buses and cars, as well as the hockey rink. The boys themselves came from privileged families with an accumulation of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) and each boy is White. Thus, studying with White male youth, I entered into a space that privileged and privileges Whiteness and the culture of power (Connell, 1995; Drummond, 2002; Messner, 2000). This shift from using a methodology that, while can be adapted for different research contexts (Wang & Burris, 1997), is primarily used in health education with marginalized people (Sutton-Brown, 2014), already questions this alignment of working with the culture of power, but also causes me to ask, does social justice not also apply to boys? There needs to be a revealing of a pluralistic view of masculinity (Kehler, 2010) as the current reproduction of power is also impacting our boys and men.

The protectionism response is disrupted with the use of photography which

historically belonged to the upper class (Sontag, 1977). Photography was used as a means to preserve and share the status of the elites with a “Whitmanesque affirmation” (p. 48), where participants used the master’s tools (Lorde, 2007) to reveal how the social structures build their security. As participants took and shared their images each week, they revealed how their identities were shaped through the reproduction of the culture of power (Priyadharshini, 2003). However, their continual challenging of the parameters of the study established by the IRB provided insights into the busyness of Whiteness.

The methods remained consistent with photovoice in that there was pre and post semi-structured interviews with each participant, focus groups where participants provided photo-feedback on each other’s images, and they engaged actively in the photo analysis of the images. However, the methods shifted to accommodate the busyness of the participants such that I reduced the number of focus groups from each week to every three weeks and the participants were not interested in creating a finale as outlined by the tenets of photovoice (Wang, 1999; 2006). The participants each stated that they did not care what I did with their images, but they were happy to help. Participants also pushed the boundaries of where/when they could take their images such as when classrooms were being used for instruction and images of their teammates who were not in the study. They would justify these boundary pushes by stating this was how they were feeling and don’t their feelings matter?

After entering into the space of the culture of power as an outsider, what began to emerge were examinations of the reproduction of power through the lens of elite hypermasculinized athletes. Sports are a place for boys to enter into masculinity and in this case the hypermasculinized sport of hockey (Drummond, 2002; MacDonald, 2014; Messner, 1989, 1990, & 2007; Young, White, McTeer, 1994). Whiteness and the culture of power are reproduced, and protected through institutions, and is also acquired through accumulating cultural capital through status and class (Bourdieu, 1986; Green, Sonn, & Matsebula, 2007; Howard & Kenway, 2015; Messner, 2000). The boys not only revealed how they benefited from the reproduction of power but how they were complicit in using this power to benefit them. Their shifting of the methodology demonstrated their innate desire to protect their status and means to disengage from school (Priyadharshini, 2003).

### Moving Beyond Nader

Nader’s (1972) four shifts when accessing Whiteness and the culture of power have been extended by elite studies researchers to also address two more areas including the research site and social justice (Howard & Kenway, 2015). Calling on a need for more research into elite schools, Howard & Kenway (2015) also appeal to educational researchers to explore the various contexts of young people in school including “sites within the social, economic, and cultural landscapes

of privileged young people's lives" (p. 1012). These broad social contexts extend into Whiteness, hypermasculinity, and forms of heteronormative power to better understand the ways in which these hierarchies are established (Kenway & Lazarus, 2017). My research study thus is situated within not only an educational institution as the site of the study but within these broad strokes of power that are entwined with the participants' lives as privileged White hockey players.

Elite schools promote, as a part of their culture, acts of social justice, however, this seems to serve as a distraction from the way these schools reproduce and perpetuate power (Howard & Kenway, 2015). This idea of social justice and giving back emerged here through the players being required to volunteer in some capacity within the hockey community. Players would volunteer coach with teams of a younger skill and age group every week with the intention to promote positive role modelling. This then gave participants another way to disengage from their schooling as they would tell their teachers they were up late doing homework and needed to sleep in class as their volunteer hours were that previous evening. Teachers would then permit or turn away from when the boys would sleep in class, both then becoming complicit in allowing the power to reproduce and leave unquestioned as participants were engaging in acts of social justice (Greendorfer & Bruce, 1994; Howard & Kenway, 2015). Using photovoice then offers a means to critically interrogate performative acts of social justice within elite schools and instead, directly challenge the power dynamics being reproduced by the milieu. This, however, places the researcher again at risk and potentially in an unethical space, as to interrogate into the culture of power and Whiteness does not build honest relationships with participants.

Another potential turn on social justice could call into question who is social justice for? Drawing on Freire (2013), social justice seeks to balance power inequities and interrogate the role of hegemony. While the suggestion is to not turn away from marginalized and othered individuals and groups, I do suggest that White privileged boys also need social justice as they are being harmed, and causing harm, by the reproduction of Whiteness and the hegemonic culture of power. This strategy of reproduction is causing harm to our boys and men as men are more likely to commit suicide than females (Navaneelan, 2012) and men also have higher rates of addiction than females and at least one in 10 men will experience depression (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2012). In Canada, two-thirds of students with identified special needs in elementary school are boys (Bohatyretz & Lipps, 2000) and boys are more likely to express forms of aggression and be diagnosed with conduct disorders than girls (Hou, Milan, & Wong, 2006). High school drop-out rates are higher for boys than girls (McMullen, 2006) and, young males are three times more likely to commit suicide than females, one of the leading causes of death for young people (Navaneelan, 2012). Boys and men are also more likely to be perpetrators of violence and victims of violence, and they are overrepresented in prison (APA, 2018). Boys and men's mental health

and well-being will remain stigmatized as a hypermasculine heteronormative male identity remains a norm among men and women, protected by the culture of power.

### Inscriptions of Power

What Nader's (1972) framework for *studying-up* provides is an insight into how the culture of power and Whiteness seek to protect itself and isolate Others that do not belong. Here, the discussion will turn to De Certeau's (1988) strategies and tactics to analyze the ways Whiteness revealed itself through Nader's framework as well as the ways researchers need to read the inscriptions of protectionism and dominance. De Certeau (1988) calls strategies an intentional manipulation of "power relationships" (p. 35). Strategies refer to all hegemonic means to reproduce and propagate the status quo and their existence depends on this reproduction of power (De Certeau, 1984; Gokalp Yilmaz, 2013; Kenway & Koh, 2013). In this research through studying-up, the strategies evoked support Nader's (1972) framework of shifting access, ethics, attitudes, and methodology as well as the extensions brought forth by Howard & Kenway (2015).

Seeking access to White privileged males was problematic from the beginning and the reinforcement of protectionism were thickening of the regulations normally enforced by IRB's (Gokalp Yilmaz, 2013). The ethics of researching the culture of power also places the researcher in a precarious position as one trying to infiltrate the protected space and through the thickening of the regulations, casts a discrediting shadow onto the study and the researcher thus, keeping control of what knowledge is produced (De Certeau, 1984). Attitudes within educational research coincide with the social construction of what counts as knowledge and a White saviour complex seems to be more profitable with research favouring reducing disparity gaps from the lens of the Other. As a White researcher, to counter this view results in isolation from the status quo (Gokalp Yilmaz, 2013) and forces one to take a reflexive turn onto the self (Lather, 2013). Methodologically, strategies were also enacted to benefit and preserve the White male youth. Participants consistently negated the regulations established for the study by the IRB as their agency of being complacent in their disengagement needed to remain hidden from view.

Strategies offer those within the realm of the culture of power a safe space where the autonomy of members remains protected through combating the threats of outsiders wanting to reveal the ways in which the status quo remains (De Certeau, 1984). When knowledge is inscribed on Others, it is done so to preserve and maintain the power of the elite. When the elite are idolized as cultural symbols (Messner, 2007) such as White male hockey players, certain ideologies are transfixed in our cultural mosaic. The hypermasculinized young White male not only benefits from inscriptions of power, but also is complacent in using this identity to deflect from revealing what lies underneath. This strategy participants used was through a recognition of their power as they enacted

the identity of the hypermasculine hockey player gave them space to disengage from school (De Certeau, 1984).

### Leaking In

Without membership in the realm of the culture of power, tactics need to be used to leak into the protected space (De Certeau, 1984; Gokalp Yilmaz, 2013). Studying-up reveals not only how the culture of power protects itself, but others can find their way in to dismantle and decentre the culture of power. Tactics employed need to be spontaneous, and researchers thus proceed blindly inside without preconceived intentions of infiltration (De Certeau, 1984). Resistance to the culture of power and its “imposed knowledge” (De Certeau, 1984, p. 32) thus must arise from the very place of deception it forces the researcher into. The life of a researcher, pushing against power then becomes an act of resistance seeking to distort the “strategies of power” (Gokalp Yilmaz, 2013, p. 67) as opposed to the researcher that feels they have to question their role at every turn. As De Certeau (1984) writes, one must “make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers” (p. 37) thus, be open to seizing the opportunity to break into the surveillance systems of the culture of power and Whiteness when opportunities arise.

In pursuing to understand boys’ relationship with the curriculum in schools, I could not have foreseen the ways that power and Whiteness were going to infiltrate and inscribe boundaries onto my study. Would entering into this study with an awareness of the role of Whiteness have prepared me to find the cracks and holes as a means to decentre Whiteness? I would argue that entering into a research study seeking to dismantle the culture of power would be much more difficult than being forced into deception by those in power seeking to preserve their power. The arms of those in the sanctified realm would have remained secretly folded (Freire, 2013) rather than revealed *as being* folded. The difference lies with the ability to dismantle through seizing an opportunity to pull apart the fissure rather than continually looking at the other side of disparity gaps from the lens of the marginalized Other. Leaking in, not only sheds light onto how Whiteness and the culture of power sustains themselves (De Certeau, 1984), but also that this self-protectionism is causing harm to those within the circle itself. The fractures and fissures not only provide an opportunity for those on the outside to form a resistance but for those that are on the inside. A shift from the centre must be occurring.

### Conclusion

By exposing the cracks in the culture of power, one can then invite those members into a dialogical conversation about the ways in which members both shape racist culture and become complicit in harming themselves (Green, Sonn, & Matsebula, 2007). Whiteness shapes knowledge and national identities (Giroux,

1997a), however largely goes unexamined because of difficulties with access, ethics, attitudes, and methodology (Bowman, 2009; Conti & O’Neil, 2017; Gusteron, 1997; Kenway & Koh, 2013; Nader, 1972; Priyadharshini, 2003; Undheim, 2003). Researchers interested in uncovering the protectionism of Whiteness, therefore, need to be prepared to seize unexpected opportunities to crack the structure of Whiteness and power (De Certeau, 1984; Gokalp Yilmaz, 2013; Rust, 2015). To move into a post-racist society, all involved need to engage in dialogue with each other and also engage in self-reflexivity on the ways that White researchers both benefit from their position and have a duty to interrogate the cracks. To continue to be anti-dialogical with each other, and privilege protectionism does a disservice to the researchers and to the institution itself. A hierarchy of ethics (Nader, 1972) and forcing deception causes harm but also presents the opportunity to confront Whiteness unexpectedly and “move towards a new way of thinking” (Freire, 2013, p. 109).

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## Mobilizing Fear to 'Set Your Soul Free'

Gerald Walton

### Abstract

In human societies, past and present, expressions of fear are widely associated with weakness and tend to be discouraged, if not shamed. Yet, fear illuminates not only danger and the need to find safety, but potential for achieving goals and meeting challenges. Fear is, then, instructive and beneficial for learning about one's identity, sense of achievement, and capacities for transformation. Through a narrative inquiry approach, this paper explores participants' perspectives on how looking at fear in ways other than weakness supports their potential for personal growth and engagement in the world.

### Introduction

Do you feel scared? I do. But I won't stop and falter.

—Howard Jones, *Things can only get better* (1985)

What does it mean to consider the emotion of fear differently from the usual media-driven narratives of shame, embarrassment, and weakness? How might

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such a narrative of fear open doors by which people can reconsider the power of their own agency? What might such a narrative mean for personal transformation and enhancement of identity, both of which are foundationally connected to formal and informal education that reinforce hegemonic norms and values?

To explore these questions, I conducted a series of interviews to examine narratives of achievement and identity based on, rather than despite, fear. These narratives are not about “overcoming” fear but recognizing its utility for learning and finding purpose to enhance their lives. In the context of teaching and learning, Paulo Freire, in conversation with Ira Shor, put it this way:

[F]ear is not something that diminishes me but which makes me recognize that I am a human being. This recognition gains my attention in order to set limits when fear tells me *not* to do this or that. I have to establish limits for my fear. (Shor & Freire, 2003, p. 482; italics in original)

The focus on transformation is foundational to critical theorists who assert that education can be a practice of freedom (Freire, 1970/2006; hooks, 1994). Such a practice necessitates student-centered approaches that foster the sharing of their knowledge, in contrast with teacher-centered approaches that presume students to be incapable, on their own, of making sense of the world (Giroux, 2011; McLaren, 2007). A student-centered pedagogy means that students, in the broadest sense of the word, look within to locate their own power for transformation (Hern, 2008; Wink, 2011). Not merely another form of imposed knowledge, a critical approach begins where students are, meaning opening possibilities for them to consider their perspectives on the world and their understanding of it (Huerta-Charles, 2007; Kumashiro, 2004).

The same principle applies to contexts outside of formal education, that change in the world happens not only from *conscientization* of social and political contradictions (Freire, 1970/2006) but also increased awareness of one’s agency. The conversations I had with nine people (six women, three men) helped me to understand the ways that agency can be invoked in the context of internalized fear with the potential for self-transformation and social engagement.<sup>1</sup>

### Dimensions of fear: A broad overview

Clichés about fear abound in popular culture. One of the more prominent in North American society is Franklin D. Roosevelt’s famous dictum in 1933 from inaugural address as US president. He said that, “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” Taken at face value, fear is, apparently, something adversarial, dangerous, and perhaps even unpatriotic. Fear will control us if we allow it to. Perhaps fear already does. If fear is to be feared, then a logical response would be to not feel it or pretend not to.

In the context of popular culture entertainment, the narrative of disavowing fear is a sensationalized ‘hook’ for drawing viewers. In a 2018 advertisement for a

competitive cooking show called *Chopped Canada*, for example, a narrator warns: “In the *Chopped Canada* kitchen, . . .: Never let the judges see or smell your fear.” By contrast, fear is employed for entertainment value, as indicated by shows such as *Fear Factor*, which ran in the US from 2001 to 2006 and 2011 to 2012. Horror and thriller movies draw in audiences who want to experience fear, or a facsimile of it, in a controlled environment within a time-restriction (Javanbakht & Saab, 2017; Dozier, 1998). Dozier suggests, however, that because media-incited fear is pleasurable, it also can be addictive given measurable changes in the chemistry of the brain during such experiences.

Fear, then, is biological and chemical (Garpenstrand, Annas, Ekblom, Orland, & Fredrikson, 2001; Åhs, Frick, Furmark, & Fredrikson, 2015). It is also socially constructed in gendered ways. Boys and men tend to be criticized, even vilified, for showing fear or, worse, giving in to it, associating doing so with emotional weakness and conjuring up epithets rooted in sexism and homophobia (Namaste, 2006; Pascoe, 2007). Demonstrating a lack of fear is associated with masculinity (Garlinger, 1999; Hollander, 2000; Pascoe, 2007). On the other hand, women who appear to be fearless may be perceived as masculine (Halberstam, 1998; Claire & Alderson, 2013). Fear, then, is deployed in society as a regulatory instrument to enforce gender norms and expectations.

Such sexism and homophobia harken a broader point, which is that those who are targeted for violence of various kinds mirror broader anxieties among dominant groups about people whose identities become stigmatized through media and political discourses. Put another way, as particular prejudices arise for political aims, the targets of violence shift accordingly. As Robin (2004) notes, fear is a key element of modern politics that target social difference. He describes what he calls “political fear” as:

people’s felt apprehension of some harm to their collective well-being [such as] the fear of terrorism, panic over crime, anxiety about moral decay. . . . Private fears like my fear of flying or your fear of spiders are artefacts of our own psychologies and experiences, and have little impact beyond ourselves. Political fear, by contrast, arises from conflicts within and between societies. (p. 2)

Echoing Robin, Tudor (2003) argues that that a “culture of fear” pervades modern, Western society and thus fear must be examined “macroscopically,” meaning factoring in social and political contexts and ideologies (Furedi, 1997, 2005; Glassner, 2010). Narratives that incite populism for political gain are replete and are spread rapidly through social media. Consider, for example, how immigration is linked with narratives of personal danger and death. Barro (2016) reports that, in the context of the U.S., the “thrust of the Trump message on immigration is not so much that our current immigration policy fails cost-benefit analysis as it is that immigrants may kill you.”

Through narratives of exclusion and vilification, fear serves a social function

of uniting like-minded people (Roberts & Naphy, 1997) as is the case with White supremacist movements (Simi & Futrell, 2010) and their support for hardcore White nationalism. More generally, Levin and Rabrenovic (2004) outline how children learn to hate others who are not like them based on shared racist and cultural stereotypes. The U.S. President seems adept at stirring the xenophobic pot for political gain, as he did with his warning about Mexican immigrants: “They’re bringing drugs, they’re bringing crime, they’re rapists,” adding that, “They aren’t people. They’re animals.”

In addition to political gains made through dehumanization and demonization of the Other, fear is also employed as a mechanism that maintains discipline and social order (Robin, 2004; Schehr, 2005). The ideology is that punishment, or the palpable threat of it, results in strengthening and maintaining social order (Clear, 2007; Van Damme & Pauwels, 2016).

As a narrative that operates in popular culture and media (Tudor, 2003), and perhaps in deference to Roosevelt’s bid for patriotism, fear must be overcome. However, fear can also be functional in the daily routine of living, neither a character flaw nor a beacon of shame. It informs living creatures, not just humans, that danger is approaching and protection is needed (Javanbakht and Saab, 2017). Fear also serves the interests of elite athletes to maximize their performance under competition (Lingam-Willgoss, 2014; Carter, 2018; and Collins, 2018).

It is these beneficial aspects of fear that aligns with my aim to investigate the ways that participants empowered themselves by working *with* fear instead of *against* it. The purpose of the interviews was inspired by Carlos, featured in Goldstein (2006). Referring to teachers, he wrote that, “Educating is realizing that the power is not in your hands, but instead it is in your ability to guide your students to the realization that the power has been in their hands all along” (p. 216). It is the themes of agency and power that I turn to below.

### Fear as relational

When I spoke with Shy-Anne,<sup>2</sup> she was a full-time graduate student and professional singer-song-writer, originally from the Matachewan First Nation. In our email and skype conversations, she talked about how she was able to recognize how fear might help her to reduce the influence of social anxiety and anorexia on her life. She describes what unfolded when she was in her first year of university and far away from her hometown:

It really triggered social anxiety of being in the city and dealing with stoplights, and people, and classrooms. So, a secretary said to me, ‘Well, if you’re looking to get over things, we’re looking for models.’ I kind of laughed at her and walked away. But then, I was kind of thinking, ‘Yeah, well, I’m scared to get up and sing in front of my peers. If I can stand naked in front of a group of people and be OK, then I can get up and sing in front of a group of people.’

She described her first experience with modeling:

My heart was pounding, I started sweating like crazy ... But, I got up there and I had my robe on and I kind of froze. The prof said, 'You don't have to do this. But nothing's going to happen other than people are just going to draw you.' When she said that, I thought, 'Well OK, yeah, they're going to be staring and they're just going to draw me.' ... I just thought, I'd sit down. How hard can it be? I just took the robe off and sat down where I was supposed to sit. My heart was pounding and I was sweating even more. I had to sit perfectly still which was hard but I just did it.

Being a model in a classroom of student artists helped her to consider her anxieties with her body in a new perspective. It also signified strength within herself to do other things, such as singing in front of public audiences. Shy-Anne characterized her experience as jumping off a cliff, not in a haphazard, careless manner, but through intentional assessment of the situation at hand. Earlier in her life, she had had an experience that almost led to her being drowned. Many years later for one of her music videos, she wanted to include a scene of her jumping off a 40-foot cliff to showcase Northern Ontario. Initial hesitation eventually took a backseat to potential reward:

You don't know what's floating underneath. It would look really cool in the video to have that particular scene 'cuz it is a really, really tall cliff. And it does really show northern Ontario. ... I said, 'OK, yeah, we'll do it.' And we got up there and [my partner Kevin's] going 'OK, let's go.' I'm like 'No, I can't do it, I can't do it.' ... My heart was boom! boom! boom! What if I break my neck? What if there's a log? What if my leg gets crushed under whatever? I can't see underneath there ... Kevin had my hand and he just squished it and then [sharp intake of breath] and my breath and everything, [another intake] it felt like forever before we actually hit the water. And we went in and bubbles and everything were everywhere. Feet everywhere. Arms everywhere. And then I just popped up out of the water and I was OK. It was an absolutely exhilarating, just crazy feeling ... that feeling of being trapped under water [was] a pretty humbling experience.

Shy-Anne did not describe her relationship with fear as adversarial, as something to conquer. Instead, she described it this way:

When you have fear inside you, ... [it] gives you adrenaline rushes and energy boosts. It's almost like it's the fear that makes you want to do it more. Just like, OK, if I'm this scared of it, that means that it's something that I really want to do.

Her experiences suggest that her relationship with fear, at least in the contexts that she discussed in our conversations, was one that points to capability rather than helplessness.

Likewise with Robin. When she and I met, she was 50 and divorced from a 22-year marriage that shaped her identity as a "perfect middle-class housewife." Her "bubble-wrapped life" was a departure from her childhood as a "badass."

“I’d do anything,” she said. “I’d run my bike over anything. I would do all kinds of crazy outdoor stuff.” Her adventurous spirit was stopped in its tracks when she was sexually assaulted at the age of 10, instilling within her a profound sense of worthlessness and a need to control her world, as though to ward off further attacks. Perfectionism wedged its way into her life, manifested in her identity as, to use her analogy, a mother in the fashion of “June Cleaver,” the prim-and-proper stay-at-home mom from the 1950s American sitcom, *Leave it to Beaver*. After her divorce, she recognized the need to rebuild her identity, leaving June Cleaver behind.

Her relationship with fear has shifted over the years in accordance with her changing circumstances. She said in an email, “Now I embrace fear but it wasn’t always so.” Remaining comfortable in middle-class suburbia trapped her to perfectionism and worthlessness. Robin took it upon herself to take risks, as she used to do before being sexually assaulted when she was a girl. She recounts going kayaking with her friend, Simon, who she credits as helping her regain what was taken from her:

The third time he pulls me out [of the water], I’m standing on the banks of the river and I’m like, ‘I’m not getting back in that boat.’ ... He’s like, ‘Robin, you’ll never be able to walk out of here. It takes, like, two hours.’ ‘I’ll be here if it takes me all damn day. I’m not getting back in that boat.’ And so, then he says, ‘Well, you’ll never get the boat out of here.’ ‘The boat can sit here and rot. I’m not getting back in the boat.’ ... And, of course, I got back in the boat. ... What I’ve learned from my adventures with Simon is that life happens when the water’s moving. Fear is where the fun starts.... But you don’t have fun until you’re out there in the water, in the scary part. Sometimes life hands you things that are rapids. If you have great self-rescue skills and you can pick yourself up out of that, that’s great ‘cuz it’s always safer in the boat.

For Robin, then, fear points her in the direction of not only fun, but personal growth through reclaiming what was lost. “Badass” Robin was able to reemerge. She said with exuberance, “The first time I went mountain biking, all of the sudden there was this joy. ... This moment of joy and this moment of just overcoming this fear of being outside, of risking, of risking injury, of risking whatever, god it filled my soul so much that I said I’ve got to have more of this. And so, I started mountain biking heavily. I started kayaking. And paragliding.” Robin expressed her philosophical relationship with fear this way:

Why not today, you know? What I have I got else to do? Life’s really, really short and when you savor those moments, it’s so sweet. That’s what fear gives me. Facing your fear is what *sets your soul free*. For so much of my life, I lived in this capsule of perfection and now I think part of why I did that was the risk of failure and the risk of looking and feeling worthless again. ... Success isn’t that I did it well, ‘cuz I suck at paragliding. Success is that I dared to risk. That’s a success. Like I said, my soul is just, I’m a different person. It’s changed everything fundamentally about who I am. [Italics added.]

For Robin and Shy-Anne, fear represents opportunity. Shy-Anne found opportunity to assert power over her eating disorder through nude modeling and, later, she grew as an artist by recording songs, performing in front of audiences, and jumping off a cliff for a music video. Robin, meanwhile, reacquainted herself with the sense fun and joy that had been robbed from her when she was a child, discovering what was lost when she risked her own safety in a controlled way through recreational activities that she pursued with friends.

Similarly, Cathy looks at fear for its hopeful potential. Cathy was in her late 40s when we met, having removed herself from an abusive marriage. She and her current husband have two daughters. She is a teacher and, in our conversations, she discussed her fear of losing her job, a worry that was eventually realized when she was bumped from her position by a more senior teacher. Life used to be what she described as “losing at a poker game.” “The worst thing that I was doing to myself,” she said, “was allowing the fear to control me and keep me trapped.” “Navigating fear” offered Cathy an avenue for emancipation from an unhealthy work environment and an unhealthy marriage. For Cathy, fear simultaneously played the role of beacon of hope, and harbinger of danger and misery.

I learned that while you can't eliminate anxiety and you can't eliminate fear, you also don't have to be a slave to it. Making the decision in the negative because of fear really just serves to continue the entrapment. It is better I think to make decisions based on hope.

What Cathy seems to suggest is that fear and hope are not mutually exclusive but, rather, work in concert with each other, as they have done to help her to arrest a pattern of losing at the proverbial poker game. Cathy, Shy-Anne, and Robin collectively suggest that fear is something, a metaphorical voice, perhaps, that informs the making of decisions and choices. Those decisions and choices might be to experience fun and joy, to grow personally by doing that which gives rise to anxiety and to navigate a journey through fear and finding hope along the way. In this way, fear informs, warns, and guides.

### Fear as pragmatic

Some of the participants offered a narrative of fear that depicted it less as relational and more as utility, an instrumental device to be used for a particular purpose. Sean, for instance, indicated that his anxieties are largely founded upon the unknown aspects of his life, especially when he is faced with a decision or a new opportunity. At the time of our conversations, Sean was in his early forties, married, and had a child on the way. A seasoned teacher now, Sean experienced a significant moment when he was doing a practicum during his teacher-training:

I was just petrified and I would be just so scared—SCARED!—I nearly quit because I thought again it was irrational fears. Things like, the scrutiny by my sponsor teacher ... and the faculty advisor and the sort of all these eyes looking at

you and you're sort of going 'You know you're feeling judged, you're feeling like every single flaw that you're in your practice is being examined and criticized even by 14-year-olds which I'd later realize isn't really the case in most cases.

To avoid feeling petrified, he over-prepares, which is what he did on the first day of his first teaching practicum. He described his preparation as "border-line-compulsive" and, even now when he chairs a committee, he uses Robert's Rules "to the nth degree to make sure that things went in a certain way." To prepare means to assert control over an imminent situation or challenge. Sean disclosed that he learned to avoid unpredictable situations from growing up under his father's alcoholism, describing him as a "Jekyll and Hyde drunk." He connected his father's drunken behaviour to his processes with navigating unknowns:

He goes from being quiet and mild mannered to being annoying, like a first-class pain in the ass. So, I think between his drinking and his temper, you never knew what you were going to get. ... My childhood with him became unpredictable.... I left home when I was young ... I think that a lot of the way that I do things stems out of that because by not knowing what's going to happen, if I can rationalize every single situation in terms of potential then, more often than not, I'm ready for whatever is going to happen.

While he could not control what mood his father might be in when he was drunk, he could assert control over other aspects of his life to gain information on the unknowns. Planning, preparing, and mitigating the unknowns are about anticipating, as much as possible, what might be ahead and to gather information to demonstrate his capabilities to others and to himself. Spontaneity tends to take a back seat in Sean's life. He said that spontaneity is

not a word that I would use to describe myself all that often. ...I have been criticized of not being spontaneous by people especially, girlfriends, in the past. ... [My wife] will attest to this ...when plans change suddenly, ...it takes me awhile for me to right myself. ... If I've got my day compartmentalized in my mind and then something spontaneous comes up, I'll oftentimes be reluctant to say "Sure, let's go do that" ... and even if whatever this is not terribly important, then my instinct is not to be spontaneous. But, I think because I'm aware of that, I'm more spontaneous than I used to be because ... lack of spontaneity is not something that everybody likes in a person.

A dual process seems to be at play when Sean navigates fear. One purpose is to gather information and plan, while the other is to recognize how being perceived as inflexible may lead others to think negatively about him. Thus, he has become more apt to enter into spontaneity in some situations than when he was younger. He recognizes, however, that guarding against the unknown is the more dominant approach for him. He said in relation to letting down his compulsion towards control, "OK, I know I'm fighting against my nature, but, you gotta suck it up sometimes."

Sean's nature, as he sees it, is to plan against circumstances that might be out of his control. Lee described a similar disposition as "avoiding the worst-case scenario." At the age of 59, Lee acquired her PhD in education after 8 years in the program. Her program was her second attempt at a PhD, the first of which was in geology when she was in her twenties. Not completing it precipitated her anxiety that she felt all through her second PhD program, saying that, "it was a huge risk because I did not want to NOT finish a second time. So, I was anxious about all of that from the very outset." Like Sean, Lee's anxiety revolves around not knowing what might happen or what might be the best choice and approach in any given situation. Ultimately, however, it is the "fear of the worst-case scenario" that made her finish her PhD on the second attempt. Her strategy of what she called "deliberate immersion" was put into practice on the second PhD attempt, necessary because it was "in a different field, in a different country, and at an older age. AND with a history of having tried before." Lee credits her ultimate success in the program to her strategy of gathering information, not unlike Sean, specifically drawing from others' experience:

I really feel like connecting with other people ... to find out what their experiences have been and how they dealt with things and how they understand things. I remember the very first course I had to take. It was a seminar and I didn't know how to write papers in education lingo. I didn't know what they were looking for, so I did actually find someone who had taken the course before and she was very...kindly shared all her papers with me. [to] see how someone might come to think about things. And then I could take it up in my own way.

Lee discussed a precedent in her life that helped to provide a knowledge-acquisition framework, recounting a story about how she felt about spiders:

We lived in Australia before we moved to Canada and ... there's all kind of things to be afraid of in the natural world in Australia: snakes and spiders and .... And so, we were ripe for being teased about all these horrible things that could happen to you. ... So, I took [our] kids to the shows where they had spiders on displays. We went up close and personal with spiders in order understand them. And we lived with them ...without being afraid all the time. So, there's a deliberate immersion in understanding as much as possible about what we were afraid of in order to not be afraid.

Her taking steps to learn to live with spiders was, for Lee, a metaphor for forging ahead and completing her PhD in the sense of making and executing a plan to gather new knowledge by which to come to new perspectives. She said in email, "I used to be afraid of fear and tension, but now see it/them as opportunities to come to new understandings—even though it can be very challenging emotional work." Completing the PhD under the circumstances she described and learning to cohabitate with spiders may seem thematically disconnected, but, for Lee, they speak to the same issue, not only as opportunities to learn but also as problems to solve.

Mary adopts the same perspective regarding opportunities. She is a self-described introvert. At 25, she decided to uproot her life and move to the prairies where she embarked on a master's program. A sojourn to Iceland three years ago prepared her for living with uncertainty and reaping its benefits. She described the whole experience as "amazing" but not because of usual tourist experiences.

Throwing herself "in the fire" is how Mary faces challenges that give rise to fear but I was staying with a family and working on their dairy farm and I didn't know these people they were complete strangers and that's kind of scary, you know, like I'm going to Northern Iceland to work on a dairy farm for a month. I don't speak the language at all and it was uncomfortable at first, it stretched me, it was difficult, it was hard work, ... I realized I was so much more capable than I ever thought I was. ... I actually went back last year and I'm going back again this summer because I love that place, and I love these people. Yet, moment-to-moment, I'm not always having the best time as I'm milking the 47<sup>th</sup> cow and I'm tired, and my hands hurt and a ten-year old son just came up to me and said something in Icelandic that I don't understand, but at the end of the day, I've learned so much and I just realize that I'm so much more capable than I ever thought I was.

She does not do so carelessly. Unlike Sean and Lee who gather information to strategize through problems related to fear, Mary sees fear as information, itself.

I'm an athlete. So sometimes pain is telling you you're hurting your body, stop. ... So, there are two kinds of pain and I think pain is information, it's not necessarily an injury. And so, I think fear is the same thing. Fear is information. Sometimes it's saying that it is freaking dangerous; don't do it. Like, you know? You gotta listen to it. And sometimes that's the information it's giving you and sometimes the information it's giving you is 'This is really big, it's going to stretch you.'

Mary's perspective of fear as information offers her the option of what she calls "worst-case-scenario'ing it out," which is the action-version of the similar approach adopted by Sean and Lee of gathering information. In the context of rock-climbing, Mary described her rationale this way:

I've checked my knots, I've checked my harness. I'm clipping in all the way up. ... Worst case scenario [is that] I fall off the hold. What's going to happen? My rope is going to catch me and I'm going to sway. It's going to scary, but I'm going to be fine. Right? Whereas if I was looking at ... climbing outdoors and I'm like, 'Hey that's a great big rock with sharp rocks underneath' and I haven't got a rope and that looks scary. When you worst-case-scenario-it-out, you go, 'Worst case scenario [is that] I fall on the rocks and I die. Let's not do this.'

The impetus for Mary's perspective that fear as information fosters calculated risks is a philosophical standpoint: "You never grow and change if you're comfortable," she summarized at the end of our interview. It is precisely the notion of comfort, specifically discomfort, that signals to Cécile that she needs to take ac-

tion. She said that fear “tells me I’m in trouble and I might ... be helpless.” When we spoke, Cécile was 57 and had just acquired her PhD. She also teaches Level I Kayaking. As an avid and certified kayaker, Cécile has capsized many times in the process of developing the skill to teach others. She recounts the process as she experienced it:

[T]hat feeling of helplessness ... probably intensifies the level of fear to a place of panic. ... The thing that’s also true for me is that I’ve actually capsized on trips more than anybody I know. ... [The] first time that I capsized, my anxiety was overwhelming prior to the capsize. It was a legitimate anxiety because I really did not have the skills to get out of the situation I was in. But once I was in the water, I had to problem-solve. I had to deal with it. At that point, the anxiety was gone and I just, we just carried on.

What it means to “carry on” is, for Cécile, the process of problem-solving. Fear indicates to her that problems have arisen that need her attention. She does not focus on fear itself but on what fear signifies. As she has done when she has capsized in her kayak, she assesses what is going on in any given situation that triggers fear and takes action. “OK, you’re not completely helpless,” she says, as though articulating a conversation she has with herself in those moments. “You’re not going to die.’ ... So, the more targeted I can be, the more I’m focused on problem solving.”

She continued by describing the benefit of fear more bluntly:

Fear and anxiety are beneficial in the sense that, hopefully it will keep you from doing really stupid things, or taking on risks that are too great. I have a friend who did some teaching and he has said to me before, ‘If you’re not scared when you’re doing a crossing [in a kayak], you’re being stupid.’

Perhaps Cécile’s recognition of the pitfalls of stupidity serves a parallel function as Sean’s and Lee’s urge to collect information and plan, and Mary’s preference for “worst-case-scenario’ing it out.” All of these participants speak to functional aspects of fear based on sound reason. Cécile summarized her perspective that fear can be a useful, if not necessary, tool to work through problems and challenges related to fear. She said that fear has “propelled me to problem-solve in ways that I think have been quite productive.”

### Fear as motivation

Closely related to the element of pragmatics is the function of control, specifically how fear can give rise to exercising control when it might be possible to do so as a motivational mechanism. The metaphor employed by Nick—getting in the race—captures his orientation towards personal development. In his early 30s, Nick is a varsity runner and doctoral-level scholar. Although he is a high-achiever, social anxiety results in ambivalence about standing out from his achievements.

He explained that, “If there’s been times when I’ve been hesitant to do things, it’s because of the fear of judgment. That’s probably my main limitation, is that social fear.” He recounts an experience of feeling embarrassed in public early in his running career:

When we were doing the competitions,... I handled it fairly well for the first couple of races; I was top 3 in the city. But the very last one, ... I couldn’t take the pressure anymore and I dropped out of the race. ... So that was a big stepping stone, so that the failure in that last critical race was the reason why I went further with running in the long term than had I done really well ... When I stopped running on that last day, on that last competition, I dropped out of the race. ... I couldn’t let it go. ... After the race, I was really upset. That was the first race my parents went to go watch me at. They didn’t really know I was taking it that seriously at that point. What did they see? Their son drop out of a race. That’s not very awe inspiring.

Backing away from the race rather than getting in it taught Nick a lesson about himself. He described how fear of social reproach serves his drive to achieve, saying that the

fear of judgment can be a positive motivator in some ways in terms of producing high quality work. You have to have a mixture between fear and fearlessness because if all you’re trying to do is please other people with anything in life, you’re probably not going to please anyone and you’re probably not going to do anything of much note. So, I think you have to learn how to master, to use the energy that fear might give you to make you do fearless things.

What Nick seems to indicate is the practice of developing the skill of harnessing energy—in this case, the energy of fear—is to fuel success. Such skill is indicative of exercising measures of control, apparent in his insight that the discipline of running “taught me a lot of lessons on how to deal with pressure, fear, how to learn how to master something, the kind of deliberate work you do on a daily basis for a long time.” In running, as in life, “getting in the race” and working with the energy of fear is, for Nick, an essential component of what it means to achieve and to learn about his capabilities.

Asserting the motivation to “get in the game” mirrors Marty’s refusal to be “owned” by difficult or challenging situations. A 24-year old graduate student, Marty has struggled with the fear of not doing well academically. He has also struggled with mental illness, having experienced a severe bout of depression in the second year of his university studies. Refusing to allow “something to take control” of him, Marty described how he felt about his depression:

[W]hen I started to become depressed, I was in a denial phase. I didn’t want to accept that I was insufficient and that I wasn’t as mentally strong as somebody should be. ... I was afraid of admitting that I had a problem because I had always seen myself as a strong person and I didn’t want to have that weakness. ... Right

now, I'm afraid of going back [to] being depressed. It was painful. . . . So, I've taken precautions and I'm always reflecting on how I feel and how I'm doing and learning from my mistakes so it doesn't happen again because I am absolutely . . . it's one of the things that scares me the most.

Put differently, Marty would say that he fears being “owned” by depression and so takes steps to avoid a full relapse. He learned about the benefits of controlling a situation before he is controlled by it through an experience he had with grade 9 science.

I went into chemistry because I thought it was hard. I remember I was back in grade 8 and I went over to my neighbor's house and he was taking grade 9 science and they were doing the chemistry unit. He opens up the textbook and he shows me the periodic table . . . I was just kind of dumbfounded, like, ‘Whoa! This is what they do in high school. This is chemistry!’ So, . . . I worked really hard at it because I accepted that notion beforehand that it was hard. It made me afraid of it and that's what drove me to actually do well and take it seriously. . . . I was expecting it to be a huge obstacle and a hurdle but that actually caused me to work harder at it because I was just afraid of failing at it.

In other words, Marty felt motivated to “own” chemistry but, later, ended up feeling owned by Physics 11, saying that,

I didn't think physics was that hard but then the first test, I got my mark back and it was 57. And I've never, ever gotten anything in the 50s in my life! It was a shock to me. I was disappointed in myself. . . . I was nervous about telling my parents that I did poorly. I remember going into the bathroom . . . and I was angry and I punched the door and I was just, it was a turning point for me. In the next unit, I did my homework literally every single day, worked every single question, and I probably got 95% on the next test.

At one point in our discussion, Marty used the phrase “obliterate me” to describe what he feared would happen if he were to become “owned by a subject.” Given what he felt was at stake, he exercised control to, in a sense, win battle over the subjects in school that challenged his academic capabilities. Those experiences taught him that he must take risks to achieve. “I see something that I think I can't do, I have to learn how to do it,” he said. He continued by connecting his orientation towards high achievement with fear: “[I]f I see something that I'm afraid to do, . . . I have to figure out how to do it. I've always found that, if I'm afraid of something, or if I think something's hard, I naturally gravitate towards it.”

For Nick and Marty, fear of social embarrassment or failure at various tasks is a clear motivator to achieve. Unlike other participants who spoke of fear in terms of relationality – a voice that guides - and pragmatics – a tool for decision-making – Nick and Marty indicated a somewhat contradictory perspective on fear in relation to achievement, at once as part adversary that threatens their sense of their own abilities and their public identities, and part mobilizer that steers them towards success through adversity.



### Vindicating fear

In his 2012 book, *Fear: Essential wisdom for getting through the storm*, Buddhist scholar, activist, and philosopher Thích Nhat Hanh claimed that “Fearlessness is not only possible, it is the ultimate joy. When you touch nonfear, you are free” (p. 6). The stories featured here demonstrate that, on the contrary, fear can be channeled to enhance agency, possibility, freedom, and even joy. Cécile demonstrates such potential, both in calculated risk and exhilaration, in the accompanying photograph (included here with Cécile’s permission):

The narratives featured here capture a moment in time for each participant. Had I conducted interviews on other days, I may have received different responses, as a matter of chance. Participants might have had additional insights and stories, or fewer, based on mood, mental clarity, ability to focus, and other circumstantial factors out of my control. The purpose of the research was not to lock these participants in time. Perhaps some of them might have different or even contrary perspectives if I were to interview them today. The purpose, instead, was to gain

insight from their perception and articulation of their experience with reconceptualizing fear. I would describe all of the participants as high-achieving people, which is perhaps what drew them to participate in the first place. Nevertheless, these narratives offer insights on agency and engagement that can be employed by most people in various ways. Whether as a voice that encourages and motivates people to go beyond what they perceive to be their limitations, or as a mechanism that provides information and helps to discern a course of action, or yet as a beacon of potential failure that motivates dedication and discipline to achieve goals, fear can serve a positive and constructive purpose in people's lives, as it has done with the participants featured here. Recognizing fear as purposeful can disrupt the dominant narratives of shame and control that circulate in modern society. Beyond the usual notions of overcoming fear or pretending to be fearless, fear is woven deeply into human experience and can, if looked at positively, be harnessed for the development of personal agency and social identity through achievement.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Fourteen people were interviewed, ranging in age from 24 to 59, but I feature 9 here to highlight the most prominent themes discerned through data collection.

<sup>2</sup> Names are pseudonyms except for participants who gave me permission to use their real first name. In accordance with participants' written consent, locations and other information may or may not be disguised.

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## Theatre—

### A Space for Human Connection

*Isabelle Gatt*

#### Introduction

The Kwakiutl Indians of northwest America had a tradition referred to as potlatch (Boas, 1966) which involved ceremonies with the gifting of food, wealth, song, dance and the sharing of tales with other tribes. The tribes would not necessarily be at peace, but potlatch was perceived as a way of resolving conflict and promoting understanding of cultures. Performance was such a gift, it was one way of sharing and connecting.

Theatre, process drama, creative drama, forum theatre all create a space and mode in which to discover and explore ideas, opinions, emotions, relationships, similarities, conflicts; in other words, a space and a mode to share and connect. The processes involved, the strategies and conventions used, aid the participants to become more socially competent as they share and connect first internally within the group as they improvise and devise, and then, in the case of performances, the connection is also with their audiences. Having worked in the theatre, as a performer and an educator in schools and drug rehabilitation centers locally and abroad, I never cease to be amazed at the way individuals transform, and a group of people bonds in the process of devising a theatre piece or simply while using drama strategies. I am always aware of the impact and the changes such work

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has on me too as animator and part of the group. The process of doing theatre is intense and changes relationships as each learns more about oneself and the others while discussing and devising theatre.

I am not referring to traditional theatre direction where a director takes a play off a shelf, chooses actors through auditions, and gives them precise directions as to how to play the part, so as to embody her/his vision and interpretation. I am referring to theatre that is a process, a theatre that allows participants space to think critically and creatively, a theatre that is collectively created, borne through discussion, improvisation and workshops. This is a theatre which moves away from the fixed linear hierarchies of scriptwriter, director, actor, audience; even if the director is key since, in the journey of making theatre, s/he is a reference point for the co-generation and co-creation of ideas and material. This is a theatre that takes in all the individuals' contributions and participation to transform, to learn, to grow both individually and as a group. The more participatory the approach is, the more the likelihood of transformation within participants. This is even more effective when the issues chosen to focus on, are political and social issues, issues that are considered to be problems or controversies, issues related to moral values, rights for the voiceless, poverty, racism, sexism and political impotence; issues that the participants perceive to be relevant to them.

In working through theatre, participants improve their communication skills and acquire the confidence to make contributions in discussions. They are encouraged to express their emotions and to voice their opinions even if these conflict with what others are saying. Conflicts are what make the journey challenging and worthwhile as one discovers more of oneself, learns to understand the other, and all can engage in resolving these conflicts, exploring solutions, making compromises, learning collectively. The different approaches used through the process of making theatre, ultimately affirm the possibility of change, the change which might emerge from engagement with that conflict. Theatre making affords a space for participants to share their doubts, emotions, ideas, opinions, dreams, hopes, frustrations, pain, anger, joys, etc. In doing so and listening to what others have to share and in researching the issue in hand, participants grow and change in a unique and meaningful way individually and as a group.

Ultimately, comes the audience; throughout the process of creating the work, the actors work in anticipation of the audience's response. A live performance is an experience that connects spectators and actors. The audience is vital to a performance; the live actor-audience interaction with all its stimulation and surprise is a strategic component in theatre. As Grotowski so aptly reflects:

By gradually eliminating whatever proved superfluous, we found that theatre can exist without make-up, without autonomic costume and scenography, without a separate performance area (stage), without lighting and sound effects, etc. It cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, "live" communion. (Grotowski, 1968, p. 19)

Theatre is about community: the community of artists that create it, the community of the audience that observe it, and the connection between artists and audience in the moment of performance.

Different theatre genres, require different degrees of interaction from the audience. The theatre space is another crucial variable when it comes to interaction; the size of the theatre, its configuration: a proscenium arch versus theatre in the round and indoor versus outdoor theatre all make a huge difference in various aspects but most essentially their impact on the audience. Another central variable is, of course, the audience; the type of individuals that make up the audience. As the audience changes for every performance, so does the interplay between actors and audience so no two performances are ever exactly alike. Each performance affects individuals differently, as with any artform, each performance should lead to enriching experiences by providing the audience with new visions of our life, others and the world. Performances that are the result of creative inquiry, be it collective or individual, reflect societal transformations that could lead the audience to new dimensions of thought that ultimately reshape their perspective of life.

### Connecting through emotional engagement and critical reflection

Strategists of the theatre have always conceived theatre to be a means of penetrating through the shell of the audience's ease. Penetrating this involves engaging the audience through emotion or critical reflection or both. In Greece, Aristotle philosophized that while the function of comedy was to expose the flaws in society which would help people see human absurdity and foolishness, the function of Greek tragedy was to evoke extreme emotions of pity and fear, in the safe setting of the theatre, so as to affect the *catharsis*<sup>1</sup> of these emotions in the audience. Tragedy exposes the flaw in the hero's character, with a consequent fall from fortune, thus evoking emotions of fear and pity from the audience. So, the audience leaves the theatre "purged" of these emotions. However, Aristotle also wrote that when watching tragedy, this vicarious experience through "empathy did not appear alone, but simultaneously with another type of relation: *dianoia*."<sup>2</sup> (Boal 2008:102).

Anti-realism movements in theatre such as Expressionism, Absurdism, Dadaism were also a reaction to the absurdity of life and politics. Such movements deliberately created confusion and explored ways to engage the audience in reflection and a re-evaluation of their notions of life by forcing them to consider a different viewpoint and the possibility of changing the status quo. Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty focused on passion and emotion to provoke an emotional reaction from the audience; his theatre was void of rationality with the intent to upset the mental status quo of the audience. Brecht, on the other hand, deliberately broke with the Aristotelian concepts of a linear plot with a climax, a suspension of disbelief, and progressive character development to, instead, present multiple perspec-

tives, introduce a narrator thus pulling down the fourth wall and use episodic plot structures. All Brecht's strategies were intended to create a feeling of estrangement. He referred to this strategy as the *Verfremdung-effekt* which targeted reason and objectivity rather than emotion; the V-effect is intended to make the spectator adopt an attitude of critical inquiry in her/his approach to the incident in the story narrated, turning the spectator into a critical observer while arousing his capacity for action.

### Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed

Should art educate, inform, organize, influence, incite to action, or should it simply be an object of pleasure? (Boal, 1992, introduction)

This is a perennial question about the role of theatre. Historically, theatre has been used as a tool for education and, at times, even for indoctrination, both within schools and within the community. Think of the mystery plays in medieval times for example. Different theatre genres engage the members of the audience differently. While all genres generally aim to offer personal recreation and aesthetic pleasure, certain genres also have a strong pedagogical and political aspect intended to engage the audience even to the extent of inciting them to political and social activism.

Augusto Boal, the Brazilian theatre director and radical liberatory educator, specifically used theatre as a vehicle for social change. He believed that

Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it. (Boal, 1992, p. xxxi)

Boal devised a system of exercises, games and different forms of highly interactive theatre referred to as Theatre of the Oppressed (TO). Boal was profoundly influenced by revolutionary pedagogist, Paulo Freire, in fact, he acknowledged this to the point of referring to Freire as "my last father" (Emert & Friedland 2011). The title of his book, *Theatre of the Oppressed* was heavily inspired by Paulo Freire's liberatory educational theory and vision in his landmark book on education, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In this book, Freire expounds his views on the political nature of education which has the power of either domesticating or liberating. He pushed for an education that was liberating, teaching people to become critical, questioning, autonomous thinkers, and moreover people who would take action. Freire's notion of *praxis*,<sup>3</sup> theoretically reflective action, is the outcome of continuous, restless, hopeful, critical inquiry with others about society and the world which results in thoughtful action. Freire advocated that learners should be stimulated to develop praxis, an inventive and interventive way of life that encourages free, creative reflection and thoughtful action in order to empower the marginalized and help them confront their oppressions, challenging the status quo.

In Drama Education, Augusto Boal's (TO) techniques can be effective in promoting critical thinking and social justice. Forum theatre in particular helps the participants understand and transform the power relations of everyday life, as, to start with, it takes its source from real situations that particular community is facing. As Hope and Timmel (1984:8) comment, "All education and development projects should start by identifying the issues which the local people speak about with excitement, hope, fear, anxiety or anger." In Boal's theatre, the spectators are not mere viewers of what the actors are doing. Their role is not passive but active as each member of the audience, for whom Boal coined the word *spect-actor*,<sup>4</sup> is an active spectator. Active not only in terms of engaged thinking, or verbal contribution but also in terms of action. In fact, forum theatre is only effective when *spect-actors* intervene, and try out alternative endings and possible solutions to the challenges presented "on stage", by physically going on stage to take over from the "oppressed" protagonist and acting, or rather take the action they deem necessary to change the situation, instead of him. In forum theatre the *spect-actors* are actively involved not "anaesthetized" (Boal, 1992) or alienated by what is happening on stage; forum theatre is not merely about entertainment but is designed to highlight issues of injustice to stimulate debate, develop learning and alter behaviour.

What fundamentally unites the practices of both Boal and Freire is dialogue. Dialogue as a true praxis of action and reflection, fostering but not dictating action. Augusto Boal's forum theatre is a medium for dialogue, a means of communication, using physical, verbal and aesthetic language on emotive issues, exhibited in a safe environment, with the potential of turning problems into solutions. This does not necessarily mean that the solution arrived at by the spect-actor is the right one, what is important is that the spect-actor empathises, thinks, reflects, tries to come up with a solution to add to the debate: 'I believe it is more important to achieve a good debate than a good solution' (Boal, 1992, p. 230).

Through the use of forum theatre, issues of injustice, exploitation and oppression can be explored not just with the actors but with *spect-actors*. His argument resonates with Paulo Freire's for the necessity of *conscientização*,<sup>5</sup> developing a critical consciousness of one's social reality through reflection and action in order to provoke reactions against oppression. In this way, theatre can serve as a powerful pedagogical tool to understanding power structures and to fostering inter-ethnic, inter-class, inter-gender solidarity and understanding. Like Freire, Boal believed that the feelings generated by *conscientização* were key to motivating community-based action.

The insistence that the oppressed engage in reflection on their concrete situation is not a call to armchair revolution. On the contrary, reflection—true reflection—leads to action. On the other hand, when the situation calls for action, that action will constitute an authentic praxis only if its consequences become the object of critical reflection... Otherwise, action is pure activism. (Freire, 1972, p. 41)

Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) rejects spectacle-theatre and embraces a different theatre in which spectators are encouraged "to ask questions, to dialogue, to participate" (Boal, 1992, p. 142). The spectators will engage and participate fully only if the focus to the initial debate is relevant to them and the signal that participation is expected in the process is clearly communicated (Shor & Freire, 1987).

Boal sees theatre as a language accessible to all to help reflect, analyse and discuss issues of oppression and explore group solutions to these issues. Boal's TO serves as a medium for the process of codification and decodification, which resonates with Freire's pedagogical approach. Drama is a form of codification, a way of capturing an aspect of life's reality and bringing it into the group in a different form. The form could be simply a line drawing, a photograph, a story, a poem, drama or music. The different form has the potential of generating interest, debate and alternative perspectives. Freire used codifications to capture aspects of everyday experiences. While Boal used theatre, Freire used line drawings to capture the issue; in this way the issue becomes decontextualized, coded and, consequently, can be seen through a different lens and more critically.

Boal used theatre as a medium and a space to engage and connect all participants in a common project and this leads to understanding others, empathizing with the challenges of others, tolerating and making compromises as personal ideas are sometimes modified, integrated with those of others or simply given up on reflection while other participants' ideas are taken on. Both empathy and reflection are necessary in the process as they are in life as indifference allows injustice and atrocities to happen. Forum theatre dares us to care, reflect, discuss and try to find solutions collectively.

### Daring to care and "the practice of freedom"

As we have seen, Boal, whose interacting theatre is rooted in Paulo Freire's pedagogical and political principles, used theatre in an attempt to raise the participants' consciousness and empower them as they reflect, discuss, criticise and challenge oppressive social conditions. Freire's radical pedagogy was geared towards empowering students, strengthening their imagination and developing a critical consciousness by giving students the tools of literacy. For Freire, the dialogue between teachers and students in the teaching setting was essential to help cultivate critical consciousness, enlighten their subjectivity and nurture in them a sense of self-determination and civic engagement. While Freire's tool to promote dialogue and critical thinking was literacy, Boal's was theatre. Boal's theatre differs from mainstream theatre which offers only images of the world as it is and leaves no room for change. Boal created theatre for freedom, theatre for the oppressed, theatre for empowerment, so his theatre deals with change and images of transition, images that inspire hope. Boal pulled down the fourth wall and instead built a bridge between the actor and spectator by inviting the latter to

engage in a self-empowering process of dialogue and consciously intervene in the theatrical situation. Forum theatre is a “practice of freedom,” a rehearsal for social action through a collective analysis of shared problems of oppression.

Another Boalian contribution, which adds to the essence of Boal’s radical pedagogy, is his book *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*. This a compendium of exercises has various objectives such as dehabituating, de-mechanizing the body, that is, to help participants break away from doing things mechanically, making participants aware of certain mannerisms, ways of thinking and help them come up with alternative solutions, solutions for a more just society. These games are an effective way to engage participants, break the ice, and build trust within a group in a short time. On an individual level, the exercises help to free individuals from both external and internal oppressions, nurture the imagination and to ultimately prepare participants to engage in real and social struggles for liberation. Boal’s techniques were intended to help participants in the practice of freedom.

At about the same time that Augusto Boal was creating the TO in Brazil, a radical pedagogist, Don Milani, was making waves in Italy with his radical ideas. Don Lorenzo Milani was a priest whose ideas were considered so dangerously revolutionary that he was “exiled” by his bishop to a tiny remote “godforsaken” mountain village. The village was Barbiana. Don Milani had a mission which was not just religious but also civic. On arriving at Barbiana he found that the only school in the village was in a desolate state; the school consisted of five classes in one hall and, worse still, he soon discovered that children left semi-illiterate from this school. Don Milani wanted to transform this, so he created his own school. He was looking for a transformation in the individuals who frequented the Barbiana school and to do this he realized he needed to use alternative methods, alternative curricula as well as alternative hours, times convenient for these young people who could only attend after their work in the fields.

Milani used anything that would connect learning and life, theatre, science, current affairs, anatomy, etc. as part of the curriculum in the school he built at Barbiana.

The immediate point of departure for learning was reality, life, or better still, the everyday issues confronting the world of the poor. This constituted the immediate motive of the moment. The longer term purpose was that of enabling the pupil to acquire a baggage of knowledge that was necessary for him or her to grow and become capable of participating in social and political life.

—Eduardo Minelli—ex student of Lorenzo Milani in an interview  
(Borg & Mayo 2007) <http://www.barbiana.it/interview.html>

Don Milani used radical pedagogy to educate the students. He wanted to teach them to read, but more than that, he wanted to show them the importance of studying, of thinking critically, of reflecting, of discussing and standing up for what is right. Milani’s pedagogical philosophy resonates closely with that

of Freire. As opposed to mainstream education, he was not interested in merely promoting narrowly defined “commercially and market-oriented” type of competence-based learning (Gadotti, 2008, p. 43), competences that are often measured according to outcomes, narrowly defined competences for exams which the Barbiana students had hitherto failed in. Instead he wanted to equip his students with broader competences that would help them become active democratic citizens. Thus, the Barbiana school would not just prepare them for exams and life as they knew it, but it would help them conceive an alternative vision of reality as they explored concretely the myriad of possibilities and options that life had to offer.

As part of his radical pedagogy, Milani would invite farmers, artists, artisans, scientists and professionals to talk and give hands-on demonstrations of their work. Milani understood the potential of the arts and included these in his school. The arts, and theatre in particular, expand the imagination and the realization of this can unlock endless possibilities, freeing the mind from the chains of reality as perceived up till that point (Csikszentmihalyi, 1986, p. 5). Through the use of theatre, Milani wanted to help his students find their voice, overcome their shy silence while also learning important communication and social skills. In this way, theatre was a means of helping the students acquire perceptions and skills to take action in the face of the injustices they suffered in this forgotten part of the world where there were no asphalted roads, no electricity, no water and no phone. Milani used every medium available to him to make learning more concrete and experiential. Working on subjects of relevance to his students gave these youths the understanding to develop their own moral compass, also instilling the ‘I care’ maxim through the notion of theatre as a democratic space to explore ideas in.

### The liberal arts to promote independent thinking and collaborative action for peace

Like Freire, Don Milani, believed that, by prescribing knowledge, schooling was a negatively powerful political tool intended to promote subordination by initiating the young into the existing culture, thus ensuring the status quo where the oppressors always win and the oppressed remain that way. On the other hand, again like Freire, Milani perceived education as a tool to liberate the oppressed and so, in his school, he taught his students to read, think and discuss critically to become aware of the injustices of this world, and to become active in struggling against them through nonviolence.

The liberal arts offer fertile ground for independent thinking and raise the possibility of multiple perspectives, in fact that is why in any dictatorship the arts are scaled back and assaulted, and that is precisely why Don Milani promoted the arts in his school in Barbiana. The democratic processes applied in making theatre lead to a sense of ownership in all the participants as they work together. This furthered the cause of peace in the participants’ lives and the community.

Doing theatre, as in devising theatre, is an educational process. Education, *ex and ducere*, literally translated, means “to draw out of” or ‘to lead out of.’” The process of improvisation and of devising theatre in a group, helps individuals draw out and discover about themselves and others as they work creatively together. The workshop-rehearsal and performative process is very similar to play where ordinary hierarchies dissolve, where certain times and places are set aside for the manipulation of special things in a world defined non-ordinarily (Schechner, 1985, p. 110). New social contracts are formed between the participants as actors as well as between the actors and the audience. Theatre is a point of contact – a space for connection. Unlike the isolation of watching television, cinema or using the internet, theatre is a space for human contact, a space where people gather, it offers a genuine point of interaction where people can become engaged, enlightened and entertained.

Theatre has a powerful potential when used as a pedagogical tool in a democratic approach to promote horizontal, equitable relationships where both teachers and learners are seen as individuals with useful knowledge and experience. It encourages participants to collectively examine even what might be rather controversial issues and find ways to coming to a consensus on issues to resolve injustices.

Reality entails injustices and conflict. Conflict, however, not as the antithesis of peace; creative and non-violent conflict resolution is part of the process for peace. The process can involve an internal conflict within the learners as they develop a critical consciousness, a social and collective awareness. This ties in with Freire’s conscientization which helps learners develop an in-depth understanding of the world and its underlying contradictions. This exercise leads to questioning one’s own beliefs and where they come from. Self-reflection is essential within such an educational process but the next step, praxis, is even more vital. Praxis involves moving from the theoretical to the practical, as learners take their knowledge and apply it in real-world situations. Praxis is key in all peace efforts. The use of Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) could serve as rehearsal for praxis, or praxis itself especially forum theatre which acts as a tool to analyze and explore possible collective solutions to problems of the oppression that can arise everywhere. (I will expound on this further on). Theatre can thus be a space for dialogue, a space for community building.

### A critical pedagogy stimulus: the newspaper

Interestingly, a common element in Boal, Freire, and Milani, is that all three used the newspaper as a tool of empowerment. As pedagogues all three understood the importance of critical engagement with current issues reported in the media. Literacy is central to Paulo Freire’s work, more importantly, critical literacy. He emphasised that reading the world always comes before reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world. (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

We began with the conviction that the role of man was not only to be in the world, but to engage in relations with the world--that through acts of creation and re-creation, man makes cultural reality and thereby adds to the natural world, which he did not make. (Freire, 2005, p. 39)

Freire insists that, in literacy, the text is not merely neutral print on paper and therefore, other than the skill of reading the words, what is more important is critical literacy which is what enables us understand the injustices. Freire urges us to transform the world through action by working towards a democracy in a collective effort against the forces that oppress and marginalize by gender, class, race or language. Both Milani and Freire explored the newspapers by teaching reading and analysis of what is written through researching the source, the message and the content and, finally, by means of discussion of the issues from various cultural perspectives. In the school at Barbiana, besides the history of the past, students read the newspaper daily from front page to back page. This was a “compulsory” school activity as the newspaper contains useful information relevant to life even if it might not have any content they would be tested in exams.

At Barbiana it was believed that politics and the daily news were important aspects of a school curriculum as one of the boys in *A Letter to a Teacher* insists. He writes that these are relevant to life because they inform one about the sufferings of others even though this might not be important in academic terms, this is the information that is important to learn for life. This implies that reading the newspaper is not merely about being literate and knowing what is going on but also about empathizing with the victims and taking action to help. Don Lorenzo Milani was an outside-the-box priest, who did exactly what he preached and preached what he believed in. He did this even during the precarious times he lived in. If he felt something was not just he would speak up and try to undo the injustice. When he read a letter in *La Nazione*, written by a group of retired military chaplains in which they referred to conscientious objection as “an insult to the fatherland and to its Fallen” he wrote the controversial public letter in response supporting the conscientious objectors, challenging the notion of a “just war” and actually calling for resistance.

Here was a priest defying the church and the state to defend young men who had refused military service at a time when conscientious objection was punishable by a prison sentence. Milani was aware of the possible consequences of doing this but felt compelled to in the name of truth and justice:

I had to teach my pupils well how a citizen reacts to injustice. How he has freedom of speech and of the press. How a Christian reacts also to the priest and even the bishop who errs. How each one has to feel responsible for everyone else.(Milani 1965)

As a result of going to press with this letter, Milani faced prosecution.

At much the same time as Milani wrote this letter, Augusto Boal also started exploring the newspaper to create a new category of popular theatre. Boal was

working in Brazil which was going through hard times of fascist repression with military intervention in schools, unions and the faculties. Boal's Newspaper Theatre, involved the people to make theatre for the people- no middle actor involved. The process involves learning to read the newspaper through headlines chosen by the editor to find the "real news"; the "actors" read through headlines, article placing and layout, collaboratively. The next task is to reframe the information from the news to create theatre using theatre techniques and conventions to bring out the different realities and countervoices. Newspaper theatre, in itself a political theatre genre, works through the composition of a succession of images and dialogue to create the structure of an argument, possibly presenting incongruous messages to reveal certain ironies and to provide a fundamental framework to prompt the audience to critically analyse what is being reported.

### Boal's and Milani's Newspaper Theatre today

In my work, I often use Newspaper theatre with university students in Youth Studies and Community Studies; the idea is that even if participants come from a non-drama background, once they have gone through certain Drama processes and theatre games, they can then apply this experience and knowledge to the groups they work with or in their classrooms. My research (Gatt, 2009) has taught me that it is not sufficient for students to learn and be given various examples of the various techniques, but that they need to go through certain experiences themselves to be able to really understand the process and appreciate the outcomes.

Prior to working on Newspaper Theatre exercises, participants go through various trust physical exercises, theatre games, icebreaking and group-building exercises with the aim of creating a safe setting to work in and slowly start unlocking their capacity for critical thinking as well as critical imagination and expression. The drama structures used offer an open framework to explore multiple opinions, possibilities, solutions as well as a context and time for reflective discourse. The drama processes used, integrate personal experiences and provide a space, a safe space, for sharing values and beliefs, while challenging personal dispositions to push for imaginative and creative solutions to help overcome oppressions.

The feedback of these courses reveal that, for students, this is a valuable experience that helps them discover themselves, and understand and empathise with others. Most comment about the non-verbal exercises based on physical games and that though most felt a bit awkward doing these initially, these exercises really helped break the ice. An example is when participants are asked to think of personal experiences about a certain theme of common interest, possibly of injustice or oppression. The technique that then follows is from Image Theatre. Each participant is asked to "sculpt" other participants' bodies into a tableau (a frozen image, statues) to portray the injustice chosen (e.g., a case of harassment, racism, bullying, etc.) Participants are not allowed to communicate verbally at any point.

Attention to detail is key both as to body positions as well as facial expressions. Such an exercise makes use of nonverbal communication which is generally easier for people to do than verbal. The process can then move to having “the audience” interpret what these tableaux mean. This involves a certain element of disclosure even if the person whose experience it is does not need to comment about his/her contribution. Such exercises scaffold the way for Newspaper theatre and eventually Forum theatre.

For Newspaper Theatre, participants are asked to bring with them newspaper articles which report oppressions, so they need to do some research on their own. The articles are shared with the participants in the group. Reasons are given as to also giving reasons why these articles were chosen, sometimes it is because the news is really powerful, other times it is because the story reminds them of a personal experience. The group analyses the article including the source of information, the journalist’s voice, the messages and the content. The process entails intrapersonal as well as interpersonal communication, helping participants learn more about themselves and the others in the group. All participants are engaged in the process, individual contributions are negotiated into a collective exercise of structuring a collective creation. The key difference in this approach to merely reading, analysing and discussing the news is that each participant in Newspaper theatre will be taking an active role to finding solutions, resolving conflict, overcoming challenges. TO is theatre as praxis: it involves dialogue, action and critical reflection.

The first step is for each individual in the group to present their newspaper case. The group is allowed time for dialogue as a group process, the instructions are to listen without being judgmental; be alert to any personal biases that surface and try to deconstruct these; inquire and reflect. The dialogue process is a key aspect of Newspaper theatre as group members ask questions to deepen understanding, gain alternative perspectives and make connections. Next, participants are guided to go beyond discussion and reflection and to imagine and try out different scenarios exploring and expressing their own emotions, attitudes, interpersonal relationships and behaviour.

Newspaper theatre is effective in involving and connecting everyone in the group through the process of creating the scene. An important factor that students mention in their journals about the sessions, is that they feel that, had they not gone through the initial theatre games aimed at integrating the members of the group, they would have found the sharing difficult. The scaffolding aspect of the process with games and exercises to help build trust, open communication and increase empathy is a process that prepares the participants and provides a safe venue for them to disclose, confide, articulate ideas, opinions and to engage in dialogue about certain personal and structural oppressions to try to find ways of overcoming these.

In a recent workshop I had with university students training to work with youth, a student brought an article about a violent attack by four young men on a

lesbian couple that took place on the upper deck of a London night bus on May 30, 2019. Melania Geymonat and her partner, Chris, were traveling home from an evening out together when four boys forced the women to kiss for their own enjoyment and then brutally attacked and robbed them. The group of students that worked on this newspaper article introduced the scene with one of the daughters coming out to her mother who was so shocked at this that she threw the girl out of the house after a long argument. This is a plausible reaction in a country where most consider themselves Catholic and hence tend to be homophobic, even if, Maltese society has become more open and civil marriage is legal since September 2017. In her journal, the student who played the mother's part, who is herself a mother, reflected how she found playing this part disturbing as she could empathize with the mother's pain of having a daughter who is different, knowing full well the challenges that await her daughter and herself due to society's lens of homophobia:

Within the group we decided that the character I was playing would act harshly towards her daughter in an effort to shock some sense into her. Playing the oppressor certainly helped me realize more the hypocrisy of homophobes as I really could find no convincing argument to rebut the daughter's arguments which sounded more genuine and convincing than mine. This exercise made me look deep into myself as, though initially I could resonate with the character being in denial, on reflection I imagined that.... if my daughter were gay, would I really prefer ignorance to reality though? My daughter is my daughter whatever her sexual orientation. People's sexual orientation should be nobody's business but their own. (BT March 2019 journal No. 7)

Theatre is a powerful liberatory tool because theatre is "the art of looking at ourselves" (Boal, 1992, p. 15). It allows space for introspective reflection so we can review our opinions and change the way we think and act: it is essentially about humanizing humanity. TO is a tool for liberation as it requires truth from each person and from within the group. Subsequently TO offers a platform for dialogue with the *spect-actors* who are outside the group in order to deal with the truth, disclose and confront oppressions.

Oppressions can be internal as well as external, that is, sometimes it is not a situation or somebody that is the oppression but it is something within ourselves that oppresses us; such oppressions also block us from growing. These oppressions are ingrained in our past experiences, our culture, our education, our religion, our traditions etc. Originally, Boal's TO methods in Brazil were intended to act as a "rehearsal for a revolution" (Boal, 1985 [1974], p. 141) against a repressive regime, but subsequently, when he worked in Europe, he found that the European context demanded something different. What was needed here was rehearsals for healing, so TO became more of a therapeutic tool to help people overcome internal oppressions such as loneliness, alienation, suicidal tendencies, moral dictates by the media, peers, etc.

Boal devised a series of TO exercises that are aimed at overcoming internalized oppressions and in themselves are therapeutic techniques. Boal refers to these exercises as the Cop-in-the-Head which deal with fears that persist even after bad experiences are over and the “oppressors” no longer hold any power over us. An important objective for TO is, in fact, to disarm the “cops in our head.” In *Rainbow of desire*, Boal emphasizes that the goal for TO is

to dynamise. This dynamisation, with the action, which results from it (set off by one *spect-actor* in the name of all), destroys all the blocks which prohibited the realisation of actions such as this. That is, it purifies the *spect-actors*, it produces a catharsis. The catharsis of detrimental blocks! (Boal, 1995, p. 72)

This *spect-actor*-actor collaboration can help determine alternative solutions or achieve a good debate. Newspaper theatre and forum theatre can both be effective tools in the process to promote peace. The point is to promote internal peace through catharsis on an individual level as well as to promote people’s peaceful coexistence on a collective level. Czechoslovakian playwright, dissident and president, Václav Havel’s thinking about this resonates with Boal’s:

Without free, self-respecting, and autonomous citizens there can be no free and independent nations. Without internal peace, that is, peace among citizens and between the citizens and the state, there can be no guarantee of external peace. (Havel, 1986, pt. 1, sct. 9)

Milani, Freire, and Boal’s work is still valid today. All three worked with a community using radical pedagogical processes to empower participants. Theirs was a process that connected individuals in a community by engaging each individual in thought, dialogue, individual and collective reflection and action. Such processes have the potential of raising awareness and impacting not only the individual learners but also their communities because they are about active community and political participation with an aim to changing the culture of violence and injustices and consequently promoting peace.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> *catharsis*—literally, ‘purging’; a term Aristotle borrowed from medicine to refer to the arousal and release of emotion through dramatic narrative.

<sup>2</sup> *dianoia*—a thinking through, or over, a meditation, **reflecting**.

<sup>3</sup> Praxis—theoretically reflective action.

<sup>4</sup> *spect-actor*—Augusto Boal’s coined this term to mean fusion of spectator and actor, a spectator who reflects and also takes action.

<sup>5</sup> *conscientização*—Freire’s Portuguese term for conscientization.

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## Crisis and Hope

### Educating Citizens for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Stephen C. Fleury & Michael L. Bentley

#### Introduction

*It is the contingency, the sheer avoidability of the current situation, that should rekindle faith that it can be changed in the future. (Ignatieff, 2017)*

We examine the effect of schooling as a formal site of deliberate intervention in shaping society's collective memory, especially pertaining to the truth-seeking and decision-making capacities of citizens in the 21st century. The premise of our work is that the particular social knowledge generated and promoted from two school subjects, science and social studies, has been underdeveloped—neglectfully, if not deliberately—regarding an understanding of its contingent and humanly-generated

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nature (i.e., science) for purposeful human uses. A raft of neoliberal and neo-conservative education reforms in the past three decades has further reified, de-contextualized, and technocratized school science and social studies knowledge, presenting a model of the world where human values are ignored by the former and inflated by the latter. We argue that the social theory, concepts and practices needed for the curriculum and pedagogy of both subjects to yield greater social benefits for 21st century democratic citizenry have been contained to the sidelines of mainstream education since the publication of John Dewey's *Democracy and Education* (1916) and subsequently extended, in part or whole, by the work of critical educators. At the risk of sounding alarmist, our very chances for surviving our environmental crisis requires us to draw from an education that recognizes the contingent nature of knowledge and habituates critique into harmful human constructions so that students can continually re-construct their own, better worlds.

We begin with two questions as teacher educators who, in 2020, work within one of the most highly educated societies in the history of the world:

How is it that such wide swathes of the population put greater trust regarding human matters in mystics and faith rather than in verifiable empirical scientific findings--especially concerning practical matters concerning the survival of the planet and all it contains?

Why, in spite of substantial formal institutional efforts to educate citizens broadly regarding science and democracy, are we now verging on the brink of environmental and political disasters?

### Crisis: Why the distrust and denial?

The recent election and empowerment of the most anti-science and religiously-oriented Executive Branch of the United States government in modern times is immediately disconcerting, with political leaders and agency appointees labelling climate change a hoax and denying that “contingency” itself— that is, their decisions about human activities—has consequences on natural and social systems. Despite the ill-begotten beliefs of the elders, all of the world’s children will face the consequences of their decisions. Nafeez Ahmed (2017) writes that, “For the first time in human history... we are standing at a point where we need to basically undergo fundamental systemic adaptation.” (p. 5) For many species, there is no time, and there is no guarantee of our own success at adaptation. For us as a social species, adaptation is likely to be painful, as measurable environmental changes are already underway, and not every consequence can be fully predicted.

Not to be alarmists, but each of us have gone through a fair amount of personal testing in our six-plus decades of living, and can testify to Ahmed’s point that there is “no guarantee of our own success at adaptation.” Sometimes adaptation is not possible, or its realization too late in our personal lives. Will the same be true regarding our environmental and political worlds? At what point is the increase

of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse aerosols too much to reverse? How many liberal democracies can veer to the Right before a critical mass of fascism and authoritarianism is the norm?

### How did we arrive here?

In *Age of American Unreason* (2008), Susan Jacoby portrays a societal “dumbness” being defined downward for several decades, including a merging of anti-rationalism with anti-intellectualism, and a persistent ignorance of basic concepts in geography, science and history despite increasing levels of formal education. Various surveys of American publics show that most agree science should contribute to public policy (Gauchat, 2015), yet large differences about the natural world occur in the collective views of scientists compared to those of the general public. For example, 88% of scientists believe in the safety of genetically modified crops and 97% in the reality of anthropogenic climate change, compared to 37% and 57% of the general public respectively (Funk & Reine, 2015).

We find it significant that an individual’s adherence to fundamental religious beliefs—more so than to Left or Right political leanings—appears to be the stronger determiner for discounting science (Gauchat, 2015). Gauchet’s distinction between the effect of “religion” versus “political leanings” on acceptance of science is somewhat clarifying, but insufficient. Our thinking is that more than the content of any belief is its self-justification *in the reasoning process* that promotes a socially dangerous religious fundamentalism. A similar absolutism sustains the socially dangerous political fundamentalism of neoliberalism:

So pervasive has neoliberalism become that we seldom even recognize it as ideology... (Neoliberalism) sees competition as the defining characteristic of human relations... (and) redefines citizens as consumers, whose democratic choices are best exercised by buying and selling. (Monbiot, 2016)

Neoliberalism is a metaphysical phenomenon—really a secular religion. Neoliberals worship at the altar of the market, promote incantations to limit governmental regulations, and judge social equality as both “counterproductive and morally corrosive.” The adoption of neoliberalism by both major political parties in the U.S. relates directly to the ecological crisis in which we now find ourselves. Monbiot (2016) concludes that the ultimate effect of neoliberalism undermines democracy; those of us involved in schooling can attest that this political consensus has already made a mess out of democracy’s main instrument, public education.

### Capitalism and democracy: Once a symbiotic relationship

Historically in the United States, formal public education contained two citizenship functions, one economic, one political. The first was to teach the basics of

reading, writing, and arithmetic in order that future citizens better conduct themselves in their communities and in performing their work; the second was that these future citizens gain knowledge about the geography and history of their country, thereby linking personal, community and national values. Through these academic means, both the vocational needs of a fledgling and developing capitalist economy, and the political needs of a fledgling and developing democracy, could be accomplished with little conflict. Thus, the framers of our Constitution left matters of education to individual states and the states, at least initially, largely gave the local school board control over its community's schools. Two early advocates of public schools were Thomas Jefferson, noted for his adamant belief that a common and wide-scale primary education for the population was necessary for the safety and survival of democracy, and Horace Mann, superintendent of schools for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in the mid 1800s and one of the first officials to ensure public schoolhouses in each small town and community received the financial support necessary to conduct education. As part of his tenure, Mann personally walked from community to community throughout Massachusetts, conducting a full inventory of the buildings, resources, and conditions of learning for children. Publication of his dismal and startling reports were the impetus for some of the young nation's first educational reforms.

The period after the American Civil War, the "Watershed Period" of the 1890s, is noted in history books as a time when large numbers of European immigrants came to the U.S. to work in factories. But an even larger number of the country's rural residents migrated from their farms to work in these same city factories. The rapid mixture of so many people with so many different cultural values—now portrayed as a positive aspect of "pluralism" in the United States—frightened those people who were in leadership positions at the turn of the 1900s, especially educators. Thus, Progressive Education was forward-looking and innovative when compared to the traditional teaching and learning practices of the "one-room schoolhouses" that marked the Common School Movement. In retrospect, it is easy to understand that progressive educational reforms were rooted in the fears of society's political and educational leaders about what might happen if the values, beliefs and behaviors of the country's new pluralistic population was not appropriately shaped.

As part of the Progressive Movement, a new class of professional educators arose who specialized in managing education (similar to other institutions that were also industrializing). Local boards of education retained authority, but increasingly followed the advice of those "experts" in education. Under their influence, the public school curriculum expanded its capacities for fulfilling both the economic and vocational needs of capitalism, as well as the political needs of an expanding democratic society. Nevertheless, the school curriculum continued to provide reading, writing, arithmetic and civics at the elementary level, but now, with the push from various educational organizations, could offer more vocational and academic "tracks" in the upper grade levels.

### Progressive educators differed in fundamental ways

While John Dewey (1916) is most often associated with the Progressive Education Movement, his philosophical concepts about teaching, learning, and democracy have been far less influential than Frederick Taylor's (1911) work on organizing and controlling large numbers of people (i.e., administrators and teachers), with specialized functions and roles, in large industrial complexes, exacting both the greatest efficiency and productivity from the workers (teachers and/or students).

Of course, more could be said about the manifold effects of the Progressive Education Movement on public schooling in the U.S., but suffice it to say that a progressively structured public educational system was quite successful in creating a highly productive economic workforce and a highly cohesive society (albeit with fractures and fissures); a system that provided more educational opportunities for more women and minorities, and one that generally provided most students a level of critical thinking sufficient to successfully engage themselves in making decisions together (democracy). In fact, the reason for the reactionary educational reforms in our country since 1983 appears to be that public education has actually been too successful, both in preparing knowledge and skills for capitalism, and for democracy.

### And, is it now the case that Capitalism no longer needs democracy?

Neoliberalism in the United States owes its rapid growth at the beginning of the 21st Century, in part, to Ingo Schulz's (2012) point that "capitalism doesn't need democracy." More precisely, we should qualify Schulz's statement: capitalism may *no longer* need democracy, a point that seems evident when one traces education reforms.

The purpose of public education for most of its history involved preparing citizens with the skills and knowledge to successfully live, work and participate in a democratic society--goals that were vocational, social, and moral. The student and citizen riots and uprisings of the 1960s and 1970s gave rise to a backlash, a vast network of private, socially conservative foundations and lobby organizations had become alarmed about the potentially destabilizing effects on society of progressive ideas. For many of them, too many women had taken over the work roles of men, and too many individuals from traditional minority groups but most especially African Americans and Latino/Latina had gained access to higher levels of education and higher occupational roles. It was discomfiting, unsettling and threatening, and best summed up euphemistically when President Ronald Reagan first suggested curtailing the accessibility and availability of educational programs to everyone, "We have tried to do too much, too quickly" (Mondale, 2004). His election in 1980 offered the perfect political opportunity for influential culturally

concerned neo-conservatives to resist the gains of the Civil Rights movement and for influential neo-liberals to use education reform as a smokescreen for their own responsibility in creating high national unemployment levels.

In 1983, a special commission appointed by President Reagan published its report titled *Our Nation at Risk* (United States National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Its effect was to establish in the public's mind the existence of an educational crisis similar to a military attack by a foreign invasion (fear of the Soviet Union likely was being evoked). Since that time, the corporate business values of "accountability" and "efficiency," and measurement techniques such as "performance standards" have been promoted by powerful economic and political interest groups as the educational solution to a trumped-up crisis.

Some three decades later, President Obama's competitive federal education funding program called "Race to the Top" signaled an almost complete transformation of public education from one with democratic purposes to one with corporate purposes. Public education morphed from a system that aimed to develop knowledge and values in order for citizens to enjoy productive and democratic living into a system whose practices restrict the development of critical knowledge, enhance the consumptive values of "corporate citizens," and control access to the riches of the global workforce. No longer under the influence of local community members nor of the educational specialists, educational reform in the United States has now become a major part of "big business" and "part of a wider crisis of politics, power and culture in society" (Giroux-Searls, 2004).

Local school boards continue to meet and make decisions, but more and more educational decisions have become pre-made because of State and Federal regulations ("mandates") based upon the dominant bi-partisan neo-lib/neo-con corporatist reform movement. Local boards and districts can reject these regulations but doing so could also mean their districts would receive reduced State or Federal financial support, or none at all.

Under closer scrutiny, U.S. public education in 1983 was neither failing nor in a state of crisis. Evidence abounds that public education was a "roaring success" (Lapham, 1987) in fulfilling the vocational, academic, and democratic goals desired by most of the citizens. Plus, enacted Civil Rights legislation had provided even greater educational opportunities for ethnic minorities, students with special needs, and women. We have learned from a closer analysis of international test score data, and from national and international economic indicators, that the purported failure of the educational system was a crisis created by influential neo-liberal business leaders and culturally neo-conservative foundations and individuals represented on President Reagan's Task Force in 1983, and almost every iteration of reform panels created at the State and national levels since then, to further a capitalist agenda.

A highly profitable educational testing industry has arisen to address a claimed need for greater student and teacher accountability, so what we have is a lot of statistical reliability but no demonstrated educative or social validity (Rav-

itch, 2013). Furthermore, the commodification of formal school knowledge for the purposes of testing and standards has solidified content borders into hardened boundaries, thereby reifying official knowledge for students, discouraging their creation of conceptual or material relationships through critical questioning, inquiry, problem-posing, and other similar activities. A rationality of deliberation has largely been replaced with one of calculation, favoring efficiency of decision-making, such as in cost-benefit studies, and test and score-driven instruction in education. In this ideology, the values, needs, and wishes of local communities are considered insignificant “externalities”. Since the mid-1980s, a combination of these dominating ideologies has reshaped the characteristics of education reforms in the U.S. and elsewhere, one of those being the ethical and political value on what it means to be a human being, on how humans should relate to each other, and how decisions affecting others (society) can and should be made together.

### The confluence of ideologies: “neo-liberal” meets “neo-conservative”

In a purely strict sense, there is little of substance that makes neoliberal and neoconservative ideologies compatible; the former promoting free-market values, the latter wishing to constrain the liberalness of cultural ones. On the other hand, there is nothing mutually exclusive either, so on particular policy issues at particular times, individuals and groups favoring one or the other ideology have coalesced. This describes both the genesis and trajectory of educational reforms since the 1980s, which have sometimes involved the efforts of factions such as the Business Roundtable and other neoliberal sponsors of the First, Second, and Third National Education Summits, and sometimes have been directed by neoconservative “think tanks” such as the Fordham Institute or Education Trust. Merely the tip of two non-contiguous icebergs, the philosophical underpinnings that inform a vast structure of loosely and not-so-loosely networked corporations, foundations, and private individuals are easily traceable to the free-market economic principles of Milton Friedman, or the restricted democratic political principles of his contemporary at the University of Chicago, Leo Strauss.

For the neoliberal business community, public education had educated too many citizens for the jobs that were available. The problem was not that workers were unprepared; rather, it was increasingly clear in the 1980s that workers were over-prepared for the positions available in industry and society in general. In addition, manufacturers were moving productive operations to countries such as Mexico, China and Southeast Asia to escape the responsibility of paying unionized workers (to them, an unfortunate byproduct of democracy. Lowering their production costs increased their profits, but rather than draw public notice of how their decisions to move were creating job scarcities, they found it more appealing to attack educators for not preparing sufficiently skilled workers (Berliner & Biddle, 1995).

Educational reforms in the U.S., as now in most industrialized countries, aim at creating a workforce for the new global corporate society. Unlike previous educational eras such as the Common School or the Progressive Education Movements, Capitalist interests today need workers with neither democratic values nor the ability for critical thinking. There is only the need to educate the population to a certain standard of competence in order to maintain the basic services and functions in society; there is no longer the need for workers with democratic values or the ability for critical thinking.

Today, similar neo-liberal and neo-conservative reforms are permeating higher education, once a bastion of and for democracy. Neo-conservative attacks on “liberal” professors have been particularly vitriolic, but at least these critiques are obvious and usually very loud. More dangerous is a creeping neo-liberal ideology and rationale that reduces the purposes of a Liberal Arts and Sciences education to one of preparing corporate workers. Long standing practices of colleges and universities such as faculty tenure, faculty control over curriculum and faculty workload are being re-negotiated in an aggressive way by college administrators, many of whom have pressure exerted on them by college trustees from the corporate business world.

It is not an easy time for anyone who understands that how we academics both organize education and deliver it to students shapes their image of the possibilities for themselves and others within a democracy. But we might find hope from another time. Walter Lippman, the nemesis of John Dewey’s pragmatic faith that the public could be educated for democracy, believed the masses could not be trusted to make informed decisions. Originally writing in *The New Republic* in a muck-racking, progressive tradition, his restrictive views of a theory of democracy and ability of the masses to make informed, useful decisions had dramatically changed by the time he authored *Public Opinion*. The further development of the logic of his argument three years later in *The Phantom Public* against the possibility of involving the masses in decision making was so dismal that even his mentors and supporters rejected his analysis. His logic was solid, but the vision too dim for contemplation even by neo-conservatives. One might find hope that in the struggle in beliefs and values over liberty and equality and a morally just society, even the staunches ideologues have limits when faced with the full implications of such an ideology. This might be enough to sustain the vision of educators working for a more critically minded society (Lippmann, 1927).

### Foundations for Hope: Construction, Critique and Contingency

Michael Ignatieff (2016) reminds us, “We are in a full gale of a conservative counterrevolution that could last for some time and reshape modernity in a very reactionary direction.” Many educators feel hopeless, but rather than despair, it is

“the contingency, the sheer avoidability of the current situation, that should rekindle faith that it can be changed in the future.” (p. 5) Ideas first laid out by John Dewey in *Democracy and Education* (1916) have been seminal in our own pursuit and development of a more philosophically vigorous contemporary constructivist theorizing whose philosophical anthropology embraces and engenders a more critical, creative, and emancipatory education. The constructivism we advocate emphasizes social consciousness and democratic citizenship in which teachers’ practices deconstruct and reconstruct students’ contingent categories that have been continually reified through their own educational biographies.

We pay particular attention to the educative and emancipatory competency emanating from Dewey’s emphasis on habit, contingency, community and communication, as exemplified in our descriptions of actual classroom practices in science and social studies. We argue that critical-constructivism should be a central theoretical referent particularly for science and social studies educators and for teacher educators in those fields. In preservice education, the nature of learning, teaching, academic content, and schooling as a sociopolitical process should be at the center of discourse. Without doing so, prospective teachers would rarely become perplexed by socio-epistemological considerations or are made aware of their political consequences.

We take a culturalist perspective of education and educational reform, that is, that while formal schooling in most societies has an intentional and a deliberative function, it is the influence of the sum total of culture—all institutions, all structures, habits and behaviors—that comprises the education of every individual. This cultural way of viewing education is consonant with the tradition of critical educational theory, drawing both directly and indirectly from many critical theorists such as Michael Apple, Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Joe Kincheloe, and Peter McClaren. We have pointed out how both the neoliberal and neoconservative premises that have reshaped politics and economics can lead to the reification of learning standards and the institutionalization of testing, two powerful bulwarks for maintaining and sustaining capital.

We are interested in education illuminating all aspects of the production, justification, and ownership of knowledge in society—scientific knowledge in particular because of its status in contemporary culture, and its rootedness and shared values with democracy. In opposing a scientism that accompanies the West’s legacy of cultural colonization, we promote a pedagogy that does not rank knowledges/forms of knowledge, but rather promotes a pluralistic epistemological democracy favoring the enrichment of possibilities for student learning. We agree with Ernst von Foerster, that the aim of education is the “multiplication of potentialities”—encouraging knowledge development which shows potential for spin-off, i.e. toward invention and research.

Decision-making removed from teachers and local schools, instruction scripted through the use of consumable programs, and learning and teaching evaluated

on the basis of competitive test scores, all manifest the pervasiveness of neoliberalism. Education in the United States has shifted from a public right to a private privilege with the Orwellian titled education policy of ‘No Child Left Behind’ of Presidents Clinton and Bush, and Obama’s competition-based Race to the Top education policies to President Trump’s most recent outright moves toward total privatization.

The cumulative effect of these reforms is that a tremendous amount of educational energy has been diverted from improving and enhancing genuine educational opportunities for achieving the traditional purposes of public education. Instead, great efforts have been misplaced on creating mechanisms of control over teaching and learning by using standardized testing and curriculum standards, subsequently promoting the competition of states against states, school districts against school districts, administrators against administrators, teachers against teachers and students against students. Powerful individuals and groups in both major political parties—factions of Democrats and Republicans—embrace the current educational reform ideology, despite the critique and resistance by many educators, students, and parents. And as more teachers are encouraged into early retirements, novice teachers are less able to provide genuinely thoughtful learning within these new parameters, even though they may be highly valued for being technologically savvy and accepting of reforms. In fact, despite the reformers’ rhetoric about “high quality teaching” being most valued, new and inexperienced teachers are precisely what the neoliberal reformers in politics and businesses want: those who are young, impressionable, grateful for work in tough economic times, and most of all, eager to please authority.

The constructivism we advocate becomes a powerful ethical project, placing its emphasis on the social consciousness and democratic citizenship students co-create as they experience communicative classroom acts. Such educative experiences don’t happen randomly, but through the teacher’s careful planning, the teacher who himself or herself understands and acts within a sociocultural perspective, co-creating with students’ habits of mind for constructing contingent categories/knowledges and re-constructing those that have been wrongly reified throughout their own educational biographies. The ultimate goal such a teacher always would have in sight would be a more conscious, just and democratically-permeated social and civil society capable of tackling the daunting environmental challenges of the climate crisis and Holocene extinction now facing our planet (United Nations, 2019).

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## Listening to Student Voice

Ineke Edes

### Abstract

Student voice is not just a privilege for students, but a must for proper and sustainable education, a form of learning that does not stop after the educational program has ended. Giving students voice creates a justice, fairness, from one human being to another, the teacher is equal to a student. He or she needs to accept and respect his or her students as equal, but also needs to acknowledge their differences. After ten years as a teacher at a University of Applied Sciences I write about my experiences of providing students with opportunities to make choices in what, when, and how to learn, and discuss how we deal with the felt insecurity, criticality and independency...and what it brings students and teachers. I can say no more teaching without giving students voice.

### Learning from personal experiences

Fifteen years old and very nervous I sat in the hallway of my high school waiting for my German teacher. He was late for my oral exams, I was worried that I made a mistake and came the wrong time or day. Twenty minutes late, he arrived as if I was too early and not that he was late. Without excuses he went in the classroom and told me he was ready in a minute and would call me, after another

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five minutes he invited me in. The first thing I asked was if I was mistaken about the time. He just said no. I felt annoyed and told him that I had been waiting and that I found it not appropriate for him not to apologize for his late arrival. I told him I was very nervous and his lateness got me even more nervous. Without responding to my remark, he started the exam by asking me in German about the books I had read. The exam went well and I immediately got my grade after the exam. But this teacher added something else in giving me my grade. He said that I was very lucky that he was kindhearted because it was not smart of me in advance of my exam, to tell him he had to apologize for his late coming...if he was not "so kind," he could have lowered my grade because I was not respectful to him. I should be delighted he was not a vengeful teacher. Biting my tongue, I left the classroom. What happened? Why was I not allowed to remind him of his lack of respect to me? His behavior made me nervous, and above all how could he say I am not being respectful to him? He was the late one, he did not apologize, and he was disrespectful. I was angry, upset and treated badly. At home my mother told me I should accept his behavior, after all he was the teacher, besides my grade was good, so not to hang on to it. Over thirty-five years later, I still believe I was in the right. His behavior made an impact on me and was never forgotten. Teachers should not use their position to undermine student's feelings and voices. My teacher should have apologized for being late and understood that I was nervous, and not being rude to him; but that he was rude to me. What if I had come over twenty minutes late? I don't think he would have let that go, possibly I would fail the exam or be prohibited to take it.

In my career as a teacher, I have seen this kind of behavior towards students much more than I wanted. Teachers who think they are always right, know it all, refuse to be the learner in situations with their students. Professional colleagues of mine use their position to belittle and suppress students, sometimes on purpose... most of the time not even realizing they do so. Once a student asked me if I had spilled my tea, would I ask him to clean it up? I immediately answered, no of course not, then he told me my colleague did exactly that other day. He was indignant about my colleague's behavior, I couldn't blame him. Traditional educational relationships are built upon the idea that the teacher is superior to the student, there is a hierarchal relationship, and the teacher is more experienced than the student in the topic being taught. This experience does not qualify the teacher to be free to bully the student. I never forget my feelings of unfairness regarding my primary school teacher making fun of a fellow student because he could not reproduce the three times tables. The boy was ten years old and hated school because he didn't fit the system, and most of all because his teacher did not take care of him. Teachers must guide and help their students within in a pedagogical relationship and never misuse their position. My primary school teacher should have understood that this boy had a hard time learning instead of making a fool out of him in front of the group.

I am guilty as well. In my first year as a teacher, I told two eleven years old girls to wash the lipstick off, while I was wearing lipstick myself. They com-

plained it was not fair but went to the bathroom because I demanded them to do so. I still remember probably because I felt regret quickly after the event. Why did I do that? Was it important for me as their substitute teacher? I felt a girl of eleven years old does not wear lipstick, but I was too harsh on them experimenting with make-up. It wasn't a big issue, but an example of a teacher misusing her authority and giving the student no voice.

I found a totally different kind of teaching while doing my Masters degree. Professors asked me about my own choices, they questioned those choices...my voice was always respected. I was allowed to make mistakes and when I asked, my teachers gave their point of view on the matter. It took me a while before I appreciated this way of teaching, I was always waiting for my professors to take action. They were my teachers: I believed they were in charge. Eventually, I learned to speak up for myself, they allowed me my own voice and choices. They encouraged me to ask critical questions about my thoughts and beliefs, I learned not to place another above me. I acknowledged our differences and accepted our equality. When I was treated as unequal, I attempted to discuss my emotions and ask questions about the accuracy of my perceptions. After a conversation with one of my students, I realized she was discouraged, in her opinion I expected too much from her. She was young and not experienced in directing her own life, I didn't know her story and needed to hear her voice to adapt my teaching to her needs and to connect with her again. It was important for me to listen to her and hear her struggles. What did she need from me in order to take self-responsibility and self-directing in her learning? Connection in a pedagogical relationship is essential to make a learning process possible.

If I am not able to dialogue about the subject I retreat. In one case I felt unheard by my professor and left a meeting. When the professor asked me on my way out if I found the meeting not interesting, I told him my feelings, and that it was necessary for him to realize he was not the only voice in the room. He asked me to stay, and promised to do better. In my opinion, he was so full of his own voice that he ignored all the other voices in the room. Ironically, at a conference for critical pedagogy, I realized that even critical pedagogues find hard to keep listening to others. Having a dialogue about equality is a beginning to acknowledge differences and acceptance the possibilities in an educational relationship. Teachers or professors may place themselves above students, but also students have a propensity to place their teachers on a pedestal.

For my German teacher it is too late, he would be retired or maybe not alive. The boy in my primary school class owns a garage now and probably hires someone to do his bookkeeping. When my daughter was about eleven, I let her experiment with lipstick and talked with her about age appropriateness, society, and suitable shades. The past cannot be changed, but we can try to inspire other teachers and pedagogues to treat others with respect. My professors heard my voice and taught me to listen to the voices of others.

### Learning from professional experiences

In my current work as a professor of a University of Applied Sciences, I try to listen to my students, but also to give them the opportunities to let their voices hear... to create an inclusive, creative learning society through a participatory democracy. I am lucky to work with colleagues who feel the same way, and allow students to direct their own learning, to be partners in learning. I ask my students questions, and in small groups we dialogue about their future profession. I attempt to encourage them to be critical pedagogues and ask questions about what, why and how they did, wanted, and how they dared that way of acting chosen in that particular situation.

After ten years, that kind of teaching is still not easy, especially when a student wants me to take control of his or her learning, it is easy to fall into old habits, behavior I was taught while learning to be a schoolteacher. Western tradition in teacher-directed learning assure that students' voices are not influencing their own education. It is a way of teaching in which students learn by doing the by the teacher- provided assignments. At some schools, students are not allowed to speak at all without permission and the teacher has control over the student (Black, 2012), deciding what, how, and when to learn. Often the class is situated in a lecture hall and interactive teaching is not possible. I cannot teach that way anymore. I want to accept differences in learning, give personalized guidance and provide learners with opportunities to learn from. In those opportunities, my students should be able to practice to listen, make decisions for themselves, and take a shared responsibility for learning. I want my students to participate, but even more, become partners in learning and teaching. To do so, I must stay critical in and of my teaching, listen to my students, and regularly evaluate the learning process with them. We are a learning community and together we provide person centered education for democratic fellowship in pedagogy (Fielding, 2011).

Students' voices are important in our educational program. We teach through the educational concept of *Real-life Learning* (Jansen, 2005) in which students' voices are asked for, and listened to. I have learned that their voices are valuable to their motivation for learning and also to me as their teacher. Our students are educated to learn self-directed in cooperation with other students. They have a weekly meeting as a learning team and they, amongst pedagogical topics, dialogue about their processes of learning. Their coach (we prefer coach instead of teacher or professor) joins the learning team meeting every fortnight. Each voice is heard in the learning team, students learn to listen to each other and ask critical questions. They do not just dialogue about their learning processes, but also practice to hear all voices in the context... and, if necessary, advocate the voice of the one who is not heard.

Professionals talk a lot about children but hardly talk with them. The voices of youth are not only not heard but also often ignored. We teach our pedagogues differently and want them to be aware of all voices and hear everyone's story. If we

want them to learn the importance of the appreciation of all voices we, as coaches (teachers), must set the example. We show them how to work with different kind of voices and as partners in learning.

As a coach, I must to listen to my students. How is their progress and sometimes even more important how is their wellbeing as a student? To adapt to students, I need to begin with hearing their voices, but just asking is not enough. As their teacher we need to provide students with opportunities to let them hear their own voices. Dialogue is the most used form in our educational program. And by dialogue, teachers and students are able to connect and learn from each other. We let our students make choices in a learning landscape, an open curriculum with possibilities to choose pedagogical themes from and survey them in one's own way and pace (Buitenhuis and Edes, 2014). Giving students voice and choice is just the first step in personalized learning (Bray & McClaskey, 2015). Because personalized learning can be seen as individualistic, with students as "customers," I would rather speak of person-centered education with a democratic approach, as in critical pedagogy. In this approach an individual is always part of a context. It is not all about you, but it is about you in a communal perspective. Co-directed learning is considered the highest form of learning in our educational program, students are part of a learning team and their choices and voices are always dialogued about. A person is embedded in relations and develops and behaves in the context. One needs the other to be yourself (Margulies, personal communication, October 12, 2011). Pedagogy as a relational science should be taught as an example and teachers; professors should walk their talk, we want more than just to give our students a voice in their own education. We want a collaboration with students in which we co-design educational situations and learn together. When our students are professional pedagogues, we want them to be the next generation to set an example for a sustainable and democratic society. Learning should not stop at graduation. Once we have learned to collaborate and experience the benefits of a democratic fellowship, we are hooked on and never want it to be different. That is what I have experienced myself, and that is also what I hear my students and graduates say.

Every year we evaluate all students and the coaches our educational program, Through dialogues about claims, concerns and issues we reflect on the learning landscape and if we find it necessary we make changes. Over the years we see some returning issues. Not just the coaches, but students too find it very hard to give voice and have choice. They love the idea of having voice, on one hand, but also believe it is easier to consume schooling on the other hand. They like to have control over their individual process but find it difficult to embrace the insecurities it brings them. They ask for more structure, lectures and tools to help learning . As a professor I grew in giving students voice and choice, however, taking the next step to co-design and learn together with my students is still tough. Not only because it is easy to design lessons on my own, but far more because I cannot ignore the voices of students

who want me to be in the lead. My students do not have my experience and are new in participating in their education by me allowing them making their individual choices. Is wanting them to collaborate with me a bridge too far?

Dialogues with students as equals enhance them with possibilities to speak freely about their personal (learning) problems and preferences in education and in our relationship. One of my students told me that I didn't realize what I am asking of my students. All the talking about self-directing and co-directing and wanting students to have voice and choice keeps them, according to that student, away from doing the real learning about becoming a pedagogue. In our program we rarely provide classes about pedagogical knowledge or training in pedagogical handling. We give our students a pedagogical theme and want them to survey a self-interest topic within the theme. Every theme has many possibilities to choose self-interests from. Students survey what they need to know and want to learn about that topic to handle situations around that topic in the pedagogical practice. Our students are motivated to want to learn and to own their learning. A particular student loves to talk about her education, but is now wondering if we have delayed her study. Would she have finished earlier if we had educated with a teacher-directed approach? Yes, she probably would have, but I believe she is a stronger and more independent pedagogue as she finishes our course. The professionals we educated are social entrepreneurs and prepared to deal with many types of pedagogical challenges. They are used to make choices regarding the voices of all involved and take the responsibility for their acting and sometimes solving felt problems within those challenging situations.

Not only students learn, conversations with my students make me learn as well. I learn about my students and what is going on in their pedagogical practice and their lives. Our dialogues keep me informed about what is going on in the work field and in society amongst young people. As a teacher we need to be informed about social and occurring pedagogical issues. My students taught me about Instagram, WhatsApp and Twitter. They are also my link to actual issues like sexting (texting sexual messages, pictures or movies by smartphone or computer), bullying by social media, and hypes that I only hear from in the news. They often know a lot more than me about current life, and see in their work the consequences of those issues for youth. In our learning community, we dialogue about these issues and our responsibilities as pedagogues. They tell me about issues in their practices and together we search for possibilities to handle those issues. Curiosity is namely the most important part that makes learning possible. If one wants to know how to act or how it works, the student will start to investigate and when you think you've "got it," you learn. We as coaches and fellow students are partners. Meeting the other voice, the unknown voice or the different voice challenges us to widen our perspective on ourselves and on the world. We can develop compassion and empathy and qualities that enhance the process of consciousness and the development of others. Democratic education provides the chances to meet other voices.

In 2015 a group of students of the University of Amsterdam occupied their governmental office. Those students felt the university was antiquated in its organization, too old fashioned, and that their demands for change were ignored. They wanted an equal say in running the university: a democratic chosen Board of Directors. The Mayor of Amsterdam and even the Minister of Education came to listen and speak to them. I was astonished. I discussed it with my students, they responded (in the way that I felt) that the Board of that university should come over and see our courses. This would never happen, maybe is impossible when you give your students voice and organize your university in a democratic way. The professor who taught me the importance of self- and co-directed learning, is involved with those students of the University of Amsterdam. When the Board of Directors is open for his advise, I am sure the organization of that university will become more democratic. But when they are stubborn and keep their ancient view of how a university should be led, nothing will change.

Another movement in this university, less political is a group of students and professors, who started their own educational program. I talked to one of the founders and he told me the idea was: if you do not teach us the way we want, we will teach ourselves. Students teach each other, to be aware, and to be a world citizen. According to him that is originally the purpose of education (Wessels, 2017). I agree. A university can be democratic as long as student's voices and/ or teacher's voices are not ignored. We need to get rid of the traditional unequally-organized and financially controlled universities and schools. Opening up for all participating voices in a democratic university is the first step to change the traditional system.

### Learn with and from others

Hans Jansen (2005) was the main founder of *Real-life Learning* and *Ecological Pedagogy*, where students are taught to be self-responsible and self-knowing individuals. In order to provide our students an educational program, in which they are not to be schooled in performing tricks or reproducing stories, we inspire students to learn and to develop professional qualities in what Real-life Learning calls a continuing learning adventure. We, as teachers, as well as our students need to be prepared to change the traditional roles and the student-teacher relationships. We need to think, but also act out of the box in an educational system where teachers traditionally supposed to be in charge. That change of the educational relationship asks courage and a constant taking of responsibility for one's actions. We listen to the needs, experiences, feelings and emotions of students and teachers. In order to adept on the world and culture of others we need to dialogue and empathy their needs, experiences and felt emotions. We need to hear all voices and be able to dialogue and question our thoughts, beliefs and do what we believe is good. In our learning teams together we ponder about voices, choices, challenges, boundaries, possibilities and our significance as professionals.

Our way of teaching evolved out of Real-life Learning, and always seem to be under pressure by the hierarchy of authorities. Learning is institutionalized in schools and theoretically justified by the superior ‘expertise’ of those on the top (Black, 2012). As teachers we want to give our students voice but do we have voice ourselves? Are we not controlled by national standards and dependent of funding by the government (Jansen, 2009)? Politics, finances, cynicism and the fear of not being in control threaten our educational system. Is the fear legitimate of getting discharged when you disagree with the system, and your voice too threatening for the people at the top? Sadly, enough this recently was reality for one of my colleagues. Joe Kincheloe (personal communication, 2006) taught me that you have to know the system and its boundaries to play with the system and find the possibilities. I will never forget the story of his experience with an educational inspector in his school district. In his seventh-grade social studies class he taught his students exactly how to work by the book, but the minute they knew what they “had to know,” they began learning the way they needed to learn. They chose their own topics and learned through personalized experience. If the inspector came to the school, a colleague of Joe’s sent a pair of red scissors as a signal to Joe’s class. Within seconds the students got their books out and they pretended to be immersed with the prepared lesson.

My experience teaching through Real-life Learning and Ecological Pedagogy has taught me that is not easy to conform with boundaries and to have a constant awareness and criticality of what I am doing, and how to fit the system of my university. According to Giroux (2017) we have to struggle for justice together in order to make history instead of being swept away. Giving voice to students in education is more recognized as important in learning and development, but the possibilities to do so are still limited. Our education is not yet organized in a totally democratic way. Student councils, student ambassadors, and evaluation panels are installed. But these panels only have an authority to give their voice afterwards, they are not part of developing the educational program, only allowed to give an opinion and the possibility to agree or disagree after the educational design/decision is made. They can give feedback but are hardly ever involved in designing a curriculum. That is still a top-down privilege to a small group of teachers or administrators. In our learning landscape that is not different.

Along with critical pedagogues like Hans Jansen, Joe Kincheloe, and Henry Giroux, our educational program is inspired by John Dewey (participation and democracy in education); Maria Montessori (trust the power of students); Janusz Korczak (equality for and acceptance of everyone); Lev Vygotsky (the important role for processes of communication in education); Celestin Freinet (education is part of life); and Paulo Freire (awareness, freedom and hope).

Dewey (1938, 1999) claims development exists by a constant reconstruction of experiences, a reflexive and everlasting process. Education should create situations that challenge students to investigate those contexts and develop a work-

ing balance between abstract and concrete, between an open mind and reliance on theories. According to Dewey, active and participative learning is crucial for learning. In our educational program we have learning teams as the center of interaction and communication within our learning landscape. Students are not tested on the content of theories but are asked for a critical review and dialogue about those theories. In literature you find formal knowledge constructed by an author. The voice of the writer needs to be treated as a learning experience and, as well as the other experiences need, to be explored, to be analyzed and interpreted.

The development of the learning landscape for Montessori teachers was the first elaborated draft of the model Jansen designed. Like the children at a Montessori school the student-teachers learn to teach, the developers of the learning landscape found students-teachers as well needed to learn to make their own choices in what and when to learn (Jansen, 2005b). Like the beliefs of Maria Montessori, in the learning landscape students learn self-directed and in heterogenic (students from different phases of the program together) groups. The voice of every student is taken into account and not less than the voice of a professor or practitioner. We ask our students to collect multiple voices and ponder and dialogue about all perspectives and all that is said.

The pedagogy of Korczak is only known since the 1980s, even though he was deported and killed in 1942 (Kroon & Levering, 2016). Korczak gave the children in his orphanage voice. He respected and valued the children the same as he did adults and learned from them by truly listening to them. His beliefs were an inspiration and guide for the Convention on the Rights of the Child of the United Nations. We respect our students' voices and treat them as learning-partners and co-researchers.

As the theories of Korczak in Polish were translated in the eighties, also the theory of the Russian Vygotsky was only translated in the 1970s. Lev Vygotsky researched the relationship between individual and culture and the role of communication in education (Kroon & Levering, 2016). Each individual learns by his or her own context and the used interaction within that context provides a significant addition to development. In our program we are dialogue-centered. Dialogue with learning-partners, professors, youth, practitioners, experts, and experienced people, is recommended. We learn with others and by others.

Célestin Freinet was from France. He is less famous than the reform pedagogues like Montessori and Dewey, but his theory is no less inspirational. Typically, Freinet is thought of through free writing and the printing press, but in our program we use his ideas about workshops. In a workshop according to Freinet students have open space in which to explore a topic. Our Open Space workshops are also digital and named Our Space. Students are not used to open space, and in the beginning, they often find it very hard to take chances.

The last inspirational pedagogue for Ecological Pedagogy and Real-life Learning is Paulo Freire and his commitment to a human-dignified pedagogy. His

legacy has a great influence on critical pedagogy. Freire accentuated the need of love and hope for education in order to create empowerment and transformation. Our learning teams are based upon Freire's theory of praxis and dialogue. Our students come together in a small group to dialogue and critically reflect upon their reality and reform it through action. Students learn to speak for themselves and develop critical awareness.

Most thinkers and developed theories spoken above are from the first half of the 20th century. We are decades further, but those theories are still relevant. Were those voices back then irrelevant or not heard? Will we ever learn? Or perhaps pedagogical discussions are of all times? Philosophers writing about education goes back to Socrates in the 4th Century BC. When we read some of their quotes you realize learning and pedagogy indeed are part of life. Some kind of education will always be part of life as well.

### Implications for voice in the context of critical pedagogy

Our concept of learning gives hope for an educational future in which students are happy with their education. Professors who believe education is part of life, are able to connect, to dialogue, and be an example to others. We need to keep on discussing the progressive and not to be forgotten work of people like Joe Kincheloe and Jesús "Pato" Gómez. And give critical pedagogues who argue traditional educational structures like Shirley Steinberg and Henry Giroux stage. We should embrace and share good practices of the importance of giving students voice. Social media and the Internet give us the opportunities to global sharing. Most of all, let us keep in touch with people in front of us: our students, colleagues and other professionals.

We cannot foresee the future of our lives and also of education. Learning from our educational experiences in the past and reflecting on the present can give us guidance in acting in the future. The most important part is to keep in touch with each other, keeping away from hierarchal structures, listening to pedagogical voices instead of financial voices. Let us create democratic ways of learning and of organizing education. By designing our education in dialogue with its users we can provide education that lasts.

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## Science and Scientific Discoveries Through the Lens of Critical Pedagogies

*Aristotelis Gkiolmas & Anthimos Chalkidis*

### Abstract

In this article, a thorough presentation is attempted on how Critical Pedagogies could be used as a basic instruction tool to teach the history of science and the “evolution” of science to students of all levels. Science is usually taught as a series of inventions, or as one scientist builds over the works of the previous ones. Seldom do educators refer to the central aspects of scientific evolutions such as: the existence of relations of power within them, the use of science to facilitate war or domination, the social necessities that order the scientific discoveries in many cases, the role of women in science, etc. Little importance is given to the evolution of non-Western, non-White science (Chinese science, Arabic science, etc.) as equivalent and equally important forms of scientific expression. Critical Pedagogies can provide answers to these thoughts and are discussed in this article. Traditional wisdom (as is *eco-wisdom*) is also compared to science in a balanced discussion through critical pedagogical arguments and the fight of both pseudo-science and the refutation of science (e.g., the avoidance of vaccination) against rational science, are discussed here, always in educational settings.

In the final part of the article, there are suggestions on how teaching history of science and scientific evolution could be applied within the classroom by means of Critical Pedagogies, thus teaching praxis could also be affected by the views suggested here.

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## Introduction

It is common practice in education worldwide, to teach Science and the Evolution of Science under the perspective of a series of discoveries, one superposing the other, or under contemporary views, as is the School of Edinburgh or the Latourian views of competition among scientists (Barnes, Bloor, & Henry, 1996; Latour & Woolgar, 1986). All these methods of instruction, as well as the very well scrutinized view of Tomas Kuhn (2012), referring to the so-called Kuhnian “paradigm,” have, with no doubt, certain grains of truth within them, but what is suggested in the current work is that forms of Critical Pedagogy could provide a more solid and generalized framework in order to teach such a field, like evolution of science.

When teaching Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geography and Geology in contemporary classrooms (both Primary and Secondary or even university—Tertiary—classrooms) the teacher usually presents scientific discoveries and/or the elucidation of certain phenomena, as something that actually *just happened*, because the specific scientist was gifted or because a large amount of knowledge was accumulated, leading naturally to a new discovery. One realizes that this accumulation of knowledge (the “banking” approach) is already contrary to the ideas of Paulo Freire (1990).

It is clear, however, that science does not work nor evolve in this way. Science has been produced—in many cases—in order to strengthen the exploitation of people by groups of specific interests, or for advancing warfare. The advance of Computer Science, for example, has been strongly related to area bombing in World War II (Williams, 1999; McCartney, 1999). We believe it would be good practice—to state to students, the reasons behind any advancement of science, which is very closely related to specific human interests, having, in many cases, very little to do with the common good.

Another strong point that would be beneficial for teaching, would be that all the forms of production of science are considered as equivalent: Science is equally well-produced by women, non-White people, First Nations or Native Americans, Chinese, Arabic peoples and other. This point is definitely missing from contemporary instruction practices.

Also, of major importance, is to ask *what kind? and what aspect?* of science is of importance and relative to the context for the audience. As educators, our ways of teaching science—(teach scientific discoveries and scientific evolution) are totally irrelevant to the lives of people—the students—hearing them. Once more, it is argued here, that Critical Pedagogies have suggestions to make, in order to change these issues.

A final point, is that it would be a mistake to consider all the aforementioned characteristics of science, as taught today as reasons to avoid science and, consequently, turn to pseudo-science or the negation of science itself. Arguments such as the Greenhouse effect *does not exist*, that we should avoid vaccination or that the Earth is flat, would be totally wrong to prevail over the rational, human-made

science. Those who provoke such arguments, have usually other ideas and interests behind them—knowing it or ignoring it—who deliberately want to keep the population in a state of fear and to a refusal to change. Critical Pedagogy certainly never refuses the concept of science as a human concept and enterprise that—when in proper use—changes our lives for the better.

### Science produced in Conditions of Rivalry

It is a usual characteristic in the production of scientific knowledge, that discovery is produced many times, in conditions of rivalry. For example, the rivalry of Louis Pasteur and Robert Koch over anthrax led to significant discoveries in microbiology and the causes of diseases, but has always been the center of many scientific debates (Ullmann, 2007), the debate of the first to discover/understand the theory of evolution in biology, Alfred Russell Wallace or Charles Darwin (Costa, 2014) is also well known, with Darwin gaining the recognition in the future. The history of science is full of such cases, but usually are not revealed nor discussed in class, the scientist that prevails is the one the teacher teaches to the students. In shaping the image of the scientist for the contemporary audiences, it would be important to focus on human aspects of those who shaped the history of science and their tremendous drive and desire to make a difference through science.

It is a central characteristic of the evolution of science that—apart from the role of social surroundings in it (Shapin, 1982)—a very strong or even unscrupulous personality prevails and gains all the recognition for the discovery over the other(s). A typical case, though a genius, was Sir Isaac Newton. One should not forget to wonder that Galileo Galilei may have been restricted to his home for the rest of his life, *what would his fate have been?*, if he had not had strong relations with the Pope and the Catholic Church?

### Science as a tool for war and for restoring relations of Power

Another major aspect in the production of scientific knowledge throughout history is the knowledge that science was employed as a means to facilitate winning wars. The discovery of the atomic bomb—a weapon of mass killing and destruction—pushed forward atomic physics (Rhodes, 2012); many inventions involving computers were associated with bombing and other activities in World War II (Rees, 1980). Also, science has been used as a means to impose power and exploitation between nations or races, even between different groups of people (Aronowitz, 1988). The famous *Manifesto of the Ninety-three* signed by prominent German scientists in order to justify what Germany did in World War I is a basic example (Norton, 2008). Another famous instance was Trofim Lysenko, the Soviet biologist and how Stalin used his ideas to impose his views (Stanchevici, 2012). The validity tools that science and scientific communities possess by definition, have been used for political reasons or reasons of exploitation, this

certainly gives us a different/new perspective of and a characteristic that it is a human creation, devised through channels that must be examined regarding their intentions. As Pierre Bourdieu noted, science is produced in the context of society and the groups that handle society's behavior are also striving to manipulate science (Swartz, 2012; Bourdieu, 1990).

### Science as a multicultural enterprise with no barriers

The contribution of various civilizations to the evolution of science is little—even discussed in everyday classroom discourse. Focus is always given to the contribution of the West and of White men to the scientific evolution. However, the Chinese, for instance, have made great discoveries, the compass as an example, many discoveries before the West; Arabic peoples discovered the system of arithmetical digits used worldwide today. Insisting on science as always a product of Western civilization product, omitting its Eastern and African origins, makes it more difficult in classrooms of today to accept and appreciate global science discoveries. Science and its importance is often hidden to the notion of civilization *as a whole*. Possibly the most dangerous ramification reveals colonial and imperialistic views on the explanation of scientific evolution and discoveries.

Another major aspect of science is its trans-class production. Many of the scientists that made major discoveries belonged to poor or lower classes, like Michael Faraday, and even though science needed in many instances, the aid of rich patrons in order to flourish, those who produced it were often very poor. We must reflect with our students that class should, in no way, be considered an obstacle in producing science.

The notion of science and feminism in the treatment of history of Science, is also essential. Many women contributed to science, and—in several cases—their contribution is neglected. We have the example of Rosalind Franklin in DNA-strand elaboration (she was forgotten in the Nobel Prizes), Lise Meitner in Atomic Theory, and Jocelyn Bell Burnell in the discovery of pulsars, the latter losing her initial recognition, due to her supervisor. The role of women in the advancement of science is a major issue to be discussed in school and university classrooms, it is of the utmost importance to reveal science's multi-dimensionality and the absence of any kinds of barriers in it. Science also must accept those who were traditionally marginalized in their era, with Alan Turing, whose non-accepted homosexuality led him to commit suicide, being one of the most prominent examples.

### The fight between Science and pseudo-Science and/or negation of Science

Another important debate that needs to be treated in educational settings, is the fight between science and pseudo-science. Often guided by ultra-conservative and religious circles, pseudo-science, as well as the refutation of science and its

rationale, seem to be gaining a lot of ground among students, teachers, the media, and the general public. For example, the old debate about the Theory of Evolution vs. the Theory of the Firstborn (Adam and Eve) has revived. A movement has been growing, reviving centuries-old theory that the Earth is flat, absurdities that fly in the face of history, science, and rationality. At the same time, masses of people believe in the “evil eye,” believing that the Earth’s population is “sprayed” by beings in the air and that vaccination does nothing but harm.

Science suffers in itself by arguments that severely threaten our planet and our existence, such as the vastly supported idea that the Global Warming is nothing more than an exaggeration, and that gases would heat up, in any case, that we cannot change these occurrences. Similarly, segregationist theories prevail in certain areas, academic and school environments, which maintain that people of certain races are inferior through DNA and they should not hold academic or political positions.

It is clear that the production of science in itself has not always been *moral* and *just* or inclusive. On the other hand, science is the basic platform we have to interpret phenomena and one of our basic tools in resolving the problems of our daily lives. It would be dangerous, obscurant, and serve inappropriate interests to replace scientific acts, discoveries and argumentation, by pseudo-science and the refutation of science.

Equivalent forms of wisdom, such as eco-wisdom or traditional cultural heritage products, must not be ignored, however. Many would not turn easily to a Shaman to cure a disease; most often an afflicted person would turn to a traditional medical professional. Yet, these forms of wisdom can readily contribute to the evolution of science, and give peace to the patient and the self-guidance, sometimes psychologically necessary, in order to treat a situation. Most important is that, given as granted that the majority among these civilizations (the Native Americans, First Nations, Southern Americans, Aboriginal Australian, Asian and African indigenous tribes etc.) are engaged in severe daily battles to preserve their lands, their water supplies, their natural resources, one thing should be stressed: *we should NOT use their—supposed—scientific inferiority, as a main argument in order to deprive them by all their basic goods and needs.*

Pseudo-science is one position, and traditional cultural and ecological wisdom is another, and a clear distinction between the two must be discussed and taught in our science classes.

### Some suggestions through different Critical Pedagogies for the classroom praxis

Critical Pedagogy, or Critical *Pedagogies*, since there are many branches and currents, is, by no means a fixed doctrine. It does not consist of a set of recipes on *how* to teach something and what results the educator should have. The understanding of critical pedagogy can give suggestions, through the lens of the world-

view of emancipatory and enlightened educational orientations, as hopefully, this is the point in the case of this article. Our intent is to merely discuss how different critical pedagogies would suggest alternatives for a teacher or an educational system that would wish to teach History of Science and scientific discoveries under a contemporary perspective. Of course, our general suggestions—obviously susceptible to alterations depend on the context within specific educational settings. It is good to teach science as a product of people with their own faults, passions, their drawbacks and dislikes. Teachers would be good to encourage students to search for the situations referring to specific scientists that led to the great discoveries or to the *giant* spiritual leaps in science.

It would be appropriate in the context of critical pedagogies to engage students to the anti-FIDUROD features of Science (Kincheloe, 2008) [F=Formal, I=Intractable, D=De-contextualized, U=Universalistic, R=Reductionistic, OD=One-Dimensional]. Working with students to identify these issues within scientific problems or histories extends the students' ability to examine alternative ways of knowing.

Additionally, the audience *does play a key-role*. When teaching science and its history, the specificities we give the students, we address to are very significant. Bricolage and ethnographic techniques (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011) are central and important to realize who the audience is we are teaching History of Science to. We ask what is *meaningful scientific knowledge* for them? and what the context of our teaching could be.

As a further step, different critical pedagogies would certainly suggest teaching *inclusive* science, a science that embodies the efforts of women in its progress, the contributions of civilizations other than the Western European and North American; the ecological wisdom, the cultural traditions, indigenous ways of knowing. For example the students could be prompted to find what role black people played in NASA discoveries or to what extent women were hidden from the lights when new scientific findings earned prizes.

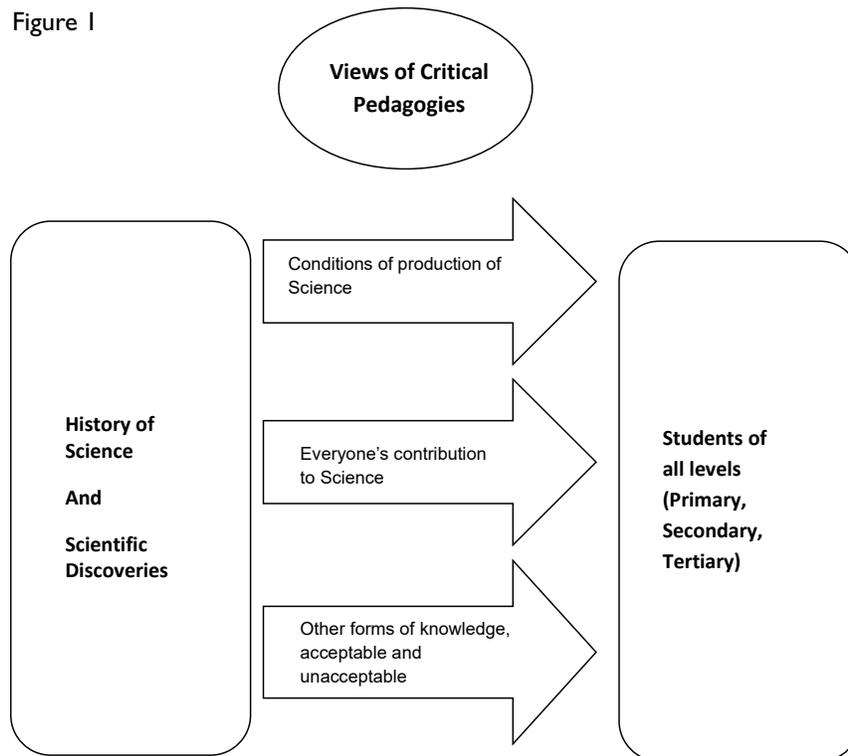
Different critical pedagogies could suggest that the teacher assign student projects or tasks that would help the latter reveal the conditions of production of new things in science, especially those related to war, conflict, or imposing relations of power. How many discoveries (e.g., Archimedes' discoveries on buoyancy) were orders given by tyrants? or to what extent did da Vinci help nobles of his era win wars, kill or imprison people with his inventions?

Another idea would be to relate the instruction of science with different types of justice (social justice, environmental justice etc). A question for investigation which could be of major interest for students in many areas in the world would be: *The government wishes to implant a nuclear waste landfill in your village/city. Among other things, they say that this will create many new job positions in this area, which is severely hit by unemployment. Create and present your thoughts about this issue.*

The fight and the disagreements between science and pseudo-science could be elucidated by the students themselves. The teacher could assign students to organize dialogues in front of the rest of the classroom, where the “*scientist*” and the “*pseudo-scientist*” have a debate over one issue, and the classroom participates arguing, discussing and analyzing the presentations of both sides.

In Figure 1, find possibilities of critical pedagogies suggested for teaching the history of science and scientific evolution:

Figure 1



### Conclusion

The history of science and scientific discoveries could be taught under new perspectives, using critical pedagogical suggestions and different ways of viewing the world. This would give students the ability to see science in its proper perspectives and contexts, and to realize the contribution of all peoples in science. Working to create arguments and different scenarios in science, and ways to deconstruct pseudo-science and its refutation of science is important. As is the recognition of diverse (sometimes) equivalent forms of scientific expression like eco-wisdom,

Indigenous knowledges, and/or cultural traditions within science. All aspects stressed by many critical pedagogies, could lead to a critically-thinking citizenry, creating empowered and informed students, those we so need in today's world.

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## Reading, Singing, and Viewing Rape

### Uncovering Hidden Messages of Manhood and Womanhood in Popular Culture

Tammie Jenkins

#### Introduction

The history of rape is traceable to the early days of humankind. Perpetrators inflicted acts of sexual violence against women, girls, and in some cases other males in an effort to assert their dominance over a particular group. Once considered part of the spoils of war, sexual assaults served to punish and control such groups and rationales created to defend these actions. These narratives are entrenched in religious texts, classical antiquity (Greek and Roman mythology), as well as popular culture. For instance, the *Bible* describes the rape of Tamar by her half-brother, Amnon. After the assault, he became incensed and forcefully threw her out of his bedroom. She found refuge in the home of her brother, Absalom, where she lived the remainder of her days as a fallen woman. Stories like Tamar's appear in mythological narratives from ancient Greece and Rome. One narrative featured in both renderings is that of Philomela, a beautiful, young princess sexually assaulted by her brother-in-law, Tereus, King of Thrace. He then orders her to keep the rape a secret, but she refused to comply. For her insolence, Tereus, cut out her tongue and left her in the woods to die. Philomela survived her injury and

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sends her husband a tapestry depicting her sexual assault; hence, infuriating Tereus. To escape his wrath, the gods transform her into a nightingale, which placed her beyond his reach. Such stories were orally transmitted from one generation to the next as each endeavored to define or justify the use of violent sexual intercourse to subjugate individuals, specifically women and girls.

Subsequently, a dismissive culture developed that created conditions under which certain types of sexual assaults were justified or punishable by incarceration, death, or inheritance. In Roman law rape was not a criminal act, but an assault involving a kidnapped or one that left home without her father's approval. This offense did not bare the sexualized connotation present in today's discourses; instead, it was a type of offense in which perpetrators and victims received punishment if found guilty. The term rape received its current sexualized component years later and that definition remained the standard until 1927. For that reason, I use the phrase sexual assault and the word rape interchangeably in this essay to describe a sexual act a perpetrator penetrates a non-consenting victim for sexual gratification or as a form of control.

The mid-to-late twentieth century witnessed modifications in the meaning of rape that has been expanded to include incestuous, spousal, acquaintance, and statutory to list but a few. The extended delineation of rape became inclusive of females as perpetrators and males as victims. High profile cases such as Mike Tyson and Desiree Washington, Tupac Shakur and Ayanna Jackson, as well as Mystikal, who was indicted on charges of kidnapping and sexual assault in Shreveport, Louisiana. He previously served six years in prison for the sexual assault of a former hairdresser and theft. Cases like these have prompted the creation of new laws or contemporary interpretations of existing statutes to address such criminal activity as the larger society endeavored to understand the ramifications of antiquated understandings of sexual assault. With these changes in the law and the social climate of the larger society, the culture that had once supported sexual assault was changing to align with the times. The concept of rape culture, like sexual assault, is traceable to the beginning of humankind. The phrase first used by second wave feminists to bring attention to the prevalence of sexual assaults in the United States. Works such as Noreen Connel's and Cassandra Wilson's *Rape: The First Sourcebook for Women*, and Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* endeavored to raise the consciousness level of the larger society. Each text attempted to show that rape still occurs and affect females in the United States, across intersections of race, geography, and class in hopes of ending this type of criminal activity. Connell and Wilson used their texts to provide female readers with the psychological and legal protocols for after an attack as well as tips for protecting themselves against potential attackers.

Unlike Connell and Wilson, Brownmiller used first-person narratives to explore the ways that sexual assaults not only affect the victim, but also the perpetrator as well as the larger society. These texts were followed by Margaret Lazarus's

and Renner Wunderlich's groundbreaking documentary film *Rape Culture* in which men and women describe their sexual assault, in the context of victim and perpetrator, as a cultural and social issue. Through interviews with victims and perpetrators, Lazarus and Wunderlich demonstrated how these dynamics create narratives that normalize sexual assaults in larger societal conversations of gender and sexuality. This ethnographic documentary provided audiences with a voyeuristic understanding of the unwritten rules that contribute to rape culture and predatory behavior from the perspective of victims and perpetrators. These filmmakers' work was considered controversial at a time when the subject of sexual assault was still taboo. Connell and Wilson, Brownmiller, as well as Lazarus and Wunderlich texts examined the notion of rape culture as a social issue that enabled them to open a dialogue about sexual assault and its impact on victims, perpetrators, and society in ways that breathed new life into many of these take for granted assumptions such as laws had abolished the practice.

This article explores rape culture in literature, music, and film as three distinct case studies. For the purposes of this essay, rape culture is defined as an attitude of indifference that allow individuals or groups to accept sexual assaults (e.g., virtual, physical, mental, emotional, or social) or other carnal acts (e.g., consensual, non-consensual) as normal social behaviors. Employing Robert Stake's description of case study as "the study of a particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. xi), I utilize *The Bluest Eye*, *Blurred Lines*, and *Fifty Shades of Grey* to examine the ways that males are masculinized and female are objectified. To excavate and explain perceptions of sexual assaults in popular culture, I use critical pedagogy to conceptualize these discourses. Critical pedagogy is an educational approach used to deconstruct and explain social narratives (Aliakbari & Faraji, p. 77). This perspective enables individuals to use historical specificity and situated knowledge to reflect on the past in order to understand the present (Gruenewald, p. 4; Tirrell, p. 117). The current exploration uses critical pedagogy to discuss portrayals of sexual assault in popular culture and mass media culture. Additionally, I utilize narrative inquiry and narrative analysis to examine the ways that larger societal conversations of masculinity and femininity contextualize rape across intersections of race, gender, and class. In this essay, I use the following guiding questions: What are the hidden messages regarding rape embedded in *The Bluest Eye*, *Blurred Lines*, and *Fifty Shades of Grey*? How do these texts define manhood and womanhood in popular culture? In what ways does language and meaning construct or deconstruct narratives of rape in these texts? What is the role of critical pedagogy in these discourses? First, I present the narratives of rape in *The Bluest Eye*, *Blurred Lines*, and *Fifty Shades of Grey*. Next, I explain definition of manhood and womanhood in popular culture. Then, I analyze and interpret the words and their attached meanings. Finally, I describe how critical pedagogy address these discourses.

### Blue is Poor, Black, and Rural

Literary depictions of sexual assaults have been in existence for decades. The desire to raise the consciousness level of the larger society has drawn authors to use their texts to bring attention to social issues from equality to race relations to sexual orientation. James C. Scott in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* describes the notion of hidden transcripts as messages in which those in power use social positioning to marginalize subordinate groups (e.g., women, people of color, LGBTQ). Once these unwritten expectations are publicly, articulated oppressed populations are able to enter these conversations by introducing their narratives of lived experiences in ways that provide them with voice and agency. Such works have rarely shied away from explosive commentaries on the subject of sexual assault, domestic violence, or other problematic topics. Contemporary authors have begun using composite characters to retell real-world stories as fictionalize accounts encompassing the lived experiences or social realities of a particular group. Fictionalized stories like these permeate literary works as each author endeavor to revisit subject matters that was previously taboo.

In the contexts of *The Bluest Eye*, narratives of rage, lust, and control underpin the sexual assaults that occur in the lives of Cholly and Pecola Breedlove (Andrews, p. 141; Tirrell, p. 122). Set in rural Ohio circa 1940s, *The Bluest Eye* chronicles the life of Pecola and her immediate family. She is the novel's eleven-year-old protagonist and is the most victimized character in the story. Pecola experiences abuse in all facets of her life both at home and in the local community (Putnam, p. 36). Her father sexually assaults her, her mother physically abuses her, and her community abandons her. Each person charged with caring for Pecola has either violated her or ignored her and her experiences. Instead, she is isolated (physically, mentally, and socially) in the novel, her voice is absent from her narrative as a result the reader must rely on the retellings provided by the narrator. Silenced and marginalized, Pecola goes insane where she remains for the remainder of the novel. Pecola is the biological daughter of Cholly and Pauline Breedlove; yet, she refers to her mother as Mrs. Breedlove and her father as Cholly. This shows Pecola's disconnect from her family beyond bloodlines. She is an outsider who is othered in her home and like the rest of her family is isolated in their community, due to their low socio-economic status, prominent African facial features, and dark melanin skin tones.

Morrison integrates discourses of rape culture through the actions and dialogues of her characters. She uses Pecola, Cholly, Claudia McTeer, and their community to express larger social views surrounding sexual assault and its effects on the victims. Claudia is the narrator who provides Pecola with a voice through the retelling of her lived experiences from age ten to approximately twelve. Jennifer Gillan analyzes *The Bluest Eye* as a transgenerational narrative that disrupts hierarchal boundaries. She found that the characters lived experiences played a role in the interactions with other characters in the novel. Gillan concluded that

such discourses determined the power dynamics of such characters as evidenced by the relationship between the Cholly and Pecola. He did not have a traditional upbringing and did not receive the type of natural affection a child receives from his or her parents. He did have a maternal figure in Aunt Jimmy, but her love for him was marred in pity and obligation.

Whereas Darlene initiation of sex with him further his confusion and left him to determine the most appropriate way to show his positive emotion to another person, especially to his daughter. Unsure of how to express his parental love for Pecola, Cholly's twisted attempt at affection results in her sexual assault. He felt her natural affection towards him, but struggled with how to reciprocate the emotion as a result he sexually assaults her. In a moment of clarity,

Following the disintegration—the falling away—of sexual desire, he was conscious of her wet, soapy hands on his wrists, the fingers clenching, but whether the grip was from a hopeless but stubborn struggle to be free, or from some other emotion, he could not tell. (Morrison, p. 163)

In that moment as he experiences “the falling away of sexual desire” (Morrison, p. 163), Cholly's manhood is signified by his ability to dominant someone weaker than himself—Pecola. He realizes the presence of his daughter after coitus when he feels her “wet, soapy hands on his wrists, the fingers clenching,” his arms, but he is oblivious as to her rationale for such defensive tactics. As he stands and looks down at his daughter, he becomes conflicted by feelings of anger and affection. Confused, Cholly wants to comfort his daughter; however, he also wants to punish her for their encounter. Instead, he covers her body with a quilt, but leaves her unconscious lying where he violated her, and walks away. Pecola's womanhood emerges when she is over come with the pain of penetration and loses consciousness. She struggles to defend herself and to protect her virtue by struggling “to be free” (Morrison, p. 163); however, Cholly's indifference to her pain and presence subjugates Pecola. She slowly regains consciousness, traumatized by her recent sexual experience as she endeavors “to connect the pain between her legs with the face of her mother looming over her” (Morrison, p. 163). Her mother, Pauline, silently watches as her daughter slowly rises from the floor, but she does not question Pecola or Cholly.

Meanwhile, Cholly's mind travels to his youth as he relives his horrifying sexual encounter with Darlene, which releases feelings of animosity as he endeavors to understand the emotions (compassion versus hatred) he has for Pecola. He possesses an inability to love others that stems from his own arrested sexual development. One night,

When he was still very young, Cholly had been surprised in some bushes by two white men while he was newly but earnestly engaged in eliciting sexual pleasure from a little country girl. The men shone a flashlight right on his behind. He stopped, terrified. They chuckled. The beam of the flashlight did not move. (Morrison, p. 42)

The two men metaphorically rape Cholly during his liaison with a young woman. They sodomize Cholly with a flashlight which they aimed “on his behind” (Morrison, p. 42) and the guns in their hands while emasculating him with their laughter. Cholly is left humiliated and frozen in that moment. Filled with embarrassment and anger, he suppresses these emotions, which he mentally projects towards a young woman named Darlene and later, violently impels onto Pecola defenseless body. Tainted by an unfulfilled sexual release and internalized feelings of his own victimization, Cholly connects feelings love to intercourse, anger, and shame (Andrews, p. 141). These factors contribute to his inability to love his daughter parentally and to respond appropriately to her before and after the sexual assault. His feelings are further complicated as the towns’ people learn of Pecola’s pregnancy and the sexual assault. The truth emerges in the final pages of the novel as the narrator attempts to uncover the events leading to Pecola’s pregnancy, Cholly’s incarceration, and Pauline’s social isolation. The narrator wants to understand why the towns’ people are in an uproar regarding Pecola’s pregnancy. She discovers “little by little” and pieces the “story together” (Morrison, p. 188). The revelation begins with the discussion of a pregnant girl and her father, which the reader learns, is Pecola and Cholly respectively. One conversant asks, “What you reckon make him do a thing like that.” To which the respondent says, “Beats me. Just nasty.” This statement is countered with a speaker stating, “She carry some of the blame” (Morrison, p. 189). An unnamed individual makes a veiled attempt to defend Pecola by stating, “She ain’t but twelve or so” (Morrison, p. 189). However, their remarks raised questions regarding the fact that Pecola “didn’t fight him” (Morrison, p. 189). These exchanged concludes with each acknowledging to varying degrees that perhaps Pecola did attempt to defend herself against Cholly’s advances and resist her rape. From these conversations, the narrator learns that Cholly had sexually assaulted Pecola and is the father of her baby. Pecola receives the blame for the rape more so than Cholly, in both their community and in her family (Gillan, p. 288). Even though she was unable to defend herself due to her size, age, and relationship, against a grown man, the community and Pauline were unsympathetic to Pecola’s dilemma.

*The Bluest Eye* concludes with an epilogue in which Pecola engages in a conversation with an imaginary friend. Their exchanges provide readers with a more in-depth understanding of the events that immediately preceded and followed her sexual assault. Initially, Pecola denies that Cholly sexually assaulted her. She states, “He just tried, see? He didn’t do anything” (Morrison, p. 199). She later, acknowledges that Cholly did rape her twice and that she told her mother after the second incident. She says that Mrs. Breedlove did not believe her the first time severely punishes Pecola for spreading lies about Cholly. Her mother placed the blame for the sexual assault on Pecola while defending Cholly. The mistreatment and ostracism of Pecola damaged her in ways that she was unable to express which contributed to her mental breakdown. Pecola is now a mentally ill girl living on

the outskirts of town. She is the hyper-embodiment of Cholly's interrupted sexual encounter, emasculation, and finally, his death in prison (Andrews, p. 141; Gillan, p. 288). The degree of silencing surrounding sexual matters or taboos is part of the hidden history embedded in the sexually assault of both Cholly and Pecola. This is an issue that persists in the novel and demonstrates the depths of rape culture in the Black community. Morrison ingrains narratives of rape in the novel beyond sexual intercourse. This text uses "peripheral histories" (Gillan, p. 284) in which a third person point of view is used to present Pecola (Tirrell, p. 120), "as a scapegoat" (Gillan, p. 284) for her family and community. Her messages appear as interconnected moments of abuse in which Pecola is the receiver. She is sexually assaulted, physically attacked, and verbally violated all of which she internalizes while remaining silent and passive. Morrison uses coded language to construct her narrative and present rape culture as a communal interpretation of the events leading to Pecola's pregnancy and Cholly's incarceration.

The conversations transpire between several unnamed characters with each endeavoring to explain the reason for the sexual assault or place the blame of Pecola. These discussions provide limited sympathy for Pecola and justify Cholly's actions under the guise of "just nasty. I guess" (Morrison, p. 189). Meanwhile, left to her own devices, Pecola, copes with her increased isolation by ultimately escapes into her own mind. The role of critical pedagogy in the exploration of rape culture using *The Bluest Eye* rests in the employment of historical specificity to deconstruct social narratives as situated knowledge using a present day context. This enables practitioners to identify moments in Cholly's life that contributed to his sexual assault of Pecola as well as analyze their community's view of the incident over time. The suppression of the female voice is a common occurrence in rape culture and its narratives transcend from the written word to the spoken such as in popular music genres.

### Erotic Speak with Euphemisms

Music plays a significant role in the lives of everyday citizens. The lyrics speak to them on an unconscious and personal level that enable individuals or groups to express their thoughts or feelings without fear of reprisals. Innocent songs such as *It's Cold Outside*, shows a man's concern for the health, safety, and well-being of the woman he is dating. Written in 1944 by Frank Loesser, this song appeared on the soundtrack for the film, *Neptune's Daughter*, in 1948. *It's Cold Outside* is performed as a call 'n' response conversation between wolf (male voice) and mouse (female voice). The wolf attempts to coerce mouse into spending the night with him, but mouse pretends to have reservations. She submits and justifies her choice by claiming intoxication. Similar songs such as Teddy Pendergrass's *Turn Off the Lights* and George Michaels's *I Want Your Sex* have entered the lexicon of popular culture with suggestive titles or lyrics that enticed listeners to explore their sexuality. The erotic was connotative in Pendergrass's title, but ex-

plicitly stated in Michaels's offering. In today's society, recordings primarily in the genres of hip-hop (including rap) and rhythm and blues have changed as the social climate of the larger society advanced (Stapleton, p. 219). For instance, *Indecent Proposal* a song in which a male singer propositions an unnamed female. He makes suggestive sexualize comments to her while asking her to dance a bachata, a sensual dance from the Dominican Republic and they end up making love. Contemporary offerings like Robin Thicke's *Blurred Lines* provides listeners with a blend of the sensual and the sexy by erasing the lines separating them. A blue-eyed soul singer, Robin Thicke takes "innuendo and double talk" (Lee, p. 359) to another level with seemingly innocent lyrics which he sings with a cheeky mischievousness. Accompanied Pharrell Williams, who provides supporting vocals as well as a free-style rap, by T. I., Thicke's *Blurred Lines* present audiences with conflictual sexual overtures ranging from consensual to coercion to sexual assault.

The lyrics cleverly veils the true intentions of the speaker. The male voice immediately shows interest in a young woman, but quickly indicates his sexual arousal. He pursues her in spite of another man showing her attention. Thicke acquires her attention and croons,

But you're an animal  
 Baby, it's in your nature  
 Just let me liberate you  
 You don't need no papers  
 That man is not your mate  
 And that's why I'm gon' take you  
 Good girl!  
 I know you want it (repeated 2 more times). (*Blurred Lines*)

Although there is another man present, Thicke is able to persuade the woman that he is the better choice of the two. He verbally pursues her by suggesting that she is an independent woman who can make her own decisions, but is in need of saving from her other suitor. She is an "animal" unbridled and in need of control as indicated by the words "I'm gon' take you" (*Blurred Lines*). The hidden meaning derived from the words "take you" (*Blurred Lines*) is sexual in nature. Colloquial speech from the mid to late twentieth century ascribed "take you" to a female who has been sexually assaulted.

The stanza "I know you want it" (*Blurred Lines*) and its repetition indicates that Thicke is endeavoring to coerce the woman into an intimate encounter. He reminds her that she is a "good girl" (*Blurred Lines*) which suggests that she is a principled woman who adheres to social expectations regarding appropriate female behavior with an unfamiliar male. Yet, he relentlessly endeavors to obtain her consent. He invites her to pursue him by singing,

The way you grab me  
 Must wanna get nasty  
 Go ahead, get at me (*Blurred Lines*)

These lyrics turns the woman into the aggressor who is asserting her desire for him touch. He interprets her gesture as sexual and inquires whether she wants to “get nasty” (*Blurred Lines*) or not; hence, giving her permission to sexually pursue him by stating “go ahead, get at me” (*Blurred Lines*). Thicke endeavors to turn the tables by convincing the woman that she is the aggressor and he is passively following her lead in the line “go ahead, get at me” (*Blurred Lines*). He receives support from T. I. who offers an alternative, verbally suggestive approach to Thicke’s pursuit.

T. I. raps, “One thing I ask you, Lemme be the one you bring that ass up to” (*Blurred Lines*). The words “bring that ass up to” (*Blurred Lines*) is Black urban vernacular speak indicating sex. He continues, “I’ll give you something big enough to tear your ass in two” (*Blurred Lines*), he brags about his male endowment and indicates violent sexual penetration with the words “your ass in two” (*Blurred Lines*) that is a marker of forced intercourse in rape cases. At the conclusion of T. I.’s contribution to *Blurred Lines*, Thicke suggests that he has used a narcotic to induce consent from the young woman. He asks,

Baby, can you breathe?  
I got this from Jamaica. (*Blurred Lines*)

Presumably they have consumed marijuana which is a popular product widely used in Jamaica. He implies that he has used this substance before to obtain consent from a reluctant partner in the words “it always works for me, Dakota to Decatur” (*Blurred Lines*). Tired of waiting, he states,

No more pretending  
Cause now your winning. (*Blurred Lines*)

He is no longer accepting her excuses or refusal as indicated by the verse “no more pretending” (*Blurred Lines*). Thicke treats her hesitation as a type of sexualized game in which she is “winning” (*Blurred Lines*) and he refuses to lose. As a result, he has decided that he is having sex with this woman and that she is powerless to stop him. Assumptions such as these propel rape culture in the larger society.

The lyrics in *Blurred Lines* incorporates colloquialisms, which embraces traditional notions of manhood and expectations for women. The man is to ask and the woman is to refuse. He asserts his manhood each time he reminds her that she “wants it” (*Blurred Lines*), while she confirms her womanhood by her unspoken refusal to consent to sexual intercourse with him. Yet, the underlying narrative removes the man from that of pursuer to complicitous victim as Thicke presents the woman as the instigator in their sexual encounter. In this context, rape culture his invitation to get at him is used to mock her reluctance to engage in intercourse by reminding her that she is a “good girl,” while implying that she subconsciously “want it” (*Blurred Lines*). Through these words, Thicke implies that she want it and she wants it from him. This song includes a form of ver-

bal coercion in which the woman is an unwitting victim of acquaintance rape. While the man receives, support from a culture that places absolves him of any wrong doings. A close critique of the song's lyrics enables audiences to address gender normative elements used in the articulation of large social narratives regarding male/female relationships (Kubrin, p. 360). By challenging the verbal symbolisms presented in *Blurred Lines*, critical pedagogues are able to create new meanings based on their understandings of language and accepted meanings as well as their lived experiences. It illustrates an aura in which women are active participants in their sexual assaults and the men are blameless for taking advantage of them. This is a common theme permeating not only music, but also the big screen.

### Kinky or Alternative Fetishisms

Cinematic offerings have long portrayed female characters as victims of sexual assault. Their imaginary plot-points have been used in films such as *Where the Boys Are?*, *Whore, I Spit on Your Grave*, and *The Accused*. Such works explore dichotomies of the good girl versus bad girl personas. While portraying potential outcomes for women who stray from larger social expectations for their gender. For instances, in *Where the Boys Are?*, Melanie meets a young man on spring break and loses her virginity. He brands her as easy and arranges for one of his male friends to have sex with her. When she refuses, he drags her into his hotel room and sexually assaults her. The evidence of her rape is in her torn clothing and demeanor in which she walks into traffic, hit by a car, and hospitalized. Presumably, she recovers physically from her external injuries, but her mental recuperation remains vague. Even though there are filmic and television renderings featuring male victims of sexual assault like *The Rape of Richard Beck* or *Outlander*, however, they are widely advertised in comparison to those with those with female victims.

Some movies have incorporated elements of romance to marginalize the sexual assault that female characters endure; one such offering is E. L. James's *Fifty Shades of Grey*. This film is an adaptation of James's "Fifty Shades" trilogy that chronicles the life of Christian Grey and Anastasia Steele. They meet by chance, but he actively and reluctantly pursues her. She is initially enamored with Christian, until he informs her that his interest in her is strictly for pleasure and punishment. She soon learns that Christian enjoys bondage during his sexual encounters in which he is the dominant and the woman is the submissive. This idea is foreign to Anastasia who has yet to have her first sexual encounter, which Christian finds unusual in that she is twenty-one years old. He tries to convince Anastasia to consider the life-style and introduces her to his red-room. This an area where he has his extravagant sex tools and the location where many of their encounters take place. He offers her a bedroom in a separate area where she is to sleep during her designated days per week. She is intrigued and confounded by

Christian's insistence on a signed non-disclosure agreement. Anastasia agrees to consider Christian's proposal and she gives her virginity to him.

Even though, Anastasia desires a more conventional relationship with Christian, he is resistant to the idea. He explains, "I don't do romance. My tastes are very singular" (*Fifty Shades*) and prefers to "fuck. Hard" (*Fifty Shades*), much to her chagrin. Christian presents Anastasia with a non-disclosure agreement and a sex contract that details her role as his submissive as well as his responsibilities as her dominant. She agrees to read the document and conduct research on Bondage, Discipline, Dominance, Submission, and Sadomasochism (BDSM) to aid her in making a decision. During her investigation, Anastasia decides to experiment with the lifestyle by entering into a one-sided relationship with Christian. He remains emotionally distant and controlled even as he delivers sensations of pain and pleasure to Anastasia during each of their which becomes disheartening to her. Desiring more than Christian is willing to give, Anastasia seeks to use the contents of his contract to understand his reluctance to have a real relationship with her. She learns that he dated an older woman when he was a teen-ager, his mother was a drug-addicted prostitute whose pimp abused him, and that the Greys adopted him when he was four years old. The older woman, named Elena, a close friend of his mother. Elena introduced him to the BDSM lifestyle. He served as her submissive for six years. Since that time, he has been the dominant of fifteen other women, each of whom were chosen for him by Elena, but Anastasia was to become first that he had chosen on his own.

During their contract negotiations, Christian endeavors to entice Anastasia to engage in intercourse with him. She arrives wearing a form fitting red dress that zipped in back which pleased Christian. He attempted to place his hand around her waist and escort her to the conference room. She rebuffs and reminds him that this was a "business meeting" (*Fifty Shades*). She tried to downplay her attraction for him, but her body language to convey her desire for him. She bites her bottom lip, which Christian found arousing, and she spoke in a sensuous voice even at the conclusion of their meeting to express her urgent need to leave his presence. He contradicted her orally stated reservation by describing her physiological responses. Christian suggests Anastasia's body is attempting to lure him into a sexual encounter. He subtly implies that she is sexually aroused, by highlighting her body's response to the thought of his touch, although she has verbally expressed her disinterest. He states, "Your body tells me something different" (*Fifty Shades*) as if to imply that her oral "no" is a non-verbal "yes." Christian continues his seduction of Anastasia by stating that she is "pressing her thighs together" (*Fifty Shades*) and that her breathing as well as her complexion has changed.

Intrigued Anastasia taunts him, by proposing that they have sex on top of the table. Christian removes his necktie in preparation for a possible encounter; however, his plans halted when she collects the document and insists that she has to leave. She assures Christian that will review the changes to the contract and hopes

to arrive at a decision soon. He makes a final appeal in hopes of changing her mind, but she insists that she cannot stay. She departs much to Christian's dismay. Their game of cat and mouse continues to the climax of the film when Christian's fixation with rules, consequences, and punishment pervades his interactions with Anastasia as she continues her endeavor to normalize their connection. She constantly compares their union to that of individuals who are in committed romantic relationships. To which Christian asserts that he is "fifty shades of fucked up" (*Fifty Shades*) indicating that he is incapable of engaging in socially acceptable methods of emotional expressiveness. As a result, Anastasia asks him to punish her in the worst way possible. He complies. Christian instructs her to lay across a table and count with him as he delivers six lashes with a belt on her bottom. She obeys, counting as tears fall from her eyes. After the last blow, Christian attempts to comfort a despondent Anastasia. She rejects him and much to his surprise yells at him. Realizing her limitations Anastasia ends the relationship.

Christian is a self-made millionaire who possesses a feeling of insecurity that he curtails through his aggressive sexualized interactions with women. He uses his position as an attractive, young man to create hierarchical exchanges that place him in control of the women in his life. His behavior is a support in rape culture as vulnerability and emotional detachment, Christian has developed to protect himself against others. He is a confused man who has been a victim of sexual assault and is fearful of falling in love with someone. As a result, he uses the women in his life as an outlet for his feelings of inferiority that he unleashes through the practice of BDSM. The character of Christian represents the strong, independent man who is able to control his woman; however, negates that he uses violence and emotional detachment to do so. Whereas, Anastasia is a composite character featuring the hopes and dreams women embody. She labors under the illusion that she can change Christian and agrees to experiment with BDSM without committing to the practice via a signed contract. The relationship between Christian and Anastasia reflects a dialogical exchange in which verbal and non-verbal cues communicate narratives of control and marginalization. He declares his manhood through he remains limited regard for his sexual partner post-coitus, while her womanhood is challenged by her inability to separate emotion from sex. This deployment of power is evident in the verbal and physical sparring that occurs between these characters. Christian's dependence on dominating Anastasia in a one-sided relationship in which she willingly agrees to her subjugation, challenges traditional ideas of sexual assaults by interjecting romantic underpinnings into their narrative. Yet, Anastasia is able to use her lived experiences, linguistic skills, and body movements to assist Christian in unlearning years of inappropriate behaviors. Many may argue that rape culture supported the popularity of the film *Fifty Shades of Grey* by describing it as an erotic romance between Christian and Anastasia. Nevertheless, aspects of sexual assault are evident in James's novel as evidenced by the relationship between Christian and Elena as well as that of

Christian and Anastasia. Both Christian and Anastasia are victims of a rape in which their consent is highly questionable, but is justified by rape culture because they developed feelings for one another.

### Rape Culture, Literature, Music, Film, and Critical Pedagogy

Rape culture, in this article, has been defined as an attitude of indifference that allow individuals or groups to accept sexual assaults or other carnal acts as normal social behaviors. The act of sexual assault is anchored in violence, capitalization, and commodification propelled by social media in which victims are eroticized and perpetrator are essentially blameless (McLaren, p. 2/7). These narratives are part of the images and dialogues currently portrayed in the larger society. For that reason, the current discussion explores the role of critical pedagogy in dismantling rape culture in ways that transcend intersections of race, gender, and class by encouraging practitioners to critically analyzing and interpreting these narratives in literature, music, and film. Critical pedagogy is an educational approach in which *currere* is instrumental in teaching individuals how to reflect on their own “educational experiences from a subjective and narrative perspective” (Kissel-Ito, p. 1) as a way of situating themselves in the narratives associated with rape culture. This enables them to understand their biases and attitudes towards sexual assaults by the presenting them with fictionalized accounts such as those in *The Bluest Eye*, *Blurred Lines*, and *Fifty Shades of Grey*.

The use of inventive manuscripts create safe spaces where participants are able to freely engage with these narratives and establish an personalized sense of empowerment as each tackle the difficult task of understanding rape culture and its part in the perpetuation of sexual assault. Such works introduced participants to hybrid stories in which a sexual assault has occurred. Participants read, listen, and view each text to identify the victim and perpetrator in each work. Next, they are to interrogate each text and identify the underpinning beliefs that are present in each victim’s and perpetrator’s narratives lived experiences. Finally, participants learn to explore these narratives from multiple points of view using a variety of lenses. This staggered approach enable individuals to separate and collectively analyze the narratives presented in *The Bluest Eye*, *Blurred Lines*, and *Fifty Shades of Grey* in ways that facilitate meaningful discussion of rape culture and the meaning of sexual assault in a present day context.

The role of critical pedagogy in this context encourages the deconstruction of the language and accepted meanings placed on certain words by the larger society to discussion of sexual assault. This essay invites the reader not only to analyze the dialogue in a text, but also the symbolism to uncover the hidden messages communicated to their audiences. A philosophical perspective with roots in sociology, psychology, and education critical pedagogy urges practitioners to empower themselves through the use *currere*, social critique, and deconstruction of

larger social narratives. By reconceptualizing rape culture as an attitude and sexual assault a crime, critical pedagogy is instrumental in examining the changing climate of the larger society through literature, music, and film.

### Conclusion

This article explored rape culture by using a novel, a song, and a film as three distinct case studies. In this article, rape culture is an attitude of indifference surrounding sexual assaults or other carnal acts held by individuals or groups normalized over time. Such views are in the narratives of the texts chosen for this exploration. *The Bluest Eye* presents sexual assault as Cholly's failure to reach his sexual maturity and Pecola as a victim of his internalized rage. It is upon closer review that the reader learns that Cholly, as a teen had been mentally raped and objectified by two white men. His sexual assault of Pecola enables him to reassert his manhood by dominating her during sex and blaming her for loving him. Whereas, *Blurred Lines* expresses the widely held belief that men are entitled to have sex with a woman he finds attractive regardless of consent. The slut-shaming tactics were used to her that she is supposed to say no, but she really is saying yes. By asserting that the female body is in need of a man to control it, *Fifty Shades of Grey* romanticizes rape as a complicated relationship between Christian and Anastasia in which rules and punishment are used to maintain his dominance and her subjugation. The role of critical pedagogy in these conversations is to provide safe-spaces for individuals to explore rape culture by developing an approach to deconstructing the underlying narratives associated with this notion using a present day lens.

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# If We Are Going to Talk About Implicit Race Bias, We Need to Talk About Structural Racism

Moving Beyond Ubiquity and Inevitability  
in Teaching and Learning About Race

*Arlo Kempf*

## Abstract

This article argues for a critical intervention in the popular discourse surrounding the analysis of implicit race bias as an anti-racism strategy. Also called unconscious race bias, implicit race bias provides a corporate-friendly lens for understanding the functions and operations of racism at the individual level. Based primarily in social psychology, the study of implicit race bias relies on the assumption that our unconscious negative and positive associations with people of different races are formed through various processes of socialization and can correspond with and impact our conscious race-based interactions. Recognizing the danger of popular understandings of race which neither consider nor account for race beyond the level of the individual, this article calls for the use of critical race theory (CRT) and critical pedagogy as tools to disrupt, interrogate, and deepen implicit race bias approaches. By bringing attention to questions of race power and inequity at the institutional, structural, and systemic levels as a precursor for taking up race at the individual level, I offer that CRT and critical pedagogy are indeed necessary for those looking to critically engage teaching and learning con-

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cerning implicit race bias. The article concludes by describing a recent study with Canadian teachers which attempts to bring critical perspectives and practices into dialogue with implicit race bias.

### Introduction

Implicit race bias (IRB) has become a popular cultural topic in mainstream media, a popular area of research and debate in social psychology, and the common foundation for diversity training in countless corporate contexts. Based primarily in social psychology, the study of implicit race bias relies on the assumption that our unconscious negative and positive associations regarding people of different races are formed through various processes of socialization, and can correspond with and impact conscious race-based interactions. At present, implicit race bias interventions are frequently misused as one-off panaceas, and the implications of implicit race bias are frequently misunderstood. This article argues for a critical intervention in the application of IRB as an anti-racism strategy, to identify a useful role for IRB approaches for anti-racist work which aims to address racism at the systemic, structural, institutional, and individual levels.

Implicit race bias research suggests that all people have implicit race biases and that these biases are in part linked to neurology. The danger here lies in a resulting passivity of ubiquity (e.g. *everyone is racist so it's not that big of a deal*) and a resulting passivity of inevitability (*racism is—at least in part—how we are wired, so there is no way to stop it*). Such misunderstandings can make it difficult to understand our personal responsibility for racism and inequitable race power, as well as the ways in which racism at the individual level is representative of larger institutional and systemic operations. These misunderstandings may also mask, mute, or deny the impact and experience of racism on Indigenous folks and people of colour. This in part, may explain why IRB provides a corporate-friendly lens for understanding the functions and operations of racism.

Recognizing the danger of popular understandings of race which neither consider nor account for race beyond the level of the individual, this article calls for the use of critical race theory (CRT) and critical pedagogy as tools to disrupt, interrogate, and deepen implicit race bias work. By bringing attention to questions of race power and inequity at the structural, institutional, and systemic levels as a precursor for taking up race at the individual level, I offer that CRT and critical pedagogy are indeed necessary for those looking to critically engage teaching and learning about implicit race bias.

This article begins by offering an introduction to implicit race bias, including a brief discussion of how IRB has been taken up in popular media and in the corporate sector. Noting the call for greater attention to IRB in K-12 schooling and university contexts, this paper then offers a brief overview of the academic conversation and scholarship on IRB and education, drawing primarily on work from social and educational psychology in the United States and Canada. Guided

by critical race theory and critical pedagogy scholarship, the paper then offers a theoretical interrogation of the limitations of mainstream IRB approaches and offers a way forward for using critical engagements with IRB, informed by CRT and critical pedagogy principles. Finally, I describe some very preliminary emerging findings from a recent study with Toronto high school teachers which endeavours to engage the critical work called for in the previous sections. A short conclusion follows.

### Implicit Race Bias

Over the past decade, implicit race bias has become a corporate diversity darling. Most famously, Starbucks<sup>®</sup> Corporation closed 10,000+ U.S. and Canadian café locations for a half-day in 2018, to provide mandatory anti-bias training to 200,000+ employees. The training came as a response to the unlawful arrest of two African-Americans at a Philadelphia Starbucks<sup>®</sup> (Abrams, 2018). Online trainings like these have not been shown to work (see Chang et. al., 2019). Although the coffee company's use of IRB was the most widely reported, the content mirrored that of many other versions of similar corporate training; differing primarily in scale rather than theoretical approach in terms of a corporate diversity strategy. From Microsoft, to Google to Papa John's to Buffalo Wings to countless other corporations and businesses (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2020), bias training is a popular mechanism for companies to appear to be doing something about racism in their organizations. Although largely understudied (with Chang et. al., 2019 offering an important exception) the work has been both lauded and criticized. Despite myriad opinions, very little popular coverage has addressed what IRB is or how it works.

Implicit (or unconscious) bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner (Kirwan Institute, 2015), and it emerges from a combination of the way our brains seem to work, and the way we are socialized—some approximation of a synergy of nature and nurture. On the nature side of this, animals are often hardwired to make positive and negative associations, and this is a highly functional tendency for survival; be it ducklings imprinting on and following the first moving objects they see after hatching, or human babies having positive associations with the first faces they encounter. Further, humans rely upon categories and schema (forms of thought or behavior that consolidate and shape categories of information and the associations among them) to make sense of the vast quantities of data that we process as part of everyday life. This relational short hand saves time, allowing us to more quickly understand and interact with the world around us.

On the nurture side, unconscious associations are cultivated over the course of our lives, through encounters with direct and indirect messages (Kirwan Institute, 2015). We are socialized by and in peer groups, teachers, curriculum, family, traditional media, social media, religion, spirituality, etc. Additionally, race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, language, immigration status, neurotypicality, ability, and other factors inform and are informed by how we walk through the world,

how we experience advantage and disadvantage, how we connect and disconnect with others, etc. Based on these identity factors, we experience and enact things such as racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, transphobia, ableism, and other oppressive attitudes and behaviors—this includes our biases around a host of phenomena, including race. Socialization impacts the nature of our unconscious associations and is informed by societal social relations. Implicit race bias both produces and is produced by dominant race patterns, ideas, and conversations: The imprint of a racist and homophobic society, for example, will be racist and homophobic implicit bias.

Bringing the nature and nurture pieces together in terms of implicit race bias, our associational shortcuts rely upon poison cues (racist, sexist, homophobic, etc.) to inform the categories and schema we use and create to navigate and make sense of our lives. Bias thusly maps onto—and can be a map of—societal phenomena, e.g., White supremacy, transphobia, settler colonialism, etc.

All of this stuff going on in our heads impacts how we (mis)understand the world and those in it during the course of our interactions with others. Alter et. al. (2016) describe what they call the “Bad is Black” effect which looks not only at the adjustment of skin tone in media portrayals of African Americans, but also at powerful patterns of a negative association with dark skin. Goff et. al. (2014), found African American boys under 11 years old are more likely than their White counterparts to have their age overestimated, to be perceived to be guilty of a crime, and to be victims of police violence when accused of being criminals. Wilson, Hugenberg, and Rule (2017) found that African American men were frequently misperceived as larger, more muscular, and taller than White men the same size; which correlated with misperceptions of threat and harm.

Implicit race bias is also consequential for how we live our lives in relation to others, as we know that IRB has an impact on our decision making in terms of how we deal with people of different races (Staats, 2014). Further, negative effects of bias are linked to social power and group status (i.e., consequences of bias affect different people differently, even though we all have biases) (Choudhury, 2015).

### Studying Implicit Race Bias and Education

Across Canada, educational outcomes are frequently patterned along racial lines (in addition to income, gender, neurodiversity, ability, language, sexuality, and other considerations) and the relationship between race and educational advantage and disadvantage is well-established in relevant literature, particularly with regard to the Ontario context (see for example James, 2019, 2018, & 2012; Robson, 2018; Dei, 2017; Clandfield, et. al., 2014; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013; TDSB, 2013; St. Denis, 2011). More specifically, the phenomena surrounding teachers’ race-based expectations of students are well-documented in the U.S. and Canada (see Henry et. Al., 2017; Crosby & Monin, 2007; Dei, 2000; Dei et.

al., 1997; & Dee, 2005). Targeting implicit racial bias in education has become an explicit policy priority at the national (see CMEC, N.D. 2017), provincial (see Government of Ontario, 2017; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013), and school board levels (see TDSB, 2017). Confirming what critical race scholarship has long suggested, the role of individual and organizational bias is now recognized in policy as central to equitable outcomes in schooling.

Harvard University's Implicit Association Test is among the major instruments used in the study of implicit racial bias, with over 12 million participants since 1998. This electronic measure has inspired numerous other instruments and tests, using the same principle of timed tests of participants' reactions when prompted to associate negative and positive images with particular races. These are particularly numerous in projects aimed at law enforcement (see for example, Correll et. al., in press; Correll et. al., 2017; Correll et. al., 2011; Correll et. al., 2007; Correll et. al., 2002). Little research on implicit racial bias has been conducted in Canada, with the vast majority emerging from the U.S. Very little U.S. work has focused specifically on education.

Researchers have employed physiological tools to measure implicit reactions to difference (including race) using functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) (Phelps et. al., 2000). Others have tracked patterns of cardiovascular responses (Blascovich et. al., 2001); facial electromyography (EMG) (Vanman et. al., 2004); and cortisol responses (Page-Gould et. al., 2008). Using novel intermodal association tasks, developmental psychologists Xiao and colleagues (2017a & 2017b) have found implicit bias in infants as young as six months. These findings may help us understand tendencies and patterns among groups of people. This important work has mostly focused on better understanding, documenting, and identifying implicit racial bias. As Banaji and Greenwal (2013) suggest, the question mark in terms of next steps in implicit racial bias research is whether or not we can undo (or de-bias) as well as mitigate the impacts of bias in our decision-making, actions, and interactions.

Implicit biases are automatic and unintentional, and are therefore more likely to manifest in a hurried moment. Reflection and "thinking slow" by engaging in mindful, deliberate processing can prevent our implicit biases from kicking in and determining our behaviors (Kahneman, 2011). This has many implications for in-class interactions, assessment, discipline, etc. Pronin's (2007) work engaged the concept of objectivity, and concluded that presuming oneself to be objective tends to increase the role of implicit bias. Findings suggest teaching people about non-conscious thought processes may lead people to be skeptical of their own objectivity. By working with IRB, we may thus be able to better guard against biased discipline, interactions, evaluations, etc. in schooling contexts.

Several researchers have explored practices which increase motivation to be fair, including learning about implicit bias; leveraging existing equity leanings; and interrogating our personal stories, lenses, and narratives of self (see Kang et.

al., 2012; National Center for State Courts, 2012; & Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004). Additionally, Crosby et. al. (1986), studied the practice of counting: Unconsciously biased behavior is best identified by using data to determine if patterns of behavior are leading to racially disparate results. Their conclusions suggest that once one is aware that judgements or actions are having disparate outcomes, it is then possible to consider whether the outcomes are linked to bias. This may have implications for grading, calling on students, discipline, favour, etc.

In terms of de-biasing/eliminating bias, Dasgupta & Asgari, (2004) have investigated counter-stereotypic imaging, an approach involving imagining in detail, counter-stereotypic others. These can be abstract or real (e.g., a personal friend). The approach makes positive exemplars noticeable and available when challenging a stereotype's legitimacy. Other researchers have investigated individuation, an approach that relies on avoiding stereotypic extrapolations by obtaining specific data about group members. This is meant to help people to evaluate members of a specific group based on personal, rather than group-based, attributes (Brewer, 1988; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990).

To date, the relevant research on both mitigating and eliminating implicit racial bias has not included the practices of teachers, and none of it has looked at Canadian education contexts, which have varied but specific demographics, histories, and organizational approaches. While this gap in the literature is significant, the paucity of study on teaching and education is perhaps less concerning than the lack of critical scholarship on IRB which attends to the production, reproduction, operation, and maintenance of racism at the institutional, structural, and systemic levels, as well as to concrete questions of social change and racial justice. As a precondition for the use of IRB analyses to address racism in education, a critical intervention is needed. Critical race theory and critical pedagogy offer two important apparatus for this work.

### Critical Race Theory and Implicit Race Bias

Critical race theory (CRT) is a theoretical framework used extensively to understand race formation and race relations. CRT arose as an application and extension of the critical legal studies (CLS) movement in the U.S., in the late 1970s, offering a framework for understanding and analyzing institutional, systemic, and individual racial privilege and punishment with a focus on the sources of racial oppression (see Bell, 1992, Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, and others). As a critical and generative institutional site of racial production and reproduction, education is a significant area of focus for CRT. The seminal scholarship of Lynn and Parker (2006), Dixson and Rousseau (2005), Ladson-Billings (1998), Tate (1997), Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), and others has exposed, troubled, and resisted the role of schooling in the preservation and maintenance of racism and other systems of oppression.

Gloria Ladson-Billings (2018) contends the origins of CRT can be found in

the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century writing of W. E. B. Du Bois, and thereafter in that of Garvey, the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X, and the Black Panther Party for Self-Defence. Following Ladson-Billings' argument, CRT has a very long history of recognizing the conjunction of power relations and race as a social construction with tangible individual, institutional, and systemic repercussions. Among the key claims of CRT scholars is that although race has no biological significance, it has profound material implications for our lived reality, organized as advantages and disadvantages. Critical race theory rejects colorblind understandings of race relations at the individual, institutional, structural, and systemic levels. Scholars, including Bonilla-Silva (2003), Urrieta (2006), and others highlight how racism is nurtured when the circumstances for its indiscernibility are maintained.

Among the chief discursive trappings employed to rationalize the denial of racism and assert the irrelevance of race, is the popular assignment of race to the past. Post-racialism is an increasingly popular conception. Bell (1990) argued that the relevance of race and the existence of racism persist and are persistently denied—a critique that remains at the heart of CRT. Among the crucial contributions of CRT to the field of education is thus the insistence that race be seen and accounted for in the first instances of institutional life. It is worth considering who benefits from a post-racial discourse, as well as who is made safe and who is threatened. As Leonardo (2009) argues, safe space in race dialogue too often provides safety only for dominant racial bodies while preserving the discursive violence of mainstream race dialogue experienced by many people of color. Indeed, the post-race approach fits this description powerfully, as some people may be more post-racial than others; just as some race biases are more impactful than others.

Against this backdrop, we can problematize popular IRB approaches which, ironically, can triage the injured White racist with the reassurance that race bias is not only normal but also innately (and biologically) human. Further, those 'trained' in one-off sessions may walk away secure that their own racism is indeed part of something far larger, in which they play no agentive role and for which they bear no responsibility. This approach ignores the fact that not all race bias is created equal in terms of lived consequences: i.e. the systemic, structural, institutional, and individual privileging of White folks and the punishment of everyone else at in Euro-North American contexts. Starbucks<sup>®</sup> and other companies admitting to creating and operating racist spaces are asking their employees to change, one by one, rather than enacting systemic or structural change in their organizations. To be clear, the Starbucks<sup>®</sup> training is primarily an issue not for the content of the training itself, but rather for the lack of broader perspective, deeper and sustained engagement, and follow-up. As a counter to this one-off, head in the sand approach, learning about one's own race bias (however inevitable and widespread) should serve as an entry point for understanding the ways in which the structural and institutional operations of race and racism have imprinted upon and within us, as well as the ways our biases feed cycles of race formation and racial injustice.

The unfulfilled promise of IRB discourses is that de-biasing and/or becoming free of racism (and our responsibility for racism) is possible without deep work, without deep criticality and discomfort. Indeed, the most dangerous implied assumption resulting from IRB approaches is that we need only tweak or slightly correct an otherwise well-functioning social apparatus, with the rule of logic sure to straighten things out, if not sooner then for sure later. This seductive fiction has a long history in popular race discourse. In sketching the development of critical legal theory (CLT), which served as midwife to critical race theory, Kimberlé Crenshaw (2017), argues:

[I]n the early 1980s... [c]ivil rights lawyers and liberal allies... shared a baseline confidence that once the irrational distortions of bias were removed, the underlying legal and socioeconomic order would revert to a neutral, benign state of impersonally apportioned justice [which] premised racial liberation on the enlightened terms of rationality. Accordingly, racial power was seen as “discrimination,” a deviation from reason that was remediable through the operation of legal principles.

Among the fundamental assertions of CLT, Crenshaw adds, is that, “no neutral process of principled legal reasoning could justify the racialized distribution of power, prestige, and wealth in America” (ibid). Guided by Crenshaw’s conceptual framing, we can see implicit race bias as a rational, logical, and inevitable consequence of racial systems, structures, and institutions rather than an irrational anomaly that needs correcting at the individual level. Indeed, this pushes us past the urge to merely right the path of the vessel that is implicit race bias, to note that what we are facing here includes the tides, winds, and flow in and through which this vessel is travelling. Noting that racial prejudice and discrimination are products of racist systems, institutions, and structures, there is no final fix that can be applied to race bias absent a breach and dismantling of the operations of race and power at these higher levels. Just as there is no actual historical moment to which chants of *Make America Great Again* harken, there is no return to logic/neutral, rationalism awaiting those of us keen to address our race biases.

As hooks (1984) reminds us, “the classroom with all its limitations remains a location of possibility,” in which we “have the opportunity to labour for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress” (p. 207). It is these practices of freedom: of imagining, of understanding together, of grappling to be in and of the world, of transgression for social justice, that occupy some of the core offerings of critical pedagogy.

### Critical Pedagogy and Implicit Race Bias: Toward Liberatory Pedagogies

Critical pedagogy is a beautiful and messy tangle of philosophy, method, practice, and activism which argues for education as a place for radical love and engagement by and for students and teachers (understood broadly). Geared toward

critical reading, reflection, and transformation of the world through engagement with the word, and vice versa, critical pedagogy seeks to develop the agency of all in the learning relationship, in critical collaboration toward the operationalization of a just world. The seminal works of Darder (1991), Freire (2000), Giroux (1991), hooks (1994), Kincheloe (2004), McLaren (1994), Steinberg & Kincheloe (2010), and others make up an (anti-)canon of sorts; while scholars such as Fanon (1967), Lorde (1984), Tijerina & Guitérrez (2000), Anzaldúa (1987), and others offer foundational and intellectually complementary insights on race, land, and identity—absent in much of the work mentioned above. Duncan-Andrade & Morrell (2008); Grande (2004); Lynn (1999); and others offer significant and instructive critiques and criticism of early critical pedagogy approaches while building on these works, with a focus on race-centric and Indigenous approaches to critical teaching and learning. The tangle of critical pedagogy (for it cannot really be called a braid) includes these controversies, inadequacies, and evolutions. This messy theoretical and practical contribution has a great deal to offer classrooms in general and may be essential for taking up questions of IRB in particular.

Implicit race bias approaches possess tremendous value as an invitational entry point—particularly for White middle-class teachers and students—for beginning to understand racism in everyday life. White supremacy allows for too few entry points for White folks to engage questions of race and racism without shifting the burden of that work to Indigenous people and people of colour. Implicit race bias offers a small window through which to crawl into a critical conversation. If IRB approaches lend themselves too easily to analyses which go no further than the level of the individual, we can call on pedagogy to make the link from the daily individual, to the broader contemporary and historical machinations of race and racism at the structural, institutional, and systemic levels—including understandings of settler colonialism, coloniality, and White supremacy.

As mentioned above, the work to mitigate and eliminate the effects of implicit race bias includes sustained reflection and slow thinking for engaging in mindful and deliberate processing. The work calls on teachers to debunk false notions of objectivity in all aspects of the teaching and learning relationship; interrogating their own identities, narratives, and notions of self and thinking deeply about individuality, presumptions, and interactivity. Such reflexivity is indeed at the core critical pedagogy in practice. Such thoughtful pedagogics opens up space for deeper thinking—the very space needed to critically interrogate the relationships between the micro and the macro, the implicit and the explicit life of race. At the core of our thinking in critical pedagogy is the connection between and potential simultaneity of, theory to practice. Called critical praxis, this process is described by Freire as, “reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed” (2000, p. 126). Critical pedagogy theorist Henry Giroux (1991) takes this a little further, calling for a border pedagogy that opposes “representational practices that make a claim to objectivity, universality, and consensus” in which “cultural

workers can develop pedagogical conditions in which students can read and write within and against existing cultural codes...” (p. 54). Writing three years later on critical pedagogy in the classroom, bell hooks (1994) argues that “to engage in dialogue is one of the simplest ways we can begin as teachers, scholars ... to cross boundaries’ and ‘disrupt the seemingly fixed (yet often unstated) assumptions” (p. 130). Freire, Giroux, and hooks thus suggest a necessary trespassing by teachers and students into more a holistic approach to understanding race and society.

The epistemic level of the individual, understood more deeply using IRB, can here be linked, through critical reflexivity to processes of race power writ large. Quoting Fanon, Sara Ahmed (2007), reminds us to think of the “‘historic-racial’ schema” which lie below our daily experiences, relationships, and interactions; suggesting, “the racial and historical dimensions are beneath the surface of the body described by phenomenology, which becomes, by virtue of its own orientation, a way of thinking the body that has surface appeal” (p. 153). Shor and Freire (1987), in a provocative discussion on dialogical liberatory education, argue dialogue is not “a mere technique, which we can use to help us get some results” (p. 13) but is instead “a means to transform social relations in the classroom” (p. 11) as well as “a way to recreate knowledge as well as the way we learn” (p. 11). Offering a concise bridge between the individual and the structural in the classroom, Lynn (1999) argues that critical race pedagogy must centre “the endemic nature of racism in the United States; the importance of cultural identity; the necessary interaction of race, class, and gender; and the practice of a liberatory pedagogy” (p. 615).

For the pedagogue—or teacher, or cultural worker—the challenge of this work exists both internally, and simultaneously in dialogue and relation (with others, with history, and with biology). Further, the relationship between the world of the psyche and that of larger structures of privilege and punishment is well-established (see Fanon, 1967; Oliver, 2004; & Gringe 2014). We can return here to the notion of imprinting, and the ways in which our individual race biases (conscious and unconscious) are produced by and are producers of racism at the structural, systemic, and institutional levels. Indeed, the very idea of *individual* implicit bias is problematic in so far as it suggests an isolated and discrete island of negative and positive associations, impossibly removed from biology, interaction, socialization, and countless other factors that are inherently interactive. For the White classroom teacher in a Euro-North American context, race bias is indelibly social and relational. Teaching for racial justice then requires an engagement of the social, political, historical, epistemological, etc as they are brought to bear on the individual. Working toward and through difficult pedagogical connection and reflection at the professional and personal levels is thus key for engaging questions of IRB. The final section of this article describes a recent small-scale qualitative research project with Toronto secondary teachers who spent a school year analyzing and working through questions of implicit race bias and pedagogy; and presents some reflections emerging from early data analysis work.

### The Implicit Bias and Teacher Practice Study

Unfortunately, implicit race bias work is often undertaken as a brief and stand-alone professional diversity training activity. As described above, such approaches may focus exclusively on the individual and may conflate the ubiquity of implicit race bias with the notion that racism is inevitable, universal, and beyond the responsibility of any group or individual. Recognizing this significant limitation, the Implicit Bias and Teacher Practice Study aimed to introduce two unique elements to implicit race bias mitigation work.

First, following the call outlined above, the study brings together anti-racist approaches informed by critical race theory, anti-colonial theory, and other critical approaches, which consider the historical, colonial, institutional, and systemic elements of race and racism; thus bringing a critical approach to an often narrow corporate vision of diversity work. Second, this work differs from conventional anti-bias work by lengthening and deepening the typically limited scope and sequence of the activities, learnings, and practices. The study was conducted over a full school year—a ten-month engagement period by teachers—using a variety of methods including journaling, dialogue, and interviews.

Braiding critical and social psychology literature, this multimodal approach aims to create space for a deeper dive into critical antiracist work to mitigate the impacts of conscious and unconscious race bias on teacher practice. The study draws broadly from critical race theory (CRT) and implicit race bias literature in social psychology (both approaches are described above) as well as second-wave White teacher identity studies and anti-colonial theory. Second-wave White teacher identity studies builds on CRT, as well as critical whiteness studies, to offer a complicated and critical study of “the cultural production of race, whiteness, and White teacher identities that articulates complex historical and social forces along with related understandings of teaching and learning in context” (Jupp et al., 2016, p. 1163).

The anti-colonial work of Fanon (1965), Memmi (1965), and others offer a phenomenology of race, which is useful for understanding White teacher reflections on race and race bias mitigation. Drawing on this tradition, Sara Ahmed suggests, “whiteness is lived as a background to experience” and considers whiteness not “as an ontological given, but as that which has been received, or become given, over time... an ongoing and unfinished history, which orientates bodies in specific directions, affecting how they ‘take up’ space” (2007, p. 150). Following the work of Tanner (2017), the study also engages the scholarship of Morrison (1992) and Thandeka (1999) who locate “race in the American imaginary by investigating how Whiteness is formed and shaped by a relationship with what both authors described as non-Whiteness” (Tanner, 2017, p. 174). Thus, I conceptualize the reflections and experiences of White teachers in the Canadian context, as sitting in relation to and in situation with the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) in Ontario educational contexts.

Among the crucial elements common to these critical approaches is the insistence that race is relevant and must be accounted for in the first instances of institutional life, as mentioned above. The braiding of these distinct but related theoretical domains allows for a deep and unconventional application of each; opening up space for a healthy complication of teacher reflections on race, practice, and pedagogy as well as of the theoretical approaches themselves.

In terms of methods, the project was a small multimodal qualitative study. Participants engaged in a series of activities. In the early fall, teachers completed a series of online modules offered by the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, wrote short race biographies, and read a series of introductory articles on the theory and practice of implicit race bias and its mitigation. In late fall/early winter, each participant reviewed a series of 20 implicit race bias mitigation strategies with the research team, and co-designed a plan for the January-June term which included the implementation of 4-6 mitigation strategies. Strategies varied from technical activities such as anonymous marking, to more dialogical activities including structured dinners at which White teachers exchanged race biographies with Black and South Asian parents and students, to personal activities including perspective-taking exercises, and other activities. Additionally, each teacher read at least one full-length critical anti-racist and/or anticolonial book from the following list: *So You Want to Talk About Race*, by Ijeoma Oluo; *White Fragility*, by Robin DiAngelo; *Policing Black Lives*, by Robyn Maynard; *Everyday Anti-Racism*, edited by Mica Pollock; and/or *Unsettling the Settler Within*, by Paulette Regan. Over the course of the January-to-June term, teachers shared their ongoing reflections on these strategies and activities using online and handwritten journaling, through phone interviews, and through email exchanges. Each teacher then participated in a culminating interview.

We are currently in the early stages of data analysis and the research team has begun a thematic analysis of the data (see Ryan and Bernard 2003). We will craft responses by theme into individual vignettes, which we will likely cross analyze for comparison (Creswell 1998, and Merriam 1998). From these meta-themes, our case analysis will identify divergences and convergences within teacher responses. We will use a narrative approach to consolidate, explore and discuss teacher experiences and reflection (see Barone, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Jacobs, 2005; and Moen, 2006).

This study is based on the experiences and reflections of 12 (n=12) secondary high school teachers in a large urban school board in Southern Ontario, Canada. In terms of gender, three identified as men, two as non-binary, and eight as women. In terms of race, two identified as mixed race Asian and White, one identified as East Asian, and nine identified as White.

### Some Very Cautious Themes Emerging from Early Data Analysis

In terms of results, initial data analysis suggests at least three emerging themes. First, teacher reflections and interviews suggest teacher perceptions of the efficacy of implicit race bias mitigation strategies may rely on the degree to which they notice conscious changes in their perceptions of and experiences with race, racism, and BIPOC students. In other words, teachers may not recognize and/or believe in the efficacy of strategies (despite empirical evidence of their ability to mitigate implicit race bias) if they do not notice any changes in their thoughts, feelings, and/or actions.

Second, teacher reflections and interviews highlight a powerful connection and synergy resulting from the concurrent use of critical anti-racist strategies (including critical race dialoguing and reading critical anti-racist texts) alongside implicit race bias mitigation strategies. Participants' deepest reflections on practice emerged from teachers working through critical texts, as well as interrogating their own implicit race biases. This hybrid approach allows for a consideration of the individual, institutional, systemic, and trans historical mechanics and productions of race and racism.

Finally, a consistent pattern emerged among participants, in which their views on race, racism, and their own racial identities (conceived of professionally and personally) appeared to change over time. Typically, participants' reflections evolved to include more complex understandings of race in education generally, as well as a greater sense of what needs to be done within their own classrooms in particular, to better support racial justice and equity. This suggests that the duration of the project, specifically, may have had an important impact on teachers' understandings of race and pedagogy.

Although the data analysis is incomplete, I can speculate that the study will be of scholarly significance in three broad areas. First, it is among the only studies on implicit race bias in the Canadian context and the first of which I am aware, to study implicit race bias mitigation practices in education in Canada. The findings may allow us to operationalize extant work on implicit race bias for concrete classroom application toward racial justice and equity work in teacher practice. Further, preliminary data analysis suggests the study may deepen and extend our existing understandings of the challenges and opportunities surrounding implicit race bias mitigation work by teachers in schools (including questions about perceived efficacy and teacher buy-in).

Second, this study brings social psychology into conversation with critical theoretical approaches including critical race theory, second-wave White teacher identity studies, and other approaches. This responds to the tension and division that characterize the chasm between these approaches, allowing for a healthy complication of the ways we understand race and racism and their impacts on teacher

practices. Uniquely, this allows us to consider emerging research on cognitive function at the individual level, while paying close attention to the institutional, systemic, and historical workings of race and racism. As noted in the emerging themes above, the project's dual theoretical approach may have played a positive role in terms of the ways teachers were impacted by the work.

Finally, this work responds to the call by second-wave White teacher identity studies scholars for a more critical and complex reading of whiteness in education, and to contemporary research with and on teachers. Specifically, these scholars suggest a need to centre White supremacy in place of White privilege, to look toward strategies for race consciousness-raising which are geared toward concrete social justice classroom practices, and which consider the notion of race beyond the domain of the individual (see Jupp et al., 2016, Lensmire et al., 2013, Tanner, 2017, and others). These mirror the practical and theoretical underpinnings of the project and may offer a productive braiding of social psychology approaches into this emerging scholarly area.

There is a lot missing here, to be sure (including a more robust development and presentation of findings). However, I hope this small study will offer an example of some of the critical engagement I have called for in this paper, bringing implicit race bias into engagement with critical theoretical and pedagogical approaches in both the consciousness and professional practices of participants.

### Conclusion

Implicit race bias is a popular approach for understanding racism. It guides a great deal of corporate training, and it takes up a lot of space in the popular press. It offers a relatively simple explanation of a very complex thing. It does not call for decolonization, for justice, or for the end of white supremacy. It also points no fingers and lays no blame, while offering people the opportunity to see racism as biological, ubiquitous, and inevitable. As such, IRB approaches are likely to stick around for a while. Although its popularity may lie in these very limitations, IRB also appears to provide an important opportunity, if used critically, to provoke deeper thinking and understanding. Racism acts as a mechanism for naturalizing and justifying racial inequity. While race has no biological basis, it has tremendous social implications. Understanding more about the neurological and evolutionary reasons for the popularity of race as a tool—wielded socially to privilege and punish—can help us understand the world around us. While racism may seem ubiquitous, inevitable, and widespread, these qualities are a call to action rather than a placation. We can use IRB approaches to identify associations and related behaviours of which we are unaware and which are tied to larger social and historical phenomena; why, for example, a small physical gesture such as moving away from someone in an elevator may have a whole lot to do with colonialism and slavery; or why crossing the street to put distance between you

and another person, may be related to a lifetime of racist media exposure. In the classroom, engaging questions of implicit race bias may help teachers identify why and how they assess students differently by race (or call on, or punish, or have an affinity for, etc.). Importantly, implicit race bias can also serve as an analytical doorway through which to better understand the violence done to those we avoid in the world (in elevators, on the street, in the classroom etc.). In short summary, with the engagements argued for here, IRB may provide valuable pedagogical entry points for race learning and for critical practice, reflection, and reflexivity for enacting racial justice at the individual, institutional, structural, and systemic levels.

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## Sequestered Spaces, Public Places

### The Responsibility of Intellectuals Who Teach Within the “Safe Zones” of the Neoliberal University

Eric J. Weiner

An intransigent form of identity politics in combination with neoliberal ideology has left the modern university, if not in ruins, then lacking, at the very least, in a sociological imagination capable of making distinctions between individual problems and public issues. Within this context, *responsible intellectuals who teach* must navigate a minefield of weaponized ideologies on both the right and left. The phrase echoes Noam Chomsky’s ideas about the responsibility of intellectuals<sup>1</sup> as well as Henry Giroux’s ideas about teachers working as intellectuals.<sup>2</sup> Unlike the teachers in Giroux’s formulation who must learn how to act as intellectuals, intellectuals are not typically trained in pedagogy, curriculum design, or assessment. They are nevertheless expected to be effective teachers. Intellectuals within the neoliberal university that take teaching seriously are immediately confronted with pressure from the administration to adhere to market-based standards of learning/teaching/assessment, while also trying to appease a broad collection of identity-based interests that are demanding safe spaces and comfort zones within the teaching/learning context. What this means for the intellectual who wants to be responsible in the Chomskian sense—speaking the truth and exposing lies—the challenges presented from administration and student-body are enormous.

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In 2020, the university is a place of sequestered spaces—symbolic and real—where too many students and faculty fear discussing issues deemed to be controversial, inappropriate, or “political.” Across the social sciences/humanities, politics, religion, sex, sexual orientation, climate change, science, gender, economic inequality, poverty, reproductive rights/regulations, homelessness, race, Trump, democracy, capitalism, patriarchy, anti-Semitism, Israel, terrorism, gun violence, sexual violence, and white supremacy are just some of the “taboo” topics that today make students and even some teachers uncomfortable. At best maybe these topics are addressed by creating some kind of false equivalence in an effort to feign neutrality and keep people comfortable. Discomfort in the classroom from ignorance, tension, power imbalances, conflict, disagreement, or any degree of affective and cognitive dissonance is no longer tolerated. While it used to be considered a fundamental part of the critical learning experience, discomfort of this sort now signals a flaw in pedagogy and/or the curriculum. Learning should always feel good, be nurturing, and, above all, fun. If it’s not, then there is hell to pay.

The fear of being emotionally and intellectually uncomfortable and the strategies used to avoid it come from all over the ideological spectrum. Avoidance strategies, from the right and left, take the discursive form of accusations about political bias; political (in)correctness-gone-wild; claims of social/intellectual marginalization; censoring viewpoints (books, speakers, media) that are deemed offensive; silencing people through various forms of protest; creating “safe spaces;” and policing, through different modes of surveillance, language, thoughts, and behavior. Retreating into intellectual silos on campus and online, students and teachers find comfort and solace in group-think, shared social practices, and aligned ideologies. The cost of these avoidance strategies for the individual and the republic, is a form of idiocy, from the Greek “idiotes,” which describes a person who cannot participate in political and intellectual life because of their lack of skills, knowledge, and general ignorance about the responsibilities of civic life. At the same time the left and right are doing their best to defang the critical function of the university, most universities are now aligned with neoliberal ideology, focusing on market-based competition, branding, privatization, the de-unionization of faculty/staff, and job training. Within this toxic brew of schooling, tribalism, and ideology, students are seen (and generally want to be seen) first and foremost as children in need of protection, entertainment, and comfort; savvy and influential consumers; agile agents of social media unofficially employed to promote their schools; and docile members of the university “family.”

Identity politics and the rise of PC culture is not, of course, all bad. We know from progressives that race, class, sexual orientation, age, gender, ethnicity, religion, nationality, the “body” (which includes everything from hair color and height to weight and posture), geography, and discourse matter (I’m sure I left out a lot of other things that also matter, so include them in this list as well). We also acknowledge the importance of what is now called the “intersectionality” of

these identities, meaning quite simply that a person can't be reduced to just one of these things, but instead simultaneously are a cross section of all of these things. True in theory, it is unclear how in the concrete world of experience (not imagined but things that actually happen), these intersectional identities *differentially* matter across changing contexts and shifting ideological landscapes. The fluidity of experience makes taking an account of *how* these intersectionalities matter at any given time a daunting task. One could say that even if it was possible to do so in some generalizable way, it would always be an analysis stuck in hindsight. As such, its predictive powers are diminished. It is also unclear how this theoretical reach into the realm of intersectionality doesn't turn back into a new/old version of liberal humanism. Doesn't intersectionality reference what is essentially a composite representation of a universal subject wrapped in the kaleidoscopic hues of transactional identities?

But before we pluralized identity, it was used in its singular ("essential") form as a blunt and powerful instrument for the development of social movements. The power of identity to organize the hearts and minds of an organic activist constituency can't be understated. Civil, labor, gay, and women's rights movements would not have been as successful as they were had they not gained power and knowledge from the experiences of these fundamental identifications. But these movements were never inclusive nor democratic. They assumed a subject and told a particular story. Not everyone who benefited and was an active part of these movements matched the imagined subject of the official story. Women of color and poor women of color troubled the White middle-class narrative of female empowerment and solidarity by second wave feminists. Women and men of color and gay people troubled the White male working class narrative of labor. Gay people troubled the heteronormative narrative of Black nationalism. Transgendered people of color troubled gay liberation movements. Poor people troubled middle-class movements for economic opportunity.

But identity politics is not just for liberal or "left-oriented" activists as the right would have us believe. Historically people have always made appeals to a singular cultural identity as a viable form of political organizing and activism. White nationalism, as historian Jill Lepore correctly points out, is just another example—a powerful example—of identity politics.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, Nazism's association to the Aryan "race" is identity politics. Being a recognized and associative member of the ruling political class is as much a discourse of identity as being working class. Identity politics is simply tribalism by another name. And what is true about all tribal movements is they eventually lead to some form of warfare. Sherman Alexie says it forcefully: "(The) end game of tribalism—when you become so identified with only one thing, one tribe, is that other people are just metaphors to you."

One of the challenges of working in this kind of environment is trying to manage competing claims for comfort and safety. When I was working towards my

Master's degree in literature at University of Massachusetts Boston, I was lucky to be able to take a course in sociolinguistics from Dr. Donaldo Macedo.<sup>4</sup> He told us a story about a graduate seminar he taught in the 1990s in which language/literacy, power and oppression were the topics being discussed. The students were all female except for the professor and, with the exception of three African American women, all identified as Caucasian. When the African American women started speaking about their experiences of racism while also sharing with the White women in the class how they perceived them as complicit beneficiaries of that same racist system, the White women vehemently disagreed. They redirected the inquiry, asserting that patriarchy, not racism and White supremacy, was the more significant and relevant system of oppression that they should be discussing because, as women, it affected them all in a similar way. They didn't feel privileged because of their race, but instead felt victimized and oppressed by male-dominated systems and social structures. Any privilege that they might have because of their race, they argued, was nullified under the regime of patriarchy. According to Dr. Macedo, the White women then demanded a "time-out" because they said if they were forced to have a dialogue about racism/White supremacy with their African American peers then they needed an established "comfort zone" before they would speak about the issue. They said they were not comfortable addressing these issues and felt unfairly threatened and attacked by the African American women. The White women wanted a "safe space" in which they didn't have to engage with people who they felt were unreasonably angry and made them feel guilty, afraid and uncomfortable. They requested that the professor "mediate" the dialogue in a way that would protect them from what they perceived as a hostile learning environment. They wanted him to place constraints over how language was being used to describe, construct, and interpret experiences, and how body language was being used to convey anger, pain, amusement, surprise, incredulity, etc. Their request put Dr. Macedo in an untenable situation. He knew that if he were to do this the space of learning would no longer be safe or comfortable for the African American female students. In response to their request, the African American women pointed out that within the context of White supremacy *and* patriarchy they, as women of color, enjoyed no such presumption of privilege, safety or comfort. Indeed, when White people demand a comfort zone before engaging in a dialogue with people of color about racism they are leveraging the power they get, within the structures of White supremacy, from being White. For one group, what is safe becomes for another dangerous, silencing and oppressive.

My concern is that there is a proliferation of demands from across the ideological spectrum that place individual comfort over critical learning. Critical learning describes a process in which students and teachers analyze the intersectional networks of power/knowledge, identity, ideology, socio-cultural-political structures, and language within and across academic disciplines. The goal is to teach students how to think critically about social, political and cultural issues so

that they can make informed decisions in their lives across a variety of contexts, i.e., work, relationships, family, governance, economy, health, culture, environment, and education.

Within higher education, fostering critical learning is no simple task as it demands that we make students, on some level, uncomfortable. By making “the familiar strange and the strange familiar,”<sup>5</sup> as Henry Giroux has written, critical teaching provokes cognitive and affective dissonance thereby disrupting the ideological coherence of thoughts and actions habituated through the normalization of hegemonic relations of power. In less technical language, critical teaching means coaxing students to think about their relationship to social, political, and cultural things in a way that potentially makes them uncomfortable. It is a praxis of what C. Wright Mills called the “sociological imagination”; that is, a way for students to theorize and interrogate how their private troubles are actually public issues. It was essential, according to Mills, that people learn to connect their personal experiences to social structures. To have a sociological imagination is to be a la Charles Lemert, sociologically competent.<sup>6</sup>

Critical educators do this through various pedagogical practices and curricular decisions. In plain language, many students, like fish that don’t know they’re in water until they flop out or are removed from the bowl, are unaware of how systems of thought/action condition their experiences and knowledge until they are taught about the existence of these systems. The systems, like water to fish, remain visibly invisible to students until they experience some cognitive and affective dissonance, i.e., get removed from the water. Not to push the metaphor too far, but if you ever watched a fish outside of its watery home desperately flop, writhe and twist, it’s not a pretty sight. Struggling to breath, fighting for its life, it needs to be put back in the water or it will soon die. People struggling with the effects of cognitive and affective dissonance typically don’t die (I haven’t lost one yet!), yet they might act as though they will. And like any sentient being that perceives her life is at stake, she will typically fight or flee. Neither is a great choice in the context of critical teaching/learning.

Taking these ideas up in a complex and powerful way, Alan Fox’s new play *Safe Space* had its inaugural run at Bay Street theater in Sag Harbor this summer. “Safe Space is set at an elite university and explores political correctness and the reaction to triggers on campus in America today. When a star African American professor faces accusations of racism from a student, the head of the college must intervene, setting off an explosive chain of events where each of them must navigate an ever-changing minefield of identity politics, ethics, and core beliefs” (<http://www.baystreet.org/calendar/safe-space/>).

I attended the July 19<sup>th</sup> performance and was immediately transported back to an undergraduate class I taught in 2018 in which a twenty-year-old student (and her parents) accused me of being insensitive, bigoted, and demeaning to her Italian culture and ethnicity. Like the African American history professor in the play who

is accused of violating his students' safety and comfort by having them write an essay which asks them to imagine how the founding fathers might have justified or rationalized owning slaves, I asked my students to think about the emotional investment some Italian Americans have in the "official" story of Christopher Columbus (great explorer, discoverer of America, etc.) even as the historical record is clear about the genocidal horror he exacted on the Taino people as well as other documented atrocities he oversaw like rape, torture, disfigurement, and slavery.

One woman raised her hand when I asked, a proud Italian American who grew up in a home that celebrated Christopher Columbus and saw him as a source of national and ethnic pride. We then went on to discuss how significant these "affective investments" can be for people. My question about affective investments in the story of Columbus and their ethnic, racial, national, and gendered identities was intended to provoke all the students in the class to think about how their interpretation of history is powerfully shaped by their identities or in James Gee's terms, their "primary discourse." The lesson then turned to a discussion about the statue of Christopher Columbus in Columbus Circle in Manhattan and whether students agreed with those people that wanted it taken down or whether they believed it should stay up. Finally, I arbitrarily assigned half the class to the side that wanted it down or the side that was in support of keeping it up. In groups, students were to design posters that they would take to an imagined rally at Columbus circle in support or in protest of the statue. We then "met" at the imagined location and staged a faux protest, with lots of sign waving and yelling. I quickly brought an end to the yelling and screaming and had each side articulate the reasoning behind their side's position on the matter. They had read a number of articles and book chapters that laid bare the core ideas and assumptions of both sides of this issue. And that was that. Or so I thought.

In the play *Safe Space*, the assignment, from the professor's perspective, was an exercise in critical thinking, intended to provoke students to consider the complexities and contradictions that inform the history of the United States and by extension their personal histories as well. Similarly, the focus in my course was on teaching future teachers how to effectively/affectively teach certain events in American history through artistic projects. As is true in all the courses I teach, thinking critically and creatively is at the heart of all the content and drives my critical pedagogy. In contrast to the support Columbus gets from some Italian-Americans and many other people not of Italian ethnicity, I asked them to consider how indigenous people might think about him. I also asked them to think about how they would teach indigenous people about Columbus and to think about the pedagogical implications of these affective investments from the perspectives of both the student and teacher. This means that students must think about the cognitive as well as emotional challenges of thinking critically and creatively about issues that are fundamental to the formation of their identities as well as their future students' identities.

The student who raised her hand sent me an email the next day that said she

was offended by my question and that she felt singled out and embarrassed. I said I felt horrible that she felt that way after my class and that I was sorry I did something that made her feel that way as it is never my intention to make a student feel either embarrassed or singled out. I did not however fully understand how what I did made her feel the way that she did. But feelings, as is stated in the play, are non-falsifiable, i.e., they are hers and therefore are real and valid and no one can say otherwise. I explained that the point of my question (ironic in the face of her email and her stated feelings) was to get students to be sensitive to the affective and cognitive investments that their future students will inevitably have in a variety of historical stories and historical figures. In the service of critical/creative thought, it is not enough to simply provide the most rigorous examples of the historical record but to be attuned to how students' identities have been shaped by familial associations in what might be a highly distorted or rationalized historical story.

In short, as critical thinking scholar Stephen Brookfield suggests, we have to try and understand how the emotional *and* cognitive work in concert if we want to be able to take a complex accounting of the habituated assumptions and practices that guide people's beliefs and actions. One way to provoke this critical response to habituated thoughts and actions is to denaturalize knowledge and experience, i.e., make the familiar strange and the strange familiar. These critical interventions can make some students uncomfortable. Indeed, this is the point.

But in our current time in which students are demanding "safe spaces" in which to learn and socialize, and the university imagines them primarily as children and consumers the question arises as to whether the university can maintain or in some cases reassert its critical function in a democratic society. If safety comes to mean comfort then the pedagogical act of creating cognitive and affective dissonance will be read as an attack on her/his safety. In the play, the student at one point says to the Dean that she expected to always feel emotionally safe at the college because she was told it should feel like home. Along with an opportunity to earn a degree, this is what she thought she was buying when she chose to attend the college. The university *as* home is a deleterious reduction as it makes faculty and administration *de facto* parents or some kind of extended family. One consequence of this is that students never have to grow up. A process of infantilization has been built into the very architecture of the neoliberal university and students, parents and even some faculty and administrators seem to relish the arrangement.

The email exchange with my student was followed by another that was much more caustic and directly accused me of disrespecting, degrading and demeaning her Italian heritage and ethnicity. I immediately requested an in-person meeting so we could work out our differences. In the eighteen years I've been doing this work, I have always been able to resolve any issue with a student with a face-to-face meeting in my office. I was surprised when she replied that she would not meet me because she was not comfortable speaking with me in my office. I suggested she bring a friend if that would make it a safer and more comfortable space. She

refused. At this point, I brought the Chair of my department into the conversation. She volunteered to mediate the meeting. Again, the student refused to meet on the grounds that my Chair was biased against her. During these exchanges, the student's father called the President of the university multiple times questioning why a professor was allowed to demean, degrade, and discriminate against his daughter because of her Italian heritage. The father, it turns out, was a major figure in the Knights of Columbus and, if memory serves, the head of the local Columbus Day parade committee. This, we were told, had nothing to do with their response to my lesson about Columbus.

Similar to the professor in the play, I was questioned as to what actually occurred in the class, was asked to document my recollection of the exchange, justify in writing what the intention of the lesson was and how it matched the goals and learning objectives of the class. I provided all of this to the Chair, Assistant Dean, Dean of the College, and President's office. I also brought in the head of our local union. I then received a letter from an Italian American Association threatening me and the university and asking for documentation proving that the university was committed to non-discriminatory practices relating specifically to Italian heritage. At this point, the student was no longer communicating to anyone about her issues, yet she continued not only to come to class each week, but to actively participate in discussions and activities. The student never filed a formal complaint with the assistant dean and never had a meeting with him either. She kept coming to class and finished out the semester. In the play, the actions of the student resulted in the removal of the African American professor and the forced retirement of the college's first female Dean. I am happy to report that I still have a job and am in good standing with the college and university. Tenure matters. Unions matter.

I don't know if the student ever really understood the chaos she caused by refusing to discuss, in person, the issue we were having. Instead of dealing with the conflict like a mature adult, she acted just like the child her parents and the university imagined her to be and like the female character in the play, she was able to use technology effectively, weaponize her identity, and define her emotional response to dissonance as a form of symbolic violence. Resting on the lessons learned from some iterations of identity politics, she felt victimized by a curriculum and pedagogy that sought to bring attention to the complex processes from which identities are formed. In the case of the play and my classroom, "identity politics" in combination with the diminished intellectual authority of the neoliberal university challenged the critical function of higher education.

At a light-hearted moment in the play, the professor is talking with the Dean about the student's demands that they both be replaced by people who *know* how she *feels* as a woman of Asian descent. They start thinking seriously that maybe the next dean should be a woman of Asian descent, but then they think maybe the African American women on campus would not feel represented, not to mention the Italians and Jews, or gay working class people of Haitian descent. And on and

on. The dean also questions the student's demand for the creation of segregated "safe spaces" throughout the college, based upon gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, religion, etc. "How can we critically learn about how people are thinking and feeling," the Dean asks, "if we are sequestered in our safe spaces?" The demand for "safe spaces" moves us further away from the idea of the university as, a la Nancy Fraser, an alternative or counter public sphere<sup>7</sup> and as such further away from establishing the university as an institution that can support a diversity of people and viewpoints. What does it say that the "progressive" move around identity echoes some of the most reactionary rationalizations for segregation?

We all want a certain degree of safety in these troubling times. We want respect, fairness, opportunities to grow, and solid communities in which our children without fear can learn and play. But we also need to be open and able to talk about our differences and through our differences. In speaking about our differences, each tribe must accept that they might have to listen to some things that are very uncomfortable and disturbing. As Vaclav Havel said, we must learn to listen more and explain less. In the wake of #metoo, many men have started to do just that. Yet it seems that many women don't want to hear men explain *their* experiences of masculinity/sexuality, dismissing all comments as "mansplaining." No doubt that mansplaining is a problematic response to feminist critiques of toxic masculinity, patriarchy, and sexual harassment. But there is an important distinction between justifying and explaining, and I am not sure tribal discourses can account for such nuance. People must be able to explain without being accused of justifying actions and behaviors that are deemed inappropriate. We must also be able to understand the difference between justification and explanation. Tribalism makes this very difficult to do as explanations *sound* like justifications when filtered through intransigent discourses. We must learn how to be nuanced and flexible in our thinking and open to the possibility that our experiences and our emotional responses to those experiences might not be the only thing that is important to consider. We must try harder to formulate a shared ethics in which our common concerns and interests are measured within the context of our differences. For higher education to become a place in which students can critically learn, we must embrace ambiguity while using the best information and resources we have to determine, beyond true and false, what is right and wrong. Our dialogue should deepen and we must be prepared to experience discomfort when learning new ways of knowing, especially when these new ways of knowing trouble what we thought we already knew.

Moving this project forward within the context of school culture are teachers who function as intellectuals and intellectuals who function as teachers. As quite a bit has already been written about the former, I will turn to discuss some of the specific challenges intellectuals face when they teach in this environment. A good starting point for this discussion is Noam Chomsky's influential essay "The Responsibility of Intellectuals."<sup>8</sup>

A lot has changed since 1967, the year Noam Chomsky's essay threw damning shade at the intelligentsia—particularly those in the social and political sciences—as well as those that supported what he called the “cult of expertise,” an ideological formation of professors, philosophers, scientists, military strategists, economists, technocrats, and foreign policy wonks, some of who believed the general public was ill-equipped (i.e., too stupid) to make decisions about the Vietnam war without experts to make it for them. For others in this cult, the public represented a real threat to established power and its operations in Vietnam, not because they were too stupid to understand foreign policy, but because they would understand it all too well. They had a sense that the public, if they learned the facts, wouldn't support their foreign policy. Of course, in retrospect, we know that this is exactly what happened. Once the facts of the operation leaked out or were exposed by Chomsky and others like him, the majority of people disagreed with the “experts.” Soon there were new experts to provide rationalizations for why and how the old experts got it wrong, but not before a groundswell of popular protest and resistance turned the political tide and gave a glimpse at the power of everyday people—the “excesses of democracy”—to control the fate of the nation and the world.

Chomsky has consistently been confident that people who were not considered experts in foreign affairs were as capable if not more so to decide what was right and wrong without the expert as a guide. This is one of the things that continues to make Chomsky such a threat to the established order. He has faith in the public's ability to think critically (i.e., reasonably, morally, and logically) about foreign affairs and other governmental actions at the local and national levels. For Chomsky, the promise of democracy begins and ends with the people. He does not have the same confidence that those in positions of power will give the public the facts so that they can make good and reasonable decisions. But this does not mean that Chomsky uncritically embraces the public simply because it is the public. He does not support, nor has he ever, the cult of willful ignorance; that is, those members of the public—experts, intellectuals or laypeople—who, as Kierkegaard wrote, “refuse to believe what is true.”

He is not a relativist and thinks postmodern theory is incoherent. Truth, for Chomsky, is not a relative concept. Rather, he believes in the need for an educated citizenry that can think logically and reasonably about pressing social and political issues. An educated citizenry with free access to factual information can evaluate the information independent of expert analysis. He contends that if democracy is to have any chance of success then people have to be educated in a way that provides them the tools to be able to critically evaluate information for whether it is true and also decide if the actions that the information implies are ethical. Without this kind of educated citizenry, democracy, according to Chomsky (and many others), will surely collapse and eventually be replaced by some form of authoritarianism.

Because he is recognized, by fans and critics alike, as a leading public intellectual as well as an expert in the fields of philosophy and linguistics, some have

read Chomsky's views on the intellectual and the official role of experts as ironic at best and hypocritical at worse. But maybe the criticism arises from the way language is being used to obfuscate rather than elucidate truth. For Chomsky, the essential responsibility of intellectuals "is to speak the truth and to expose lies." From this perspective, Chomsky's issue is not with the intellectual but with those who identify as such but do not function in this way. Those who have been identified as intellectuals but do not function in this capacity are pseudo-intellectuals (charlatans) at best and, at worse, are using their authority to undercut civic agency, perpetuate the status-quo, support established power and its abuses, and manufacture consent for ideas and policies that run counter to the interests of those outside of official power. Chomsky is neither against intellectuals nor the value of having expertise but rather critical of people who use the title "intellectual" and "expert" to impose untruths and veil lies behind a distortion of facts, omission of information, jargon and/or unnecessarily complex language, a project of miseducation, censorship, and by blocking access to information that should be available in a free and democratic society.

Intellectuals, in order to be able "to speak the truth and expose lies" must understand how ideology works in the form of official institutions and everyday life. Ideological analysis is not simple and requires specific knowledge and skills. My grandfather, who had an 8th grade education and grew up a very poor, Jewish refugee from Russia, had this knowledge and these skills. He was a voracious reader and essentially self-educated. He functioned as an intellectual although his expertise was in managing a television and electronics repair store. One had little or nothing to do with the other. Yet he was committed to speaking the truth and was capable of exposing lies because of his literacy and self-education. He was not schooled, but rather was educated through his reading of history, social theory, philosophy, political science, biographies, and religion. He had a deep and wide-ranging library. Having served in WWI, he came back a pacifist, horrified by the destruction and suffering he experienced. He was also a "card-carrying" socialist, anti-racist, proud American, and active member of his synagogue. He could discern lies through ideological analyses and by reading beyond official accounts. He could evaluate whether something was right or wrong by combining his experiential knowledge with his book knowledge of ethics and morality. His literacy and library card were his keys to becoming a version of Chomsky's intellectual. What he didn't have was time. He worked six days a week and five nights. His name was Samuel Oliver Barrish (He would joke that he was a proper SOB). He was born in 1896 and lived 96 years.

In our current historical juncture, Chomsky's critique of the intellectual and the cult of expertise is still as relevant today as it was in 1967, yet complicated by a hegemonic surge of anti-intellectualism and the established cult of willful ignorance. In short, anti-intellectualism is a suspicion and outright rejection of complexity, reasoned analysis, facts, and grounded theory. From Ph.D.s to high

school dropouts and everyone in between, anti-intellectualism is an equal opportunity employer, attracting people from all walks of life who must work hard to remain wrapped in a veil of ignorance. Of course, anti-intellectuals would never acknowledge their anti-intellectualism as a form of ignorance. Rather, these people are happily members of the cult of willful ignorance, refusing “to believe what is true,” especially when what is true challenges or contradicts what they think they know.

More generally, anti-intellectualism is a state of mind; a set of social practices; a network of associations; a formation of knowledge; a Discourse; a tribal identification; a circuit of intertextual mediums that deliver content; a set of dispositions, propositions and attitudes; a structure of power and authority; and a transformative cultural and political force. In the modern university generally, and in certain colleges and departments more specifically (i.e., education, teacher-training, business, finance), anti-intellectualism has been institutionalized at an ideological level. Instrumentality rules with the power of commonsense, while the work of intellectuals is marginalized, dismissed as impractical, or considered beyond the scope of their academic and institutional responsibilities. Outside of the university, anti-intellectualism has found its champion in a president who rejects any facts that challenge his authority, while gleefully and without irony manufacturing “alternative facts” from the mantle of power/knowledge.

Anti-intellectualism of this nature arises like smoke from the fires of neoliberal capitalism, neo-conservatism, reductive masculinist ideology, certain expressions of working-class culture, intransigent forms of identity politics, positivism, and the liberal wings of academia. Within these overlapping contexts, the work of intellectuals signals a form of labor that has no recognizable value within capitalist ideology because it can’t easily be commodified (this doesn’t mean it hasn’t); carries connotations of privilege and elitism; is perceived as left-leaning and an attack on tradition; effeminate because it is disconnected from manual labor; and politically impotent because of its tendency to embrace a form of post-modern relativity.

From silos on the Left and Right, the intellectual is dismissed as out-of-touch, disconnected from the real-world problems of everyday people who are struggling to make ends meet, take the kids to after-school activities, feed their families, fix a leaky toilet, care for their elderly, and walk the dog. In bipartisan fashion, intellectuals are represented as caricatures jabbering incoherently in jargon-riddled language telling the rest of us the right way to act, think, use language, shop, watch media, use technology, and eat. Intellectuals, from this anti-intellectual perspective, are self-righteous and moralistic. Whether or not they act better, they always seem to know better. From silos on the Right, intellectuals are imagined as almost exclusively liberal and more recently as an instrument, however ineffective, of a radical socialist agenda intent on destroying capitalism, gender norms, national identity, and official history. These intellectuals should be feared but also ridiculed for being silly and politically impotent.

Against the backdrop of these representations—the good, bad, and ugly—of

the intellectual, I want to briefly discuss the responsibility of intellectuals who teach. For my purposes here, I am not concerned with the age level of the students that are being taught. I will be limiting my comments to the responsibility of intellectuals who teach in formal school settings. Although pedagogy happens through all kinds of medium and within all sorts of institutions, my comments are limited to this population of educators. Intellectuals as teachers, for some reading this, will immediately call to mind Giroux's influential book *Teachers as Intellectuals* (1988). Indeed, my thoughts about the responsibility of intellectuals who teach were stirred by his book.

His book was a critical intervention into what he argued was a hegemonic anti-intellectualism within teacher-education and the teaching profession. What he identified was a form of education that deskilled teachers, preventing them from knowing how to design curriculum and enact pedagogical practices that could challenge the official curriculum. The official curriculum was the curriculum that certain experts had designed and, as many have pointed out over the decades, primarily served the interests of the ruling class, White people, heterosexuals, and men. There is too much literature to review and cite regarding the research about the official curriculum, but suffice it to say that I think it is compelling, provocative and uncontroversial.

Teachers as intellectuals, for Giroux and echoing Chomsky, meant that they would speak the truth and uncover lies in the context of their "content-area" knowledge; the official curriculum in their schools, districts, states, and country; and with regard to their pedagogical responsibility to prepare students to be able to participate in democratic life. As one of the thought-developers of "critical pedagogy," a praxis of teaching and learning that sees schooling as a socializing institution and therefore servicing particular ideological interests, Giroux's thoughts about teachers as intellectuals add another layer to Chomsky's in that teachers, in addition to speaking the truth and uncovering lies within the context of schooling, also have an ethical responsibility to teach their students how to recognize and interrogate lies and how to create the conditions by which the truths they are learning to speak can be heard.

Teachers as intellectuals are encouraged to think about their role in the school as a corrective, if needed, to anti-democratic techniques of power. These forces, when naturalized within dominant standards of learning and teaching essentially become invisible to students and teachers alike. But instead of representing a neutral or balanced standard of teaching and curricular design, these forces have historically helped to reproduce the status quo of inequity in terms of race, class, gender, nationalism, and sexuality. As such, teachers as intellectuals who are working within the framework of critical pedagogy have an ethical responsibility to disrupt the continuity of these indoctrinating narratives in an effort to provide students with an opportunity to learn the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to fully participate in democratic institutions. Giroux saw the need for the develop-

ment of this new kind of teacher—the teacher as intellectual—because of how de-professionalized and de-skilled teachers were and how normalized anti-democratic ideology had become in curriculum and pedagogy. When obeying authority rather than questioning it becomes the sign of a good student (or teacher), we have moved the needle that much farther away from educating a citizenry that can be self-governing. Within the ranks of teacher-education, this move away from democratic skills, knowledge, and dispositions can be seen in the fact that the more educated many of these pre-service and in-service teachers become, the less able they are to speak the truth, uncover lies, and teach their students how to think critically about the workings of ideology, knowledge, and power.

I want to invert Giroux’s framing of the issue, not because teachers are now widely working as intellectuals (his book from 1988 still speaks to a growing problem in teacher-education in 2020), but because there are many intellectuals that teach and have no idea about what it means to be an effective critical educator. So rather than emphasize the intellectual responsibilities of teachers, I want to highlight in broad strokes some of the major pedagogical and curricular responsibilities of intellectuals who teach. I am not going to speak about those “intellectuals” that are not “speaking the truth and uncovering lies.” My thoughts about the responsibilities of intellectuals who teach are confined to those intellectuals who see their essential responsibility as intellectuals as telling the truth and uncovering lies. Bringing this commitment into the classroom and school is easier said than done.

First, there are a few different kinds of responsible intellectuals who teach. This doesn’t, in the end, affect their essential responsibilities, but it may affect how open they are to thinking critically about their role as a teacher. Some intellectuals who teach do it begrudgingly because it is a requirement of their position at a university, college, or other type of school. I call these teacher-intellectuals the “Aristocrats” as they are beholden to no one, rarely if ever wrong, already know everything they need to know, and rule over their classrooms as though it was their fiefdom. The Aristocrats are the hardest to reach because they don’t see themselves as teachers at all and think about teaching as a hindrance and beneath their work as responsible intellectuals. Even though they are committed to speaking the truth and uncovering lies, students are thought of as an inconvenience, theories and practices of teaching and learning are beneath them or beside the point, and curriculum design is no more complicated than compiling a list of books and articles about a topic. Pedagogy is reduced to some form of lecture or “Socratic dialogue,” with the Aristocrat funneling truths and uncovered lies into the empty minds of his/her students. It matters little whether or not the students learn what he/she has taught. If students learn, then that is good. If they do not, then there is probably something wrong with the students.

Another group of intellectual-teachers, I call the “Actors.” This group of intellectual-teachers loves teaching, but primarily because it provides a stage for his/

her to disseminate the truths and share the lies he/she has uncovered. The classroom is but a stage and all the students her/his captive audience. An animated and engaging lecturer, the Actor often gets high ratings from her/his students' teacher evaluations. On "Rate My Professor," the Actor is consistently praised for being cool, funny, and easy. The Actor needs this kind of affirmation and when the truths s/he shares and the lies s/he uncovers appear to make her/his students uncomfortable, the Actor works hard to soften the effect by creating false equivalences, acknowledging that s/he might be wrong, or changing the subject. The Actor is a relativist in intellectual garb and when threatened with a bad review because s/he has introduced students to uncomfortable truths about the world or themselves, s/he immediately backs off and tries to make the lies and truths relative. S/he does this through an appeal to context, perspective, complexity, and the ambiguity of theory. There is a streak of cowardice that animates the pedagogical work of the Actor. Her/his speech is often punctuated by the rhetorical strategy of creating false equivalences and dichotomies where there are none by framing the issue with the phrase, "On the one hand...but on the other hand..." Even though s/he knows that teaching students to think critically about whatever it is s/he is teaching can result in them "blaming the messenger," s/he is ultimately more concerned with being "liked" than with being a responsible intellectual-teacher. The more "likes" s/he receives, the more she performs to her audience's expectations. These may or may not support speaking the truth and uncovering lies.

The next group of intellectual-teachers I call the "Wizards." This group embraces, without irony or apology, post-modern theories about truths and lies. This does not mean that they ignore the truth or hide lies. It also doesn't mean that they don't find value in speaking truths and uncovering lies. Rather, the Wizards spend most of their time on exploring complexity through a theoretical analysis of changing historical contexts, situated perspectives of intersectional identities, post-structural views of language/signs/signifiers, and power/knowledge dynamics that are "always already" conditioning our everyday experiences. The Wizard doesn't care too much if the students don't like him/her but s/he is troubled as to why they always seem so confused. Complexity for the Wizards is not a diversion as it is for the cowardly Actor but an honest attempt to struggle with what they understand as the historicity of truth and lies. These intellectual-teachers will speak truths and uncover lies, but immediately put air quotes around almost everything in order to signal to their bewildered students the relativity of whatever truth they have spoken and whatever lie they have uncovered. Theoretically incoherent, pedagogically confusing, and ethically relative, they never seem to be able to come to any concrete conclusions about what to do in the face of the truths and lies that they have been teaching. But they are incredibly enthusiastic, creative and committed to understanding the slippery social, cultural and political conditions that construct our intersectional identities and give people and/or deny them access to real opportunities. Co-optation and commodification are real risks for the Wiz-

ards, as there are not any fixed meanings upon which to get their political footing, and frankly, the more slippery the slope, the better.

The last group of intellectual-teachers I will discuss are the “Neo-Critics.” These folks have no issue with courage, likability, speaking the truth, or uncovering lies. Critique is their “tool” of choice and they enter the classroom ready to expose not only the lies but the liars as well. The truth is something that is spoken loudly, without nuance, caveat, or the complication of intersecting contexts of time or place. If the Wizards drift too far into relativism, then the Neo-Critics can put too many eggs into the basket of modernity. Their work is both theoretical, drawing energy from a diversity of thinkers across disciplines, within “high” and “popular” culture, as well as being historical in nature. The Neo-Critics are, in the lexicon of the day, social justice warriors, the implication being that they speak the truth and uncover lies in the service of not just helping students understand oppression but by using their authority as teachers to work with students to overcome it. The line between Neo-Critics as teachers vs. activists can be a fine line that can be easily and problematically crossed.

Using their position as intellectual-teachers, they take explicit positions against racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of oppression and violence. They do this in the name of honesty and authenticity, arguing that students, if they know what the teacher’s position is, can argue against it. Generally astute to the workings of power, the Neo-Critics blind spot regarding inequity within the context of the classroom can be befuddling. How they take a position might be the difference between becoming the very thing they rail against, namely another force that is silencing, marginalizing, and, in its own way, oppressive to certain groups. To be an effective educator, how one represents the truth and uncovers lies has a lot to do with how deeply the students learn about these truths and lies. This is how and why it is possible for the responsible intellectual to become an ineffective intellectual-teacher. In the worst instance, the responsible intellectual in speaking the truth and uncovering lies does not in the end teach his/her students anything, but instead repels the students away from the truth, with the uncovered lies hiding in plain sight behind her/his students’ ideological biases. In short, the Neo-Critic can be, and often is, theoretically right, but pedagogically wrong.

In broad strokes, here are some things the Aristocrats, Actors, Wizards, and Neo-Critics—all responsible intellectuals—might want to think about as they design their curriculum and perform their pedagogies so that the truths they speak and the lies they uncover can be learned by the students they teach.

1. Begin with where your students are, not where you want them to be. Your students are not empty-headed, docile bodies waiting expectantly for your knowledge. They come to your class with their heads full of ideas, bodies vibrating with experiences, and family histories running through their veins. They are subjects of learning,

not objects. As such, they need to be included to varying degrees in the learning process.

2. Teaching is performative. Our voice must be calibrated to the tenor of the time, place, and people we are teaching. We must find a way to be both authentic as well as sensitive to the fact that the way we represent ourselves has an impact on how deeply our students learn from us. I don't believe we can be effective for all students under all conditions all the time. But we can try to embody and represent intellectual integrity, a commitment to their learning, a respect for their knowledge and experience, and a will to learn how they best learn. Honesty, humility and humor go a long way in creating an environment that is conducive to tackling difficult truths and lies. Conversely, arrogance, apathy, and moral ambiguity play less well.

3. We are not only located in a particular time and place, but we are located in terms of our cultural identities. When we enter the classroom, our students assign us a race/ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, and religion. They may not be conscious of making these assignments, but they do make them and there are pedagogical implications to knowing and anticipating what these assignments are. What are the dominant meanings of these identifications in the time and place in which you teach? What are the assumptions students may have about you if they are reading and accepting these dominant scripts? Rather than ignore these identifications as though you are not indeed speaking about your topic from a particular location, acknowledge how these identifications are shaping your attitudes and perspectives about the truths of which you speak and the lies you uncover. The inverse is also true in relation to your students' relationship to truth and lies and your assignment of identities to them.

4. When speaking the truth and uncovering lies in the classroom, students will become uncomfortable for a variety of reasons. This is not only unavoidable, but desirable. However, students have to feel comfortable being uncomfortable. This is not always possible and it is certainly not an easy thing to create. Trust, tolerance, and respect are three important ingredients that a teacher needs to be adding to the classroom environment in order to have any chance of not alienating some students. When the truths you speak and the lies you uncover challenge the deeply learned lessons of a student's past, the reaction can be quite disturbing. From shutting down to aggressively resisting the veracity of the truths you are speaking about, students who are in this state of heightened anger and fear are less likely to be able to unlearn the lies they have been taught in order to reflect on the truths that you speak. It's important to

understand how disturbing it can be for students to learn truths that upset their fundamental ideas about whatever it is you are teaching them. Belief systems that were thought to be grounded in systems of truth come with a whole set of rules for behavior, thought, identity, etc. When we disrupt these belief systems without recognizing how disturbing these disruptions can be on our student's sense of identity, then we miss an opportunity to deepen their critical understanding of their relationship to whatever it is you are trying to teach them.

5. Be kind, compassionate, and realize students are in a vulnerable state in relation to the power they have in the school. Although they do have "unofficial" power to disrupt, demean, demonize, resist, refuse, deny, etc., the real disciplinary power of schooling is manifested in our authority to assess their work, determine curriculum, and structure classroom pedagogies and assignments. The deep mistrust that many students have of teachers arises from an abuse of this authority or a perceived abuse of this authority. Either take the grades off the table, or be crystal clear as to what your expectations are. But make sure your expectations for their learning are coherent in the context of your teaching. When a teacher is progressive pedagogically, but conservative/traditional in terms of assessment, there is an incoherence that tells students the teacher is not really as progressive as their pedagogy suggests. What do you want your students to know, why should they know it, and how are you going to measure their learning? Are all of these considerations consistent with your understanding of what it means to be a responsible intellectual-teacher?

I'll conclude by simply saying that becoming a consistently responsible intellectual is increasingly difficult because of the hegemony of the cult of willful ignorance in combination with the audacity of those in positions of official power who collectively lie with a recklessness not seen in modern times. This makes being a consistently responsible intellectual-teacher also more difficult. Speaking the truth and uncovering lies in a way that is pedagogically critical and transformative while being sensitive to student diversity across a variety of disciplines and school-based contexts has always been challenging. Doing it in this toxic environment of intransigent identity politics in combination with a hegemonic neoliberal ideology is not without considerable risk.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1967/02/23/a-special-supplement-the-responsibility-of-intelle/>

<sup>2</sup> Giroux, Henry A., "Teachers as transformative intellectuals," pp. 121-128 in his *Teachers as intellectuals: Toward a critical pedagogy of learning*. Granby, MA: Bergin & Garvey, 1988.

<sup>3</sup> Lepore, Jill. 2018. *These truths: A history of the United States*. New York, NY: Norton.

<sup>4</sup> I worked with Donaldo Macedo while earning a Master's degree in literature at University of Massachusetts Boston in 1997.

<sup>5</sup> Giroux, Henry and McLaren, Peter. (Eds). 1989, *Critical pedagogy, the state and cultural struggle*. New York, NY: State University of New York Press.

<sup>6</sup> Lemert, Charles. 2012. *Social things* (5<sup>th</sup> Ed.). New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield.

<sup>7</sup> Fraser, Nancy. 1997. *Justice interruptus*. New York, NY: Routledge.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1967/02/23/a-special-supplement-the-responsibility-of-intelle/>

## Le Pragmatisme en France au XX<sup>e</sup> Siècle

Sabina Barbato

**Editorial note:** As part of *Taboo's* commitment to globalizing critical studies, we include a short essay by Sabina Barbato in both French and Italian. The article looks at the French position of Dewey's sense of education—rarely is this discussed in the educational academy in France. Sabina has been part of a growing group of students and scholars who are committed to bringing Critical Pedagogies to the European Union.

### Le pragmatisme en France au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle

À ce stade de la réflexion, il paraît clairement nécessaire de s'interroger sur la façon dont le pragmatisme a influencé l'école française et sur la façon dont il a été réellement perçu en ce qui concerne la vision américaine de la *Critical Pedagogy*. Pour cela, nous nous appuyons sur une réflexion menée par Brigitte Frelat-Kahn dans son texte *Pragmatisme et éducation, James, Dewey, Rorty*. L'autrice nous invite à opérer une reconstruction historique du courant américain et de ses retombées dans le domaine de l'éducation, où il a posé les principes de liberté d'action et de pensée au cœur d'une pédagogie nouvelle. À cet effet, Dewey exprime et incarne de manière typique le mouvement de la vie politique aux États-Unis et la recherche d'une nouvelle liberté. Impliqué dans les événements de son temps en Russie, il est appelé à critiquer le totalitarisme soviétique, en particulier lors du procès Trotsky. Il tombera ensuite dans l'oubli pendant plusieurs décennies, avant d'être redécouvert par Jean-Pierre Cometti, dans le sillage de Gérard Deladelle, qui avait déjà commencé à traduire certaines de ses œuvres. Dans les années 1990,

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on retrouve également l'esprit de Dewey dans le livre de Cometti et Joelle Zask consacré Rorty, *Qu'est-ce que le Pragmatisme?*

### Les prémices du pragmatisme en France

B. Frelat-Kahn souligne que, pendant longtemps, l'idée d'une éducation générale a été mise de côté et considérée comme incomplète. Dans toute l'Europe, seule la Russie a connu l'influence de Dewey. En ce qui concerne l'apparition et la diffusion de l'auteur en Europe, on peut mettre en évidence trois périodes. La première, au début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, est celle que l'on associe à l'Éducation Nouvelle, puis, dans un second temps, Dewey est perçu comme marginal, en raison des interprétations marxistes de ses textes. Seul Deladelle traduit et diffuse certaines de ses œuvres majeures. C'est enfin au cours des années 1990, comme il a été dit précédemment, que s'ouvre à nouveau dans l'horizon français la perspective de découvrir Dewey en tant que philosophe.

En 1909, grâce à la revue *L'Éducation*, fondée par le directeur de l'École des Roches, G. Bertier, le public français découvre l'Éducation Nouvelle. S'ensuivent d'autres étapes importantes comme la création, en 1921, de la Ligue Internationale pour l'Éducation Nouvelle, qui compte parmi ses représentants A. Ferrière et É. Claparède. En 1922, Ferrière met en avant le travail de Dewey et son influence dans deux ouvrages : *L'École active* et *L'École active : principes et applications*. La Ligue, comme nous l'avons dit, souhaite procéder à la mise en œuvre d'une véritable réforme de l'éducation, « réaliser une coopération entre éducateurs et entre éducateurs et parents » et « développer les échanges entre tous les éducateurs qui se reconnaissent dans les principes de l'Éducation Nouvelle ». Malheureusement, malgré la justesse des principes véhiculés, le nom du philosophe américain n'apparaît dans aucune publication. L'Éducation Nouvelle, diffusée par la revue *Pour l'Ère nouvelle*, attire l'attention de grands noms comme Piaget, Piéron et Wallon, qui se consacrent à l'orientation psychologique de la formation de l'enfant. Progressivement, on s'aperçoit que la théorie de l'expérience de Dewey se retrouve vidée de sa charge critique pour être transformée en un procédé utile à l'enfant pour répéter de manière formelle des préceptes déterminés.

### Une période contrastée: entre rejet et reconnaissance

Au cours des décennies suivantes, les effets de mauvaises interprétations se font sentir et suscitent des malentendus idéologiques relativement importants : l'école active est perçue comme une vision utopique et rapidement réduite à des tendances socialistes et communistes liées au groupe de Ferrière. Nous avons fait remarquer que la pensée de Dewey a été largement appréciée en Russie, mais cela a entraîné, d'une part, les critiques dévastatrices des communistes américains qui ne se reconnaissaient pas dans le philosophe de la liberté et, d'autre part, l'implication en 1937 de Dewey dans le procès Trotsky, qu'il est alors chargé de réeva-

luer. À l'ouverture du procès, le 10 avril, Dewey déclare: « J'ai consacré ma vie au travail de l'éducation que j'ai conçu comme le moyen de diffuser les lumières dans l'intérêt de la société. Si j'ai finalement accepté le poste de responsable que j'occupe aujourd'hui, c'est parce que j'ai compris qu'en agissant autrement je n'aurais pas été fidèle à l'œuvre de ma vie... »

Quelques mois après cette déclaration, au cours d'une interview donnée au *Washington Post* en décembre de la même année, il prend ses distances quant à ses liens supposés avec le communisme, affirmant qu'il a effectivement cru en l'expérience sociale mise en œuvre en Russie, au point que d'autres pays auraient pu s'en inspirer : « Je voyais en l'Union Soviétique un laboratoire social où pouvaient être expérimentées des choses. »

Dès 1934, à l'occasion du symposium du *Modern Quarterly* intitulé « Pourquoi je ne suis pas communiste », il s'était défendu de toute implication dans le mouvement communiste.

### Qu'a-t-on effectivement compris du pragmatisme?

Rorty a révélé certains éléments clé du pragmatisme, à savoir ses dimensions philosophique et éducative qui aboutissent respectivement à la philosophie politique et à la théorie de la connaissance. Ces notions n'ont pas été suffisamment comprises par ceux qui, auparavant, prétendaient à la fois promouvoir l'activisme de Dewey et définir la pédagogie comme la base d'une société démocratique. En réalité, ce n'est pas à une forme de gouvernement qu'aspire la pédagogie, mais à une réalité collective possible dans laquelle les individus pourraient s'intéresser librement aux relations sociales pour atteindre une plus grande capacité d'adaptation et de croissance. Le principe de liberté n'appartient pas à la démocratie, il s'agit plutôt d'un exercice pratique que les membres d'un groupe déterminé décident d'appliquer. De la même manière, l'aspect éducatif a été réduit à une analyse approximative de la dimension psychologique et l'on commence seulement aujourd'hui à y entrevoir une théorie de la connaissance. Cette praxis cognitive s'articule, pour B. Frelat-Kahn, selon deux thématiques fondamentales : l'élimination de toute forme de dualisme et l'affirmation du pluralisme. On entrevoit ainsi une approche concentrée sur le développement de deux modalités précises : l'aspect politique et l'aspect épistémologique.

### Les effets sur la pédagogie

En ce qui concerne la pédagogie, B. Frelat-Kahn insiste sur le fait qu'elle est, par essence, une pratique et non une méthode d'analyse coupée de la réalité. En effet, il ne s'agit pas de la recherche d'un fait déjà défini par des vérités préexistantes. L'enquête passe au contraire par le déploiement d'un processus de recherche qui tend à la résolution du problème futur. À titre d'exemple, il suffit de penser à « l'école laboratoire » fondée par Dewey à l'université de Chicago pour

s'apercevoir des différences qui existent entre l'application des principes qui y sont expérimentés et ce qui se passe dans les Écoles normales d'instituteurs, où le principe de laboratoire est transformé en pratique. Pour Dewey, la cohérence est ancrée dans le présent, au moment précis où il est question d'évaluer une réalité définie qui pourra enrichir ou non l'expérience. La valeur se trouve alors dans la capacité à projeter dans l'avenir des effets potentiels. De la même manière, dans l'optique du pragmatisme, la connaissance du problème met en place des bases qui donneront lieu à des actions différentes par rapport à l'éducation traditionnelle. En considérant l'élève ou le sujet pensant comme celui qui se confronte à la réalité du problème, on l'appelle, d'une certaine manière, à résoudre et à construire des parcours, à identifier les voies nécessaires pour aboutir à un changement. L'éducation est aussi le développement de méthodes d'analyse, afin que ses activités cognitives ne soient pas coupées du reste de la culture : « C'est l'enfant qui est en cause. Il doit être en mesure de s'affirmer par le biais de ses propres capacités ». La position centrale de l'enfant est aussi un élément primordial pour Rousseau. Dans *l'Émile*, il reconnaît en effet la pertinence et la fonction de l'organisation des systèmes éducatifs, même si les méthodes proposées sont différentes. Dewey ne juge pas utile d'utiliser des artifices pour rendre un contenu intéressant, car l'effort mental mis en œuvre ne sera jamais assimilé par l'expérience. En effet, la limite de Dewey par rapport à Rousseau, est la seule confrontation avec la nature, telle qu'elle pouvait être perçue à l'époque.

### Le projet éducatif et ses liens avec la philosophie politique

La notion de projet renferme un effet de la connaissance: il s'agit de tendre vers l'avenir tout en appliquant des dispositifs de recherche extrêmement précis. Les résultats partiels, les notes, ne suffisent pas à rendre l'élève ou le sujet actif dans son propre parcours car il leur manque cette tension vers la découverte d'un savoir qui n'aurait pas été préconstruit. Dans le monde moderne du travail, la représentation est perçue comme un instrument de médiation entre les choses réelles et la vie des citoyens, liés les uns aux autres par le contrat social. De cette façon, le savoir se transmet de génération en génération comme un axiome invisible, produisant des spectateurs passifs. En France, rappelle B. Frelat-Kahn, « le public c'est la politique, la chose commune, l'universel; c'est le domaine de la volonté générale ». L'acte de reconnaître les rôles du public et du privé tel que le propose le pragmatisme, semble vouloir séparer le bien commun du bien individuel. Cependant, pour Dewey, la distinction entre public et privé ne concerne pas la nature même des choses. Il s'agit plutôt de comprendre comment certaines influences peuvent éloigner ces deux champs du vrai sens de la démocratie. L'important est d'établir comment certains actes peuvent avoir des conséquences – directes ou non—sur l'intérêt général.

En pratique, la valeur légale du public et du privé est établie par un contrôle

et une réglementation. L'État, en tant volonté, doit être l'expression du bien commun et des choix réalisés délibérément par les citoyens, en reconnaissant d'une part la communauté de l'intérêt général et, de l'autre, l'intérêt politique, ainsi que la communication nécessaire entre ces deux aspects. La frontière qui sépare le public du privé doit être tracée sur la base des conséquences importantes qu'elle implique et qui nécessitent un contrôle, à travers la promotion ou l'interdiction.

### Le pluralisme comme forme de liberté

Le pragmatisme met en avant un individu universel capable d'amorcer un processus d'émancipation au moyen de l'enquête, forme de liberté particulière qui est peu représentée en France, où l'individu-citoyen ne connaît pas de séparation entre le domaine privé et la neutralité de l'État. À ce sujet, Dewey rappelle d'ailleurs qu'en Europe, à travers la reprise a posteriori des théories de Rousseau, une erreur d'interprétation a été commise quant aux intentions du pragmatisme. On l'a pris, en effet, pour une forme d'éducation statique et de politique nationaliste. On perd ainsi de vue le principe selon lequel la formation d'un être humain est différente de celle d'un citoyen. Dans cette perspective, l'État fournit les moyens nécessaires pour s'acquitter de la seule éducation publique et non de l'émancipation sociale. Reconnaître le rôle central de l'éducation demande un travail important de la part des enseignants et des parents pour comprendre que la finalité de l'enseignement n'est pas étrangère aux programmes scolaires, mais représente un autre aspect d'une même réalité. En unissant la réflexion aux différents contextes éducatifs, il est possible de travailler sur la capacité d'adaptation et de dépassement des problématiques. C'est pourquoi l'éducation ne se confond pas avec la démocratie, si ce n'est en la reconnaissant comme partie d'un processus de mise en œuvre de principes communs. Selon l'approche habituelle, le pluralisme permet de poser les bases d'une entière représentation du public, en tant qu'ensemble d'individus qui interagissent et sont directement impliqués dans les actes d'une société produisant des biens et services. Comme il a été évoqué précédemment, la vision de la culture et de la liberté sur le territoire français peine à accepter une telle fragmentation d'idéaux et d'identité. Le débat n'a été rouvert que récemment, permettant une mise en lumière d'arguments jusque-là considérés comme gênants vis-à-vis des croyances en vigueur. Malheureusement, on s'aperçoit, à partir de ces premiers éléments, que les discussions n'ont pu aboutir que sur un point : le détachement d'une vieille métaphysique atomiste, incapable de résoudre la complexité actuelle du problème.

### Le pluralisme, l'éducation, la démocratie

L'effort réalisé par Dewey est de reconnaître que, si le libéralisme qui existait auparavant considérait l'action économique comme un moyen pour parvenir au bien-être social, le nouvel individualisme conserve à l'inverse une vision statique

de l'économie qui laisse à la marge un homme unidimensionnel. L'éducation n'est donc pas seulement un fait privé, pas plus qu'elle n'est liée à la seule institution scolaire: elle concerne l'ensemble de la vie sociale et de ses représentations, dans toutes ses formes culturelles, qui permettent l'accomplissement du processus d'intégration. À partir de là, la portée de la pensée s'élargit pour prendre en compte une exigence démocratique visant à juger aussi les organisations industrielles, en fonction de leur contribution à la vie collective. L'éducation acquiert également un intérêt politique, en particulier à travers les notions de public et de grande société. Elle devient ainsi un processus d'expérience de politique partagée. Le pragmatisme, en raison de son profond sens critique, de son alternance d'actions avec des processus de déconstruction et de reconstruction logique, reste difficile à intégrer en Europe. Ainsi, B. Frelat-Kahn nous soumet l'hypothèse suivante : « Sans doute devons-nous prendre au sérieux cette importance du pragmatisme en France, si l'on tient précisément que le pragmatisme est une conception américaine. Ce serait en effet l'indice d'un bouleversement très radical des cadres de notre culture. »

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Brigitte Frelat-Kahn, *Pragmatisme et éducation, James, Dewey, Rorty*, J.Vrin, 2013, P. 27.

<sup>2</sup> John Dewey, *The Leon Trotsky Inquiry, LW Vol 11*, Southern Illinois University Press 1987, p. 309 cité dans R. Pudal, « Pour une analyse comparée de l'engagement politique des intellectuels en France et aux États-Unis lors des procès de Moscou de 1936-1938 », *Sociétés contemporaines*, n°64, 2006, p. 95-113, cité dans Brigitte Frelat-Kahn, *op. cit.* p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> John Dewey, *op. cit.* p. 309 cité dans R. Pudal, « Pour une analyse comparée de l'engagement politique des intellectuels en France et aux États-Unis lors des procès de Moscou de 1936-1938 », *Sociétés contemporaines*, n°64, 2006, p. 95-113, cité dans Brigitte Frelat-Kahn, *op. cit.* p. 48.

<sup>4</sup> John Dewey, *L'Ecole et l'enfant*, 1913, Edition revue et augmentée par G. Deladalle, Paris, Flabert, 2004, p. 61, cité dans Brigitte Frelat-Kahn, *op. cit.* p. 107.

<sup>5</sup> Brigitte Frelat-Kahn, *op. cit.* p. 111.

<sup>6</sup> Brigitte Frelat-Kahn, *op. cit.* p. 178.

### Il pragmatismo in Francia nel 1900

A questo punto della trattazione appare chiaramente la necessità di porsi la domanda di come il pragmatismo abbia influenzato la scuola francese e di come sia stato realmente percepito rispetto alla visione americana della Critical Pedagogy. Faremo fede ad alcune riflessioni in tal proposito a partire dal testo di Brigitte Frelat-Kahn, *Pragmatisme et éducation*, James, Dewey, Rorty. L'autrice ci invita ad una ricostruzione storica della corrente americana e dei risvolti in ambito educativo, ponendo la libertà dell'azione di pensiero di una pedagogia nuova. In questi ambiti Dewey esprime ed incarna il movimento tipico della vita politica statunitense, la ricerca della nuova libertà. Restando implicante nelle vicende russe sarà chiamato a criticare il totalitarismo sovietico in particolar modo al processo Trotsky. Dimenticato per lunghi decenni sarà Jean-Pierre Cometti a riportarlo alla luce, sulle tracce già segnate da Gérard Deladelle, che aveva già iniziato a tradurre alcune opere. Negli anni Novanta Cometti e Joelle Zask attraverso un libro dedicato a Rorty intitolato « Qu'est-ce que le Pragmatisme », si ritrova lo spirito di Dewey connesso.

### Premesse al pragmatismo in Francia

B. Frelat-Kahn sottolinea che molto tempo l'idea di una educazione generale è stata accantonata e considerata parziale, solamente la Russia ha sentito l'influenza di Dewey in tutta Europa. Possiamo dividere l'entrata e la diffusione dell'autore in tre periodi: il primo riconducibile all'Educazione Nuova, periodo inizio del XIX secolo, un secondo momento le interpretazioni marxiste dei suoi testi lo hanno reso più marginale, solamente Deladelle si era occupato delle traduzioni e della diffusione di alcune opere maggiori. Negli anni Novanta come anticipato, riaprono all'orizzonte francese la possibilità di scoprire Dewey come filosofo.

Nel 1909 la rivista *l'Education* fondata da Bertier, direttore de *l'Ecole des Roches*, permette al pubblico francese di conoscere la Nuova Educazione. Nel 1921 seguono altri importanti passi come la creazione della Ligue Internationale pour l'Education nouvelle, che riconosce tra i suoi esponenti A. Ferrière e Cleparède. Nel 1922 Ferrière pubblica due opere in cui mette in risalto il lavoro di Dewey e la sua influenza, *L'Ecole active et L'Ecole active : principes et applications*. La lega come abbiamo detto pocanzi voleva procedere alla creazione di una vera riforma educativa, « de réaliser une coopération entre éducateurs et entre éducateurs et parents, et de développer les échanges entre tous les éducateurs qui se reconnaissent dans les principes de l'Education Nouvelle » p 27. Sfortunatamente agli ottimi principi divulgati il nome del filosofo americano non compare in nessuna pubblicazione. La Nuova Educazione diffusa dalla rivista *Pour L'Ere nouvelle*, richiama l'attenzione di alcuni maestri come Piaget, Pieron e Wallon, dediti all'orientazione psicologica della formazione del bambino, piano piano ci si rende conto che la teoria dell'esperienza di Dewey viene svuotata della sua car-

ica critica, per essere trasformata in un'arte utile al bambino affinché determinati precetti siano ripetuti formalmente.

### Nei decenni successivi un altalenarsi di rifiuti e di riconoscimenti

Gli effetti delle cattive interpretazioni continuano a dare voce a dei malintesi ideologici assai importanti, la scuola attiva sarà vista come utopica e in breve tempo ridotta ad alcune tendenze socialiste e comuniste del gruppo di Ferrière. In precedenza avevamo detto che il pensiero di Dewey era stato largamente apprezzato in Russia, ma ciò a creato critiche devastanti da una parte dai comunisti americani che non si riconoscono nel filosofo della libertà e dall'altra parte il 1937 lo vede incaricato di rivalutare il processo di Trotsky. Durante l'apertura del contro processo, il 10 aprile, Dewey dice : »J'ai consacré ma vie au travail de l'éducation que j'ai eu conçue comme l'homme moyen de diffuser les lumières dans l'intérêt de la société. Si j'ai finalement accepté le poste responsable que j'occupe aujourd'hui, c'est parce que j'ai compris qu'en s'agissant autrement je n'aurais pas été fidèle à l'œuvre de la vie... » p 47 j.Dewey, *The Leon Trotsky Inquiry, LW Vol 11, Southern Illinois University Press 1987, p. 309, Cité dans R. Pudal, « Pour une analyse comparée de l'engagement politique des intellectuels en France et aux Etats-Unis lors des procès de Moscou de 1936-1938 » Sociétés contemporaines, n64,2006, p. 95-113.*

A distanza di pochi mesi della sua affermazione nel dicembre dello stesso anno durante un'intervista al Washington Post prese le distanze dai suoi legami presunti con il comunismo ; dichiarando che aveva effettivamente creduto nell'esperienza sociale sviluppata in Russia, tanto che anche altri paesi avrebbero potuto prenderne spunto, : »Je voyais en l'Union Soviétique un laboratoire social où pouvaient être expérimentés des choses » p. 48 cit de F Kahn, J.Dewey, *The Leon Trotsky Inquiry, op.cit dans R.Pudal, « Pour une analyse comparée de l'engagement politique des intellectuels en France et aux Etats-Unis lors des procès de Moscou de 1936-1938 » Sociétés contemporaines, n64,2006, p. 95-113.*

Già nel 1934 durante il simposio del Modern Quarterly nel 1934 intitolato « Pourquoi je ne suis communiste », aveva ribattuto le sue ragioni contro ogni qualsiasi implicazione con il comunismo.

### Cosa è stato effettivamente recepito del pragmatismo?

Rorty ha portato in luce alcuni elementi chiave del pragmatismo, cioè la dimensione filosofica e quella educativa, che sfociano rispettivamente nella filosofia politica e la teoria della conoscenza. Queste conoscenze non state sufficientemente comprese da chi in precedenza aveva avuto la pretesa di promuovere l'attivismo di Dewey, così come di definire la pedagogia la base di una società democratica. In realtà non è una forma di governo a cui si ispira, ma ad una possibile realtà collettiva in cui gli individui possono liberamente interessarsi alle relazioni

sociali, per ottenere una migliore capacità di adattamento e di crescita. La libertà è un principio che non è contenuto nella democrazia, è piuttosto l'esercizio pratico che i componenti di un determinato gruppo decidono di seguire. Allo stesso modo la parte educativa è stata ridotta ad un'analisi approssimativa della sfera psicologica, ma solo ad oggi si comincia a intravedere una teoria della conoscenza. In questa articolata prassi cognitiva secondo Kahn ritroviamo due tematiche fondamentali : l'eliminazione di tutte le forme di dualismo e l'affermazione del pluralismo. L'approccio nascente punta perciò a sviluppare due modalità precise quella politica e quella epistemologica.

### Gli effetti sulla pedagogia

Proprio sulla pedagogia Kahn ribatte la sostanzialità del suo essere una pratica e non un metodo di analisi separato dalla realtà. In effetti non rappresenta la ricerca di qualcosa di già definito da verità antecedenti, ma è attraverso lo sviluppo di un processo teso alla risoluzione del problema in divenire, che si dirige l'inchiesta. In questo senso basti pensare all' «*écoles Laboratoire* » che Dewey aveva fondato all'università di Chicago, per rendersi conto delle differenze che esistono, tra l'applicazione dei principi sperimentati rispetto alle *Ecoles normales d'instituteurs*, dove il principio di laboratorio viene trasformato in pratica. Per Dewey la consequenzialità è insita nel presente, è nel momento preciso in cui si deve valutare una determinata realtà, che può o meno arricchire l'esperienza. Il valore è la capacità di proiettare nel futuro dei probabili effetti. Allo stesso modo conoscere il problema pone delle basi per azioni differenti nel pragmatismo rispetto all'educazione tradizionale. Considerando l'alunno o il soggetto riflettente come colui che si confronta con la realtà problematica, in qualche modo è chiamato a risolvere e costruire dei percorsi, ed a identificarsi nei passaggi necessari per arrivare ad un cambiamento. L'educazione è anche sviluppo di metodi di analisi, affinché le sue attività cognitive non siano separate dal resto della cultura : «*C'est l'enfant qui en cause. Il doit être en mesure de s'affirmer par le biais de ses propres capacités* » p 107 citazione di BFK nota 1 J.Dewey, *L'Ecole et l'enfant, 1913. Edition revue et augmentée par G. Deladalle, Paris, Flabert, 2004, p 61*. La centralità del bambino è elemento centrale anche per Rousseau, infatti nell'Emilio, riconosce la pertinenza e la funzione dell'organizzazione dei sistemi educativi, anche se con delle tecniche differenti. Dewey non ritiene necessario utilizzare trucchi per rendere interessante un contenuto, perché lo sforzo mentale impiegato non sarà mai assimilato dall'esperienza. Infatti rispetto a Rousseau il limite è il confronto con la sola natura, per come poteva essere percepita all'epoca.

### Il progetto educativo e i legami con la filosofia politica

All'interno della parola progetto troviamo un effetto della conoscenza, quello di prendere posizione verso il futuro mettendo in pratica dei dispositivi di ricerca

estremamente accurati. Non sono solo i risultati parziali, i voti, a rendere l'alunno o il soggetto capace di essere attivo nel proprio percorso attivo, perché manca in essi, la tensione alla scoperta di un sapere non già costruito. Nel mondo lavorativo moderno, la rappresentazione è percepita come uno strumento di mediazione tra le cose reali e la vita dei cittadini, che sono legati insieme per il vincolo del contratto sociale, in questo modo il sapere passa di generazione in generazione come un assioma invisibile, creando degli spettatori passivi. In Francia ricorda Kahn, : » le public c'est la politique, la chose commune, l'universel ; c'est le domaine de la volonté générale » P 111 Kahn. L'atto di riconoscere i ruoli del pubblico e del privato così come il pragmatismo propone di fare, sembra vogliono disgiungere il bene comune dal bene personale, ma per Dewey la distinzione tra pubblico e privato non riguarda la natura delle cose, ma cerca di capire come certe influenze possano allontanare i due ambiti dal vero senso della democrazia. Ciò che conta è stabilire come certi atti possano essere conseguenze dirette o indirette sull'interesse generale, così come Dewey ha definito in queste parole la vera essenza tra pubblico e privato : « Si l'on monte que les consequences( d'une) conversation s'étendent au-delà de ces personnes directement concernées, qu'elle affecte le bien etre de nombreuse conversation soit menée entre un roi et son premier ministre (...) ou entre des marchands projetant de monopoliser le marché » ; P 112 J DEWEY LE PUBLIV ET SES PROBLEMES.

Il valore legale effettivo è stabilito in funzione al controllo e alla regolamentazione. Lo stato in quanto volontà deve esprimere il bene comune , e le scelte deliberatamente effettuate dai cittadini, riconoscendo la comunità di interesse generale e quella politica dall'altra, e che le due parti devono essere in comunicazione . La linea di demarcazione che separa il pubblico dal privato deve essere tracciata sulla base delle conseguenze che possono essere importanti e che necessitano di controllo, attraverso la promozione o la proibizione.

### Il Pluralismo come forma di libertà

Il pragmatismo promuove un individuo universale capace di iniziare un processo di emancipazione, per mezzo dell'inchiesta, questa particolare forma di libertà che trova un riscontro poco interessante in Francia, dove l'individuo-cittadino non conosce separazione tra ambito privato e la neutralità dello stato. A tal proposito Dewey ricorda che in Europa e nelle teorie di Rousseau riprese a posteriori, c'è stato un errore di interpretazione delle intenzioni del pragmatismo, che è stato confuso con una forma di educazione statica ed una politica nazionalista. In questo modo si perde di vista il principio per cui la formazione di un essere umano è differente da quelle di un cittadino, in questa prospettiva lo stato fornisce solo i mezzi per adempiere ad una educazione pubblica e non di emancipazione sociale. L'interesse nel riconoscimento della centralità dell'educazione occupa un lavoro importante da parte degli insegnanti e dei genitori, affinché si comprenda

che i fini non sono esterni ai programmi scolastici, ma sono lo stesso lato della medaglia. Unendo capacità di riflessione ai vari contesti formativi, si può lavorare sulla capacità di adattamento e di superamento delle problematiche. Per cui l'educazione non coincide con la democrazia, se non riconoscendola come parte di un processo di attuazione di principi condivisi. L'approccio ordinario del pluralismo concede le basi per una piena rappresentazione del pubblico, inteso come insieme di individui che interagiscono, e che sono direttamente coinvolti dalle azioni di una società che produce beni e servizi. Come avevamo anticipato nei paragrafi precedenti, la visione della cultura e della libertà sul territorio francese, fanno fatica ad accettare una siffatta frammentazione di ideali e di identità. Solo recentemente il dibattito si è riaperto permettendo una apertura su degli argomenti ritenuti scomodi rispetto alle credenze in vigore. Purtroppo ci rendiamo conto da questi primi elementi che l'unica variabile discussa con successo sia quella di distaccarsi da una vecchia metafisica atomista, incapace di risolvere la complessità attuale.

### Il Pluralismo, l'educazione, la democrazia

Lo sforzo compiuto da Dewey è quello di riconoscere che il liberalismo di prima considerava l'azione economica come mezzo sociale per arrivare al benessere sociale, il nuovo individualismo conserva invece una visione statica di una economia, la quale lascia ai margini un uomo con una sola dimensione. L'educazione quindi non è solo un fatto privato, ne tanto meno legato alla sola istituzione scolastica, è l'insieme della vita sociale e delle rappresentanze, in tutte le sue forme culturali, che rendono completo il processo di integrazione. A partire da ciò la portata del pensiero si amplia per accogliere al suo interno un'esigenza democratica che mira a giudicare sia le organizzazioni industriali, in funzione del loro contributo alla vita collettiva. L'educazione diventa anche interesse per la politica, ed in special modo tra il senso di pubblico e quello di grande società, divenendo un processo di esperienza di politica condivisa. Il pragmatismo per il suo profondo senso critico, in cui i processi decostruzione e di ricostruzione logica si intervallano ad azioni, rimane di difficile integrazione in Europa, tanto che Kahn sostiene che : » sans doute devons-nous prendre au sérieux cette importance du pragmatisme en France, si l'on tient précisément que le pragmatisme est une conception américaine. Ce serait en effet l'indice d'un bouleversement très radical des cadres de notre culture ». P 178 Kahn.

## A Decolonizing Essay on Decolonizing Dissertations

Jennifer M. Markides

Four Arrows (Wahinkpe Topa), aka Jacobs, Don Trent. (2008). *The authentic dissertation: Alternative ways of knowing, research, and representation*. New York, NY: Routledge.

In this article, I will follow several of the decolonizing structures modelled by Four Arrows in his work, *The Authentic Dissertation: Alternative Ways of Knowing, Research, and Presentation*, published by Routledge in 2008, beginning with an introduction of who I am. Like many Indigenous scholars, I position myself up-front in my research and writing (see Kathy Absolon and Cam Willett in *Research as Resistance*, edited by Leslie Brown and Susan Strega from 2005). I am Métis with family ties to the Red River Settlement in Manitoba, and I currently live in High River, Alberta, with my family. I am in the fifth year of doctoral studies at the University of Calgary.

It is unconventional to write a book review essay for a publication that is more than one or two years old, but I believe that doing so, in this case, is also a decolonizing act. Just as the dissertations shared in the book were controversial and ground-breaking for their time, I see *The Authentic Dissertation* in the same light. As discussed in the text, sometimes writing of this nature may challenge the

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audience's expectations and assumptions of what academic *can be*. If it does not resonate with the beliefs and experiences of the reader, the book may be easily dismissed or ignored. With the increased attention to Indigenous research methodologies, knowledges, and practices in recent years, I anticipate that the perspective *audience* for a book, such as *The Authentic Dissertation*, has also grown. Thus, I humbly and unapologetically offer the following review.

Early in my academic journey, I read the chapter “‘Seeing Red’ Pauline Sameshima’s story, with Patrick Slattery, Howard Gardner, Elliot Eisner, Rebecca Carmi, and Gregory Cajete” an expert from *The Authentic Dissertation* as part of a Conceptualizing Interpretive Inquiry course. I was in awe of the writing structure employed by Four Arrows. The book is presented as a *conference* where dialogues ensue after many of the *presentations*. The *presenters* describe their—often award-winning—dissertations, as well as the challenges and criticisms they faced when engaging with *alternative ways of knowing, research, and presentation*.

While significantly varied, the research projects build upon and contribute to the existing body of qualitative research methods and discourses, including but not limited to: phenomenology; hermeneutics; arts-based research; autoethnography; mindful inquiry; critical methodology; anti-oppressive research; decolonizing methodologies; Indigenous research; participatory action research; narrative inquiry; and more. The dissertations may be: situated in experience; creative; interdisciplinary; comfortable with subjectivity; aligned with sustainability priorities; attending to the wisdom of the natural world; critical of hegemonic systems; service-driven; honouring Indigenous ways of knowing; and/or, seeking to make the world a better place.

Four Arrows resists colonizing models of writing by presenting a multi-voiced, fictional narrative. His citations are numerous, but do not follow standard APA conventions. All but two *characters* presented in the book are real, living academics. The two fictional characters, Runner and Mr. Samson, serve as the protagonist and antagonist respectively. Both are presented as respected scholars. Runner is an “American Indian” woman, with deep knowledge of Indigenous scholarship and perspectives; while Dr. Samson is a Western gatekeeper who brings forward traditional academic beliefs about research. These well-employed literary figures spark discussions that are interspersed between the *presentations*, asking questions of the *audience members* and offering divergent points of view. They provoke dialogue that opens spaces for continued learning, while also keeping the conference moving.

In my initial reading I thought that Four Arrows had taken significant liberties to form the dialogues as he attributed different sides of the debates to significant, known scholars in the field. The style is both bold and effective. I often felt like I was a listening-in at a *real* conference, but I caught myself wondering, *what would the actual scholars think of Four Arrows putting words in their fictitious mouths?*

As it turns out, Four Arrows reached out to each of the scholars represented

in the text and requested their participation in the *presentations* and *discussions*. He used “personal communication” as a clever means of circumventing the traditional rules for academic citations and referencing. Just as Four Arrows obtained permissions and voice from the academics in the conference story, I have gained insight into the text through personal communication with Four Arrows, himself. Introduced by our mutual friend, Shirley Steinberg, Four Arrows and I have been corresponding about various publications and projects. It is more than happenstance that brought us together at this time. As Four Arrows explains: one honors the Spiritual phenomenon often referred to by Jungians as synchronicity.

Through synchronicity, I am brought back to *The Authentic Dissertation*, as I write my own dissertation. I am at a point, now, where I know most of the authors, conferences, and publications that are mentioned in the book. The prospect of writing an alternative dissertation is both enticing and daunting. The people who have experienced success in the pursuit of alternative research and presentation, faced significant challenges and scrutiny. They were successful because they were courageous, rigorous, and unrelenting; their work, exceptional.

*The Authentic Dissertation* is worth re-visiting, perhaps now more than ever. There is a growing readiness and receptivity, within academic and societal structures, for alternative ways of knowing. I believe that the book would make an excellent course text for use with graduate students. As Amy Scatlif suggests in her letter to Four Arrows that is shared in the Introduction, alternative dissertations should be introduced early on in academic studies, allowing time for students to experiment with and learn from these models. Some professors might be concerned that this type of text could “muddy” the graduate students’ learning early on. Like many early career scholars, I learned a lot about academic writing from the examples that were shared with me through my coursework. Appreciably, other professors might foresee that using such a text could create extra work, requiring them to provide additional guidance and critical feedback in order to support the students to be successful in these “dangerous” pursuits.

While I can see the challenge of introducing alternative ways of doing research alongside traditionally accepted forms of research and dissertations, I can also see the potential benefits of opening up spaces of greater possibilities within academic work. An early introduction to alternative forms of dissertation may provide a rhizomatic complementarity in the teaching of research and writing that would embody and enliven what Barbara Mann describes as the cooperative binaries that are endemic to Indigenous ways of understanding and knowing the world (explored extensively in her work titled, *Native Americans, Archaeologists, and the Mounds*, 2003). Thus, teaching both the widely-accepted *and* alternative approaches to research and presentation may contribute to more flexible and creative thinking individuals and more robust and dynamic academic communities.

## Why Language Matters (Even More Than Ever Before) . . .

Reflections on Paola Giorgis,  
*Foreign Languages and Foreign Language Education  
as Critical and Intercultural Experiences*

Victoria Perselli

For me, the key theme and most important take-away from this book—which the author, who is a teacher, researcher, and political activist in Northern Italy, has structured under thematic headings of *Praxis*, *Theory*, and *Research* in order to delineate her understanding of ‘foreignness’ in all its multiplicity of meanings—comes at the very end, where she describes education as ‘the militant and applied branch of knowledge.’

In her project, speaking overall, this is certainly how education is being put to work: Giorgis is a wide-reaching scholar who has, it seems to me, an extraordinary command of the kinds of theoretical, cultural and artistic referents that support her central tenet of foreignness—and by extension foreign language teaching—as being significant vehicles in the struggle (using a quote from Lorenzo Milani) ‘to communicate with all kinds of people, meet new folks and new problems, and laugh at the sacred borders of all fatherlands’ (pp.103-104).

This latter is the kind of phrase many writers and/or workers in the field of language education may wish to have written themselves, and one that we could

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all surely joyfully espouse, especially when conjoined with Giorgis' embracing of foreignness as a positive, rather than a problem or an exoticisation of 'the other'?

Except, of course, that education in these difficult times often occurs within a political landscape that all too frequently manifests the polar opposite position, that is, one of homogenising, sorting, grading, constraining and even restraining the human species from meaningful, affective interactions of any kind; where mythological sacred borders and fatherlands are apologies for the true-life drawing and redrawing of hard boundaries and positivistic identity categorise so beloved of empire and empire builders. This is the bleak reality of life for a majority of people artificially separated and subdivided from their geographical roots, from each other and from the material and economic sources of well-being that would enable such an elegant educational purpose to flourish. The icons to contemporary demagogues and the divisions they created may have been smashed in both tangible and symbolic acts of overcoming oppression in the 20th century on the one hand, only to be replaced or reconstituted in the current age on the other—including the addition—and largely unanticipated—*virtual reality* of cyberspace and social media as much as in oppression's material manifestations of clip-boards, cages, tagged ankles and electrified perimeter fences.

Throughout her book, and especially in the beginning and end sections, Giorgis painstakingly unpicks the populist ideals (speech acts) that abound across the globe, currently, which serve to cumulatively undermine 'education as the militant branch of knowledge,' so that by the end this reader is in no doubt regarding the authority of Giorgis' thesis.

Using her own country of Italy as a specific example, the author demonstrates how nationality and national identities are continuously being constructed, disassembled and remade through language. Giorgis is emphatic also regarding the illusory nature of the many signs and symbols that constitute the alt-right's reclamation of culture presently (ubiquitously short-handed as 'culture wars' in the popular press, as though such hate-speech has no *material* effects) and it is truly heart-warming to see how her language teaching praxis has unfolded against this somewhat bleak—and possibly dystopian—backdrop (depending, I guess, on just how depressed one might feel about the political landscape currently in Italy and beyond).

Giorgis herself remains predominantly upbeat—and for good reason: she has identified and operationalised an armoury of specific research strategies and tools, all the more powerfully with which to argue her case for a liberalising form of language education today. This has the dual purpose of being enormously helpful for research students in Higher Education; demonstrating in clear and rational terms how a methodological framework for constructing, conducting and analysing educational research can—and I would say *must*—emerge from the theoretically informed, politically overt stance of the researcher. Anything else is mere dogma. But for the novice researcher this always begs the enormously daunting question—where to begin?

In this instance, the (theoretical) armoury-for-action is centred, as one would expect, on the identification and analysis of the key terms of Georgis' daily work as a foreign language teacher—but via an imaginative and bold literary trawl that conjoins Kristeva, Kramersch and Jonathan Swift (on Foreign); Klemperer, Stieve and Orwell (on Language); Meirieu, Freire and Milani (on Education) and so forth. Indeed, Georgis repeatedly intertwines her literary scholarship with the elemental aspects of all our daily lives, whether these be food, TV and media, clothing or skin tones; for example for the purpose of demonstrating how stereotyping (of a nationality or ethnicity) occurs and how the attribution of such stereotyping can all too easily be attributed to 'cultural differences' rather than as a feature of an individual's behaviour—over which they themselves have degrees of autonomy. Neither does she shy away from difficult topics: migration, asylum, poverty; indeed socio-economic status is a particular concern.

This is entirely coherent with the critical pedagogic approach in educational research (and Participatory Action Research as Georgis' explicit research methodology), since at no point do critical pedagogues seek to *screen out* the variables of art, culture, politics and economics from the research project design, or of experience grounded in the conversational and affective dimensions of teaching and learning, because it is precisely through these that we aspire to hold true to the interests and aspirations of the learner—their world of lived experience—as research 'subject.'

The middle section of *Meeting Foreignness* constitutes a practical account of Georgis' formal research project and its analysis. This chapter is entirely consistent with her writing practice of seamlessly interweaving theory with praxis, in this instance according to the responses of her research participants. As I anticipated, there are illustrations here of the linguistic turns one would expect to encounter when doing research in and on lived experience: 'reflexivity' and 'triangulation,' for example, that Georgis nicely demystifies via their practical application in the in-depth analysis of the data and discussion of her findings.

So why *does* all of this matter? And—most dreaded of questions for qualitative researchers of all stripes: *Who cares anyway?*

Consistent with Paola Georgis' own approach, and drawing direct inspiration from it, I will bring into play two items of realia from my practice as a reader and writer that illustrate my own thoughts on identity, language(s) and foreignness, specifically...

1. A playground chant from childhood, that at one time would have been perceived as completely innocuous:

*Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never harm me.*

It is now unfortunately self-evident that this cannot be further from the truth, as the hate-speech, not just of lonely individuals or 'playground' (and of course cyberspace) bullies, but also of world leaders on a global stage, continuously con-

tributes to legitimate acts of physical violence, mental and material terror; in Giorgis, from Giuliano Pontara, violence that is ‘direct, structural and cultural’ (p.103).

2. *Never Let Me Go*, by Kazuo Ishiguro, a novel written by this Nobel prize-winning author from 2005 that demonstrates with devastating clarity how human beings can be homogenised, institutionalised and brainwashed *through language*. Ishiguro employs a flat, two-dimensional prose and banal narrative style—as expressed through the first-person voice of the novel’s protagonist—combined with an educational setting—‘Hailsham’—where the central characters are deliberately deprived of knowledge of otherness, difference, *foreignness*, in Giorgis, that might motivate their escape and set them free. Ishiguro shows how language—and language alone; there is no overt physical violence at Hailsham—functions to instigate material constraints and, specifically, psychological blockages—*taboo*—the very title of this journal—without any need for hard borders. The characters in this novel know that they cannot ask particular questions relative to their identity and selfhood because... They just *know*. Instead, the young people at Hailsham fret and fuss over the most minuscule details of the mundane interactions amongst themselves and with their teachers. They have no relational reference points or language models beyond a reductive and proscribed curriculum; a monotheistic and reified version of ‘culture.’

Now juxtapose this with what Giorgis’ protagonists have to say about foreign language learning (italics added):

I sometimes use English to *break the banality of conversation... as a transgression* when I am with friends.

Indeed, another language *makes you feel a different person, and that can attain more self-confidence than in your mother-tongue.* (p. 70)

Giorgis’ students are encouraged to consider the phenomenon of the linguistic gaffe, for example, because ‘intercultural communication is not a practice we can learn from a list or from a book, as it involves complex dynamics which can have positive outcomes, or may result in a fiasco for many different reasons and causes. (To fail linguistically is) an opportunity to reconsider the context or situation from another perspective, to grasp at other meanings and, at the same time, to learn about ourselves too’ (p. 25).

It therefore concerns me deeply that the study of foreign languages has been persistently demoted in public schooling in English speaking countries, in particular, and I struggle not to see this as an educational homogenisation (colonization?) of the very same generations of young people who are visibly experimenting—and oftentimes struggling—with their identities alongside all the other insecurities of life in the 21st century. All human beings have the right to self-definition, in my view; to the making and remaking of identity and sense of self, whether stemming of necessity from instances of trauma and tragedy or from the more privileged

position of an imaginative and informed educational curriculum that challenges learners to consider critically who they are and who they hope to become; always already in relations with those around them. Having had the privilege of growing up in a language-rich environment (argumentative, explosive, linguistically competitive and at times unquestionably insensitive though that may have been) and having experienced the work of Orwell and the like in my formal education and beyond, it seems as though I have always known—at a visceral level even—how and why language—and languages—matter. From my reading of Paola Georgis I now understand—and can argue more cogently—why foreign language teaching and the meeting of foreignness through foreign languages is axiomatic to arriving at an understanding of self and others that constitutes meaningful maturity.

On a stylistic/aesthetic note, I would have preferred a more ‘elasticized’ version of *Meeting Foreignness*, as I felt at times that ideas came so thick and fast it was hard for me to keep up. I needed more time to think and digest, even when the sources and settings of Georgis’ discourse were familiar territory, broadly speaking. I look forward therefore to further explorations of her key themes because I believe that the issues Paola Georgis has raised are of enormous importance; next time her publisher just needs to allow her more wordage, is all.

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**Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education**  
Volume 19, Number 2, Spring 2020

**Vision and Scope**

*Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education* is an academic forum for the transdisciplinary study of the dynamic and complex relationship between the various competing and complementary aspects of education broadly defined. *Taboo* is grounded on the notion of radical contextualization. To investigate the notion of radical contextualization, we encourage scholars to draw from a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives to contest current taken-for-granted approaches in education and in the academy. Some of these approaches include, Post-Structuralism, Feminist Studies, Actor-Network Theory, Queer Theory, New Materialism, Historical/Genealogical, Affect Theory, and Critical approaches to race, class, and gender studies. Beyond simply articulating critical perspectives we seek contributions willing to stake the unsaid and the previous and current unconsiderable and/or irreconcilable. We encourage work that seeks to wrap its lips around the complex, chaotic, and cutting edges of the sayable and knowable. We want to push readers and contributors to perform complex questioning of the very ideas that have become all too common-place within traditional academic journals. We specifically foster discussions across and through different disciplines including explorations into how intertextualities and intersectionalities operate throughout and within different educational times/spaces/places. The journal encourages papers from a wide range of contributors who work within these general areas. We also encourage research that pushes the methodological boundaries. *Taboo* seeks a dialogic series of interactions that push place, space, and time boundaries as well as invites a leaning in and pushing back approach. Not only do we seek content that engages these values, but we also favor unique, controversial, and continually complicated forms and modes of presentations. As its title suggests, *Taboo* seeks provocative and controversial submissions.

**Reviewer Questions and Criteria**

When submitting a piece for consideration, please know that reviewers will be asked the following questions about your manuscript:

*How does the manuscript take up a transdisciplinary study of the dynamic and complex relationship between the various competing and complementary aspects of education broadly defined?*

*How and to what extent does the manuscript address the notion of radical contextualization?*

*How does the manuscript investigate the notion of radical contextualization?*

*How do scholars draw from a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives to contest current taken-for-granted approaches in education and in the academy? (Some of these approaches include, Post-Structuralism, Feminist Studies, Actor-Network Theory, Queer Theory, New Materialism, Historical/Genealogical, Affect Theory, and Critical approaches to race, class, and gender studies).*

*Beyond simply articulating critical perspectives how does the manuscript stake the unsaid and the previous and current unconsiderable and/or irreconcilable?*

*How and to what extent does the work seeks to wrap its lips around the complex, chaotic, and cutting edges of the sayable and knowable?*

*How does the manuscript push readers and contributors to perform complex questioning of the very ideas that have become all too common-place within traditional academic journals?*

*How does the manuscript foster discussions across and through different disciplines including explorations into how intertextualities and intersectionalities operate throughout and within different educational times/spaces/places?*

*How does the manuscript foster research that pushes the methodological boundaries?*

*How and to what extent does the manuscript foster a dialogic series of interactions that push place, space, and time boundaries as well as invites a leaning in and pushing back approach?*

*To what extent is the content of the manuscript provocative and controversial?*

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**Articles:** *Taboo* accepts what might be called traditional academic articles. We also encourage scholars to write and produce research that exposes the limits of this form as well as compose research in modes that would not be considered in mainstream academic journals. We expect thoughtful, provocative, and well-researched articles, but we also encourage authors to play with form and content. There is no word limit. Articles will go through a double-blind peer-review process. Authors can expect to receive a decision in 3-4 months.

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- e. Please indicate that the research complies with the rules and regulations of the Institutional Review Board of your particular institutions (if applicable)
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# Taboo

The Journal of Culture and Education

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