Peter Pericles Trifonas   *Editor*

# Handbook of Theory and Research in Cultural Studies and Education

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Peter Pericles Trifonas
Editor

# Handbook of Theory and Research in Cultural Studies and Education

With 17 Figures and 12 Tables

## Springer

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# Part I

# Knowledge Production and Identity

# Cultural Studies and Education

<span style="float:right">**1**</span>

Peter Pericles Trifonas

**Abstract**

Cultural Studies and Education are entwined in extremely broad and expanding transdisciplinary fields. The epistemological divide between their theory and practice is bridged by examining the ground of contested and multiple spaces of *praxis* to resist and rupture the status quo and challenge hegemonic and normalizing systems of power. Cultural Studies and Education have a complimentary set of interests, concerns, teaching, and research agendas that coalesce around the analysis of ideas, artifacts, or practices that are actively being formed, acted upon, exchanged, and reproduced.

**Keywords**

Cultural studies · Education · Difference · Popular culture · Sociology of education

Cultural Studies and Education are entwined in extremely broad and expanding transdisciplinary fields. The epistemological divide between their theory and practice is bridged by examining the ground of contested and multiple spaces of *praxis* to resist and rupture the status quo and challenge hegemonic and normalizing systems of power. Cultural Studies and Education have a complimentary set of interests, concerns, teaching, and research agendas that coalesce around the analysis of ideas, artifacts, or practices that are actively being formed, acted upon, exchanged, and reproduced:

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- A particular cultural practice
- A particular group of cultural producers or consumers (e.g., Aboriginal artists, youth subcultures, an aspect of national or ethnic cultural maintenance, specific community groups, individuals)
- The analysis of cultural "texts" (news, films, advertisements, etc.) to show underlying structures, patterns, and contents and the way subjects are positioned, portrayed, defined, and persuaded
- Representations of a particular subject in contemporary media or art (e.g., female bodies and eating disorders, sexuality and gender, war and terrorism, the articulation of identities, or stereotypes, of specific groups or identity formations) or questions of culture and morality or entitlement (e.g., depictions of "good" and "evil" desire in advertising, images of youth, and rebellion)
- Cultural categories that underlie differentiations between particular social groups
- A particular style of cultural practice, such as everyday consumption, cultural rituals, or commemorations (e.g., cooking or eating, sport, practices surrounding death, cultural festivals)
- An analysis of a specific cultural audiences or "subcultures" based around particular tastes (e.g., sexual subcultures, art gallery users, street fashions)
- An analysis of cultural institutions or policies
- A comparison of differing cultural order that privilege differences
- Intercultural relations and practices of cultural exchange or "translation," including appropriation, reappropriation, and exappropriation
- A theoretical or ethical question considered in terms of its cultural circulation
- Culture and technologies (e.g., communication devices, digital media, or games, virtual communities, etc.)

This handbook brings together a multiplicity of voices in a collective and converging manner that asks critical questions from a heterogeneity of vantage points around Cultural Studies and Education. Its practical role and theoretical impact are to challenge dominant socioeconomic and politico-ideological structures that reproduce the ethical and material relations for injustice and inequity. Some themes and topics that will be in the sections of the book are Education and Pedagogy (elementary, secondary, postsecondary institutions, curricula, literacy, testing); Religion and Spirituality (ethnicity, identity, conflict, representation); Digital Technology and Public Media (Facebook, cell phones, digital games); Urbanization and Arts (the city, graffiti, street art, poetry); Fashion, Music, and Identity (hip hop, metal, punk, commercialization); Advertising and Manufacturing Desire, Film and Television, Sports, and Media (masculinity, women in sports, violence, steroids); Environmental Sustainability and Capitalism, Cultural Politics and Representation, and Politics and Participation (democracy, citizenship, institutions); Youth and Childhood; Gender and Identity; Sexuality and Human Rights; and Race and Representation. A focus on the relevance of ongoing production and reproduction of cultural and historical differences of educational practices.

This includes what it means not only to develop forms of pedagogical address that are responsive to such differences but also to examine the challenges of coming to

know a world beyond one's own perspective through reading, hearing, or viewing texts, stories, and images, focusing on the possibilities and limitations of practices through which identities/subjectivities are informed with subject-centric discourses and histories (e.g., feminist, class-based, and ethnocultural), as well as regional, nation/nation-state, or global efforts to define collective subjectivities. Examining the relation of the pedagogical, the ethical, and political in education and culture. This implies developing practices and frameworks that help to clarify one's basic commitments as an educator, researcher, or cultural worker and how those commitments might be worked through in practices. Interests here include how local and state education and cultural policies influence the possibilities of various forms of pedagogical practice and cultural activism and what new alternatives might be proposed that would support a more just and equitable society. Culture must therefore be considered as a distinct, if overlapping, sphere of heterogeneous, techno-pragmatic modes of meaning production. This means taking culture seriously as referencing a variety of pedagogical forms. Thus, there is concern, for example, with the institution of practices such as music, museums, television, literature, photography, art, religious worship, architecture, and urban topographies and how these forms of expression articulate their own dynamics of subjectification, meaning, embodiment, and reproducibility. For education, this means, on the one hand, teaching about popular, commercial, mass, folk, and local culture while, on the other hand, learning how one learns from such cultural forms, attending to and critiquing what and how they teach. The purpose of such a critical position is to understand the differentiated and often unequal processes of social exchange that result in local and global cultural production in a world system being reordered and re-specialized through changes in economic policies and practices, for example, the role of new technologies, and emergent, and at times, the influence of counter-hegemonic cultures on mainstream ideas, objects, and practices. This handbook analyzes the genealogies of different conditions of knowledge and their appearance as particular subjects and disciplines in light of advances in cultural theory and critique, including the important contributions that knowledge historically marginal to the Western traditions of thought can make to contemporary notions of knowing, teaching, and learning.

In ▶ Chap. 2, "Social Movement Knowledge Production," Aziz Choudry examines social movements and social, political, and environmental justice activism as important sites of knowledge production. This includes ideas, insights, and visions produced by people collectively working for social, economic, and political change and reflecting on their experiences and what has preceded them. This is often knowledge about systems of power and exploitation developed as people find themselves in confrontation with states and capital. However, the forms and significance of this knowledge production are often overlooked by social movement scholars and even activists themselves. Focusing on the intellectual work that takes place in struggles for social and political justice, and drawing from engaged scholarship and a range of movements and activist contexts, this chapter discusses the processes, possibilities, and tensions of social movement knowledge production for providing tools for organizing and critical analysis. This chapter discusses the

relationship between learning, action, and knowledge production; research in social movements and political activism; the production and use of historical knowledge as a tool for organizing; and popular cultural/artistic work that takes place within activism.

Alana Butler, Cathryn Teasley, and Concepción Sánchez-Blanco present a critique of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) as a contested site of cultural transmission and social reproduction in Western nation-states, but also as one that can become a potentially powerful space of resistance and change. ► Chap. 3, "A Decolonial, Intersectional Approach to Disrupting Whiteness, Neoliberalism, and Patriarchy in Western Early Childhood Education and Care" examines how language and other symbolic systems shape social hierarchies of power within and beyond ECEC contexts and how children from infancy to the early years of schooling are exposed to various forms of oppression caused by racist, ethnocentric, neoliberal, patriarchal, heteronormative, and neocolonial dynamics. How these persistent cultural forces converge on malleable young minds, perpetuating not only White privilege but other injustices sustained by predatory capitalist cultural strategies, which emphasize conformity, competition, and consumerism over other ontological and axiological orientations, are encoded through cultures of play, pedagogical practice, and interpersonal/intergroup relations in ECEC. They focus more specifically on how color-blind racism within ECEC is undergirded by a Western-centric, capitalist, and patriarchal world system, while color blindness that situates ECEC as a neutral space is rejected. The discussion is further framed through intersectional, decolonial, counter-hegemonic, and cross-cultural inquiry into culturally sustainable child-centered pedagogy. To understand how racial and other sociocultural hierarchies colonize children's spatialities, temporalities, potentialities, and overall well-being, we conclude by proposing strategies to foster resistance and rupture the systems of hegemonic power and dominator culture within ECEC.

Now, more than ever, there is an obligation to recognize the presence of the infinite possibilities and multiple horizons of alterity, which destabilize the grounding of subjectivity and our knowledge about what it means to be human. This responsibility highlights the problem of exposing or creating locations for otherness within communitarian-based institutions such as the university, which still occupy the colonized space of traditional knowledge archives and are at the same time alterior to the logic of the status quo simply by producing new forms of knowledge and blazing trails of discovery that change the disciplines. If so, ► Chap. 4, "Ourselves as Another" by Peter Pericles Trifonas asks, How and where are gestures toward the spaces of these new locations enacted within the human sciences by which we define the difference of ourselves as another?

► Chap. 5, "Between Cultural Literacy and Cultural Relevance: A Culturally Pragmatic Approach to Reducing the Black-White Achievement Gap" introduces a culturally pragmatic approach to reducing the Black-White achievement gap, which marries Hirsch Jr.'s cultural literacy with Ladson-Billings's culturally relevant pedagogy. Mohamed Dahir's approach offers African American students the taken-for-granted knowledge required to succeed academically and navigate mainstream society while simultaneously utilizing and validating African American culture in

the classroom. In addition, it seeks to encourage students to view the world with a critical consciousness, which questions and challenges the sociopolitical order. The chapter starts by examining the strengths and weaknesses of Hirsch's approach through a comparative analysis with the ideas of Bourdieu and Freire. Next, the need for a pragmatic approach to the education of African American students, that is free of dogmatic and political constraints, is discussed. The chapter then turns its attention to examining how the culturally pragmatic model, by combining cultural literacy with culturally relevant pedagogy, is able to create synergy between the two approaches and also have each make up for the educational blind spots of the other. The chapter ends by exploring an alternative explanation for the motivating factors that engender oppositional culture among Black American students. Rather than an adaptation to pessimism about African Americans prospects on the job market, oppositional culture is presented as a strategy to protect the self-concept in response to an uneven playing field, for which culturally pragmatic education is presented as a possible remedy.

In ▶ Chap. 6, "Politics of Identity and Difference in Cultural Studies: Decolonizing Strategies," Ruthann Lee asks, How do modern Western concepts of identity, subjectivity, and difference enable and constrain how Cultural Studies scholars engage in the work of social justice and political transformation? Despite a sophisticated understanding and theoretical establishment of identities as intersectional, students and faculty continue to make strategically essentialist claims as they navigate the contradictory dynamics of power and privilege in the university. This chapter examines some of the strategies and expectations of performing diversity that coincide with ongoing dilemmas of the "burden of representation." Cultural Studies' continued reliance on liberal humanist frameworks limits how it can imagine and enact practices of anti-capitalist decolonization. Lee uses an example of local grassroots organizing to protect water to suggest that by engaging with Indigenous feminist theories of relationality, Cultural Studies can more purposefully resist and challenge colonial and corporate powers within and beyond the institution.

Jan Jagodzinski questions the broad understanding of "diversity as difference" in relation to one strand of Cultural Studies where issues of representation are constantly forwarded in what has become the political practice of identity politics: diversity within "democratic societies" ruled by representational politics. In "Explorations of Post-Identity in Relation to Resistance: Why Difference Is Not Diversity" refers to the usual primary signifiers such as skin color, sex, gender, race, ethnicity, ability, and so on that have grounded Cultural Studies in general. The result has been an unexpected "resistance" by populist movements to multiculturalism, supported by any number of authoritarian personalities around the world, from Trump in the United States to Erdoğan in Turkey, from Duterte in the Philippines to Orban in Hungary, from Putin in Russia to Zuma in South Africa, and from Israel's Netanyahu to China's Xi Jinping – now installed as president for life. The globe is crisscrossed by these "authoritarian men." And, the list seems to have proliferated to now include Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega, Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro, and Michel Temer's sweeping corruption of Brazil. Drawing on the nonrepresentational theories of Deleuze and Guattari where "difference" is process based, I dwell on the case of

Paul Gauguin to confuse identity politics, not as hybrid-hyphenated identities but by queering identity, a "post-identity" position which heads in the direction of a planetary consciousness that requires an understanding of difference as singularity and new political formations of the "common." Otherwise, our future is closed.

In ▶ Chap. 8, "Beyond Domination: Enrique Dussel, Decoloniality, and Education," Noah De Lissovoy and Raúl Olmo Fregoso Bailón interrogate the colonial epistemology underlying familiar progressive approaches to education and propose a decolonial approach building from non-Western standpoints. They start from an analysis of coloniality in Western culture and knowledge systems, grounding our account in the work of influential philosopher Enrique Dussel, considering in particular Dussel's accounts of the methodology of analectics (which he contrasts with Western dialectics), the ethics of exteriority, and the epistemology of liberation. They describe how both mainstream progressive and critical accounts of curriculum and pedagogy are interrogated by the challenge proposed within Dussel's work, specifically, how his decolonial theses (a) suggest a confrontation with Eurocentrism at the level of knowing and being (not merely content or ideology); (b) challenge easy notions of reconciliation and solidarity in teaching spaces in favor of a dialogical ethics that systematically privileges the voices of the oppressed and marginalized; and (c) ask us to recognize the source of pedagogy and politics in the power and agency of the community (including communities of students), a source that teachers should remember and to which they should remain accountable. And it concludes with a summative statement of the ways in which a decolonial approach to education based on the work of Dussel rearticulates, at the level of orientation, epistemology, and ethics, the meaning of an emancipatory commitment in education.

The rise of neoliberal ideology has had significant implications for education. Scholars from various fields have argued that neoliberal processes have commodified both educational outcomes and the knowledge they yield. The internalization of neoliberal processes by student subjects reflects a similar commodification of the "self" to be marketed to future employers. Educational and other investments in oneself hold the promise of upward social mobility and success in an increasingly competitive workforce. Neoliberal success narratives that underlie curricula transmit this promise and are coincident with a neoliberal demand for normativity. In ▶ Chap. 9, "Other Possible Worlds: Queerness as an Intervention into Neoliberal Success Narratives in Education," Nadine Violette troubles neoliberal success narratives in education that necessitate a normative subject position. The analysis explores what messages about identity and success are present in New Brunswick's (NB) Personal Development and Career Planning (PDCP) curriculum document, a text that addresses wide-ranging topics including sexual health, self-concept, suicide prevention, and labor market preparation. Nonnormative subject positions such as queerness, disability, and race can be used as entry points and interventions into neoliberal success narratives that necessarily demand normative subject positions. This analysis speaks to the consequences and contradictions of neoliberal education in Canada while pursuing the reclamation of "failure" and "failed subjectivities" as means of combating totalizing neoliberal success narratives. This project is undertaken

to redirect blame from nonnormative subjects and their perceived "failures" to the constraints of neoliberal capitalism. Ultimately, failure can be employed to imagine other possible worlds, other possible curricula, and other possible trajectories for education. In ▶ Chap. 10, "Vitality of Heritage Languages and Education: The Case of Modern Greek in Canada," Themistoklis Aravossitas states that one of the concerns of minority/immigrant communities and their members is to maintain their heritage through the intergenerational transmission of their language and culture. Such a process involves not both family language planning and heritage language education (HLE). This chapter examines the vitality of community languages using the Greek language in Canada as a case study. The role of the community in promoting and sustaining heritage language education is the main focus of this study which includes a theoretical and an empirical part. In the first part, Aravossitas explores the phenomena of language shift and language maintenance and examines parameters that affect the ethnolinguistic vitality of minority groups, such as institutional support through education. In the empirical part, he analyzes research findings related to educational needs and challenges of HL learners and teachers. The study shows that in order to overcome social and educational barriers in promoting the teaching and learning of Greek as well as all community languages in Canada, there has to be a systematic attempt by community and other stakeholders to improve the motivation of teachers and learners and modernize the curricula of heritage language programs.

The modus operandi of many pedagogies indexed under the rubric "critical" and "transformative" is to acknowledge and overcome oppressive structures ingrained in dominant societal ideologies. Yet in practice, some of such pedagogies may be susceptible to what Gert Biesta has called the "logic of emancipation." This means that those who are to be emancipated ultimately remain dependent on the "truth" provided by the critical educator. In ▶ Chap. 11, "Transference, Desire, and the Logic of Emancipation: Psychoanalytic Lessons from the 'Third Wave,'" Antti Saari provides a critical discussion of the possibility of overcoming the logic of emancipation from the point of view of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. Transformative learning process is analyzed as a formation and a subsequent unraveling of transferential fantasies and desires invested in the critical educator as a "subject supposed to know." As a case example, the chapter analyzes an (in)famous pedagogical experiment conducted in a Palo Alto High School in 1967. In a World History class, a teacher taught his students about the perils of fascism by using unorthodox teaching methods. While lecturing them about the history of the Third Reich, the teacher allured his students to adopt decidedly fascist discipline and forms of mutual persecution. The aim was to help students learn how easily almost anyone can willingly succumb to authoritarianism. This provocative case is used to illustrate the power of transferential fantasies in education and the difficult process of trying to unravel them for the purposes of a transformative experience. Moreover, the case raises questions about the ethics of such pedagogic practices.

In ▶ Chap. 12, "Exploring the Future Form of Pedagogy: Education and Eros," Inna Semetsky addresses the future form of pedagogy and explores a related educational theory. The chapter, first, reflects on exopedagogy as a form of posthumanist education. Second, the chapter positions exopedagogy in the context of

Gilles Deleuze's philosophical thought and his pedagogy of the concept. Education as informed by Deleuze-Guattari's transformational pragmatics is "located" in experience, in culture, and in life. As grounded in praxis, education necessarily includes an ethical dimension. Such cultural pedagogy is oriented to the "becomings" of human subjects and has an affective, erotic aspect. The feminine qualities of care and love associated with the concept of Eros should not only form the basis of education for the future but can make this rather utopian future our present ethos in accord with the educational policy agenda of the twenty-first century. Future educational leaders as "people to come" are themselves produced via the creative forms of experiential becomings, including "becoming-woman." In conclusion, the chapter asserts that people-to-come in education should be able to use imagination to cross the limits of the present and tap into the future.

Since 2015, the Aegean Islands have been receiving an influx of refugees, which has by far exceeded the existing capabilities of the islands in terms of reception and hospitality. Refugees/migrants from Syria, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and other countries on route to Europe have found themselves "trapped" in Greece, due to the tightening of the EU border controls. Due to this, a considerable number of refugees/migrants are increasingly coming to terms with the potential of staying in the Greece. Since 2016, Greek language lessons have been offered to adult, adolescent, and child refugees at the Linguistics Laboratory of the Department of Primary Education, University of the Aegean, in Rhodes, Greece. The lessons are provided by volunteer members of the teaching staff and students. The language and cultural diversity of the group, the mobility of the learners, as well as their unstable present and future have led to the adoption of communities of language learning, empowerment, and agency, as well as the implementation of new pedagogical approaches, which reflect the dynamic character of the learners' identities and their multiple needs. In ► Chap. 13, "The Creation of a Community of Language Learning, Empowerment, and Agency for Refugees in Rhodes, Greece," Vasilia Kourtis-Kazoullis, Dionysios Gouvias, Marianthi Oikonomakou, and Eleni Skourtou present the case study of the Greek language lessons, focusing on the multicultural, multilingual community of learning that has been created and specifically on the volunteer teachers in this community and the ways they feel that they have been affected by teaching refugees.

While forest schools are increasingly popular in Canada and their work of connecting children to nature and enacting a new pedagogy for learning outdoors is important, how do forest schools, as places of learning in nature and on the land, connect with Indigenous ways of knowing, learning, and teaching? This question is significant in the context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as Canada is in the midst of recognizing the injustice of its treatment of Indigenous Peoples and working toward reconciliation. In ► Chap. 14, "Forest School Pedagogy and Indigenous Educational Perspectives: Where They Meet, Where They Are Far Apart, and Where They May Come Together," Lisa Johnston examines the ways that Forest School Pedagogy and Indigenous Educational Perspectives may meet, may be far apart, and may come together. How do notions of nature and land, risk, and resilience differ from Western understandings? What does decolonization mean? How does place-based education connect with Indigenous understandings of land as

first teacher? As a settler and early childhood educator, the author is situated in this learning journey as "coming to know." Drawing on Indigenous and settler scholars offers insight into the complex differences between Forest School Pedagogy and Indigenous Educational Perspectives and offers guidance on how (re)positioning forest schools in the context of settler colonialism reframes the premise of how forest school may incorporate, embed, and be reshaped by Indigenous Educational Perspectives.

▶ Chap. 15, "Integrating Community-Based Values with a Rights-Integrative Approach to Early Learning Through Early Childhood Curricula" presents an application of the conceptual model of social justice that integrates community-based values with Di Santo and Kenneally's "rights-integrative approach to early learning." The conceptual model emerged from an analysis of the *British Columbia Early Learning Framework*. The aim of this chapter by Rachel Caplan, Aurelia Di Santo, and Colleen Loomis is to discuss how the learning framework exemplifies the integration of children's rights with community-based values. Examples of how professionals working in early learning settings may integrate conceptualizations of children's rights of a "community of children" in addition to more conventional conceptualizations of child rights as individuals are provided.

Humans have long been recognized as having layers of being conscious, unconscious, and subconscious – Id, Ego, and Superego, to name a few. These focus on the individual. But humans do not exist only as individuals. We are inherently members of systems: social, cultural, linguistic, political, and so on. We are also inextricably nested within ecological systems of home, influencing and influenced by all of the human and more than human beings that we share our environment with. This relationship with all of our relations can be captured within the Self. As we move from a focus on self to an embrace of our connected Self, there are infinite considerations to be explored. In a collection of textual and reflective snapshots in ▶ Chap. 16, "Posting #Selfies: Autogeographies and the Teaching of Me," Susan Jagger navigates the wonderings about and wanderings from self to Self.

In ▶ Chap. 17, "Closing the Achievement Gap via Reducing the Opportunity Gap: YAAACE's Social Inclusion Framework Within the Jane and Finch Community," Ardavan Eizadirad uses comparative spatial analysis and critical race theory to outline an overview of systemic and institutional barriers impeding academic achievement of racialized students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds living in under-resourced racialized communities in Toronto, Canada. Youth Association for Academics, Athletics, and Character Education (YAAACE), a nonprofit community organization in the Jane and Finch neighborhood, is examined as a case study in closing the achievement gap in the community by investing in minimizing the inequality of opportunity impacting young children, youth, and families in the area. The collaborative synergic model of YAAACE from a Social Inclusion Strategy framework that takes into consideration participants' identities and developmental needs and the community's spatial dynamics and demographics exemplifies an effective approach to mitigating systemic and structural barriers impeding academic achievement of racialized students for upward social mobility. YAAACE's unique model for teaching and learning and offering holistic services can be used as a tool

and a spark for further discussion in how we can use alternative approaches to close the achievement gap and expand the limited hegemonic definition of success that is normalized and perpetuated in schools focusing exclusively on academics which marginalizes and oppresses racialized identities and their needs.

For Carlo Ricci, in ▶ Chap. 18, "Democracy Under Attack: Learning, Schooling, and the Media," whether we are "acting" as teachers or parents or friends, our being impacts other beings, as the citation above suggests. If the space is full of fear, stress, and anxiety, it will harm those within. Knowing that you do not need bells, whistles, tests, assignments, grades, coercion, fear, anxiety, and so on, in order to have learning, what can we do to help create more peaceful and deep learning spaces? This is a question that each and everyone of us can ask ourselves and we each then have to decide what we can do to benefit rather than diminish learning. Ricci tries to make clear what we mean when we use so many familiar words, because words are not neutral, and they are contentious, and they are political. Words that seem so simple are filled with complexity. For example, consider the word learning, the meaning of which might seem so obvious, but in reality it is not. What does learning actually mean? Of course, it depends on your philosophy and your worldview. Does it mean curriculum, and what happens in mainstream schools?

In ▶ Chap. 19, "Resistance, Action, and Transformation in a Participatory Action Research (PAR) Project with Homeless Youth," Dacid Goldberg examines data from a 1-year participatory action research (PAR) project with 35 homeless youth reveals many flee to the streets to resist dangerous, volatile, or dysfunctional homes. The chapter details how participatory action research (PAR), the methodology used in the study, contests "expert" research into social ills and oppression from those who are detached from the communities they study. Many of the young people connected to the PAR project they helped lead, and in so doing, a number of youth transformed their sense of self. During the research, the youth reflected on their experiences and lifeworlds as they defined them. They examined homelessness from their standpoints of parenting, self, education, and shelter. The youth prioritized stereotyping and stigmatization, as critical themes to address. Some noted that at a time in their lives when they hoped to expand their social networks and opportunities, stereotypes and stigmatization shamed them into "hiding" and "retreating." Some added that society's shunning of them for supposed faults and shortcomings felt similar to their experiences in their households. The youth conceived a number of solutions to change people's perceptions of them. They poured their energies into individual artworks to represent their findings. Of these, they selected "The Other Side of the Door," a searing theatre play written by a peer in the project. The play depicts the dysfunctional dynamics between a volatile mother and her 16-year-old son, who flees into homelessness. The youth argued passionately for the play to be presented in a number of places and institutions, ranging from schools of psychology, social work, and education to courts and juvenile corrections, places of worship, and high schools.

Western education systems typically place significance on the development of the *whole child*; however, the spiritual domain of development is often neglected due to the belief that religion and spirituality are synonymous notions. In ▶ Chap. 20,

"Spiritual Meditations: Being in the Early Years," Dragana Mirkovic, Barbara Pytka, and Susan Jagger explore the varying understandings and ideas of spirituality in an attempt to illustrate its significance and possibilities within the early years. This piece does not attempt to isolate a single definition of spirituality, rather recognizes spirituality as a way of *being* and focuses on meditating ideas of what spirituality can be in various contexts of the early years. Through the exploration of current literature and application of relevant narratives, this piece emphasizes the avoidance of spirituality within educational settings and the common characteristics or foundations of spirituality. Finally, the chapter offers practice implications that can support educators in welcoming spirituality into the classroom environment.

In ▶ Chap. 21, "Identity Construction Amidst the Forces of Domination," Terry Louisy argues that identity is created not by biological imperatives alone but is realized in consciousness. In this ongoing process of identity construction, youth are confronted both by biological indicators apparent within themselves and by dominant prevailing societal discourses that see those biological indicators as cause to ascribe particular roles to the individual and to exclude them from others, especially in regard to gender, race, and class. This has particular consequences for those gendered as male and racialized as black. The negotiation of black masculinities, especially for those black males who are non-heteronormal, becomes a struggle against exclusion and resistance and being located at the bottom of a socioeconomic hierarchy determined by hegemonic masculinity. Caught between conceptual hegemony that streams the dominant's discourses of hierarchical stratification through countless images, media, advertising, historical accounts, schooling, and society's interminable dominant group messaging and the message itself of hegemonic masculinity, black masculinities are challenged with forces that threaten exclusion, dropout, trauma, and imprisonment. Whether or not this constant stream of indoctrination can be absorbed or resisted in a way that does not obliterate genuine being or necessarily require that black masculinities be relegated to the lowest levels of society is uncertain. Yet, some scholars posit that resilient self-conceptions can be scaffolded through interventions born of a critical race conceptual framework, which focuses on identity construction and which can improve self-conception, and through that, academic achievement as well.

In ▶ Chap. 22, "Never-Ending Adolescence: A Psychoanalytic Study of Resistance," Farah Virani-Murji and Lisa Farley speculate about a psychic quality of resistance manifesting in a fantasy formation that we are calling "never-ending adolescence." Also known as the Peter Pan syndrome, they argue that never-ending adolescence is made from a fantasy of not growing up that takes shape in a longing to dwell forever in what is imagine as a past time. Virani-Murji and Farley propose that the technologically driven quality of today's adolescence amplifies this archaic fantasy structure, setting into motion the creation of nostalgic objects that have come to be known as "throwback" phenomena signifying fantasied portals into an idealized time of the childhood past. Such phenomena, Virani-Murji and Farley suggest, freeze time into "immobile sections" that secure a certainty of experience and resist what Julia Kristeva calls, the "mobility of duration." Against a backdrop of throwback phenomena, we theorize never-ending adolescence as marked by a

halting resistance of time that defends against entry into a future plugged into an avalanche of both information and uncertainty. Through our discussion, we pose a challenge to developmental constructions positing adolescence as simply a forerunner to adulthood and rather suggest how we are all adolescents when we engage idealized objects and attachments that stall the mobility of time. The challenge for both teachers and students is to imagine ways of being and becoming that can make tolerable, and even enjoyable, the imperfections and frustrations of living a life that is less filtered and fuller for it.

In the United States, Canada, and much of Europe, white nationalism has emerged as a significant part of dominant political, cultural, and social discourse. While this renaissance of white supremacy is significant, with concrete impacts for women, people of color, LGBTQ2, and Indigenous folks, it can be read as a mark of the success of identity politics – specifically the activism, resistance, work, organizing, and scholarship – by these very groups. Conservative white nationalist discourse in mainstream social and other media offers a barometer of a broad and significant epistemic change and indeed heralds the end of certain forms of acceptable whiteness. This is a new white racial formation and requires a new conversation about whiteness and being. The chapter begins by identifying the political, theoretical, and academic project of this work and situates the arguments herein within anti-colonial and critical race theory. In ▶ Chap. 23, "Contemporary Whiteness Interrupted: Leaning into Contradiction in the University Classroom," Arlo Kempf offers a description of and reflection on the author's teaching and classroom experiences in a large Canadian teacher education program. He discusses the ways in which white right voices are seeking and finding agency in university classroom spaces, while simultaneously, the experiences and perspectives of people of color, Indigenous peoples, LGBTQ2 folks, and women are increasingly validated and central to mainstream teacher education. The chapter then sketches the broader political context in which these emerging classroom dynamics are situated, suggesting a new moment in race politics.

David Kergel takes the position that a digitally augmented part of reality emerged with the Internet. He argues that this augmentation of reality bears social implications. In ▶ Chap. 24, "The History of the Internet: Between Utopian Resistance and Neoliberal Government," Kergel discusses the evolution of societal meaning of the web in the course of the development of the Internet since the late 1950s and the increasingly growth of the Internet since the late 1960s. The societal meaning of the Internet shifts thereby constantly between the poles of utopian resistance and neoliberal government. Using a genealogical and socio-semiotic approach, the article reconstructs the discussion of the discursive meaning of the Internet and digital technology in the course of the history of the Internet.

From Marcel Duchamp's portrayal of Mona Lisa with facial hair to Andy Warhol's painting of Campbell's soup cans, artists have used creative license to appropriate and/or modify other's work for their own interpretation. However, appropriation is not always about purely representing another's work; it is sometimes tangled in political, economic, global, and cultural hegemony, particularly in

virtual worlds where it can create a Third Culture. The Third Culture is a worldwide intercultural mix of cultures created by residents who speak different textual languages. Virtual world residents create and recreate their own and other cultures' visual representations to promote their virtual products or ideologies. In the Third Culture, the meanings of images are built and negotiated by the Third Culture residents. In ▶ Chap. 25, "Visual Culture in Virtual Worlds: Cultural Appreciation or Cultural Appropriation? When Cultural Studies Meets Creativity," Hsiao-Cheng (Sandrine) Han contemplates artistic creativity and whether cultural appropriation can lead to cultural appreciation in the virtual world of Second Life through a research-based conversation between Kristy, the female avatar of this art educator/ researcher, and Freyja, a Taiwanese research participant, interspersed with the real-life thoughts and experiences of the author.

Science fiction films as a mass medium for public consumption have disseminated cautionary parables of technological dystopia rooted in existing social and economic conditions. ▶ Chap. 26, "Technological Dystopia in the Science Fiction Genre" by Peter Pericles Trifonas examines how the theme that ties them together is the representation of technology and its effect on human society in the future. Each film deals with the subject in different ways that ultimately relate to its cinematographic style, technical advancements, and the story line. And yet, the theme of the failed quest for utopia remains morally unresolved in the depiction of the rise of a technological dystopia and its effect on human society in a world to come, playing on the incommensurability of philosophical, religious, political, economic, and literary narratives of scientific progress.

The widespread usage, consumption, and production of social media has sparked serious debate about its role in stimulating, cultivating, and influencing the shape, depth, and impact of democracy. How does and can engagement in and with social media lead to citizen participation in seeking to address issues that significantly affect people, notably social inequalities, racism, sexism, classism, poverty, war and conflict, the environment, and other local as well as global concerns? Does (or can) open-ended social media access, beyond the tightly controlled normative, hegemonic structures and strictures of democracy that frame, to a great deal, how people live, work, and even think, lead to new, alternative, and innovative forms of (critical) engagement? In ▶ Chap. 27, "Social Media and the Quest for Democracy: Faking the Re-awakening," Paul R. Carr, Sandra Liliana Cuervo Sanchez, Michelli Aparecida Daros, and Gina Thésée seek to make connections between the intricacies of using social media and the reconceptualization of democracy, linking the two in an attempt to underscore how participation and engagement are changing. Using social media involves multilevel configurations of not only communicating with others but also of developing content, responding, sharing, critiquing, and reimagining the "Other" as well as reinterpreting contexts, political spaces, and cultures. This chapter also examines and critiques the potential for tangible, counter-hegemonic change within and outside of the mainstream, representative, electoralist model of democracy, which is increasingly being rejected by large numbers of citizens around the world. A significant piece of this equation is the filter of education, attempting to understand its role, impact, and meaning for social

media usage/engagement in relation to democracy. The backdrop of fake news is interwoven and problematized throughout the text.

In ► Chap. 28, "Unlocking Contested Stories and Grassroots Knowledge" Antonia Liguori argues that digital storytelling is a form of engagement that enables people to share personal stories and to produce new knowledge(s). Digital stories reveal unexpected connections across different communities of interest, places, and time periods. They reflect shared and conflicting values, feelings, and concerns surrounding a particular place. Digital storytelling as a process can guide us during a journey over time, by enabling storytellers to use their creativity to trigger memories from the past and to stimulate critical thinking around current situations and possible future scenarios. It also reconnects storytellers and story-listeners to physical and emotional journeys, while they are disconnecting themselves from places that, after dramatic transitions, cannot exist anymore as they were. Reflecting on some examples of practice-led research projects, this chapter will consider questions such as: How to connect individual stories to community narratives? How to unlock grassroots knowledge and bring unheard voices into a debate? What kinds of social impacts can personally meaningful stories – especially if they are contested – produce? Since co-design and co-production have been identified as key elements of the digital storytelling process, this chapter intends also to inquire if and how this methodology can be enriched by contaminations with other creative approaches absorbed from the visual arts and music.

Comparing digital stories and other forms of narratives may represent an additional way of uncovering conflicts and also discovering unexpected common ground in the dialogue between lay and experts' knowledge, due to the authenticity of personal stories and the natural "mess" of storytelling.

► Chap. 29, "Technology, Democracy, and Hope," Jeremy Hunsinger is about how most of our educational and technological lives exist outside of democratic control and primarily exists in the spaces of bureaucratic authoritarianism. He argues that sometimes this authoritarianism is due to a need for authority based in specific knowledges or expertise, but other parts of our political, cultural, and educational lives could be equal and democratic. Increasingly though, they are becoming a matter of private instead of public governance. This transformation of our public institutions and privatization of our public goods is a matter of ongoing neoliberal "market solutions," but they are also driven by the technologies themselves few of which are democratically oriented at all.

In ► Chap. 30, "Youth Consumption of Media and the Need for Critical Media Literacy in the Time of Liquid Modernity: Everything Is Moving So Quickly," Danielle Ligocki analyzes the ways in which living in our current liquid modern time, according to Zygmunt Bauman, is having a direct impact on the lives of young people everywhere, specifically in regard to media consumption. Liquid modernity is a time of endless consumption and disposability, with no clear beginning or end, no solid bonds, no clear line between public and private lives, and a state of constant surveillance. These characteristics of liquid modernity intersect with media consumption in such a way that young people are unable to make sense of the ways in which media is influencing their own self-identity, as well as their views of others

and the ways that they work to understand those who may be different than they are. The chapter looks at the ways in which these two major forces combine, and the need for critical media literacy in schools becomes clear.

The media and marketing machinery continually spins out an excess of products and services to increasingly ad-swamped consumers looking for social emancipation, a sense of identity, and meaning in life through the acquisition of goods and services. In ▶ Chap. 31, "The Merchandizing of Identity: The Cultural Politics of Representation in the 'I Am Canadian' Beer Campaign," Peter Pericles Trifonas analyzes the links between desire, subjectivity, and advertising. Successful advertising for alcoholic beverages that does not appeal to sexuality offers consumers images and jingles that become signposts of an individual's history by equating alcohol consumption with life's great moments. The brand, the badge, and the label personalize a beer. The "I am Canadian" campaign proved to be a very successful campaign even though it did not opt for the usual "sex sells" marketing approach so common in the advertising of alcoholic beverages. The commercials gave an amusing take on "Canuck" patriotism and played off ethnic stereotypes to nationalize a brand and acculturate good taste using the cultural politics of identity and difference.

In ▶ Chap. 32, "Eating Culture: How What We Eat Informs Who We Are and Who We Want to Be," Cammy Lee considers how our food and foodways impact identity. In approaching this, Lee unpacks two food narratives: the first, causing embarrassment and shame, will be analyzed using psychoanalysis and critical literacy, while the second, sparking creativity, includes a discussion on the role of disgust – the paradox of aversion, aesthetic disgust, the cognition-affect link, and finally disgust in culture. Using interdisciplinary lenses for analyses, she argue that whether good and bad, our food experiences can inform how we understand who we are and more significantly, shape who we want to become. Despite its varying effects, this chapter seeks to underscore that as an entry point to interrogate culture, identity, and otherness, food has pedagogical value.

Gabriel Huddleston and Mark Helmsing, in ▶ Chap. 33, "Pop Culture 2.0: A Political Curriculum in the Age of Trump," posit the concept of Pop Culture 2.0 as a means to mark important changes in popular culture of which scholars and teachers should contend. They propose a revised agenda in the study of popular culture and education, sitting in a position that is within the transdisciplinary configurations, concerns, and approaches of Cultural Studies, a field that is experiencing its own changes amidst a renewed sense of urgency and relevance in recent years. One issue is the shifting landscape of popular culture itself, which Huddleston and Helmsing approach from their researcher positions in the United States, and how the very conceptualization of what constitutes *culture* and *the popular* have radically changed in the wake of President Trump's election to the office of President of the United States in 2016. A second issue, in some ways inextricable from the first, is accumulated effects of the recent *postcritical* turn in the humanities and social sciences. Scholars from various fields and areas of inquiry have taken up this turn in a spectrum of differing directions we consider in this chapter. We identify Pop Culture 2.0 as a movement of post-postmodern, post-twentieth-century popular culture forms that began to emerge during the US presidency of Barack Obama in 2008

and have been given a more recognizable shape and form of its content during the US presidency of Donald Trump in 2016.

▶ Chap. 34, "Children's Literature: Interconnecting Children's Rights and Constructions of Childhoods Through Stories" explores hegemonic views of children and childhoods, views which continue to marginalize children and diminish their rights within Western societies. The chapter by Bethany Robichaud, Sarah Peltier, and Aurelia Di Santo explores children's rights, children's social status, the social construction of childhood, and the role of literature in constructing and reinforcing or challenging these concepts. Given the presence and influence of literature in the lives and learning of young children, and the view that storybooks are well positioned to convey rights discourses to children and adults alike, this chapter provides examples of how children, childhoods, and rights are implicitly and explicitly conveyed through storybook's pictorial and lexical narratives in both supportive and non-supportive ways. The capacity of children's literature to serve as a salient tool for challenging problematic hegemonic notions of children, childhoods, and rights is also explored.

With humans being the architects of meaning, Nietzsche's superman (übermensch) was representative of a system of values and a way of life of a society in need of a heroic narrative. Although this narrative is not unique to any era or culture, societal psychological and social values, beliefs, and attitudes are forged from its ever-changing needs and motivations. In ▶ Chap. 35, "Selling the Dream: The Darker Side of the 'Superman' Athlete," Nikos C. Apostolopoulos expounds on how this heroic narrative, at one time symbolic of the highest aims of mankind, mirroring the ideal morals of a community, has been abducted, coerced, and exploited by media to serve its own selfish commercial needs, a dark side in guise of the preservation of a heroic tale. With the use of numerous techniques (i.e., public relations, propaganda, strategic communications), media capitalized on the enormous influence celebrated athletes and sports has in both industrial societies and developing nations. Through use of symbols and signs, the advertisements created and disseminated onto the public carried with them invisible messages with the sole intent or goal of persuading the consumer to purchase product. To achieve this, they manipulated the individual's perception of reality, engineered to create a symbol on itself inspiring loyalty by the consumer to an athlete, a team, or a brand.

In any cultural situation, pedagogy registers how individual learns from others in recreating oneself within the consensual regime of hegemony. In ▶ Chap. 36, "Pedagogy and the Unlearning of Self: The Performance of Crisis Situation Through Popular Culture," Stephen Ching-kiu Chan asks what a pedagogy of culture entails for the social body today facing a *cultural* situation edging away from trust, tolerance, and credibility. Recent experiences in civil disobedience, social antagonism, and political deadlock suggest that dissent, as the antithesis of consent, is the condition of possibility for the self-in-struggle under the unique context concerned. Pedagogy in popular culture is embedded as a process of self-learning engaged by subjects implicated in the reproduction of collective anxieties and shaping of social desires. As such it intervenes in the public sphere whereby a cultural subject learns to situate himself/herself and acquires one's place as a social being. While this takes

place under the status quo, it involves the process by which the subject struggles with the shaping of agency, identities, and differences. In the aggregate process, the resultant pedagogical *act* of self-recognition entails multiple refashioning of "who I am;" often, it engenders the performative process of *un-learning* the hegemonic act of embedded social practices.

Over a span of three decades since the city's late colonial rule by Britain, the world-renowned filmmaker Johnnie To has created memorable cinematic scenarios of Hong Kong's crisis situation – either at the conjunctures of the 1997 political transition or in the wake of the widespread protest and unrest invoked by the Umbrella Movement of 2014 and its aftermath. With this focus, Chan examines the play of social antagonism and politics of affect via moments of dissensus.

In ▶ Chap. 37, "Cultural Studies in the Writing Center: Writing Centers as Sites of Political Intervention," William E. De Herder III explores how writing centers can enact counter-hegemonic work through helping writers gain deeper understandings of contexts: audiences, writing situations, genre expectations, and power relations. It maps the position of writing centers, develops Cultural Studies for writing center work, and suggests strategies for writing coaches. Drawing theoretically on Stuart Hall, Lawrence Grossberg, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, and Antonio Gramsci, this chapter shows how coaches and writers can develop understandings of complexity, contingency, and contextuality. It then shows how these understandings can help coaches and writers map meanings; identify binaries, possible third positions, affordances, and constraints; and trace political, economic, ideological, material, and social forces and structures. These techniques can help writers reflect critically on their use of genre and non-hegemonic codes, as well as recognize deeper complexities of writing situations and writing topics.

Critical work in music education has interrogated Eurocentric values and representational systems in music curricula, as well as idealized constructions of musicianship grounded in Western aesthetic practices. In ▶ Chap. 38, "Angry Noise: Recomposing Music Pedagogies in Indisciplinary Modes," Kurt Thumlert and Jason Nolan argue, further, that inherited Eurocentric music pedagogies enact a "distribution of the sensible," a self-evident regime of sense perception prefiguring what is hearable and doable and possible, inviting students, through the very processes of music education itself, to ultimately disqualify themselves from vibrant and vital relations to musical worlds and sound-making practices. Thumlert and Nolan argue that dominant forms of music education do not simply mobilize Eurocentric values and genres but are driven, fundamentally, by "talent regimes" – disciplinary systems freighted with aesthetic presuppositions, ableist epistemologies, and pedagogical operations that interpellate students into gendered roles and classist relations to sounds and that tacitly disqualify bodies based on "self-evident" disabilities and perceived developmental "inadequacies." At a time when arts education is increasingly enrolled in the service of neoliberalized discourses of "creativity" and "play," Thumlert and Nolan present counter-models that not only work to liberate music education from the constrictions of bourgeois aesthetics and commodity relations but help to situate aural/sound/music learning experiences as a fundamental and necessary mode of sensory inquiry for young people's learning. Drawing on work in

critical disability and technology studies, Thumlert and Nolan conclude with an exploration of counter-models for alternative and more equitable pedagogical orientations to materials-centric inquiry, as well as opportunities for learning through soundwork composition – models that can, we argue, maximize the creative capacities of anyone and everyone.

Early psychological studies on the link between health and writing were rooted in a theory of inhibition and disease and produced mostly quantitative results. A meta-analysis of 146 such studies on the connection between emotional disclosure and improved health concluded that the practice of expressive writing for the improvement of psychological and physical health does work, on some people, some of the time; however, the influential aspects of the mechanism remain unclear. In ▶ Chap. 39, "Toward Understanding the Transformational Writing Phenomenon," Elizabeth Bolton suggests that further research in this field be conducted under the broader term transformational literacy practices and that methods examining them be more inclusive of various presentations of qualitative data such that these methods respect the organic development and pacing of a devout writing practice, as it is upkept by an individual who identifies as a writer. Under these suggestions, writer and researcher become one, and hermeneutical phenomenology, a highly suitable methodology for capitalizing on that union in order to generate rich and informative data on the writing-health link. When writing about the self is treated as phenomenon rather than task, we are then able to consider the cultural milieu in which that phenomenon has taken place as critical aspect of the data.

In ▶ Chap. 40, "The Truth Can Deceive as Well as a Lie: Young Adult Fantasy Novels as Political Allegory and Pedagogy," Heba Elsherief considers Marie Rutkoski's *Winner's Curse* trilogy and Tomi Adeyemi's #blacklivesmatter movement inspired *Children of Blood and Bone* as exemplars of young adult (YA) fantasy fiction works which utilize political allegory in their narratives to understand how they may impact readers' social engagement. Besides being lauded as empathy building texts by educators and library organizations, publishing trends and social media activity indicate that these novels are widely read and enjoyed. But how much do they actually impact readers' understanding of the real-world happenings they allegorize, and how far do they go to encourage acting upon said understanding? How are these novels conceptualized and received as cultural artifacts, and can they actually work as forms of resistance against societal injustices? Via excerpts and authors' notes, Elsherief utilizes affect theory to understand the emotive and consumer popularity of these novels and take up Keen's theorizing on the empathy-altruism hypothesis to problematize their effect. While my findings suggest that YA fantasy novels may not be equipped to undertake the critical work of a resistance project in themselves, this chapter is ultimately a call for slower, more deliberate readings that may inspire readers to do the work of social activism long after the last pages are turned.

The measure of art is the ability to induce modes of sensibility that create new forms of intelligibility. In *Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon* and *Guernica*, Pablo Picasso enables the viewer to see what was not there before and in a different way. In ▶ Chap. 41, "The Politics of Seeing: Art and the Violence of Aesthetics," Anthi

Trifonas and Peter Pericles Trifonas examine how these paintings politicize aesthetic acts as moments of a questioning and reflection on subjectivity toward an emancipation of the image from past experience. Art no longer becomes a witness signifying the timeless truths of life but is a battleground triggering nostalgia and disillusionment mourning the loss of meaning. The politics of seeing depends on the violence of aesthetics. That is, the extent to which artistic regimes impact the production of what is knowable and what is visible are reproduced and resisted in a work of art.

In ▶ Chap. 42, "Storied Assessment of the Aesthetic Experiences of Young Learners: The Timbres of a Rainbow," Matthew Yanko and Peter Gouzouasis develop an understanding of what a child learns through arts learning experiences, by examining integrated visual arts and music instruction through creative composition practices in soundscapes. To present a viable means of interpreting aesthetic learning experiences, they investigate the learning story as a means of assessment and expand upon this approach by using visual and aural metaphors to examine how they can provide teachers with the necessary tools and practices to compose richly detailed, meaningful storied assessments. Yanko and Gouzouasis discovered that children are capable and able to engage with descriptive, interpretive, and evaluative aesthetic criticisms, and that the sharing of learning stories promotes discussions, understandings, and a celebration of young learners' meaning making with integrated arts. Postulating that the learning story is a viable assessment practice for the aesthetic and artistic merits that emerge as children engage with music and the arts.

▶ Chap. 43, "Thinking Physiologies Methodologically with Post-qualitative and Posthuman Education Research" debates methodological possibilities for thinking Physiology, informed by feminist science studies conceptualizations of scientific knowledge, with post-qualitative education research practices. Offering an emergent articulation of how physiologies might become differently and productively entangled with feminist science studies, post-qualitative research, and posthuman enactments of fleshy bodies, Nicole Land proposes that education research can engage (with) physiologies with generative, non-essentialist, accountable methodological practices. She thinks three post-qualitative methodological concerns alongside insights from feminist science studies, weaving her exploration with a moment from an early childhood education pedagogical inquiry research project. Attending to the tensions, practices, and possibilities that emerge when post-qualitative research and physiologies converse, Land argues, might generate novel methodological practices that contribute to post-qualitative projects intent on refusing humanist habits in education research.

In his 2015 State of the Union, President Barack Obama called climate change the "greatest threat to future generations." Conversely, President Donald Trump has cast doubt on the very existence of human-induced global climate change, thereby dismissing decades of empirically collected data by scientists around the world which, when aggregated, portray a warming world at and past the brink. Fierce global competition for dwindling resources is certain to increase as a result of the steady, irrevocable, and dramatic shifts in weather patterns which continue in

causing catastrophic macro- and micro-[global] consequences, including consummately a loss of human life. While recommendations have been provided toward a mitigation of anthropogenic climate change through a re-envisioning of education standards, the United States' panoptic, neoliberal educational behemoth has not kept pace with the necessary standards and curricular changes that might substantively and authentically address the realities of a rapidly changing global climate for those who inevitably will act as this world's future stewards. Notable academic and recently deceased Chet Bowers has written extensively on this subject, suggesting in sum that such education is ostensibly a moral imperative requiring broad, interdisciplinary content inclusive of revised and radically upended modes of thinking, approach, and authentic feeling. An investigation into the burgeoning field of queer ecology offers an intersectional, discursive conceptual foundation toward the construction of such neo-curricula, which inherently and intentionally elides various disaggregated epistemological and ontological schools in unique, timely, and critical ways. The pessimistic epistemic postulations of queer scholars, such as Lee Edelman, provide insight catalyzing a dynamic and urgent thesis in curricular rethinking inclusive of queer eco-environmentalism as an integral, tenable tenet. In ▶ Chap. 44, "Eco-queering US K-12 Environmental Curricula: An Epistemic Conceptual Investigation into Queer Pessimisms Serving as a Pragmatics to Navigate Current Environmental Castrations," Peter Scaramuzzo seeks to negate optimistic, heteronormative conventions onto the urgent creation of eco-curricula and pedagogical practices in K-12 schools, and the author contends that it is through a pedagogical recognition and embrace of discordant and other ontological notions informed by queerness as a blurring space that an inspired salvation is possible. In this way, environmental optimism, as it is presented in current K-12 educational contexts, is a limited portrayal of current realities and, as such, assumes the position of a destructive pathology of deniability.

Starting with an assertion that philosophy's prerogative is to propose alternative worldviews and values, in addition to the basic interpretation of philosophy as an inquiry into the myriad dimensions of human experience, ▶ Chap. 45, "Contemplating Philosophy of Education: A Canadian West Coast Perspective" by Heesoon Bai, Muga Miyakawa, Timothy Tiryaki, and Meena Mangat proffers a view of education that centers the cultivation of a more balanced and integrated humanity in resistance to the increasing instrumental forces in modern societies that fragments, alienates, and therefore dehumanizes. Distinguishing between education – primarily concerned with the human being, from instruction – primarily concerned with the human having, this chapter proposes a contemplative mode of intersubjective relationality between the self and self-other. A variety of critical observational and interpretive notes are offered on major concepts that animate contemporary discourses in education, such as dualisms, imbalance and fragmentation, dislocation and alienation, progress and existential crisis, all refracted through the prism of the most recent contemplative turn in education. The chapter ends with a curated dialogue among the four authors of this chapter, all of whom share how they have come to situate themselves in the intersection of philosophy of education and contemplative inquiry and how they see the nature of contribution that the latter makes to the former.

We tend not to question the implications of the terms we use in environmental education and its ever-changing names, purposes, and goals. Digging deeper into well-worn and accepted meanings from the early-nineteenth-century movements integrating place-based nature study since John Dewey through conservation and outdoor education, the tensions in the historical realization of the field are traced. In ▶ Chap. 46, "An Ecology of Environmental Education," Susan Jagger presents a critique of the social manifestations, political purposes, and philosophical grounding of environmental education is developed in relation to (1) shifts in the definition of its terms; (2) conceptual transformations of the discipline; (3) ecological issues; and (4) pedagogical imperatives. The resulting historicity takes into account initiatives from UNESCO to Agenda 21 and NAAEE to provide an ecology of environmental education.

In ▶ Chap. 47, "Citizen Science: A Path to Democratic and Sociopolitically Conscious Science," Justine Oesterle, Bhaskar Upadhyay, Julie C. Brown, and Matthew Vernon explore the idea of citizen science in science education and its value in broadening student science participation, building greater science engagement, and expanding the usefulness of science in broader life events and actions. The focus of the chapter is to explore how citizen science provides a space and context for teachers and students to engage in science content and activities that bring greater personal and community meanings in learning and doing science. The chapter seeks to explore the following questions framed by critical pedagogy and critical theories: What is citizen science and how does it raise critical consciousness in students from underrepresented groups? How is citizen science a space for equitable science teaching and learning space for all students? In what ways does citizen help students make sense of science learning and provides a context to challenge the dominant view of learning and doing science? How does citizen science make doing science a democratic practice for sociopolitical consciousness? Answers to these questions are drawn from critical theories and pedagogies where sociocultural contexts take a central space in understanding affordances of citizen science as a sociopolitical consciousness raising framework for teaching and learning.

Nature is increasingly situated as important in early childhood education, but the various definitions and societal constructs of the term nature impact our understanding of how children relate to the more-than-human world. Navigating nature through varying perspectives, this piece considers the concept of simulation, privilege, and control in relation to children and the outdoor world. In ▶ Chap. 48, "Growing Children's Ecological Relationships Indoors," Leah Shoemaker questions the anthropocentric value that is engrained within these relationships and looks toward the indoor classroom as a tool for educators within urban centers. Provided is argument that blurring the line between the outdoor and the indoor classrooms may support children's ecological understanding of the interrelated systems that run between the categories of human and nature. Personal narrative is woven throughout to queer the line between identity and theory and encourage reflection inward when interacting with the topic.

Globalization has brought many changes to people's lives and mindsets, posing challenges to the concepts of language, culture, and identity, related to cultural

hybridity and the impact of new information and communication technologies on education in general and on higher education in particular, especially in terms of the process of internationalization of higher education, with the implications of using, teaching, and learning certain languages in that process. The role of languages in the process of internationalization is at the core of discussions regarding this process. A critical view of language(s) guided by language policies which reflect the intercultural relations of the global and the local context is paramount for a sustainable and more horizontal internationalization process of higher education. The reflection on the interface between culture and identity in relation to language is important insomuch as one shapes the other. In a world of super-diversity with an increase in the flows of information, people, goods, and languages, the development of competences to deal with such diversity is essential to establish sustainable academic relations. In this scenario of mutual exchanges, languages play a key role, since they express ideologies and beliefs that represent conflict between local and global values. The conflicts afforded by languages, in turn, affect the formation of identities in modern times, replacing old identities by new ones, thus fragmenting the modern individual in a more hybrid and complex world. In ▶ Chap. 49, "Cultural Studies and the Development of Sustainable Relations for the Internationalization of Higher Education," Felipe Furtado Guimarães, Gabriel Brito Amorim, and Kyria Rebeca Finardi reflect on the connection between Cultural Studies and the internationalization of higher education institutions (HEIs) in general and the role of languages and language policies in that process in particular. So as to achieve this goal, a review and discussion of literature is offered, critically addressing the importance of Cultural Studies and intercultural competences for dealing with the complexity of modern times, in terms of the internationalization of higher education.

# Part II

# Language and Representation

# Social Movement Knowledge Production

**2**

Aziz Choudry

## Contents

### Abstract

Social movements and social, political, and environmental justice activism are important sites of knowledge production. This may include ideas, insights, and visions produced by people collectively working for social, economic, and political change and reflecting on their experiences and what has preceded them. This is often knowledge about systems of power and exploitation developed as people find themselves in confrontation with states and capital. However, the forms and significance of this knowledge production are often overlooked by social movement scholars and even activists themselves. Focusing on the intellectual work that takes place in struggles for social and political justice, and drawing from engaged scholarship and a range of movements and activist contexts, this chapter discusses the processes, possibilities, and tensions of social movement knowledge production for providing tools for organizing

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and critical analysis. It discusses the relationship between learning, action, and knowledge production; research in social movements and political activism; the production and use of historical knowledge as a tool for organizing; and popular cultural/artistic work that takes place within activism.

## Introduction

Social movements and social, political, and environmental justice activism are not only spaces of action but also important sites of knowledge production and learning (Kelley 2002; Holst 2002; Choudry and Kapoor 2010, Choudry 2015; Choudry and Vally 2018). This includes ideas, debates, insights, and visions produced by people collectively working for social, economic, and political change and reflecting on their experiences and what has preceded them. However, the forms, significance, and value of this knowledge production have often been overlooked by social movement scholars and even by activists themselves.

Focusing on some aspects of the intellectual work that takes place in struggles for social and political justice, this chapter discusses some of the processes, possibilities, and tensions of social movement knowledge production for providing tools for organizing, critical analysis, and education. Space does not permit an exhaustive appraisal of social movement knowledge production, but rather I offer an introductory overview of this topic. While there are many forms, processes, and contexts in which knowledge is produced and contested in social movements, this chapter will discuss four areas. These are (1) the relationship between learning, action, and knowledge production; (2) research in social movements and political activism; (3) the production and use of historical knowledge as a tool for organizing; and (4) popular cultural/artistic work that takes place within activism.

## Learning, Action, and Knowledge Production in Social Movements

A Marxist theory of praxis that insists upon the unity of thought and action necessitates a "[d]ialectical theory of consciousness in which thought, action, and social relations are inseparable" (Carpenter and Mojab 2011, p. 13). It is a process which simultaneously involves theory and practice. Indeed, a number of radical adult education scholars contest the separation of "theory" and "practice" when considering knowledge production and learning in social movements. Human activity and thought are mutually constitutive; they are shaped by each other. Paula Allman (2010) suggests that "our action in and on the material world is the mediation or link between our consciousness and objective reality. Our consciousness develops from

our active engagement with other people, nature, and the objects or processes we produce. In other words, it develops from the sensuous experiencing of reality from within the social relations in which we exist" (p.152). Marxist dialectical under-standings of how consciousness is formed thus highlight that this process takes place through and by our relationship with a material, social world. To talk and think critically about knowledge necessitate serious engagement with social and political power. Whose knowledge counts and by what criteria should its value be assessed? To paraphrase Allman (2010, p. 167), is knowledge an object that can be possessed, or rather (as she asserts) a process of continuous unfolding and deepening?

British feminist adult educator Jane Thompson (1983) argues that the purpose of knowledge has to be more than an individualistic solution to personal disadvantage. She writes: "Social change, liberation ... will be achieved only by collective as distinct to individual responses to oppression" (p.170). Writing about knowledge and learning in political struggle, Budd Hall (1978) writes that "knowledge is produced and renewed by continuous testing, by acting upon one's theories, by reflecting upon one's actions, and by beginning the cycle again. It is the combination of social transformation and education that has created the kind of knowledge which forges the personal and communal commitment for sustained engagement" (pp. 13–14). This highlights the continual cycle of learning in action that can occur in the course of long-term campaigns, short-term mobilizations, and daily struggles. Richard Johnson (1979) wrote about "really useful knowledge," that is produced when people reflect on their experience with each other in ways that generate further insight and understanding into the causes of their conditions, common problems, and struggles and which also enable theories to be developed that are linked to strategies to bring about change.

In affirming the concept of activist knowledge production, theorizing, research, and other forms of intellectual work in social movements, Antonio Gramsci's (1971, p. 62) articulation of different groups of intellectuals is also helpful. Gramsci theorized two groups of intellectuals. First, there are "traditional" intellectuals, scholars and scientists who, although seemingly detached from class positions, are produced by specific historical class formations. Gramsci argued that they are produced within the ruling systems and that they play a part in and are connected to them in particular ways that constrain them from being able to think and pro-foundly change systems of power. They function according to their positions. Second, there are the "organic" intellectuals, the thinking and organizing persons in any class. According to Gramsci, such people articulate a "philosophy of praxis" that develops in the course of political struggle, the "concrete historicisation of philoso-phy and its identification with history." Often organizers and "permanent persuaders" emerging from the grassroots/working class are not seen as intellectuals capable of creating knowledge. Yet in Gramsci's understanding of intellectuals, these people have a greater potential to effect change because they are not tied to the system in the same way. Moreover, they develop theories and ideas in relation to where they come from in powerful ways that push and challenge their thought further.

The US historian Staughton Lynd (in Lynd and Grubacic 2008, p. 40) suggests: "there are examples of homegrown, close-to-the-earth kind of theory that evolved

directly from folks' experience in organizing …[but] I think there is another kind of theory that is needed, too." For example, he adds, "in the absence of a theory to explain what is going on economically the best-intentioned, most grassroots and democratic sort of movement is likely to flounder." Theoretical and analytical frameworks can provide powerful tools for analysis, strategy, and action, whether produced in institutional spaces like universities or outside of them. Alan Sears (2014, p. 26) acknowledges the existence of "long and powerful traditions of activist theorizing that produce powerful generalizations outside of the formal circuits of scholarly production. Activist knowledge begins in the realm of experience…It also involves conscious learning processes to understand the big-picture context that frames experience as a basis for processes of effective change." Informal, often incidental learning from experience (Foley 1999; Holst 2002; Choudry 2015), as well as intentional nonformal learning, political education, and learning that is related to action are important processes for producing knowledge in movements. Reflecting on the ways that knowledge is produced in social movements, Sears suggests that specific, grounded knowledge needs to develop in tension with powerful generalizations in order to map effective strategies which draw on past and present struggles. Neither social movements nor the knowledge that is produced within them should be romanticized or uncritically engaged with. But nor should the intellectual debts owed to ideas and visions collectively brought forth in movements for social justice be overlooked, as a number of scholars contend (Kelley 2002; Austin 2013; Sears 2014; Choudry 2015). The politics of learning and knowledge production in social movements, as elsewhere, is fraught with tensions, contradictions, complications, and conflicts. Foley (1999) notes that learning in social movements can reproduce status quo, dominant positions, and ideas but that also this same experience can produce "recognitions which enable people to critique and challenge the existing order" (p. 4). Such learning, he suggests, can be "difficult, ambiguous and contested" (p. 143). We should be wary of discussing knowledge production and learning in singular, monolithic terms and in seeking to better engage them, attend to the politics, history, and context in which such processes take place.

The importance of spaces for collective action, learning, and reflection are crucial, as is openness to valuing processes of informal and nonformal learning and knowledge produced from within people's everyday experience. British socialist historian E.P. Thompson (1963) warned of the "enormous condescension of posterity" (p. 12), when writing about how patronizing and dismissive so many historians were when dealing with working class history, committed as he was to foregrounding the importance of working class people as political agents, thinkers, and knowledge producers. Activist intellectual work requires practices and strategies grounded in critical (including self-critical) historical perspectives as well as emerging ideas which arise from engagement in current struggles (Choudry and Kapoor 2010; Choudry 2015; Choudry and Vally 2018; Lynd 2014). It takes seriously the significance of the ideas, insights, and visions produced by people collectively working for social, economic, and political change and reflecting on their experiences, and what has preceded them. This includes knowledge about systems of power and exploitation developed as people find themselves in confrontation with states and capital.

Such activist knowledge may be brought forth through critical engagement with the rich, often underexplored, archives and publications of earlier generations of movements (Vally et al. 2013; Ramamurthy 2013; Sears 2014; Choudry and Vally 2018; Choudry 2019), as well as the conscious production of understandings that challenge dominant or hegemonic "common-sense" within, and about, various struggles.

The intellectual/educational aspects of organizing for change include intentional, explicit, programmatic educational activities within activist and social movement spaces, as well as multiple forms of incidental, informal learning that are not always obviously linked to learning, embedded as they are in a host of activities – the often mundane but vital tasks in the hard grind of organizing work. Eurig Scandrett's (2012) approach to theorizing learning and the educative aspects of social movements highlights the importance of attending to the dynamics between more structured processes and informal and/or incidental learning and knowledge production. He notes an emergent direction in some social movement scholarship that emphasizes the contribution of theoretical work to movements themselves, the importance of theorists to be accountable to movements, and the theory generated within movements. He argues that this emergent direction entails a dynamic engagement with the research and theorizing already being done by movement participants. He writes that for those working in adult education, "this approach resonates with conceptions of really useful knowledge (Johnson 1979) and popular education in which scholarly knowledge is interrogated by movements of the oppressed for its value in interpreting and promoting their own material interests. Such material interests embedded within knowledge are exposed through dialogical methods such as popular education and lifelong education" (p. 43).

Douglas Bevington and Chris Dixon (2005) also call for recognition of existing movement-generated theory and of dynamic reciprocal engagement by theorists and movement activists in formulating, producing, refining, and applying research. Historian Robin Kelley (2002) suggests that "[r]evolutionary dreams erupt out of political engagement; collective social movements are incubators of new knowledge." (p.8). He suggests that social movements generate new knowledge, questions, and theory and emphasizes the need for concrete and critical engagement with the movements confronting the problems of oppressed peoples. He argues that "too often, our standards for evaluating social movements pivot around whether or not they 'succeeded' in realizing their visions rather than on their merits or power of the visions themselves" (p. ix). Kelley emphasizes the importance of drawing conceptual resources for contemporary struggles from critical readings of histories of older movements. It is also important to appreciate the significance of knowledge that may be produced at the margins of social movements which may contest dominant ideas of the movement itself, such as challenges from anti-racist, Indigenous, feminist, working-class perspectives, and politics (Featherstone 2012; Austin 2013; Choudry 2015). Some scholarship highlights tensions within networks of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community organizations, social movements, and grassroots groups which include struggles over whose knowledge is valued, representation, professionalization, political positions, and expertise

(INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence 2007; Choudry and Kapoor 2013; Choudry and Vally 2018; Rodriguez 2010).

As people struggle, they may learn, educate, and indeed theorize. The forms this takes may change, but the importance of spaces and places for collective action, learning, reflection, and intergenerational sharing is crucial to building, sustaining, and broadening resistance to injustice and exploitation. A critical eye to history is vital, together with an openness to valuing processes of informal and nonformal learning and knowledge created from the ground up. Indeed, this lens is necessary for those who want to link critical knowledge to action and for action to be informed by deeper historical understandings.

## Activist Research

Broadly interpreted, one could argue that some kind of research is intrinsic to most decisions that activists and organizers make and the foundations on which they act. For example, there is research involved in figuring out whether, where, and when to have a demonstration, picket, blockade, meeting, workshop, or other activities; what is effective and what is not; whether to take part in a campaign; who to seek support from or offer solidarity to; or how to build a campaign or reach and involve more people. Within movements and different activist contexts, there are also more deliberate forms of research, although defining the lines between such intentional activity and the implicit kinds is not an easy task since they are often tightly interconnected.

Movement research is produced in diverse ways. In some contexts, this includes the establishment and maintenance of specialized research and education institutions by social struggles to support social movements. Some movement organizations and NGOs combine grassroots work with research, publication, and knowledge generation. The case for specialized research NGOs is often made, as Cynthia Bazán et al. (2008, p. 191) argue, "to become a counter-discourse with teeth … everyday knowledge [of social movement actors] needs to be synthesized, systematized and given coherence. It also has to be linked with analytical knowledge of the contexts within which everyday practices occur—contexts which, while they impinge on people's life, are in many cases analytically inaccessible to them." While working through a specialized research organization may not be the research model appropriate to every situation, it is important for us to recognize the range of ways that research is organized and takes place within movements and appreciate this as intellectual work that may include theorizing and analysis, whether or not it is immediately recognizable to us as such in our locations. Yet a common assumption in much writing on activist research and research for social change remains that professional researchers with specialist academic training must conduct or facilitate research. While there are examples of academic researchers participating in social movements, including playing research roles, research that is closely and organically connected with, conceptualized or framed by, or that emerges from organizing/

movements/popular struggles, has received far less attention, if not been overlooked altogether (Choudry 2015).

Activist research, education, and action are often dialectically related within movements and struggles for social change. As some activist researchers themselves suggest, boundaries between research and organizing are sometimes blurred to the point of nonexistence. Such understandings challenge binary thinking that separates, fragments, and compartmentalizes activities into categories of "research" and "organizing" and actors into "researchers" and "organizers" (Choudry 2015). Some people who are involved with activities which could be viewed as research or which involve aspects of research do not identify as "researchers" but as activists and organizers who do research among other activities required of them in the struggles and networks in which they are engaged and the politics to which they are committed. Within movements and different activist contexts, there are also more deliberate forms of research, which often evolves from questions and needs of people in struggle and solidarity networks.

Much of the theory produced by participants in social movements may not be recognizable to conventional social movement studies since it is produced by activists. As Bevington and Dixon (2005, p. 195) note, "[t]his kind of theory both ranges and traverses through multiple levels of abstraction, from everyday organizing to broad analysis." In theorizing "collective ethnography" conducted in organizing/political spaces in the context of organizing mainly immigrant taxi workers in New York, Biju Mathew (2010, p. 169) points to both the theorization that takes place in organizing spaces and also the process:

Organizers formalize the knowledge that is emergent through these multiple levels, repackage and force each short cycle of knowledge production back into circulation, and facilitate the evaluation of the knowledge produced through external agents/allies. Thus, organizers facilitate the expansion of knowledge, and each round of knowledge is quite immediately returned to other levels for engagement. . .. It forces a short cycle of theorizations – and ensures that each round of theorization is immediately engaged with the materiality of the domain of organizing.

The dialectical relations of "research" and "organizing" are a major strand of the reflections of activist researchers inside social movements. So too is the relationship between knowledge produced in struggles at the grassroots and the material conditions experienced and contested by workers, peasants, and others often key to producing "research." Knowledge production/research and organizing/action are often mutually constitutive and are seen in this way by the people producing it (Choudry 2015).

Reflections on doing activist research, as well as research for activism itself, often emerge from collective and collaborative relations, discussions, and exchanges with a wide range of actors. While some activist research targets policymakers, national and international institutions, a major goal in many cases is to support and inform social change through popular organizing and mass movement building. The activist research processes described here are embedded in relations of trust with other activists and organizations that develop through constant effort to work together in formal and informal networks and collaborations. These networks are spaces for the

ongoing sharing of information and analysis. They allow for the identification of research that is most relevant to particular struggles and communication of that research in ways that are meaningful and useful for movement building. They are invaluable in the production, validation, vetting, or "getting the research right" in the applications, strategic considerations, and dissemination of the research. But research spaces can also be spaces of organizing. As noted by Aziz Choudry (2015) and Valerie Francisco (2016), the research process itself can be a form of organizing, building, and strengthening communities, movements, and alliances. This in turn needs an organized grassroots to foster and develop research for struggles. This is an ongoing process that informs action – it is not a process that ends, for example, when research is "written up" and a report published.

There are also some useful accounts of the politics of knowledge in community environmental struggles that have collaborated with scientific professionals. Such "people's science" or "civic science" mobilizes and makes accessible scientific knowledge that is co-produced by community members through the strategic use of scientific tools deployed along with the systematization of lay knowledge and experience, as in struggles against industrial pollution by villagers in Tamil Nadu, India (Narayan and Scandrett 2014), and by the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance in South Durban, South Africa (Scott and Barnett 2009).

Much of what is written on research and social change tends to emphasize particular methodologies and partnerships between researchers in academia and community groups. This means that it primarily treats professional dilemmas faced by professional researchers in doing this work rather than engaging with the experiences of researchers and activists who carry out research and the ways in which they understand their work. This is especially true of people who conduct research almost entirely independently of formal partnerships or collaboration with academic researchers. Some practitioners claim that a number of methodologies and approaches to qualitative research are inherently oriented toward social justice. For example, these include institutional ethnography/political activist ethnography, participatory action research, community-based action research, the extended case method, and reflexive global ethnography. Others have questioned implicit and explicit claims of this nature and highlight embedded power relations in research relationships, as well as the importance of relationships of trust and shared political commitments for activist research (Jordan 2003; D'Souza 2009; Choudry 2015).

## Making History

Another significant area of social movement knowledge production concerns historical knowledge and how it is used in activist contexts. Activists are engaging with historical materials, debates, and ideas from earlier periods of struggle. Some movement activists and educators look at this history with an eye to its relevance and use for contemporary organizing and radical politics. Such knowledge from below often includes contested versions of history that challenge dominant

or authoritative accounts, which is often overlooked by dominant treatments of historical social struggles.

Besides radical history, critical social movement scholarship (Bevington and Dixon 2005; Choudry and Kapoor 2010; Choudry 2015) contends that significant and under-researched conceptual resources and theoretical contributions emerge from people's concrete engagement in social struggles that may challenge scholarly understandings of social change. In his obituary for Black British historian and educationalist Len Garrison (founder of the Black Cultural Archives and the Afro-Caribbean Education Resource Centre in Britain), Mike Phillips's (2003, p. 297) suggested that: "[t]he handbills, flyers, posters, programmes for a wide range of events, including political meetings, art exhibitions, concerts, plays, community meetings about education, welfare and politics … may be not only the only surviving record of transient organizations, but the only way of understanding whole movements and trends." Some scholars, such as Anandi Ramamurthy (2013), Andrew Flinn (2018), and Aziz Choudry and Salim Vally (2018), have discussed the possibilities for community and movement control over the way such hidden histories can be recovered and used as a tool for political education and organizing. Histories are transmitted in many struggles through such informal collections. They are also transmitted through stories, songs, and poems, particularly in contexts where oral transmission of knowledge, values, and visions is more significant than written versions (see below). Many archival initiatives are built on people trying to make sense of relevant ways to preserve their collective histories. Within that work, people are forced to learn to think creatively about the meaning and process of building archives, which are relevant to communities and struggles for preservation, dissemination, education, and mobilization purposes.

A significant current that runs through the intellectual work within many movements and which takes multiple forms relates to efforts to recover useful histories, oral history, forgotten archives, and history from below. Popular education resources also make accessible hidden histories of struggle and tools for understanding the contingent – what might have led up to particular conditions at particular moments. Organizers grapple with how to engage with the democratic significance of activist knowledge through developing popular education tools, documenting histories of struggles, and informal ways in which political education is passed across generations of activists. Some reflect on pedagogical issues and approaches which seek to draw upon important ideas and debates found within activist archives (organized or not), from oral histories, and from other critical/dialectical engagements with history. In some cases, organizers and activists try to develop context-specific, locally relevant ways to connect historical movement knowledge with contemporary organizing.

However, time pressures and the need to prioritize different kinds of work mean that movements are rarely able to focus on how best to pass on knowledge about visions of social change, stories of their struggles, and their histories. Yet documenting vanishing histories, excavating and archiving them, is crucial for educative and knowledge production work in today's movements and activist groups. Writing on independent Black British community archives, Andrew Flinn

and Mary Stevens (2009) note that documenting histories, especially marginalized and subordinated ones, can be subversive and political. They write that centers and archives dedicated to this work "are not seen as alternatives to struggles but as part of them, a resource for continuing and renewing the fight. Sometimes this has developed into a more definitively historical project but even in these cases the history represented by the archive and created by those who research in the archives is frequently connected to an agenda of education for social change—either as a resource to inform present and future actions, or as a corrective to the absences and misrepresentations of mainstream and dominant accounts" (p.8). Movement histories are also sites of much debate, argument, and contestation.

## Cultural Knowledge Production in Social Movements

Corina Dykstra and Michael Law (1994) assert that "the full life of a social movement—poetry, music, petitions, pickets, and so forth—brings culture and politics together in an inherently educative way" (p. 122). Robin Kelley (2002, p. 10) notes that "[i]n the poetics of struggle and lived experience, in the utterances of ordinary folk, in the cultural products of social movements, in the reflections of activists, we discover the many different cognitive maps of the future, of the world not yet born." Richard Iton (2008, pp. 8–9) argues:

"The suggestion that art and politics should be divorced . . . depend[s]on a notion of the aesthetic as a realm that by definition should not be implicated with the political. . . . Political communication is not divorced from the same kinds of considerations that determine our responses to artistic work: imagine Malcolm X, for instance, without his comic timing and his sense of humor. There are aesthetic grammars that determine the relative success of political interactions and the impact of political communication in the cultural realm: signs, styles and performances whose qualities transcend the political and artistic realms."

There are many traditions and examples of social movements which have generated and employed cultural forms of political engagement which serve to document people's experiences and struggles and to educate, organize, and mobilize. In doing so, they may contribute to the generation of new knowledge as well as reaching broader publics. Raymond Williams' (1989) "dissident cultural apparatus" featured publications, bookstores, cultural centers, workers' choirs, left-wing theatres, union education, sports, language classes, and the work of left-wing cultural workers and anti-capitalist organizations. When formal political channels for sharing ideas, analysis, and experiences are not available, and even when they may seem to be, the arts and cultural approaches can provide powerful ways to approach political education work and articulate visions and ideas. For example, reflecting on South African worker education during the struggle against apartheid, Salim Vally, Mphutlane wa Bofelo, and John Treat (Vally et al. 2013) concur when they write that informal education efforts included "a dizzying range of cultural and mass-media forms, including the writing and production of plays, poetry readings, songs and musical choirs, and dozens of community-based and trade union newsletters.

These efforts aimed to provide everything from general literacy and technical work-related skills to running democratic and accountable union structures, organizing, political consciousness and social mobilization" (p. 470). Large and small movements and mobilizations across the world have been rich in places where politics, art, and education meet. These forms not only sustain movements but also connect across time and space with other moments, other struggles.

Music and the arts affirm people's sense of the world in ways that are emotional, intellectual, political and educational, offering hope and inspiring action (Choudry 2015; Austin 2018). They can be vehicles for ideas, as well as ways to bring people together and build a sense of solidarity and connection. They not only nourish hope and possibility but affirm ideas and feelings as well as educate. Palestinian scholar and poet, Rafeef Ziadah (2012), writes that "poetry can go places that no leaflet or political slogan can go. It reaches and connects with people at a different level – speaking directly to their emotional being. It stirs anger, pain, hope, and love – the necessary feelings that inspire revolutionary action and help to maintain us as political beings for the long term. Poetry allows for a renarration of Palestine in ways that are not just different to a political speech, but act to fill in the blank spaces that political speech necessarily leaves behind" (p.110).

Montreal-based anarchist artist, musician, writer, and activist Norman Nawrocki (2012) writes, music "can help tell community stories uncensored, from a fresh perspective. It encourages people to explore and reinvent the oral tradition and introduce it into their daily routine. It helps broaden discussion and reclaim silenced voices. Moreover, it combats the ever-passive consumerism of our own culture, allowing people to take music back" (p. 106). Within, and alongside movements, many artists perform, record, and transmit (hi)stories of resistance around the world, sometimes at times or about events, periods, or perspectives on which "official histories" are conveniently or deliberately silent. Many movements have had poets, playwrights, performers, and musicians in their ranks who have creatively told the stories of struggle, affirmed their experiences, and inspired people to stay strong (Sayeed and Haider 2010; Prasant and Kapoor 2010; Austin 2018). In sum, these art forms can be as much history and knowledge as are more official sources and can help to document, theorize, inspire and nourish social, environmental and political action.

## Conclusion and Future Directions

Further documentation, research, and analysis of concrete examples of knowledge production within activist milieus can help to challenge dominant scholarly understandings of historical and contemporary processes and relations arising from social movements and social change. Choudry and Kapoor (2010) suggest that the traditions, trajectories, hopes, visions, and dilemmas of past and present struggles are rich resources for extending academic scholarship, as well as offering vital tools for contemporary activism. There are many processes and ways in which knowledge is produced in social movements in diverse contexts and times. By outlining the

relationship between learning and knowledge production in social movements, activist research, the development and use of historical knowledge for the purposes of organizing, and the role of cultural forms of knowledge production and dissemination, this chapter highlights the significance of knowledge production and its connection to informal and nonformal learning, education, research, and action within social, political, and environmental activist milieus.

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# A Decolonial, Intersectional Approach to Disrupting Whiteness, Neoliberalism, and Patriarchy in Western Early Childhood Education and Care

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## Contents

**Abstract**

We present a critique of early childhood education and care (ECEC) as a contested site of cultural transmission and social reproduction in Western nation-states, but also as one that can become a potentially powerful space of resistance and change. We examine how language and other symbolic systems shape social hierarchies of power within and beyond ECEC contexts and how children from infancy to the early years of schooling are exposed to various forms of oppression caused by racist, ethnocentric, neoliberal, patriarchal, hetero-normative, and neocolonial dynamics. These persistent cultural forces converge on malleable young minds, perpetuating not only White privilege but other injustices sustained by predatory capitalist cultural strategies, which emphasize conformity, competition, and consumerism over other ontological and axiological orientations, and are encoded through cultures of play, pedagogical practice, and

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interpersonal/intergroup relations in ECEC. We focus more specifically on how color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States. Rowand and Littlefield, Landham, 2013) within ECEC is undergirded by a Western-centric, capitalist, and patriarchal *world-system* (Wallerstein, Piel negra, máscaras blancas. Akal, Madrid, 2009), while we reject the discourses that situate ECEC as a neutral, color-blind space. Our discussion is further framed through intersectional (Collins and Bilge, Intersectionality. Polity Press, Cambridge, 2016), decolonial (Mohanty, Feminism without borders: Decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity. Duke University Press, Durham, 2003; Orelus, Whitecentricism and linguoracism exposed: Towards the de-centering of whiteness and decolonization of schools. Peter Lang, New York, 2013), counter-hegemonic (Freire, Pedagogy of the oppressed. The Seabury Press, New York, 1970; Moss, Transformative change and real utopias in early childhood education: A story of democracy, experimentation and potentiality. Routledge, New York, 2014), and cross-cultural inquiry into culturally sustainable (Ladson-Billings, Harvard Educational Review 84:74–84, 2014) child-centered pedagogy (Sánchez-Blanco, Fuego, meteoritos y elefantes: Cruzando fronteras en educación infantil. Miño y Dávila, Buenos Aires, 2018). We seek to understand how racial and other sociocultural hierarchies colonize children's spatialities, temporalities, potentialities, and overall well-being, and we conclude by proposing strategies to foster resistance and rupture the systems of hegemonic power and dominator culture within ECEC.

## Introduction

Early childhood education and care in most Western nation-states has been discursively constructed as a neutral space where children are permitted to learn through play-based pedagogies (Escayg et al. 2017; Jipson and Johnson 2001; Naughton and Davis 2009; Ramsey 2015). We instead argue that such spaces serve to reinforce dominant ideals about Whiteness, racism, social class, and gender normativity. In this scenario, children, regardless of their family histories or experiences with cultural and material forms of oppression, are predominantly perceived by the promoters of today's capitalist world-system to be consumers and competitors of varying status and are thus provided – albeit inequitably – with affordances to engage in this system at increasingly younger ages. Consider, for instance, the fact that dramatic play areas in early childhood settings often include toy shopping carts and artificial foods or other goods that can be purchased with "play money." Homi Bhabha (1994) has argued that the commodification of time influences cultural practices; for children engaging in such preconditioned play, "leisure" or free time becomes a site for consumption. Operating,

then, as a time-based marker of leisure, consumer culture may also circumscribe the very boundaries of imaginative play. As we shall see, designated products or activities provided by the school or childcare center thus construct the limits of creative play in ways that engender unjust social distinctions of all kinds: not only classism but racism, ethnocentrism, and sexism(s), to name some.

As diasporic researchers of African Canadian, Anglo-Italian American, and Iberian Hispanic origins, respectively, we introduce some key theoretical frameworks in this chapter that guide our critical, cross-cultural examination of the *coloniality* (Leonardo and Singh 2017; Lugones 2008) of White-privilege racism, neoliberal capitalism, and patriarchal gender normativity on children and their rights and how such discriminatory cultural influences can be either reinforced or challenged through pedagogical practice and care work.

African American intersectional researcher, critical educator, and writer bell hooks (1994) has repeatedly reminded us that no education is politically neutral. Like hooks, we too have found inspiration in various social theories and movements, such as Black Power; Black feminism; queer theory; critical theory; anti-, post-, and decolonial theory; and especially the counter-hegemonic educational theory of late Brazilian critical pedagogue and anti-colonial thinker Paulo Freire (1970), who suffered in his own skin, through exile, the political effects of his educational theory. We thus position ourselves and our readership against a pre-biased system that favors the privileged few to the detriment of the *subalterned* many in a world of imbalanced power relations. This imbalance is not always as readily perceived in Western contexts, where Whiteness remains the hegemonic "default," representing the imagined majority group of each polity, when in reality that status is not only a diminishing demographic, but one whose very existence has depended on an ongoing dialectic with the Black or Brown *other* (Battiste 2013; Bhabha 1994; Dei and Kempf 2006; Fanon 2007/1967; McCarthy 2013; Mohanty 2003; Orelus 2013; Wallerstein 2009). To counter such White supremacy in the West and worldwide, we not only engage the alternative analytical tools of critical, decolonial intersectionality (Collins and Bilge 2016; hooks 2015; León 2011; Lugones 2008; Mohanty 2003), but, in keeping with Bonilla-Silva (2013), we also tackle the hegemony of "color-blind" discourse in society and education, as we promote culturally sustainable pedagogy (Ladson-Billings 2014) and other strategies to help challenge the discourses of racial and cultural neutrality, while fostering resistance to systems of neocolonial power and cultural (re)production in early childhood education and care (ECEC).

## Decolonialism, Color-Blind Racism, and Intersectionality

Decolonizing education has the ethical and political aim of recognizing past inequalities while concurrently re-examining present systems of thought in order to center non-Western epistemologies. Indigenous scholar Marie Battiste (2013) argues that in order to eliminate the collective colonial cognitive frameworks that precondition our thinking, we must understand the historical injustices they are rooted in and interrupt

the ongoing injustices that sustain them. Not only historical colonialism but today's globalization has emerged as instrumental forces in this sense. As Arjun Appadurai (1996) contends, the discourses around globalization sometimes misrepresent cultures as being equally situated and positioned in hierarchical representations of power. The reality of globalization is that it privileges Eurocentric, Western cultures, an effect which in turn impacts production at the local level in the "Global South," often displacing traditional local cultures. The forces of globalization represent a reiteration, then, of imperialist colonial practices (Appadurai 1996).

Colonial ideals have also shaped the conceptualization of children. Cannella and Viruru (2004) offer a postcolonial critique of how children are treated in most Western societies, positing that children are "colonized subjects" who are constructed through hegemonic discourses that normalize surveillance, control, and domination. Colonial discourses have in fact evolved in the area of early learning to privilege Western traditions and epistemologies. The creation of an adult/child dialectic contributes to further binary discourses that position children as innocent and the adult as intelligent. This dichotomy also supports the color-blind ideologies that frame children as too "innocent" to learn about race, racism, and the underlying Whiteness of pedagogical practices. For instance, developmental theorists such as Piaget have constructed the typical child as male, White, able-bodied, and middle class. Moreover, the play/work binary, as a Eurocentric construct, does not exist in many developing or "Third World" contexts. Twum-Danso Imoh (2016) argues that dominant discourses about children in the Global South, including sub-Saharan Africa, have tended to focus on poverty and disease when in fact childhood experiences there are obviously diverse. The author argues that contemporary research fails to reveal how play is incorporated into the work that children may perform. Work in such contexts is not viewed as being strictly the domain of adults, as it is in the West, but these kinds of false dichotomies between childhoods in the North and South are reinforced through literature and pedagogical practices.

Similar neocolonial practices can be found in the pedagogy and practices of Western early childhood education. For example, despite efforts to diversify the early learning curricula for Indigenous and other marginalized children, the curricula remain Eurocentric. Battiste (2013) notes that the philosophy underlying most Western curricula is that Eurocentric knowledges are crucial for a quality liberal education. She terms this practice "cognitive assimilation" and argues that it is tacitly expressed through schooling. Likewise, Bhabha (1994) discusses the production of the *other* though a set of colonial discourses which are represented in the texts and images found in early childhood education.

Children in Western early childhood education are simultaneously perceived to be potential consumers who are also presumed to be "color-blind" to differing skin tones. "Color-blind racism" is the term Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2013) has used to characterize the current forms of racial ideologies present in the United States, the roots of which date back to European supremacism and imperialism, the invasion, pilferage and colonial occupation of distant lands and their peoples, and, most significantly, the transatlantic slave trade. Ideologies rooted in that racist ordering of world populations enters early childhood education today, even as children are

presumed to be "innocent" and, *therefore*, color-blind or unaware of racial hierarchies (Cannella and Viruru 2004). And yet, empirical research evidence shows that children are in fact aware of racial differences from as early as age 3 (Berman et al. 2017; Naughton and Davis 2009; Ramsey 2015).

Bonilla-Silva (2013) observes that color-coded inequality exists simultaneously with the avowed "color blindness" of the Western White hegemonic culture. Such coexistence is not, however, paradoxical. It is premised on what Bonilla-Silva (2013) calls "abstract liberalism," which serves as a convenient frame of interpretation that employs economic and political liberalism to sustain racial inequality. These sociopolitical frames are enacted discursively through explicit and implicit language emphasizing equality and fairness while obfuscating historical and current oppressions. Abstract liberalism thus allows members of the dominant White culture to reframe the world in ways that make it ostensibly racially neutral. Naturalization is one such frame: the idea that racial inequalities occur as a "natural" consequence of inherent racial "difference," which is how educational and socioeconomic inequalities can be attributed to natural preferences. Cultural racism (sometimes referred to as new racism) attributes racial inequalities to cultural difference; that is, the practice of blaming a group's ethnic practices for their subaltern status serves as a proxy for racism (McCarthy 2013). Lastly, with color-blind racism, racism becomes minimized as a rare social phenomenon with relatively little impact or social consequence. We beg to differ.

Intersectional theorists, who originally emerged from radical and queer Black feminism and critical race theory located in the Global North (see Collins and Bilge 2016, for an overview), contend that racism is one of several interlocking oppressions, along with classism, ethnocentrism, sexism, ableism, and heteronormative impositions on sexuality and gender identity, all of which exert uneven influences on one's identity formation. Intersectionality thus facilitates a more context- and subject-sensitive approach to apprehending complex experiences with bias in social environments where the dominant culture is White, heterosexual, and middle class. Not only do the intersections operate on multiple levels of oppression, but they also shape individual agency and resistance to varying degrees, depending on the individual at hand. Intersectional analysis has thus allowed for more complex representations of the nature of privilege and its counterpart, oppression, by shifting our gaze away from the aforementioned binaries in order to better "see" how multiple injustices impact with varying intensity subjectivities whose identities in turn interact and mutually influence each other. In the next sections, we consider how the intersections of racism, socioeconomic distinction, sexism, and heteronormativity colonize childhood and early childhood education.

## Understanding the Intersectional Effects of *the System* on Early Childhood and Education

We approach the cultural study of early childhood from the premise that young children, as capable generators of their own particular cultural modes of interpreting the world (Corsaro 2003; Guss 2005; Sánchez-Blanco 2018), are also heavily

influenced by what Immanuel Wallerstein (2009) has referred to as the *world-system* of our times, consisting of a globally dominant set of organizing principles and dynamics that greatly condition our perception of social reality and our experiences with collective coexistence. Currently, this system is composed not only of capitalistic modes of exploitation, production, and exchange but of modern, Western-centric, racist, classist, patriarchal, and heteronormative regimes of neocolonial control over cultural and material forms of production and social organization. Young children, through their family-kinship-friendship networks and through their increasing participation in childcare programs or early childhood schooling (Gabriel 2017), are exposed to a continuous flow of cultural influences from community members, institutional agents, and the mass media, which are both producers and products of the system. The very young must grapple with this sweeping cultural framework in order to make sense of the world, of the world in themselves, and of themselves in the world, with their own more specific cultural interpretations.

In this section, we argue that not enough attention is paid to these dominant forces of cultural input in the early years, considering that many such dynamics prove oppressive when they pre-frame in discriminatory ways and thus overly condition how children learn to relate with others and themselves, reproducing, in the process, social injustices. We will identify several manifestations of the world-system's impact on early childhood and explore some alternatives by means of intersectional and decolonial modes of inquiry, including radical feminist thought positioned within the Global South (León 2011; Lugones 2008; Mohanty 2003). Further insights will be drawn from critical, anti-racist, feminist, and decolonial pedagogies (Dei and Kempf 2006; Freire 1970; hooks 1994, 2003; Ladson-Billings 2014; Leonardo and Singh 2017; Moss 2014 and Orelus 2013, among others).

Where the various components of the world-system are concerned, the role capitalism plays in the generation of systemic culture is paramount. As a modern, Eurocentric economic construct based on the exploitative and competitive production and monetary exchange of goods, capitalist trade is controlled by those who own the modes of production, the products of which are sold in local and international markets to meet demand, but always with the primary imperative of profiting the owners of production, who retain for their own private gain disproportionately larger portions of the collectively produced wealth. This formula necessarily involves two *culturally* informed processes: undervaluing and under-rewarding the great majority of human labor put into producing such wealth while denying any value at all to the reproductive work carried out primarily by women around the world when they produce (or nurture) the human workforce in the first place (León 2011; Mohanty 2003; Scholz 2014). Capitalism as such has taken an intensified turn in our late modern era, as it is increasingly driven, on the one hand, by an historically recent variant on liberal ideology referred to, from radical circles, as *neo*liberalism – one that rejects external public controls (at local, state, and/or global levels) on "free" trade for private gain. On the other hand, information and communication technologies also contribute to the intensification of global capitalist trade by easing its circumvention of state-level regulatory controls, as well as

geographical and cultural distances. In Arjun Appadurai's early and lucid post-colonial analysis of these increasingly transnational relations of production, capital flows, and their attendant cultural and consumer dynamics, he notes that territorially and culturally localist claims to the means of production often serve to disguise the "globally dispersed forces that actually drive the production process. This generates alienation (in Marx's sense) twice intensified, for its social sense is now compounded by a complicated spatial dynamic which is increasingly global" (Appadurai 1990, p. 307).

This transnational field of capitalism thus paves the way for uncontrolled exploitation and trade of all kinds, the interested agents of which often defy states' attempts to intervene in order to limit the degree of exploitation or redistribute the capital gains more equitably. Children born into families not favored by this biased system – that is, the majority of youth throughout the world, especially in the South and East but also in the North and West – begin their lives, then, constrained by an overarching capitalist culture that relentlessly conditions the development of their most basic needs and outlooks, let alone higher levels of well-being, such as fair access to ongoing and personally fulfilling education, what Peter Moss (2014) terms "flourishing," or to resources for gaining recognition or respectability. Meanwhile, the privileged few of society benefit from this imbalance.

Based on his review of various studies, William Corsaro (2003) finds that children as young as ages 3–6 are already highly aware of their relative status among peers. And another researcher of early childhood, Annica Löfdahl (2002), discovered that peer-designated higher status in some children was directly related to their greater participation and leadership in play with peers. These children's perceptions are largely (but not exclusively) conditioned by the dominant ideological and axiological messages promoted by a world-system that constantly pushes toward forming, in young children, competitive consumers as opposed to inquisitive, creative, cooperative, and freethinking human beings and citizens with rights (Buckingham 2011; Moss 2014). For Marx, the root cause of such domination and of the concomitant manifestations of hierarchical distinction among individuals and groups resides in the fundamentally unjust operations of capitalism, which form the basis of status or class structure in societies. For critical sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (2000), a person's relative power and status are composed not only of economic but of social and cultural capital, all of which form a more-or-less stable symbolic filter, or *habitus*, for perceiving self and others through relationships of domination or the imbalanced exercise of power and distinction.

Seen from an intersectional point of view, however, much of this perceptual filtering plays out not only in classist but in racist, ethnocentric, and sexist ways, with uneven oppressive effects on individuals and groups depending on their identities and attributes. Children's early expressions of discrimination are generally intersectional in that they are the product of subjectivities (young and old) influencing each other as they come to perceive and prioritize – largely by means of world-system cultural filters – material/structural and cultural sources of difference in peers and others. For instance, researcher Charlotte Palludan (2007) found in multicultural early childhood settings in Denmark that educators and other adults, through subtle

linguistic practices, tended to establish sociocultural hierarchies favoring native Danish-speaking children over those speaking other native languages at home or at school, this despite the latter possessing practically native fluency in Danish. Compounding this ethnolinguistic subordinating practice is the intersectional reality that, more often than not, Black, Brown, and migrant children find themselves on the subaltern end of these discriminatory linguistic practices in Western educational contexts, this amounting to "linguoracism" (Orelus 2013) in both early childhood levels (Srinivasan 2009) and in general (Battiste 2013; Dei and Kempf 2006; hooks 1994; Leonardo and Singh 2017; McCarthy 2013). Moreover, many of their home languages do not meet the instrumentalizing criteria for schooling that have only tightened their grip under the neoliberal agenda in early childhood education – i.e., increased standardization, privatization, accountability measures, competition, and product over process (Moss 2014) – nor do they meet the ideologically informed curricular priorities associated with ethnically dominant languages of instruction (Apple 2004; Ladson-Billings 2014; Orelus 2013; Srinivasan 2009).

These are just some ways that racism enters into the equation. But there are many others as well: such racism is only intensified, as was shown in the first section, through educators' color-blind practices (Berman et al. 2017; Ladson-Billings 2014), as well as the fact that Black, Brown, and migrant children's families have a disproportionately greater chance of falling into lower socioeconomic brackets and residing in poorer neighborhoods thanks to economically and/or racially discriminatory urban planning and hiring practices that lead to racist and elitist de facto segregation (Collins and Bilge 2016). As a result, the access these families have to early childhood care and education itself – with little if any provision of cost-free programs for infants and toddlers (up to age 4) – is much more limited or nonexistent.

Considering these early harmful effects on children, introducing alternatives to the system's influences in early childhood settings will help both children and adults to broaden their perspectives or cultural outlooks. Marxist anti-colonial scholar Vivek Chibber (2013) asserts that capitalism continues to colonize all corners of the globe, and whereas this process was initiated through the formal colonial forces of pre- and early twentieth-century imperialism based on White supremacist ideology, neoliberal capitalism has come to dominate globally in the post-World War II era through informal or neocolonial "means of economic and political manipulation by the advanced world—unequal exchange, profit repatriation by corporations, technological dependence, and so on" (Chibber 2013, p. 254), which are still profoundly racist. Hence, Chibber argues that despite some subaltern studies scholars' claims that capitalism faces more challenges in certain non-Western contexts, much more need be done to disable capitalism's overarching cultural logics and material modus operandi than has hitherto been accomplished from the postcolonial analytical camp of subaltern studies.

In our view, however, anti-capitalist perspectives and struggles are not enough. A decade earlier, another critical Indian scholar, Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003), identified similar processes but from a decolonial, feminist epistemic that speaks more directly to our intersectional concern here about the cultural impacts of the

broader world-system on early childhood education and care. In her book, *Feminism Without Borders* (2003), Mohanty called for a meeting of feminist minds between what she referred to as the "One-Third/Two-Thirds Worlds" (p. 226). This term captures the reality that institutional actors from the Global North, although fewer in number, dominate the social majority from the Global South. Regarding this imbalance of power relations throughout the world and considering the fact that "the hegemony of neoliberalism, alongside the naturalization of capitalist values, influences the ability to make choices on one's own behalf in the daily lives of [the] economically marginalized" (Mohanty 2003, p. 229), Mohanty poses the following challenge by factoring gender into the equation:

> It is especially on the bodies and lives of women and girls from the Third World/South—the Two-Thirds World—that global capitalism writes its script, and it is by paying attention to and theorizing the experiences of these communities of women and girls that we demystify capitalism as a system of debilitating sexism and racism and envision anticapitalist resistance. Thus, any analysis of the effects of globalization needs to centralize the experiences and struggles of these particular communities of women and girls. (Mohanty 2003, p. 235)

Other decolonial feminists, such as Magdalena León (2011) of Ecuador or María Lugones (2008) of Argentina, have been attempting to do just that. Basing her perspective on the Quechua notion of *Sumak Kawsay* or, in Spanish, the *Buen Vivir* (Good Living), León pursues a Southern feminist alternative to patriarchal capitalist orientations toward "development." Transitioning toward the *Buen Vivir* involves revaluing the *reproductive* economy of care which is overwhelmingly occupied by women, and upon which both children and adults depend during their lifetimes to gain access to immaterial (cultural) goods and services that are not dissociable from material flows. This is why the principles of solidarity, reciprocity, and interdependence represent the axiological core of the *Buen Vivir*, as opposed to the exploitation, competition, and ecological destruction associated with the so-called "productive" (capitalist) economy. This focus implies a *cultural turn* in that it means reconceptualizing the role of caring not only for fellow human beings but for all living things as a fundamentally essential part of *producing* our common good or well-being. For her part, Lugones (2008) argues that coloniality, as an enduring form of domination that affects Black and Brown women all over the world – and more so than it does Black and Brown men – can offer a more powerful analytical frame than intersectionality itself for understanding the imbalance of power in today's world-system.

Broadening young children's experiences with these kinds of gender-emancipative, decolonial, anti-racist, pro-commons, and anti-system perspectives and values serves to *revalue* the culture of early childhood, as well as the education and care children need, for it helps both adults and the very young develop their own cultural perspectives more independently from the world-system. For example, in a cross-cultural study on gender diversity in 3- and 4-year-olds (Teasley 2014), new evidence was found to confirm that transgender identities can start to form as early as 2–3 years of age (Brill and Pepper 2008) and that the younger the children, the more

openly they accept gender roles that do not conform to the gender identity binary the system is built on and normatively assigns to newborns. To persuade young children to accept only those norms, artifacts, and forms of self-representation associated with certain genitals is to limit children's outlooks, explorations, and inclinations around gender identity.

On so many levels, then, this is an emancipatory moment in history which children have a right to experience to the fullest. Striving to make early childhood education and care a commons-friendly learning environment, as political initiatives such the *Buen Vivir* promote or as early childhood educator and researcher Peter Moss (2014) has proposed, represents a possible way forward, as do the culturally relevant or sustainable, anti-racist, and antibias child-centered pedagogies explored in the other sections of this chapter.

## On Neoliberalism, Consumerism, Human Rights, and Early Childhood Education

Neoliberal economic solutions to poverty and inequality are part of the colonial mandate criticized by Bhabha (2013, p. 96), which goes out of its way to sustain an economy of inequality based on small pockets of wealth and masses of racialized poor, who may be offered help but never the chance of inclusion. Financial assistance of all kinds comes tinged with colonialism in the guise of paternalistic child-centrism, including allowances for early childhood education. These grants are based on a distorted view of the rights of childhood, which ignores the need for stable, well-paid employment that would allow children to be raised and cared for by family members in their local communities.

The scarcity of funding for early childhood education leads to the creation of rifts and hierarchies among families competing for a share of the limited financial assistance on offer. The categorization of poor families and their children in terms of social "vulnerability" fuels a dynamic of racism and hierarchical confrontation based on sociocultural distinction and difference from an early age. Societies oppressed are pushed by a fiercely competitive economic system into a merciless rivalry over the same welfare pot. This is especially true in the case of grants for non-compulsory stages of education, which do not generally come cheap or free.

Poor immigrant families from around the world who travel to richer regions in search of a better future are pitted against local families in situations of economic disadvantage, to the extent that the latter may demand the expulsion of immigrants, particularly those who do not share the majority language or religion. Children in these circumstances are exposed to all manner of bias and prejudice from parents and educators alike, especially where teachers, most of whom are women, are themselves living in poverty or forced to hold down multiple jobs to survive the onslaughts of capitalism. In the early childhood education sector (0–3 years), for example, low salaries mean that many teachers are forced to take on other employment just to make ends meet. Pushed into poverty, marginalization, and despair, their life plans curtailed by job insecurity; it can be hard for teachers in this situation not to lose

sight of their educational mission or to fall into the trap of "aporophobia" (fear and rejection of poor people and poverty; see Cortina 2017), criticizing and condemning the lifestyle and behavior of some of the families they work with on a daily basis.

The scarcity of financial assistance pits poor people against each other in a mutual blame game over who has taken whose job or welfare entitlement. This misdirection of responsibility is exploited by many politicians as a way of deflecting attention away from their own failure to ensure that taxes are paid in proportion to income and are therefore sufficient to guarantee the rights and needs of the population as a whole. The economic chasm between families gives rise to educational discrimination of all types (racism, sexism, classism), which are then papered over by well-intentioned cohesion and integration plans. Far from resolving the problem, these plans perpetuate an economic ideology that promotes the affluence of the few and seeks to colonize child, teacher, and family attitudes with the socially disruptive, economistic belief that "you are what you own."

This type of logic is based on an anti-democratic, "move over, you're in my spot" social Darwinist philosophy of the survival of the fittest, which has come to be seen as natural and inevitable (Sánchez-Blanco 2015). Children are conceived of not as fledgling lovers and understanders of their fellow citizens but as born competitors and unbounded egocentrics. The "no alternative" conceptions, strategies, and values of planned obsolescence have become naturalized and embedded in social consciousness, with people (children included) now treated and classified as expiration-dated goods to be traded and profited from.

In line with the increasing commercialization of human existence, a unique model of childhood has been invented, according to which children are conceptualized as commodities to be controlled and manipulated for commercial gain. This model, driven by the large multinational youth entertainment corporations, attempts to imprint in children a predatory, consumerist subjectivity from early on by immersing them in the pomp of princesses, princes, and dime-a-dozen superheroes while keeping them oblivious to the problems of the world and the flesh-and-blood heroes who stand and fight every day for a more just world (Sánchez-Blanco 2016, 2018).

Young children constantly observe and absorb both at home and in the greater community value and status markers and other hierarchical dynamics peddled by the mass media and street advertising the cultural impact of which works its way into their hearts and minds and then into their formal early childhood education settings, not only through neoliberal educational policies but when children themselves bring their possessions into the classroom for "show-and-tell" (or simply because they want to and can). Needless to say, this practice can lead to various forms of subordination and exclusion, particularly when class activities are created around such personally owned artifacts or when the owners use them to obtain favors or status from less privileged classmates. Educators should be aware of the socioeconomic discrepancies between children in this regard.

Schools can act as a counterweight to the hegemony of capitalist interests and ideas by protecting the frugal, compassionate, curious, and emotionally generous nature so true to childhood and by building critical educational communities based on principles similar to those of the *Buen Vivir*, such as thrift, conservation,

sustainability, and the common good, with which community members work together to find equity-based educational solutions that eschew the fictitious needs of the market and the pantomime of solidarity that turns economic ruin and misfortune into an opportunity for commercial gain. Schools must be mindful of, value, care for, and preserve the unique culture created by children without interference from the consumerist values of the entertainment industry.

The example set by childhood itself can help us, as adults, to reject the neoliberal culture of social hierarchies and waste, reclaim our hope for a more just future, and work to make it a reality. When educators are respected and listened to, schools become a space for liberation for subjects of all ages (Freire 1970), capable of freeing us even of our *retrotopian* longing for "the good old days" (Bauman 2017). Children's idiosyncratic ways of exploring and discovering the world around them give us hope, for they are a constant reminder that a better future is possible. We must take care, therefore, not to disrupt their childhood ethos, to listen respectfully, to let them be themselves and not project onto them our own frustrated agendas, and to give them the space and opportunity to develop as human beings. We must always remember how vital they are to maintaining our faith in the ability of human kind to care for one another.

## Race, Ethnicity, and Culturally Relevant/Sustainable Pedagogy

For almost 100 years, the research findings have illustrated that very young children are not "color-blind" but aware of racial differences from about age 3 (Naughton and Davis 2009). The classic 1939 doll study by Clark and Clark (cited in Naughton and Davis 2009) showed that young African American children were aware about racial hierarchies and selected White dolls as more desirable than Black dolls. The study's disconcerting findings have been replicated by many researchers with White, Black, and Brown children, all of which have indicated their awareness of societal preference for Whiteness and the resultant internalization of that awareness to personal preference. Bhabha (1994) observes that cultural representations within children's literature depict White heroes and "dark" villains with strange accents; hence, the *other* in childhood literature and activities is portrayed as something to be feared, as Frantz Fanon denounced in a passage from *Black Skin, White Masks* (2007/1967), in which the "negro" visage was deemed frightening by a young girl and her mother.

In a study of early learning centers in Toronto, Canada, authors Berman et al. (2017) found that early childhood educators failed to report racial incidents that occurred at early learning centers, the racial incidents being minimized or negated. This response is consistent with color-blind racist ideologies and findings from critical race theory. The authors concluded that the findings have significant implications for teacher education programs in early childhood education as well as professional development. Escayg et al. (2017) argue that there is a pro-White bias among both White and racialized children in early childhood education settings. Whiteness is constructed through cultural influences and messages that children absorb and integrate and their coming to understand through these processes that

Whiteness is associated with power. The authors thus highlight the need for an anti-racist analysis that is critical of White power, privilege, and the biased production of knowledge.

Even the most "progressive" early learning programs such as the Reggio Emilia preschools (located mostly in the Italian town of the same name) are still designed with European children in mind. The program materials extol the virtues of its child-centered approach, which also supports the co-construction of learning, but the authors situate Reggian pedagogy within the Global North's normative epistemological practice of referring almost exclusively to modern, Western sources, interests, and perspectives (Jipson and Johnson 2001). In related research, Clark (2014) observes that many Western ECE learning spaces provide art activities that are homogenized and goal-directed, describing the art products created in early learning as not only "predictable" but as also reflecting Eurocentric norms in the process of creating the artwork, as such activities tend to be organized in specific spaces with limited resources and time – another prevalent curricular practice in Western approaches to ECE.

Even when early childhood pedagogical strategies are characterized as "emergent," they can still enforce the boundaries of "acceptable" and "normative" play. Michael W. Apple (2004) contends that many ECEC play settings lend themselves to the reproduction of the division of labor. In "dramatic play centers," for instance, children are encouraged to enact gendered and racialized roles through the consumption of materials. This is most often detectable in gender role-play, but racial and class hierarchies are also evident in such play. Where storytelling is concerned, Ramsey (2015) claims that many stories written by White authors about diverse children portray White characters in prominent, rescuing, or heroic roles, while the children of color play less important supporting roles to the main White characters. This is a common trope reproduced in film and television with the portrayals of the "sidekick" character of color. Even when the main subject of the story is a member of a minority group, s/he is often portrayed as requiring "help." What is more, White authors may fail to notice these tropes because of their unconscious biases (Ramsey 2015).

Goodman (cited in Naughton and Davis 2009) argues that racial awareness in young children emerges through three developmental stages: children begin to notice racial differences in stage one (at approximately age 3); stage two occurs around age 4 when children begin to exhibit racial attitudes; and the last stage is characterized by a full integration of racial bias, prejudice, and stereotypes by age 7. These developmental approaches are grounded in cognitive development theories that represent modern canonical knowledge in early childhood education, the ideas advanced by Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky guiding the curriculum, assessment, and pedagogical approaches for early learning in most Western nations. This is not to say that developmental patterns do not exist or should not be investigated; it is to say that what is still largely missing in research on early childhood is what the late Palestinian postcolonial theorist Edward W. Said (1993) called "contrapuntal analysis": nuancing dominant research orientations and canonical narratives with *other* epistemological and cultural perspectives on similar phenomena. Naughton and Davis

([2009](#)) argue that pedagogical processes in early learning contribute to the racialization of children's identities in ways that reproduce Whiteness as dominant and relegate additional racial/ethnic identities as subaltern *others*. The politics of these discourses are contextually dependent and may vary according to the intersections of gender, class, and ethnic identities, but the authors further argue that these discourses and practices in early education serve to organize and reproduce racialized power relations.

In order to redress this situation in ECEC, alternative pedagogical strategies are required. A few decades ago, Gloria Ladson-Billings developed and advocated for an educational approach that she termed "culturally relevant pedagogy" and has more recently termed "culturally *sustainable* pedagogy" (Ladson-Billings [2014](#)). In her view, when teachers engage this pedagogy, they learn to value and appreciate the cultures of their students, their families, and local communities. The educators then use this cultural understanding to structure and frame their everyday teaching practices – making them more relevant, culturally, and therefore more sustainable. Such educators stand a good chance of becoming highly effective by developing this cross-cultural competence.

Nonetheless, several scholars have extended Ladson-Billings' work, such as Christopher Emdin ([2017](#)), who describes "reality pedagogy" as an approach to teaching and learning that has the primary goal of meeting each student on her or his own cultural and emotional terms. There is value placed on community and home resources: Where are the students coming from? What are their points of reference? Similar to Ladson-Billings' ([2014](#)) culturally sustainable pedagogy, reality pedagogy is a student-centered approach through which the teacher and learner co-construct the classroom space and knowledge. Students' cultural identities are constantly acknowledged and placed full-center in collective learning spaces; they are visibly and auditively *present* at school, so that the students can see and hear that their own points of reference, experiences, and interests are a valued part of the curriculum. Such referents also serve as a bridge for approaching less familiar topics of learning. Some of the teaching strategies for educators include having the students create stories about the teaching content that relates to their own lives or encouraging older children to "teach the lesson" to the rest of the class; to tell or read stories to younger children in their own voice; or to develop meaningful and educational forms of assessment. Students are guided toward initiating cooperative research projects and activities that have real impact in their local communities and that draw, intergenerationally, on the knowledge of prominent figures from those communities. Reality pedagogy focuses on building on students' experiences, interests, and linguistic diversity as well, the latter of which is all too often framed as a deficit at school rather than a resource or challenge. Pierre Orelus ([2013](#)) refers to this framing as linguoracism, for racism is usually implicated in such linguistic imperialism.

In these ways, then, and in keeping with an essential part of Freire's ([1970](#)) critical pedagogical thinking, new cultural knowledge is both intersubjectively and collectively generated, never merely "transmitted," and never at the expense of negating previously existing (and previously silenced) cultural "knowledges," where children find grounding. The starting point for educators, then, involves

creating a "common ground" with their students where different epistemological and ontological viewpoints are seen and heard, where all "ways of knowing" (Freire 1970) count. And while in ECEC this focus amounts to child-centered practice, allowing young children to discover the world as much as possible on their own terms, Freire's pedagogy goes a step further in that axiological or ethical dimensions are always present and highlighted in this process. As critical educators, then, we are compelled to raise children's and adults' consciousnesses about the injustices engendered by the heavily biased world-system into which we all have been born. With this aim in mind, we conclude this chapter by exploring a few more ways we can challenge that system in the early years of learning.

## Conclusion and Future Directions

As we have argued throughout these pages, Western early childhood education is heavily influenced by a neocolonial world-system consisting of capitalist, White supremacist, and patriarchal-heteronormative forms of cultural and material domination and oppression. Nonetheless, scant attention has been paid to how this power/ knowledge force has colonized young children's thinking and being in formal educational contexts and beyond.

Naughton and Davis (2009) argue that we should interrogate White discursive practices in order to develop antibias and anti-racist pedagogies that directly challenge White supremacy. They suggest that teaching practices be diverted to identifying and mapping just how Whiteness is normalized in early learning. Early years educators thus need to shift their discourses and strategies to unpack White normativity in their assessments and observations of child behavior. By adopting an ecological pedagogical approach that situates children's expressions of racial, ethnic, gender, and material status awareness within their local communities and national and/or global contexts, such educators can interrogate, along with the children, the injustices that become visible through such awareness. We urge educators to embrace critical alternatives to the color-blind, technical-rational modes of learning that pervade current ECEC in the West. In spite of claims about "inclusive" education, what learners constructed as subaltern *others* experience are neocolonizing practices that compel them to conform to the dominant norms while simultaneously negating their own identities. Such assimilation-oriented teaching runs contrary to cultural sustainability (Ladson-Billings 2014).

Anti-colonial critical scholars of education Dei and Kempf (2006) remind us that the salience of race is still powerful and that we must resist demands from the dominant culture to adopt the stance that race as an analytical tool is not useful. Dei (cited in Dei and Kempf 2006) argues that the discourse about moving beyond race is couched in a denial of the racialized positionality of power and privilege. To claim to not notice color is to not notice the inherent racism that accompanies race or the unequal power relationships that are associated with it. The discourse of color blindness can be interpreted as an attempt to silence the competing discourse of anti-racism and refute efforts to challenge racial injustice. Seen from Mohanty's

decolonial feminist perspective: "In knowing differences and particularities, we can better see the connections and commonalities" (2003, p. 224).

When educators facilitate young children's opportunities to perceive injustices, providing ample educational time and space for their ongoing and spontaneous exploration and deliberation, young children can and do come to critically examine (Sánchez-Blanco 2015, 2016) many aspects of the biased conceptions, contents, contexts, and "conduits" that colonize their lives in systemic ways (Teasley 2009), privileging *some* groups at the expense of *others*. Moss (2014) urges ECEC educators to methodically observe and reflect on their practice via the Reggian strategies of pedagogical documentation and school-community assemblies and by engaging a "pedagogy of listening" (Åberg, in Moss 2014). Nonetheless, hooks (2003) notes that in certain spaces, there is only a tacit engagement with multicultural "diversity," without a commitment to recognizing cultural/racial difference (or "pluralism," in hooks' terms), lasting social change, or inequitable power structures and unjust cultural practices. hooks (1994) suggests that educators may be reluctant to teach from critical perspectives that include awareness of the intersectionalities of race, class, sexuality, and gender because their personal identities and sense of selves may be challenged and they may feel uncomfortable or unable to address controversial issues that evoke emotional responses. She calls on teachers at all levels from early learning to university to change their teaching styles to respect the sociocultural identities of their diverse students, no matter how young.

Early childhood educators have a key role to play in subverting these global systems and reaffirming children's right to experience childhood free of capitalist pressures. Early childhood educators must also resist and challenge – through what Mohanty (2003) has referred to as "pedagogies of dissent" – racist and sexist bias in ECE curricula, policy, and environmental design. Decolonizing early childhood education would achieve the objective of creating an anti-oppressive, antibias learning environment for all our children.

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# Ourselves as Another II

# 4

Peter Pericles Trifonas

**Abstract**

Now, more than ever, there is an obligation to recognize the presence of the infinite possibilities and multiple horizons of alterity, which destabilize the grounding of subjectivity and our knowledge about what it means to be human. This responsibility highlights the problem of exposing or creating locations for otherness within communitarian-based institutions such as the university, which still occupy the colonized space of traditional knowledge archives and are at the same time alterior to the logic of the status quo simply by producing new forms of knowledge and blazing trails of discovery that change the disciplines (see Derrida, "Of the humanities and the philosophical discipline: The right to philosophy and the cosmopolitical point of view," *Surfaces*, 4, 1.1, and Trifonas and Peter, *Deconstructing Derrida: Tasks for the New Humanities*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2005). If so, how and where are gestures toward the spaces of these new locations enacted within the human sciences by which we define the difference of ourselves as another?

**Keywords**

Cultural studies · Cosmopolitical · Difference · Philosophy education · Deconstruction · University

The inside and outside borders of any cultural spaces we define according to the age old concepts of community and humanity open up the material locations within which theory and praxis are renewed. The syncretic nature of subjectivity is symptomatic of the impossibility of pinning down the essence of being and the gist of

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what it means to be human. *On the one hand,* the demise of the autotelic subject – a subject defined *in, of,* and *by* itself – is fueled by a global vision of a shared community running rampant today. *On the other hand,* the idea of global citizenship as the seat of human hybridity nurtures the impetus toward a communal proclivity of the autotelic Subject as a shared identity, and produces the call for a leveling of difference, quite ironically, through what Jacques Derrida has called the cosmopolitical point of view. The world vision of a new humanity privileges both particularity and therefore uniqueness while at the same time creating the conditions for essentialism and the universalization of difference, which effaces differences in a mass sharing of an amorphous "global culture." The productive effect of alterity marks itself on subjectivity as a reflectivity characterized by alienation and growth in relation to the articulation of differences across the signs of culture, language, and the archives of knowledge manipulated and guarded by communications technologies. But the rapid proliferation of new systems, *technes*, and means of representation have hastened the call for a new humanities that is cosmopolitically friendly, whereby communities of difference are conjoined in new affiliations that render their uniqueness in the difference of themselves as a common feature of a world picture molded by the forces of globalization. Otherness is present yes, but with a debt and duty to the historicity of what has gone before. The concept of the cosmopolitical defines human heterogeneity and similarity via the necessity of marking the interior and exterior limits of culture through language and the rise of other technologies of representation, which seek to transfix the world picture of the socioeconomic and ethicopolitical future of global citizens. The logic of the cosmopolitical within the notion of a global subjectivity broaches the question of human rights and education. It asks us to rethink the certainty of knowledge as a philosophical project of genealogical excavation in relation to social justice and educational equity. The ethical problem of who *can, should be*, or *is* capable of determining the propriety of the formal location of inquiry regarding the "human sciences" characterizing the Humanities and Cultural Studies – the space and place of the cultural–institutional indexicality marking the public paths of difference, its entrances and exits – is a flash point of conflict.

Pedagogical institutions put in motion the academic machinery of the cultural reproduction of knowledge and are always already implicated in the perennial question of democracy and discipline, of knowledge, difference, otherness, social justice, and the right to education for each and every subject and citizen.

In "The future of the profession or the unconditional university," Jacques Derrida engages in a moment of questioning regarding the nature of academic community and its "profession of faith" to knowledge within the university. It invokes the urgency of the need to recognize new tasks for the humanities after the cosmopolitical orientations of globalization, which directly address the academic responsibility of educational institutions and, by extension, those who teach, work, and live *in* and, perhaps, *for* them, as the teaching body (*le corps eneignant*) (See Derrida 1990, pp. 111–153), to value difference. What does this mean exactly to the future of the "professor" of knowledge? To say that a pedagogical institution and those who are a part of it possess total and unabiding and hence *irresponsible and unaccountable* control of the intellectual domain they survey is to surmise a legacy

of exclusion. There is no space left to welcome other possibilities and conditions of knowledge, *impossible conditions*. It becomes a question of unconditional affinity and openness toward embracing the difference of the Other without giving way to hesitance or reservation, empirical qualification, and moral judgment, let alone indignation. The question of a "proper domain" of rights, of institutions, of community and difference, of humanity and what is proper to the study of humanity – of propriety and domination, appropriation, expropriation, of property, participation, ownership, and fairness, and therefore, of law, ethics, and, ultimately, of social justice – brings us back to the connections between culture and knowledge within the university. It extends the problem of democracy and *democraticity*, governance and governmentality, of the responsibilities and principles relating to the formation and formativity of a system of public education on an international scale. Derrida alludes to this unconditional responsibility toward otherness via the cosmpolitical as "mondialization" or "worldwide-ization" within the disciplines of the Humanities rooted in the enigmas of subjective experience that inflect knowledge. It is a matter of locating the axiomatic difference of these terms, the difference of their axiomaticity, and their inter-relatability, within a hospitable space and place that only an open concept of community and education can entreat them to because there is difference. The university and its academic community must welcome the production of different knowledges and efface the traditional boundaries of research, which build walls around the disciplines. The concept excavation that deconstruction enables, essentially exposes a genealogy of difference within formations of thought constructed as logical and rational. It eventually leads to a productive recognition of alterity, which breaks down what is thought to be common sense without self-interest; that is, deconstruction enables an ethical expansion of thought and thinking without limitations or borders, or conditional limits within knowledge protected by the ideological beacon of the discourse of "enlightened thinking."

The principle of reason "as principle of grounding, foundation or institution" (Derrida 1983) has tended to guide the science of research toward technopractical ends within the university (See Derrida, "The principle of reason."). It has put conditions on inquiry that have limited the possibilities for knowledge creation. From this epistemic superintendence of the terms of knowledge and inquiry, there has arisen the traditional notion of academic responsibility, which is tied to the pursuit of truth via a conception of science based on the teleological orientation of intellectual labor toward the production of tangible outcomes achieved according to a method of procedural objectivity (Trifonas 1996, 2000). For Jacques Derrida, this is not an insignificant historicity because its effects determine the nature of the epistemic subjectivity of the researcher. The ethics and politics of research – and the role "the ['modern'] university may play" (Trifonas, "The ends of pedagogy," p. 11.) in helping to construct the dimensions of a scholastic arena for paideai impelled toward the quest for the pragmatic application of results, or the "pay off" (p. 12) of predirected outcomes of inquiry – is fed more and more by competing interests situated outside of the rationale of the institution itself. Most certainly, academic work "programmed, focused, organized" (p. 11) solely on the future expectation of its profitable utilization does not and cannot take into account the democratic ideals

protecting the welfare of the nation-state, especially when the quest for knowledge becomes driven by particularized and exclusionary agendas arbitrarily guiding the course of inquiry for political or economic reasons. A myopic orientation to research as an instrumental process of usable outcomes limits intellectual freedom and responsibility because it is, Derrida has contended, "centered instead on [the desires of] multinational military–industrial complexes of technoeconomic networks, or rather international technomilitary networks that are apparently multi-or trans-national in form"(p. 11) ("The principle of reason" we must remember was written and presented in April of 1983. At the time – the peaking of the "Cold War," this is a fair description of the homogeneous "conditionality" of the Western 'nation-states" – most conspicuously exemplified by America and Russia – that according to Derrida were spending in total upward of "two million dollars a minute" on the manufacture of armaments alone.). Indeed such regulatory forces wielding the power of "in-vest-ment" – not necessarily monetary – are always wanting to control the mechanisms of creative production to commodify knowledge so as to make it a useful product of preordained and preconceived epistemological directives and scientific outcomes not necessarily for the sake of science, truth, or knowledge. These "external" influences affecting and reflecting the purposes of the university are to be found more and more in not so obvious, but covertly strategic, areas within the architectonical confines of the traditional institutional structure. This is possible thanks to the "channel of private foundations"(p. 14) that have penetrated the sphere of the modern research university and are therefore indispensable to the logic of its goals and operation. In fact, the direction and scope of research within and throughout the university institution are guided by the irresistible lure of funding and other personal and professional incentives arising there of (e.g., power, status, career advancement, etc.). And yet to intimate, as I have, that the "pragmatic" (utilitarian) interests of an "applied science" are in opposition to the relative disinterestedness of "fundamental" (basic) inquiry is to create a binary distinction.

A qualitative and evaluative division of research along these lines is, without a doubt, problematic. The ethics of its logic is something that can and should consistently be worked against as deconstruction has shown. Derrida reminds us, however, that such a metaphysical conceit separating theory and practice is of "real but limited relevance"(p. 12): Given that the deferred dividends of the "detours, delays and relays of 'orientation,' its more random aspects"(p. 12), are either incalculable or go unrecognized until a suitable situation of the advantageous use of research presents itself. The use-value of research cannot be an unimportant consideration because the ethics of science and its endeavors quickly occupies the foreground of analysis as the purpose of knowledge discovery comes into question. For Derrida, it is naive to believe there are some "basic disciplines ['philosophy,' 'theoretical physics,' and 'pure mathematics' are the examples he gives] shielded from power, inaccessible to programming by the pressures of the State or, under cover of the State, by civil society or capital interests"(p. 12). That thought has now been unthinkable for some time, especially since the monstrous dawning of the "post-critical" age of nuclear politics and in the wake of the informatizing function of science as research "[a]t the service of war"(p. 13). In this sense, what has been at

stake with respect to the purpose of research in all of its manifestations as a mode of conquering the symbiotic field of the human and nonhuman Other concerns the "control" of knowledge and the industry or commodification of its results as intellectual by-products to be used by the State apparatus. This desire to command the path and ethics of science has and will pivot around the "higher priority" issue of protecting "national and international security"(p. 13) interests, however heterogeneous the calculation of a plan of insurance or the lack of it is to the logic of "peace" or "democracy."

The differentiation of the aims of research is not that discreet an indicator of its "use-value" so as to clearly distinguish between the profitability of application and the destructive effects of misappropriation, despite the usual factoring-in of "reasonable" margins of error. Derrida comments, Research programs have to [in the sense of, *are made to*] encompass the entire field of information, the stockpiling of knowledge, the workings and thus also the essence of language and of all semiotic systems, translation, coding and decoding, the play of presence and absence, hermeneutics, semantics, structural and generative linguistics, pragmatics, and rhetoric. I am accumulating all these disciplines in a haphazard way, on purpose, but I shall end with literature, poetry, the arts, fiction in general: The theory that has all these discipline as its object may be just as useful in ideological warfare as it is in experimentation with variables in all-too-familiar perversions of the referential function. Such a theory may always be put to work in communications strategy, the theory of commands, the most refined military pragmatics of jussive utterances (by what token, for example, will it be clear that an utterance is to be taken as a command in the new technology of telecommunications? How are the new resources of simulation and simulacrum to be controlled? And so on …)…. Furthermore, when certain random consequences of research are taken into account, it is always possible to have in view some eventual benefit that may ensue from an apparently useless research project (in philosophy or the humanities, for example).

The history of the sciences encourages researchers to integrate that margin of randomness into their centralized calculation. They then proceed to adjust the means at their disposal, the available financial support, and the distribution of credits. A State power or forces that it represents no longer need to prohibit research or to censor discourse, especially in the West. It is enough that they can limit the means, can regulate support for production, transmission, and diffusion (p. 13).

Within the "concept of information or informatization" (p. 14), the ethics and the politics of research take shape essentially as the conservative ideal of "Science" the university itself stands on is overtaken. The transformation of research goals and purposes consumes the institution because the autonomy of its own self-regulating measures of knowledge advancement is sacrificed to the real-world pressures of simply securing a sustainable future for itself as an economically and politically viable institution of culture. And that is understandable, although it may not be ethically defensible or acceptable. Not even to those unquestioning defenders of the dominant (or onto-teleological) interpretation of the principle of reason and science the university is grounded on: Essentially by its logic of "integrat[ing] the basic to the oriented, the purely rational to the technical, thus bearing witness to that original

intermingling of the metaphysical and the technical"(p. 14) within the disciplinary corpus of the institution.

The academic responsibility Derrida has wished to "awaken or resituate" (p. 14) is "in the university or before (*devant*) the university, whether one belongs to it or not" (p. 14). *Its double gesture bridges the ungrounded space of the conditions of possibility over which positions on ethics and responsibility, reason and rationality are thought-out and taken*. The difficulty of this "new academic responsibility" is elaborated, according to Derrida, by actively opposing the "prohibiting limitations" (p. 13) that "presses, [public and private] foundations, mass media" (p. 13) and other "interest groups" place on the act of research within the institution: "The unacceptability of a discourse, the non-certification of a research project, the illegitimacy of a course offering are declared by evaluative actions: Studying such evaluations is, it seems to me [he emphasizes], one of the tasks most indispensable to the exercize of academic responsibility, most urgent for the maintenance of its dignity" (p. 13). To intervene decisively in the business of the university is to appeal (to) reason, to ask for the concession of reasons out of which to judge judgments made in the name of truth, and the imperative for gaining knowledge and teaching it as such. The medium in question, which relates the obligation and responsibility of ethics to politics and the practices of the institution, is language and two ways of thinking about the *value of language*. Derrida defines these complementary modes of thought in relation to the principle of reason as "instrumental" (informative) and "poietic" (creative), essentially by associating their contrasting methods of semiological effect (e.g., representation/undecidability) with research-type, which is end-oriented and fundamental. On the basis of the difference of values of finitude, which must not proceed from knowledge but always head toward the possibility of its reinvention, is grounded the deconstructive attempt to define a new academic responsibility "in the face of the university's total subjection to the technologies of informatization" (p. 14). The cross-contamination between the instrumental and the *poietic* aims of research science is obvious "at the outer limits of the authority and power of the principle of reason" (p. 14), where the specificity of goals or purposes is blurred by the shared logic of *praxis*. Derrida situates this antinomic responsibility – of "the experience and experiment of the *aporia*," (Derrida 1992, p. 41) more or less – within the general domain a hypothetical "community of thought," (Derrida, "The principle of reason," p. 16.) a community that is committed to the "sounding [of] a call to practice it." (Ibid., p. 16.) The *"group-at-large"* referred to is not one "of research, of science, of philosophy, since these values [of 'professionalism' and 'disciplinarity' no matter how 'radical'] are most often subjected to the unquestioned authority of the principle of reason" (Ibid., p. 16.) and can be absorbed into the homogeneous magma of intra-institutional discourse (e.g., the standardization of Marxism and psychoanalysis). Derrida has named this loosely gathered consortium a "community of the question" (Derrida 1978, p. 80) after the death of philosophy, a chance for safekeeping the possibility of the question of the *violence of metaphysics*, onto-theo-logical and protoethical. How would it function? Derrida explains as follows: Such a community would interrogate the essence of reason and of the principle of reason, the values of the basic, of the principial, of radicality, of the

*arkhe* in general, and it would attempt to draw out all the possible consequences of this questioning. It is not certain that such a thinking can bring together a community or found an institution in the traditional sense of these words. What is meant by community and institution must be rethought. This thinking must also unmask – an infinite task – all the ruses of end-orienting reason, the paths by which apparently disinterested research can find itself indirectly reappropriated, reinvested by programs of all sorts. That does not mean that "orientation" is bad in itself and that it must be combatted, far from it. Rather, I am defining the necessity for a new way of educating students that will prepare them to undertake new analyses in order to evaluate these ends and choose, when possible, among them all (Derrida, "The principle of reason," p. 16.).

For Derrida, the ordeal of decision is an instant of madness regarding action; it "always risks the worst," (Derrida, "The principle of reason," p. 19.) especially, as concerns us here, in relation to the ethics of research and the grounding of the preconditions of the violence of an existing foundation like the idea of the university's reason for being an institution for scientific innovation and cultural reproduction: It is not a matter simply of questions that one *formulates* while submitting oneself, as I am doing here [in the discourse], to the principle of reason, but also of preparing oneself thereby to transform the modes of writing, approaches to pedagogy, the procedures of academic exchange, the relation to languages, to other disciplines, to the institution in general, to its inside and its outside.

Those who venture forth along this path, it seems to me, need not set themselves up in opposition to the principle of reason, nor give way to "irrationalism." They may continue to assume *within* the university, along with its memory and tradition, the imperative of professional rigor and competence (Ibid., p. 17.).

The meta-logic of deconstruction defines the site of the struggle for a new academic responsibility. The double-sided responsibility of its "to" and "for" peripatetic aims at a *Verwindung* of the principle of reason, which would rearticulate the ethics of science and/as research within the university. After the affirmative ethics of deconstruction, this means a "going-beyond that is both an acceptance and a deepening" (Vattimo 1988, p. 172.) of reflection on the concepts of ethics, science, and responsibility as Gianni Vattimo has argued, not to get over, overcome, or to distort the principle of these concepts by outbidding them into submission but to resign the compliance of thought to a rethinking of them (See Gasché 1994). And thus to effectuate a change in the thinking of the being of the University and the academic responsibility of our roles in it as researchers, teachers, and intellectuals. To avoid reproducing the classical architectonic of the Kantian institution, thereby entrenching its effects still further, Derrida asserts that "'Thought' requires *both* the principle of reason *and* what is beyond the principle of reason, the *arkhè* and an-archy." (Derrida, "The principle of reason," pp. 18–19.) With this I agree. The creation of a chance for the future occurs by keeping the memory of the past alive. There must be an archive, a body of knowledge, to work from, for, and against. It is at the interspaces of old and new knowledge constructions beyond the grasp of "meaning" or "reason" that risks are taken to move beyond what we already know by

endeavoring to put the systematicity of what may appear to be grounded or static into motion, play, *kinesis*. The institutional meeting place of a deconstructive ethics and politics would engage the undecidability of interpretative links where a new academic responsibility could be forged between those faculties speaking a constative (theoretical) language of a Kantian type and others who make performative (interventive) statements of an Austinian type. Like a bridge across an abyss of reason.

For Derrida, the heterogeneous scope of this impossible territory after the reason of "Enlightenment—*Aufklärung, Lumières, Illuminisimo*" is where the struggle over difference and human rights has to take place after Immanuel Kant. It "risks" reenvisioning the Humanities after the cosmopolitical condition: A hypothetical situation of geo-global interconnectivity or mondialization having an "inter-national or interstate dimension" (Derrida, "Of the humanities and the philosophical discipline," p. 2.) and related to the question of the *emanation* and diaspora of the *polis* and *politeia as a way of life*. The idea of the cosmopolitical solidifies the problem of a universal history or "the link among the cities, the *poleis* of the world, as nations, as people, or as States." (Ibid.) However we cannot in good conscience subscribe to the constellations of a panoptic vision of an "abstract universalism," (Ibid.) which strangles difference in the name of a general culture of homogeneous communities, permanent archives, and exclusionary institutions. Kant postulated the cosmopolitical as an organic global synthesis of cultures and subjects upon which a template for writing the blueprint of any and all institutions *to come* can be. In many ways the vision still guides us and the pedagogical imperatives of today's educational and social institutions.

Interrogating the modality of this desire for sameness demands a rethinking of the future of thinking and works toward illuminating and transforming rather than dismissing or deriding the historicity of "philosophical acts and archives."(Ibid.) Questioning the ground of institutions and the reason of their institutionality with respect to the formation of subjectivity engages the real-world effects produced by the performative force of epistemological discourses and their responsibility as instances of founding and therefore of foundation, which forces us to rethink the nature of what it means to be sovereign, to have rights, to be human. The notion of the cosmopolitical humanities arises from an anti-utopian thrust, contrary to the ideal of a natural universalism of thought and action uniting thinking and subjectivity in the image of the global citizen. It enables us to link the problem of human rights and difference with the Derridean conception of the Kantian cosmopolitical point of view in a positive rather than a negative way via the notion of mondialization. We must remember that knowledge and knowing are articulated by the continual reaggregation of the logic of the letter, the terms of its reading as production and reproduction, and the domain of its archive. The problem of how to go about securing both private and public "access to this language and culture, first and foremost by means of education," (Ibid.) involves, more or less, the working-out of the problems of subjectivity, community, and difference central to answering the question of academic privilege (who has the right to knowledge?) and the power of location (how? and why?).

The pedagogical onus on an affable (simple, crude, and vulgar) modality of cultural production and reproduction without the complexity of resistance or complications of difference fixes the parameters of an institutional ethic of response and responsibility on the conditional boundaries of knowledge, and limits the horizons of new forms of thinking and research. But this reduction of the frame of reference to categorical imperatives, which willfully ignore the limitations and boundaries of a project of repeating the historicity of Western education, occurs only if and when the cosmopolitical nature of difference as a source for new professions of faith is not taken into account. It would be wrong to ignore the diversity within the composition of what we call knowledges and to cull a universal thinking without a diversity of knowledge. The emanation of the cosmopolitical view is a gathering of multiplicity in knowledge communities that articulates the ethical terms of a responsibility to acknowledge the profundity of differences within the same archive of knowledge and thinking, the unimaginable manifestation of many it parts and partners, nations, states, and peoples whose materiality comprises and cannot but exceed the conceptual totality of its essence. These aspects are not unrelated insofar as such ethico-qualitative judgments require an identification of who would have the privilege and opportunity of participation regarding curricular decisions about the future of the right to education, and why. The global diaspora of subjectivity is the open ground of a *democracy-to-come*, with a *pedagogy-to-come*, and the potentially diverging paths of its filiations, friendships, what is held close, in affinity, to the spirit and the heart, not the mind. Kant's ethical universalism, and its Eurocentric bias, can be used in a novel way by turning it toward the question of human rights, community, and difference to mobilize the cosmopolitical as a viewpoint *not only* for reconceptualizing the "eternal becoming" (The "Roundtable discussion" on Jacques Derrida's "Des humanités et de la discipline philosophiques"/"Of the humanities and philosophical disciplines" in *Surfaces* Vol. VI.108 (v.1.0A-16/08/1996), 5–40 involved Hazard Adams, Ernst Behler, Hendrick Birus, Jacques Derrida, Wolfgang Iser, Ludwig Pfeiffer, Bill Readings, Ching-hsien Wang, and Pauline Yu. All further quotations from this text are comments made by Derrida. The page references are from the website version of the text to found at http://tornade.ere.umontreal.ca/guedon/Surfaces/vol6/derrida.html. This endnote refers to a quotation from page 3.) of being-in-the-world, *but as a new approach to realizing the impossible futures of a "progressive institutionality" to come and the unforeseeability of its educational methods and apparatus*. This does not simply mean a securing of the opportunity for freedom in thinking and teaching; neither does it defer pedagogically, nor ethically, to the teaching of thinking without reference to the tradition of Western episteme; however, it may be defined in curricular terms. The notion of the cosmopolitical reawakens and resituates the Eurocentrism of the concept and its implications for reinscribing the "horizon of a new community" (Ibid., p. 3.) of the question and the impossibility of the question that teaches the Other to question the sources of the Self and the Other through meditations on difference. This may sound strange to those who envision and portray deconstruction as a *destruction* of Western metaphysics, its institutions, and its teachings. All Western ideas about education *predict* a trajectory of thinking along a "teleological axis" (Ibid., p. 3.) with respect to the

epistemologico-cultural ideal of the "infinite progress" of Being, and the temporal procession of beings toward perfectability, achievable or not. Anything else "would be nothing but a novel" (Derrida, "Of the Humanities and the Philosophical Discipline," p. 2.) given the inseparability of the European epistemological tradition from the notion of the universal, "a plan of nature that aims at the total, perfect political unification of the human species (*die vollkommen bürgerliche Vereinigung in der Menschengattung*)." (Ibid., p. 2.) Any social or cultural institution is founded on memory and the material conditions of its working out as a dynamic tradition of theory and practice, philosophy, and action. Communities are predicated *on taking memory and it differences into account*: Accounting for the causality of its effects, its bias, its exclusions, rendering an account of what makes memory, disrupts it, constructs its limits, openings, how and why it favors. It mobilizes a thoroughly Western conceit and philosophical project directed toward the pragmatic rectification of Being as presence and the sending of itself forward in time toward the infinity of progressive becoming.

We have to accept the reality of the forces of globality and cosmopolitanism and yet safeguard the right to difference within thinking. A critique – coming down on one side or the other – of efficacy is not at all useful, but a misleading endeavor seeking an ethical refuge in the evaluative power of a binary form of metaphysical reasoning pitting "the good" against "the bad," "essentialism" against "anti-essentialism," "Eurocentrism" against "anti-Eurocentrism," and so on. The end work of such a critical task, which freely places blame or adjudicates value for the sake of a castigation or rejection of worth, is performed too quickly and easily. Its decisions are rendered by an appeal to the dictates of a universalist conception of reason and its demotic (and not at all democratic) corollary of "common sense" to construct the ideologico-conceptual grounds of what is "good" and what is "bad." The judgmental edifice of its EITHER/OR rationale presumes a lack of interpretative complexity, a plainness of truth, which is totally transparent and obvious to everyone, a clear-cut and unarguable judgment made with no fathomable case to be made for the possibility of opposition or exemption to the rule of law. One life-world. One reality. One Truth. The metaphysical value of this ethic of perception and its monological model of representation determines the nonoppositional grounds of truth. Conditional and definitive limits thereby demarcate the freedom of what it is possible to know and to think and what it is possible to say without offending the much guarded sensibilities of reason and "good taste" – however their values might be constructed and articulated – as the ideals of commonly held responses to cultural institutions and practices. Difference is abdicated in favor of a community of shared interpretative responsibility and the unethical hegemony of its "majority rules" attitude, which bids one to erect barriers against diversity, "to see and talk about things only as they are or could be." The priority of clarity as an ethical prerequisite of a "responsible response" is, without a doubt, everything when the analytical imperative is NOTHING BUT an exercise of choosing sides. There is a more productive approach. The ethical impetus of the "postcolonial," "anticolonial," or even the "neocolonial" moment as it is called by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak begins with a philosophical nod to what is, for Derrida, the performative legacy of the

institutions and models of "Greco-European memory." (Ibid., p. 4.) Addressing the textual composition of this epistemic and cultural genealogy of Western knowledge, Kant's discourse on the cosmopolitical is only one example of a host of writings by philosophers who possess the temerity to have made such audacious and largely accurate statements about the dominance of "the guiding thread (*Leitfaden*) of Greek history (*griechische Geschichte*)" (Ibid., p. 3.) with respect to explaining the unfolding of the Reason of Being within communities across space and over time. The axiomaticity of this logic directed at excluding an "Other" from the fundamental (pure) archive of its heritage would only be natural from a philosophical perspective of human historicity, which narcotizes the productive value of difference and thus denies the validity of allowing for the possibility of a heterogeneous opening to a world community from a cosmopolitical point of view. As Derrida says, "One encounters [its Eurocentric axiology] again and again, intact and invariable throughout variations as serious as those that distinguish Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, and Valéry." (Ibid., p. 3.) But of course there is a difference in what Kant proposes by way of a vision of the world from a cosmopolitical point of view and its universal enactment in the form of a "Society of Nations" despite the emphasis he places upon Greek philosophy and history, because it attempts to *sublate*, to synthesize, and, at the same time, keep the tensions of the values of cultural difference in an amicable and moral unification of humanity worked out, more or less, along with the trajectory of the "teleological axis of this discourse [that] has become the tradition of European modernity." (Ibid., p. 3.) The concept of nature, and specifically the "unsociability (*Ungeselligkeit, Unvertragsamkeit*)" (Immanuel Kant cited in Derrida, "Of the humanities and the philosophical discipline," p. 3.) of human being *by nature*, is actually the means to a salvation "through culture, art and artifice (*Kunst*), and reason, to make the seeds of nature grow." (Ibid., p. 3.) And Kant truly believes in the potentially unifying power of this "natural or originary state of war among men" (Ibid., p. 3.) (in Kant's time there could literally only be a state of war *among men*). Because of the propensity of subjective (cultural) differences to force antagonisms, territoriality, and conflict, there is only one possible solution that "resembles a novel-like story yet isn't one, that which in truth is but the very historicity of history, is the ruse of nature." (Ibid., p. 3.) And here we may be amazed (or not) by the implications of the Kantian vision. For Kant violence – and its threat to the security of human *Dasein* – is the catalyst that allows nature "to aid reason and thereby put philosophy into operation through the society of nations" (Ibid., p. 3.) we forge under the auspices of global security and nations united. This is a troubling thesis, holding together the logic of the cosmopolitical community of global proportions around the concept of alterity as productive tension. On the one hand, peace achieved through the danger of violence is not really a peace made at all. It is a provisional state of human entropy with respect to the appeasement of the tensions of difference and the possible uprising of transgressions and aggressions against subjective alterity, which depends on the ethico-philosophical essence of the cosmopolitical covenant of being. The condition of peace represents the satiating of a reaction to nullify the difference of difference. On the other hand, a peace compelled by the dark side of the human spirit is perhaps the only *possible and natural* peace that could be rendered

effective or legislated under circumstances within which no other decision or action is acceptable, viable, or defensible, given the alternative of violence. This of course begs the question of the constitutive force of community – whatever that IDEAL may entail as an affective identification of a subjective sense of belonging, a *being-at-home-in-the-world WITH OTHERS* – and the responsibility of its opening-up of the Self unto the difference of the Other. When these two states or conditions of existence, peace (community) and violence (war), are placed in direct opposition to each other, the ethical choice is clearly delineated by the power of a humanistic appeal, which is made to a *universal* and hence *moral will* denying the propriety of any transgression of subjectivity at all costs, even if this means suppressing human rights and freedoms for "the greater good." Community, then, is a matter of instilling and practicing a homogeneous concept of culture, a *general* culture whose model of a collective intersubjectivity acts as a unified resistance to the threat of alterity. The promoting of common points of recognition and identification within the ideologico-philosophical consciousness of its constituents in order to defy or suppress the propensity for violence against the threat of difference – or at the very least to quell the performativity of the desire to do so – establishes the psychic and figural ground for the foundations of friendship and belonging. Playing by the determinative ethics of these rules of consensus in the name of community and commonality, and also of communication, reduces the Other to the Same and minimizes the potential of a subjective resistance to the inclusion of contrariety within the sphere of a closed system of shared associations. This illusion of unity masks the radical violence of alterity and softens the risk of its provisional acceptance by replacing the shock of its reality with the comforting image of a single, harmonious group, a majority without difference. *They is Us*. The correlation of subjectivity relieves the discord of diversity because one has to inhere and adhere to the fundamental agreements of a consensual state of abstract universalism to be part of the general yet specific culture of a community. *I am We*. An ethical and philosophical contrition of sorts must be achieved in this case by the subject to ensure the manifestation of a "responsible response" that is itself a coming to peace of the Self with the avowable laws of a community and its effacing of difference. If we consider the Eurocentrism of the reasoning put forward for pursuing a universal alliance of humanity from the cosmopolitical view, and its prefiguring of new models of global gathering and world institutions like the United Nations and UNESCO, we cannot avoid addressing the ethico-philosophical focus of such an idea aimed at rearticulating the notion of an academic community, citizenship, and the right to knowledge as unconditional possibilities of self-expression both within and without the university after recognizing the multiplicity of difference throughout the disciplines constituting the Humanities today.

## Cross-References

▶ Angry Noise: Recomposing Music Pedagogies in Indisciplinary Modes
▶ Cultural Studies and Education

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# Between Cultural Literacy and Cultural Relevance

**5**

## A Culturally Pragmatic Approach to Reducing the Black-White Achievement Gap

Mohamed Dahir

## Contents

### Abstract

This chapter introduces a culturally pragmatic approach to reducing the Black-White achievement gap, which marries Hirsch Jr.'s cultural literacy with Ladson-Billings' culturally relevant pedagogy. This approach offers African American students the taken-for-granted knowledge required to succeed

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academically and navigate mainstream society while simultaneously utilizing and validating African American culture in the classroom. In addition, it seeks to encourage students to view the world with a critical consciousness, which questions and challenges the sociopolitical order. The chapter starts by examining the strengths and weaknesses of Hirsch's approach through a comparative analysis with the ideas of Bourdieu and Freire. Next, the need for a pragmatic approach to the education of African American students, that is free of dogmatic and political constraints, is discussed. The chapter then turns its attention to examining how the culturally pragmatic model, by combining cultural literacy with culturally relevant pedagogy, is able to create synergy between the two approaches and also have each make up for the educational blind spots of the other. The chapter ends by exploring an alternative explanation for the motivating factors that engender oppositional culture among Black American students. Rather than an adaptation to pessimism about African Americans' prospects on the job market, oppositional culture is presented as a strategy to protect the self-concept in response to an uneven educational playing field, for which culturally pragmatic education is presented as a possible remedy.

## Introduction

One of the most pressing and enduring problems of public education in America is the Black-White student achievement gap. This racial disparity in academic outcomes has been the center of educational policy debates and has spurred a large body of research and numerous reform initiatives ever since it was brought to the fore in 1966 by James Coleman and his colleagues in their seminal study *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, commonly referred to as the "Coleman Report." Its main finding, that family background played a larger role in school achievement than differences in common measures of school quality, was interpreted by many to mean that schools matter little in the pursuit of academic parity between Black and White students. Though the Coleman Report did not deny the existence of school effects, it was used to absolve the school system from any responsibility for racial gaps in outcomes and to give legs to the various deficit theories popular at the time, which posited that Black underachievement could be explained by the culturally impoverished and linguistically deficient environments within African American homes and communities (Hess and Shipman 1965; Bereiter and Engleman 1966; Deutsch 1963).

Of course, deficit thinking has not gone unchallenged by educational theorists and researchers. Proponents of various culturally responsive pedagogies are among the progressive voices which strongly reject the pernicious narrative that blames Black

Americans themselves for their academic woes; instead they attribute the achievement gap to the differences and discontinuities between minority cultures and the mainstream culture of the school (Cazden and Leggett 1981; Ladson-Billings 1995; Jordan 1985; Mohatt and Erickson 1981). Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) has developed an approach she calls *culturally relevant pedagogy*, which goes beyond making sure teaching is culturally responsive by also introducing into the classroom a critical perspective on societal power relations and dominant knowledge claims.

E. D. Hirsch Jr. (1987, 1999, 2016) advocates for an approach, quite different from culturally relevant pedagogy, that calls for American public schools to focus on developing the *cultural literacy* of students. According to Hirsch (1987), someone is culturally literate if they "possess the basic information needed to thrive in the modern world" (p. xiii). He would agree with supporters of culturally relevant teaching that public schools should be interrogated as sites that fail to provide equality of educational opportunity but would disagree on the underlying reason for this failure. For Hirsch, the Black-White achievement gap continues to be a feature of American public education not because pedagogy and curriculums aren't culturally responsive, but because the progressive ideas that prevail in schools across the country do not prioritize disseminating cultural literacy.

This chapter examines how Hirsch's philosophy can be combined with Ladson-Billings' culturally relevant approach to form a cohesive and culturally pragmatic model that can reduce the long-standing Black-White achievement gap. The first part of the chapter puts Hirsch's conservative educational ideas into conversation with the critical and progressive perspectives of the prominent theorists Pierre Bourdieu and Paulo Freire: both of whom Hirsch refers to in his book *The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them* (1999). The aim of this comparative analysis is to tease out both the strengths and shortcomings of the cultural literacy approach to education. The chapter then presents the various components of the culturally pragmatic model and how they fit together to create a synergistic and balanced education. The chapter ends by suggesting an alternative explanation for the factors motivating oppositional culture among African American students and presents culturally pragmatic education as a possible solution.

## Hirsch, Bourdieu, and Freire

### Cultural Literacy Meets Cultural Capital

According to Hirsch (1999), "The French scholar Pierre Bourdieu has shown that those who possess a larger share of 'cultural capital' tend to acquire much more wealth and status, and to gain more abilities, than those who start out with very little of this precious resource" (p. 19). In his book *The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them*, Hirsch presents Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital as being analogous to his notion of cultural literacy. Their converging views on the matter accurately describe how those who possess the knowledge, frames of reference, linguistic patterns, and behaviors valued within the dominant culture access and

retain social and economic benefits that are out of reach to those who are not cultural "insiders."

Both Bourdieu and Hirsch consider public schools to be institutions that reproduce achievement gaps and social inequality by rewarding for cultural capital, with Bourdieu setting his ire on the education systems of industrialized societies in general and Hirsch focusing specifically on public education in the United States. This take on public education is hard to dismiss, since schools do function in a manner that assumes minority and working-class students possess the cultural capital required to succeed, even though such cultural capital is distributed unevenly along racial and class lines and is acquired primarily from the home. Bourdieu (1977) describes this reality saying:

> By doing away with giving explicitly to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone, the education system demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give. This consists mainly of linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture. (p. 494)

This damning critique of public education is very similar to Hirsch's (1999) view that "it is a fundamental injustice that what American children are enabled to learn in school should be determined by what their homes have already given them" (p. 47). Bourdieu and Hirsch's concepts of cultural capital and cultural literacy provide useful analytic lenses that situate the Black-White achievement gap within a system of institutional inequality, characterized by an education system that does not initiate African American students into the mainstream culture and yet penalizes them for not possessing what other students receive from home.

## Hirsch and Bourdieu on School Effects

Hirsch and Bourdieu differ on whether public education can be used to reduce the social inequality that it plays an integral role in maintaining. For Bourdieu (1977), inequality is an inherent feature of schooling in modern industrialized nations, intended to maintain and reproduce the existing power relations within society. In his view, merely changing the curriculum in order to explicitly disseminate cultural capital to disadvantaged students is not a viable option for two reasons. Firstly, much of the cultural capital and the ingrained attitudes, unconscious habits, and dispositions, which he calls the "habitus," that are rewarded by the school system "can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture" (Bourdieu 1977, p. 494). Secondly, Bourdieu (1996) believes such attempts will only serve to cement and legitimize the dominant culture and its hierarchy of values, which are the instruments used to create and maintain social inequality in the first place. Even if public schools succeeded in giving some students the cultural tools to join the middle and upper classes, he predicts many would come to deny their working-class origins, thus leaving class distinctions and their reproduction through the school system intact (Bourdieu 1996).

Bourdieu's belief in the inherent nature of schools to cement and re-create the social status quo is a restrictive one that shackles the potentiality and transformative power that can be found in the educational process. Hirsch reacts against this sort of social determinism that discounts the possibility of change short of a transformation in the way society is fundamentally structured. He not only has hope that schools can increase equality of educational opportunity but believes doing so is a matter of civil rights (Hirsch 1999). Though schools are setting up disadvantaged students for failure, he doesn't see this to be an inherent feature of public education. Instead, Hirsch (1987, 1999, 2016) contends that the problem stems from the good-intentioned but misguided adoption of child-centered and process-oriented progressive pedagogies. He concedes that no public school system can completely level the playing field for disadvantaged students, since "schools alone are not the sole agents of education" (1999, p. 91). But Hirsch is confident that schools, if they make cultural literacy a central focus, can greatly reduce the achievement gap and socio-economic inequality. For this reason, any sort of school reform, especially those intended to narrow the Black-White achievement gap, is better served by Hirsch's hopeful philosophy on public education than the pessimism of Bourdieu.

## Hirsch and Bourdieu on the Dominant Culture

Another major point of divergence between Hirsch and Bourdieu is their opinions on the nature of the dominant culture and how it affects those who don't belong to it. Hirsch takes a largely positive view of the process of standardization that languages and cultures have undergone in modern nation states. For him, the dominant culture, which he refers to as the "national culture," facilitates communication between citizens, improves economic efficiency, promotes public discourse and democratic ideals, and allows social mobility for disadvantaged individuals who manage to develop cultural literacy (Hirsch 1987). Hirsch's analysis seems overly focused on the grand benefits of the "national culture," and less interested in exploring the notion that the culture governing the public sphere is not a neutral and benign entity but is instead one predicated on the structure of values and power relations most beneficial to those who already hold power within the social hierarchy.

Bourdieu has a much more critical view of the dominant culture: one that is highly attuned to its impact on the working-class. He sees dominant culture as "the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power" (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, p. 5) that allows those in power to continue to reap social and economic rewards, because they're judged positively against the arbitrary hegemonic cultural criteria they have imposed: an arbitrary imposition that relegates others to the margins of society. According to Bourdieu this reality is a form of "symbolic violence" through which those in power maintain their positions by making inequality a defining feature of society "without resorting to external repression or, in particular, physical coercion" (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, p. 36).

Interestingly, Hirsch also subscribes to the view that the dominant culture is largely arbitrary. He says "the most striking characteristic of language standardizing

is its initial arbitrariness, which is similar to that of setting up of almost any common standard" (Hirsch 1987, p. 79) and "it is cultural chauvinism and provincialism to believe that the content of our vocabulary is something to either recommend or deplore by virtue of its inherent merit" (Hirsch 1987, p. 107). For Bourdieu, the dominance of the cultural arbitrary is oppressive, while for Hirsch, its utility in facilitating communication, standardizing language and writing, and "unifying" disparate peoples is a self-evident reality. A compelling argument can be made that both the history and present realities of marginalized groups are more characterized by the oppressive nature of the dominant culture than by its utility, making Bourdieu's analysis better suited to exploring the sociocultural foundations of this oppression than the sanitized take offered by Hirsch.

## Hirsch and Freire on the Social Order

Apart from a shared belief that what happens in classrooms matters for what happens in society, the ideas of Hirsch and Freire overlap very little. A glaring point of contention in their philosophies revolves around what should be done about social injustice. For Hirsch, the racial and class inequalities in American society aren't problematic enough to warrant fundamentally rearranging the current power structure. He doesn't seek to reshape the largely Eurocentric nature of the "national culture" in a substantial way to make room for the meaning-making and value structure of minority cultures, nor do his writings suggest that he believes labor and the poor are best served by upending the very foundations of market capitalism and the neoliberal order. For Hirsch, it's not American society that has to undergo change to further the cause of equality, it's public education. He writes "Since inferior education is today the primary cause of social and economic injustice, the struggle for equality of educational opportunity is in effect the new civil rights frontier" (Hirsch 1999, p. 43). This view, which takes equality of educational opportunity as the primary unit of analysis on issues of social justice, glosses over the complicated role of race and racism and macroeconomic forces in determining the life chances of millions of disadvantaged Americans in the opportunity structure of the United states. Hirsch, as a result of this blinkered view, fails to investigate the underlying social tensions brewing beneath the surface of American Liberal Democracy and falls short of exploring how the dominant culture, along with the knowledge it privileges through its institutionalized criteria, operates to demarcate power and control.

Paulo Freire, in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000/1970), outlines a critical pedagogy of liberation that aims to transform unjust social orders built on the subjugation and oppression of the powerless. This pedagogy seeks to initiate a process of "conscientization" or a critical consciousness among the oppressed, allowing them to perceive clearly the nature of the oppression in which they live and those responsible for it. Speaking of his work among peasants in Brazil, Freire (2000/1970) says, "I must intervene in teaching the peasants that their hunger is socially constructed and work with them to help identify those responsible for this

social construction, which is, in my view, a crime against humanity" (p. 55). His philosophy seeks to extricate the oppressed from their submersion in and identification with the reality of the oppressor by questioning and critically dissecting the privileged knowledge, narratives, and myths that form the pillars upon which the oppression is built. Freire's critical perspective is indispensable to those interested in the education of African Americans in inner-city schools, as it opens up possibilities for deeper insight into how inequality operates than is possible through the neutral and unquestioning approach of Hirsch.

## Cultural Literacy Versus Cultural Invasion

Freire (2000/1970) describes a process he calls "cultural invasion", which refers to how those in power erase the cultural identity of the oppressed by stripping them of their own frames of reference and replacing these with a worldview they've shaped for the purposes of retaining control. Schools are often one of the main centers of cultural invasion, as they function to mold and condition the oppressed with the approved narratives and myths that keep both the oppressed and the oppressors in their respective places within the social structure. According to Freire even educational initiatives that intend to help the oppressed can be regarded as perpetuating cultural invasion. He writes:

> One cannot expect positive results from an educational or political action program which fails to respect the particular view of the world held by the people. Such a program constitutes cultural invasion, good intentions notwithstanding. (Freire 2000/1970, p. 95)

Hirsch's call for schools to teach disadvantaged students the enabling knowledge to successfully navigate mainstream culture runs the risk of devolving into good-intentioned cultural invasion, because it does little to include the worldviews of minority students. His approach has been criticized for being a "culturally imperialist" one that seeks to assimilate minority children into the dominant culture at the expense of their own (Bell-Robinson 2016; Provenzo Jr. 2005).

According to Hirsch (1987, 2016), his proposed reforms cannot be considered culturally imperialist given that no single group can lay claim to the "national" language or culture, since they transcend any regional dialect or social class. This is why, he claims, Cinco de Mayo has become as American as St. Patrick's Day and the Fourth of July (Hirsch 2016). His premise that the dominant culture is a neutral construct that belongs equally to everyone is flawed, demonstrated by the largely Eurocentric origin and middle-class to feel much of the content in his list of items found in his book *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (1987). In order for minority students to enjoy literacy in the dominant culture without becoming "alienated from the spirit of their own culture and from themselves" (Freire 2000/1970, p. 153), Hirsch's approach can and should be implemented alongside a pedagogy that includes and validates their unique cultural identities and conceptions of reality.

## Cultural Literacy as a "Banking-Model" of Education

Freire (2000/1997) sharply criticizes what he refers to as the "banking-model" of education, in which the teacher is an authority figure tasked to deposit content into the minds of ignorant and passive students that are little more than "patient, listening objects" (p. 71). The transmitted content is deliberately disconnected from reality so as not to upset the status quo. Instead students are "filled" with narratives that keep them immersed in the logic governing the warped social reality constructed by their oppressors. He writes:

> It is not surprising that the banking concept of education regards men as adaptable, manageable beings. The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them. (Freire 2000/1970, p. 73)

According to Freire (2000/1970), students educated in a banking-model system lose their creative powers and transformative agency, essentially becoming automatons following a script designed to keep them in that unconscious state. As an alternative, he calls for a dialogical method that collapses the categories of teacher and student into each other, so that both the teacher and student are co-responsible for teaching and learning. In this process, teacher and student use critical and inquiry-based dialogue to question and challenge official narratives and to create and re-create knowledge that can be used in the struggle for liberation.

Though the merits of the critical dialogical approach for the pursuit of social justice are obvious, by completely denouncing the traditional transmission method of education, Freire may be throwing out the baby with the bathwater. Hirsch has it right when he claims that transmitting the traditional knowledge of the dominant culture through the curriculum gives disadvantaged students increased chances for upward social mobility and even a foundation that can facilitate efforts to agitate for social change. As an example of the latter, Hirsch presents some of the official writings of the Black Panther Party in his book *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*. The writings clearly exhibit markings of a traditional education in their style, content, and use of cultural allusions, making references to "bourgeois democracy", America as the "land of milk and honey", and the concept of the "police state". Of course, this aided the group in reaching wider audiences within the public sphere of discourse. But here, Hirsch shouldn't lose sight of the fact that the critical and revolutionary perspective of the Black Panthers did not come from their education in American public schools, but from exposure to speeches and writings of Black leaders who came before them and also their own personal insights into injustice produced through their lived experiences. Hirsch's approach, without a dialogical method intent on generating a critical consciousness within students, can degenerate into the "banking-model" which Freire rightfully disparages. But Freire's

critical pedagogy, though undoubtedly liberating, may sell students short of a much-needed knowledge base when it dismisses the transmission of content as nothing more than oppressive conditioning.

## Culturally Pragmatic Education
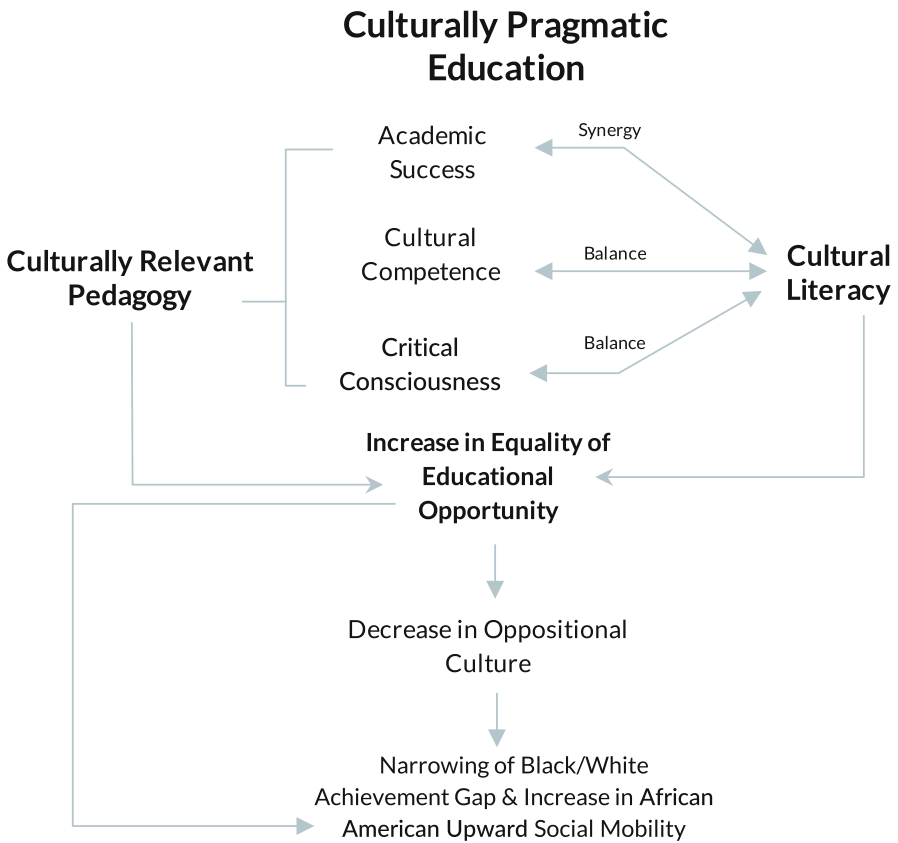


## The Need for Pragmatism

If one were to ask an educational progressive whether they think it's a good idea for a young African American from the inner city to do a job interview dressed in urban street fashion while interspersing their speech with African American Vernacular English, what sort of answer could be expected? Mostly likely they would deem such attire and manner of speech to be ill-suited for the given occasion, because they intuitively understand that evaluations and judgements shaped by the dominant

culture hold sway within the job market and broader society. Yet, if you were to ask the same individual if disseminating cultural literacy to African American students in urban schools is a good idea, they would most likely consider such a notion to be unwise and justify this position by relaying some of the same criticisms of Hirsch's philosophy covered earlier in this chapter. This apparent friction between preserving students' cultural identities and giving them the cultural tools to succeed in mainstream society presents a conundrum.

Culturally pragmatic education seeks to resolve this conundrum by bringing culturally relevant pedagogy and cultural literacy into one cohesive model. This is a pragmatic approach that eschews dogmatism and the strict adherence to either camp in the progressive-conservative divide within educational circles, giving it the flexibility to reconcile ideas and methods that on the surface seem to be at odds with each other. Hirsch also considers his approach to be pragmatic, saying, "I would label myself a political liberal and an educational conservative, or perhaps more accurately, an educational pragmatist" (1999, p. 6). Very simply, pragmatism entails doing what works and produces the desired results. But it's difficult to see how, on its own, Hirsch's vision for educating minority students can lead to desired results when it does little to include and engage with their cultural identities and also fails to include a much-needed critical perspective. Where Hirsch does include the histories and experiences of minorities in his conception of cultural literacy, it's often only a cursory treatment that does little justice to the topic. Provenzo Jr. illustrates this fact in his book *Critical Literacy: What Every American Ought to Know* (2005) by showing the entry under "slave trade" in Hirsch, Kett, and Trefill's *The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* (1993). The entry reads as follows:

> **Slave trade** The transportation of slaves from Africa to North and South America between the seventeenth and nineteenth century. Congress banned the importing of slaves into the United States in 1808. (Hirsch et al. 1993, p. 264)

The most defining collective historical experience of African Americans, that has shaped their very identity as both Africans and Americans and as an oppressed minority group in the United States, is barely afforded three lines. The unique utility of culturally pragmatic education lies in making up for such blind spots in Hirsch's perspective without compromising his overall approach. This is accomplished by imparting literacy in the mainstream culture to minority students while also exposing them to content and pedagogy that is culturally relevant and critically oriented.

## Ladson-Billings' Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

The culturally pragmatic model makes use of an approach to culturally relevant pedagogy developed by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995). Her approach has three focal points: academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. The goal of academic success requires teachers to set high academic standards and positively reinforce these expectations with the aim of getting students to "choose" academic

excellence. This is crucial, because low teacher expectations for Black students have been shown to be detrimental to their academic development (Rist 1970; McKown and Weinstein 2008). A culturally relevant approach allows teachers to view the identity of their African American students as an asset in the pursuit of academic success instead of as a deficit or limitation. Naturally, operating from such a perspective raises standards and contributes to academic achievement.

Cultural competence, the second focal point, requires that teachers bring the home culture of students into the classroom, so students can maintain positive identities. Also, it allows for the intelligent use of the home culture as a tool in the learning process, such as using African American Vernacular English as a scaffold to learn Standard American English. Ladson-Billings (1995) gives the example of a sixth-grade teacher named Ann Lewis whom she describes as "culturally Black":

> In her sixth-grade classroom, Lewis encourages the students to use their home language while they acquired the secondary discourse (Gee, 1989) of "standard" English. Thus, her student were permitted to express themselves in language (in speaking and writing) with which they were knowledgeable and comfortable. They were then required to "translate" to the standard form. (p. 161)

Such methods of utilizing and validating the home culture in the classroom is crucial in the education of African American students, as it can help to eliminate negative psychosocial and academic consequences that may arise from feeling pressured to assimilate into the mainstream schooling culture.

Ladson-Billings' third focal point is the Freirean concept of critical consciousness, which entails encouraging students to develop a critical skepticism that questions the value-laden truth claims, privileged narratives, and myths that underpin the social structure. It's expected that students develop a broad sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to re-evaluate and "critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities" (Ladson-Billings 1995, p. 162). Teachers are encouraged to present students with and encourage them to discover, through dialogue and inquiry, the multiplicity of perspectives contained in counter knowledge that challenge hegemonic perspectives and accounts of reality. Heightening the critical awareness of students to how power and privilege is stratified along racial and class lines within society can provide them with the conceptual tools to speak about equity issues and also the impetus to struggle for social justice.

## What Should Be the Focus of Cultural Literacy?

African Americans children often do not begin formal schooling having a good grasp on the culturally determined knowledge base and language patterns required for academic success. Compared to White students, they start school scoring about half of a standard deviation lower on tests of reading and math ability (Fryer and Levitt 2004b; Burchinal et al. 2011). The problem is compounded by the fact that the

Black-White achievement gap grows wider as children progress through school (Fryer and Levitt 2004a). According to Hirsch Jr. (1999), this phenomenon can be explained by a "Matthew effect" within education, where students who have the requisite knowledge and vocabulary will gain even more, while students who lack these tools to begin with will struggle to ever gain them to a sufficient level.

This unequal playing field in public education has not got unnoticed by African Americans and other minority communities similarly affected by it. In Martin, Wignell, Eggins and Rothery's (1988) critique of progressivist pedagogy, we find the following quote from a Native American elder concerning the education of Native American children:

> We want them to learn. Not the kind of English you teach them in class but your secret English. We don't understand that English but you do. To us you seem to say one thing and do another. That's the English we want our children to learn. (1988, p. 145)

The elder's characterization of this version of English as "secret" is a perceptive realization that when it comes to cultural capital "the social conditions of its transmission and acquisition are more disguised than those of economic capital" (Bourdieu 1986, p. 245). This reality allows schools to mask their role in the maintenance and reproduction of inequality with a veneer of meritocracy. Culturally pragmatic education seeks to remove this mask, not only to expose the uneven playing field that lies behind it, but to also offer a solution that can make the competition for educational credentials closer to the meritocratic ideal.

An important part of this solution lies in paying heed to Hirsch's (1987, 1999, 2016) call for schools to spend less time on naturalistic techniques and formal skills, such as "hands-on learning" and "finding the main idea," and to focus more on student acquisition of "core knowledge." This is critical, given that student ability to acquire new vocabulary and increasingly standard forms of speech and writing, while improving their reading comprehension, all rely on a foundation of relevant background knowledge (Hirsch 1987, 1999, 2016). The culturally pragmatic approach recognizes that the Black-White achievement gap is in large part a knowledge gap and that urban schools have a responsibility to give African American students the culturally defined knowledge and language skills other students receive from home.

It's important to note that the importance of cultural literacy goes beyond reducing the achievement gap, as it also imparts to African American students the competence to successfully navigate mainstream institutions, thereby increasing their chances for upward social mobility. This kind of facilitatory knowledge is unevenly distributed to the detriment of many Black Americans. For instance, African Americans rank the lowest among all college student groups on assessments of general financial knowledge, testing on topics such as insurance, credit and investing (Chen and Volpe 1998). Also, African American students report that they receive unequal information regarding college admissions (Hubbard 2005). In addition, poor and working-class Africans Americans tend to lack the micro-interactional skills, such as knowing when to display assertiveness, that lead to favorable

outcomes during institutional encounters (Lareau and Weininger 2003). To change this bleak reality, African American students require the cultural literacy that makes them privy to the "rules of the game" and gives them the enabling knowledge and strategic skills which, when deployed in financial, labor market, justice system, and educational institutions, yield advantages and benefits on account of meeting the evaluative standards of the dominant culture.

## Synergy and Balance

A notable feature of culturally pragmatic education is how well its various components interact to produce synergistic effects and a cohesive balance that can lead to major improvements in the education of African Americans. For instance, the focus on academic success in Ladson-Billings' approach is greatly facilitated by the teaching of cultural literacy. Given that school reading materials and standardized tests are written in Standard American English and assume students possess culturally determined taken-for-granted knowledge, African American students will be in a much better position to succeed academically when the curriculum in urban schools is designed to explicitly disseminate cultural literacy. In turn, the focus on academic success and higher teacher expectations will facilitate the uptake of cultural literacy by students in inner-city schools, since the academic self-image and effort of African American students improve when their teachers expect them to succeed (Rist 1970; McKown and Weinstein 2008). This synergy between the focus on academic success and the teaching of cultural literacy can contribute greatly to equality of educational opportunity.

Also, the acculturation process initiated by the teaching of cultural literacy, which can be argued is assimilationist, is balanced by Ladson-Billings' focus on cultural competence, which ensures that African American students maintain the integrity of their cultural identities. Students will become adept at using Standard American English and acquire the knowledge to join the mainstream while also being exposed to and taught the cultural symbols, historical figures, art, and folktales that represent the African American cultural heritage. This balancing act, made possible by a culturally pragmatic approach, effectively removes the cultural monopoly enjoyed by the dominant power structure within inner-city schools and allows African American students to retain their identities and gives them the tools to seamlessly transition or "codeswitch" between the two cultures as the situational context demands.

The culturally pragmatic model is also able to achieve a balance between critical consciousness and cultural literacy. A focus on critical consciousness alone could engender a sense of powerlessness in African American students, who may feel like their personal situation cannot be altered unless structural change first takes place at the societal level. On other hand, a focus on cultural literacy alone poses the risk of giving students a perspective that is too individualistic, which may lose sight of the issues facing African Americans and other disadvantaged groups. This disconnect with one's own cultural identity and community of origin can be especially likely

when cultural literacy facilitates social mobility and a move up in the class hierarchy of American society. Combining cultural literacy with critical consciousness creates a balance that ensures African American students maintain a critical perspective on social issues, especially those affecting historically marginalized communities, while at the same time giving them the confidence and expansion in personal agency that comes from having the cultural tools to excel academically and successfully navigate the public sphere and its various institutions.

## Oppositional Culture Revisited

### The Opportunity Structure Explanation

John Ogbu's (1978, 1998) theory of oppositional culture (also referred to as the cultural-ecological theory) posits that the Black-White achievement gap can be attributed to African Americans adapting to their membership in an oppressed minority group by taking on an oppositional cultural identity at odds with the values and behaviours associated with the dominant White culture. Black students, as a subset of this group, respond to discrimination in American society, especially in its opportunity structure, by devaluing education and associating pro-school behaviours with "acting White" (Fordham and Ogbu 1986). Though Ogbu (2003) does not discount the importance of systemic changes that address inequalities at the school and societal level, he does not believe meaningful progress can be made unless the Black community itself makes a cultural shift in the direction of taking up and promoting attitudes and behaviours conducive to academic success. This view has proven to be controversial in education circles, as many have interpreted it to be unfairly implicating Black culture in the persistence of the Black-White acheivement gap.

Studies designed to test Ogbu's theory have found that Black students, despite their oppositional behaviours, express more pro-school attitudes than do White students (Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey 1998), and are also more confident about the returns on education and future occupational opportunity than their White peers (Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey 1998; Harris 2006). In addition, the belief among some Black students that behaviours conducive to getting good grades are tantamount to "acting White", does not seem to significantly impact the relationship successful Black students have with their Black peers (Horvat and Lewis 2003), nor does it prevent them from striving for academic success (Tyson et al. 2005). If Black students see the value in education, are not pessimistic about the opportunity structure and are not held back by the burden of "acting White", what explains oppositional cultural behaviour?

### Academic Skills and Student Self-Concept

A plausible explanation is that African American students adopt oppositional behaviors to prevent possible injury to their self-concepts, stemming from their higher risk

for academic failure as a result of lacking the required academic skills. In other words, taking on an oppositional Black student identity that considers putting effort into one's studies as "acting White" is better for one's self-esteem than displaying pro-school behaviors, only to still end up failing due to the uneven playing field in public schools. In their study looking at the relationship between prior skills and oppositional behavior of African Americans in high school, Harris and Robinson (2007) concluded that:

> Students' behaviors during high school are endogenous to the academic skills that students acquire prior to high school. This finding suggests that the skills students acquire before they enter high school are an important factor in determining whether students develop oppositional behaviors during high school. (p. 150)

When you take the link between academic skills and oppositional culture and connect it with the fact that "black adolescents, like other students, need to feel competent, and that they work to preserve a positive self-concept" (Tyson et al. 2005, p. 599), it makes sense to conceive of oppositional culture as a psychologically adaptive strategy that devalues education in order to strip it of its powers to affect one's self-image and to confer individual status within the Black student collective. Instead of locating the motivating factors for oppositional cultural identity in structural realties outside of the school, this alternative interpretation holds schools accountable for creating the conditions, through their failure to impart the necessary skills for school success, that make adopting such oppositional behaviors rational.

In his book *Minority Education and Caste: The American System in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (1978), Ogbu asks, "[Is] it logical to expect that blacks and whites would exert the same energy and perform alike in school when the caste system, through the job ceiling, consistently underutilize black training and ability and underrewards blacks for their education?" (p. 195). Instead, it may be more pertinent to ask: Is it logical to expect that Blacks and Whites would exert the same energy and perform alike in school when public education does not disseminate to Black students the tools required to succeed academically and achieve upward social mobility?

## A Remedy

Culturally pragmatic education can contribute greatly to equality of educational opportunity for African American students in inner-city schools, thereby significantly reducing the underlying conditions than can engender oppositional cultural identity. Utilizing the home culture of African American students through culturally relevant pedagogy can sever the perceived link between being academically engaged and "acting White." In addition, the explicit teaching of cultural literacy can give African American students the confidence to put effort into their studies without the fear of underachievement, alleviating the need to adopt an oppositional cultural identity as a means of protecting the self-concept. Of course, many Black American

students do not engage in oppositional behaviors despite the uneven playing field they encounter in public schools. This fact is illustrated in the culturally pragmatic education flowchart on page 9, which shows an alternate route, independent of a reduction in oppositional behavior, that leads to a narrowing of the Black-White achievement gap and increased upward social mobility. But to the extent that oppositional culture does exist among African American students, it's safe to assume that with less academic threats to the self-concept, thanks to a culturally pragmatic approach, the less appealing oppositional culture becomes as a psychologically protective strategy.

## Conclusion

It's been over 50 years since the Coleman Report catapulted the problem of the Black-White achievement gap into a national debate about the state of equality of educational opportunity in the United States. With the gap remaining and showing no sign of disappearing anytime in the near future, this debate continues to rage on with similar intensity. E.D. Hirsch Jr., one of the most prominent voices on the issue, has articulated a vision centered on his concept of cultural literacy as a response to the achievement gap. But his approach to education has been sharply criticized for, among other things, erasing the cultures of minority students, utilizing an analytic lens that discounts race and racism, and promoting an uncritical view of the power relations and truth claims of the dominant culture. Though much of this critique does a good job of exposing the shortcomings in Hirsch's educational philosophy, it falls short of making a convincing case to leave cultural literacy out of a well-designed educational program for African American students and other disadvantaged students.

The reality is, the information taken for granted in the public sphere, along with proficiency in standard speech and writing and an insider understanding of the "rules of the game," are all indispensable for academic achievement and climbing up the social ladder. In acknowledgment of both this reality and the flaws inherent in Hirsch's philosophy, the culturally pragmatic model combines cultural literacy and Ladson-Billings' culturally relevant pedagogy into a single approach. This ensures that African American students, in addition to attaining the knowledge and skills to thrive in mainstream society, have their home cultures validated and utilized to support learning in the classroom, while also being armed with a critical consciousness.

Of course, culturally pragmatic education is not a panacea for all the issues facing African Americans in the United States. Racial discrimination continues to pose real and significant problems for Black Americans, including being subjected to profiling and other abuses by law enforcement (Brunson 2007), disproportionate incarceration rates (Haney-Lopez 2010), and difficulty securing housing in predominantly non-Black residential areas (Downey 2008). Despite these issues, it's also true that educational credentials are more linked to social mobility in today's America than in previous generations (Downey 2008), which is why failure to narrow the

Black-White achievement gap is having real and sustained social and economic consequences for the Black community.

This reality of expanded room for vertical movement within the opportunity structure in the United States matches the professed attitudes of African American students who are asked about their perceptions of occupational opportunity and the value of education (Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey 1998; Harris 2006).This makes it more likely that oppositional culture is not the result of student pessimism about the job market but rather a defense mechanism to preserve one's self-esteem when faced with a high chance of failure in the uneven playing field of public education. This interpretation opens up the possibility for schools to address oppositional culture by validating African American culture and giving students the core knowledge and academic skills to thrive academically.

Though this chapter focused specifically on the Black-White achievement gap, the culturally pragmatic model can be used in the education of Hispanics, Native Americans, and other minority groups in the United States or around the world. Regardless of who it's used for and where it's implemented, the goal of culturally pragmatic education is to increase equality of educational opportunity for cultural minority students falling through the cracks of public systems of education.

## Cross-References

▶ Beyond Domination: Enrique Dussel, Decoloniality, and Education
▶ Closing the Achievement Gap via Reducing the Opportunity Gap: YAAACE's Social Inclusion Framework Within the Jane and Finch Community
▶ Explorations of Post-Identity in Relation to Resistance: Why Difference Is Not Diversity
▶ Identity Construction Amidst the Forces of Domination
▶ Politics of Identity and Difference in Cultural Studies: Decolonizing Strategies

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# Politics of Identity and Difference in Cultural Studies

## Decolonizing Strategies

**6**

Ruthann Lee

## Contents

### Abstract

How do modern Western concepts of identity, subjectivity, and difference enable and constrain how Cultural Studies scholars engage in the work of social justice and political transformation? Despite a sophisticated understanding and theoretical establishment of identities as intersectional, students and faculty continue to make strategically essentialist claims as they navigate the contradictory dynamics

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of power and privilege in the university. In this chapter, I examine some of the strategies and expectations of performing diversity that coincide with ongoing dilemmas of the "burden of representation" (Mercer, Welcome to the jungle: new positions in black cultural studies. Routledge, London, 1994). Cultural Studies' continued reliance on liberal humanist frameworks limits how it can imagine and enact practices of anti-capitalist decolonization. I use an example of local grass-roots organizing to protect water to suggest that by engaging with Indigenous feminist theories of relationality, Cultural Studies can more purpose-fully resist and challenge colonial and corporate powers within and beyond the institution.

## Introduction

*Annyeonghaseyo*. To begin, I will tell you a bit about my relations. Although I'm not fluent in the language, I have Korean ancestry. My family spoke to me in Korean when I was a child, but I lost my fluency in public school because I was encouraged to assimilate into white Anglo-Canadian culture as fast as possible. I am now tentatively trying to relearn my native tongue as a way to reclaim my ancestral history. I was born and raised on what I've learned to be the traditional lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit River, the Huron-Wendat First Nation, and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy or the city of Toronto, Ontario (Canadian Association of University Teachers 2017, p. 18). It is the shared territory where the historic Two Row Wampum Treaty was established between Dutch traders and Haudenosaunee peoples and later extended to relationships with French, British, and American settlers.

The Two Row Wampum belt depicts two boats on a river. According to Indigenous philosophers such as Dale Turner, the Two Row Wampum provides an important decolonizing framework that connects water, sovereignty, and law (2006, p. 49). The purple rows represent the paths that the boats make as they travel down the river. One boat is the European ship and the other is a Haudenosaunee canoe. The boats travel side by side but do not interfere with one another, which symbolizes respect for autonomy. The white background represents the river of life and a relationship based on peace, respect, and friendship. The fringe indicates that the relationship is unending.

Margaret Kovach clarifies that treaty is a concept that is often understood in terms of identity; however, "to consider treaties as solely a categorical demarcation of identity demonstrates a limited understanding of Indigenous culture and philosophy" (2013, p. 110). Put differently, a "treaty is not a 'thing.' It is a word that describes an active relational process that includes seeking continuous counsel and dialogue on matters that have bearing on the parties it involves" (Kovach 2013, p. 212). The

understanding of treaty as an enduring relationship of balance, respect, and mutual responsibility is key to my discussion in this chapter.

In recent years, through ongoing conversations and the teachings of my Indigenous mentors, I have been humbled to recognize that, even though I am subject to white racism as an Asian diasporic person, I benefit from my complicity in settler colonialism as a Canadian citizen *in relation* to Indigenous peoples and their lands. As Robinder Sehdev suggests, "[w]e belong here not because Canada opened its doors, but because Aboriginal nations permitted settler governance on their lands" (2011, p. 266). In other words, my belonging on this land is made possible by treaty. I join a growing number of non-Indigenous scholars and activists who understand that acknowledging land and place enables us to learn our roles and responsibilities and take direction from Indigenous peoples who often describe themselves as caretakers – and not owners – of the land (Lawrence and Dua 2005; Walia 2014). Rita Wong eloquently explains: "[f]rom an imposed settler perspective, land belongs to people. From an older Indigenous perspective, however, people belong to the land" (2012, p. 528). The recognition of land as something that is shared and not owned is one of the most remarkable and useful teachings I have learned since I started to engage with Indigenous perspectives. For this reason, I want to think deeply about the places I *come to* and how I arrived (Haig-Brown 2012). Acknowledging territory demonstrates respect and recognition for Indigenous peoples (Canadian Association of University Teachers 2017). Although Indigenous land acknowledgments can too often become tokenizing gestures, they can also help to establish reciprocal relations if they occur within a larger context of ongoing work to forge meaningful efforts and concrete practices to dismantle settler colonialism (Vowel 2016).

In this chapter, I share my thoughts on questions that I am grappling with as a tenure-track professor of Cultural Studies at the University of British Columbia's Okanagan campus (UBC-O) located in the City of Kelowna, which has a population of nearly 200,000 residents, approximately 13% who identify as "visible minorities." According to the 2016 Census Profile, the general population size of Kelowna is 194,882. The "visible minority" resident population totals 14,935 with the largest groups identified as South Asian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Black, Latin American, and Southeast Asian, respectively (Statistics Canada 2017). UBC-O is a smaller "sister" institution to UBC Vancouver (UBC-V) with about 9000 students, 575 faculty, and 650 staff ("Facts and Figures," 2017). The campus is located on the unceded lands of the Syilx Okanagan peoples. The Syilx peoples have lived in the Okanagan Valley for thousands of years. Their traditional territories extend from the south central interior of British Columbia to North Central Washington State ("About Us," 2017). In 2015, UBC renewed a memorandum of understanding with the Okanagan Nation that was first established in 2005. This agreement outlines UBC-O's mandate and obligation to engage respectfully with Syilx Okanagan peoples and Indigenous perspectives ("Memorandum," 2015). I am grateful to the many Syilx community organizations, leaders, and knowledge keepers such as the En'owkin Centre, Sncewips Heritage Museum, the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society, Dr. Jeannette Armstrong, Pauline Terbasket, Roxanne Lindley, Dr. William

Cohen, Wilfred and Pamela Barnes, Mariel Belanger, Jordan Coble, Chris Marshand, Eric Mitchell, and many others, who generously share their teachings on Indigenous governance and land stewardship in the Okanagan Valley where I've lived since 2012.

I begin by addressing some strategies and challenges of navigating the politics of identity and difference as a nontenured, self-identified queer, cisgender, able-bodied, woman of color, settler scholar teaching Cultural Studies in a mostly-white but rapidly shifting student demographic at a smaller university campus. I suggest that strategies of institutional resistance that rely on identity-based logics are not only limited by an intensified neoliberal climate but also through liberal humanist frameworks that invoke modern Western concepts of identity, subjectivity, agency, and freedom. Indigenous feminist theories of relationality trouble these concepts by illuminating how the human subject is constituted through settler colonial and heteropatriarchal assumptions that necessitate the expropriation of Indigenous land and disappearance of Indigenous subjects. I conclude by exploring how Indigenous feminist theories of relationality offer ways for Cultural Studies to (re)imagine and organize viable alternatives to settler colonial and corporate rule within and beyond the university.

## Individualism and Identity

Since I began my position at UBC-O, I've taught a first-year introductory course that examines the history of Cultural Studies as a discipline and its key theories and concepts. In a sense, my course outlines a Cultural Studies "canon" beginning with the so-called Founding Fathers of the Birmingham School, Marxist critiques of capitalism, and the modern Industrial Revolution, followed by cultural theories of identity, difference, power, oppression, and resistance. Although my first-year syllabus includes additional readings and texts that offer alternative views, it primarily follows the Cultural Studies history presented in the Canadian textbook co-authored by O'Brien and Szeman (2017), *Popular Culture: A User's Guide*, now in its fourth edition.

Like most Cultural Studies scholars, my approach to teaching is grounded in values of social justice. My pedagogical inspiration comes from hooks (1994) who, following Paulo Freire, suggests that education is the practice of freedom. During my former experience as a university student, I had the privilege of being mentored by radical women of color, queer, and trans-identified community activists who worked on the front lines through organized protest, direct action, consciousness-raising, and anti-oppression education. I often mention to my students that I learned far more during my involvement in grassroots activism than I ever did in a university classroom. Along with bell hooks, my activist mentors inspired me to think about how every classroom is a potential activist space.

Over the years, however, I have noticed that, despite acquiring the advanced language and conceptual tools to critically analyze relations of power, identity, and

difference, many Cultural Studies students appear apathetic or remain disillusioned by our current realities of global consumer capitalism. For instance, most of my first-year students are stumped at the beginning of term when I ask: "What are some alternatives to capitalism as an economic system?". Instead of discussing existing systems like barter, trade, and co-ops or coming up with new models, we often have a shallow debate about communist dictatorships and the perils of socialism. Our conversation is regulated by a seductively deterministic and neoliberal logic of individualism and the idea that "humans are selfish by nature," which is reinforced by the competitive expectations of academia more broadly.

In turn, I am led to consider more seriously how modern Western concepts of identity, subjectivity, and difference can enable but largely constrain how Cultural Studies scholars engage in the work of social justice and political transformation. For example, despite a sophisticated theoretical understanding of identities as intersectional, students and faculty continue to make strategically essentialist claims as we navigate the uneven and contradictory dynamics of power and privilege in the university, what bell hooks describes as "an active gesture of political resistance to name one's identity as part of a struggle to challenge domination" (1994, p. 78). More than 20 years ago, British Cultural Studies scholar Kobena Mercer (1994) wrote about the "burden of representation" faced by black artists with limited access to institutional resources in the art world following the racist conservative backlash of the Thatcher-Reagan-Mulroney era in the 1990s. He noted:

> When [we] are positioned on the margins of institutional spaces of cultural [and intellectual] production, [we] are burdened with the impossible task of speaking as "representatives," in that [we] are widely expected to "speak for" the marginalized communities from which [we] come. (Mercer 1994, p. 235)

It seems that little has changed. Feminist theorist Sara Ahmed (2012) more recently describes some obligatory strategies and tokenistic expectations of "performing diversity" associated with the ongoing burden of representation in university settings. Ahmed's *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* focuses on British and Australian universities. But the heightened neoliberal climate she describes resonates with UBC-O and Canadian universities more broadly – particularly after the release of the *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2015) and its 94 "Calls to Action," several of which implicate higher education. For instance, Sections 62 (ii) and 65 on "Education for reconciliation" specify calls "[to] provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms" and "upon the federal government, through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, post-secondary institutions and educators, and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation

and its partner institutions, to establish a national research program with multi-year funding to advance understanding of reconciliation" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015, p. 331).

A recent qualitative analysis of the social well-being and university experiences of 34 self-identified Indigenous, racialized, and/or LGBTQ+ students at UBC-O largely contradicts the stated commitments to diversity and global citizenship espoused by the university ("Place and Promise," 2012). For example, despite the university's purported emphasis on Aboriginal strategic engagement, the report indicates that "many [Indigenous] students felt disconnected from their Indigenous cultural traditions from which they drew strength or felt that their traditions were devalued from the university's individualistic and highly competitive environment" (Caxaj et al. 2018a, p. 6). Similar to Indigenous-identified students, students of color at UBC-O experienced isolation and resorted to self-organizing in order to address the lack of culturally relevant services and initiatives. However, these racialized students felt emotionally burdened by their involvement in campus organizing. They also expressed cynicism about existing diversity- and equity-related programs promoted by the university, which "did not engage with difference in a substantive or meaningful way... Despite the performance of inclusion, the university did not authentically welcome students of color but, rather, tokenized them" (Caxaj et al. 2018a, p. 9; see also Caxaj et al. 2018b).

Private sector interests and investments only intensify the auditing mechanisms of self-regulation and self-governance among university students, faculty, and staff. Ahmed suggests that "equality and diversity [have] become performance indicators" and states: "it is thus not surprising to note the increasing proximity between equality, diversity, and excellence. [. . .] Diversity thus becomes a technology of excellence" (2012, p. 108). The multifaceted study conducted by anti-racist scholars Frances Henry, Carl James, Peter S. Li, Audrey Kobayashi, Malinda Smith, Howard Ramos, and Enakshi Dua, *The Equity Myth: Racialization and Indigeneity at Canadian Universities*, concurs that the implementation and understanding of institutional diversity across Canadian universities have become completely evacuated from dismantling white supremacy. Their research concludes that prevailing ideologies of neoliberalism and austerity reinforce conventional structures of power such that "universities have come to prize certain kinds of efficiency, competitiveness, and production while at the same time seeing equity as something to be managed in order to avoid embarrassing litigation or reputational damage. Neoliberalism therefore has created a work culture antithetical to group-based policies or ones that do not translate into immediate payoff" (Henry et al. 2017, pp. 299–300). Cultural Studies is not immune to this frenzied neoliberal pursuit of recognition. Moreover, despite its interdisciplinary foundations, Cultural Studies' continued reliance on liberal humanist frameworks limits how it can imagine and enact practices of anti-capitalist decolonization.

## Indigenous Feminist Theories of Relationality Offer Strategies to Decolonize Cultural Studies

The modern liberal fantasy of human progress and development relies on binary logics of primitive vs. civilized subjects. In particular, the modern Western notion of a progressive and fully enlightened human subject depends on the oppositional construction of backwards and barbaric Others in need of saving. Crucial to this colonial logic is the idea that Indigenous traditions and epistemologies are primitive or extinct. In this way, modern Indigenous peoples cannot exist, or they are deemed paradoxically inauthentic. Chickasaw feminist scholar Jodi A. Byrd examines how the underlying settler colonial assumptions of Cultural Studies are revealed in "notions of liberalism, democracy, and humanism [that] have all too often depended on the eradication of indigeneity. . .most European traditions that assert such noble ideals as 'the good,' 'democracy,' and 'liberalism' have done so only through encounters with and control of Indigenous peoples, what Aileen Moreton-Robinson has identified and named as 'white possession'" (2009, p. 16). In a related way, Indigenous feminist thinkers Aimee Carrillo Rowe and Eve Tuck argue that "[c]ultural studies theorizations of race, space, and colonization have yet to adequately grapple with the politics of settlement on Indigenous land. Critical cultural studies projects are often grounded in assumptions that presume and erase settler colonial epistemologies so that even in our best attempts to challenge systems of exclusion and privilege unwittingly reify the normatively White Enlightenment subject and the settler colonial grounds on which it is formed" (2017, p. 7).

Indigenous thinker Zainab Amadahy offers an incisive critique of leftist political theory:

> Marxism, socialism and anarchy do not address relationality, that is, the inter-relatedness and inter-connectedness of life. . .Such theories still operate under the assumption that we two-leggeds are separate, differentiated individuals. As a species we are still considered to be superior to rather than inherently part of other life forms. . .Relationality is inadequately understood and still seen as an appendix to existing theory, rather than a legitimate and viable worldview in and of itself. (2011, para. 9)

Indigenous feminist theories of relationality trouble liberal humanist concepts by illuminating how the human subject is a *settler* subject who is constituted through settler colonial and heteropatriarchal assumptions that necessitate the illegal occupation of Indigenous land and disappearance of Indigenous subjects, particularly Indigenous women. Indigenous feminist scholars powerfully reveal the link between the settler-state and violence against Indigenous women that is enacted through military (in)action and ongoing colonial legislation (Smith 2005; Dhillon 2015). Mohawk feminist scholar Audra Simpson critically examines this evidence in the delegitimization of Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence during her 6-week hunger strike in 2012, as well as the callous indifference toward the February 2014 murder of Inuk graduate student Loretta Saunders portrayed by the mainstream Canadian media:

> [W]hen we are sent the memo repeatedly on the relationship between ideological degradation, gender, dispossession, and governance, rendered in the bodies of the murdered and missing women, when Indigenous people are rising up all over, holding hands with settlers in absolute concern, grief, and outrage, the language normatively should not be "reconciliation" since the historical violence of colonialism is not over, it is ongoing. (Simpson 2016, "Flesh and Sovereignty," para. 2)

Since 2012, the Idle No More movement has called for an honest treaty relationship that meaningfully reflects practices of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and demands justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirits (MMIWG2S). Idle No More also seeks to expose and dismantle the colonial legislative measures initialized by the Canadian Harper Government to amend the Indian Act, Fisheries Act, Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, Navigable Waters Protection Act, and numerous other changes without the consent of First Nations groups. These legal changes erode treaty rights by further enabling industrial development and settler domination over Indigenous lands and peoples.

This chapter comes out of a desire to build decolonizing relationships that are guided by Indigenous feminist theories of relationality, which emphasize our mutual recognition and responsibility to all life on stolen Indigenous land (Rowe and Tuck 2017). Indigenous feminist theories of relationality seek to dismantle white supremacist, hetero-patriarchal institutions of the settler colonial and capitalist state, which include the university. A relational framework holds us accountable for related but distinct modes of oppression by foregrounding how we are all invited to participate in interlocking systems of Indigenous genocide, anti-black racism, Orientalism, and environmental destruction (Smith 2006). The analytic power of relationality relies in the recognition that alliances between different groups are more powerful when they are not based on shared victimization but, rather, with the acknowledgment that we can all be complicit in each other's victimization. Moreover, as a settler scholar, I heed Leey'qsun feminist scholar Rachel Flowers' important caveat about self-serving moves to settler innocence:

> It is crucial that settlers find a place to stand in resistance that does not take up spaces for and appropriate the labor of Indigenous peoples (in particular, Indigenous women). This point is of increasing concern in the rise of public and academic discourse about missing and murdered Indigenous women that was originally led by the voices of the families of missing and murdered women, as well as Indigenous activists in the communities. (2015, p. 37)

Correspondingly, resistance strategies must effectively challenge colonial systems by keeping settler subjects accountable and, accordingly, "question academic participation in Indigenous dispossession" (Arvin et al. 2013).

In my classes and teaching experiences at the university, settler and non-Indigenous students are often uncomfortable and defensive when they begin to recognize that they are illegal occupants on stolen Indigenous lands. To mediate this tension and discomfort, I share a quotation from the Okanagan Nation Alliance's mission statement that describes how Syilx people understand Aboriginal title and rights:

> The word "Syilx" describes the action of taking any kind of fiber, like hemp, and rolling it and twisting it together to make one unit, or one rope. It is a process of making many into one. Syilx contains a command for every individual to continuously bind and unify with the rest. It is an important concept, which underlies what Aboriginal title and rights means to the Okanagan peoples. ("About the Syilx People," 2019)

As my students and I reflect on how Aboriginal title and rights are about sharing and taking care of the land collectively, we consider how concepts of Indigenous nationhood and governance are profoundly different from Canadian and modern Western concepts of the nation-state. Instead of emphasizing individual entitlements and property ownership, Indigenous nationhood recognizes collective responsibilities to land as a way to liberation, which challenge and open up liberal democratic notions of freedom. This understanding of Indigenous nationhood indicates how treaties apply to all non-Indigenous peoples – particularly settler citizens – and how they can provide radically alternative meanings of cultural and political sovereignty.

Like the students in my classes, Cultural Studies as a whole can take responsibility to learn from and participate in activist movements like Idle No More, Stop Site C, No DAPL, pipeline and tar sands blockades including Unist'ot'en Camp and direct actions to stop Kinder Morgan to name but a few. By engaging with Indigenous feminist theories of relationality, I contend that Cultural Studies can more purposefully resist and challenge colonial and corporate powers within and beyond the institution.

## Water Is Life

In her call to action for scholars of Canadian literature, poet-activist Rita Wong writes:

> What might a watershed moment feel like? I don't know what I haven't yet experienced but, for starters, it would involve a wide network of critical and creative projects that take up the challenge to restore damaged ecosystems, and to regenerate life in ways that make the lakes and rivers safe enough to drink from, welcoming enough that the abundance of fish, amphibians, birds, mammals and many creatures that previously lived there would flourish. It might also involve respecting the etymology of the name "Canada," which is said to come from the Huron-Iroquoian word for village.
> I think the word "kanata," is a reminder to hear and value the original language(s) of the lands on which we live, the languages which are a gift from the land that humans can in turn reciprocate with gifts, be they poisoned and/or regenerative. (2010, pp. 2–3)

Taking cues from Wong, I want to be accountable for my impacts as a settler on the Indigenous lands and watersheds I live on. At a local level, this entails learning about Syilx Okanagan protocols and the mutual responsibilities to care for the land with a particular emphasis on Indigenous water governance (Sam and Armstrong

**Fig. 1** Poster for "Ripples from Standing Rock" 2016 World Water Day event held in the Okanagan Valley

2013; Younging 2016). Central dilemmas involve the conflicting legislative interpretations of water protection and the corresponding rights of Indigenous peoples, which are threatened by economic interests of the settler colonial state (Hall 2016, p. 246).

In 2016, I was part of a grassroots collective led by a dynamic group of young Indigenous women that organized a teach-in and panel discussion on World Water Day held in the Okanagan. It featured water protectors from the Oceti Sakowin Standing Rock camp and Syilx community members. This educational event showcased a vast array of critical and creative skills and the incredible generosity of Indigenous community members. I am especially grateful to the following organizers, colleagues, and key supporters: Ashleigh Giffen, Harron Hall, Amberley John, Tina Miller, Flaming Wolf, Allison Hargreaves, Gail Smith, Anne-Marie Estrada, Jenica Frisque, and David Jefferess. Event speakers included elders, knowledge keepers, and different generations of Indigenous land activists from various nations including Wilfred Barnes, Trish Manuel, Dr. Bill Cohen, Chad Charlie, Mark Tilsen, Ronnie Dean Harris, Harron Hall, Sadele Paulette, and Amberley John who were accompanied by a slide show with powerful images from Standing Rock. The presenters spoke about the harmful impacts of oil pipelines and tar sands on the environment and Indigenous sovereignty, strategies for direct action, and debated contested meanings of the term "warrior."

Over 100 community members attended and engaged in an hour-long Q&A that ended with traditional ceremonial songs and gift-giving. This event highlighted organized resistance to settler colonial and corporate rule such as the fossil fuel divestment campaigns in various universities and cities across Turtle Island (McSorely 2014). This example of local grassroots activism reveals that anti-capitalism and decolonization are interlocking struggles. It also showed how water protection movements offer multiple and concrete ways to resist (Fig. 1).

## Conclusion and Future Directions: Land as Pedagogy

Rather than considering Indigenous feminist relationality as a mere add-on to critical theory, I argue for the radical potential of "placing indigeneity at the centre of Cultural Studies and operationalising it as an entry point for inquiry" (Byrd 2009, p. 16). Mississauga Nishnaabeg feminist writer Leanne Simpson suggests that, in order for academia to enact its commitments to respectful Indigenous engagement and reconciliation, it must adapt relational epistemologies that rely on the fundamental understanding of *land as pedagogy*:

> If the academy is concerned about not only protecting and maintaining Indigenous intelligence but revitalizing it on Indigenous terms as a form of restitution for its historical and contemporary role as a colonizing force…then the academy must make a conscious decision to become a decolonizing force…by joining us in dismantling settler colonialism and actively protecting the source of our knowledge—Indigenous *land*. (2014, p. 22)

To conclude, Cultural Studies can learn and take direction from ongoing Indigenous resistance movements to build deeper relationships of solidarity between different groups in our classrooms and beyond. This solidarity must uphold the integrity of nation-to-nation relationships that are not based on shared identities or fantasies of settler innocence but rather our sacred responsibilities to land, water, and all forms of life (Tuck and Yang 2012).

## Cross-References

▶ A Decolonial, Intersectional Approach to Disrupting Whiteness, Neoliberalism, and Patriarchy in Western Early Childhood Education and Care
▶ An Ecology of Environmental Education
▶ Beyond Domination: Enrique Dussel, Decoloniality, and Education
▶ Contemporary Whiteness Interrupted: Leaning into Contradiction in the University Classroom
▶ Forest School Pedagogy and Indigenous Educational Perspectives: Where They Meet, Where They Are Far Apart, and Where They May Come Together
▶ Identity Construction Amidst the Forces of Domination
▶ Pedagogy and the Unlearning of Self: The Performance of Crisis Situation Through Popular Culture
▶ The Merchandizing of Identity: The Cultural Politics of Representation in the "I Am Canadian" Beer Campaign

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# Explorations of Post-Identity in Relation to Resistance

**7**

## Why Difference Is Not Diversity

jan jagodzinski

## Contents

**Abstract**

This chapter questions the broad understanding of "diversity as difference" in relation to one strand of cultural studies where issues of representation are constantly forwarded in what has become the political practice of identity politics: diversity within "democratic societies" ruled by representational politics. Here I am referring to the usual primary signifiers such as skin color, sex, gender, race, ethnicity, ability, and so on that has grounded cultural studies in general. The result has been an unexpected "resistance" by populist movements to multiculturalism, supported by any number of authoritarian personalities around the world, from Trump in the United States to Erdoğan in Turkey, from Duterte in the Philippines to Orbán in Hungary, from Putin in Russia to Zuma in South Africa, and from Israel's Netanyahu to China's Xi Jinping – now installed as president for life. The globe is crisscrossed by these "authoritarian men." And, the list seems to have proliferated to now include Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega, Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro, and Michel Temer's sweeping corruption of Brazil. Drawing on the nonrepresentational theories of Deleuze and Guattari where "difference" is process based, I dwell on the case of Paul Gauguin to confuse

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identity politics, not as hybridic hyphenated identities but by queering identity, a "post-identity" position which heads in the direction of a planetary consciousness that requires an understanding of difference as singularity and new political formations of the "common." Otherwise, our future is closed.

Gilles Deleuze (1994) famously wrote: "Difference is not diversity" (p. 222). And both he and Guattari (1987) make the point that a workhorse and an ox are closer to one another than the workhorse is to a thoroughbred, although both are "horses." These provocative claims immediately put the question of identity and difference into a tailspin, which cultural studies, from its inception have had to contend with. Within a liberal discourse, the categories of diversity make issues of race, class, and sexuality look like a matter of identity politics that are difficult to reconcile. The questions surrounding subjectivity within this Kantian-Hegelian idealist tradition, especially when it comes to art rooted in an originating creative subject, that of genius or an "author-function" as Michel Foucault (1977) pointed out, lead to the exceptionality of the artist's signature. The work of art is central to the construction of the modern subject of Euro-America where the self is placed in opposition to the Other in what is taken to be a critical attitude to maintain resistance and negativity, a position embedded in the Hegelian master-slave relationship.

The capitalization of Other, especially as it first emerged in the poststructuralism of the 1980s and 1990s, attempted to disperse identity politics by expanding difference via self-reflexivity by focusing on primary identity signifiers – be it race, ethnicity, class, feminism, sexuality, and so on. At the same time, there was a recognition of an array of secondary signifiers that played into a more fluid understanding of identification rather than the more stagnant notion of identity found in numerous cultural studies essays that repeated the Hegelian core belief of master-slave as embraced by critical theory. Artists in the 1980s and 1990s, who embraced poststructuralism, were defined through their performances based on various signifying chains that could be complexified and hybridized to meet the demands of multiplying differences of voices seeking to be "heard" so as to be included in what were the ideals of social democracy: equal rights, social justice, and equity. The growing list of complaints and dissatisfactions always fell short given that capitalism and its underlying Christian Protestant values framed what is considered to be the apotheosis of democratic living. Lesbian artists, for instance, emerged from the shadow-cover of the feminist movement; feminism itself would splinter into various viable political positions. Social feminist artists would differentiate themselves from liberal feminist artists; black feminist artists would differentiate themselves from white feminist artists, and so on.

Similarly, when it came to a proliferation of cultural groups vying for similar rights, multiculturalism became the summation of the diversity of difference where political correctness was forwarded and critical judgment took a back seat. Courtesy, tolerance, respect, and recognition of the Other were virtues to be promoted, overlooking a culture's most grievous practices (often its misogyny, practices such as clitoridectomy, or obvious class hierarchies such as India's caste system) in the name of "human rights" and equality. Emmanuel Levinas' (1969) ethics of "the Other," and "The Face," remain a key source for such justifications, as does Gayatri Spivak's (1988) "strategic essentialism" necessary to wedge in power by minority individuals or groups so as to lay claim to the cultural substance or "ground" upon which their identities rest.

Stuart Hall, respected as an organic public intellectual, had always attempted to radicalize cultural studies through his concepts such as "articulation" and the politics of "conjuncture" (Henriques and Morlely 2017). Hall (1996) sums up this situation of identity in the early 1990s: "Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (p. 392). Hall's process-orientated identity politics was couched in the psychoanalytic Lacanian framework of Franz Fanon and Homi Bhabha's neo-Hegelian gestures of difference between self and Other. For instance, diasporic identity (Caribbean in this case), according to Stuart Hall in his well-known and well-cited "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" (1996), was "'framed' by two axes or vectors, simultaneously operative: the vector of similarity and continuity; and the vector of difference and rupture. Caribbean identities always have to be thought of in terms of the dialogic relationship between these two axes" (pp. 226–227). The confluence or coexistence of similarity and difference was another way of recognizing duration that characterizes identification. Recognizing the sameness and differences at once was a way to establish coalitions joined by mutual recognition of the political context despite existing differences. This was a way of grasping ruptures to identity that force change. Difference, in this case, is not the "pure" Otherness within binary terms; difference had now migrated to the supplementarity of deferment, following Jacques Derrida's deconstruction, where representation is an open process of difference and deferment, subject to change as shaped by ruptures and contingencies. The relations of difference, in this way of thinking, recognize the arbitrariness and contingent nature of all representation; identity is *always already* subject to transformative change within the dialogue of power and resistance, as well as refusal and recognition. Identification and disidentification are in constant play in this way of thinking, as is the memory of past traces that impact the present, bringing to fore traumatic experiences that are revisited, overcome, or repeated.

The proliferation of identity differences within a changing capitalist globalized framework opened up new ways to harness commodity profit via social media (especially Facebook and Google) by targeting individualized, profiled interests as if each customer was being personally addressed. Catering to difference by capitalist forces defines postmodernism. Resistance, however, to such a countable multiplicity

of "individuals" seems moot. The targeting of difference is perhaps best exemplified by the tracking of voter identification during (especially the United States and the United Kingdom) national elections and referendums according to various measurable categories (age, sex, race, ethnicity, rural, urban, class, earnings, and so on) to determine the election outcomes by utilizing sophisticated big data algorithms. As has been recently shown, such companies as Cambridge Analytica's involvement in the Trump election and Brexit referendum to sway voters one way or another via the availability of big data, is able to effectively manipulate identity formations on election issues that solicit strong emotional responses (González 2017). Desire as lack is in full force. Their sophistication of "hacking" electoral votes via profiled identities works. Identity as grasped through representational categories can be unnervingly accurate once hitched to the "trigger" concerns and worries of a populous: a nation's "structure of feeling," coined by Raymond Williams back in 1977, can be transformed through the spread of a viral "emotional contagion" that mimics a swarm mentality (Hazy and Boyatzis 2015).

Resistance to such manipulation is difficult as beliefs are enforced and trust then follows. Yet, the proliferation of endless differences that can be catered to reaches a sort of "end game" with the signifier "queer," a paradoxical position that tries to have it both ways: to be included and excluded at once. Queer is both a general claim of disidentification to whatever is perceived as the "norm," and, at the same time, it participates in, or is embedded, within a growing string of identity politics as represented by the coalitional chain of LGBQTI, etc., which first emerged by distancing itself from the "originary" binary: heterosexuality-homosexuality. Yet, "queer" always claims to be on the edge of anything that disturbs what is perceived to be normative. "Anything" might be queer that cannot be easily categorized, pointing to the very limits of representable differences: a vanishing point or abyss is reached where they are all canceled out, leading to a nonrepresentational dimension that will be addressed below.

Such a brief summation of the shift to the diversity of difference that tries to be accommodated within social democracies rests uneasily within a nation's hegemonic identity that defines its "imagined community" (Anderson 1983) despite restricted polarizing categories, most notably race, class, and patriarchy. The contemporary global political landscape seems to confirm that various forms of fascism and authoritarianism have emerged through populist movements stoked by the fear of loss of hegemonic standing regardless of social position (rich and poor making for strange bedfellows). There is a paranoia of the Other via the hyper-flows of immigration in a growing list of countries, the United States (Trump), China (Xi Jinping), Russia (Putin), Hungry (Orbán), Poland (Morawiecki), Turkey (Erdoğan), North Korea (Kim), the Philippines (Duterte), India (Modi), Israel (Netanyahu), Saudi Arabia (King Salman), Venezuela (Maduro), Syria (Bashar al-Assad), and Cuba (Castro), where racism, nationalism (esp. Northern countries, South Korea, Syria), religious orthodoxies, language, and religious ethnicities (Sunni vs. Shia) are the overriding signifiers of identification that prop up leadership. Identity is mobilized differently with varying degrees of complexity in each country where clashes of

resistance and support for the regime in power is played out on the ground and in the media utilizing the rhetoric of spin and propaganda.

Representational identity politics is strongly felt throughout all First Nations globally where the primary signifier is territory (land). Coalitions among different tribes scattered geographically throughout each nation push back governments, demanding rights and a seat at the decision-making processes. The heterogeneity of cultural differences among them (in Canada, for instance, there are 634 First Nation Tribes) is overcome so that they may come to stand as "One" voice despite the myriad of disagreements among them. Métis, whose indigenous status has always remained questionable within these binary politics, join such coalitions to increase their own power and influence, not unlike in the United Kingdom where "brown" bodies merged with "black" bodies to assert a more "visible" minority status for political advantage. First Nations claim a nation within a nation – the status signifier "first" amassing its rhetorical power.

The master-slave, colonizer-colonized narrative maintains itself. As Hegel taught us, opposing something is often a way of remaining bound to it. Modern universalism is battered by postmodern relativism: postcolonial decolonizing deconstruction pervades cultural studies to push back perceived injustices. Anticolonialism seems to turn to a cultural anthropology that freezes rather than translates between cultures, or rather – for political gains – translation seems to take a back seat. Unfortunately, postcolonial deconstruction raises impossible issues as who has the "right" to represent (speak and artistically address) its ethnic or cultural group. Who indeed "belongs" – via bloodlines, linguistic ties, and so on? Such controversies continue to plague First Nations. For instance, in Canada artists like Bill Reid and writers such as Joseph Boyden have been questioned as to their "authenticity" and right to call themselves indigenous in their storytelling or to use Haida symbols in the former case. Genealogy becomes crucial. Perhaps, a more extreme example is the case of the Huron who were historically decimated by disease through contact with the French and slaughtered by the League of the Iroquois (especially the Mohawks who were their traditional enemy). Consequently, with records lost, they have constructed a counterculture to achieve a phenotypical Indian identity, a staged culture so as to reclaim their territorial rights. The neo-Huron culture is "counterfeit," the created ethnicity through the process of ethnogenesis (Roosens 1989). This is a form of "strategic essentialism" at its extreme.

In all these forms of identity formations that posit a Self-Other in representationally negative terms, it becomes necessary to posit a monolithic transcendent empty signifier that structures the critique: be it "the Enlightenment," phallocentrism, colonialism, the white Man, and so on. Such a structure has given the excuse for white supremacy to rise once again, just as black supremacy did in what became Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe that swept away "white Rhodesia." Negation, *as radicality*, sets up modernism as a form of subtraction: purification defines "the" revolution as a force that purges form so that the new is born, which is why Kazimir Malevich's *White Square on a Black Background* is the epitome of purification, perhaps the inspiration for Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) "faciality machine" – the

black holes against a white surface that generate the myriad of endless faces that are never quite "pure" enough to reach some mythical transcendent empty signifier, a far cry from Levinas' own facial machine that embraces the Other no matter how dire the circumstances are (kiss the cheek of your enemy to establish betrayal or trust). The centrality of the "root" in modernism anchors identity along established lineal lines. It is a "founding father" gesture, a deep-seated Darwinism that speaks to a host of dictators, strong men, authoritarian-type fascist leaders mentioned earlier, and leaders who have changed their national constitutions or manipulated elections to make sure they stay in power so that the "new" would never arrive or that the older former regimes are reinstalled. The "root" establishes power, racism, paternalism, and nationalism and pushes back on the extraordinary dispersal of identity – the uprootedness that is now taking place through displacement, immigration, exile, and refugeeism. To "re-root" oneself, the turn has been back to religious fundamentalism in its new postmodern forms, to gravitate back to some mythical nationalism ("Make America Great Again") and claims to land rights and filiation via an indigenous imaginary that generates the First Nations master signifier. While the two trajectories are clearly not the same, they both call on an irreconcilable struggle to establish sovereignty through forms of resistance and disruption (negation). Border walls are emerging everywhere.

The inheritance of modernism continues to pervade contemporary art. To recall, in the eighteenth century, the work of art is explained by its status and the origin of the artist, especially "his" "portable" nationality. There is no escape from what has framed the modernist system of art within capitalism: individual expression and autonomy. A work of art is confirmed by the artist's signature assuring authenticity and a priceless, but "useless" commodity value in complete opposition to the structures of capitalism's deindividualized labor. Objects, as well as subjects, are reduced to fetishized commodity status, which define social relations via commodity values that are built on generating fantasy and desire (Marx). The "value" of art is entirely reliant on the structures of belief as linked to aesthetics, art markets, art histories, and art criticisms. The artist's identity and intention is conflated with the work of art itself, an activity of "man," and not animals given that art "adds" to nature something entirely new. The art critic and art historian are the auxiliary confirmers and experts of this belief, connoisseurs who identify "genius" when they "see" it. Art – as an expression of emotions, feelings, beliefs, temperament, and eventually the unconscious by the Surrealists following Freud – becomes the epitome of subjectivity, opposed directly to science elevated to the height of objectivity. In the Kantian aesthetic, this subject-object correlation is cleverly cancelled by an impossible paradox of a "universal judgment." This is a view from "nowhere," a "disinterested attitude" by the critic/judge who must not have a subjective interest; an absolute universal aesthetic can be achieved through contemplation and indifference to the existence of the object. The critic/judge is "objectively subjective" in *his* ability to grasp the artistic intent of genius and beauty. While "taste" is always in the balance, agreement is reached among experts. Such an aesthetic sets up the colonialist mentality of hierarchy as exemplified by Hegelian aesthetic where the working of *Geist* through the creativity of the artist presents the heights of the striving of

Man. The artist, as shaped in the Romantic context of the mid-nineteenth century, became the apotheosis of the sovereign subject of "free will," defined as epitomizing the *resistance* to the increasing industrialization, democratization, and bureaucratization of culture, apart from a debased and tasteless bourgeois culture – in Henri de Saint-Simon's terms – an avant-garde as he coined it in 1824 (1975, p. 281). With this aesthetic, differentiation is understood oppositionally, a stance which remained pervasive in the colonial context, heightened at the turn of the twentieth century by foregrounding and incorporating the various uses of "primitivism" by artistic movements – the so-called isms of twentieth-century modernism.

In what follows I discuss *one* example as a microcosm of identity issues that were in circulation in the 1990s, followed by an attempt to rethink identity by drawing on the oeuvre of Deleuze and Guattari. Although I call this a nonidentity approach, it is meant as a foil against representational identity approaches that are so deeply ingrained today; by nonidentity I am referring to a position that tries to steer away from the Hegelian inheritance that continues to circulate in various forms.

## Working Through an Example: The "Other" Gauguin

The example I wish to discuss in relation to the question of identity as developed above is Paul Gauguin. The controversies surrounding Gauguin's assessment reveal how contested the politics of identity are. No artist escapes such disputes. Gauguin, in terms of St.-Simon's socialist theory exemplifies the artist as "bohemian" (my own identification as an artist working in the late 1970s as a newly minted BFA with a shingle on my door). Such an artist is an outsider who escapes from bourgeoisification of culture in order to hold up a new set of values. Gauguin has proved to be an exemplary figure when it comes to the Self-Other relationship that continues in many sectors to pervade an understanding of identity. In the 1990s I was deeply involved in the international scene in art education. In August 1993, the 28th World Congress of the International Society for Art Education Through Art (InSEA) met in Montréal, Canada. The weeklong conference quoted as its theme the title of one of Gauguin's acclaimed artworks: *Where Do We Come From? Where Are We? Where Are We Going?* (1897). These three questions were identified by the conference organizers in order to bring the membership's attention to an historical climate where issues of identity had become a global concern. The empty signifier "we" held the promise of the global community of art educators coming together in the future, suggesting (perhaps inadvertently) the long-standing promise of modernist universalism?

Displayed prominently in the lobby of the conference center was a faithful copy, in both scale and content, of Gauguin's achievement. References to Gauguin, or to this particular painting, were made numerous times in the program catalogue by various presenters – mostly all positive. The praise of Gauguin's achievement was taken up by the then current president of InSEA, Anna Mae Barbosa of the *Museu de Arte Contemporanea de Sao Paulo*, Brazil, a strong advocate of critical theory and the pedagogy of Paolo Freire. Her address entitled "From Gauguin to Latin America: Who we are?" included this statement from the Catalogue:

Gauguin's early experience in Latin America can be seen as one of the reasons for his flexibility to see different lands, different people in their own way, not as a colonizer or invader. As a white European, he interpreted those so-called "primitive with respect for their environment and their myths." Those myths are represented by him as an expression of their beliefs and aspirations, not as exoticism. Certainly his contact with Latin Americans and his Peruvian heritage made him flexible and sensitive enough to look to the "other." (Barbosa 1993, p. 55)

Barbarosa defended Gauguin's character even further during her address by an aside to the fact that he had left his wife and children and traveled abroad, an act for which he should not be condemned; today, argued Barbosa, he would not be judged so severely. Her reason was that divorce and separation had become so common as to become a socially accepted value. Barbosa's defense of Gauguin as an exemplary artist who was sensitive to the Other was further buttressed by quotes from his own journal writing as testimony to his sincerity.

In 1990, I attended the 78th Annual Conference of the College Art Association (CAA) held in New York. In a panel called "Denaturalizing the Nude," the literary critic, Peter Brooks, argued that Gauguin's nude studies in Tahiti served to put into question the entire European tradition of nude studies, representing the woman's body in such a way that the male gaze was mitigated and made problematic. Gauguin's nudes, like *Te arii vahine* (The Noble Woman, 1896), *Manao tupapau* (The Spirit of the Dead Watches, 1892), and *Nevermore*, were direct comments on Manet's *Olympia* and *Dejeuner Sur L'Herb*. Brooks argued that Gauguin was wrestling with painting the nude "naturally" – fully erotic, without the connotations of shame, scandal, and exposure, which were problematic at this time since the artificiality of the neoclassical style displayed the nude as a prostitute: the spectator's glance matched the glance of the paying customer. Manet's *Olympia* had not solved the problem. Eve's nakedness was to replace Venus's nudity, a point developed much later by Lynda Nead (1992). His paintings acted like a Derridean supplement to the entire tradition, hence putting it to question and disrupting its assumptions on sexuality.

Such an assessment was in direct contrast to the art critic Abigail Solomon-Godeau whose article, " Going Native," had appeared in *Art in America* a full year earlier, in 1989. Solomon-Godeau argued that Gauguin's modern primitivism was a form of *mythic speech*. His life, a paradigm case for "primitivism as a white, Western and preponderantly male quest for an elusive object whose very condition of desirability reside[d] in some form of distance and difference, whether temporal or geographical" (p. 120). The "elusive object" referred to by Solomon-Godeau was an earthly paradise, a place of plenitude where compliant female bodies presented themselves everywhere. Gauguin's heroic journey to find himself was part of the mythic sense of being avant-garde, original self-creative, and heroic. Further, Solomon-Godeau claimed, this vision was abetted by racial and sexual fantasies. His sojourn as a "savage" into Brittany, as his "initial encounter with cultural Otherness" (p. 122) into a "more archaic, atavistic, and organic society," was more accurately a mystification of Brittany as a folkloric paradise. Brittany was a center of an international artist's colony (the Pont Aven circle) and tourism; its

peculiar and visually distinct aspects, especially women's clothing, were a sign of its *modernity*. The textual representation of the Breton Celtic ethnic group as being primitive was part of a broader discourse created by colonialism where a "natural primitivism" had emerged through the encounter with tribal arts, *Japonisme* and *cloisonnéisme*.

Like Symbolism, the significance of Gauguin's religious and mystical iconography, as exemplified through the representation of numerous Calvaries and self-crucifixions, mark a crisis of representation brought on by the crisis of capitalism during the *fin de siècle*. The flight out of urbanity presented Brittany as the Other of Paris – feudal, rural, spiritual, and static. As Solomon-Godeau further argues, the absence of men presented a "purely feminized geography," an unchanging rural world, an atavism where women, adolescent girls, and children's perception was said to be closer to nature and the spiritual. Gauguin's nudes from this period are said to participate in this quest for the primitive. "The savage woman" was to exemplify Nature's link between Eros and Mother Nature – the constellation of imagery around "Eve/Mother/Nature/Primitive." His depiction of the Maori culture and women continued this mythic primitivism. The figure of the *vahine* represented either monstrously (as in cannibalism and tattooing), or idealized as a noble savage, became a "metonymy for the tropic paradise tout court" (p. 124). "Going native" was a façade. Gauguin never learnt the Polynesian language, the customs he wrote about were plagiarisms drawn from previous accounts, his very survival depended on the *vahines* he so idealized, and his life was but a continuous rape of images and "pillaging the savages of Oceania" (p. 128).

Such a scathing indictment of Gauguin raises many questions as to the ethics and politics of any textual reading of art. Feminist members of the audience, notably Griselda Pollock (1992), objected to Peter Brook's reading on the grounds that his reading was *still* caught by a male's appropriation of the woman's body. Other artists in the audience reacted with some trepidation. Just what sort of representation of the female nude body was to be permitted by men to avoid such accusative wrath? From within the confines of the patriarchal view, Gauguin's representations of Tahitian women represent an advance. From this perspective, Gauguin had not gone far enough. Linda Nochlin (1988) made the earlier point that there was "no high art in the nineteenth century based upon women's erotic needs, wishes or fantasies" (p. 138). All such art was meant for the male gaze, homosexual or heterosexual. The very painting Brooks praised as one of Gauguin's greatest achievement in disrupting this gaze, *Deux femmes tahitiennes*, is the very same artwork chosen by Nochlin to illustrate the opposite thesis; this was a prime example of erotic imagery of the nineteenth century, a "comparison of the desirable body with ripe fruit" (pp. 193–194). While for Brooks the title reads, *Two Tahitian Women*, Nochlin rewrites the title as: *Tahitian Women with Mango Blossoms*. From the perspective of a colonialist, Gauguin represents a heroic search for himself; from the perspective of a postcolonialist position, he is an exploiter and an invader. Each interpretation of Gauguin implicates the viewer-reader under different sets of ethical and political imperatives. "What was it in Gauguin's own blindness, which could not make him see past the exotic Other?" is the query.

Three years later Peter Brooks (1993) published his CAA talk. It is obvious that Brooks had not changed his mind despite the feminist critique. Brooks maps out the metaphorical discourses that had shaped Gauguin's desire: the *Exposition Universelle* of 1899, which presented an exhibition of the French colonies, the fantasies associated with exotic travel, the search for the body of a beautiful woman, and the carefree life as the search for the noble savage. Gauguin's "authentic" journal voice begins to sounds very inauthentic as he mimes colonial travel discourse sounding like a "Club Med travel" brochure (p. 164). In short, Brooks rehearses many of the insights Solomon-Godeau had identified earlier, yet he concedes very little to her, claiming that her discussion holds a "general truth" but requires a "more nuanced discussion" since she "distorts the original discursive framework of the European encounter with Tahiti" (p. 179). Gauguin, according to Brooks, was engaged with the problem of the Enlightenment philosophy and ethnology, actively seeking to invent a version of Tahiti earlier than the one found in the 1890s in order to provide a commentary on the civilization which had produced an "Eve." Further, Gauguin had denounced colonialist appropriation after his initial participation in it. In Brooks account, Gauguin once again emerges as a hero. "Solomon-Godeau's argument does not do justice to the disruptive, interrogative force of Tahitian sexuality in Western discourse, and to the figuration of that force in Gauguin's Tahitian painting" (p. 180). The rest of his chapter is in defense of this thesis.

Although Gauguin predates the rise of the avant-garde, he is interpreted as one of their precursors. The avant-garde is often characterized by the forces of elitism, historicism, and individualism (Docherty 1993). They are elitists because the artist is a hero who has seen the future in advance of everyone else; they risk their energies on behalf of the tardy common masses; they are historicist because they are out of step with the masses around them, who have to catch up to the "progress" they maintain. Finally, the ideology of the avant-garde is individualist: it is based on self-expression. In this view the avant-garde Self distinguishes itself from its Other and thereby produces the Other, who are the masses. Does Gauguin escape such an ideology so that he may be reinscribed as an exemplar of intercultural learning – Barbosa's Gauguin? He invented Tahiti in his autographical account, *Noa Noa*, which was a critique of Judeo-Christian mythology. The psychology of the "enacted biography" was enormously popular at the time. Biography and journalism enabled the artistic person to emerge: "fact and fiction, history and biography, psychology and journalism, merged and overlapped in the mapping of an artistic 'type,' and hence in the provision of raw materials for new identities" (Tickner 1992, p. 6). In the context of this discussion, this serves the need for the avant-garde to define itself by "shocking" its audience from the solace of its comfortable forms of identity by always presenting a radicalized Other.

It seems Gauguin appears Janus-faced. Which face the interpreter reads has ethico-political consequences as to how the modernist canon is judged. It has implications for how we take up the events and territorializations in the contemporary world. These two faces are comfortable attached to the same body, which one shows itself is dependent on the conditions in which Gauguin finds himself in. Hal

Foster ([1993](#)) identifies this ambivalence through a psychoanalytic lens: "This conflict occurs because the primitivist seeks to be *opened up to difference* (to be made ecstatic, literally taken out of the self sexually, socially, radically) *and* to be *fixed in opposition* to the other (to be established again, secured as a sovereign self)"(p. 85, original emphasis). Foster's remarks both open and close the door to yet another more generous assessment of Paul Gauguin, this time from a rethinking of both diversity and exoticism by Victor Segalen, who held Gauguin in high esteem. The Symbolist-inspired poet wrote a number of essays between 1904 and 1918, which reworked and deconstructed this Self-Other binary as understood in polarizing or hybridic terms. Segalen, as a navy officer, also embarked for Polynesia, arriving on the Marquesas Islands in 1903. By that time Paul Gauguin had died. Segalen wrote a number of texts that supported and defended the Maori civilization. He spoke out against the colonial administration and the civilizing machine of the West via militarism and missionary zeal. He praised Gauguin's effort ("Gauguin in his Final Setting") and wrote a book of stories that portrayed the culture of the people debilitated by colonialism. His *Essay on Exoticism* ([2002](#)) is a defense of heterogeneity and contra exoticism as then understood. It was an attempt at recognizing diversity as difference. The "sensation of Exoticism" is "nothing other than the notion of difference, the perception of Diversity, the knowledge that something is other than one's self" (p. 19). The most generous reading of Segalen's "feeling of Diversity" is the capacity to identify with singularity. This is a "universal Exoticism, essential Exoticism" (p. 70), by which he meant the ethical act of perceiving diversity in all its intensity. This is the figure of the "Exote": as the one who can "conceive himself only as something *other* than he is" (ibid. original emphasis) by rejoicing in diversity. Diversity here is not multiculturalism nor is it the close coexistence of cultural, class, or gender differences. Rather it refers to the "exotic" as the existence of an absolute difference between peoples and cultures in the world. When two realities are pitted against one another, it is not the cancelling out of each other; rather the Exote and the exotic co-produce diversity via negotiation, elaboration in space-time that is indeterminate.

Such a view is nascent of what Deleuze and Guattari ([1987](#)) would call an *encounter* where a "becoming" takes place – *where there is no Other*, or otherness that presupposes an "I." (Becoming for Deleuze and Guattari has reverberating clusters of synonyms that they use to develop their process philosophy. A partial list would be event, machine, milieu, multiplicity, creativity, movement, haecceity, encounter, transformation, process, intensity, and difference.) Deleuze and Guattari would say a third (impersonal) person emerges. Difference as exoticism, as singularity for Segalen, was a way of saying colonialism was standardizing everything via commodity goods. "The exotic Tension of the World is decreasing. Exoticism, a source of Energy—mental, aesthetic, or physical (though I do not like to mix levels)—is on the wane" (p. 62). From his perspective, Gauguin was translator of the Tahitian culture, an Exote, able to pick up on its exoticism that generated a different sexual energy. The monumental *Where do We Come From? Where are We? Where Are We Going?* broke with the linearity of the Western pictorial system. There was no importation of indigenous motifs into Western painting but an encounter with

Polynesian territory – that is to say, *with is percepts and affects*. The title's narrative confuses both the origin narrative and future progress; it is an anti-Christian and anti-eschatological manifesto, more of the mystery as represented by its central figure: an enigmatic worshiper.

There is no clear, unquestionable or fully defensible identity that can be claimed as "Paul Gauguin." The politics of identity in difference as an "invented figure" is taken up by claiming different sides by Barbosa (Gauguin is a non-colonizer), Solomon-Godeau (Gauguin is a nonfeminist), and Brooks (Gauguin is a non-Colonist and anti-Enlightenment). Then there is Segalen, whose stance is closer to theorists such a Deleuze and Guattari where identity disappears with an encounter where the self meets the self in difference; where one becomes alien to oneself when a particular assemblage of desire is established, an "exotic" pull is achieved aesthetically and a new vision emerges. This is to give Gauguin the benefit of the doubt and to say he had achieved this, as had Segalen.

## Nonrepresentational Identity?

In his unfinished essay, Segalen's attempts to rethink diversity and what precisely is the draw of the "exotic." He points to the encounter with difference that makes a difference, raising issues of translation and an understanding of difference *as* difference that worries the negative dialectics of the Hegelian master-slave couplet that has defined identity throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. This has continued well into the twenty-first century by remarkable skewing of Hegelian logic by Slavoj Žižek (2013) and Alain Badiou (2011) – an odd love affair they have with German Idealism as inherited from Lacan, whose psychoanalytical stance, in the former case, is wholeheartedly embraced by Žižek and, in the latter case, is said to have been superseded by Badiou himself. In *Science of Logic*, Hegel (1998) specifically states in his own convoluted way that identity is always a question of difference in contradiction: "difference as such is already implicitly contradiction; for it is the unity of sides which are, only in so far as they are not one – and it is the separation of sides which are, only as separated in the same relation" (p. 431). For Deleuze, such representational thinking is a *transcendental illusion*. Everything can be understood in terms of representation; it operates on a level where movement and change occur only through an *Aufhebung*, a synthesis into a higher level through the working of spirit, power, struggle, and so on: the slave rebels as this is a fight for survival that accounts for social Darwinism.

Deleuze's reworking of difference that departs from Hegel takes us back to those first lines that began this chapter on diversity as not being difference, and the heterogeneous comparison of the ox and the workhorse as being closer to one another than the thoroughbred. The Hegelian logic "x is not y" is replaced by a differential calculus where dx and dy are undetermined variables in relation to x and y, but are completely determinable in relation to one another. In this representational comparison between x and y, its quantitative determination is cancelled, amounting to zero, while the sub-representational domain (the "d") is forwarded as a

transcendental field of pre-individual elements. Categories of representation like quantity and quality do not apply, whereas force and intensity do. This shift from representational "being" to the process of "becoming" enables a change that can be followed through a series of events (mathematically: differential calculus enables a charting of a curve's gradient along any of its points, the integration of which becomes for Deleuze the ontogenesis of being). There is no transcendent concept that is cast over the elements so that their individual differences are overcome – as the category or genus of "horses" – which is the Hegelian way of a "spatial multiplicity" to be united by a transcendental signifier of classification of the "many", that is, the one and the multiple. For Deleuze (1994) there is only multiplicity, more specifically a "differential virtual multiplicity": "the one is multiple" (p. 182). So why is this important?

To begin with, identity is rethought. Deleuze "inverts" Hegel, or rather the Platonic influences of Hegel, by developing a transcendental logic based on the differential and virtual multiplicity that leads to the genesis (actualization) of the world of subjects and their properties without presupposing an organic, conceptual, representational structure. This virtual multiplicity is pre-individual, constituted from elements that are incommensurate with any substantive actuality and hence cannot be equated with diversity (as in Hegel). Deleuze develops the genesis of form from the unformed (the differentiated heterogeneous elements), avoiding hylomorphism (the Aristotelian-Kantian inheritance of imposing form on matter) or falling into the "formlessness" of an undifferentiated abyss with no property structures, best understood as a transcendent signifier that is without signification (e.g., Geist, God, Lacan's Phallus).

Deleuze's shift, through the passages of differential calculus, is toward understanding processes through *topological conceptualizations* rather than the geometry that still grips self-other in relation to difference, a spatial geometrical way of thinking. At best, this position leaves us with anamorphic projections, a recognition that there are many (multiple) skewed and awry perspectives that are available on the world that remain "knowable." The world can thus be *distorted*, deformed, and perturbed from a Euclidean geometrical viewpoint. In Lacanian terms the *objet a* becomes a gravitational point or attractor that (gravitationally) pulls at the axiomatic lines (of light) that are then *distorted* but are *not* as yet elastically bent in ways where a topological thinking emerges characterized by diffractions and continuous variations that morph into shapes where surfaces stretch and move as in the well-trod example of a coffee mug turning into a donut through continuous variation. Anamorphism presents the limits of Enlightenment perspectivism. It still maintains that there is a "possible" world, which is then represented through multiple, but skewed, perspectives. For Lacan, it exposes the logic of the modern *gaze* as such – as it makes evident that something always "escapes" the spatiality of the "look" (or world picture). What escapes, of course, is what is "outside" the perceptual represented frame: the world-in-itself. For Lacan this is the Real (not-all), for Deleuze this is the ontology of the virtual, and for Derrida, the point of his critique of Kantian aesthetics is that the frame is the artificial separation of the inside-outside binary that lends itself to infinite deconstruction. Derridean *différance* (as difference

and deferment) is simply another way of pointing to the impossible relationship between infinity (the nonrepresentational "outside"), which is forever deferred and the finite (the inside), which is arbitrarily "fixed" through the play of differences to establish structure that is then subject to change. Another way of stating this is that it is the relationship between continuity and discontinuity brought on by an ideological "cut" (an event) or a "divergent series" in the thought of Deleuze. Mathematically the non-countable (infinity as limits) and countable (finity as real numbers) relationship has had a long history that is not entirely fully resolved; for example, Cantor develops an "actual infinite" – infinities with different magnitudes (Buckley 2012, for review).

With topology we have a shift of thinking in non-Eucledian terms, away from the common sense notion that art practice is the creative potential of one's self-forming power, realizable only once the work is realized, as is the usual understanding of creative becoming. Identity, as a process, becomes a shifting surface; the body is subject to sensation from the "outside," by the cosmological forces of nature in its environment. It is theorized as a complex of vital forces that is subject to patterns and rhythms, which defy any stable or coherent identification, transfigurable, and resistant to representational descriptions. In this understanding a body is inhabited by other bodies; it is a multiplicity, microcosms within macrocosms, "all the way down." Everybody is chaotic and hybrid, capable of habituated yet distinctive choreography and organization, as well as subject to internal disruption by multiple forces and other bodies in an infinite number of ways as each body is inhabited by infinite zones of indiscernibility and indeterminacy for change. In this way of thought, the lines between distinctive species become blurred, as degrees of difference rather than kind and the intensity of forces are forwarded (much like the example of workhorse-ox relationship).

Deleuze, in *The Fold* (2002), draws on Leibniz to further articulate his position on the pre-individualized self. (The difficulties of understanding and misunderstanding Deleuze's fold are legion. I rely on Mogens Laerke (2010, 2015) careful expositions, someone who reads French and German and able to articulate the nuances in English.) The fold is a surface concept, like the surface of the sea, with surfaces folding, unfolding, and refolding. For Leibniz, a body's being (individuation) is not a consequence of being recognized, nor is it the way it affirms itself, as a type (i.e., a horse *is* a horse, a genus). Rather an individuated being is all the relations that it bears to other relations. Leibnitz's monad is unique in occupying a point in time and space, and in the way, it perceives and is affected by all the other relations and affections in time and space. The naïve notion of identity as referring back to a subject that perceives only through its constituted world is outright dismissed. Deleuze advances a topology of folds to advance his differentiated virtual dimension, which in this book, takes on a religious iconicity by being referred to as soul(s). Univocal matter is riddled by multiple "souls" whose perceptions fold, unfold, and refold into pluriform configurations. This is a cosmogenesis, i.e., the genesis of a world composed of individuated percepts, affects, blocs of sensations, and thoughts.

It means grasping an aesthetics that goes against the normative sense. A multiple and indistinct body, in Deleuze and Guattarian (1986) terms, sensation signifies the

body prior to any distinction or differentiation taking place from surrounding bodies; the pre-subjective body subject to *nonhuman* affects and percepts (as the body of sensation) from its surrounding is forwarded, the body's openness to encounters and its impact at this pre-organized and pre-articulated level via events that deterritorialize (deform, disidentify, deteriorate, dematerialize, de-organize) a pre-established organization. How the body is affected and in turns affects other bodies is at issue. In this view, it is not the intentional vitalism of "becoming" that is posited; rather this is a *passive* vitalism of *life* from the outside: life that is not controllable, life that "veers off" on its own accord, and life that matters to all animals, that is, force itself, or pure immanence, pure desire, and the striving of life that Spinoza names as *conatus*. Deleuze follows a monist philosophy in the footsteps of Duns Scotus, Leibniz, Nietzsche, and others: there is only an infinite universe, and each monad is only able to grasp that "world" from its particular vantage point embedded in an assemblage of forces that the body interiorizes and then acts on.

## Why Should All This Matter?

Unfortunately, there are those who do see the full importance of Deleuze and Guattari's importance for understanding identity in relation to "difference as difference" when it comes to art. He has been belittled, but not entirely dismissed by Amelia Jones in her *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts* (2012). She charges Deleuze (along with Guattari) for being ignorant or unaware of activist movements and art practices and theories that transformed thinking regarding the "subject" since the Second World War, a strange and perhaps unfair statement given their involvement in the 1968 student movements, Guattari's own political activism, and their critique of Lacan who Fanon embraced, and the development of the "male gaze," which Jones sees as the blind spot of Deleuze and Guattari. Jones admonishes Deleuze and Guattari for not mentioning Beauvoir and Fanon whom she sees as the early pivotal figures, and that Deleuze's examples are all limited to "white male artists" (notably Francis Bacon). She resorts to the usual complaint of their work being "typical of the kinds of mystifying, formalist, and modernist interpretations" (p. 234) of which she is suspicious. "Deleuze's interpretations are ahistorical," she asserts, "and deeply attached to metanarratives" (ibid.). Perhaps more laughable is her assertion that Deleuze "completely ignor[ed] the content of the work (including Bacon's typical upsetting and violent images of eviscerated and tortured bodies" (ibid.). Perhaps, and this is precisely what I wish to emphasize in what Jones sees as Deleuze's failure, is her statement: "Deleuze reduces Bacon's paintings to questions of energy and form such that they come to exemplify Deleuze's concept of the ruin of representation. . . . Strikingly absent for example, is any attention to Bacon's known public, and quite exaggerated queer self-preservation and life choices" (p. 234). Ultimately, for Jones "Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy eschews and poses itself against: the fixing of axioms and rules, the return to order [. . .], and the staging of singular 'correct' readings that rely on metanarratives" (p. 234). Without this contextualization, for Jones, there is no

anchoring concepts in relation to real contexts, but she is even more bothered that Deleuze elevates certain art (films and literature as well) that are capable of deterritorializing molarity (namely, clichés and commonly accepted narratives). This is all rather confusing, as she then forwards her own "feminist durational model" as being capable to doing precisely this. It seems Jones has a very limited understanding of the scope of Deleuze and Guattari's oeuvre, especially Deleuze's two *Cinema Books* and their development of a "minoritarian politics," which addresses ethical and political dimensions for change. Jones, unfortunately, has overlooked their radical claims and established her own "straw figure" of these theorists to advance her own position.

## Back to Gauguin

Color has been one of those problematic "visible" signs that raise the flags of racism, despite the overwhelming evidence that, anthropologically speaking, there is no such thing as "racism." The April 2018 edition of *National Geographic* prominently displays on its cover twin sisters of an "interracial" marriage where one sister looks "white" and the other looks "black." The journal special on racism is intended to query and overturn the Nati*onal Geographic's* own complicity in forwarding the racially exotic colonial perspective. One of the featured artists in this special edition is the Brazilian Angélica Dass (2018). Her *Humanae* ongoing installation consists of 4,000 portraits from 18 countries whose "flesh/skin tones" match up with the tones and shades on the Pantone color cards, considered the authority for color standards when it comes to settling copyright and advertising court cases. From a Deleuzean perspective of virtual multiplicities, color provides a good example (drawn from Bergson) of grasping what is at stake. The standard concept of color (like the awful "color wheel" of primary, secondary, tertiary colors) operates on a logic of exclusion that is negativity: primary colors mark their difference by extracting what is shared by all colors. They are "foundational," like the usual racial claims – white, black, red, yellow, and brown. Bergson's alternative, who Deleuze follows, is to take the "thousand and one different shades of blue, violent, yellow and red, and by having them pass through a convergent lens, brings them to a single point" (Bergson 1946, p. 225). This generates "white light in which [each shade and tone] participates, the common illumination from which it draws its coloring" (ibid). The unification of colors in white light gives us an understanding of monism as well as Leibnitz's perspectivalism of an infinite cosmological universe where each monad grasps the world in its own singularity. As Deleuze says, "the different colors are no longer objects under a concept, but nuances and degrees of the concept itself" (Deleuze 2004, p. 43). Colors, like monads, are the differential elements that are interpenetrated within light itself (the infinite universe), as modifications of a heterogeneous color space. They are not distinct elements within a homogeneous space as represented by the color wheel. The transcendental field has no distinguishable diverse elements; the only "unity" is light itself, and this light is infinite. Colors are but the various intensities of its "unity." This unity is a monism that can never be

completely grasped. Quantum physics presents this limit as there is dark matter that has yet to be understood. Such a Deleuzian perspectivism is used quite effectively by the Brazilian anthropologist Viveiros de Castro (1998) to show how different Amazonian-Amerindian cosmologies provide a "multinaturalism" [think white light here] a world populated by different species of subjects, from nonhumans to humans, each apprehending the world from its discrete point of view. All are considered "humans"; they differ only in the bodies that they have. The plant-animal-human divide disappears in this cosmology.

Despite these metaphysical speculations, on the "ground" the situation is quite different. Racism is an immediate affective sensation: be it color as skin/flesh; the quality of sounds, as in a foreign language; smells (of certain foods); the places where "they" live; or perhaps the clothes they wear. Such percepts and affects act directly on the nervous system. It is an encounter with abject, as famously described by Fanon when the child is confronted with his "difference." (This is a well-known and well-analyzed passage form *Black Skin, White Masks.* "Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened!" Frightened! Frightened! Now they were beginning to be afraid of me. I made up my mind to laugh myself to tears, but laughter has become impossible./ I could no longer laugh, because I already knew that there were legends, stories, history, and above all historicity. ... Then, assailed at various points, the corporeal schema crumbled, its place taken over by a racial epidermal schema . . ./ I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I subjected myself to an objective examination. I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism [sic], racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all: "'Sho' good eatin'" (Fanon 1967, p. 112).) For Deleuze and Guattari, this is a microorganic impact at the pre-articulate level – on the "body without organs" (i. e., a multiple and indistinct body that has not as yet been organized, the body prior to the distinctions of sensations that are made through the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, hands). This is a haptic occurrence that "touches" a body and, in turn, a body touches back or withdraws. Various emotional feelings then follow. In the famous exchange between Fanon and young Parisian boy, a "shock" is transmitted. Color has material force. Multiplicities rather than identities are at play. However inadequate in its presentation, Angélica Dass's artwork tries to demonstrate, through its "failure," that such a fluid multiplicity of portraits suggest an endless continuum, whereas the Pantone color chart is finite, providing only approximations. Theoretically her portraits can proliferate to infinity, as in Leibniz's infinite calculus that never reaches a limit. This perspectivism does not present a variation of the truth according to the subject, that is, some sort of relativism. Rather, as Deleuze (2002) puts it, this is "the condition in which the truth of a variation appears to the subject" (p. 19) Yet, Dass's project remains highly anthropocentric. What is one to do with the probability of crossing DNA with animal life to veer from the human genome? What of the transhuman where artificial intelligence (AI) becomes incorporated into our bodies?

We could do a thought experiment and imagine that each of Dass's "portraits" is a monad, which has interiorized its world from the 'outside' and expressed it through a work of art at its point of intersection. This would require incorporating fragments of

memories as events that each has experienced; the virtual potential of each expression as actualized provides its singularity. The qualification of this thought experience being that the resultant artwork is an encounter with difference wherein each "identity" has been deterritorialized, a divergent series taking place as there had to be movement in opposite directions for an event to take place. In brief, one can imagine each portrait marking an event as a "video" movie that is constantly playing until it goes blank or dark, coming to an "end" of that life. A near future science fiction, *The Final Cut* (2004) provides an inkling of such an imaginative scenario. After your death, a cutter edits the highlights of your memories that have been recorded since inception into a 2-hour video called a rememory for your friends and family to watch. Imagine that rememory is an accounting of a monad's individuation – "A Life" as Deleuze puts it, where significant encounters with the multiplicity of the outside charts its journey.

Let us now be even more generous to Gaugin. A number of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts enable us to grasp Gauguin as a "translator" in the colonial peripheries (see Levan 2007), to help us understand Gauguin in a much more complex way as creating an assemblage that is necessarily "false." ("The minimum real unit is not the word, the idea, the concept of the signifier, but the *assemblage* [...] The utterance is the product of an assemblage – which is always collective, which brings into play within us and outside us populations, multiplicities, territories, becomings, affects, events" (Deleuze and Parnet 1987, p. 51). Assemblage is a complex structure constructed concretely through the circulation of desire. It is context and place specific, mediating and anchoring phenomena, always undergoing changes, and therefore contingent.) His oeuvre, a creative endeavor with his mediators (Brittany, South Sea Islands, Tahiti, Caribbean, Martinique), enabled him to falsify the established ideas and truths of his own Western culture to produce "a truth" in its own right – a "false positive." Encountering these cultures as mediators enabled Gauguin to deterritorialize his own identity. His was a "line of flight" out of his homeland, a movement of deterritorialization that is always at risk, possibly ending in death. (Becomings are lines of flight (*fuite*), intensities, forces, affects – a means of escape, of fight, of leakages. Becoming is therefore a relay between internal and external notions of difference. Always happening in "between," as differentials of intensity, encounters are always performances; they are both processes and passages to the new; they are relational and affective (body to body, place to place, culture to culture). *Not* emerging "between" points, but "through the middle" (*in media res*) – ontogenic.) His *contact* with Martinique culture was haptic – a touch with sensation of the new surround, not a merger or an incorporation, but an emergence of the new: the creation of a *between* him and his mediators. As Deleuze (1995) says, "To say that 'truth is created' implies that the production of truth involves a series of operations that amount to working on material- strictly speaking, a series of falsifications. When I work with Guattari each of us falsifies the other, which is to say that each of us understands in his own way notions put forward by the other" (p. 126).

The assemblage Gauguin created has a certain style; he is able to open up new transformative territories through his artwork, new sensations, and a new regime of

signs through his imagined notebooks and paintings. The Christian narrative is reworked by Gauguin, rather than imposed. Gauguin is an "anomalous figure" in Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) terms, enacting a politics of positioning, traveling to the edges of the French colonial expansion. (Deleuze and Guattari define the anomalous as "neither an individual nor a species . . . but a phenomenon of border-ing" (1987, p. 43).) Gauguin's constant movement becomes a primary condition of his existence, undoing and redoing the assemblages he finds himself in.

Gauguin's becoming is, of course, only one side of the story when it comes to the difficult questions surrounding contact, as the ethical and political questions must be visited and revisited – what Deleuze (1990) calls "counter-actualizations." Mary Louise Pratt's (1992) work on transculturation identifies the "autoethnographic expressions" that the colonized engage in to resist their colonizers. These expres-sions are not autochthonous or self-representational; rather, signs are stolen from the colonizer and used in such a way that are neither their own nor that of the colonizers. The "Mud Men" of Papua New Guinea, for example, changed their masks to show wry expressions in resistance to the tourist crowds that began to watch their ceremonies.

We can leave this essay with the thought of Bourriaud's (2009) attempt to claim that contemporary globalized art has entered into an "altermodernist paradigm." Borrowing heavily from Deleuze and Guattari, Bourriaud replaces their rhizome with the "radicant," an ivy-type plant that develops its roots as it advances (p. 51). According to Bourriaud's thesis, the artist has become a *nomad* (cf. Deleuze and Guattari). Movement is a key global factor where "the exile, the tourist, and the urban wander are the dominant figures of contemporary culture" (ibid.). This individual resembles "those plants that do not depend on a single root for their growth but advance in all directions on whatever surfaces present themselves by attaching multiple hooks to them. [. . .] The adjective "radicant" captures this contemporary subject, caught between the need for a connection with its environ-ment and the forces of uprooting, between globalization and singularity, between identity and opening to the other. It defines the subject as an object of negotiation" (ibid.).

Radicant artists are like a "thousand and one" Gauguin's. "Diversity," writes Bourriaud, "is an aesthetics of the origin [multiculturalism], but it underscores that origin only the better to relativize it, presenting it as a simple point in a flickering, moving line. Not freezing the image, but always inserting it in a chain: thus could one summarize a radicant aesthetic" (p. 67). In brief, diversity now becomes a certain "queerness" as discussed above, a multitude of "anomalous" artists cast in a precar-ious world, each a singularity, a monad, in a perspectivalism that *now does seem to have a telos of extinction – for the future appears closed*. The deterritorialization of the Earth has been accelerated by the anthropogenic activity of (Western) "man." Can the global dispersal of peoples, each having to deterritorize themselves anew in various precarious situations lead to a "New Earth," as speculated by Deleuze and Guattari (1987; Guattari 2000)? Judging by contemporary populist politics giving rise to new forms of fascism, retrenchments into the orthodoxies of religion (Islam, Judaism, Evangelical Christianity), the ever-growing problem of nuclear threat, and

the strengthening of global capitalism under the wealth of 1% of the population, the answer is rather bleak.

## Cross-References

▶ Identity Construction Amidst the Forces of Domination
▶ Politics of Identity and Difference in Cultural Studies: Decolonizing Strategies

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# Beyond Domination

8

Enrique Dussel, Decoloniality, and Education

Noah De Lissovoy and Raúl Olmo Fregoso Bailón

## Contents

### Abstract

This chapter interrogates the colonial epistemology underlying familiar progressive approaches to education and proposes a decolonial approach building from non-Western standpoints. We start from an analysis of coloniality in Western culture and knowledge systems, grounding our account in the work of influential philosopher Enrique Dussel. We consider in particular Dussel's accounts of the methodology of analectics (which he contrasts with Western dialectics), the ethics

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of exteriority, and the epistemology of liberation. We then describe how both mainstream progressive and critical accounts of curriculum and pedagogy are interrogated by the challenge proposed within Dussel's work. Specifically, we show how his decolonial theses (a) suggest a confrontation with Eurocentrism at the level of knowing and being (not merely content or ideology); (b) challenge easy notions of reconciliation and solidarity in teaching spaces in favor of a dialogical ethics that systematically privileges the voices of the oppressed and marginalized; and (c) ask us to recognize the source of pedagogy and politics in the power and agency of the community (including communities of students), a source that teachers should remember and to which they should remain accountable. We conclude with a summative statement of the ways in which a decolonial approach to education based on the work of Dussel rearticulates, at the level of orientation, epistemology, and ethics, the meaning of an emancipatory commitment in education.

## Introduction

Latin American philosopher Enrique Dussel can be considered the founder of the *philosophy of liberation*. Recognizing that in general philosophy as a field of knowledge has existed without taking into account 80% of the world (including Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East), Dussel (1980, 1991, 2001, 2008) has developed a comprehensive new strand in philosophy in an effort to include those colonized nations that do not have a place in the map of philosophy. In his work, Dussel has had a crucial focus on epistemology. We first consider here the method that is used to build an epistemology of liberation according to Dussel (*analectics*), focusing on one of the key steps within this method: the analogic word. These methodological considerations illuminate Dussel's path toward a philosophy of liberation that can crucially participate in enabling colonized peoples to achieve liberation and, more generally, the condition of *decoloniality* as such, including through education (De Lissovoy 2010; Mignolo 2011; Walsh 2009).

Dussel's philosophy can be seen as part of the larger contemporary scholarly discussion of *coloniality of power* (Quijano 2008) – an effort to situate Latin America as the epistemological and foundational locus of enunciation from which a new cartography of concepts can be created to make visible the extent to which Mexicans, Salvadorians, Nicaraguans, Colombians, and others are authors capable of enriching the scholarly ethos. In this project, new epistemological locations can become visible that have not yet been "discovered" on the map of knowledge (Dussel 1980, 1991; Fregoso Bailón 2009; Mignolo 2011). However, Dussel's work also goes beyond the contemporary conversation on decoloniality, since he

has founded a different and specific strand in philosophy: the philosophy of liberation, which addresses the problem of colonialism but also elaborates a methodology of emancipation against and beyond the prevailing form of modernity. In this chapter, after outlining several of Dussel's most important theoretical contributions, we investigate their crucial implications for education. These include a rethinking of the relation between being and liberation in teaching, a shift from a superficial problematics of difference to a radical confrontation with alterity, and a more profound recognition of the power and agency of oppressed communities and students in particular.

## Key Philosophical Points of Departure in Dussel

### Dussel's Method: Analectics

The first epistemological-ethical moment in Dussel's philosophy is focused on allowing the Other to speak by herself/himself rather than having someone else speak for her/him. The Latin American (or indigenous, or marginalized) Other is situated "beyond" (*ano-*) the horizon of the "totality" of Western epistemology (Dussel 1985). (Through derived from the Greek particle *ano-*, Dussel (1980) prefers the term "analectic," which is similar to *ana*-economic, *ana*-Oedipus, etc.) The Other only exists as a peripheral entity in that landscape. Therefore, they cannot make sense of their experience if they use frameworks that have previously underestimated them. For instance, it does not make sense for Latin American peoples to start from European philosophical frameworks that were built from deficit perspectives according to which Mexicans or Bolivians are capable of producing coffee but not philosophy. These Others need to follow a different path in order to build new critical and militant epistemologies.

Dussel (2013) proposes *analectics* as a method grounded in the experience of Latin America as global and historical periphery. He outlines the construction of an *ana-logos*: a distinctive vehicle for the creation of knowledge, situated *beyond* the dominant rationality, rooted in the suffering of the oppressed. The suffering of the Other, as such, is already *ana-logos* (beyond Western epistemology). Knowledge is in this way fundamentally an ethical project. As Dussel puts it, it is necessary to start from a form of *ethical reason*: "Analectical affirmation, beyond the horizon of the world and the dominant community of communication, is the fruit of 'ethical-preoriginary reason'" (Dussel 2013, p. 337).

The point of departure for Dussel's methodology is the suffering of the Other, beyond the totality of the dominant. Analectics begins from the revelation of this suffering. For instance, analectics arises from the experiential knowledge of people that survive in territories devastated by multinational corporations, who struggle against occupation and annexation, or who confront systematic racial violence. The disruption of the Western episteme from the starting point of ethics is the root of the analectic method. In this process, Others are no longer just entities. In this way,

analectics undertakes a transontological process, a process that challenges the perspective that thinks of the oppressed just as empty data; against this perspective, analectics uncovers their dignity and agency. As Dussel (2013) explains, in reference to Bloch's principle of hope: "Bloch locates the *positive content* of the drive for hope at the transontological level, that is, *beyond* the dominating totality. The transontological is the analectic" (p. 337). The analectic method reveals Latin America – and the being of the Other more broadly – as an original philosophical starting point from which to build what colonial thought lacks (Fregoso Bailón 2015b).

In his volume *Método para una Filosofía de la Liberación* (1991), Dussel outlines the key moments in the process of the analectic method. One of the most important is the *analogic word*. According to him, the Greek term *logos* means to express, to explain, and to define. However, *logos* is a translation from the Hebrew word *dabar*, which means to speak, to say, and to reveal. The contrast between these two words is crucial. *Dabar* is the analogic word – the word that *reveals* the human being, rather than simply expressing a detached rationality. Expression (*logos*), as philosophical foundation, is problematic because it understands ideas in a linear, disembodied, and abstract fashion.

To further explain this point, Dussel (1991) makes a distinction between *analogía verbi* (the word that reveals what human beings are) and *analogía nomini* (the word that expresses what human beings want to say). As he explains: "Tratamos aquí sólo la analogía verbi...es decir, del hombre como revelación...lo originario de la palabra reveladora, no meramente expresora...analogía verbi no debe confundirse con la analogía nomini, ya que esta última es de la palabra expresiva" (Dussel, p. 189). "We are just talking about *analogía verbi*, that is about human beings as revelations...what emerges from the revealing word, not just about the expressive word... *analogía* verbi should not be confused with the *analogía nomini*, since the latter is about the expressive word" (p. 189, our translation). That is, the *analogia verbi* uncovers those spaces that Western knowledge is not able to illuminate.

The analectic method requires a listening to the word of the Other from the starting point of ethical-preoriginary reason (Dussel 1980, 2013). For example, Dussel points to the narratives of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) and of the Guatemalan Rigoberta Menchú as more than mere instances of discourse. These narratives represent a "praxis of semiotic liberation" (Dussel 1980) involved with struggles of popular liberation. Similarly, Dussel states: "Popular epic poetry of all peoples and of all historical moments is art par excellence. It is creative; it speaks of the ineffable, of what has never been told; it is the very narrative of popular liberation" (Dussel 1985, p. 126). The analogic word within the analectic method is a starting point for rescuing and listening to those revelatory narratives that reach out to human beings situated beyond the modern-imperialist totality, surviving in the exteriority of the social order. For Dussel, the *revealing* word impels the Other forward to enable it to reveal itself; in this way, the revealing word is a word that creates and acts. On the other hand, the word that only aims to *express* simply gathers what is needed for an abstract calculation of reason or argument.

## Exteriority

*Exteriority* is represented in the oppressed Other that is able to speak by himself/herself from his/her locus of enunciation using his/her concepts to express his/her reality without translating from those that have previously dismissed him/her. Latin America is the exteriority of the continent that we call America (Dussel 1980, 1991, 2001); in its exteriority it is the appendix that has not been written in the book of history. As Dussel (1980) explains, Latin American peoples have been historically exploited in many ways, from silver and gold mining in the past to the super-exploitation of labor and natural resources today. Their contribution is made invisible on purpose. In this way, their exteriority exists within the totality of the dominant but only on terms that benefit the colonizers.

However, if the analectic method is applied, the exteriority of the Other can be used as a locus of enunciation from which the oppressed can begin to build their liberation, as long as this is an autonomous process (Preciado Coronado 2014). For instance, millions of teachers globally only exist to *provide a service* (that is, to teach but not to educate); they are ignored as human beings and allowed only to survive in their exteriority. Totality takes them into account only as a disposable work force. Indeed, what they own is their exteriority, and nothing else. But this exteriority is a fortunate locus of enunciation from which to create new insurrectionary or trans-colonial discourses (Fregoso Bailón 2015a). In their struggles, as they expose the way that their work enriches empires worldwide, they can find the cracks in these systems and create insurgency (Walsh 2009). In philosophical terms, they are in a position to produce understandings that go beyond the dominant totality – a totality that does not have concepts to truly apprehend them. From their exteriority, the overcoming of totality becomes imaginable. As Dussel (1985) states: "The analectical moment is the affirmation of exteriority; it is not only the denial of the denial of the system" (p. 160).

Exteriority is "the ambit whence other persons, as free and not conditioned by one's own system and not as part of one's own world, reveal themselves" (Dussel 1985, p. 40). As the oppressed Other starts to become *someone* and not merely a fact or thing, her/his exteriority begins to overcome the dominant totality that oppresses her/him. In this project, Others should dare to build new concepts and discourses, because they cannot start from categories and perspectives that have previously despised them. In the process, they are able to go beyond totality's persistent affirmation of its certainty of itself. As Dussel (1985) explains, "The other is the alterity of all possible systems, beyond 'the same' which totality always is" (p. 43).

## Decoloniality: Toward Epistemologies of Liberation

The final stage in Dussel's philosophical project is liberation for the oppressed of Latin America and elsewhere. Dussel points out the extent to which Latin America is a crucial philosophical point of departure when it comes to challenging Europe's pretension of unidirectional universality. Modernity could not have come into

existence without Latin America; that is, Europe was able to construct modernity as a "universal" project only after accumulating the fund of capital produced by the free labor force and natural resources of Latin America. Nevertheless, Western thought still remains trapped in its own provincialism (neglecting, for instance, the fact that the first revolution of the twentieth century was the Mexican revolution in 1910 and not the Russian revolution in 1917). Dussel shows how that epistemological racism is still current today.

Dussel first asks whether it is even possible to philosophize (and therefore to create new epistemologies) in colonized nations. His affirmative response foregrounds the crucial premise of the specific socio-historic context from which that new philosophy would come: "Parece que es posible filosofar en la periferia, en naciones subdesarrolladas y dependientes, en culturas dominadas y coloniales" ("It appears possible to philosophize in the periphery in underdeveloped and dependent nations, in dominated and colonial cultures") (Dussel 1985, pp. 172–173). Thus, Dussel points out that we cannot think of philosophy as isolated ratiocination divorced from concrete geopolitical loci of enunciation. He then completes his statement by posing a key condition for the hypothesis of liberatory philosophy to be authentic for the peoples of the periphery: ". . .sólo si no se imita el discurso de la filosofía del centro" ("only if the discourse of the philosophy of the center is not imitated") (Dussel 1985, pp. 172–173). This means that for Dussel, oppressed peoples will not be able to gain liberation by means of dominative epistemologies that have been built without taking them into account. This means mapping Latin America and the globe differently (Mendieta 2008), and also that liberation entails true originality of thought.

What must be accomplished in order to realize original thinking in the periphery and among the oppressed? Dussel responds: "Dicho discurso para ser otro radicalmente, debe tener otro punto de partida, debe pensar otros temas, debe llegar a distintas conclusiones y con método diverso. Esta es la hipótesis." ("To be different, this discourse must have another point of departure, must consider other themes, must come to distinctive conclusions by a different method. This is the hypothesis.") (Dussel 1985, pp. 172–173). It is not possible to achieve new goals through familiar means. A new decolonial philosophy should have a different point of departure (an ethical approach to the stories and epistemologies of the colonized) and should work on unconventional subjects (e.g., narratives of the oppressed as epistemological artifacts). If we use alternative methods, we have the possibility of coming to distinctive conclusions – for instance, that we all, as human beings, are producers of power (De Lissovoy 2015). The central problem to confront in this regard is the way in which epistemological racism imposes restrictions upon knowledge, suggesting that the knowledge of the oppressed lacks theoretical and methodological "seriousness." After all, Latin America is only supposed to produce bananas or coffee, not philosophy or epistemology. Decoloniality means positioning the oppressed and the periphery as the locus of enunciation of serious philosophy, epistemology, and ethics (Mignolo 2011). Initially a Latin American concept, decoloniality can be useful for other categories of marginalized people as they work to expose the sophisticated forms of exploitation that empires worldwide still

deploy, even as these empires refuse those they exploit the opportunity to tell their stories.

## Dussel and Education: Toward a Decolonial Pedagogy of Liberation

Dussel's rethinking of ethics, liberation, and philosophical methodology has important implications for education. Whereas official educational programs throughout the Americas have generally worked to incorporate students into systems of oppression and alienation, Dussel's thought articulates the foundation for an educational project that works from the *beyond* of power and in fidelity to the dignity of those whom power has sought to erase. Therefore, Dussel's work can deepen the project of critical pedagogy, even as it exposes some of the epistemological limits of this tradition. Pointing beyond Western constructions of emancipation, his ideas can help us to sketch the outlines of a decolonial teaching that would live in a permanent state of rebellion against domination. We also note that while the immediate point of reference for Dussel's key principles is the oppressed and exploited classes of Latin America, the philosophical reach of his work – which suggests rearticulations of the ideas of democracy, difference, and autonomy that have been central to critical pedagogy – has implications for students and teachers everywhere who are engaged in education for liberation.

### Deepening the Struggle: Exteriority, Being, and Liberatory Teaching

First, the notion of *exteriority* in Dussel (1980), which we have outlined above, can serve as an important starting point for critical educators in thinking about the project of liberation. In contrast to the idea of marginalization, the subaltern, or even the oppressed, exteriority points to a more profound exclusion. Whereas familiar critical pedagogies aim to challenge the *reduction* and immobilization of subjectivity in students, Dussel's category of exteriority asks us to explore the ways in which power works to make the being of students *impossible* and unrecognizable within the totality of the system – just as, at the global scale, the value and agency of the "periphery" is unintelligible from the standpoint of the "center." As he shows, power's ontological violence goes beyond a domestication of the imagination to a conquest of being. As such, it demands more from us than mere critique. While critical pedagogy has generally insisted above all on a demystification of the ideological organization of schools and society (Apple 2004; Darder 1991), a decolonial pedagogy starting from the recognition of exteriority must aim for an openness to that which is *beyond* ideology, beyond the system, and beyond totality as the world of being and knowing. This opening does not aim for an inclusion of the Other in the given but rather at a *revelation* of exteriority that undoes the ontological order of power: "The face of a person is revealed as other when it is extracted from our system of instruments as exterior, as someone, as a freedom that questions,

provokes, and appears, as one who resists instrumental totalization" (Dussel 1985, p. 40).

Dussel's philosophy also demands that we rethink the dialectics of development that even critical education has taken as the basis for making sense of teaching and learning. In the Western philosophical and political framework defined by the conquest of the Other, "growth" and "development" – for the oppressed – can only be a process of alienation. The "autoeroticism of the totality" (Dussel 1985, p. 56) seeks, in order to secure its own ontological presence and intelligibility, to erase alterity. These insights suggest that we should be skeptical of the progressive impulse to fold marginalized students and communities into a democratic pedagogical and political project that does not interrogate its own cultural and epistemological roots. In this light, both Dewey's (1938/1997) notion of growth (a proliferative expansion of experience) and Freire's (1970) dialectics of conscientization (a collaborative unfolding of criticality) are ultimately incomplete to the extent that they are unable to contemplate the fundamental provocation of the exteriority of the Other – which impinges upon and splinters the imaginaries of development and incorporation that undergird Western concepts of both learning and democracy.

Dussel reconceptualizes liberation as an *analectical* process beginning from the world-shattering gaze of the Other. Confronted by this gaze as "a freedom that questions, provokes, and appears, as one who resists instrumental totalization" (Dussel 1985, p. 40), the coherence of the familiar space of pedagogy is undone, and teaching is thrust into crisis. As we have described, analectics names the liberatory force of testimony and revelation rather than the inert and incorporative logic of Western dialectics; an *analectical pedagogy* would refuse the settled truths of dominative reason. However, in contrast to poststructural approaches that seek to rest in a condition of indeterminacy, from a decolonial perspective this crisis opens the possibility for the emergence of a *new topography of being together* in the classroom and for a reorientation of teaching in relation to other standpoints and histories. That is, the purpose of the decolonial project is not to trouble the rationality of the given but rather to burst it open from the starting point of exteriority – a starting point that can also be understood, as Dussel (1985) explains, as an "interior transcendentality" that lives already as an erased and disavowed otherness within the familiar. To put the problem in more concrete terms: What would it look like not merely to "affirm" diversity in classrooms, but rather to center the being and knowing of marginalized students as the ethical and epistemological foundation for the education of all? What kinds of curricular rupture and reconstruction would this imply, and what kind of refounding of the being of the teacher?

## Rethinking Difference and Dialogue

The kind of cultural difference that is valorized in liberal forms of multiculturalism has been critiqued, from a Marxist perspective, as collapsing into the difference between niches in the capitalist market (McLaren 1997). Others have described how multiculturalism works to fetishize difference within a frame that celebrates the

tolerance and progressivism of the modern democratic state (Hale 2002; Nichols 2014). Dussel's account of the relation between power and difference shares much with these critiques; however, his philosophical discussion of the category of alterity points to the problem of difference and Otherness as constitutive of ethics itself. His account suggests not only that systems of assimilation and appropriation (capitalism and bourgeois democracy) must be confronted but also that a de-fetishized and radical responsibility to the Other is a cornerstone of social and political transformation. This position refuses separatism, but it also challenges the Western tendency (including in Marxism) to seek to transcend difference in the name of revolutionary unity. As Dussel (2008) puts it, in radical democracy we move from "Equality, Fraternity, Liberty!" to "Alterity, Solidarity, Liberation!" (p. 137).

Furthermore, as Dussel (1998) shows, Otherness in modernity is characterized by a fundamental geography/topography. Thus, Latin America has lived through conquest and dependence in and as a condition of *peripherality*. What is important here is not any physical distance, but rather the ethical and ontological externality of the Other – a constructed externality that conceals the intimacy of relationships of domination. Indeed, Dussel (1998) describes how the colonial encounter, and the Americas, were in fact the starting point for the historical sequence that became modernity, even as the fact of this historical agency has been refused and erased. More generally, his analysis shows that emancipatory projects have to contend with the invented and legislated *distance* of difference. For projects of emancipation, it is not a question of overcoming difference in order to assimilate the Other into the space of politics as alienation but rather of bringing near what has been refused in order to confront the center and undo it, to remake politics as a proximity and a lovingness that recognizes – and depends upon – alterity.

Dussel's work, we believe, demands that we affirm, and also rearticulate, the ideas of solidarity and dialogue that have been central to critical approaches to education. Certainly, authentic pedagogy depends upon building community in the classroom (Ladson-Billings 1995) and does so through committed and critical engagement that cultivates student voice (Giroux 1992). However, the responsibility to the Other that grounds Dussel's ethics necessarily interrogates topographies of power and knowledge that even progressive pedagogies tend to consolidate. Just as, in politics, "the *people* is transformed into a *collective political actor* rather than being merely a substantial and fetishized 'historical subject'" (Dussel 2008, p. 75; italics in original), in the same way the kind of community that critical education should work to create is characterized by a "hyperpotentia" or "state of rebellion" (Dussel 2008, p. 82) that is immediately organized against the constituted power of official knowledge, the state, and perhaps even the school itself (De Lissovoy 2018). In this way, we should recognize that the divisions and injuries of racism, patriarchy, and cultural domination that multiculturalism seeks to soften are essential moments of the alienated and fetishized power that circulates through and supports the coherence of familiar forms of teaching and learning.

As teachers, a decolonial analysis starting from Dussel suggests that we should not seek simply to affirm or include a range of voices in the classroom. Rather, we should seek to *center* those voices and standpoints that have been marginalized and

to decenter those that have been centered. In this teaching, we remember Dussel's *analogía verbi*; we search for and start from the *revealing word* that exposes and confronts, rather than merely affirming the given, and in this process, we confound the obscure but determinative epistemological topography of teaching. The point is not to exalt some students and bring others low, but rather to open the possibility for a *collective* project of reimagining community as *pluriversal* and potent in the face of relentless domination (Mignolo 2011). Under the condition of coloniality, learning, knowing, and sociality are *for* domination (in the Hegelian sense). Finding another meaning and purpose for these processes means uncovering and confronting the topography of violation that inhabits them. For instance, critical race theorists have pointed to the epistemological authority possessed by students of color with regard to understanding racism and oppression (Yosso 2005); how might we mobilize this authority in the classroom in a way that opens a complex and collective investigation into and against power? Dialogue in this context must be audacious, improvisational, polydirectional, and insurrectionary, as critical pedagogy turns inward to investigate its own discursive determinants. This is a political and epistemological process of *shaking loose* from the forms and habits of domination – a process that in the first instance will be felt as a deep dispossession by privileged students and teachers but perhaps also as a radical provocation.

## Power, Authority, and Autonomy

Dussel (2008) challenges the Western conception of power as *power over* (or domination) in the distinction he draws between *potentia* – which is the expression of a bottom-up potentiality of power grounded in the collective will to live of the community– and *potestas*, which is the institutional exercise of power. While *potentia* is "a faculty or capacity inherent in the people as the final instance of sovereignty" (p. 17), *potestas* is the empirical practice of power. The latter is necessary for governance but is also the starting point – when it is turned inward and fetishized – for corruption. The ethical exercise of power occurs when *potestas* is responsible to *potentia*, remembering the source of its authority in the people. This is "obediential power" (Dussel 2008) – an authority that acts as the true delegate of the people and works for their happiness, rather than working for itself or from a position of detachment. In the context of coloniality, obediential power knows intimately the exteriority of those it is charged with representing, and speaks with them, from the standpoint of their historical experience, against oppression and domination.

   In addition to serving as a framework for understanding politics proper, the distinction between *potentia* and *potestas* is a useful starting point for considering the relationship between teacher and students and for rearticulating the critical-pedagogical account of this relationship. Just as Freire (1998) argued that building democracy and dialogue does not mean that teachers should abdicate their proper authority, Dussel (2008) describes the way that power as potential must become institutionally organized according to an axis of "feasibility." However, he

emphasizes that the source and ground for power always remains *potentia* and that the delegated authority of the leader must be accountable to that collective human potential. In the context of pedagogy, we can thus begin to see the authority of the teacher as in fact an expression of the collective imagination and agency of students and to understand that it must be responsible in a basic way to that imagination. Dussel's (2008) analysis of corruption as the process in which institutional power turns inward, forgetting its source in the people, should serve as a warning against forms of pedagogy (including critical ones) that imagine a warrant for their authority before or separate from the being of the students themselves. From a decolonial perspective, education is the activity of a group in which the teacher has a special, but not separated, role and charge. Examples of this orientation are indigenous and cooperative forms of learning that initiate children, through direct participation, into the practices of a living community (Urrieta 2013).

Starting from Dussel's framework also has the advantage of expanding the notion of student agency. The progressive educational tradition has influenced us to think about this in terms of providing spaces for movement and experience (Dewey 1944/1997). However, the notion of *potentia* suggests that we should think about student agency "politically" as well, that is, as a capacity to think and intervene *autonomously* in a way that can transform educational and social structures (Cabrera et al. 2013). Once again, Dussel's analectics is helpful here, since it suggests an originary revelation of the capacity of students that evades the constrained and stepwise logic of learning in a dialectical frame. Moving beyond constructivist perspectives in education that emphasize student participation in generating knowledge and the discursive hybridity of classrooms (e.g. Gutiérrez et al. 1999), we might point to the fact of an "ecology of knowledges" (Santos 2014) that is always already active in education and that should establish the baseline for what we might call an *obediential pedagogy* that would work for and from the standpoint of students. This decolonial pedagogy would recognize the source of student knowledge and agency in the concrete historical experience of marginalized and yet resilient communities (Yosso 2005) and preserve a faith in and commitment to the project of emancipation.

In contemporary global youth-led protests against privatization, xenophobia, ecological destruction, and violence, we can see an autonomous pedagogy at work – a teaching in which youth invite their elders not only into collaboration for social justice but also into an attitude of respect for *hyperpotentia* and the wisdom of the marginalized – in this case, that of young people themselves (De Lissovoy 2014). Dussel's framework provides a scaffolding that might allow us to *follow the lead of youth* toward a radical care for and imagination of the future – an orientation that would have important implications for formal education as well. Progressive education has sought to create spaces in which children might *practice* their agency. By contrast, a radical and decolonial education, starting from Dussel's reconceptualization of power, might recognize the *immediate authority and necessity* of young people's agency for all of us and, in this way, open a more profound dialogue with students, especially students of color and marginalized students globally. A pedagogy more deeply open to the being and knowing of students

would find itself with fewer answers and more questions, with less anxiety and more anticipation, and also with a salutary humility in the context of the failure of adult society to confront planetary crises. And in the space of this pedagogy, students might begin to recognize themselves and their power in schools, instead of confronting – in the stultifying practices of conventional teaching (Rancière 1991) – a distorted reflection and a condescending narrative of the innocence and impotence of childhood.

## Conclusion

As the decolonial turn begins to be felt in the field of education, the work of Enrique Dussel anchors the challenge to Eurocentric reason with philosophical rigor and ethical commitment. As we have described, while sharing in Western critical theory's radical critique of capitalism and political domination, Dussel builds from a Latin American and hemispheric standpoint to challenge the underlying developmentalism and expressivism of the epistemological logic on which critical theory depends. In place of this logic, he centers the earth-shattering moment of revelation of the face of the Other and the oppressed, which *confounds* the given forms of knowing and being. The political and pedagogical embodiment of this ethos is the methodology of *testimonio* – the first-person narrative of violation and survival – which tears down the truth of domination in the narrative that it painfully gathers, healing the oppressed and warning the privileged at the same time. Dussel's epistemological ethics asks educators to attend to the testimonio of those who are refused and abandoned (to *exteriority*) and to the reordering of knowledge that their voices provoke. For critical pedagogy, this amounts to a shift from an emphasis on empowerment to a recognition of the already living power (*potentia*) of the marginalized and of students in particular. In this context, the power of the curriculum, of the teacher, and of the school can only be meaningful to the extent that it is absolutely responsible to and learns from its source in the community of students themselves. Just as the struggle against ongoing global processes of occupation and exploitation demands that we shift decisively from a colonial to a planetary paradigm (beyond the totality of empire), so too in education does the struggle against the coloniality of knowing and being demand that we refuse the fetishized power of instruction in favor of a collective project of learning and liberation. Against the prevailing educational logics of isolation and fatalism, the principles and directions that we have outlined in this chapter aim to make the possibility of this project visible.

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# Other Possible Worlds

**9**

## Queerness as an Intervention into Neoliberal Success Narratives in Education

Nadine Violette

## Contents

**Abstract**

The rise of neoliberal ideology has had significant implications for education. Scholars from various fields have argued that neoliberal processes have commodified both educational outcomes and the knowledge they yield. The internalization of neoliberal processes by student subjects reflects a similar commodification of the "self" to be marketed to future employers. Educational and other investments in oneself hold the promise of upward social mobility and success in an increasingly competitive workforce. Neoliberal success narratives that underlie curricula transmit this promise and are coincident with a neoliberal demand for normativity. This essay troubles neoliberal success narratives in

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education that necessitate a normative subject position. The analysis explores what messages about identity and success are present in New Brunswick's (NB) Personal Development and Career Planning (PDCP) curriculum document, a text that addresses wide-ranging topics including sexual health, self-concept, suicide prevention, and labor market preparation. Non-normative subject positions such as queerness, disability, and race can be used as entry points and interventions into neoliberal success narratives that necessarily demand normative subject positions. This analysis speaks to the consequences and contradictions of neoliberal education in Canada, while pursuing the reclamation of "failure" and "failed subjectivities" as means of combating totalizing neoliberal success narratives. This project is undertaken to redirect blame from non-normative subjects and their perceived "failures" to the constraints of neoliberal capitalism. Ultimately, failure can be employed to imagine other possible worlds, other possible curricula, and other possible trajectories for education.

## Introduction

> What kinds of reward can failure offer us? Perhaps most obviously, failure allows us to escape the punishing norms that discipline behavior and manage human development with the goal of delivering us from unruly childhoods to orderly and predictable adulthoods. (Halberstam, The Queer Art of Failure)

Critical theorists have argued that state-sanctioned education preforms the function of ideological reproduction. The rise of neoliberal ideology in particular has had significant implications for education. Neoliberal success narratives operate in education to ensure the production of neoliberal subjects and the reproduction of capitalist relations. This can be observed in the commodification of educational outcomes, the knowledge they yield, and student subjects themselves who come to embody capital and the requirements necessary for the sustainment of neoliberal capitalism. Educational and other investments in oneself enable this type of identity formation and hold the promise of upward social mobility in an increasingly competitive workforce. Neoliberal success narratives that underlie curricula transmit this promise while coinciding with a neoliberal demand for normative subjectivity. Within this framework of understanding, the myriad state-sanctioned curricula that address sexuality, gender, and work beckon critical attention to discern how such ideological processes are at work in curricula and to explore their implications for student subjectivity.

This essay will explore what messages about identity are present in the text of New Brunswick's (NB) Personal Development and Career Planning (PDCP) curriculum document. PDCP is a course embedded in NB's public schools that addresses

wide-ranging topics including sexual health, self-concept, suicide prevention, and labor market preparation (Government of New Brunswick [GNB] 2016). The stated purpose of this course is "for learners to gain the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to effectively negotiate the life/work process" (GNB 2016, p. 2). I conceive of this curriculum in particular as an identity text because the topics addressed are intimately related to student subjectivity. The "knowledge, skills, and attitudes" within the text are not neutral and are intended to have influence over students. Identity should be conceived of throughout this analysis as "embodied subjectivity," while non-normativity is used to encompass all such atomized identity categories that fail to conform to a dominant order. Although math, science, and social studies curricula are not immune to the same kinds of ideological undertones, a curriculum concerned primarily with gender, sexuality, and work is more likely to serve an overt ideological purpose (or perhaps have emancipatory potential).

The main points of concern that arise from the PDCP curriculum document can be observed in the language around employability, diversity, gender, and sexuality. Namely, the language of general curriculum outcomes (GCOs) is framed within a neoliberal discourse wherein the student subject is encouraged to think of their positive qualities and self-concept only in relation to employability and success. This approach promotes the internalization of neoliberalism by student subjects and frames personal "success" as inherently linked to capitalism; Foucault and others' work is useful in understanding this linkage. Despite mention of buzzwords like "cisnormativity" and "heteronormativity" in the curriculum, the language used to address gender and sexual diversity is nonetheless framed within a normative discourse. This inconsistency speaks to the politics of documentation as discussed by Sarah Ahmed and the issue of homo-nationalism. Taken together, these problematics fulfill a neoliberal purpose in education.

Using a queer theory framework inspired by theorists Jack Halberstam and Robert McRuer, this essay draws attention to the incommensurability of neoliberal capitalism and queerness. In alignment with contemporary queer epistemology, I employ the term "queer" (ness) with no concrete political referent so as to allow for the multiplicity of sign signification and so as to avoid a positivist one-dimensional critique. Queerness ought not be conceived of as a one-dimensional identity category but, rather, a transient hypernym for the intersectional scene of gender and sexual non-normativity (Eng et al. 2005). This analysis speaks to the consequences and contradictions of neoliberal education, while pursuing the reclamation of queer "failure" and "failed subjectivities" as means of combating totalizing neoliberal success narratives. This project is undertaken to redirect blame from non-normative subjects and their perceived "failures" to the constraints of neoliberal capitalism.

## Commonsense Neoliberalism

In his (2005) work *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, David Harvey outlines the global rise of neoliberal ideology and its successful infiltration of commonsense discourse (p. 39). Common sense in this context refers to the commonly held beliefs

and values that go unquestioned in a given community. As per Harvey's analysis, neoliberalism refers to various social, economic, and political liberalization and decentralization processes, in place of previous Keynesian economics, such that the market becomes the guiding force in place of the state. Proponents of neoliberalism insist that, under such circumstances of increased privatization, free trade, and limited social welfare, a natural and superior social order (akin to social Darwinism and "the survival of the fittest") will emerge to optimize productivity (Harvey 2005, p. 157). Several issues emerge from this point of departure, namely, related to its utter disregard for pre-existing power relations and class struggle. Under neoliberal circumstances, the prize of individual freedom comes at the immense cost of those negative freedoms and inequalities that render already-disadvantaged groups at a deficit (e.g., the freedom to be poor). From the commodification of everything to deconstructions of the American Dream, Harvey interrogates processes of neoliberalism and their hollowing effects on society, social institutions, and the minds of individuals. Although not explicitly an educational text, Harvey's work gives significant attention to adaptations in social practice and policy that arise to accommodate the neoliberal order.

## The Entrepreneurial Subject

The cutting back of state obligations that is characteristic of neoliberalism and the corresponding enforcement of individual responsibility onto citizens inspired a new form of subjectivity, that is, as Foucault insists: the entrepreneurial subject. In his (2007) lecture segment on *Security, Territory, and Population, 1977–1978*, Foucault provides a genealogy of the modern state and its rule over people. He discusses the concept of *police*, identifying it broadly throughout history as the set of practices used to control the acts of humans (pp. 313–315). Police is the disciplinary mechanism used to ensure that humanity is doing more than just living but doing so productively and in such a way that enables the development of the state's forces. This also implicates police as a set of means by which an individual's well-being is made to contribute to the state's force, meaning that what defines personal "happiness" and "fulfillment" must also contribute to the state's devices and utility. The state-sanctioned education of young peoples is a testament to the theory of police as youth are socialized through education and other means into state rationality. Foucault writes:

> ...Police will have to ensure that children acquire literacy... literacy involves everything necessary to fill all the offices of the kingdom, and so all that is required for exercising an office in the kingdom. Obviously, they must learn devotion, and finally, they must receive military training. So, the Bureau of Police, which is concerned with the instruction of children and young people, will also be concerned with the profession of each (pp. 319–320).

The individual internalization of this *raison d'état* is necessary for the sustainment of neoliberal capitalism as it allows the state to govern citizens through freedom.

In other words, citizens internalize police as a means of "self-surveillance" to ensure their own contributions (and the contributions of others) and are in turn granted freedoms by the state. While the state decenters itself from the lives of individuals, the market installs itself in its place. Under such conditions of neoliberalism, the entrepreneurial subject becomes personally responsible for the failings of external systems. Harvey notes that the practice of governing through freedom produces the conditions wherein "...individual success or failure are interpreted in terms of entrepreneurial virtues or personal failings (such as not investing significantly enough in one's own human capital through education) rather than being attributed to any systemic property (such as the class exclusions usually attributed to capitalism) (2005, p. 65). In other words, through their learned self-discipline, citizens internalize personal failings that may otherwise be attributable to the failings of neoliberal capitalism. The theory of police and its regulation of young peoples is, therefore, very much implicated in an educational project as state-sanctioned education has become a site of socialization for the entrepreneurial subject.

## Education and the Knowledge Economy

It is through educational and other investments in (and of course, inheritances of) one's own human capital that individuals become equipped to take on the various professions demanded by constantly evolving industries (Foucault 1978, pp. 226–227). The commodified process of human capital acquisition that enables entrepreneurial subjectivity is intimately related to the emergence of the knowledge economy: a system dependent on the intellectual capacities of its subjects. Linda Smith suggests that under such conditions, knowledge itself is commodified as an object of capitalist desire and internalized by individuals as human capital (2005, p. 124). As such, the education of neoliberal subjects serves a generative function to knowledge economies in pursuit of growth in the global neoliberal market. Fiona Patrick suggests that neoliberal education actually commodifies the student "self" and requires that "individuals carry the mode of production within them[selves]" (2013, p. 2). These conditions of subjectivity are known as bio-capitalism: a system wherein education's sole purpose is to cultivate the knowledge worker, the entrepreneurial subject, and the societal contributor, into a marketable good. David Branceleone and Stephen O'Brien explore this theme also, suggesting that the knowledge economy has rendered learning and curriculum outcomes into hierarchized commodities that translate into both use and exchange value. For instance, STEM learning outcomes offer particularly high use and exchange value as they are seen to equip students with the knowledges necessary for economic success and to correspondingly fill gaps in industry that necessitate highly knowledgeable expert subjects. The values and meanings imposed onto various learning outcomes are recognized by student subjects as forms of human capital to be pursued, internalized, and marketed to future employers. Using a Baudrillardian framework, the authors suggest that the signified meanings (values) of learning outcomes have been overtaken by neoliberal ideology and processes of commodification thus initiating a

state of hyperreality. Hyperreality in this context suggests a crisis of representation wherein prior "educational substance" outside of the knowledge economy is commodified (simulated) and consumed: education becomes an industry and knowledge is its product (Branceleone and O'Brien 2011). In other words, as neoliberal ideology intrudes on the referent of educational outcomes, their exchange value in the knowledge economy becomes more "real" than any prior meaning or educational substance. Not only is the student a consumer of knowledge in the form of commodified curriculum outcomes, but the student "self" becomes commodified as an amalgamation of human capital to be marketed (Patrick 2013).

## PDCP as a Neoliberal Text

The PDCP curriculum is doubly implicated as a neoliberal text: in addition to learning outcomes being infused with neoliberal ideology, the (un)intended purpose of the course is for students to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively navigate the neoliberal job market. Although this differs slightly from the actual stated purpose of the course, I argue that the GCOs are likely to yield such consequences. The various PDCP curriculum outcomes facilitate the commodification of the student self and allow for the formation of entrepreneurial subjectivity. This can be observed, for instance, in the PDCP GCO 1.0 concerned with fostering a positive "self-concept" and "self-image" in students and the skills necessary for effective communication with others (GNB 2016, p. 8). Although the outcome itself is well-meaning, the surrounding language suggests neoliberal motive. The pedagogical suggestions for learning and assessment that follow include having students create inventories of their positive qualities and other attributes that contribute to their "self" concept or image, to be expressed through collages, personal reflections, and even LinkedIn profiles. These inventories are to be kept in the students "career portfolios" and to be revisited throughout the course. In subsequent GCOs, the student's articulation of a positive self becomes even more explicitly linked to their potential for employability and appropriate self-portrayal to future employers (GNB 2016, p. 8). For instance, in GCO 1.3, students are asked to "choose a job listing and create a letter of application in which they describe themselves in the most positive manner" (GNB 2016, p. 10). Nearly all of the teacher resources provided for this section are sources that relate to career development as opposed to the psychology or guidance sources that might be expected of a unit concerned with the development of a positive self-concept, communication, and interpersonal relationships. Such a progression of GCOs links the students' "self-concept" and subsequent "self-worth" to employability and industry demand, thus signaling toward the commodification of the student self (Patrick 2013).

Neoliberal trends are observable also in GCO 3.3 concerned with students' ability to seek out and utilize "life/work information." Here, positive qualities of the self and personal values are linked directly to the potential for employability. For instance, students are asked to research and summarize three "high demand" occupations of interest to them (GNB 2016, p. 23). This exercise implies that success is

directly linked to students' ability and desire to fill an economic void and meet industry demand. This practice also ignores and marginalizes occupations that may not be considered "desirable" or "in demand" such as homemaking and other forms of feminized and/or menial labor. GCO 4.6 requires that students keep a detailed record of their most frequent leisurely activities. Thereafter, students are encouraged to reflect on how such activities may contribute to (or jeopardize) various aspects of future economic and career-oriented goal attainment (GNB 2016, p. 30). While this outcome may have the intention of "breaking bad habits" and encouraging "better ones" (and may very well have a positive effect in some cases), it attempts to link student leisure time with compulsory productivity and human capital acquisition. After all, time itself is a commodity and leisure time is no exception. In other words, the language of the GCO implies that in order to be successful in life, one's leisure time should necessarily contribute to one's attainment of goals (and subsequent economic contributions). Not only does this message place employment as common sense a priori to leisure, but it aligns with contemporary economic trends that demand entrepreneurial subjectivity (Patrick 2013; Rojek 2005).

The PDCP curriculum's promotion of the entrepreneurial subject also involves the normative framing of professionalism. GCO 4.1 requires that students become familiar with processes of self-marketing (e.g., interview skills) to determine the behaviors of a "good job seeker" (GNB 2016, p. 27). The good job seeker archetype is undoubtedly linked to ideology-laden conceptions of professionalism that are based on individual competitiveness and the acquisition of "professional" signifiers. In their (2013) work *Acting White? Rethinking Race in "Post-Racial" America*, Devon Carbado and Mitu Gulati suggest that dominant standards of professionalism are inherently white, masculine, and heteronormative. Marginalized subjects are thus required to adopt a "working identity" by employing various strategies of "passing" (as white, straight, masculine, cisgender, etc.) in order to excel and survive in the workplace. Adopting strategies such as "racelessness" empties the "undesirable" contents of the embodied subject and keeps them hidden in the workplace in an effort to preform "professionally." Non-normative subjects who do not practice such conformity in the workplace are thus intimately bound to failure. As such, professionalism and notions of success are used to control the subjectivity of working populations. Moreover, that their success is contingent on the disavowal of a marginal identity in the workplace contradicts the neoliberal embracement of "workplace diversity" as promoted in the curriculum (GNB 2016, p. 12). This suggests a reality wherein non-normative identities are embraced superficially because of their inherent contradictions with neoliberal notions of "success."

## The Queer Art of Failure

Perhaps the most notable limitation of the PDCP curriculum, a course deeply concerned with the success of young people, is its altogether omission of failure. In his (2011) work *The Queer Art of Failure*, Jack Halberstam argues that failure must necessarily be located within a queer genealogy. Queerness and other non-

normative logics complicate the traditional equation for success defined by dominant structures of cis and heteronormativity, patriarchy, neoliberalism, capitalism, colonialism, and so on (p. 89). With their subordinate logics, such non-normative practices as anti-capitalism, non-procreativity, gender subversion, and more become associated with failure: the failure to accumulate wealth, to procreate, to preform gender properly, and so on (Halberstam 2011, p. 89). This failure is further complicated by intersections noted by authors like Kobena Mercer, for instance, who demonstrate how black masculinity has been historically constructed not only through patriarchal means but also through imperialism and white supremacy: binding the black gay male subject doubly to failure as "standards" for the performance of successful masculinity necessitate both heterosexuality and whiteness (Mercer 1994, pp. 136–137). In his (2019) work *One Dimensional Queer*, Roderick Ferguson rejects the politics of inclusion that presents issues superficially and without attention to intersectionality. He states that homo-nationalist practices of inclusion appropriate queerness into an archetype of "the homosexual as a white and upwardly mobile consumer" (Ferguson 2019, p. 13). The mainstreaming of queerness thus presents a reality wherein queer subjects are included only insofar as they conform to the archetype provided (queerness can be cool, but only if you wear Louis Vuitton). Within this framework, that which does not conform to narrow definitions of the "successful" queer subject is nevertheless constructed and experienced as failure; thus, the experience and embodiment of failure is constituted in those subjectivities that proclaim it – the poor, queer, disabled, and racialized subjects. Understandings of failure are only further complicated in the presence of intersecting non-normative identities. In reciting Lee Edelman's work, Halberstam insists that "the queer subject has been bound epistemologically to negativity, to nonsense, to anti-production, and to unintelligibility" (Halberstam, 2011, p. 106). So perhaps, these mainstreaming processes occur in an effort to make queerness intelligible (and of course, profitable).

In place of dominant practices of homo-nationalism that inscribe queerness into a discourse of liberal hope and inclusion, Halberstam portrays failure as not exclusively negative and negativity as not exclusively destructive. On the contrary, Halberstam's project frames failure as a point of resistance, departure, and opportunity as he demonstrates the possibility of failure as a productive force (2011, p. 106). In embracing those grim realities of the queer aesthetic, characterized by negativity, failure, and so on, an important political statement can be made about current practices that render queerness and marginality, more generally, as non-normative. In embracing a politics of negativity as opposed to a politics of hopeful recognition, one might protest the continuation of those forces that render queer and other identities as failures in the first place. In doing so, Halberstam seeks to advance "queerness as a form of critique rather than an investment in a new form of normativity or life or respectability or wholeness or legitimacy" (pp. 110–111). Halberstam exemplifies this politics through reference to The Sex Pistols' song *God Save the Queen*: an anarchic and overtly negative parody of British monarchy and its ongoing dispossession of marginalized populations. Likewise, he discusses the autobiographical work of Quentin Crisp in *The Naked Civil Servant*, chronicling

him as "someone who chooses not to work and for whom work cannot be life's fulfillment" (p. 96). Writing during the great depression, Crisp's account models the embodiment of queer failure and the acceptance of a politics of negativity, because as Halberstam frequently recites: "if at first you don't succeed, failure might be your style" (Crisp 1968, p. 196). As per these accounts, non-normative rebel subjects can be observed inverting expectations, rejecting inclusion, and embracing alternative conceptions of "success."

## Failed Subjectivities

Halberstam remarks the reality of normative success: "in order for someone to win, someone must fail to win" (2011, p. 93). So too is this theme taken up by Robert McRuer in his (2006) work *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* as he demonstrates how neoliberal capitalism demands a compulsory hetero and able-bodied subjectivity (binding non-normative subjects to inevitable failure). In line with the school of anti-essentialism, McRuer writes of self-composition as a disorderly, messy, and fleeting process, contrary to authoritative definitions of self-making that lead to a (mythical) identity fixity. Such tropes can be observed, for instance, in the nonexistent "secure" masculine identity and the "finished heterosexual product" (p. 151). In his chapter on education, McRuer argues that many courses, on writing and critical thinking in particular, offered in neoliberal educational institutions "focus on demonstrable professional managerial skills" (p. 148) and are streamlined in such a way that assumes (and demands) that all students share a necessarily salient subjectivity. As such, these courses are less concerned with the embodied learning of students and more with factory-like efficiency (p. 148). He insists that dominant perceptions of composition wrongly portray an ongoing fragmented process as a "finished product" that is necessarily orderly and efficient, straight, and able, be it an essay or student subject. As such, current pedagogical practices do not accommodate non-normative subjects but rather consolidate, essentialize, and idealize those identities most compatible with success (as defined structurally). To revisit Halberstam's neologism: "in order for someone to win, someone must fail to win" (Halberstam 2011, p. 93). While capitalism necessitates the failure of some, neoliberalism inherently fosters the individualization and internalization of that failure while simultaneously bespeaking unkept promises of upward social mobility and success to those who "try hard enough."

## The Irony of Inclusivity

If non-normative identities (e.g., queer, racialized, disabled, etc.) are incompatible with operational definitions of success, what then is a (dis)course like PDCP actually doing? The irony of talking about neoliberal success alongside of queerness, disability, and non-normativity more generally lies in their incommensurability. PDCP GCO 2.4 asks students to explore such terms as "cisnormativity" and

"heteronormativity" and to create an action plan to "limit their impact" on sexual health (GNB 2016, p. 19). However, in limiting the scope of student inquiry to "sexual health," the curriculum implies that these structures only apply to that realm and neglects the countless barriers that hetero- and cisnormativity present in the context of *work*. This task benevolently strives to "limit" the impacts of hetero- and cisnormativity without fully acknowledging their reach. As a neoliberal text fostering the entrepreneurial selves of students (and looking favorably onto capitalism), any meaningful and substantial acknowledgment of hetero- and cisnormativity would require a broader critique of the course itself due to the interlocking forces of oppression that constitute social formations. In other words, the curriculum would need to be especially reflective of neoliberalism and capitalism, as well as ableism and white supremacy, to effectively administer lessons in cis- and heteronormativity. In using buzzwords like cis- and heteronormativity, the PDCP curriculum appeals to what Sara Ahmed calls a politics of documentation, wherein documents (curricular or otherwise) and their discourses serve as mere lip service to fulfill emerging neoliberal "diversity" auditing practices (Ahmed 2007). While it should not go unmentioned that implementing these concepts in curricula may provide some positive exposure, the lack of nuance has the potential to leave students feeling dissatisfied. Sandra Byers, Lisa Hamilton, and Bonnie Fischer's (2017) study is a testament to student dissatisfaction with PDCP and other sexual health education curricula in Eastern Canada (with samples from NB, Nova Scotia, and Ontario). Their findings suggest that students acquire more information about sexuality, gender, and sexual health via independent searches and peers than they do from formal education. These findings bolster the argument that implementing such concepts as cis- and heteronormativity in curricula haphazardly and without fully acknowledging their reach can leave student's feeling misinformed and render curricula less effective.

Moreover, the language that surrounds "diversity" in the PDCP curriculum promotes the "acceptance of individual differences" and essential "others." For instance, GCO 1.5 calls for students' to "examine the concept of diversity to foster the acceptance of others" in the workplace (GNB 2016, p. 11). Not only does such an approach consolidate identities, but it frames them only within the context of work. As if "diversity" is something that one might encounter in the workplace, something that one may need to tolerate, but never something that students will (or should) themselves embody. This course is thus framed within multiple discourses of normativity: be it whiteness, straightness, able-bodiedness, or the like. Supporting these processes primarily are teacher resources taken from official government websites, as opposed to critical theoretical resources that might help teachers and students to better understand such concepts as hetero- and cisnormativity, diversity, and difference. Although the course does provide limited instruction on important topics like consent, and gender and sexual diversity, more can be done to ensure students' critical understandings. Instead, the course dances around any profound radical notions by framing difference within a discourse of neoliberal success and inclusion. Although such "inclusion" might otherwise be perceived of as relatively

progressive in comparison to other provincial curricula, this analysis is (fittingly) framed within a politics of negativity for reasons made evident above. Importantly, such problematic messages about identity are not necessarily intentional or reflective of the will of civil servants and others involved in the writing and administering of curricula. Governmental constraints, lack of professional development, and several other factors impact how a curriculum is written, interpreted, and put into practice. And of course, the common-sense character of neoliberal ideology often keeps individuals from questioning the legitimacy of texts like PDCP.

## Failure as a Point of Resistance

> All our failures combined might just be enough, if we practice them well, to bring down the winner. (Halberstam 2011, p. 120)

What contributions might failure bring to the political project of "queering" educational spaces and texts? In his (1982) work *The Subject and Power*, Foucault suggests that "maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are" (p. 78), because only in doing so can we imagine those other possible worlds outside of ourselves and the structures that bind us. Perhaps queer failure, as Halberstam suggests, can be conceived of as a contribution to this radical project. Throughout this chapter are various appeals to the impossibility of an authentic self. Echoing Halberstam's claims to a politics of negativity, McRuer proposes that in certain moments, we are all queer and disabled, although always transient, and that these moments can in fact be productive (McRuer and Berube 2006, p. 157). In quoting Sedgwick, McRuer suggests that, if heterosexuality and able-bodiedness are conceived of as orderly self-compositions to aspire to, as standards, as origins, then both queerness and disability are necessarily situated in "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances, and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's sexuality [or bodily, mental or behavioral functioning] aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically" (2006, p. 156). In other words, the transience that characterizes subject composition, the reality of inauthenticity, *declares us all failures*. If we are all, to varying degrees, shy of the norm (in terms of provisionary positionality), we are all, in some moments, destined to failure. It is no secret that the grand promise of neoliberalism, that is, the "American Dream," is a fiction: it is the ultimate unkept promise to the majority of people (Harvey 2005, p. 79). Under such circumstances, is success itself not then a fiction that one can only ever aspire to? As heterosexuality as origin is never truly identifiable, and as men exist only insofar as they insist on performing masculinity, our aspirations to neoliberal success, and to normativity, are only ever illusory. If identities are only ever insecure, is curriculum simply trying to hold them together? If success is mere fiction, I wonder what a course on failure might look like. And more importantly, I wonder how it would make the world a better place.

## Conclusion

The foregoing analysis uses the New Brunswick PDCP curriculum document to illustrate the relationship between the entrepreneurial subject in pursuit of neoliberal success narratives and queer failure as a potential site of resistance. A text primarily concerned with gender, sexuality, and work, PDCP seeks to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to effectively navigate the workforce, diversity landscapes, and the creation of a positive self-concept. As such, the curriculum can be conceived of fittingly as an identity text that serves an ideological purpose. Underlying discussions of career planning and professionalism is a neoliberal discourse that can work to commodify the student self and encourage entrepreneurial subjectivity; Harvey, Foucault, and others provide useful insight into these disciplinary processes. The text's claims to diversity and inclusion are displaced by gestures of "workplace tolerance" and contradictory aims, thus yielding to a politics of documentation. While the PDCP text reveals itself as a neoliberal discourse, so too do its consequences for student subjects become apparent. A queer failure framework allows for an intervention into neoliberal success narratives that underlie the curriculum and signals to the possibility of reclaiming education (and ourselves) from neoliberalism.

## Cross-References

▶ A Decolonial, Intersectional Approach to Disrupting Whiteness, Neoliberalism, and Patriarchy in Western Early Childhood Education and Care
▶ Eco-queering US K-12 Environmental Curricula: An Epistemic Conceptual Investigation into Queer Pessimisms Serving as a Pragmatics to Navigate Current Environmental Castrations
▶ Identity Construction Amidst the Forces of Domination
▶ Pedagogy and the Unlearning of Self: The Performance of Crisis Situation Through Popular Culture

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# Part III

# Pedagogy and Power

# Vitality of Heritage Languages and Education

**10**

## The Case of Modern Greek in Canada

Themistoklis Aravossitas

## Contents

### Abstract

One of the concerns of minority/immigrant communities and their members is to maintain their heritage through the intergenerational transmission of their language and culture. Such a process involves not both family language planning and heritage language education (HLE). This chapter examines the vitality of community languages using the Greek language in Canada as a case study. The role of the community in promoting and sustaining heritage language education is the main focus of this study which includes a theoretical and an empirical part. In the first part, we explore the phenomena of language shift and language maintenance and examine parameters that affect the ethnolinguistic vitality of minority groups, such as institutional support through education. In the empirical

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part, we analyze research findings related to educational needs and challenges of HL learners and teachers. The study shows that in order to overcome social and educational barriers in promoting the teaching and learning of Greek as well as all community languages in Canada, there has to be a systematic attempt by community and other stakeholders to improve the motivation of teachers and learners and modernize the curricula of heritage language programs.

**Keywords**

Language and culture in education · Heritage languages · Language maintenance · Community-based research in education · Ethnolinguistic vitality

## Introduction: Language and Community

With the intention of representing the linguistic diversity in the world, Garcia (1992) used the "Language Analogy Garden," emphasizing how monotonous the world would look if all gardens had the same monochromatic flower. The diversity of languages, like the diversity of flowers in a garden, makes human experience more colorful and interesting. However, some languages become stronger than others simply because they are used by the majority of the population in a given society. Hence, they encompass more prestige and cultural, political, and economic power in comparison to minority languages that have a relatively smaller number of speakers. According to Grin (1990), a minority language is one spoken by less than 50% of the population in a given geographical area, which is usually a nation-state. Two additional criteria are used for the distinction of minority languages: (a) that they are in competition with the dominant language(s) and (b) that the two languages, the minority and majority language, differ considerably. In the European Charter for Minority Languages (Council of Europe 1992), minority languages are classified either as regional (i.e., spoken traditionally within a given territory of a State by a minority of the population) or (b) non-territorial (i.e., cannot be identified with a particular geographical area). Skutnabb-Kangas and McCarty (2008) observe that it is "power relations" – not numbers – that constitute the defining characteristic of minority languages, offering the example of Navajo speakers who are the majority within the Navajo Nation land, while their language is in fact "minoritized," as is the case with several indigenous languages in Africa (Lodhi 1993). Although there is no international consensus on the characterization of minority groups, language is one of the central aspects in the definition of minorities by the United Nations Minorities Declaration (1992) which states that "minorities are based on national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity" (United Nations 2010, p. 2).

Language can be viewed as "a system of communication used by a particular country or community" (Oxford Dictionaries 2018a), whereas community as "a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common" and/or as "the condition of sharing or having certain attitudes and interests in common" (Oxford Dictionaries 2018b). Cultural minority communities may be

defined either geographically – when there is a significant concentration of their population in a particular region – or by cultural features which include language, music, food, traditions, media, and religious institutions that create bonds among group members. For example, the Greek community in Canada which is examined in this study is defined both by demographic (i.e., people of Greek descent who live in Canada) and by the cultural criteria, among which language is of vital importance (Vitopoulos 2018). It is extremely useful here to emphasize that a minority/immigrant cultural community is further influenced and shaped by the dominant group's culture and language. Thus, the Greek community in Canada is different from the Greek community in Germany, not only in relation to the inter-community characteristics (language, religion, music, etc.) but also in terms of unique external/mainstream factors. Many members of the Greek community in Canada, for instance, celebrate Thanksgiving and Halloween or enjoy playing ice hockey and curling. In some of these features, they are more similar to "Canadians" than they are to Greeks. Furthermore, Greeks in Canada might have more similarities to Greeks in the United States or to Greeks in Australia due to the English language commonality than to Greeks in other parts of the diaspora such as Russia or Turkey. Obviously, there is a synthesis of identities that composes the twofold or hybrid Greek Canadian identity which entails two sets of experiences of the Greek Canadian community members: the experiences of the country of origin and the experiences of the country of residence, which compose "diachronic" and "synchronic" identities (Gallois 2016).

## Language Maintenance, Language Shift, and Heritage Languages

Baker (2011) refers to language maintenance as the language's relative stability vis-à-vis its use in specific spaces (e.g., home, school, community events), its practical use by both children and adults, and the number and distribution of speakers of that language. According to Fishman (1966), the term language shift denotes the behavior of a whole community, a subgroup of the community, or an individual. On the other hand, for De Vries (1987), language shift is an individual's transition from one linguistic community to another one. Weinreich (1964) offers another definition of language shift: the gradual transition from one language to another as the norm. Essentially, both language shift and language maintenance refer to any minority community's supplanting of their native language with the dominant society's language.

Studying a group of US native bilinguals who had developed high levels of proficiency in their HL as well as in English, Tse (2001) found that biliteracy development is fostered by the concurrence of two sets of factors associated with language vitality and literacy experiences. The vitality factors included parental, institutional, and peer support that resulted in acceptance of the heritage language and culture as part of the individual's identity. HL proficiency is also attributed to receiving guidance from adults and peers who are more literate in the HL and provide support to the learners for meaningful use of the language outside the confines of the classroom. In other words, learning and using the HL in natural,

social contexts in the community and in the home as well as studying it in a school setting are crucial factors for the maintenance of the language.

For instance, in the case of second-generation Korean speakers, Cho and Krashen (1998) identified four predictors of HL competence: having parents who use the language at home, opportunities to visit the "home country," access to reading materials in the HL, and access to television programs in the HL. Parental use of the HL, particularly the role of the mother as a HL user in the home, is one of the most decisive factors for the intergenerational transmission of heritage languages (Hinton 1999; Clyne 2003). According to Tse (2001), access to reading materials in the HL is linked to higher levels of proficiency in the HL.

After examining several studies on the development of HL competence in relation to age and motivation, Cho et al. (2004) concluded that HL competence usually declines as children grow without always affecting their positive attitudes toward their HL unless they experience ethnic ambivalence during adolescence (Tse 1998). They also observed that when many HL speakers become adults, they are motivated to regain competence in their HL mostly for reasons related to family relationships. The extent to which HL speakers may reach high levels of competence in their HL depends on factors such as their generational status (as mentioned above, first- and second-generation members are usually more proficient than third- and fourth-generation), the age and order at which they acquired the HL and the dominant language, and the amount of input that they received in the HL in the home or a school (Carreira and Kagan 2011).

Lambert (1975) coined the terms "subtractive bilingualism" and "additive bilingualism" to highlight the distinction between two types of bilingualism: second language acquisition leading to subsequent loss of one's first language and culture or second language acquisition that only adds to the first language. This distinction was significant as it emphasized the social conditions of bilingualism (Reynolds 1991) and was supported by research in Canada (Cummins and Swain 1986; Genesee 1987; Swain and Lapkin 1991).

Garcia records that the study of language in society emerged in the United States during the 1960s within the Sociology of Language field, and it was marked by the work of Joshua Fishman who introduced the concepts of language maintenance and language shift. These notions at the time were "tied to a diglossic theoretical framework, claiming that only with strict language compartmentalization could an ethnolinguistic group maintain its language" (García 2011, p. 6). Developments in bilingual education following the ethnic movements for greater rights had various results according to the level of power gained by minority groups. Garcia observes that in the best-case scenario for minority groups, bilingual education programs developed curricula in protecting the dominance of the language of the nation-state and preserving the maintenance of the minority language as a link to the identity of a single ethnolinguistic group. But in most cases, a minority language would only be used in transitional bilingual education models, not designed to upset the 'unequal competition' between the dominant and the minority languages (García 2011, p. 6).

Another attempt to explain and predict the process of language maintenance or shift in relation to minority languages is through the theory of core values (Smolicz

1992). According to this theory, each group has distinct cultural values that are fundamental to its continued existence as a group; those members who reject these values face the risk of exclusion from the group. The national language is considered the most important value for some cultural systems and certain ethnic groups and is used as the primary defense mechanism against assimilation.

Language maintenance has also been associated with its socioeconomic value. The concept of "linguistic market" was introduced by Bourdieu (1982) as part of a theory that associates linguistic ability with capital. Depending on how useful a particular language is in everyday communication within the broad society, it gains a certain level of value which Bourdieu refers to as linguistic capital. Similarly, Tandefelt (1992) points out that if knowledge of a specific language is not "in demand," it is expected that the language will gradually lose its value. Accordingly, Fishman (1985) found that ethnic group members have no incentive to maintain their language if it is not used for services or the job market within mainstream society. Based on the factors affecting retention or attenuation of a minority language, Fishman argues that the most important domains where the battle for the preservation of a minority language is fought are family, friendship, neighborhood, school, church, profession, government mechanisms, and media. Research shows that family and the immediate social environment are domains associated with values of intimacy, while the other domains are more related to validity which promotes the use of the dominant language at the expense of the minority language (Fishman 1979).

Moreover, the frequency of language use is associated with a positive attitude toward language and therefore the language maintenance. However, abandonment of the mother tongue or combined use with other languages by the parents when communicating with their children can result in intergenerational weakening of the mother tongue which can eventually lead its total decline (Siren 1991). Denison (1997) refers to this mechanism as linguistic suicide, that is, the situation in which parents do not deem it appropriate to pass on their mother tongue to their children because of its low validity. In addition, Holmes et al. (1993) add the geographical distribution (of the minority community members) as a factor significantly affecting language maintenance. As long as immigrants are concentrated in a particular area, retention of the mother tongue is supported, whereas living in isolation from each other brings about language loss.

This phenomenon is explained by the collective power of the minority group against the linguistic and social pressure applied by the dominant group (Holmes et al. 1993). One of the noteworthy demographic factors is the generation of immigration, as it is the most important variable in predicting language maintenance; a number of studies reveal that for each subsequent generation, there is a weakening in the minority language (Alba et al. 2002). Finally, the social/institutional factors also include representation of the minority language in official or informal social institutions. Mass media, including online social media, are considered social institutions that affect decisively language and culture maintenance, since they have the power to raise the prestige of the minority language (Clyne 1991).

The cultural factors are related to religious and educational infrastructure in the mother tongue, the degree of preservation of the ethnic identity, and the degree of contact and correlation between the two cultures, that is, the culture of the country of origin and that of the host country. One of the cultural factors is definitely the status or the validity of a language. More specifically, if we accept that the relationship between languages and language groups could be described as superiority and subordination, then the fate of the subordinated, which in our case is the minority language, is the shift to and the assimilation by the dominant language group. It has been observed that immigrants who wish to elevate their social status pay particular attention to learning the dominant language and attain competency in all levels of speech. Lieberson notes that languages do not differ from each other in their inner strength, but the speakers or the nations associated with them vary in power which inevitably affects the existing standards of language use (Lieberson and Dil 1981).

The last category of factors that are associated with the maintenance or shift of a language pertains to purely linguistic parameters. According to Clyne (1991), language shift is more frequent among genetically related languages; therefore, it is related to the degree of similarity between the minority and the dominant language. In addition, maintaining the minority language is directly linked to domains of use by the speakers, if, that is, beyond the family environment, the use expands to other social fields of action. Finally, contribution to language maintenance is attributed to the possibility of learning the mother tongue in the host country, especially for the younger generations of speakers, for it is the youth who determine the viability and future of the minority language.

The theory of ethnolinguistic vitality, by Giles et al. (1977), supports the idea that vitality is the driving force that makes an ethnolinguistic group behave autonomously and act collectively in the course of intergroup interactions. Ethnolinguistic vitality includes a number of components: (a) the validity of the group (sociopolitical and economic status); (b) demographic factors that include the population of the minority group, its concentration, and the geographical proximity of the country of origin; and (c) institutional support that the minority group receives by official agencies of the host country, such as cultural support and teaching of the minority language in formal education. This hypothesis assumes that the more positive a minority group's status is on the above variables, the more likely it is that it will preserve itself as a distinct group. Conversely, a group with negative vitality indicators faces collective extinction. In search of connections between the state of HLE and the Greek ethnolinguistic vitality in Canada, I cross-examined several language maintenance models with the theory of Giles et al. (1977) who suggest that language status, institutional support, and community demographics can determine the vitality of an ethnocultural community.

Issues related to language maintenance or language shift have been addressed by Conklin and Lourie's (1983) framework which outlines various factors according to three broad categories. These include (a) political, social, and demographic, (b) cultural, and (c) linguistic. Since there is a direct correlation between the number of HL speakers in a community and the group's numerical (thus political) robustness, both in comparison to the dominant group and other minority communities, it has

an obvious impact on the political, social, and demographic category. Other significant influences on this general category include the possibilities for labor market integration in the host country; the speakers' socioeconomic class; their bonds with the homeland and intention to return to it; and the stream of immigration from the homeland. Additional factors worth noting include the host country's proximity to the country of origin and the degree of cultural difference between the ethnic group identity and the dominant language group identity.

Under cultural factors, one can point to the importance of mother tongue institutions; cultural and religious ceremonies performed in the home language; the inextricable emotional link between ethnic identity and the mother tongue; the significance of familial and community ties; and the value placed on formal learning of the heritage language. According to Conklin and Lourie (1983), certain factors can either enhance language maintenance or contribute to language loss when not available. They organized these factors into three categories: (a) politico-socio-demographic factors, (b) cultural factors, and (c) linguistic factors.

Examining minority language maintenance in the United States, Fishman (1985) delineated three useful criteria for forecasting whether a particular community language would survive. These criteria are (1) the number of mother tongue claimants; (2) the number of relevant cultural institutions, such as schools, churches, and media; and (3) an index of the relationship between (1) and (2). Six major factors of language vitality have been designated by UNESCO (2003): (1) linguistic transmission between generations; (2) the total number of speakers; (3) the percentage of speakers within the total population; (4) current trends in established language domains; (5) response to new domains and media; and (6) language education and literacy materials. Exploring the required conditions for language vitality and revitalization, Jo Lo Bianco (2008a, b; Lo Bianco and Peyton 2013) developed the framework introduced by Francois Grin (1990). The result was the Capacity Development, Opportunity Creation, and Desire (COD) framework. It proposes (1) the development of the young learner's linguistic capacity; (2) the creation of opportunities to use language; and (3) an effort by community members to encourage the active practice of the language.

Summarizing the factors of language maintenance and ethnolinguistic vitality, they can be categorized as (a) those that depend on actions undertaken by the community and (b) those that are affected by external (to the community) conditions. A HL community has minimum stimulus over its language "market value" which Bourdieu (1982), Fishman (1985), and Tandefelt (1992) consider quite an influential factor for language maintenance. Neither can it control whether its language is similar to the dominant language of the society (Clyne 1991). From the variables of ethnolinguistic vitality presented in the framework of Giles et al. (1977), it is clear that the first two (i.e., language status and demographics) cannot be controlled by any immigrant community. In the case of Greek HL in Canada, the community has nothing to do with the fact that (a) it uses a highly respected language of a significant academic value and that (b) the Greek migration influx to Canada was interrupted for several decades before it resumed with the new migration wave caused by the financial crisis in Greece (Damanakis et al. 2014). The third set of factors, which

is described as "institutional support" and includes provision for HLE, is the only aspect of ethnolinguistic vitality partially dependent on actions undertaken by the HL community groups.

The framework of Conklin and Lourie identifies additional areas which are controllable by a community. The concentration of an ethnic group in a specific region, the financial and social status of its members, and the organization of community institutions which provide opportunities for language learning and domains for language use are all contingent to a certain degree on how each HL community perceives its identity and builds attachment and cohesion around it. Furthermore, in Fishman's framework, as well as in Grin and Lo Bianco's model and also in UNESCO's list of language maintenance factors, HLE is consistently mentioned or implied as one of the crucial language vitality and maintenance indicators. Subsequently, the obvious starting point for a community group that wishes to undertake any kind of action in order to boost its vitality rate and increase its language maintenance efforts is to develop and maintain a reliable HLE system. In the next section, we examine aspects of community research concerning the teaching and learning of Greek in Canada.

## Greek Heritage Language in Canada

The Greek community in Canada has an estimated population between 250,000 and 300,000 members (Aravossitas 2016), mainly immigrants from Greece and their descendants. During the twentieth century, in the period between the 1950s and the 1970s, Greek migration to Canada reached a peak (Historica Canada 2017), followed by approximately 30 years of inactivity until a new "crisis-driven" migration wave appeared after 2009 (Damanakis et al. 2014). Greek Canadians tend to join organized communities which are found in all major Canadian metropolitan centers such as Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, and Ottawa. Those communities offer diverse and multifaceted services ranging from language schools, churches, and cultural events. Modern Greek is taught as a heritage language (HL) in the context of a complex semiofficial educational system which varies from province to province and involves both public, private, and community organizations (Constantinides 2001, 2014; Aravossitas 2016). In Ontario, numerous public school boards offer Greek language courses through the Ministry of Education-mandated International Language Programs (ILPs) which involve 2.5 h of instruction per week usually taking place outside the day school curriculum, in weekend or weekday evening classes (Ontario Ministry of Education 2016).

In addition to the ILPs at the elementary and secondary levels, Greek language programs usually 4–6 h long weekly are also offered by community groups and private schools. In higher education, Modern Greek is taught as part of Hellenic Studies Programs offered in six Canadian universities: York University and the University of Toronto in Ontario; McGill and the University of Montreal in Quebec; Simon Fraser University in British Columbia; and the University of New Brunswick (Aravossitas 2016). Modern Greek university programs operate mainly under the

financial support of Hellenic foundations through endowments (Gallant 2006) and include language courses for beginners, intermediate, and advanced levels as well as courses of Modern Greek culture, history, and literature. Overall, across Canada approximately 10,000 students learn the Greek language annually; the number of Greek language instructors is estimated at 300 (Aravossitas 2016).

## Theoretical Framework and Research

In the Greek education scene, the term heritage language (HL) is not very common. Teaching and learning Greek in the diaspora is usually covered by the terms native, second, or foreign language education. However, in Canada HL is already in use since the 1970s to identify the programs of the languages used by a plethora of ethnic immigrant communities (Cummins 2014). HL is also used internationally as a term attributed to those languages used in a family environment without being the official or predominant ones in the wider social environment (Valdes 2001). This is not just a terminology issue, since HL education has different characteristics than the second or foreign language domain (Kagan and Dillon 2008).

Among other characteristics, HL learners tend to identify more easily with operationally diverse uses of the language and to develop progressively their listening comprehension skills to an extent that goes beyond the development of their other language skills (Polinsky and Kagan 2007; Valdes 2001). They can generally use a wider range of vocabulary than second language learners (Carreira and Kagan 2011), because the acquisition of a HL is linked to their social activity in authentic communication environments. Language use in the home or in community functions attributes to interaction that evolves naturally as opposed to the "artificial" environment of the school class (Lynch 2014). Regarding their speaking skills, HL learners are highly heterogeneous, as many demonstrate similar abilities to natural speakers, while others have very limited command of the target language (Carreira and Kagan 2011, p. 371). Most of the problems they face in connection to the HL are associated with understanding and using complex syntax and grammatical phenomena (Benmamoun et al. 2010). A very comprehensive way to outline the diversity that HL instructors usually face in their classrooms is offered by Polinsky and Kagan (2007) who formulated two definitions of HLLs: the "broad definition" describes those who have a familial or cultural connection with the HL without an actual ability to use the language and the narrow definition, on the other hand, is for individuals who acquired the language to some extent but did not completely learn it before switching to the dominant language.

In recent years, several studies have been conducted for Greek language education in Canada, as part of an increased community-based research activity (Aravossitas 2014, 2016). Most research initiatives tend to explore the prospects of the community's ethnolinguistic vitality and to examine language shift and language maintenance issues, focusing mainly on the state of Greek language education and the quality of community-operated Greek language programs. Czaykowska-Higgins (2009) describes such studies as community-based language

research, which (a) is undertaken by (or in collaboration with) community members as researchers and (b) is aimed at promoting knowledge in relation to the language that the community uses.

In this context, the present study attempts to draw conclusions on the educational conditions governing the teaching and learning of the Greek language in Canada by focusing on two protagonists: the learners and the teachers (Aravossitas and Oikonomakou 2017; Oikonomakou et al. 2017). Using questionnaires and interviews with two groups of participants – 85 university Greek language students and 25 Greek language teachers, respectively – we rely on a theoretical framework of recent HL research findings to analyze two vital issues in Greek/HL education: (a) teaching mixed classes of heritage and foreign language learners and (b) identifying the professional development needs of Greek language instructors who teach mainly HL learners.

The first part of our investigation involves students enrolled in two undergraduate university courses of Modern Greek language in Toronto. Through a self-assessment placement questionnaire, based on the "I can do" statements of the common European framework for languages (2001), students-participants reveal their sociocultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds as well as the major motivating factors and preferences in relation to studying Greek. The second part presents the reflections of Greek language educators (for methodological remarks, see Aravossitas and Oikonomakou 2017, pp. 3–6) who disclose, through questionnaires, their teaching practices and challenges as they participate in a community-initiated professional development course. The paper concludes with summarizing the basic parameters that affect HL education in multicultural and multilingual environments.

## Learners and Teachers as Dynamic Mapping Fields: Educational Profile and Relation to the Greek Language

Identifying the challenges in the teaching and learning of Greek as a heritage language in Canada inevitably implies, due to the semiofficial nature of the corresponding education system (Cummins and Danesi 1990; Duff 2008), the need to accessing data by the educational community itself. HL teachers and learners, although often representing different education levels, provide useful information about the issues of heritage language education in multilingual environments (Cummins 2014). Generating the views of these two groups contributes to the clarification of different parameters in language education for heritage learners and can inform the design of corrective interventions to improve the educational work and to overcome any challenges associated with preserving minority languages.

The study of the social characteristics, as well as the personal and academic path of teachers and students (Aravossitas and Oikonomakou 2017; Oikonomakou et al. 2017), constitutes a key research priority since it is linked to their (a) motivation to integrate into the language community and (b) educational or professional needs.

It also highlights the importance of identity as a directing factor, because most participants have links to the country where the target language is spoken.

At the learners' level, those who attend Greek language courses in their university studies form three distinct groups: (a) 42% of the participants are second-generation heritage language learners, with parent(s) born in Greece (HLL2s); (b) 36% are third-generation heritage language learners, with parent(s) of Greek descent (HLL3s); and (c) 22% are students who study Greek as a foreign language (FLLs). The average age group of the students in Greek language courses is 18–25; most of them are major in humanities and social sciences (Oikonomakou et al. 2017).

A similar trichotomy is observed in the teachers' sample: 51% of the participants-educators indicated that they were born in Greece, while 41% and 8%, respectively, were born in Canada and/or in other countries.

Strong connection with the target language is also evident when examining the personal and academic trajectory of the participants (Kanno et al. 2008). In the case of students, it is often found that those who have an experiential relationship with the country of origin, through their social and family environment, have already developed background knowledge in the Greek language by attending programs either in Greece or in Canada.

The clear majority of the teachers, on the other hand, learnt Modern Greek in Greece (by 63%) and approximately one third (31%) in Canada, while only 6% received their Greek language education elsewhere. Based on the teachers' origin, the distributions about the level of Greek studies provide a clearer picture: of those born in Greece, 16% completed programs at the middle school level, 29% at high school, and the majority of 55% at a university. In contrast, Greek language teachers born in Canada completed Greek language studies at the middle school level by 13%, high school at 47%, and at university 33%. Ongoing contact with the Greek language, whether as a learning or as a teaching subject, shapes to a large extent the physiognomy and prospects of Greek language education in Canada. Factors that determine the relationship of the learning community with the target language indicate the existence of subgroups with different characteristics and different starting points (Oikonomakou et al. 2017: pp. 9–11).

For the teachers, in addition to their origin and the time of residence in Greece, there are differences regarding (a) the degree of development of a direct experiential relationship with the language and the Greek reality as well as (b) the degree of relevance of their studies with language education and pedagogy (Aravossitas and Oikonomakou 2017, pp. 6–8). The shaping of their professional profile is influenced by their teaching experience in educational environments where Greek is taught as a HL but also by other factors such as the emerging prospects of job security and advancement in their workplace (Feuerverger 1997; Aravossitas 2016).

Similar factors shape the educational profile of the students. Although most of them had limited opportunities to live in Greece – for studies or personal reasons – they had attended Greek language programs in their elementary or secondary school years in Canada, before enrolling in a university course. Specifically, individual measurements per level of study indicate that a large percentage of students in the

intermediate and advanced classes have acquired a substantial knowledge base in the Greek language in compulsory education before the start of the university course. For beginners, the allocations are similar, although in much lower percentages. A general analysis per different levels of study suggests that initially students at the intermediate and advanced levels maintain reasonably closer experiential relations with the Greek language than those enrolled in the beginners' classes (Carreira 2004). Finally, what seems to be decisive for students' enrollment in the two upper levels (intermediate and advanced) is the daily use of the language. Exposure to Modern Greek in the immediate social or professional environment seems to be consistent with their ethnic origin (Oikonomakou et al. 2017)

Indicators about the degree of language skills development (Brown 1994; Efstathiadis and Antonopoulou 2004) for the students who attend Modern Greek language classes at the University of Toronto (UT) and York University (YU) arise from analyzing their five-scale self-assessment statements, formulated by each level of study (Council of Europe 2001; Goodier 2014; North 2014). In summary, at the beginner's level, there is a clear distinction in the degree of development of oral and written language skills and substantial variation in productive and receptive skills. Students in both classes have already developed to some extent their listening skills, oral interaction, and speech production but not their writing skills, while differentiation between the two classes is notable, as beginners of YU seem to have a greater familiarity with speaking than their UT counterparts. Students at the intermediate and advanced levels consider their reading comprehension skills as satisfactory to very satisfactory, followed by listening comprehension and oral communication. However, they are less confident about their speaking and writing skills.

## Motivation, Educational Needs, and Challenges

In the context of examining aspects of the educational reality, the expression of expectations, aspirations, and educational needs of teachers and learners was sought (Carreira 2015; Oikonomakou et al. 2017). This approach highlights the identity issue (Gardner and Lambert 1972) and personal interests or inclinations for those who wish to learn Greek.

Thus, it is indicative that beginners in both classes determine important reasons for their enrollment, on the one hand, their contact with the Greek language and culture and, on the other hand, the possibility of visiting Greece. The cultivation, in other words, of a closer relationship with the Greek reality, the use of language in authentic communication environments, and the acquisition of firsthand experiences are recorded as their immediate priorities.

Identity, however, in its most tangible dimension, has emerged as a crucial incentive for the students at the two higher levels and particularly for the advanced group which ranked it as first among all other options, while important place holds the prestige attached to the Greek language. Possible use of the target language in the professional life of the students appears to be the least popular of the suggested

answers. Overall, awareness of the importance of identity is associated with the desire of intermediate and advanced students to continue the program, while beginners are mainly influenced by cultural values or personal choices.

Learning motivations are directly related to the students' expectations about the content of the courses and reflect specific aspirations regarding the cultivation of specific language skills.

Thus, those who choose to enrol in the Greek programs prefer language teaching to be based on thematic units associated with their personal interests, their concerns, and their social life interactions with family, friends, and community members. Emphasis is placed on the need for flexible programs enriched with interdisciplinary educational material that adopts a range of learning strategies (Oxford 1990) based on their educational needs and peculiarities. The use of information and communication technologies as learning aides (Kourtis-Kazoullis et al. 2014) is considered as a positively contributing factor to this effort by solving many practical weaknesses or by favoring the application of differentiated teaching principles in the classroom.

The applied teaching practices must also consider the students' objectives in terms of language learning. These vary according to the learners' personal trajectory but tend to show regularity per level of study. For instance, the development or improvement of oral and written communication skills is the goal of beginners and advanced students, while conscious knowledge of the language system is the main goal at the intermediate and advanced levels. Substantial familiarity or contact with the Modern Greek culture is the goal of the advanced level students who seek the development of more systematic academic skills, as well as the cultivation of writing skills.

A similar picture is illustrated by the positions of educators who teach Greek in primary and secondary HL programs in which a high level of heterogeneity leads to the formation of multilevel classes, comprised of individuals with different sociocultural characteristics and learning objectives. Consideration is given to the whole range of teaching, with emphasis on the need for appropriate differentiated teaching and assessment strategies, the development of appropriate supporting teaching materials, and the implementation of innovative teaching activities that address the increasingly diverse needs of the students. Addressing non-consistent attendance, updating curricula, and ensuring closer collaboration between teachers and parents are some issues that also concern the Greek HL teachers' community.

The heterogeneity issue is not characterizing only the student population but also the teachers who express their desire to participate in professional development programs with a view to upgrading their skills and to enhancing their teaching capacity (Aravossitas and Oikonomakou 2017, p. 9); they appear very interested in expanding their knowledge base in both teaching methodology and pedagogy as well as in the target language. They still express at the same time the desire to learn how to utilize further the educational potential of information and communication technologies in their lessons and to deepen their knowledge on the functionality of online learning communities and e-learning applications.

As to the difficulties and concerns that arise in the professional field of Greek/ heritage language instructors, the emphasis was on the need to improve the earnings

of teachers and to strengthen the supportive framework either by improving the infrastructure or through cooperation and exchange of views with all the Greek heritage language education community players.

In this direction, the administrators of schools or institutions could play a more active role as well as parents with a more creative participation in the schools and the community.

## Discussion and Conclusions

Our inquiry about studying Greek HL education highlights primarily the importance of conducting research within the community itself. The community is the feeder and the ultimate recipient of efforts to improve the level of language teaching and to clarify the parameters that determine the preservation or revitalization of heritage languages in contemporary multicultural societies. Comparative studies focusing on the attitudes of educators and learners in the field, in this sense, contribute decisively to drawing conclusions on the conditions in which HL teaching and learning takes place. At the same time, they provide a perspective for any efforts to upgrade the field and to trigger coordinated, non-fragmentary actions. Gathering and analyzing data from different levels (courses or grades) highlights common trends and dysfunctions that eventually cover the full range of the educational work produced in the field of HL education.

The analysis of the research data that we used in this study shows that the system of Greek HL education is characterized by heterogeneity at the core of which stands the identity issue. Another parameter of this heterogeneity is the semiformal nature of the education system: Greek is taught by schools or institutions that have different characteristics at the levels of organization and administration, operation, and resources, composing a multilevel mosaic; community groups offering language courses without specific assessment criteria or clear objectives; international language programs operating courses that take place outside the day school curriculum, with many mixed age-grouped and proficiency classes; university programs that try to accommodate both heritage and foreign language learners; etc. Those who wish to learn Greek by studying in university programs have already, basically, developed ties with the country where the target language is spoken. Learning the language is an element of their identity, since they are mostly students whose family members come from Greece. Consequently, they have formed attitudes and established perceptions about the learning subject before joining the programs through their experiential contact.

Ethnic origin is not the sole determinant factor of diversity but also the personal path and the choices of each learner whether they have or not the ability to use language in their family or social environment or whether they have or not acquired personal "Greek" experiences. It is noted that the same classes are attended by students for whom Greek is a foreign language. Their participation enriches pluralism and widens the cultural an intercultural capital of the learning community.

On the other hand, Greek HL teachers who serve in classes like the ones described above compose a highly diverse body of educators with different individual, social, and cultural characteristics and thus with different goals. Teaching Greek in heterogeneous multilevel classes – and in the case of primary and secondary education of different age groups – is a challenge for educators who also synthesize a community with diverse characteristics. Apart from their origin, the personal and academic paths of the teachers (Aravossitas and Oikonomakou 2017) play an important role in shaping their professional profile.

Although for most teachers, knowledge of the heritage language has been realized through their interaction with native speakers in Greece, there is a significant percentage of those who never had this opportunity as they have lived and studied in Canada or elsewhere. Similarly, their professional development and teaching experiences vary. Some of them are professionals with nonacademic backgrounds or university graduates who specialized in subjects other than (Greek) language or pedagogy. Therefore, although they value their teaching work positively, they consider their in-service development in linguistic and pedagogical issues particularly beneficial for their teaching careers.

The outline of the profile of teachers and learners and the expression of their educational needs demonstrates some of the peculiarities of teaching and learning Greek as a heritage language (Carreira 2014). Learners with different starting points come to classes with goals and expectations that reflect personal aspirations or experiences, as well as their varied background knowledge of the Greek language and culture. Activating their linguistic and cultural capital is an educational challenge particularly in higher education, where students of Greek origin coexist with students for whom Greek is a foreign language.

Selecting appropriate learning material of escalating difficulty in accordance with the students' interests, adopting differentiated and innovative teaching approaches, and using modern knowledge media such as the ones provided through the information and communication technologies (Golonka et al. 2014; Kourtis-Kazoullis et al. 2014) are some of the recommended strategies for the educational conditions of Greek heritage language education. Informing the existing curricula with adequate community content relevant to the students' experiences and utilizing the findings of recent studies and developments in language education are necessary to place the teaching and learning process in its social dimension. Moreover, the above should contribute to the empowerment of all students (New London Group 1996, 2000) and the development of their communicative, academic, and critical skills (Baynham 1995, 2002).

Placing the language in its social context presupposes, at the school level, the contact of teachers and learners with authentic textual environments where different functional uses of the language and its different varieties exist (Bakhtin 1986). The collective analysis, critical understanding, and interpretation of diverse and authentic learning material provide essential participation in the learning process and cultivate metacognitive strategies. Therefore, it is important for both educators and learners to familiarize themselves with such practices. It is also important to consider the above recommendations in the design of professional development modules for teachers

who work with heritage and foreign language learners and to assess the effectiveness of their implementation for the methodological renewal of the educational work that is already taking place. However, any curriculum revisions should be applied partially and in consistence with the needs and concerns of a wider, heterogeneous community. The aim is to promote processes that can favor the gradual transformation of the classrooms in active learning communities (Wenger 1998) by establishing collaboration and strengthening the existing supportive framework.

The use of the language in authentic communication environments on the basis of everyday needs or habits, further participation in community activities (Carreira 2004) and exchange of information on initiatives by language teaching institutions, in particular those involved with heritage languages (Schwartz 2001), can only have a positive effect. Strengthening the perception that language is a social product and as such should be negotiated in learning places can ensure the viability of the programs as well as the improvement of the professional conditions in which teachers perform their work.

## Cross-References

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▶ Politics of Identity and Difference in Cultural Studies: Decolonizing Strategies
▶ The Creation of a Community of Language Learning, Empowerment, and Agency for Refugees in Rhodes, Greece

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# Transference, Desire, and the Logic of Emancipation

## Psychoanalytic Lessons from the "Third Wave"

Antti Saari

**11**

## Contents

**Abstract**

The modus operandi of many pedagogies indexed under the rubric "critical" and "transformative" is to acknowledge and overcome oppressive structures ingrained in dominant societal ideologies. Yet in practice, some of such pedagogies may be susceptible to what Gert Biesta has called the "logic of emancipation." This means that those who are to be emancipated ultimately remain dependent on the "truth" provided by the critical educator.

This chapter provides a critical discussion of the possibility of overcoming the logic of emancipation from the point of view of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. Transformative learning process is analyzed as a formation and a subsequent unraveling of transferential fantasies and desires invested in the critical educator as a "subject supposed to know."

As a case example, the chapter analyzes an (in)famous pedagogical experiment conducted in a Palo Alto High School in 1967. In a World History class, a teacher taught his students about the perils of fascism by using

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unorthodox teaching methods. While lecturing them about the history of the Third Reich, the teacher allured his students to adopt decidedly fascist discipline and forms of mutual persecution. The aim was to help students learn how easily almost anyone can willingly succumb to authoritarianism.

This provocative case is used to illustrate the power of transferential fantasies in education and the difficult process of trying to unravel them for the purposes of a transformative experience. Moreover, the case raises questions about the ethics of such pedagogic practices.

### Keywords

Psychoanalysis · Critical pedagogy · Emancipation · Lacan · Jacques · Ideology

## Introduction

Cubberley High School in Palo Alto, California, 1967. During a sophomore history class lecture on the contemporary world, while the class was discussing the atrocities of World War II, a student asked teacher Ron Joneshow Germany's general public *could not have known* about what was going on in the concentration camps. Historians, psychologists, and philosophers since World War II have tried to explain how all these civilians could have disavowed knowing the obvious, horrifying truth about the Third Reich's genocidal persecution and succumb to such rule. Now it was a California history teacher's turn to explain it.

This scene was not far away from Stanford University, where Philip Zimbardo (2011) conducted prison experiments a few years later, demonstrating how normal university students easily could succumb to authoritarian rule. Something similar took place at Cubberley High. As an improvised reaction to the student's question, Jones proceeded to implement authoritarian methods of instruction, including military-style drills and collective chants, including "Strength through discipline!" and "Strength through unity!" Surprisingly, these measures led to students eagerly succumbing to harsh discipline and willingly persecuting detractors within the group. Moreover, the experiment soon proved to be contagious, as it swelled into a movement called the Third Wave, with students from outside Jones' class joining in. By the third day of the experiment, the movement had already attracted 300 students. After three class periods, Jones realized that his experiment was spinning out of control.

Later, the Palo Alto events have been the subject of a documentary, a novel, a musical, and a movie, and yet they have garnered scant attention in critical education research circles. Although not a proper psychological experiment, like Zimbardo and Stanley Milgram's (1963) famous experiments on the interpersonal dynamics of authority, the Palo Alto events reveal something of the darker sides of group behavior. It also finds resonance with the current concern over political authoritarianism in liberal democracies. This chapter's objective is neither to defend nor condemn Jones' rather unusual teaching methods. Drawing on my earlier work

(Saari 2016), I propose that the Third Wave experiment is a prominent case against which to think about the psychodynamic complexities involved in emancipatory pedagogies, as well as the ethical *aporiae* therein. Jones' own written accounts and those from his former students in the school newspaper and in a recent documentary provide insights into how the events unfolded and the unsettling experiences they engendered.

By analyzing the dynamics of transference between a teacher and his students, I highlight how students' desires and fantasies were used intentionally to make them realize their complicity in succumbing to authoritarian rule. I argue that this complicates the claim by Gert Biesta (2014, 2017), among others, that emancipation should entail not only subjects being freed from oppressive ideologies but also being able to question the epistemic authority of the critical pedagogue themselves. Furthermore, this points toward a challenge for critical educators to acknowledge the difficulties in teaching the pressing topics of political oppression, ecological degradation, and global economic distortion. As it turns out, confronting these issues often comes with resistance or disavowal (Cho 2007, pp. 703–704), as there may be a "desire not to know" in the way one's own fantasies are imbued in sustaining societal ideologies. I argue that drawing attention to the "darker" sides of emancipation, it is possible to gain a more realistic and balanced view on the possibilities of critical and democratic pedagogies.

## Logic of Emancipation and the Problem of Transference

The modus operandi of many pedagogies indexed under the "critical" and "transformative" rubric is to help people acknowledge and overcome oppressive power structures ingrained in dominant societal ideologies. Such ideologies are sustained by being "reified," i.e., widely viewed as natural, inevitable, and just. In other words, such structures successfully obfuscate the way they take hold on human consciousness and social reality, yet people can be taught to understand that they are unjust and that they can and should change. A classic case is from Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2005). Working with poor Brazilian peasants, Freire aided them not only in learning how to read but also in *conscientization* (*conscientizacao*), i.e., fostering a critical consciousness of surrounding social realities, which carries with it a new sense of agency, pride, and hope. Conscientization is a deeply transformative process in the sense that it involves a substantive change in subjects' attunement toward themselves and the world.

However, Biesta asserts that sometimes critical pedagogies might be susceptible to the so-called logic of emancipation. Because ideologies tend to conceal their status as ideologies, those who fall under their spell cannot emancipate themselves from them – they need external guidance from those who have not succumbed to the ideology. Thus, the critical pedagogue is someone who *really knows*, while the student *does not know yet*. Therefore, the practices of the critical pedagogue are legitimized afterward when the emancipation process is complete – a state in which the pedagogue and student *both know*. For Biesta, this means that critical pedagogy

unwittingly establishes an asymmetrical power structure in which the student's own view of reality is distrusted and he or she is made fundamentally dependent on the critical pedagogue's knowledge and practical aid (Biesta 2014, pp. 82–83, 2017, pp. 55–56).

Here, the logic of emancipation means that those who are emancipated ultimately might remain dependent on the "truth" provided by the critical educator. In other words, emancipation sometimes means merely replacing an old master with a new one (Biesta 2014, p. 78) – unless subjects are given the means to be free from all masters. Here, Biesta's analysis resonates with a series of earlier reflective considerations and debates in critical theories of education (e.g., Ellsworth 1989; Burbules 2000): Sometimes emancipatory intentions and dialogical approaches might inadvertently end up repeating, in a different guise, the power structures that they are meant to overthrow.

Biesta (2014, 2017) offers Jacques Ranciére's famous text *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1991) as an example of a pedagogical approach that potentially can bypass this problem. Ranciére's book recounts the story of Jean-Joseph Jacotot (1770–1840), an Enlightenment pedagogue who treated his students as equals. Jacotot contended that a pedagogical relationship in which a master explains a piece of information to students generates a hierarchical structure in which the student is "stultified" and made inferior to the master. This structure, Jacotot insists, should be overthrown (Ranciére 1991, pp. 6–8). When students face a problem or they wish to learn something, they first try to turn to Jacotot to provide them with an answer, but Jacotot systematically refuses to provide answers and instead interrogates them about what they see and think, thereby encouraging students to find answers for themselves. The objective is not so much to make them learn something specific but to practice emancipation in the sense of encouraging students to see themselves as equals to the teacher and to gain a sense of autonomy and dignity (Ranciére 1991, p. 17).

While Biesta's analysis provides insight into the complexities and potential pitfalls in the practices of critical pedagogy, it might benefit from psychoanalytic theories that unpack the unconscious dynamics that enable, complicate, or inhibit emancipatory processes. As Deborah Britzman (2009) notes, school, as a social institution, is a hothouse of fantasies, desires, and forms of adulation and disavowal that affect the way students do or do not learn. One particularly helpful concept here is transference, often referred to as "new editions of old conflicts" (Britzman and Pitt 1996, p. 117; e.g., Samuels 2002, p. 46). Although the concept has undergone many revisions since Sigmund Freud (1912), *transference* generally means that expectations, fears, and desires formed in a child's relations with significant others are transferred to new situations, e.g., a student's relation with her teacher. This may take the form of *positive transference* in which teacher is idealized as a wise, protective, and accepting parental figure or a *negative* one, in which feelings of resentment, disappointment, or rejection are projected toward the teacher (Britzman 1998, p. 40; Boldt 2006).

It is clear that transferential desire, in the form of adulation of a charismatic teacher, might easily nourish authoritarian pedagogies (Bracher 2006, p. 85). This has a broader political undercurrent, as transferential desires are central in inculcating ideologies and mobilizing people to follow a leader or a cause. For Slavoj Žižek

(2013), ideology should not be viewed merely as a "veil" that easily can be removed for people to become conscious of it and see reality as it is. On the contrary, ideology is a natural transferential attunement in conceiving reality and, thus, is difficult to remove (Žižek 1989, p. 244). Indeed, transference is difficult to avoid, even in emancipatory pedagogies. If a Jacotot-like figure tried to avoid it by displaying ignorance and using dialogical instructional methods, it might merely fuel transferential adulation from his or her students as a manifestation of a critical intellectual with high epistemic and ethical standards (Samuels 2002, pp. 49–50).

However, it should be kept in mind that transference is more than just a disturbing phenomenon to be avoided at all costs in education. As Schleifer (1987, p. 807) notes, (positive) transference is the "motor of pedagogy," ideally triggering a desire to learn, an expectation that the teacher has something to offer (e.g., recognition, information, or skills) in the first place. Moreover, students might learn something significant about themselves if they are forced to face the truth about their own transferential fantasies. Therefore, we should realize that transference can fuel a dialectic process of emancipation: it leads students initially to succumb to the guidance of a master (a teacher or a body of knowledge).Yet transference can also be acknowledged and reflected upon to make students less susceptible to societal power structures (Samuels 2002; Cho 2009).

In the following sections, I use French philosopher and psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan's works to highlight transference as desire for recognition and epistemic certainty, as well as to examine how transference is imbued with disavowal. Here, I will not go into exegetic detail on Lacan's notoriously opaque theories but rather use them to highlight the psychodynamic complexities inherent in emancipatory teaching practices.

## Transference and the Third Wave

Now, back to Cubberley High in Palo Alto. As a recent Stanford graduate, Ron Jones was drawn to "simulation," a teaching method in vogue among progressive pedagogues in the 1960s (Whiting 2010). After being asked the inciting question about German citizens during the Third Reich, Jones did something his students did not expect. First, he introduced them to a practice that would allegedly heighten their self-discipline and focus. This would, in turn, make them learn more efficiently. Imitating army drills, the students would, upon the teacher's command, rush out of the classroom and then swiftly return to their desks. Jones also suggested that it would be good for students, when being addressed or when answering the teacher's questions, to stand at attention. He then proceeded to write a slogan on the chalkboard:

> Strength through discipline, strength through unity. (Jeffery and Neel 2011)

From now on, these would be the guiding principles in class. As a further symbol of militant unity, the students should salute each other with a raised hand, palm

curved. By increments, while introducing more new rules and drills, Jones swiftly conjured an uncannily different kind of social reality in the classroom (Jones 1972).

How did Jones get his students to participate in such a simulation? In the documentary, former students describe Jones as a highly charismatic figure. He was known for being jovial, jocular, and "progressive" in his approach to students, certainly not one to hide behind the facade of authority. So, when he started introducing militant drills, it was first considered to be a fun game in which the students giddily took part (Jeffery and Neel 2011).

Then a second phase followed. Jones claimed that this was not merely a game but actually part of a serious political grassroots movement called the Third Wave, which was spreading across the USA. Jones claimed that the Third Wave would overcome political corruption and a widespread sense of alienation and apathy among Americans. Reportedly, he also claimed that democracy itself was a problem that should be overthrown: "(Democracy) has many unnatural aspects since the emphasis is on the individual instead of a disciplined and involved community" (Klink 1967, p. 3). Thus, the discipline exercised in the class was not merely a pedagogical simulation but allegedly a direct revolt against the dominant political culture.

For many of his students, this seemed to make some sense. The documentary refers to the late 1960s' cultural and political climate, which was in the midst of constant upheaval, manifested in student riots over the Vietnam War and political violence through assassinations, creating a constant sense of confrontation and foreboding, especially on college campuses (Jeffery and Neel 2011). High school campuses were certainly not insulated from the political tensions of that time. A high school newspaper columnist complained that "derogatory remarks" (such as "commie rat" and "un-American") and even "threats of violence" had been made toward student activists who openly protested against the Vietnam War on Cubberley High campus (Stahl 1967, p. 2).

The outline of the Third Wave depicted above paints a picture of a transferential relationship between teacher and students. The first phase highlights transference as love – not necessarily romantic or erotic love but as idealization and a desire for recognition (cf. Cho 2005). In psychoanalytic theories, transference is generally considered an expression of the other-oriented constitution of subjectivity. In Lacan's theory, ego is formed through mirrorlike relations with others, mainly caretakers during infancy, who address the child as a separate personality with her own will. Eventually, the child learns to see herself through others as a coherent entity with a mind and body separate from her mother. However, the subject can never be a coherent entity – in control and transparent to herself, as well as emotionally self-sufficient – therefore, the ego is *imaginary* (Lacan 2001, pp. 2–6). This entails that there is a fundamental lack – incompleteness, incoherence, and heteronomy – in our being, which is constantly obscured by the imaginary ego and its fantasies (Fink 1994).

The imaginary ego requires continuous sustenance in the form of recognition offered by others. So, in transference, the other-oriented, mirrorlike constitution of the ego is repeated through constant introspective questioning: *What does the other want from me? How can I be a person the other wants me to be*? The imaginary ego

might also fantasize about a desired completeness in the other, such as an idealized teacher, and strive to identify with this figure. Put succinctly, transferential love aims for completing or covering over a fundamental incompleteness or lack within each of us (Fink 2017). In Palo Alto, a charismatic figure like Jones expressed determination, assertiveness, and an intellectual, open-minded attitude toward political and historical questions – qualities that many of his students undoubtedly wanted to acquire (Jeffery and Neel 2011).

The second phase of the Palo Alto experiment attests to the symbolic side of transference. As Lacan (1977, p. 123) notes, transference also manifests a fundamental longing for certainty – desiring "meaning" to cover over the aforementioned lack in subjectivity. In this case, an analyst or a political or spiritual leader, as well as a pedagogue, might assume the position of an epistemically superior figure, a "subject supposed to know," who is thought to be in possession of knowledge and meaning (Lacan 1977, pp. 230–233). One can easily imagine young sophomore students being in the throes of epistemic insecurity, especially in a climate of cultural and political turbulence during the late 1960s in the USA. In this kind of situation, someone who is expected to connect the dots in a shattered social reality is easily adulated. Yet since the teacher is not a self-sufficient ego either and since there can never be a symbolic system that is coherent and all-explaining, such transferential fantasies can never be fulfilled.

The way the events then transpired testifies to the disavowed aspects of transference. In Palo Alto, the experiment eventually included Jones introducing party-membership IDs and recruiting secret agents to spy on other students and report party traitors (Jeffery and Neel 2011). Guards were placed at the class doors. It was now declared illegal for students to congregate in groups of more than three, and any sign of mutiny would lead to lowered grades or banishment from the group (Klink 1967, p. 3). With a few exceptions, students did not object and blow the whistle: The totalitarian reality had surreptitiously become the new normal (Jeffery and Neel 2011). While most students were succumbing to transferential fantasies and blatant authoritarianism, they also continued with their studies on world history and totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century. And while many of them excelled academically, a former student claims that it did not occur to them that their own class shared striking similarities with Germany's fascist regime (Jeffery and Neel 2011). Slavoj Žižek (2008) calls this "fetishist disavowal," which has the structure "I know, but I don't want to know that I know, so I don't know." Thus the students' own complicity in normalizing authoritarian rule, especially their enjoyment of it, was disavowed. As Žižek (1989, pp. 44–44, 89–91) notes, fabulation about a noble political objective as a justification for authoritarian rule operates as a facade to hide its true appeal. In other words, what was so beguiling about German fascism was not its ideological *content* – a sacrifice of individuality for a greater good – but the *form* of its practice, the sheer enjoyment of discipline itself as it eradicated disorder and doubt in a society awash in economic and political turmoil. And yet, it also was paramount that the subjects themselves do not realize this truth about their transferential enjoyment, lest the spell of authoritarianism dissipate.

## Overcoming Transference

Not all students in Jones' class succumbed to his authority, however. There was a small minority that had been against the experiment from the beginning. Whether Jones planned it or not, the Third Wave offered this minority of students a way to learn to resist oppression. For them, the Third Wave imposed a strict order and a law against which to rebel. As such, it provided coordinates for acquiring autonomy and agency through revolt. However, most students either remained under Jones' spell or did not resist out of fear. So, how can the experiment be ended in a way that would be valuable pedagogically, especially to these students?

Several factors indicated that the experiment should be shut down swiftly. To some extent, Jones himself seemed to have fallen under transferential dynamics in the form of *countertransference* – fantasies the teacher has of himself or herself as an object of students' adulation and desire (see, e.g., Britzman 2009, pp. 83–86). Jones (1972) reports that during the experiment, he began to see himself as a revered visionary and a political leader. Other ethical problems from the Third Wave also were becoming impossible to ignore. Soon, 500 parents mobilized to support a push to remove Jones from his teacher position. A group of students even tried to kidnap him and replace his classes with others about democracy (Klink 1967, p. 3).

The method used to end the experiment offers an enlightening, and also deeply disquieting, example of how transferential desire can be overcome pedagogically by stripping students of their objects of attachment (see, e.g., Samuels 2002, pp. 45–46; Cho 2009). One day, Jones declared that it was time for the Third Wave to emerge from the underground. He claimed that soon, the movement's leader would make a televised speech, which would be viewed in the campus auditorium. To add to the air of spectacle, Jones recruited his friends to act as journalists covering the event. Once the students had gathered in the auditorium, the lights went out, but the TV remained dim. Minutes passed in silence. As pressure gathered, students spontaneously began to recite their slogan, *strength through discipline*, first as a careful whisper and then erupting into a loud chant (Jeffery and Neel 2011). Finally, something emerged on the TV screen in black and white. It turned out to be not the leader of the Third Wave but Adolf Hitler parading through the streets of Nuremberg with enchanted Germans hailing him from all directions. The students were caught off guard, suddenly faced with their disavowed complicity in totalitarian rule. "This is a hoax!" someone shouted. After a moment, the confused crowd slowly began to leave, though some remained glued to their seats, sobbing helplessly (Jeffery and Neel 2011). The students learned an unusual lesson that left them disoriented, ashamed, and angry.

Although Jones did not refer to psychoanalytic approaches or concepts when planning or reporting his actions afterward, the way that the events unfolded resonates with the Lacanian claim that some truths cannot be taught by addressing a subject's rational thinking, as that might be part of the problem. One cannot easily step aside from one's own self to see and assess one's own transferential fantasies from a neutral, outsider perspective (Lacan 1977, pp. 130–132). Lacanian psychoanalytic tradition uses the term "going through the fantasy" to denote a painful stage

in which the analysand faces the truth of her or his own fundamental transferential fantasies. This entails the realization that the analyst is not a supreme authority who can diagnose and provide ready solutions to the analysand's problems, as well as the painful fact that the analysand herself or himself has been complicit in sustaining such a fantasy. In Lacanian psychoanalytic tradition, such anxiety-provoking experiences are decidedly ethical: when a subject loses the coordinates for making sense of reality, he or she also becomes open to the possibility of radical re-examination of one's own self (see, e.g., Zupancic 2000). Slavoj Žižek (1989) applied the principle of going through the fantasy to the arena of critical political theory to shed light on the painful release from the hold of ideologies. For Žižek, people do not always succumb to authoritarian rule against their will, as interests and desires might exist that make them passionately attached to it (see also Cho 2007), in which case, merely telling them to cast off their ideologies is not enough, as they must realize it for themselves.

When used to shed light on the Third Wave case, going through the fantasy reveals a more complex schema than those in which personal transformation or emancipation is supposed to emerge out of a growing consciousness of an oppressive system, of its malleability, and the scope of one's own agency in changing it. In the Palo Alto case, it began with an expectation on the part of the students that something could be gained by joining the movement – acceptance from the teacher, better learning results, and good grades. These transferential fantasies were fed by the teacher's fabulation about a bigger political cause but ultimately directed toward their implosion. Then and only then can one have the "emancipating" realization that these fantasies were an error in which he or she was complicit. Ideally, such reflection during the aftermath will lead to a more reflective attunement to one's own desires and fantasies in relation to political ideologies.

## A Dark Emancipation

So, what was Jones' answer to the student's question: "How could the Germans not know?" As in Ranciére's Jacotot example above, he refused to give a straight answer. Instead, he guided his students to learn *from* his teaching rather than *about* it (e.g., Britzman and Pitt 1996, p. 119). This entails the idea that sometimes, it is impossible to convey important lessons about democratic education through *content* and instead must convey them through the *form* of communication (e.g., Žižek 1989). Thus, Jones did not simply claim, "You, too, under certain circumstances, may act the same way as Third Reich Germans," nor did he use any psychological or psychoanalytic terminology to explain to the students what he was doing and why. Instead, he let students be confronted with their own transferential desires. By not answering the initial question, Jones deconstructed its basic assumptions in practice and revealed the disavowal undergirding them. First, the question about the Germans and the Holocaust should not be about *them*, as this merely would be another form of disavowal – splitting social reality into pure and evil. The experiment uncovered, in a very practical way, the uncomfortable fact that a high school class in a liberal

democracy might just as easily descend into authoritarianism as German society did. Second, the question should not be about knowing or not knowing, as this rigid dichotomy does not allow for a state in which one might know yet refuse to acknowledge it. Instead of not knowing, this was a case of fetishist disavowal.

In contrast to Jacotot's emancipatory strategy of making students realize their fundamental equality with the teacher and with each other, the Third Wave experiment does not manifest the assumption of fundamental equality but instead lays bare the fundamental human desire to submit to ideology. This is an insight missing from many critical theories of education (Atkinson 2004). Whereas Jacotot's emancipatory pedagogy relied on a natural, spontaneous will to know (Ranciére 1991, pp. 10–16), psychoanalytic theories have articulated a much darker and conflicted humanity that can account for the willful submission to authority apparent in a US high school, just as in a totalitarian regime.

Jones' approach might be called *dark emancipation* (cf. Roudinesco 2008), i.e., stripping students of their fantasies about themselves as morally pure subjects and showing them that authoritarian ideologies are not only out there somewhere (in the past or in different geopolitical locations) but also uncomfortably close by and within. Rarely is it pleasant to acknowledge our own complicity in injustices, and it is our "passionate ignorance" (Atay 2013; Alcorn 2013) that ultimately sustains the existence of such an oppressive system. Yet, as Mark Bracher (2006, pp. 152–153) notes, if students never confront their own transferential desires, they might easily end up reproducing and strengthening those oppressive power structures, the very possibility of which is passionately disavowed.

The purpose of such an emancipation is not to dwell on the savagery of human atrocities or highlight the utter falsity of Enlightenment ideals of reason, freedom, and democracy. Nor is it about inculcating feelings of guilt and shame. Instead, it is in concordance with Theodor Adorno's (1998) famous call for education with the principal objective of preventing monstrosities like Auschwitz from ever happening again. And here, we must acknowledge the dialectical nature of Enlightenment ideals of reason, progress, and individual freedom – the Freudian notion that "civilization itself produces and increasingly reinforces anti-civilization" (Adorno 1998, p. 191). Therefore, we must never be lulled into the misconception that authoritarian rule can never happen "here," within the confines of a liberal democratic society.

While providing valuable insight into the psychodynamic aspects of ideology, in the case of the Third Wave experiment, such dark emancipation is also susceptible to serious ethical concerns that call into question its legitimacy. In Palo Alto, the kind of insight gained from looking into the dark recesses of one's self was certainly uncomfortable and even traumatic. While some formed students say it was the most important lesson they have ever learned about themselves and about society, many others remain horrified and angered by Jones' actions (Jeffery and Neel 2011).

The first ethical concern is that of indoctrination. Jones' teaching bypassed the rational consideration of the student, which has been the inalienable basis of democratic education. However, in the Palo Alto experiment, this involved

conscious deception and indoctrination. Students were told lies about the existence of a political movement and not informed about the true objectives of Jones' teaching methods until afterward. They succumbed to blatant totalitarian rule in which the teacher's authority could not be questioned. In this respect, the Palo Alto experiment bears some characteristics of the aforementioned logic of emancipation, as it has an asymmetric, authoritarian power structure that becomes legitimized only afterward, once the students know what the teacher knows. What the Lacanian psychoanalytic and political tradition and its theory of emancipation seem to claim is that at least a minimum amount of deception and reliance on authority is needed for the subject to gain an insight of his or her transferential fantasies and the way they are imbued with dominant societal ideologies. One can well ask whether the price of learning such lessons in a school environment is sometimes too high, at least in the case of the Palo Alto experiment.

Even if this kind of indoctrination was considered legitimate in certain cases, the second concern entails debriefing the students. After the experiment ended, Jones apparently did not discuss the methods, outcome, or emotional responses with his students to ensure no serious trauma was inflicted. This surely contributed to the appalled reactions from his students even several decades later. To be sure, anxiety and anger are natural reactions when a subject suddenly is stripped of her attachments to people, ideals, and/or fantasies. "Working through" is a psychoanalytic principle of giving voice to and articulating the confusion, anxiety, and mourning inherent in such disillusionment (Alcorn 2002). If this is not done properly, it runs the risk of students not acknowledging or accepting uncomfortable truths about themselves, let alone seeing much value in the methods used to uncover them.

## Conclusions

Lately, scholars of world politics (Diamond 2015), as well as notable non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Freedom House 2017) and the media (Ogilvy 2017), have proclaimed a "democratic recession" globally. The long-standing spread of democratic rule in various countries seems to have halted or even reversed course. Many democratic states are currently facing unsettling questions about whether a transition to authoritarian rule could happen in their home countries and how. The realization that democratization is not a unilinear, inevitable process elicits a new sense of urgency across different levels of academia. The developments taking place globally raise questions about how the grip of authoritarian tendencies might be loosened or avoided altogether in schools. Therefore, it is important, for example, in teacher education to stress the values of democracy in education and the crucial role of schools in keeping such ideals alive.

The case of the Third Wave highlights the importance of educators understanding the "psychic life of power" (Butler 1997; see also Alcorn 2002, p. 61), i.e., how ideology works through psychic attachments in the human mind. As dominant discourses of teaching point toward governing student behavior, attention rarely is directed at encouraging a reflexive attunement toward teachers' and students' own

interiority in that their fantasies, desires, and anxieties can so easily be disavowed (Britzman 2009, pp. 85–86; Roseboro 2008). It is here that psychoanalytic theories and concepts – still absent from mainstream education (Taubman 2012) – might be of value in critical approaches to teaching democratic values. How is the rule of authoritarian ideologies and power structures tied to interpersonal relationships between teachers and students? What is the role of desires, hopes, fears, and fantasies therein? Asking these questions does not lead to simple ethical guidelines or methods that can be followed, as this would mean succumbing to yet another external authority. There is no magic "pill" (Lacan 2008, p. 3) that can make such critical pedagogy easy. Instead, emancipation involves a risky investigation into one's self, asking whether those abject tendencies that are the breeding ground for totalitarianism might be found uncomfortably near (e.g., Taubman 2010).

## Cross-References

▶ Democracy Under Attack: Learning, Schooling, and the Media
▶ Exploring the Future Form of Pedagogy: Education and Eros
▶ Never-Ending Adolescence: A Psychoanalytic Study of Resistance
▶ Social Media and the Quest for Democracy: Faking the Re-awakening

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# Exploring the Future Form of Pedagogy

## Education and Eros

Inna Semetsky

## Contents

**Abstract**

This chapter addresses the future form of pedagogy and explores a related educational theory. The chapter, first, reflects on exopedagogy as a form of post-humanist education. Second, the chapter positions exopedagogy in the context of Gilles Deleuze's philosophical thought and his pedagogy of the concept. Education as informed by Deleuze-Guattari's transformational pragmatics is "located" in experience, in culture, and in life. As grounded in praxis, education necessarily includes an ethical dimension. Such cultural pedagogy is oriented to the "becomings" of human subjects and has an affective, erotic aspect. The feminine qualities of care and love associated with the concept of Eros should not only form the basis of education for the future but can make this rather utopian future our present ethos in accord with the educational policy agenda of the twenty-first century. Future educational leaders as "people to come" are themselves produced via the creative forms of experiential becomings, including "becoming-woman." In conclusion, the chapter asserts that people to come in education should be able to use imagination to cross the limits of the present and tap into the future.

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## Introduction

This essay explores the future form(s) of pedagogical practice and educational theory with reference to three sources. It reflects on exopedagogy – a neologism coined by Lewis and Kahn (2010) – and connects this form of post-humanist education with the model of experiential and experimental transformational pragmatics derived from Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy with its concepts of *becoming-animal* and *becoming-woman.* Education, which is grounded in experience, in *praxis*, necessarily encompasses a moral or ethical dimension, in contrast to theoretical knowledge which is "normatively neutral" (Schnack 2009, p. 16). Incidentally, in Greek mythology *Praxis* was also another name for Aphrodite, the goddess of love who was instrumental in the story of Eros and Psyche.

   Pedagogy for the future demands educators to become what Deleuze and Guattari called "people to come" and to assume a leadership role (cf. Semetsky 2010a) grounded in the relational dynamics of the ethics of care (Noddings 1984/2003) which represents a feminine and maternal (Noddings 2010) approach to education. The qualities of care and love associated with the concept of Eros as the affective dimension of experience should not only form the basis of education for the future but can make this rather utopian future our present ethos in accord with the educational policy agenda of the twenty-first century (Simons et al. 2009).

## What Is Exopedagogy?

The term "exopedagogy" indicates an alternative form of education that exceeds a solely human dimension. In contrast to anthropocentric education, exopedagogy represents a form of *post-humanist* education. This radical form of cultural, experiential, and post-formal pedagogy transgresses the boundaries of narrow rationality and takes education out of its habitual bounds. Exopedagogy is "located" in culture, in experience, and in life; as such it appears to partake of Nietzsche's gay science that would be affirming *life*, rather than neglecting the alternative possibilities for/of life and education. It is a somewhat Dionysian rejuvenation of life that allows for transgressing habitual limits by means of what Lewis and Khan dubbed *savage imagination*, which typically does not "belong" in formal instruction constituting a sole form of pedagogy in accord with what Giorgio Agamben has described as an anthropological machine in education. Anything outside such a machine would be described as plainly "monstrous" and as such abnormal.

   The concept of the "monster" is the major qualifier to designate a precise line of division between what contemporary collective "scientific" consciousness perceives as binary opposites, such as human and nonhuman animals, or normal and abnormal.

It is exopedagogy that allows us to escape quantitative measures and disciplinary forms associated with fixed norms, thereby problematizing the notions of *norm* and *normal* altogether. The borderline between normal and abnormal and between human and nonhuman becomes blurred. Paradoxically, a prime example of anthropocentric pedagogical practice is, for Lewis and Kahn, a classical case study of the feral child Victor, the real-life wild boy of Aveyron like the archetypal Mowgli. In the broader social and political discourse, the *homo ferus* is traditionally an excluded element in uncritical compliance with established law and order; yet the humanist education provided to Victor was conducted precisely in accord with the anthropocentric machine. Still, goes the argument, because a persistent surplus as "a residual stain" (Lewis and Kahn 2010, p. 43) of the primal division cannot be incorporated into the stable symbolic order, the "educated" subject of this very order is left outside the "zoomorphic imagination" (p. 69) that could have exposed it to a much broader epistemology and a specific grammar of the feral including *survival skills* or *play* as a suspension of the ban on "social scapegoating" (p. 68).

Entering the paradoxical space that opens when the dualism between binary opposites, such as human versus nonhuman, is abolished or at least suspended leads us into the "reptoid" territory as a province of the uncanny "UFOther" (Lewis and Kahn 2010, p. 73). In the continual effort to resist "the lure of the anthropological machine" (p. 74), Lewis and Kahn present the "reptoid hypothesis" and relate it to David Icke's alien conspiracy theory for the purpose of further combating the humanist assumptions of "normal" pedagogy. They investigate the possibility of the formation of new human/reptoid alliances toward peace unencumbered by the counterforces of humanistic and/or superstitious nature alike. They notice that the allegory of the alien is not limited to the cultural sphere but has been taking decisively political overtones. In contrast to the categorical definition of the alien within mainstream liberal discourse, the close encounter with the UFOther conceptualization would have opened up a range of new possibilities precisely because of being (non)located in the imaginative zone existing "betwixt and between (dis)orders and (dis)identifications" (Lewis and Kahn 2010, p. 79). Such a "no-man's land" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 293) which is located in-between habitual categories of commonsense discourse is an ideal place for multiple experiential becomings representing:

> an extreme contiguity within a coupling of two sensations without resemblance or, on the contrary, in the distance of a light that captures both of them in a single reflection. . . . It is a zone of indetermination, of indiscernibility, as if things, beasts, and persons . . . endlessly reach that point that immediately precedes their natural differentiation. This is what is called an *affect*. (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, p. 173)

The presence of a zone of indiscernibility constituted by blurred affects transforms pedagogy into an open set of pragmatic tools, psychological interventions, and artistic creations. Such educational philosophy would not conform to the schematics of the progressive and uninterrupted building up of knowledge toward some higher ideal end. Progress of the latter kind, for Deleuze and Guattari, would represent "the

submission of the line to the point" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 293) as a return to representational thinking and the idea of the correspondence theory of truth. Instead their philosophy is concerned with:

> A line of becoming [which] is not defined by points that it connects, or by points that compose it; on the contrary, it passes *between* points, it comes up through the middle . . . A line of becoming has only a middle. The middle is not an average; it is fast motion, it is the absolute speed of movement. . . . A becoming is neither one nor two; . . . it is the in-between, the border or line of flight . . . (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 293)

Referring to Hardt and Negri, Lewis and Kahn posit the savage form of imagination as a real material force that can carry us across the boundaries of space, time, or habitual pre-existing knowledge and modes of thought. The act of imagination necessarily represents a "*resonance* between sensations and sense, cognition and affect" (Lewis and Kahn 2010, p. 2). It is exopedagogy that would have embraced a resonance between thought and affect, thereby creating a paradoxical "thinking feeling" (p. 2) embedded in the new world of strange hybrids that appear foreign to mainstream humanist discourse in education. Imagination expands the world only narrowly realized in cognitive thought; it carries an affective, feeling-tone, quality.

## Deleuze's Pedagogy of the Concept

It is along such a resonating line, filled with affects – the line of flight or becoming, as Gilles Deleuze called it – that we can break away from being "trapped in a five sense prison" (Lewis and Kahn 2010, p. 98) and thus acquire a novel ability "to hear, to see, and to feel the appearance of difference" (p. 98), therefore becoming aware of the subtle presence of novelty that strikes us as uncanny. It is an alternative form of perception – a perception in *becoming*, for Deleuze – that represents a sensorial alteration, which must take place in order for exopedagogy to actually begin and subsequently dare to produce the "divine violence" (Lewis and Kahn 2010, p. 101) embedded in the process of becoming-other.

Deleuze scholar Ian Buchanan remarks (in Semetsky 2008) that Deleuze qualified education as an *erotic*, voluptuous experience, perhaps the most important one can have in life. Erotic becomings are expressed via *affects* that reflect the objective structure and intensity of experiential events. For example, Deleuze explains the *intensity* of reading as "reading with love" (Deleuze 1995, p. 9), with affect: it is *affect* due to which the reproduction of the same, as a feature of formal pedagogy, is replaced with the newly created concepts that embody difference and lead to novel understanding. According to the myth, it is *Praxis*, the goddess of Love, who created a series of experiential encounters for the human Psyche before she could unite with her beloved, the divine Eros, therefore blurring the boundaries between the human and divine domains. It is when habitual dichotomies are under threat or become suspended, such as the categories of us versus them, destruction versus production, private versus public, or sacred versus profane, that "the monster appears as an

important conceptual category" (Lewis and Kahn 2010, p. 2). The monstrous may seem to be something mystical, but it cannot be reduced to being just an illusion. *Monster* is the ubiquitous symbol for the always already demonic alien, the generic Other, an a priori excluded foreigner or stranger. It represents a figure of "radical difference" (p. 74) embedded in those experiential encounters that, as Deleuze would say, produce a shock to thought and as such "spill over beyond whoever lives through them (thereby becoming someone else)" (Deleuze 1995, p. 137): *becoming-other*.

When we encounter something in real experience which is so intense that it causes a shock and forces us to think – to reflect on this very experience – this encounter is not yet conceptually present to us. We are permeated by affects that we simply *feel* at the level of the body, outside of one's conscious awareness. A nonconscious component of learning is significant at the level of holistic practices comprising education and human development (e.g., de Souza 2009; Semetsky 2009, 2011). Affective forces express our innermost intense and as yet a-conceptual feelings among which Deleuze prioritizes love: he presents the immanent evaluations of experience in the affective language of "'I love or I hate' instead of 'I judge'" (Deleuze 1989, p. 141). The multiple valences of love and affect embody "de-subjectification" (Lewis and Kahn 2010, p. 146) which can defy the control of power. *Becoming-other* is always a condition of possibility that involves "the harshest exercise in depersonalization" (Deleuze 1995, p. 6), and "experimentation on oneself, is our only identity, our single chance for all the combinations which inhabit us" (Deleuze and Parnet 1987, p. 11). It is in the affective conditions in real experience when the desire for knowledge can become intensified to the very limit. As Deleuze says,

> once one ventures outside what's familiar and reassuring, once one has to invent new concepts for unknown lands, then methods and moral systems break down and thinking becomes, as Foucault puts it, a "perilous act", a violence whose first victim is oneself. (Deleuze 1995, p. 103)

Such a perilous act of thinking is embodied in the maximum intensity of experience as "a power to affect itself, an affect of self on self" (Deleuze 1988, p. 101) that leads to our learning from experience and becoming-other. For Deleuze, rational Cartesian consciousness as the sole constituent of thought is insufficient because what is yet unthought-of is equally capable of producing practical effects at the level of practice. Deleuze considered the unconscious of thought – as yet unthought-of at the cognitive level – to be just as profound as the unknown of the body, at the level of affects and encounters. As an unconscious desire, in contrast to one's conscious will, an erotic element of *affect* is fundamental for Deleuze's philosophy. Even as a concept inhabits our experience (for Deleuze and Guattari it is a *living* concept) in its as yet unconscious – or *virtual* – form, still the ethical task remains "to set up . . . to extract" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, p. 160) the very "sense" of this empirical event as the newly created concept in our *actual* practice.

An intensive capacity "to affect and be affected" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. xvi) disrupts the moral codes that permeate society. Society begins to function on "its power to be affected. The priority of the right or the good does not enter into this conception of openness. What is open ... is the expression of power: the free conflict and the composition of the field of social forces" (Hardt 1993, p. 120). Thinking through affects brings an element of non-thought into a thought; such a forceful, as if physical, intensity of an encounter with an affect marks the passage between the experiential states of the body, which is defined by Deleuze, borrowing from Spinoza, as both physical and mental, corporeal and incorporeal. Accordingly, the body's power and its capacity for action undergo transformation and change. The process of becoming, grounded in experience, in life, in *praxis* is creative and "ethical ... as opposed to morality" (Deleuze 1995, p. 114), with the latter's simple dualistic division.

Tapping "into the virtual and immanent processes of machinic becoming" (Ansell-Pearson 1997, p. 4) is equivalent to "affectivity" (p. 4); and the process of becoming is always filled with affect, desire, love, and Eros. Incidentally, in Plato's *Symposium* Diotima, the Priestess teaches Socrates that Eros or Love is located *in-between* lack and plenty – that is, precisely between the two supposedly binary opposites that therefore become united by love. Eros is a spirit or daimon that, importantly, can hold two opposites together as a whole, therefore being capable of eventually reconciling that which analytic thinking habitually perceives dualistically as irreconcilable opposites. Eros, in the process of what Deleuze called de- and, subsequently, re-territorialization, necessarily leaves the domain of the philosopher-kings. It "steps outside what's been thought before" (Deleuze 1995, p. 103) into an uncertain territory of unfamiliar encounters and the as yet unknown future that we ourselves create in our very experience. Thinking, enriched with desire, "is always experiencing, experimenting, ... and what we experience, experiment with, is always actuality, what's coming into being, what's new, what's taking shape" (Deleuze 1995, p. 106) in praxis.

Deleuze's model of experiential informal learning is based on the explication of subtle signs, such as involuntary memories similar to those awakened by Marcel Proust's famous *madeleine* (cf. Bogue and Semetsky 2010), images, or esthetic and artistic signs as potential sources of meanings in accord with "the logic of sense" (Deleuze 1990). This logic exceeds narrow instrumental reason: it is a "different logic of social practice, [represented by] an intensive and affective logic of the included middle" (Bosteels 1998, p. 151) – the paradoxical and erotic "logic" of love, caring relations, and affects. It is the *included middle* that appears as a monstrosity or incomprehensible magic to the habitual dualistic way of thinking with its scientific rationality and strict moral algebra of good versus evil or right versus wrong. Lewis and Kahn (2010) refer to the magical world of the "faery" as the ethical and esthetic response to overcoming the limits which tend to be deliberately sustained and maintained by the active anthropological machine. They contrast "fairy" as plainly a cultural artifact with the "inoculating trace of the faery [as] a utopian promise" (Lewis and Kahn 2010, pp. 103–104) and even faith. Supporting new utopian visions, Lewis and Kahn call for a new exo-revolution informed by the project of exopedagogy that would create a theory/practice nexus, which is often missing from present-day secular education.

Faery is a phenomenon associated with spirits and magical experiences and represents an indigenous, psycho-spiritual assemblage of *becoming-animal*, the concept articulated by Deleuze and Guattari. Becoming-animal is the very first assemblage embedded in the Deleuze-Guattarian transformational pragmatics associated with post-humanist education and partaking of "exopedagogy as a teaching and learning about the monstrous" (Lewis and Kahn 2010, p. 38). Becoming-animal is a link affecting human forces as "having an understanding, a will, an imagination" (Deleuze 1995, p. 117); it is not a lower form but an important phase in human development derived from learning by experience and in experience.

An unorthodox, informal, pedagogy is represented by the very becoming of human subjects that takes place in real-life encounters and exceeds a solely cognitive *Cogito*. Becoming-other – such as becoming-animal, becoming-woman, becoming-minor, becoming-child – often expresses itself in the mode of *silent* discourse (Semetsky 2010b) along the affective lines of flight that defy propositional language and conscious discourse. Affect is an erotic element that takes priority over syllogistic judgments and contributes to the creation of novel concepts. Learning from experiential encounters produces a shock to thought; this "knowledge" can only be felt experientially and "grasped in a range of affective tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering" (Deleuze 1994, p. 139). It is an affect that provokes erotic desire as a love for knowledge in the form of experimental becoming of novel concepts when new understanding blends together with an evaluative aspect and we become able to create a particular meaning for – or make sense of – a singular experience. *Such is Deleuze's pedagogy of concepts.*

## The Pedagogy of Becomings

The pedagogy of the concept represents an important example of "expanding educational vocabularies" (Noddings 1993, p. 5) in the concrete context of the often conflicting experiences constituting contemporary culture. For Deleuze, a concept is always full of critical, creative, and political power that brings forth values and meanings. Becoming-animal is not the only hybrid concept of post-humanist education which is oriented toward the future, toward our experiential growth as becomings. For Deleuze, it is *becoming-woman* that represents "the key to all the other becomings" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 277) and through which they all pass. Lewis and Kahn (2010) draw from Marx's reading of the ancient Greek myth of Medusa and notice that:

> monstrous animality is gendered female, indicating a sense of connection between patriarchy, anthropocentrism, and superstition. Medusa was once a beautiful young virgin who participated in the cult of Athena. Poseidon, who could not resist her beauty, brutally raped Medusa, which led to her ultimate banishment as a monster. If, as Julia Kristeva . . . argues, women are the original strangers, then Medusa is the ultimate foreigner. (Lewis and Kahn 2010, p. 26)

Indeed rational, and predominantly patriarchal, thought tends to privilege the masculine "'hero' capable of 'taming' or 'killing' the irrational beast using the tools of reason" (Lewis and Kahn 2010, p. 5). The proverbial beast always already represents a threat, a fear that "the uncanny return of the other within the familiar is a site of great ambiguity, a paradoxical location that speaks to the limits of enlightenment reason" (p. 62). Yet it is within this paradoxical and uncanny location that the habitual dichotomies break down, thereby defying the supposedly illogical and monstrous status of the other by transforming the old and creating new assemblages based not on the dualistic opposition but on the inseparability of self and other, subject and object, cognition and affect, nature and culture, and human and nonhuman.

Emphasizing *care* as a feminine alternative to character education, Nel Noddings (1984/2003) presents the ethics of care in sharp contrast with the paradigmatic model of moral education, because what is fundamental to it is a self-other *relation* rather than an action of the individual autonomous moral agent. She remarks that the contradictory and paradoxical attitudes we often take toward others constitute one of the great mysteries of human life. Borrowing the term *confirmation* from Hasidic philosopher Martin Buber, she suggests it as an integral part of the ethics of care in education. The idea of confirmation appears to be close to the very meaning of Deleuzian becoming-other, as if establishing in practice Buber's *I-Thou* relationship. The idea of becoming-other, as well of confirmation, emerges from our awareness of moral interdependence, that is, self-becoming-other by means of entering into another person's frame of reference and taking upon oneself the other's perspective. In the context of education, to become capable, explicitly or implicitly, of becoming-other, means to confirm the potential best in both oneself and another person by establishing an intensive and affective relation that can allow us to "go from 'limited sympathy' to an 'extended generosity'" (Deleuze 2003, p. 167).

This relational and integrative "capacity for 'empathy'" (Noddings 2010, p. 6) is a prerogative of what Noddings calls *the maternal factor* as the natural instinct of mothers to care about and love their children. Such sympathy as an ability of "feeling with" (Noddings 2010, p. 73) is an effect that represents a feminine path to morality – at once symbolic and real "becoming-woman" at the level of action. Noddings (2010) expresses hope for the convergence between traditional and feminine ethics in education; the latter naturally grounded in caring relations. She points to the maternal, feminine, capacity for "reading the emotional state, needs, and intentions of others" (Noddings 2010, p. 170) and notices that with appropriate guidance such empathic capacity can be brought to a high level. She presents an *excellent* system of education as a system that purports "to open opportunities – never to close them" (Noddings 1993, p. 13).

The verb "to open" is significant and can be applied to open minds or open borders alike. Indeed, for Deleuze it is precisely "an *open* society, [which is] a society of creators" (Deleuze 1991, p. 111). Michael Peters notices that the creation of "the open society" (Peters 2009, p. 303) is a transformation of the whole of the knowledge economy. Exopedagogy therefore is always a form of feminine eco-pedagogy and as such transgresses many of "contemporary forms of

anthropocentric domination and destruction of complex natureculture assemblages" (Lewis and Kahn 2010, p. 103), itself becoming the very threshold capable of bringing "nature and culture together in its net" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 236). Significantly, in the framework of present-day standardized education, "faery" pedagogy – faery being neither self nor other but located in the *Imaginal* (using philosopher Henry Corbin's term), yet real, world along the very line of flight or becoming – represents "a form of decisively political poetics" (Lewis and Kahn 2010, p. 112) that can open up new configurations, scramble ideological codes and moral norms, and create new sensory experiences over and above reductive empirical science.

## Conclusion

Examining the utopian tradition and the role of education in affirming its value in society, Peters and Freeman-Moir (2006) call for the future generation of educators to embrace imagination through which individuals can be transformed and the collective consciousness expanded. They are certain that the "connection between imagination and utopia that brings out the foundations of both in human development is of particular significance for educational theory" (Peters and Freeman-Moir 2006, p. 3) and pedagogical practice. Among the new affective configurations established in practice, in experience, in life, will be exopedagogy which exceeds critical pedagogy oriented to the production of critical consciousness. As incorporating affects, love, and Eros, this form of pedagogy is oriented toward creating new modes of different – *altered* – states of consciousness by means of training our senses to perceive beyond given data and "to revision our relations to nonhuman life" (Lewis and Kahn 2010, p. 114).

Deleuze and Guattari speak of those who can put in practice the transformational pragmatics and create real changes as a *people to come.* These people as would-be educational leaders and policymakers are themselves produced by experimentation; they belong to "an oppressed, bastard, lower, anarchical, nomadic, and irremediably minor race... They have resistance in common – their resistance to death, to servitude, to the intolerable, to shame, and to the present" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, pp. 109–110). The people yet to come will appear only via the creative forms of experiential becoming: becoming-animal and becoming-woman. The future form of pedagogy necessarily partakes of becoming-woman because of the priority of relations and affects. The uncanny confrontation with its own other is a precondition for such a sensorial alteration.

Training in love will become as necessary as teaching facts. Exopedagogy represents the very training of love in practice and as such gains a new urgency in education and in the whole of culture. The qualities of care and love associated with the concept of Eros should not only form the basis of education for the future but can make this rather utopian future our present ethos in accord with the educational policy agenda of the twenty-first century (Simons et al. 2009). Connecting the trope of love with the figure of St. Francis of Assisi (following Hardt and Negri in *Empire*),

Lewis and Kahn interrogate his passion as diasporic and germinal, itself paradigmatic of the pedagogy of the monstrous, of the different. St. Francis is the epitome of a paradigm shift toward the "confrontation with its repressed excess" (Lewis and Kahn 2010, p. 13). Exopedagogy therefore is *both the means and the end to* a particular post-humanist *vocation*, irreducible to the teacher's profession as a plain occupation – but taking over the whole space located out of bounds yet permeated with a new vision of untimely love together with the new image of thought and future-oriented education.

The facilitation of creativity and emergence thus belongs to a particular, and necessarily paradoxical, type of educational leadership that Deleuze would describe as an inventor of new immanent modes of existence, crucial for educational futures. People to come in education will be able to use imagination to cross the limits of the present and tap into the future, thereby potentially converting the "monstrous" into the "magical." The alternative topologies would reverse categories; and what narrow rationality delegates to the realm of the monstrous may actually showcase itself as *enchanted*. The resignation and melancholia pervading the current system of education may turn into affirmation and joy. The beast can become beautiful by virtue of love.

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# The Creation of a Community of Language Learning, Empowerment, and Agency for Refugees in Rhodes, Greece

# 13

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**Abstract**

Since 2015 the Aegean Islands have been receiving an influx of refugees, which has by far exceeded the existing capabilities of the islands in terms of reception and hospitality. Refugees/migrants from Syria, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and other countries, en route to Europe, have found themselves "trapped" in Greece, due to the tightening of the EU border controls. Due to this, a considerable number of refugees/migrants are increasingly coming to terms with the potential of staying in Greece. Since 2016 Greek language lessons have been offered to adult, adolescent, and child refugees at the Linguistics Laboratory of the Department of Primary Education, University of the Aegean, in Rhodes, Greece. The lessons are provided by volunteer members of the teaching staff and students. The language and cultural diversity of the group, the mobility of the learners, as well as their unstable present and future have led to the adoption of communities of language learning, empowerment, and agency, as well as the implementation of new pedagogical approaches, which reflect the dynamic character of the learners' identities and their multiple needs. This paper will present the case study of the Greek language lessons, focusing on the multicultural, multilingual community of learning that has been created, and specifically on the volunteer teachers in this community and the ways they feel that they have been affected by teaching refugees.

## Introduction

Although European countries have always received refugees, 2015 saw the largest number of arrivals with 1,015,078 in the Mediterranean region alone (also 3,771 either dead or missing) (UNHCR 2018a). In Greece, 2015 marked 856,723 sea arrivals, 4,907 land arrivals, and 799 either dead or missing. In 2016, 173,450 persons arrived by sea, 3,784 arrived by land, and 441 died trying to reach Greece or were declared missing. In 2017 the corresponding number was 29,718 sea arrivals, 5,668 land arrivals, and 59 either dead or missing. The year 2018 marked 32,497 sea arrivals, 15,421 land arrivals, and 174 dead or missing (UNHCR 2018b). Following the central Mediterranean route, the refugees pay large amounts of money to be guided across the borders and then to be placed in a boat from the coast of Turkey to Greece. Thousands have lost their lives at sea (Council of Europe 2018a, b).

In the weekly snapshot provided by the UNHCR (2019) for the time period of December 31, 2018 to January 06, 2019, it was estimated that over 14,680 refugees and migrants reside on the Dodecanese islands. The majority of the population on

the Aegean Islands are from Afghanistan (36%), Iraq (17%), and Syria (11%). Women account for 21% of the population and children for 29% of whom more than 6 out of 10 are younger than 12 years old. Approximately 20% of the children are unaccompanied or separated, mainly Afghan and Syrian. Some 45% are men between 18 and 39 years old (UNHCR 2019). Moving from north to south on the Dodecanese island chain, during this same time period, 15,022 refugees are recorded as being on the island of Lesvos, 3,846 on the island of Chios, 8,541 are on Samos, 1,336 are on Leros, 27 on Kalymnos, 2,662 on Kos, 158 on Symi, 503 on Rhodes, and 248 on Kastellorizo (UNHCR 2019). However, these figures change from day-to-day, depending on the arrivals and voluntary or involuntary departures.

The island of Rhodes is in the southeastern region of the Dodecanese island chain, approximately 50 km from the coast of Turkey (i.e., Marmaris). In comparison to other islands in the area which have received the majority of refugee flows (e.g., Lesvos and Chios), Rhodes has received less refugees. This is partly due to the fact that other islands are closer to the Turkish coast. Rhodes has also retained less refugees as an official refugee camp does not exist.

According to the EU-Turkey deal in March 2016, migrants arriving in Greece are expected to be sent back to Turkey if they do not apply for asylum or if their claim is rejected. That, in combination with the tightening of the EU border controls, means that a considerable number of migrants/refugees are increasingly coming to terms with the potential of staying in Greece permanently. The refugees living temporarily on the island of Rhodes, Greece, are in a state of a permanent "semi-free" life, residing either (a) inside an informal camp near the harbor under difficult living conditions; (b) in hotels rented by the UNHCR (early 2017 till summer 2017); or (c) in other accommodation facilities (e.g., apartments) rented by the UNHCR outside of the camp (after the summer of 2017) or by NGO's. Those that do not remain in Rhodes are either forwarded to other Reception and Identification Centers (RICs) or directed to other islands (i.e., Crete, Leros, and Kos) or to the Greek mainland. RICs are Units of the Reception and Identification of the Ministry of Migration Policy, General Secretariat of Reception of the Hellenic Republic (2018a, b).

Although the refugees are supported by international organizations such as the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), intense difficulties arise in solving everyday survival problems such as accommodation, health issues, schooling of children, and the acquisition of necessary language skills for integration into the local community.

In order to help in the integration of refugees that are on the island of Rhodes temporarily or perhaps on a permanent basis, the authors of this paper, in collaboration with other members of the university community (i.e., teaching staff, postgraduate and pre-graduate students) and supported by the UNHCR, have carried out voluntary activities since 2016.

The following voluntary interventions have been carried since April 2016 to this date for refugees by/at the Linguistics Laboratory of the Department of Primary Education, University of the Aegean, in Rhodes, Greece:

1. Informal language teaching for refugee children who do not attend school (by visiting informal Receptions Camps or accommodation facilities provided by the UNHCR and NGOs)
2. Support for refugee children who do attend Greek schools (by visiting schools)
3. Greek language lessons for adult refugees at the university campus

Although all the above activities were interrelated, this paper will focus on the third activity above, i.e., the Greek language lessons for adult refugees, providing a case study of the community of language learning, empowerment, and agency (COLLEA) that was created, focusing on volunteer teachers in this community and the ways they feel that they have been affected by teaching refugees.

## The Case Study

The case study provides a detailed examination of the communities of language learning, empowerment, and agency that were created because of the Greek language lessons for refugees that were conducted at the Linguistics Laboratory of the Department of Primary Education, University of the Aegean from 2016 to this date. These activities were designed to help solve some of the problems that adult refugees face in regard to their communication needs while they are either temporarily or permanently in Greece and to assist them in adopting strategies to survive and adapt to the new environment. A significant point is that though they were designed for the adult refugees, they seem to have affected their teachers as well.

The community was studied mainly within the teaching/learning context [but also outside the classroom setting and in electronic environments (e.g., Facebook groups)]. In order to study the whole community, a mixed approach to research methods was applied (Creswell 2014). Regarding the qualitative aspects, the following tools were used: classroom observation, record keeping, teacher and volunteer reflections, semi-structured questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. Regarding quantitative research, a log was kept, which included rates of participation, backgrounds, languages, and cultures.

Important considerations in the gathering of data included the access to information and ethical considerations as the main purpose was to provide assistance, empowerment, and a safe space for agency rather than to conduct a study (Sales and Folkman 2000). The information was gathered in a discrete manner, as to not infringe upon the privacy of the refugees or make them feel uncomfortable. For this reason, data was collected mainly through feedback from the volunteer teachers, rather than from the refugees themselves. The researchers considered it would be unethical to extract information from persons who were still in an unstable situation. They had experienced war and life-threatening conditions after fleeing their countries, and some had experienced personal tragedies. Furthermore, they were still in a condition of uncertainty as to what their future will hold and where they will be moved to or move to themselves. Therefore, the ethical considerations included

the following. Confidentiality was considered as personal information was provided on a voluntary basis. Social responsibility was conducted as the purpose of the actions was to promote social good or prevent or mitigate social harms (Shamoo and Resnik 2009). Human subjects' protection (Shamoo and Resnik 2009) was extremely important as there was effort to minimize harms and maximize benefits, to respect human dignity, privacy, and autonomy. Special precautions were taken as the refugees were considered as a very vulnerable population; therefore, the emphasis was placed on providing services to their benefit, rather than collecting data.

This particular case study provided an opportunity to pursue action leading to the resolution of a problem, i.e., the problem of not being able to communicate in a foreign language and express basic needs. By studying the ways in which the learning environment provided a safe haven for the students and created a community of empowerment, the researchers were able to draw conclusions as to what the appropriate learning environment should be in this case.

## Theoretical Framework

### Community of Language Learning, Empowerment, and Agency (COLLEA)

The Greek language lessons for adult refugees were structured around a complex theoretical framework. The underlying concept was the creation of a community of language learning, empowerment and agency. Although the term community of practice (Wenger 2011) is a popular term that has been used in various contexts, including education, it does not explain the type of community that was envisioned, as it mainly entails improving performance of the learners through collaboration.

The environment that was created was not simply a Community of Learners (CoL) or "a group of people who share values and beliefs and who actively engage in learning from one another. They thus create a learning-centered environment in which students and educators are actively and intentionally constructing knowledge together" (Blonder 2014: 1). In the case of this project, the objective was not only to improve language performance or active engagement but to create an environment of empowerment. It includes an attempt to transform the whole classroom. This transformation process involves a "reorientation of both teachers and students as learners and agents within and beyond the classroom (Rodriguez 2013: 95). Learning the language of the host country was part of the empowerment process (LIAM 2018). In order to create this community of language learning, empowerment, and agency, many theoretical constructs for second language learners were considered and adapted to meet the needs of refugees or asylum seekers such as transformative pedagogy, collaborative relations of power, empowerment, identity investment, and utilizing the plurilingualism of the group. Furthermore, examples from toolkits (Council of Europe 2018a, 2018b; Lazenby-Simpson 2012; Little 2012) or good practices for refugees were considered, such as language for resilience, supporting vulnerable members of the community, classroom as a safe haven,

emergency lessons, and conflict resolving. Furthermore, constructs of adult education were utilized, and the content of the language lessons was designed according to the communication needs of the refugees (i.e., needs analysis) (see Fig. 1).

## Transformative Pedagogy

The basic theoretical framework was based on theories of second language learning for minorities but was adapted, according to the needs of the refugee students as the lessons progressed.

Transformative pedagogy was the underlying pedagogical orientation. Transformative approaches to pedagogy draw their inspiration from the work of Freire (1970) while also acknowledging the important influence of Vygotsky (1978) and use collaborative critical inquiry to enable students to analyze the social realities of their own lives and of their communities (Cummins 2010; Rodriguez 2013). An environment is created where students discuss, and frequently act on, ways in which
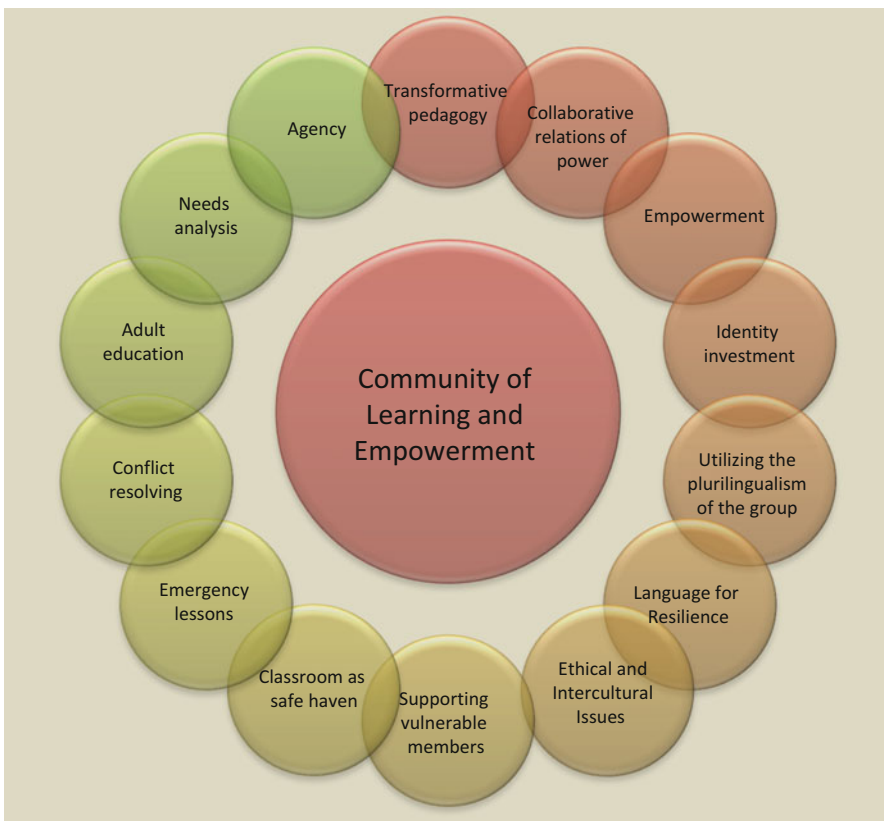


**Fig. 1** Theoretical framework

these realities might be transformed through various forms of social action. This orientation gives importance to issues of equity and justice (Cummins 1996, 2000, 2010). The implementation of this particular pedagogical orientation was not an easy task, as stated in other articles as well. Magee and Pherali (2017) refer to Syrian refugees in Jordan and the attempt to build Freirean critical consciousness in this refugee context.

## Collaborative Relations of Power, Empowerment, and Identity Investment

In accordance to the transformative pedagogical orientation, collaborative relations of power were encouraged as an attempt was made for this power to be generated in the interpersonal and intergroup relations, thereby becoming "additive" rather than "subtractive" (Cummins 1996). We adapted Cummins' framework for coercive and collaborative relations of power manifested in macro- and micro-interactions (2000) according to the needs of the refugees (see Fig. 2).

The refugees were empowered through their collaboration, so that each member was given the opportunity to affirm her or his identity. This gave them a greater sense of efficacy to effect change their social situations. Thus, power was created in the relationship and shared among participants. In this particular learning environment, collaborative relations were not easy, as the refugees came from different backgrounds. Refugees who were fleeing from war often considered each other enemies. It was very hard for a person to sit next to and collaborate with a person who they considered an enemy or the source of their misery (e.g., in cases where they had been wounded or lost family members in war).

## Plurilingualism of the Group

The Council of Europe's work in language education is founded on the principle of plurilingualism or the capacity to learn and communicate in more than one language. Therefore, plurilingual competences reflects the linguistic repertoire of the person or the languages each person has learnt at different stages of their lives and used in a variety of ways and purposes (Council of Europe 2018a, b; Lazenby-Simpson 2012; Little 2012; Jury 2018).

We discovered that most of the refugees were strongly plurilingual because they came from multilingual societies where it is usual for people to communicate in two or more languages; they had learned one or more foreign languages at school; they had spent a long time living as migrants in various countries where they learned to communicate in the languages of the countries they have passed through, etc. Furthermore, they had different levels of literacy. Some could read and write in several scripts, some were able to read and write in the script of their main language, and some were not able to read or write in any language, although they were able to use different forms of communication (e.g., cell phones) (Council of Europe
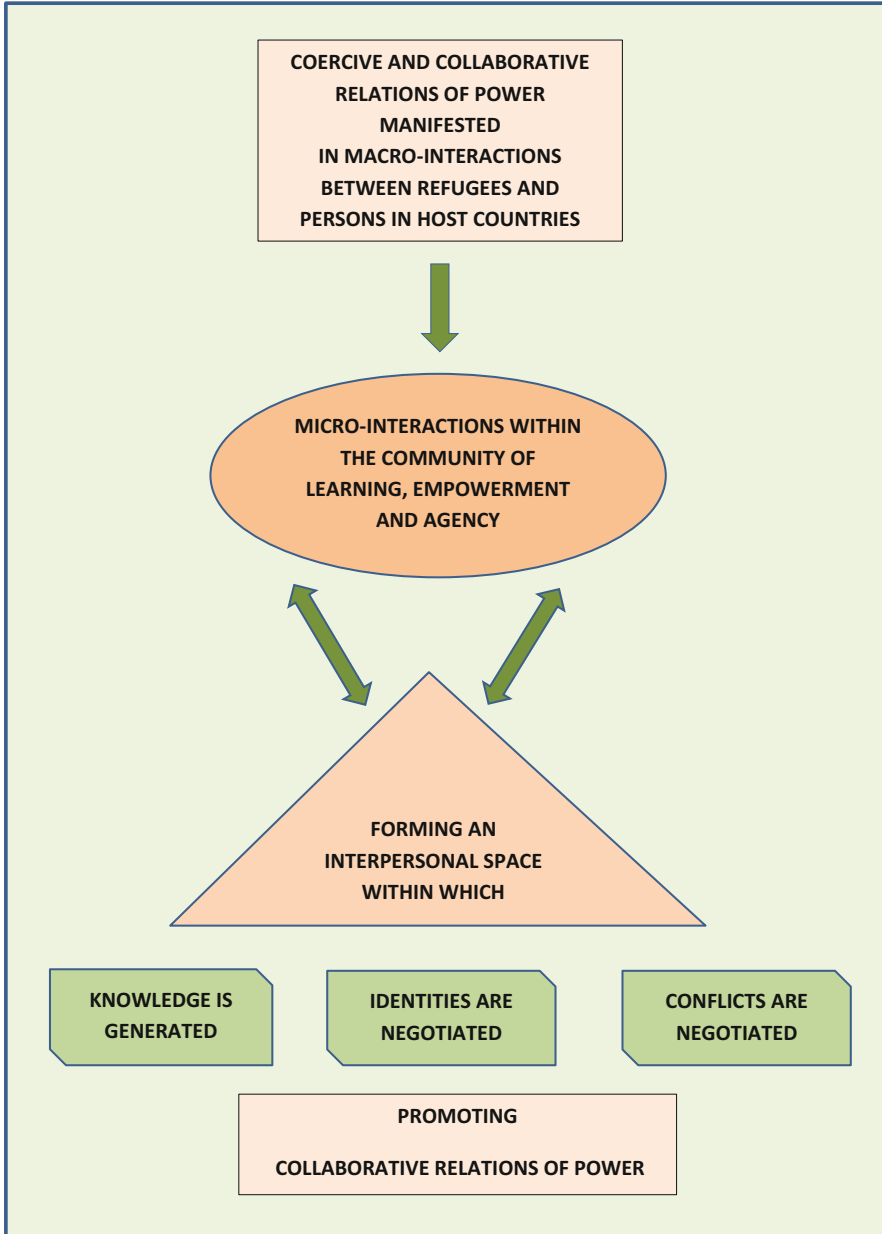
**Fig. 2** Collaborative relations of power. (Adapted from Cummins 2000: 20)

2018a, b; Jury 2018). Furthermore, some had very negative feelings about some the languages they knew and refused to use them, sometimes preferring to communicate in a language they did not know as well. For example, students of Kurdish origin often preferred to speak in English, rather than Arabic.

The plurilingualism of the group was taken into consideration, as it was the only way to communicate. Many languages were used in the learning community, with teachers and students interpreting to each other from one language to the other.

## Language for Resilience

In planning the lessons, we took into consideration information on language lessons that build resilience for persons displaced from their homes by conflict and civil unrest and who have experienced man-made emergencies resulting from civil or international conflicts, fighting, and wars (UNICEF 2018).

The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) was a starting point, namely, "the ability of individuals, households, communities and institutions to anticipate, withstand, recover and transform from shocks and crises" (3RP 2015: 17; Capstick and Delaney 2017).

According to the principles of language for resilience, language learning is absolutely essential. It helps refugees and their host communities to withstand challenges, to recover from crisis, and to overcome barriers – to build resilience (Capstick and Delaney 2017). Language for resilience research identifies a number of ways in which language builds resilience: giving a voice to young people and adults; building social cohesion in host communities; and providing individuals with the skills they need to access work, services, education, and information (Capstick and Delaney 2017). Language learning can also promote inclusion and non-discrimination; it reduces isolation. Knowledge of the language of the host country is central in helping refugees address the effects of loss, displacement, and trauma. Furthermore, the teaching environments can create safe spaces where refugees are able to express their feelings and work toward reducing the effects of trauma. Knowledge of the host country's language can also improve the chances of refugees to find work and can also provide opportunities for training as well as furthering their education (Capstick and Delaney 2017).

## Ethical and Intercultural Issues

It was important to make the members of the community feel comfortable; therefore, great care was taken when discussing sensitive issues that could give rise to conflicts. We avoided asking personal questions about the refugees' situation in their country of origin or experiences they had when travelling to Europe, as these questions would be painful in situations where they had lost family members or were wounded. We aimed to create an atmosphere in which refugees could feel comfortable to express themselves, if they wanted to (as this was often the case) and to share whatever information about themselves that they wanted to. We also avoided drawing attention to the literacy level of the participants. Respect of the privacy of each individual was of utmost importance (Council of Europe 2018b).

## Other Factors

In combination with the above, it was important to support the most vulnerable members of the group. For example, mothers with children were encouraged to participate as volunteers cared for their children during the lessons (either in the classroom or in the space outside the classroom). We tried to create a safe haven in the classroom. For this reason, the lessons for adults did not take place in the camp, but at the university, along with other students (i.e., Erasmus+ students and language learners from the local community). The refugees were treated no differently than university students, giving them a sense of respect and worth. Tea was served during the break, making the experience more personal and social. As Krashen (1982) explains in his affective filter hypothesis, students will be better able to learn a second language when they are relaxed, uninhibited, motivated, and free of anxiety. It is of critical importance to (a) reinforce the trust among both students and teachers and (b) create an environment which will lower students' anxiety levels. This is particularly important when working with individuals who have experienced trauma (Bobrow Finn 2010).

We also considered the factors related to emergency lessons as the refugees were persons on the move. Much had to be covered in a short period of time. Conflict resolving was also essential as tensions existed between different groups of persons in the same classroom, sitting next to each other. Adult education was considered. Finally, the content of the lessons was designed and created by the language instructors, according to the needs of the refugees, through needs analysis, rather than using any of the available textbooks.

## Results

### Phases of the Activities

Since 2016 up to this date, the Linguistics Laboratory of the Department of Primary Education of the University of the Aegean has developed and implemented the following actions aiming at the support of refugees residing on the island Rhodes: (a) actions for refugee children; (b) action for adult refugees; and (c) actions to support children of refugees attending schools on the island. The incentive to begin such actions was the fact that many children (some travelling alone) found themselves in the unofficial refugee camp in Rhodes. The first step was to create a team of volunteers, made up of university students from the School of Humanities of the University of the Aegean. The students were trained, and a Facebook group was created, entitled *Refugee Children,* which served as a means of communication between the volunteers. From April 2016 to June of 2016, the university students conducted literacy activities, on a daily basis, and set up an area in the unofficial camp that served as an informal classroom. Although the activities were designed for children, adults also participated, as they wanted to learn the Greek language. Following this, in September of 2016 to June of 2017, the university students also supported the first refugee children who began attending school. The coordinating

team also worked with doctors for the inoculation of the children, local officials, the local board of education, school directors, and teachers. In December of 2016, Greek language lessons for adults (primarily) began at the Linguistics Laboratory of the Department of Primary Education of the University of the Aegean and continue to this date. The lessons were held once a week for beginners (A1). The participation of the students was not stable and depended on the arrivals and departures of the refugees to and from the island. From December 2016 to June of 2017 approximately 25–30 men, 10–12 women, and 10–12 children attended the lessons. The men were of different ages and of various professions and had different literacy experiences. The women were from ages 20 to 45 and were mostly mothers with large families (of more than three children), and most had infants. Thus, they had difficulties in participating in the lessons as they had nowhere to leave the children. This was the reason that volunteers provided activities for these children while their mothers were attending the lessons. The lessons were also attended by children from 2 to 16 years of age (mostly children of the adult refugees) who attended classes sporadically with members of their families. The afternoon lessons served to provide extra language input for the children who attended public school during the day or as preparation for enrolment in school.

In the second phase, from October of 2017 to June of 2018, a second level was added, i.e., A2. In the beginner's group (A1), the majority of participants were women (i.e., Syrian, Iraqi, Kurdish, Afghan) in comparison to the first phase in which the majority was men. In the same phase women from Russia and Belarus living on the island of Rhodes also attended the lessons as they were informed through the local community. In October of 2017, Erasmus students from Germany, Austria, and France started to attend the lessons.

The third phase began in October of 2018 and will continue to the end of June 2019 with two groups: A1 and A2. In the previous phases, two volunteer instructors taught the first group and two taught the second group. In the third phase only one instructor teaches the first group and two continue to teach the second group.

The courses begin in October and end in June, but new students can join at any point. This inconsistency in the classroom is what Sticht et al. (1998 in Bobrow Finn 2010) describe as attendance turbulence. Although the students are dedicated and attend the classes regularly, they are constantly in a state of mobility. When they leave the island through their own will or if they are moved to another environment, this leads to difficulty in maintaining a sense of continuity in instruction. New students attend the lessons each time, also leading to a spiral method of teaching where the teacher must begin from the beginning every time. Thus, the differences in levels lead to difficulty in moving forward and the slowing down the other students' progress.

## Creating a Community of Language Learning, Empowerment, and Agency (COLLEA)

The first and major priority was to create a community of learning. This community was made up of the coordination team (i.e., 3 university professors), the teaching

staff (i.e., 2 teachers for level one and 2 teachers for level two), approximately 30 student volunteers, 40 refugees/migrants, and 6 Erasmus students (see Fig. 3).

The refugees from war zones were from Syria, Iraq, Kurdistan, Afghanistan, and Palestine. Although the lessons were designed for refugees, i.e., persons displaced from their homes by conflict or civil unrest, they attracted economic immigrants from Algeria, Pakistan, Russia, Belorussia, and Albania. They were gladly included in the community of learning. When Erasmus + students from Germany, France, and Austria requested Greek language lessons, the coordinating team decided to ask them if they were interested in joining the language lessons for refugees and immigrants or if they wanted separate language lessons. They decided to join the refugees and immigrants.

Over the 2 years (i.e., 2016–2018) 37 adult refugees and 7 children from Syria took part in the lessons, as well as 11 adults from Iraq, 25 adults and 8 children from Kurdistan, 1 person from Afghanistan, and 4 persons from Palestine. Of the adult migrants one person was from Algeria, six from Pakistan, one from Russia, two from Belorussia, and two from Albania. Two Erasmus students were from Germany, two from Austria, and two from France. Added to this, we had ten student volunteers, three coordinators, and four members of the teaching staff (see Table 1).

Collaboration among students is reinforced by an open enrolment policy in the Greek classes, where students are free to participate as they please. What Finn (2010)
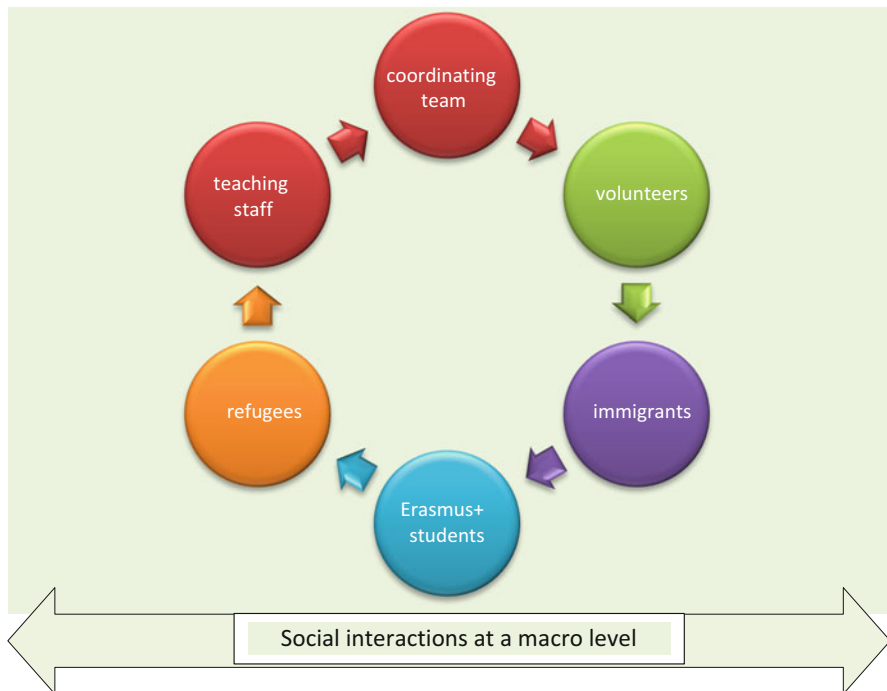


**Fig. 3** Community of learning

**Table 1** Participants in the community of learning

| Subgroups (Active years, 2016–2018) | Country or Region | Number |
|---|---|---|
| Refugees | Syria | 37 (+7 children) |
| | Iraq | 11 |
| | Region of Kurdistan | 25 (+8 children) |
| | Afghanistan | 1 |
| | Palestine | 4 |
| Migrants | Algeria | 1 |
| | Pakistan | 6 |
| | Russia | 1 |
| | Belorussia | 2 |
| | Albania | 2 |
| Erasmus+ students | Germany | 2 |
| | Austria | 2 |
| | France | 2 |
| Greek student volunteers | Greece | 10 |
| The main teaching staff and coordinating team | Greece | 6 |

refers to as a "revolving door of students" reflects the community of learning where students take on shifting roles as experts, or those who are knowledgeable and experienced helping learners who are just entering the community for the first time (Lave and Wenger 1991). This interchange of roles between teachers and students was very helpful for communication purposes. Refugees fluent in the languages of others interpret from language to language and from person to person. Thus, the message coming from the teacher in Greek or English is interpreted, for example, into Arabic and from Arabic to Urdu.

Students provide language support to other students, but also social support. The expert/novice dynamic that Finn (2010) refers to creates an environment that builds trust.

## Plurilingualism of the Group

In classroom observations made during the lessons, the researchers saw evidence of different languages being used when the learners interacted with others and with the language teachers in order to construct meaning. The learners drew on diverse language resources when they learned together, relying on interpretations from one student to the other in various languages and utilizing varieties of languages. The learners were able to draw on all the varieties in their repertoires to meet the needs of communicating with the teachers and with each other. The lessons take place in a dynamic environment involving many different languages. All the language teachers were fluent in Greek; all spoke English as a foreign language;

one spoke French; and one spoke Arabic. The student volunteers spoke Greek, Arabic, and Farsi. Table 2 outlines the languages of the language learners.

## Feedback from Volunteers

The seven volunteers (four women and three men) were asked to complete a semi-structured questionnaire dealing with the topics outlined in this paper. The question-naire was either answered in Greek and translated into English or written in English. An informal discussion followed.

   None of the volunteers had previous experiences teaching refugees; however, three had experiences teaching Greek to other groups (e.g., immigrants living permanently in Greece or online). The following excerpts provide information about the volunteer's experiences:

(a) When asked what they felt about their experiences teaching refugees, all felt that they were making a major contribution.
   Excerpt 1:
      I felt that I contributed to an important collective effort to support and empower persons facing and dealing with extremely difficult situations due to war, poverty, political repression and social oppression.
   Excerpt 2:
      It was an unprecedented experience, as the refugees had experienced trau-matic experiences as a whole and, in this context, language teaching had a profound social and humanitarian dimension.

**Table 2**  Languages spoken by the members of the community of learning

| Subgroups (Active years, 2016–2018) | Country or Region | Spoken languages |
|---|---|---|
| Refugees | Syria | Arabic |
| | Iraq | Arabic |
| | Region of Kurdistan | Kurdish |
| | Afghanistan | Farsi, Pashtun, Dari, Urdu |
| | Palestine | Arabic |
| Migrants | Algeria | Arabic |
| | Pakistan | Urdu, Punjabi |
| | Russia | Russian |
| | Belorussia | Russian |
| | Albania | Albanian |
| Erasmus+ students | Germany | German, Turkish |
| | Austria | German |
| | France | French |
| Greek student volunteers | Greece | Greek, Arabic, Farsi |
| The main teaching staff and coordinating team | Greece | Greek, English, French, German |

Excerpt 3:

For me, it was an unforgettable experience. My first experience in teaching Greek was to foreigners but teaching refugees has been unforgettable.

(b) When asked what they learned from this experience, all volunteers stressed that they learned a lot and that it helped them personally.

Excerpt 1:

I was able to confirm the importance of communication in every educational process, the feeling that through it everyone is acquiring elements that enrich their identity and spirit. These people, through the ways they face daily their adventures and difficulties, transmit a force of soul, dignity, will, hope, and humanity. And through the different stories, experiences and elements of their culture, you feel that your intellectual horizons are widening.

Excerpt 2:

It is very difficult to describe the range of experiences I had at a personal and professional level from such an experience. The most important thing is that language learning in crisis conditions and in intense cultural and social disturbances can act as a means of empowerment.

Excerpt 3:

I was able to get to learn about the refugee crisis on a first-hand basis and then help change attitudes and distorted opinions about these people, and I learned a lot about their languages and cultures.

(c) In response questions on how their students feel about learning Greek or why they are learning Greek, most of the answers had to deal with basic communication needs.

Excerpt 1:

The Erasmus students are interested in learning to speak basic Greek in order to use the language in their day-to-day communication with fellow students, as well as with other Greek residents in the area with whom they interact (e.g. when they go to a restaurant, when they shop, . . .). They are also interested in Greek as a means of initiation in the culture of the country that they have come to study. The refugees and migrants who come to our courses are those who feel the need to learn Greek because they want to stay in Greece, get a residence permit and work here or again there are those who are waiting to get the necessary documents to go to another European country- usually Germany. They want to do something creative that will get them out of the camp and will re-activate them as human beings, so they can communicate with other people and participate in a learning experience.

Excerpt 2:

Learning the Greek language is very important for refugees, even when they know that their stay on the island or Greece will be temporary. Besides the practical benefits, such as finding a job, learning support for their children going to school, communication with Greek speakers, etc. they are also interested in the very process of language learning and feel empowered.

Excerpt 3:

From what I understand, they show great interest in the Greek language, especially when they identify the similarities between their language and the Greek language. They also believe that it is a "tool" in the host country for as long as they are in Greece. They are always willing to learn, polite and show their gratitude in every way.

(d) In response to the questions dealing with how they empower their students, all the participants stressed that they wanted to instill trust in their students and provide support. The language learning was secondary, while empowerment was of vital importance.

Excerpt 1:

In our lessons, the first goal is not, of course, achieving high academic performance. It is to cultivate an environment of trust, acceptance, security, cooperation and support. The students' support during the lesson is both through their continuous verbal support and through forms of non-verbal communication. I try to gradually cultivate a climate of respect for all the elements that make up the identity and culture of each student / learner by highlighting this through questions, presentations, etc. I want to make them feel comfortable and to create a friendly environment where they can talk freely about anything they want to. Finally, I try to support them in learning by providing them with the appropriate material, using a variety of teaching methods, making the lesson more communicative and creative while using ICT.

Excerpt 2:

The empowerment results from the increased involvement of refugees themselves, who are gradually taking an active role in learning. The use of mother tongues is very important in their empowerment as it gives them a sense of community and helps them to realize the importance of their linguistic and cultural capital.

Excerpt 3:

I try to be the transmitter, the transmitter of knowledge but also the receiver. I show a keen interest in their language, culture, traditions and lifestyle. I show respect for the pupils and the difficult situation they are in. I treat them equally, respecting their nationalities, religions, languages.

Excerpt 4:

I got personally involved with some refugees, in the sense that I moved beyond a simple acquaintance and formed deeper bonds with some of them. By focusing on certain –more vulnerable in my opinion—persons and extending my assistance to everyday-life problems that those persons face (e.g. helping them to acquire social security numbers or by escorting them to the hospital and other health-related agencies), while at the same time explaining to them basic "facts-of-life" and formal procedures prevalent in my country, I believe that I offered them a crucial initial support for a more creative, independent and emancipated life course. My efforts have been, quite frequently, met with indifference, bitterness and even open racism from

various "compatriots", and there were times when I was disappointed and discouraged, but somehow, I managed to make a difference in some peoples' life!

(e) In response to the question "How do the students support each other?", all four stress that collaboration was vital.

Excerpt 1:

Through the language learning and the teaching, the different groups of refugees learn to cooperate, communicate and support each other in this process.

Excerpt 2:

[They support each other] by explaining a question to each other in a language which they both know (which I obviously cannot do). There is a spirit of cooperation, unity, fellowship, empathy, a dynamic communication code, I would say.

(f) Another important point in the creation of the community of language learning, empowerment, and agency are the interpersonal relationships within the group. All the volunteers stressed the importance of the personal relationships within the group.

Excerpt 1:

These lessons can only be effective through the creation of a learning community in which everyone is equal and supportive. It is very often observed that a student who has already learned something explains it to the person sitting next to him or her. We also often rely on a student who speaks Greek or English somewhat better than the rest to act as a translator for the rest of the team. Sometimes we compare words, grammatical and syntactical phenomena in different languages and we find common points and differences that impress all of us. What is dominant, however, is that every Wednesday a group of people, despite the difficulties and problems they face, come to the lessons with joy to learn Greek and to share thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences with other people who, over time, become familiar to them and eventually become their friends.

Excerpt 2:

The learning community that is set up is heavily reliant on mediation, as refugees themselves, take on the roles of teachers, interpreters and translators as the need arises. Support involves the learning process, but can also be psychological, as we are working with vulnerable groups. Thus, their previous knowledge and experiences are activated, and through intense interactions they redefine their relationship with the learning process, the different languages, but also their identity.

Excerpt 3:

It [the learning community] works very well as there is empathy among students. They have all experienced similar traumatic situations. The environment is very positive, and I am very pleased that I am able to add to this learning community.

Excerpt 4:

There is a general sense of mistrust, not always manifest in an overt way. Refugees, as expected, socialize more frequently and strongly with compatriots and with people with the same ethnic origins and the same language, although other factors, such as geographic origin, socio-economic and educational background and the social & cultural capital etc. might affect their place-making, dwelling and bonding strategies.

The refugees, due to their status, are forced to trust other people for reasons of enjoying even basic human needs, such as shelter, food, health, and often talk to somebody as a means to feel special, to feel esteemed by someone else.

The level of trust is always linked with the level of cultural capital one might possess, leading to a distinction between us and them.

Women show a more defensive attitude towards socialization with other refugees, especially when they are single among many men or multi-person families.

(g) Another point of interest was the way in which the plurilingual potential of the group was utilized effectively. In answer to the question "How do you go about teaching students who speak different languages?", all considered the plurilingualism of the group as an asset, despite the difficulties.

Excerpt 1:

Teaching students with different linguistic backgrounds is not easy. As each language system has its own logic and its own peculiarities. However, over time and through teaching experiences, you realize that by using elements of multilingual and non-verbal communication you can achieve a good level of communication and understanding that creates a sense of enrichment of each person's linguistic, cultural and intellectual capital.

Excerpt 2:

Teaching language in conditions of intense insecurity requires the adoption of flexible teaching practices that can contribute to the empowerment of refugees. They are based on the promotion of critical language awareness and the development of metacognitive skills developed through language learning that can help refugees to critically understand oral, written or other texts and to meet their increased communication and social needs.

Excerpt 3:

For me, students who speak different languages are a challenge. More of a challenge, than, let's say, teaching a class of students who speak the same language. Cultural and linguistic coexistence excites me. This linguistic diversity is an incentive for me to help them meet their communication needs on one hand and then share with them the beauty of the Greek language and culture on the other hand.

(h) When asked about ethical and intercultural issues, the volunteers spoke about the privacy of the refugees

Excerpt 1:

Apart from other insurmountable problems (language, time & space limits, legal & administrative problems), we have had to overcome an understandable suspicion, which lied on the fact that persons who have been subject to degrading and often aggressive & humiliating behaviour from the time they stepped feet on Greek soil might be deeply distrustful of any Greek citizen. They have been very hesitant in openly and freely expressing their opinion. However, our approach has been centered on encouraging their unhindered self-expression. Our response to their learning needs draws elements from, not only the social research codes of practice (ethics), but also our personal attitudes towards refugees, which correspond more to a solidarity value system, rather than a philanthropic approach to a supposedly "social malaise". This approach is acknowledged and respected by the refugees.

## Conclusions

No doubt, the experiences of refugees in the world today can be considered a modern-day tragedy. Likewise, the influx of refugees and asylum seekers throughout the world has had a profound impact on the societies in the host countries. Refugees are often confronted with hostility and even in cases where there is a will to provide assistance, this is not always carried out in the most efficient and effective manner. As educators working with refugees, we have learnt to give *learning* a secondary status and to give *well-being* a primary importance. Therefore, the community that is defined in this case study is primarily a community of empowerment and agency, with language learning playing the part of an empowerment skill and an agency tool. The term community of language learning, empowerment, and agency (COLLEA) that is used in this paper is a tool that educators can use in order to assist displaced persons and persons at risk improve their conditions.

As for the tutors, who voluntarily taught Greek, the very crucial point is that, according to the above excerpts, they underwent a personal transformation, which affects social, cultural, and linguistic aspects of their doing. A turning point in their doing is sharing power, building collaborative power relations, and treating their students with dignity, respecting their privacy, accepting them as the very agents of their interests. As for Greek as the target language, the tutors point to the communicative skills that, as they argue, is what their students need in order to survive and to adapt in Greece. As for the plurilingual potential of the students, the tutors consider it a "challenge." Language differences and barriers prevail. It takes some time to make the step toward embracing the language potential available in the classroom.

At this point, we can but speculate if the transformation process of the tutors toward their students will dramatically change the ways in which teaching members of vulnerable groups takes place in general, but it seems that teaching refugees and coming so close to personal and collective tragedies made a deep impact on the

specific tutors, as regards the content, the style of their teaching, and the interpersonal relationships in the classroom.

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# Forest School Pedagogy and Indigenous Educational Perspectives

**14**

Where They Meet, Where They Are Far Apart, and Where They May Come Together

Lisa Johnston

## Contents

**Abstract**

While Forest Schools are increasingly popular in Canada and their work of connecting children to nature and enacting a new pedagogy for learning outdoors is important, how do Forest Schools, as places of learning in nature and on the land, connect with Indigenous ways knowing, learning, and teaching? This question is significant in the context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as Canada is in the midst of recognizing the injustice of its treatment of Indigenous Peoples and working toward reconciliation. Through a review of literature, this chapter examines the ways that Forest School pedagogy and Indigenous educational perspectives may meet, may be far apart, and may come together. How do notions of nature and land, risk, and resilience differ from western understandings? What does decolonization mean? How does place-based education connect with Indigenous understandings of land as first teacher? As a settler

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and early childhood educator, the author is situated in this learning journey as "coming to know" (Cajete, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence*, Clear Light Publishers, Sante Fe, 2000). Drawing on Indigenous and settler scholars offers insight into the complex differences between Forest School pedagogy and Indigenous educational perspectives and offers guidance on how (re)positioning Forest Schools in the context of settler colonialism reframes the premise of how Forest School may incorporate, embed, and be reshaped by Indigenous educational perspectives.

## Introduction

I got lost on the land once. It was on the Niagara Escarpment on the Bruce Trail, back in the woods behind my friend C's house. We must have been about 9 years old. We packed a lunch and set out on an adventure that we had been planning for a week. It was my first big adventure into the world with a friend. I remember walking in the woods and how new it felt. We trudged through the bush until we came a very thorny thicket and then into a large clearing with blue sky above. I remember it well because I had just read about a "clearing" in a Nancy Drew book, so I knew exactly what it was and now I was in one. We walked alongside a small brook until we came to the most beautiful shale waterfall. It wasn't very high. The rocks were large, smooth slabs of grey that went up in long steps just as the small brook came bouncing down. The sun was right above us. We ate our lunch there and stayed for a while hopping up and down on the stone steps around the flowing water. When we had hopped enough, we continued on getting lost in our sense of adventure until we noticed that the sun had moved considerably and that we were in fact lost. Panic! We tried to go back but nothing looked familiar anymore. Will we have to stay out here over night? C was a little older than me and suggested that we use the position of the sun to work out which way to go. We decided that we were heading west and that we should just keep going that way. Maybe we would eventually come to a house or a road. A little further on, we heard a car go by. We ran toward the sound, and soon we were at the side of the road up around the corner from my house about a quarter mile from where we started. Relief! We never did go back, though how I would love to sit by that waterfall again. I wonder if it still looks the same as I remember it.

This story is from a time when I was a daughter, a sister, and a friend. Now I am a wife and a mother, an educator, and a student. Although I live in downtown Toronto, those memories of growing up close to the land, live on in me. As a preschool educator, I shared my love of nature with the children in my program and built a small garden in the playground of the childcare center where I worked at Yonge and Bloor Streets. Each summer we watched the life cycle of the ladybug in the Globe

maples, and for 1 year a Monarch butterfly laid eggs on our little milkweed plants. We reared the caterpillars and released the new generation of Monarchs back into the garden. We spent every day there naming all the flowers and seeing how things had changed from day to day. I tell this story as I reflect on my relationship with the land and how it has shaped me and taught me. I tell it also to situate myself in the journey of this chapter:

> "Coming to know" (Cajete 2000) is a way of describing distinct Indigenous views on the process of learning via more intuitively connected pathways. Indigenous ways of coming to know respect the individual's relationship with and the responsibility for what is being learned and explore stories and other diverse approaches to the subject at hand, learning pathways that appeal to diverse learning styles in non-prescriptive ways. Coming to know ultimately invites us to explore our emergent learning process as part of our own journey, rather than challenging us to enter into externally imposed, isolated theme areas. (Anderson et al. 2017, p. 59)

Currently, I am a graduate student, continuing to journey, learn, and think more critically about the world, my practice, and pedagogy. My learning journey has brought me back to thinking about my love of nature and about the land and my place in it, in a very different way. When I began my journey back to school, I knew that I wanted to take this opportunity to explore outdoor education, specifically Forest Schools in more depth. At the same time, I began learning more about Indigenous ways of knowing and being and about settler colonialism and decolonization. I wondered how Forest Schools and Forest School pedagogy connected to Indigenous ways of knowing, teaching, and learning. This chapter seeks to explore these connections though a review of some of the literature. I invite you to walk with me as I step out on a new adventure. I acknowledge the land that I walk on is ancient and storied with the history and current lives of the First Peoples who have always lived here. I am a settler on this land, a treaty person welcomed here through the *Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant* to share and respect the land and all that is in it. I acknowledge my western settler perspective and that I am actively working on "decolonizing" this perspective as I explore these topics. I seek to listen to the voices of Indigenous scholars and share them here where I do not have the authority to speak. Even so, I am aware that from my perspective I am choosing which passages to include. I am at the beginning of this journey, walking with an open mind, open heart, open eyes, and open ears. I am coming to know.

## Truth and Reconciliation

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission report that came out in 2015 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015) outlined 94 Calls to Action for non-Indigenous governments, institutions, and individuals to engage in as actions to move us together toward reconciliation. Education is implicated largely in the Calls to Action, and so educational institutions from childcare centers to PhD programs are incorporating Indigenous content and ways of teaching into their curriculum. There

is no returning to our previous ignorance about Residential Schools and the destructive trauma of colonial education on Indigenous children and families. It is our responsibility as non-Indigenous citizens to learn the truth and to actively work toward reconciliation and the decolonization, at the very least, of our thinking and of our educational institutions.

## Coming to Know

In this light, it was a natural assumption for me to think that Forest Schools, situated in wild nature as they are, would have a lot in common with Indigenous ways of knowing and being and of teaching and learning. On the surface, this may seem sensible, and indeed there are aspects of Forest Schools that do connect to Indigenous educational perspectives; however there are deeper understandings that escape the western view, escaped my view, where these two paths move away from each other. This chapter will explore some of the literature about Forest Schools and Indigenous educational perspectives, where they converge and diverge and perhaps where they may eventually come together:

> The wilderness that resides in our national identity is a fantasy of Canadian homeland created in the interplay of desire and anxiety and is used to mask implication in colonial injustice. The discursive absence of the politics of wilderness on our cultural landscape mirrors its curricular absence in much educational practice. Wilderness is a deeply ambivalent fiction that canoe trippers nonetheless enjoy and this contradiction haunts outdoor and environmental learning. (Newbery 2012, p. 37)

Newbery's (2012) article, *Canoe Pedagogy*, challenged and shifted my thinking about our great Canadian wilderness. The pristine nature of the Canadian wilderness as an open, empty space waiting for adventure has been idealized while not at all acknowledging the erasure of the people that were removed from their land and the destruction of languages, cultures, families, and histories. Newbery (2012) argues that outdoor education should henceforth include the history of Indigenous peoples on the land and the history of colonialism. In thinking about Forest Schools specifically, I wonder how many educators know the Indigenous history of the land or the treaties that govern it and how many include this in their curriculum. I am cognizant of the fact that, fundamentally, though Forest Schools are based in nature, they remain "socially and culturally constructed" (Harper 2017) western forms of education. Here in Canada I believe that those with closer ties to and who have worked to build relationships with Indigenous communities and family are genuinely working to weave Indigenous perspectives into their curriculum (Child and Nature Alliance of Canada, 2018b; Elliot et al. 2014; Elliot and Krusekopf 2017; Rowan 2014). On their website, Forest School Canada acknowledges that "Indigenous people here have been teaching and learning on, with, and from this land for millennia. We have learned and still have much *to* learn from building reciprocal relationships built on mutual trust with the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit

communities around us" (Child and Nature Alliance of Canada 2018a). A section on Aboriginal perspectives is also included in the guide, *Forest and Nature School in Canada: A Head, Heart, Hands Approach to Outdoor Learning* (Child and Nature Alliance of Canada 2018b).

The first western nature kindergarten can be traced back to Froebel's kindergartens in Germany in the mid-1800s (Harper 2017). The concept was transported to North America in the late 1800s. Forest Schools began in Sweden in the 1950s later inspiring similar schools in Denmark and Norway and the *Waldkindergartens* (forest kindergartens) in Germany. The Forest School movement quickly caught on in the UK and is beginning to increase in popularity in the USA and Canada (Sobel 2014). While Forest School philosophies and pedagogies may differ as they adapt to the contexts in which they are situated, they do have similar overarching tenets and goals. Generally, the focus in Forest Schools is on play in the outdoors with some form of inquiry-based learning or place-based learning that either is planned or occurs naturally out of children's curiosity, wonder, and questioning (Harper 2017). Since Forest School pedagogies differ also from indoor, mainstream classroom settings, Forest School programs are often conducted by at least one educator trained as a Forest School practitioner (Child and Nature Alliance of Canada, 2018a). Forest School practitioners are trained and knowledgeable in building fires, tool use, wood carving, shelter building, as well as in child development. What sets Forest Schools apart from mainstream education is that it is based on an ethos that recognizes children's innate sense of wonder and discovery in the outdoors and supports children's initiative to explore and engage in inquiry and experiential and experimental learning, building their self-esteem, confidence, and social skills (Harris 2017; Child and Nature Alliance of Canada 2018b). Each iteration of a Forest School takes a different form, whether it is every day for a half or whole day or it is once a week for a series of weeks. Regardless of the schedule, the time is spent rain or shine or snow.

For some, the idea of spending all day outdoors rain or shine or snow is not an appealing one. For others, it is an exciting adventure. The attractiveness of Forest Schools for families who send their children to them and for educators who teach in them is the health benefits that come with physical play outdoors and being in nature (O'Brien and Murray 2007; Chawla et al. 2014); opportunities for risky play and building resilience (Harper 2017); the increased environmental awareness and responsibility (Elliot et al. 2014; Elliot and Krusekopf 2017; Smith et al. 2018); and the play-based, place-based, and inquiry approach to teaching and learning (Gruenewald 2003; Maynard 2007; Sobel 2014; Harwood and Collier 2017). Forest Schools in many ways are an attractive alternative for the rigid learning that takes place in mainstream classrooms which, for many children, is agony. "Children cannot bounce off the walls if we take the walls away" (Erin Kenney, founder of Cedarsong Nature School as cited in Sobel 2014).

When I read about Indigenous educational perspectives, it becomes obvious why children area bouncing off the walls in Western Euro-centric educational settings. More and more I think that the real draw to Forest Schools is to subconsciously get back what our western worldviews have scrubbed out of our own educational

systems and society as unnecessary and what we have simultaneously stolen from and destroyed in Indigenous peoples, namely, a spiritual and emotional as well as physical and intellectual connection to the land. John, a Cree Elder in a study by Hansen and Antsanen (2016), indicated that "balance is important, and emotions as well as spiritual understanding are paramount in the traditional education system. He suggests that the emphasis on the mental and physical aspects in the mainstream education system results in learning difficulty because half of human existence is excluded. Therefore, Indigenous education includes the feelings and spiritual understandings" (p. 10). Anderson et al. (2017) in *Natural Curiosity 2nd Edition,* describe Indigenous perspectives as being "rooted in complex, dynamic knowledge systems, and grounded in the long-standing cultural worldviews of Indigenous peoples" (p. 6). There is also an emphasis on relationship (Greenwood 2013), having a holistic worldview, an understanding that everything is interconnected (Hansen and Antsanen 2016), and learning from the land (Styres 2011). Hansen and Antsanen (2016) also point out that "Indigenous knowledge is not a relic of the past, but rather it still exists as an adaption to life in a changing world. Indigenous people adapt to stress and adversity through Indigenous knowledge, which emphasizes the need for balance" (p. 3). Anderson et al. (2017) echo this in stating that "Indigenous perspectives belong in *all times* (emphasis in original)" (p. 6) and in a quote by David Orr that highlights the need for Indigenous knowledge now. "The skills, aptitudes, and attitudes necessary to industrialize the earth are not necessarily the same as those that will be needed to heal the earth or to build durable economies and good communities" (David Orr as cited in Anderson et al. 2017, p. 2).

## Forest School Pedagogy and Indigenous Educational Perspectives: Where They Meet and Where They Are Far Apart

Richard Louv (2008) in his book, *Last Child in the Woods*, famously coined the term "Nature-Deficit Disorder." Not that it is a real, diagnosable disorder, but that it is an effect seen in the rise in obesity, attention disorders, and depression in children. Forest Schools boast of the positive impact they have on children's health and well-being. O'Brien and Murray (2007) note that Forest Schools have "positive impacts in children's confidence, social skills, language and communication, motivation and concentration, physical skills and knowledge and understanding" (p. 249). Similarly, Roe and Aspinall (2011) demonstrated restorative effects on mood and behavior of young people. Forest Schools also support healthy development by offering opportunities to engage in more risky play like climbing trees, using knives, lighting campfires, and playing near water. This is one of their central appeals. Parents and educators who are involved in Forest Schools tend to share a point of view that sees the positive benefits of risky play. Harper (2017) defines risk as "the potential for loss or harm, yet risk can also present opportunities for gain" (p. 318) and argues that risk builds resilience necessary for healthy child development. He describes how society has become risk averse in trying to protect vulnerable children and prevent injury. This uncovers a duality in the image of the child that we can hold, with the child

having agency and rights on one hand and being vulnerable and needing protection on the other (Maynard 2007). Forest Schools offer the antidote for the risk averse society. In Connolly and Haughton's (2017) study, Forest School practitioners (some who were also parents) agreed that children needed risk in their lives and that risk was viewed positively; however they struggled with how much risk to allow and how parents would react if their child got hurt while attending the Forest School. Getting hurt, though, is part and parcel of risky play and helps to build physical resilience. Emotional resilience is also supported by being in nature. Though not Forest Schools, Chawla et al. (2014) show the positive effects of green schoolyards on lowering children's stress and increasing their resilience.

When considering what risk and resilience mean from an Indigenous perspective, Giddens (1999) eludes to risk being a modern social construction that did not exist in the same way for pre-modern societies. Hansen and Antsanen (2016) offer a different and more complex view of resilience for Indigenous peoples, specifically Cree and Dene Elders from Saskatchewan who took part in their study. Elders in the study describe their education systems and how values were passed on through watching their grandparents and following by example, like using a knife to cut moose meat at a very young age, learning how to hunt and fish and snare rabbits, and sometimes having to figure things out on their own (experiential learning). While these elements of risk were a natural part of the education for these Elders, they are different than the understanding of risky play in Forest Schools. These were necessary skills to learn for survival. Risky play then is not only a socially and culturally constructed concept but also a colonial one.

Resilience also has a much different and deeper meaning for Indigenous peoples. Resilience means enduring and thriving in a colonial state. The Cree and Dene Elders in Hansen and Antsanen's (2016) study talk about how culture and language was taken away and destroyed and children were taken away from families for generations. This was immeasurable loss and harm with no opportunity for gain. The resilience built by risky play in Forest Schools for healthy child development cannot be adequately compared to the resilience demanded by the ongoing colonization of Indigenous peoples and imposed colonial education. If Forest Schools were to be a place of connecting to Indigenous ways of teaching and learning around ideas and concepts of risk and resilience, this would need to be acknowledged.

Much of the literature about Forest Schools also centers on how they foster a sense of environmental awareness and responsibility in the next generation. Many families and educators value children's learning in the outdoors and learning about nature and the environment. In the literature, studies document the positive impact of Forest Schools on children's environmental responsibility and nature relatedness (Elliot et al. 2014), environmental stewardship (Elliot and Krusekopf 2017), and pro-environmental attitudes (Turtle et al. 2015). A return to nature is crucial for the health and well-being of our children and ourselves but also for the earth that we inhabit. When children have adventures outdoors, their connection to nature and the environment grows and grows deeper. Hordyk et al. (2015) show how children develop deep caring relationships with and in nature and how nature in return nurtures children in many ways:

> The concepts of spirituality and balance are recognizable when one considers the Indigenous view that plants and animals like humans have a spirit. It is a manifestation of the holistic worldview. As John Martin described it, the spirit is inherent in all that surrounds us—the trees, grass, rocks, etc.—which expresses the idea that existence is interconnected. (Hansen and Antsanen 2016, p. 11).

In the literature, Indigenous perspectives of the environment are rooted in the land, and they encompass more than just an awareness. Cajete (2010) states that "Traditional Indian education is an expression of environmental education par excellence" (p. 1128). Land is understood to be the source of knowledge and first teacher (Simpson 2002; Styres 2011). Connection to Mother Earth is intrinsically linked to Indigenous spirituality (Simpson 2002; Anderson et al. 2017). It is a holistic worldview which recognizes that everything has a spirit and everything is interconnected (Hansen and Antsanen 2016). This way of understanding the land is much different than environmental awareness because it demands that we have a relationship with the land and everything in it. In reflecting on the difference in language used to describe outdoor education, I noticed that western education uses terms like nature kindergarten and Forest School, whereas Indigenous perspectives always use land. This is a significant difference. Using words like nature and forest convey a sense that these environments are only in certain places, like in a Forest School or in the Canadian wilderness. Land is more definite, firm. It implies our direct and sustained connection with the earth. So even when we are at home or in school or at work, we are on the land. Styres (2011) describes "land as an Indigenous philosophy or ideology that exists beyond the concrete connection to place" (p.718).

This brings up a very important point that cannot be ignored. We cannot have a conversation about Forest Schools and Indigenous ways of teaching and learning without acknowledging the land and who it belongs to and without discussing what decolonization really means. A critical work by Tuck and Yang (2012) discusses decolonization as more than just thinking critically about our practices and pedagogies, but that decolonization is the "repatriation of Indigenous lands and life" (p. 21). This is another article that significantly shifted my thinking about the land and my place in it. In it, Tuck and Yang (2012) describe "settler moves to innocence" as "diversions, distractions, which relieve the settler of feelings of guilt" (p. 21). I can see how my original thinking about the connections between Forest Schools and Indigenous educational perspectives may be a "settler move to innocence" in that I naively made broad comparisons between Forest Schools and Indigenous educational perspectives without thinking more critically about the implications of settler colonialism. I am realizing that this is a much deeper topic than can be adequately addressed in this chapter. I offer here my journey of "coming to know" about this, knowing that I have much more to learn.

Tuck and Yang (2012) also describe how the Occupy movement, while being a social justice movement, is actually a recolonizing of the land as it focuses only on the plight of the poor settler and ignores the deeper issue of colonialism, uncovering that there are limits to solidarity. Applying this thinking to Forest Schools means that these are also ways of recolonizing the land for the benefit of those in the colonial state while continuing to ignore land claims and treaty rights and responsibilities.

These are at once simple and very complex issues that will not be easily resolved. And they are unsettling. I have been unsettled by thinking about land for some time now. I am not a homeowner, and so I do not officially "own" land, but I live, work, and engage in recreation on the land owned by others who are not Indigenous. I think the land should be given back, but that seems like an impossibility. This thinking has also deepened my understanding and appreciation for land acknowledgments that are increasingly a part of official gatherings and educational settings. Settlers were originally welcomed onto the land in a spirit of sharing and reciprocity. The treaties were equal nation to nation agreements. Honoring these treaties and re-establishing nation to nation equality is a start, just as is making space to have these conversations.

A further critical look at how land is addressed in educational curriculum shows how it is largely shaped by western and colonial perspectives. Pedagogies like place-based education use place as a way for students to learn about many different topics by engaging with the people and material elements of the specific places they inhabit. Place-based education fits well in Forest School settings as it is grounded in the physical space of the forest. Place-based education's intention is also to help students engage in critical thinking and real-world problem-solving about the places they live in (Smith 2002). Ladson-Billings (1995) includes critical consciousness as part of her theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy that uses place-based education to challenge students to think critically about the systems of oppression in their communities and how to change them. Place-based education is criticized, however, for not going far enough to address decolonization. Gruenewald (2003) suggests a critical pedagogy of place that proposes decolonization through critical pedagogy and re-inhabitation through place-based education that encourages social action. Calderon (2014), however, argues that place-based education needs to "intersect with land education" and fully expose settler colonialism (p. 24). Her conceptualization of land education "centers the relationship between land and settler colonialism" (p. 26) and makes us rethink how Indigenous people were removed from their land and how the land was renamed. Calderon (2014) agrees with Gruenewald's (2003) concepts of decolonization and re-inhabitation but specifies that re-inhabitation is giving back local control of the land to Indigenous peoples. She argues that more must be done than just enacting environmental policies. Relationships must be built with Indigenous peoples to really learn about the land and its history. O'Connor (2009) chronicles an effective use of experiential and place-based education that addresses "the lack of success and disengagement among Indigenous students by promoting a holistic form of education that values the importance of place and its cultural knowledge" (p. 415) in schools on reserves in Northern Alberta and the Yukon.

Another way to understand place is in Basso's (1996), *Wisdom Sits in Places*, where he shares an engaging and insightful ethnography of how place is understood from a Western Apache perspective. Wisdom is situated in specific places and brought to life in the stories of those places with life lessons to be learned. Storytelling is also a valued learning approach in Forest Schools (Child and Nature Alliance of Canada 2018b). Harwood and Collier (2017) using a new materialism

lens describe children's storied engagement with a stick in their forest school setting and how the stick speaks to them to become different imaginings in their stories. This connects to the Indigenous worldview that everything has a spirit, even inanimate objects (Hansen and Antsanen 2016). This worldview instills a profound respect for and fosters a deep relationship with everything in the natural world, one that is missing from our current western colonial society, but that has deep implications for how future generations will treat the land and the places and their places within in.

## Forest School Pedagogy and Indigenous Educational Perspectives: Where They May Come Together

I began with the premise that Forest Schools and Indigenous educational perspectives may meet on some common ground. I explored some of the literature relating to Forest Schools such as its impact on health and well-being, risk and resilience, environmental awareness, and pedagogies such as place-based education and how these topics converge and diverge with Indigenous ways of knowing and being, ways of teaching, and learning. I came to know that while these learning approaches and outcomes of Forest Schools may have some surface commonalities with Indigenous educational perspectives, they don't hold up in the context of settler colonialism. This has uncovered for me that I have a lot more to learn and reflect on. (Re)positioning Forest Schools in the context of settler colonialism helps to reframe the premise of how Forest Schools may incorporate, embed, and be reshaped by Indigenous educational perspectives.

Many Indigenous scholars have written about how to incorporate Indigenous educational perspectives into western education. Rowan (2014) describes her work in Inuit early childhood and introduces the term "saimaqatigiinniq" which means "Inuit and Qallunaat meet in the middle and are reconciled" and invites "Inuit and Qallunaat [non-Inuit people] to do things in new ways" (pp. 74–75). Styres (2011) suggests "land-infused course content and activities" (p. 718). Cajete (2010) suggests a "'culturally informed alternative' for thinking about and enabling the contemporary education of American Indian people" (p. 1127). He illuminates that the goal is more than just education but that "[d]evelopment of appropriate American Indian education and education policy is fundamental to returning Indian nations to sovereignty, self-sufficiency and harmony" (p. 1126). Bartlett et al. (2012) offer the perspective of "Two-Eyed Seeing" (p.331), a guiding principle introduced by Albert Marshall, the "designated voice on environmental matters for Mi'kmaw Elders in Unama'ki-Cape Breton" (p. 331). "Two-Eyed Seeing" is a way of weaving together Indigenous Knowledge and Traditional Knowledge with western knowledge to work together to solve environmental issues. This has broader implications for all aspects of education.

Western scholars have also written about how to "meet in the middle and be reconciled" (Rowan 2014, pp.74–75) specifically in the context of pre-service teacher education. These understandings, though not directly related to Forest Schools, can be applied to how we as educators in all settings can think about how we engage with Indigenous education and educational perspectives. Madden's

(2015) review 23 studies of teacher educator's perspectives and found 4 pedagogical pathways present in pre-service teacher education: learning from Indigenous traditional models of teaching and learning, pedagogy for decolonizing, Indigenous and anti-racist education, and Indigenous and place-based education. I have touched on some of these already. Tompkins (2002) specifically addresses anti-racism in her study with pre-service teachers. She refers to a need to do "affective work" (p. 413) and argues that we need to be comfortable with the messiness of reconciliation. She points out the importance of being in relationship to realize how power and privilege work so that we can move to a place of less arrogance. This reminds me that I have more to learn and need to continually ask myself, as Tompkins (2002) asks of herself, "Just who do I think I am?" (p. 408). Pratt and Danyluk (2017) studied how pre-service teachers engaged in critical service learning in First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities as a form of reconciliatory pedagogy. They found how students' initial feelings of anxiety and preconceived notions about Indigenous communities created a "cognitive dissonance" (p. 14) as they were welcomed into the community and found that their preconceived notions were challenged by the reality of the community's lived experiences. This led to a transformational experience for the students. This further confirms for me the importance of learning more in relationship with Indigenous communities. Here in Toronto, *Natural Curiosity 2nd Edition: A Resource for Educators* (Anderson et al. 2017) uses an Indigenous lens to re-envision the "approach to environmental inquiry" in the first edition (p. 2). This is an excellent resource that connects more directly to Forest Schools as a form of outdoor education and environmental inquiry.

## Conclusion and Further Directions

Just as I began with my story of getting lost on the land, I began this journey with a confidence and familiarity with Forest Schools and even a little bit of knowledge about Indigenous ways of knowing, teaching, and learning. However, as I delved deeper into how these two different educational perspectives meet at points and at points are far from each other, I found I was in unfamiliar territory and having to find a new way home. Using the sun and the sound of the car on the road, I and my friend C managed to find our way. For me, listening to and learning from Indigenous scholars, knowledge keepers, and educators along with taking the approach of "Two-Eyed Seeing" will help me find my way on this journey of learning how to incorporate Indigenous educational perspectives into my own pedagogy and practice and also into Forest School pedagogy. I am humbled by the depth of knowledge I have come to know thus far, and by all that I have yet to learn and understand.

## Cross-References

▶ A Decolonial, Intersectional Approach to Disrupting Whiteness, Neoliberalism, and Patriarchy in Western Early Childhood Education and Care
▶ An Ecology of Environmental Education

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# Integrating Community-Based Values with a Rights-Integrative Approach to Early Learning Through Early Childhood Curricula

## 15

Rachel Caplan, Aurelia Di Santo, and Colleen Loomis

## Contents

### Abstract

This chapter presents an application of the conceptual model of social justice that integrates community-based values with Di Santo and Kenneally's (Child Educ 90(6):395–406, 2014) "rights-integrative approach to early learning" (Caplan et al., J Child Stud 41:38–46, 2016). The conceptual model emerged from an

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analysis of the *British Columbia Early Learning Framework* (Government of British Columbia, British Columbia early learning framework. Ministry of Health and Ministry of Children and Family Development, Victoria, 2008). The aim of this chapter is to discuss how the learning framework exemplifies the integration of children's rights with community-based values. Examples of how professionals working in early learning settings may integrate conceptualizations of children's rights of a "community of children" in addition to more conventional conceptualizations of child rights as individuals are provided.

## Introduction

Article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is explicit that in all actions concerning children, the "best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration" (UN General Assembly 1989, p. 2). Moreover, in General Comment #7 – in reference to Article 3 in implementing child rights in early childhood – the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2005) explains that the "best interest" principle applies not only to individual children but also to "young children as a group or constituency" (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR] 2005, p. 6). Accordingly, we argue that children's rights must be realized collectively – as a relational community – in addition to individually. Findings from a document analysis of the *British Columbia Early Learning Framework* (2008) are presented in this article through a model of social justice that expands on conceptualizations of children's rights as individuals – to one that also views children as a collective "community of children" (or "group"/"constituency") (Caplan et al. 2016).

## Conceptualization of Social Justice in Early Learning Curricula

Di Santo and Kenneally (2014) stated that practitioners must "move out of a child/educator-centred philosophy to one of creating a global community" (p. 396). In response to this call, Caplan and colleagues (2016) developed a model (Fig. 1) that conceptualizes social justice whereby children are envisaged not only as individuals with individual rights but as a global "community of children" with rights, which includes the commitment and responsibility to one another to ensure each other's well-being.

The foundation of the model is in sustaining a balance between a child's right to protection with their right to autonomy: a balance that shifts and changes with a child's evolving capacities (Lansdown and Wernham 2012). We argue that there also
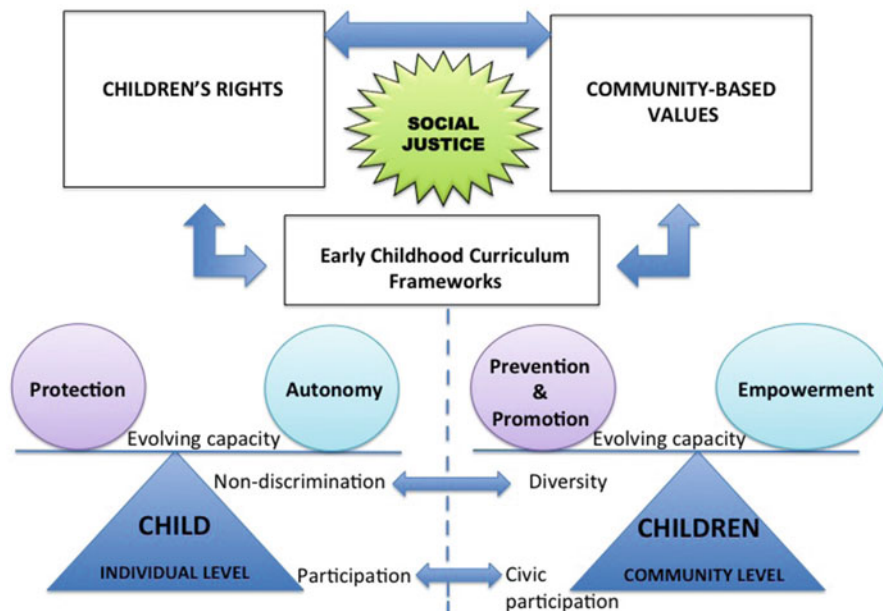
**Fig. 1** Conceptualization of social justice through early childhood curriculum frameworks. Notes. Integrating children's rights (top left square) with community-based values (top right square) in early childhood education needed for social justice (universal well-being) through early childhood curriculum frameworks (top central square). Left of dashed line: individual child (triangle), balancing (horizontal line) child's protection and autonomy rights, the weight of each changing with evolving capacities of the child (Adapted from Lansdown and Wernham 2012); and enhanced by child's rights to non-discrimination and participation. Right of dashed line: children as a community (triangle), balancing (horizontal line), community-based values of prevention and promotion, and empowerment, the weight of each changing with evolving capacities of children and enhanced by community-based values of diversity and civic participation. On an individual level, *protection* rights are compatible with values of *prevention and promotion*; and on an individual level, *autonomy* rights are compatible with *empowerment*. On an individual level, *non-discrimination* rights are compatible with value of *diversity*, and on an individual level, *participation* rights are compatible with *civic participation* (Caplan et al. 2016, p. 40)

needs to be a balance between children's rights to protection with their rights to autonomy, which must also shift with evolving capacities of children as a local, national, and global community. Therefore, in addition to maintaining a rights-based approach in early learning frameworks, integration of compatible community-based values such as prevention and promotion (Albee 1986; Nelson and Caplan 2014; Nelson et al. 2009), respect for diversity (Akkari et al. 2011; Pacini-Ketchabaw and Berikoff 2008; Trickett 1996), empowerment (Rappaport 1987; Zimmerman 2000), and civic participation (Loomis and Akkari 2012) is necessary to conceptualize children as a relational community (see Table 1 for examples of compatible child rights on an individual level with community-based values on a collective level). The integration of children's rights and community-based values can be applied through

**Table 1**  Compatibility and integration of children's rights with community-based values

| Individual child rights (Children as individuals) | Community-based values (Children as a collective) |
| --- | --- |
| Protection | Prevention and promotion |
| Autonomy | Empowerment |
| Non-discrimination | Diversity |
| Participation | Civic participation |

**Table 2**  BCELF's three main sections

| Sections of BCELF | Subsections |
| --- | --- |
| Section One: About This Document | Structure of this Document<br>Introduction<br>Purpose<br>The Image of the Child |
| Section Two: Background | The Context for Early Learning in British Columbia<br>　Growing Up in British Columbia<br>　Early Learning and Children's Health<br>　The United Nations Rights of the Child<br>　Regulations in British Columbia<br>　Early Learning and Aboriginal Children<br>Early Learning and the Primary Program<br>Supporting Young Children's Early Learning<br>　Children are Natural Learners<br>　The Importance of Relationships<br>　Environments to Support Early Learning<br>　Learning through Play |
| Section Three: The B.C. Early Learning Framework | The B.C. Early Learning Framework at a Glance<br>Vision for Early Learning<br>Principles<br>The Areas of Early Learning<br>　Well-Being and Belonging<br>　Exploration and Creativity<br>　Languages and Literacies<br>　Social Responsibility and Diversity |

early learning frameworks and curricula, such as the British Columbia Early Learning Framework (Government of British Columbia 2008).

## British Columbia Early Learning Framework

British Columbia's Ministry of Health and Ministry of Children and Family Development published the *British Columbia Early Learning Framework* (BCELF) in 2008. The framework includes three sections and several subsections (Table 2). The BCELF begins with an introduction to, and the philosophical lens of

the framework (Section One), followed by a description of British Columbia's context for early learning (Section Two), and concludes with the early learning framework (Section Three). In this chapter, we will discuss how children's rights and community-based values were included more generally in the philosophy and context described in the BCELF (Sections One and Two) and more specifically in the early learning framework (Section Three). The analysis was framed theoretically by Caplan and colleagues' (2016) conceptualization of social justice, where each child is viewed as an individual with individual rights, but also where children as a global "community of children" have rights, and therefore a commitment to one another to ensure each other's well-being.

## Children's Rights

The BCELF explicitly and implicitly refers to children's rights as per the CRC (UN General Assembly 1989) throughout Sections One and Two of the document. The following are examples – but not an exhaustive list – of where children's rights are referenced in these sections of the BCELF. In Section One, the "Introduction" subsection indicates that "some Aboriginal communities have expressed interest in developing their own culturally-specific early learning framework" (Government of British Columbia 2008, p. 3), which implicitly acknowledges children's cultural and identity rights, and is expanded upon in greater depth in Section Two of the document (specifically on Page 8, in the subsection entitled "Early Learning and British Columbia's Aboriginal Children"). Additionally, the subsection describing "The Image of the Child" explains that young children are viewed "as capable and full of potential; as persons with complex identities, grounded in their individual strengths and capacities, and their unique social, linguistic, and cultural heritage" (Government of British Columbia 2008, p. 4), which supports children's identity and autonomy rights.

In Section Two – in the subsection called: "The Context for Early Learning in British Columbia" – the authors allude to children's rights to adequate standard of living, including health and access to health care; safety; nutrition; and housing – when they state: ". . .children cannot fully engage in early learning unless their basic needs for food, shelter, physical safety, and adequate health care are met" (Government of British Columbia 2008, p. 6). Additionally, the subsection "Supporting Young Children's Early Learning" states that: "Months before the emergence of their first words, infants can use hand gestures and signs to point at people and objects in their environment, and to express their desires and intentions" (p. 9), which implies the authors' recognition and appreciation of the expressive capacities of even the youngest children. Acknowledgments of children's identity rights are expressed through statements such as: "It is the foundation developed in infancy that toddlers build. . . to create their identities as members of social, cultural, and linguistic communities" (p. 9). Moreover, a subsection of Section Two was dedicated to explicitly describing "The United Nations Rights of the Child" (p. 7), and the "Environments to Support Early Learning" (p. 11) subsection emphasizes

the significance of children's exposure to nature, natural environments, as well as language, all of which support their rights. Finally, children's rights to play, recreation, and leisure are described in detail in the subsection "Learning through Play" (p. 12).

## Community-Based Values That Support Children's Rights

Sections One and Two of the BCELF contain implicit statements and concepts centering on community-based values that nurture fulfillment of children's rights. For example, statements including "As infants become toddlers, they develop the ability to share simple goals and intentions with other people—the very foundation of community and social life" (p. 9) and "Exposure to natural environments strengthens children's relationship to nature, building the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual connections that are a necessary motivation for environmental stewardship" (p. 11) demonstrate that the authors inherently value the ecosystem, social interactions, and community – all of which are essential in moving toward social justice. However, while the term "community" is used frequently, it is utilized in reference to a larger community of adults and children, and not explicitly in relation to children as a relational/global community of their own. Next, we will discuss how the balancing of individual child rights with community-based values are integrated or could be more explicitly integrated.

*Balancing individual child rights to protection and autonomy with collective, community-based values of prevention and promotion, and empowerment.* The BCELF's "Introduction" states that "As they [children] grow, they develop both their capacity and dispositions to learn through supportive relationships with their families, with other children and adults in their communities, and with their environments" (p. 2). In addition, the document highlights the CRC and explicitly declares that the Convention is a "necessary foundation for freedom, justice, and peace in the world" (p. 7). The BCELF also says that:

> The Convention recognizes children as citizens with the right to reach their fullest potential, to be treated with dignity and respect, to be protected from harm, to exercise a voice, to engage in play and recreational activities, and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. (p. 7)

These statements highlight the relational balance needed between children's rights to protection and autonomy, with their evolving capacities. Paradoxically, however, immediately following the description of the CRC, the authors state: "this framework can help adults ensure these rights are upheld" (p. 7). This statement suggests that adults are solely responsible for ensuring the rights of the child, hence prioritizing adult responsibility in fulfilling child protection rights over children's autonomy rights. As the statement is written, it is inconsistent with the notion that as individual children mature, and as the capacities of children as a collective community develop within societies and across the globe, each child's autonomy – and

resulting empowerment of children as a community – increases. With these evolving capacities, children – as rights-holders – then require less external protection from duty-bearers (i.e., "adults"), as they exercise and ensure that their own "rights are upheld." Adults are necessary partners, but alone, they are insufficient in ensuring that the rights of children are upheld. Children as individuals and as a collective have been and continue to be active agents in ensuring that their own rights and the rights of other children are fulfilled. In order to work from a position where adults take on the roles of allies with children, the statement could be re-envisioned as: "This framework can help adults and children, both individually and collectively, in ensuring these rights are upheld."

Autonomy rights of children are implied throughout the BCELF, however, not referred to explicitly. For example, phrases such as "As children grow and learn, they ask questions, explore, and make discoveries... Within this complex ecology, every child belongs and contributes" (p. 4) and "Toddlers who have both a supportive environment and opportunities to explore will develop a secure sense of self and a healthy spirit of adventure" (p. 9) implicitly exemplify children's autonomous capacities. Despite a general support for autonomy rights of children, the following statement was made in the "Environments to Support Early Learning" subsection:

> By talking to children about their environment, and by giving them some control over it, adults may gain valuable insights about what children are noticing, and may be in a better position to adapt the environment to support children's learning and healthy development. (p. 11)

To suggest that adults "give" children "some control" over their environment is an example of existing power relations between adults and children inherent in society – those described by Angelique (2008) as using language and rhetoric to veil oppressive practices. Contrary to valuing autonomy, whereby a child has control over one's choices and decisions, and contrary to true empowerment, whereby children as a collective have mastery over their own affairs, this statement covertly describes a relationship whereby adults maintain power over children. The act of "giving them some control" demonstrates that the adult decides when, how much, and in which ways the child can "control" the learning environment and the child gains a *sense* of autonomy – but not actual control – thereby reinforcing the status quo. In our quest to shift from individual rights to collective values that support these rights, we can better understand why children as a group have very limited or no power and control over practices, policies, and research that affect them within their communities and across the globe. Since adults are ultimately in the position of power over children, they/we can revoke control at any point.

*Fulfilling individual child rights to non-discrimination by valuing collective diversity.* The importance of non-discrimination rights of children is evident throughout the BCELF (predominantly in Section Three of the document, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section of this chapter), and in fact, community-based values of diversity – which support child rights to non-

discrimination – are integrated effectively as well. To go further, the authors emphasized that not only is non-discrimination and celebration of collective diversity essential in the early years but that the opportunity to learn about diversity is in fact a privilege. Henceforth, embracing these opportunities to celebrate diversity can contribute to equity and social justice. The following statement illustrates the aforementioned point:

> These diverse peoples [those living in British Columbia from other parts of the world] with their distinct histories and contexts contribute to the rich social fabric of this province, offering young children the chance to experience the cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity that is a part of today's world, and to develop the skills, attitudes, and dispositions that promote social equity and justice. (p. 6)

*Fulfilling individual child rights to participation by valuing collective civic participation*. Children's participation rights are implied throughout Sections One and Two of the BCELF, however, not referred to explicitly as "rights" (with the exception of the subsection on "The United Nations Rights of the Child"). For example, statements made include: "As children grow and learn, they ask questions, explore, and make discoveries..." (Government of British Columbia 2008, p. 4) and "As toddlers become preschoolers, they begin to... explore different ways to represent their experiences symbolically – through language, art, music, movement, games, and other forms of expression" (p. 9). Furthermore, while phrases associated with concepts of civic participation such as "young children's powerful drive to learn is inextricably linked to their emerging identities as members of social, cultural, linguistic, and geographic communities" (p. 10), as well as the authors' emphasis on the importance of language as a fundamental tool by which children can participate in their communities ("...language as a powerful tool to communicate, to explore relationships, to tell stories, to question, and to shape the world around them" [Government of British Columbia 2008, p. 11]), a noteworthy contradiction must be addressed. The "Introduction" to the BCELF states: "In creating this framework, the voices of numerous families, early childhood educators, teachers, researchers, post-secondary institutions, and other early years service providers in B.C. were heard" (p. 2). Contrary to children's rights to participate in matters that affect them (e.g., their early learning program), children themselves did not participate in contributing to the BCELF. We cannot expect to fulfill children's rights to participation, if children as a collective continue to be excluded from meaningful civic participation in our society, such as through educational institutions, curriculum development, and programming.

## (Re)imagining Children as a Global Community

The visual image depicted on the "Section Three: The B.C. Early Learning Framework" cover page (Fig. 2) is of a single child represented by a tree. The branches of the tree represent four areas of learning (i.e., Well-Being and Belonging,

**Fig. 2**   Image in Section Three: The BCELF. (Note. Government of British Columbia 2008, p. 13)

Exploration and Creativity, Languages and Literacies, and Social Responsibility and Diversity). At the roots of the tree are *Families and Environment*, and *Communities and Governments*. To describe the image, the general "Vision" statement of the BCELF says: "This vision for early learning in British Columbia is based on the image of the child as capable and full of potential" (p. 14). To shift focus to fulfillment of rights for children as a global community, rather than only in individualistic, child-centered terms, we might rephrase the vision to say: "This vision for early learning in British Columbia is based on the image of the child and of children as a collective, as capable and full of potential." The image could be re-envisioned as many trees (individual children), who as a forest (community), deeply connected through their roots within the ecosystem, have the capacity to create the air in which we breathe, to sustain life on our planet. Only then can we understand how fulfillment of the rights of each individual child is essential, but only within a larger context of rights of children as a collective – and these children as a collective are within an even larger context of our ecosystem, and our planet – all of which are interconnected.

*The vision for children aged birth to five.* The CRC states that: "States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being. . ." (UN General Assembly 1989, p. 2). Children's rights to protection are supported in this subsection of the BCELF, with the vision for them to

"experience physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual well-being" and for them to "feel safe, secure, and enjoy a sense of belonging in their homes and communities" (Government of British Columbia 2008, p. 14). These statements also support community-based values of prevention of suffering and promotion of well-being.

Article 12 of the CRC states that: "States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child..." (UN General Assembly 1989, p. 4). A child's right to express their views and feelings in matters that affect them are also supported in the BCELF's vision, stating that: "They [children] will be able to communicate their own thoughts and feelings, and to listen to, acknowledge, and empathize with the thoughts and feelings of others" (Government of British Columbia 2008, p. 14).

Furthermore, child identity rights are supported in the BCELF's vision for children aged birth to 5, through statements such as: "Within the context of their individual and cultural identities..." and "Young children will feel pride in their linguistic and cultural heritage" (Government of British Columbia 2008, p. 14). The individual rights of children are addressed in this vision, and importantly, these rights are also supported by community-based values of civic participation through the statement: "Young children will... exercise social responsibility, understand their relationship with nature and the earth, and be active participants in their communities" (p. 14).

*The vision for families, communities, and governments.* The BCELF's vision for families, communities, and governments states that a child's "Adults will... listen to and value children's thoughts, feelings, and contributions..." (Government of British Columbia 2008, p. 14), which is an example of how the BCELF supports children's rights to having their views and feelings respected. Furthermore, child identity and non-discrimination rights are apparent in statements such as "Adults will... nurture their [children's] individuality and uniqueness, and promote and practise respect for linguistic and cultural diversity" (p. 14) in the BCELF. These examples indicate a shift from individual child rights to creating a vision for the duty-bearers responsible for supporting these rights by emphasizing the importance of families, communities, and governments. In fact, we can go even further to shift our language and concepts of "respecting" diversity of each individual child and move toward *embracing, celebrating,* and *pursuing* diversity. Additionally, the framework can go further to show how we might embrace and celebrate diversity not only to fulfill non-discrimination rights of individual children, but on a broader scale, and the community-based value of diversity extends across complex intersections of ability, race, ancestry, religion, culture, gender, family structure, sex, etc. By infusing early learning curricula with community-based values of diversity, children and practitioners alike can continue to seek and celebrate diverse individuals, groups, contexts, ideas, and values.

*The vision for children's environments.* In stating the need for environments that are "...inclusive, reflective of the cultural and linguistic context of communities," children's rights to non-discrimination are addressed in this subsection. To go further, the authors included the need to "promote respect for diversity" – a

community-based value that supports non-discrimination on a collective level. Additionally, to ensure child rights to protection, the vision embraces community-based values of prevention and promotion (i.e., "Children's environments will be designed with the intention of securing their well-being, nurturing positive relationships. . ." [Government of British Columbia 2008, p. 14]), as well as their rights to participation by highlighting their "connection to their communities and to the earth" (Government of British Columbia 2008, p. 14).

## Relational and Pedagogical Principles

Four child rights and their corresponding community-based values (i.e., prevention and promotion, empowerment, diversity, and civic participation) will be discussed according to Caplan and colleagues' (2016) model. While additional child rights (e.g., play and recreation; identity; life, survival, and development; best interest; etc.) may be part of the principles of the BCELF, we chose a few to highlight in order to demonstrate how the model can be applied to relational and pedagogical principles. Table 3 presents the nine principles of the BCELF, along with a non-exhaustive list of examples of associated statements with infused community-based values (i.e., prevention and promotion, empowerment, diversity, and civic participation), that support children's rights to protection, autonomy, non-discrimination, and participation.

## Areas of Early Learning That Support Young Children

The BCELF outlines four interrelated areas of early learning, namely, (1) Well-Being and Belonging, (2) Exploration and Creativity, (3) Languages and Literacies, and (4) Social Responsibility and Diversity. Each area includes a variety of learning goals and questions to consider when working with young children. We would like to highlight that the *Social Responsibility and Diversity* area of learning is unique in that it begins to address more structural aspects of adults and children living together as a larger community, as opposed to viewing children solely as individuals. Tables 4 and 5 present examples of how each of the areas as well as their corresponding learning goals and questions support a child's right to autonomy, protection, non-discrimination, and participation, by infusing community-based values of prevention and promotion, empowerment, diversity, and civic participation.

It is important to note that the examples presented in Tables 4 and 5 are not an exhaustive list. Rather, they highlight how the conceptual model may be utilized to connect children's rights with community-based values. By using our conceptual model (Caplan et al. 2016) as a guide, we encourage the reader to further connect additional children's rights with other community-based values.

*An application of integrating community-based values through a rights-integrative approach.* To further illustrate how this conceptual model might look in practice,

examples of how practitioners working with young children may integrate conceptualizations of children's rights with a view of children as a community are provided through a rights-integrative approach.

BCELF's four areas of early learning can encompass community-based values that support children's rights as a collective group. For example, the first learning

**Table 3** Principles of the British Columbia Early Learning Framework

| Principle | Example statement | Child rights | Community-based values that support children's rights |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Children are born with the innate desire to learn (p. 15) | Children learn in a variety of ways, develop at different rates, and have different needs (p. 15) | Diversity | Value of *diversity* supports right to *non-discrimination* |
| | Children's relationships, experiences, and environments during the early years greatly influence whether, and in which ways, **they** [authors' emphasis] realize their full potential to learn (p. 15) | Autonomy | Value of *empowerment* supports right to *autonomy* |
| 2. Families are the primary caregivers of children and have the most important role in promoting their children's well-being, learning, and development in the context of supportive communities (p. 15) | Early learning programs and activities should value and support the important contributions of families in all their diversity. Regardless of their circumstances, every family has unique social and cultural resources and strengths that can contribute to early learning (p. 15) | Non-discrimination | Value of *diversity* supports right to *non-discrimination* |
| 3. Play is vital to children's healthy development and learning (p. 15) | Play is vital to children's healthy development and learning | Protection | Value of *prevention* and *promotion* supports right to *protection* |
| | Through play, children interact with, explore, and make sense of the world around them (p. 15) | Participation | Value of *civic participation* supports right to *participation* |

**Table 3** (continued)

| Principle | Example statement | Child rights | Community-based values that support children's rights |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4. Consistent, responsive and nurturing relationships are essential to the well-being and early learning of children (p. 15) | Trusting, loving, two-way relationships with. . . other children. . . in their community are essential to the sharing of knowledge. . . (p. 15) | Participation | Value of *civic participation* supports right to *participation* |
| | Consistent, secure, responsive, and respectful relationships with caring adults are vital to children's well-being (p. 15) | Protection | Value of *prevention* and *promotion* supports right to *protection* |
| 5. All aspects of children's development and learning – physical, social, emotional, cultural, linguistic, and intellectual – are interrelated and interdependent (p. 16) | Children are **active** [authors' emphasis] and holistic learners: development in one area influences development in other areas (p. 16) | Participation | Value of *civic participation* supports rights to participation |
| 6. Language plays a central role in connecting thought and learning (p. 16) | Children should be supported to learn their first language and other languages (p. 16) | Non-discrimination | Value of *diversity* supports right to *non-discrimination* |
| 7. Children are active participants in their families and communities (p. 16) | Children's abilities, interests, previous experiences, and desire for independence motivate their interactions with other people and with their environments (p. 16) | Autonomy | Value of *empowerment* supports right to *autonomy* |
| | Children make important contributions in the lives of families and communities. Families and communities benefit when they hear, value, and respect children's views (p. 16) | Participation | Value of *civic participation* supports right to *participation* |

**Table 3** (continued)

| Principle | Example statement | Child rights | Community-based values that support children's rights |
|---|---|---|---|
| 8. The individual, cultural, and linguistic identities of children and families are respected and integrated into early learning settings, programs, and activities (p. 16) | Early learning environments should promote a sense of belonging for all children and demonstrate respect for diversity. Rich and varied experiences support children's ability to value individual, social, and cultural diversity, including differences in gender, age, language, ethnicity, family structure, and economic circumstances (p. 16) | Non-discrimination | Value of *diversity* supports right to *non-discrimination* |
| 9. The physical environment shapes children's learning and well-being (p. 16) | Children's early learning benefits from their interaction in—and with—a broad range of settings. Children should have access to a variety of settings in their homes and communities—both indoors and outdoors, natural and built—to enrich their learning, draw on their natural curiosity, promote a sense of belonging, and inspire respect for the natural environment (p. 16) | Participation | Value of *civic participation* supports right to *participation* |
| | It is important to **balance** [authors' emphasis] the need for safe physical environments with opportunities for rich and varied experiences (p. 16) | Balance between protection and autonomy | Balance between values of *prevention* and *promotion* (support right to *protection*) with value of *empowerment* (supports right to *autonomy*) |

Note. Government of British Columbia 2008, pp. 15–16. Principles and example statements are written verbatim from the BCELF

**Table 4**  Three areas of early learning in the BCELF

| Area of early learning | Associated learning goal(s) or question(s) | Community-based values that support children's rights |
|---|---|---|
| Well-Being and Belonging | Feel safe and respected (p. 18) | *Prevention and promotion* (supports right to protection) |
| | Learn ways to keep themselves healthy, nourished, well-rested, and physically active (p. 18) How do the opportunities in the environment provide infants and toddlers freedom to move on their own and in their own time? (p. 20) | *Empowerment* (supports right to autonomy) |
| Exploration and Creativity | Explore the world using their bodies and all their senses (p. 24) Build, create, and design using different materials and techniques (p. 24) Actively explore, think, and reason (p. 25) | *Civic participation* (supports right to participation) |
| Languages and Literacies | How are children exposed to the written languages and signs of other cultures (e.g., First Nations pictographs, Chinese characters)? (p. 31) In what ways do adults welcome the use of languages other than English in the child's environment (e.g., by encouraging bilingual children to use both languages, by singing songs in other languages)? (p. 31) How well are the children's cultural backgrounds represented in the arts and crafts, stories, and symbols used from day to day? (p. 32) | *Diversity* (supports right to non-discrimination) |

Note. Government of British Columbia 2008, pp. 17–32. Areas of early learning and associated learning goal(s) or question(s) are written verbatim from the BCELF

goal, *Well-Being and Belonging*, suggests that children should "feel safe and respected" (p. 19), which supports a child's right to protection. Together, practitioners and children can explore ways to understand Well-Being and Belonging and feelings of safety and respect beyond the classroom. Through the promotion of Well-Being and Belonging and prevention of suffering of children globally, together they can fulfill the protection rights of children as a collective. For example, practitioners may want to fundraise for a children's rights issue with their children or perhaps to undertake a project that explores children's rights and the roles of children within a community of learners. Individual children's protection and autonomy rights are supported through children learning "ways to keep themselves healthy, nourished, well-rested, and physically active" (p. 19). Practitioners can further support community-based values of collective well-being by exploring issues such as food insecurity (e.g., McCullum et al. 2004; Tarasuk 2001), environmental sustainability (e.g., Riemer and Van Voorhees 2014), and housing, homelessness,

**Table 5**  Fourth area of early learning in the BCELF: Social Responsibility and Diversity

| Learning goals | Example of an associated question | Community-based values that support children's rights |
|---|---|---|
| Explore and learn about family, community and the wider world (p. 34) | How is information about different cultures shared amongst children and families? (p. 34) | *Diversity* (supports right to non-discrimination) |
| Show responsibility for themselves and begin to show responsibility for others (p. 34) | What kinds of opportunities do children have to go on outings or be part of cultural events? Would other available outings or events be appropriate? (p. 34) | *Civic participation* (supports right to participation) |
| Participate in the making, following, and re-working of rules, rituals, and procedures in their everyday world (p. 35) | In what ways are children given opportunities to explore peaceful strategies for resolving conflicts? (p. 35) | *Civic participation* (supports right to participation) |
| Learn to appreciate diversity (p. 35) | How do adults respond when children ask questions about individual, social, and cultural differences? How do these responses reflect the values of inclusion and respect for diversity? (p. 35) | *Diversity* (supports right to non-discrimination) |
| Understand that all persons have value; accept and welcome individual differences (p. 36) | How are materials (e.g., books, pictures, dolls, figures, songs) selected? In what roles are children of different genders, ethnicity, age, and abilities represented in these materials? (p. 36) | *Diversity* (supports right to non-discrimination) |
| Understand how their own actions may affect nature and the planet (p. 36) | What opportunities do children have to begin to discuss their emergent ideas about stewardship of the earth? (p. 36) | *Civic participation* (supports right to participation) |

Note. Government of British Columbia 2008, pp. 33–36. Learning goals and associated questions are written verbatim from the BCELF

and mental health (e.g., Nelson 2010). Exploring these issues might lead to understanding why certain children do not have the same opportunities to satisfy the BCELF's learning goals.

By asking practitioners to think about "how everyday events and activities [can be] used to engage children in thinking about and discussing strategies to address social and environmental challenges" (p. 26), they will be fostering democratic processes in the classroom and in fact are also encouraging civic participation and children's right to participation. Practitioners can plan for children to explore tangible materials and theoretical concepts, so they learn about leadership, citizenship, and forms of privilege and oppression they may experience themselves or by members of their community of children around the world. This is the only question in the *Exploration and Creativity* section that alludes to civic participation.

Developing more questions for practitioners to consider when planning learning experiences would greatly enhance this section of the BCELF. The goals and questions introduced in the third area of learning, *Languages and Literacies*, were exemplary in not only supporting children's rights to non-discrimination but also the community-based value of diversity in supporting children's rights to non-discrimination. Some questions asked were: "How are children exposed to the written languages and signs of other cultures (e.g., First Nations pictographs, Chinese characters)?" and "How well are the children's cultural backgrounds represented in the arts and crafts, stories, and symbols used from day to day?" (p. 31).

Community-based values are effectively integrated within the learning goals and corresponding questions related to *Social Responsibility and Diversity*. For example, the learning goal "Express a positive regard for others and respect for self, others, and property" and its associated question "How, and in what contexts, are children encouraged to initiate, maintain, and enjoy relationships with other children (e.g., turn-taking, problem-solving, negotiating, helping others, understanding other people's points of view, attitudes, and feelings)?" (p. 34) help practitioners think about essential emotional and social aspects of living harmoniously in a community. Processes of citizenship such as turn-taking, problem-solving, and negotiating all contribute to civic participation. Other examples include *understanding fairness both for themselves and others* and its associated questions, "In what ways are children's questions and concerns respected? What steps are taken to accommodate children's perspectives on a day-to-day basis?" (p. 35), as well as the learning goal, *Begin to recognize discrimination and inequity and to respond appropriately*, and its associated question, "How do adults model inclusive language, attitudes, and practices? What effect does this have on children's responses and their environments?" (p. 35). These learning goals create optimal opportunities for practitioners and children to think not only about (un)fairness within the classroom (i.e., between and among adults and children) but to think about the state of children as a community, more globally. With an overarching goal of "universal well-being, whereby the rights of all living beings and the ecosystem are fulfilled equitably" (Caplan et al.'s 2016, p. 39 definition of "social justice") in mind, issues of equality, equity, power, privilege, and oppression can then be introduced through planning learning experiences.

The language and concepts discussed in several components of the *areas of early learning* were deemed problematic with respect to children's rights and capacities. For example, under the learning goal for children to feel "safe and respected" in the *Well-Being and Belonging* section, associated questions included: "In what ways do adults convey to infants and toddlers a sense of safety in their environments?" and "How do adults convey to children that they can be themselves in the environment?" (p. 19). Protection rights are being prioritized over autonomy rights of the child in this example; the focus is on adults acting as necessary agents in making children feel safe and respected. This imbalance between autonomy and protection rights of the child negates children's evolving capacities to create and foster their own safety and belonging within their environment. Overall, while the *Well-Being and*

*Belonging* section implicitly suggests ways that individual children's rights can be fulfilled, more work must be done to foster learning about the well-being and belonging of other members of their community of children.

## Conclusion and Future Directions

Conventional views of children's rights conceptualize children as individual rights-holders. Integrating community-based values through a rights-integrative approach allows us to envision "children as a community" with rights as a collective – an idea that might help in shifting social justice movements forward. However, these movements require that every child has equitable access to high-quality, universal, not-for-profit early childhood learning and care. Early learning settings require high-quality, evidence-based curricula and early childhood practitioners with the expertise to understand, interpret, and (re)conceptualize these frameworks. These curricula must promote, infuse, and enforce children's rights and community-based values that support child, family, community, national, international, and ecological well-being. Using the BCELF as an example, this chapter applied a conceptual model of social justice for examining and integrating these values through a rights-based approach to early learning. Overall, the BCELF effectively demonstrates a children's rights approach to early learning. We argue that the next step would be for practitioners to also integrate community-based values in their planning and implementation of learning experiences to promote social justice both inside and outside of the classroom.

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# Posting #Selfies

## Autogeographies and the Teaching of Me

Susan Jagger

### Abstract

Humans have long been recognized as having layers of being: conscious, unconscious, and subconscious; Id, Ego, and Superego; to name a few. These focus on the individual. But human do not exist only as individuals. We are inherently members of systems: social, cultural, linguistic, political, and so on. We are also inextricably nested within ecological systems of home, influencing and influenced by all of the human and more than human beings that we share our environment with. This relationship with all of our relations can be captured within the Self. As we move from a focus on self to an embrace of our connected Self, there are infinite considerations to be explored. In a collection of textual and reflective snapshots, this chapter navigates the author's wonderings about and wanderings from self to Self.

Jungian psychology identifies the *Ego* as the center of our consciousness and this is surrounded by the *Self*, the entirety of our personality. Similarly, Lacan places *I* in necessary relation to the *Other*, one's sociolinguistic community. Taking these nested situations and realizing the expanse of what comprises us, our inherent membership in ecologies, in relation to all others, we can locate our self as an individual within our Self, our interconnected systems. By moving from the individualized self to the collective Self, there are infinite considerations to be explored. What comprises the Self? How do I care for the Self? What can this care look like in

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education? In everyday life? This chapter presents a collection of snapshots, Selfies if you will, of my wonderings about and wanderings through paths of realization as I came to know, and continue to come to know, my Self.

**#awareness #educator #respectingcaringacting (Victoria, BC)**

This past year, and in many past years, I have become much more aware of who I am and how I interact with the world around me. As a teacher, I wonder about what I teach, both in the classroom and through my acting and being, to my students and how I influence their developing citizenship. Am I promoting, encouraging, showing my students the necessity of respecting, caring, and acting with and in the natural world? How can I as an educator foster my students' attachments to/with/in the natural world? And how do my concerns and questions fit into curriculum? Really, what should educators be working toward?

**#morethansumofparts #limitsoflinear #RathRun (Parksville, BC)**

Mary Catherine Bateson's (1996) chapter made me think about the place of parts within a whole and attempt to capture my place in a drawing. I envisioned Rathtrevor Beach: the forested area, just after a good rain, running along the trails with my sister. This is what I tried to capture in my drawing.

I couldn't quite communicate the vibrance, the crispness, the shininess of the greens. I also couldn't capture the freshness of the air, the clarity of it, and the revitalizing qualities of it. The textures were missing as well – the squishy almost hollow feel of the ground beneath my feet, the gentle touch of leaves and boughs as I run by. It seems that artistic expressions of experience tell only part of the story....it would be impossible to capture all of the lived experience, all of the sensory information gathered about a time, setting, place.

On the reverse of the page, I listed the science behind the experience. I found myself going back to the drawing I had made and picking out the science within it – the biochemical photosynthetic processes in the leaves, the varying chlorophyll within different plants, the forces acting on my knees with each step, comparing that impact with that experienced when running on pavement, the distance travelled in a certain time and the velocity calculated from that, the reflection of light waves off of water molecules in the air to create rainbows. Looking more closely at my notes, I saw that they all took the form of "If...then" statements – a classic linear scientific form.

Relating the science to the art, I quickly saw that the sum of my linear observations came nowhere near to my experience in the setting, let alone the drawn representation of that experience.

**#littlesself #bigSSelf #whomadewho (Victoria, BC)**

After reading of Maturana and Verden-Zoller (2008), I considered the characteristics of the people (or others) who played a role in my (ongoing) upbringing that I display. Circling around my self and making up my Self are...

. . . my mum

She is an incredibly strong and independent woman. At the same time, she is caring and nurturing. She worked as a nurse for decades and made such a difference in the care and compassion that her patients received. She has amazed me in the past few years with how physically and mentally strong and determined she has been in recovering from her knee replacement surgeries.

. . . my dad

My dad was proud of everything that we did. . . everything! High school sports, degrees, baking an amazing pumpkin pie at Thanksgiving. Dad really valued talking with people. He would talk and laugh with anybody. People were happy in his presence.

. . . my sister

My sister is my best friend. When we were little, our family had some big, cross-country moves. The two of us really stuck together despite a four and a half year age difference. We are still best friends though today our relationship has moved beyond Barbies and roller skating to discussions of careers, life paths, marriages, children, and what the hell we are all doing anyway. She is my go-to person for everything.

. . . my nieces

My nieces remind me so much of my sister and I when we were little. I almost relive my childhood when I am with them. Being with them also makes me think more and deeply about the future: what will my nieces live when they are adults? What about their children?

. . . my kindergarten teacher Mr. S

When I started kindergarten, Mr. S scared me. He was this big, strange man with a beard and moustache (late 1970s, the norm I guess, my uncle and my cousin scared me too. . . all of that facial hair). I remember that whenever I was called upon in class, I would start to cry. It's not that I didn't know the answer to the question, I was just scared to share it. What if I was laughed at? What if I was wrong and embarrassed? I got over the crying but still won't share unless I am very confident in what I have to say.

. . . my biology teacher Mr. B

Mr. B was my Biology 11 teacher. He indulged my curiosity in the natural world. I talked him into taking a group of us to Bamfield for several days. He was delighted when, for my plant collection assignment, I brought in a cooler full

of seaweed that I had gathered and identified. He also encouraged my questioning and my efforts to find answers.

... Karen

I met Karen on an overnight train from Venice to Nice. Monika was a vice-principal of a British Columbia elementary school and was travelling around Europe as well. We ended up staying in the same hostel in Nice and visiting some galleries together. In Karen, I had someone to talk with about my work and life situation who could give a (I want to say objective but of course she couldn't be, no one really is) new perspective on what I might do (I was in a continuing teaching position but with a co-teacher who didn't let me have the freedom to teach how I wanted to and how my students needed). Karen inspired me as she told of how she was taking painting classes and had a studio space where she spent most of her non-school time. She was living a rich and fulfilling life beyond her work and was nurturing her artistic interests and talents.

... my aunt and uncle

My aunt and uncle always seemed like the classic Beaver Cleaver parents. They have lived in the same house since the early 1960s and have been going to the same church for nearly as long. And they don't seem to age... my uncle is now 91 and still goes curling. My aunt and uncle are the most accepting people I know. I always felt (and still feel) comfortable with them and excited to spend time with them. My aunt and my dad, sister and brother, are very similar; being with my aunt is a little (a lot) like being with my dad.

... Pam

I met Pam one day a few years ago on campus. We were both volunteering at a conference and were both experiencing similar stresses in our personal relationships. She was in a relationship but was questioning what she was really getting out of it. I was engaged to a man that I felt that I couldn't rely on and couldn't see myself being with long term. We talked for a few hours and our conversations helped me to realize that I needed to put myself first and that I needed to do what I knew I needed to do. We talked on a Friday. The following Tuesday I called my fiancé and broke up with him. I have never felt so free. And the weight off of my shoulders! It was so liberating. I then started to think seriously about doctoral programs. ...

... my London students (all students, really)

My students remind me of why I am a teacher. They help me to continue learning and experience joy in new discoveries. Teaching in London helped me to realize some of the things that are important in teaching: building, recognizing, and

celebrating community and interactions with others. My prescribed curriculum would regularly be set aside to consider everyday issues that came up... difficulties with peers, stresses outside of school... life in general. It was much more important to me to help my students navigate through life experiences than memorize dates and write haiku poems. It was also in London and then back in BC schools that I started to think more deeply about how my students' attachment (detachment) and experiences (inexperiences) in the natural world would influence how they acknowledged the environment and how their actions reflected this acknowledgment.

**#home #theresnoplacelikehome #toiletbathtubbedscomputer (Qualicum Beach, BC)**

What comes to mind when you think of home? And where does this come from?

places that I feel a part of, connected to;
places where I grew up;
places where I feel most comfortable;
places where I have memories that are positive, cherished, with loved family and friends;
places and situations that contribute to my being
(...well, everything does...I guess those that I can easily pinpoint)
Coming from experiences in place,
memories,
defining moments,
being away and coming back.

After thinking and writing a little about home and recognizing the role that family, cherished places, and memories of situated experiences have in my sense of home, I was curious to see how my family members understood home.

"Home is the place that you stay and sleep at; it is where your personal items are; it is where you live; it is where your memories are." – Breanna, niece, age 11

"Home is where you live; it has a toilet, bathtub, beds, and a computer." – Kaitlyn, niece, age 6

"Home is comfortable and safe; it is where my people are and is not really home when they aren't there; the presence of certain people make home; it is a place where I am not judged; it is a place that I take care of. These understandings of home come from childhood when you need to be safe. It makes me think of living on Weaver Place and playing Barbies." – Heather, sister, age 38

"Home is a place where I feel secure and comfortable; it is a place where I can be with family; it involves certain surroundings, familiar to myself and to the people I am with." – Sally, mum, age 67

**#deepecology #beautifulacts # cycleofbeing (Victoria, BC)**

When I first read Arne Naess' (Naess and Sessions 1984) deep ecology platform, I took it as being very prescriptive and some of the points to be problematic....

1. "The flourishing of human and nonhuman life on earth has inherent value." Yes, of course, this point seems quite obvious to me. Is it obvious to others though? Do they see the value in a moss? Or a lichen? Or the annoying mosquitoes that zzzzzzzzz outside (or maybe inside) your tent in the middle of the night?

2. "Richness and diversity of life-forms are also values in themselves and contribute to the flourishing of human and nonhuman life on earth." Again, this seems pretty straight forward. Aren't richness and diversity a part of life flourishing? Can life flourish without richness and diversity? Richness and diversity could also be considered in a cultural sense… but does this make our lives flourish? I would say yes, it does. I am sure however for some richness and diversity of cultures certainly doesn't add to the flourishing of their lives.

3. "Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy *vital* needs." This is where I start to get uncomfortable. Maybe this is because I am thinking about my own actions. One's vital needs include food, shelter, and water. I wonder about food… what food might be considered vital? Naess points out that *vital need* is left vague intentionally. Is meat and fish considered vital? They certainly can contribute to our health but there are other foods that can be eaten to get similar health benefits. What about eating plants? Singer (1975) asserts that eating animals is morally wrong but when we eat plants, we are killing them as well. Where do we draw the line? Does eating other animals and plants contribute to the reduction of richness and diversity or only reduce populations?

4. "The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease." OK, but how do we have this decrease of human life? Birth rates are dropping in some parts of the world but are increasing in others. Our medical sciences are also extending some human lives to well beyond normal expectancies and are controlling the effect of many diseases…humans taking on a role above all other beings. In theory, the fourth point is logical but how would it play out in practice in a world where human life is valued over all others?

5. "Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening." Again, this point is clear to me. What about others? What about those who, without a thought, drive their massive SUVs to the big box store around the corner to buy apples from New Zealand, bananas from Ecuador, and a bottle of Roundup, "double bagged please, I am walking (out to my car)," a stereotype, I know, but would this person likely see that our interference is excessive?

6. "…policies must be changed. The changes in policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply indifferent from the present and make possible a more joyful experience of the connectedness of all things" … yes, yes, and yes! Policies must change but the underlying relationships must also change. Changing policies will not do this alone. Here, the ideological change would underlie changes in technological and economic structures altered by globalization. I think most people experience joy (to varying degrees) and wonder when they take time in natural space… but does

this joy and wonder translate into a realization of the inextricable links between members of the natural world?

7. "The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality rather than adhering to higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great." It is interesting that often those who have the highest standard of (material) living have a low quality of life with little joy, happiness, and contentment. High standards of material living are so entrenched as goals of Western culture as markets and the commodification of everything from goods and services to people, things, and environments becomes hegemonic… how will this change? There are changes, yes, but a widespread embracing of rich living through simple means? Maybe the recent and current economic crisis are forcing people into simpler means but if and when markets improve, will this rich, yet simple, living be discarded in favor of insatiable consumption once again? Will size always matter? Will productivity and profit always reign?

8. "Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to participate in the attempt to implement the necessary changes." It is this point that I initially found to be a prescription. It is interesting that Naess uses the term "obligation" in this point when he also says that we ought to do things out of inclination – beautiful acts.

After watching *Crossing the Stones* (Horne 1992) and seeing Naess in his home and going about his daily life, it was clear how the points of deep ecology can be practiced. Naess embodied his theoretical writings; his being led to his thinking which cycled back to his being and so on.

### #UVicbunnies #predatorprey #stillheartbreaking (Victoria, BC)

I have a complicated relationship with the bunnies at UVic. (Since writing this entry, UVic implemented a rabbit free policy and has removed the rabbits from campus. The rabbits were moved to a number of sanctuaries with most going to a rabbit sanctuary in Coombs, BC (Szpotowicz 2011).) I know that the rabbits are an invasive species – they are not meant to be on campus and are contributing to some pretty big changes to the ecosystem. In theory, I do not like the rabbits but in practice, I can't help myself from being drawn to them.

A month or so ago, my sister and nieces came to visit me. Brea and Kaitlyn like to see the rabbits so we brought them up to campus. Heather and I sat on a bench, drinking tea, while the girls tried to pet the bunnies. We heard this terribly high-pitched screeching and the girls saw that there was a baby rabbit in the bushes with a rat biting onto its neck. My sister went over and scared the rat away. The girls wanted their mum to do something, and Heather and I looked on, trying to decide what to do. The rat was waiting patiently (well, for a break at least) in the bushes nearby. The bunny was clearly going to die but it wasn't there quite yet. I was really torn about what to do. I knew that it would have been best to just leave the bunny and rat alone. It just seemed to be such an undignified way to die – with a rat clamped

on your neck. We ended up moving the bunny to a rabbit hole away from the bushes. It seemed like a place where it could die without additional stress. I ended up being more upset by the whole situation than my young nieces.

I know that I would have been best to not interfere. Where does caring for the other have its boundaries? Were we simply pressing our ideas of dying with dignity onto the other? Do other beings think about how they would like to die? And what about the rat? We were certainly not accepting it as a legitimate other. And our actions did not show that we care for it as well.

Just today, my sister and I were at the beach in Qualicum and saw several dead lion's mane jellyfish on the shore. Again, it felt wrong that they would just rot on the beach. We ended up throwing a few back into the water. They'll likely end up on shore again, but it didn't feel right to leave them.

#### #antisocialbehaviour #zombies #gelatolunch (Victoria, BC)

I took the bus downtown after class to meet my friend Elaine for lunch (not so much lunch. . .gelato). I looked up from my books and saw that all of the passengers in the side facing seats were focused on their cell phones and devices, text messaging, and reading replies. They were all engaged in their own separate worlds within the shared space of the bus and interacting within this created interface.

#### #busybees #buzz #savethebees (Qualicum Beach, BC)

I was watching some bees at work this afternoon in my mum's garden. I was first delighted to see that there were bees there to begin with. Watching them buzzing from flower to flower, wiggling in each, and then carrying on to the next, I started to think about more than human living things and how they all seem to go about their business – eating, sleeping, reproducing – all basic actions that allow them to persist in the natural world. Humans aren't like this though. We make so many choices about doing things. We include more than basic needs in our lives, those things essential to survival. It seems that these choices have brought us to place ourselves above all others. When did we get this way? Why did we get this way? Do other living things make choices like this? Do other living things dominate over others as we do beyond meeting our basic needs? If humans were not in the natural world, would another species take on the dominant and destructive role as we have?

#### #cancersucks #careandcompassion #alonenotalone (Victoria, BC)

My sister, Heather, recently started working as a unit clerk at Nanaimo Regional and West Coast General Hospital emergency rooms. Since we talk often, we have talked a lot about her new experiences at the hospitals. During one shift, she met a man who was terminally ill and waiting in the ER for a bed to come available on a ward. The man had cancer and the tumors in his neck made it very difficult for him to lie comfortably in his bed.

Heather was struck by how hardened and seemingly void of emotion the hospital staff were around the man. He was treated as an object rather than a being. The man was alone, without family or friends by his side, and had no one to comfort him and take time to talk with him.

As Heather and I talked about this experience, we discussed how people are much more than their physical presence. This man had a past and interacted with others. He likely had a family and friends who cared for him. He made a difference in the lives of others (and in the greater Self). He had a home and was part of the homes of others. How sad to be waiting to die and be without those who have contributed to your being and your Self.

We also wondered aloud what happens when we die. One's being is much more than our physicality. I read David Abram's (1996) book and shared with Heather the idea of air as the medium that connects and supports all of us. I also recalled the David Suzuki video (Lang 2002) that had an interview with James Lovelock. Lovelock discussed how when one dies they once again become part of the Earth, of Gaia. The atoms and molecules that make up the body do not simply die with the body. Instead they return to the Earth and become part of another system (self) within larger systems (the Self). The being is physically changed but does not end.

I find some peace in thinking about death in this way, particularly the passing of my Dad. I take comfort in knowing that part of him is always with me... even in the atoms that were part of him that continue to be part of my world. Parts of my whole Self.

A couple of days after our conversation, the man passed away. I hope that he was not alone.

**#shootingstar #isthereanyoneoutthere #celestialcinema (Parksville, BC)**

There was a lovely, clear sky this past Saturday night. I was visiting my sister and nieces and we decided to do some stargazing in the backyard.

Heather and I talked about the expansiveness of the sky and the incredible distances that we were viewing. How far and how long had the light travelled from stars to be visible to us? How fast were the satellites moving? In such a massive space there must be more life. What is out there? Is it right for us to explore it? Is it a part of us? Is there life but in a completely different form and definition from life as we understand it?

Heather said that when she looks at the sky on nights like this one, she often wonders where Dad really is. Just after saying this, she turned back to the sky and saw a shooting star. She really did! And this raises the question: do things just happen by coincidence or is there more to occurrences, however random and coincidental they may appear? Thinking ecologically, chance does not seem to be possible. The connectedness of the self to others within the Self would make chance occurrences impossible; the actions of another (an Other) would cause all things to happen.

**#retainerresidue #dentaldust #questionsfromthechair (Victoria, BC)**

When one's awareness is awakened, ideas seem to reveal themselves in the strangest of places.

I was at the dentist today and asked if he could please clean away the cement left on the back of my front teeth from a retainer that had long since been removed. Using a high speed, something-sonic filer, he quickly worked away the cement and smoothed the surface of my teeth. From my position in the chair, it looked as though smoke was coming out of my mouth as he filed away. I asked him if this was what was happening (he did ask me to let him know if it got too hot). He said that no, it was "just cement dust, but really, what is smoke?"

Hmmm. . . had my mouth not been open already I could have discussed Abram's paper and shared the possibility that smoke may simply be the visible form of air, the medium that connects and supports all beings within the greater Self.

Side wondering: Why do dentists always ask questions when you have a mouth full of fingers and tools?

**#giftofillness #Dad #fearlossgriefpeace (Victoria, BC)**

The gift of illness. Francisco Varela discussed this in *Monte Grande* (Reichle 2008). It is something that became so clear after my dad's passing. It was then that I, and I think my sister and mum as well, experienced a period of clarity, when those things, relationships, people, actions that are most cherished, are sacred seemed to make up and support my whole world. Those things, relationships, people, actions that did not matter as much faded. I also remember saying to my sister that it is so unfortunate that only in times of loss and grief or celebration does our whole family come together. We miss out on the simple yet rich everyday occurrences, those happenings that we so often take for granted.

Varela spoke about a subtle consciousness and the period of time right before death. I was with my dad during this time at the hospital. I remember him asking me to take care of my mum. I also remember him telling me that he was really scared and did not think he was going to make it through the day. Did he feel peace before dying or was his last emotion fear?

**#recycling #bigbox #thankwho (Highway 19, Nanaimo to Qualicum Beach, BC)**

*Thank you for saving the environment!* This was a sign that I saw above a recycling bin outside of a big box store in Nanaimo. I was in a grumbly mood (this big box store is particularly irritating) and this sign really got to me. I mentally picked it apart as I drove back to Qualicum Beach (who am I to be critical, driving, though at least in a small, fuel-efficient car).

*Thank you.* This implies that the act of recycling is something above and beyond one's normal everyday activities. This draws me back to deep ecology; we should do things out of inclination and pleasure rather than obligation. Do these beautiful acts that we do because we want to require thanks? I do not think so for

we take pleasure in doing them. Perhaps we ought to be thankful for the opportunity to take part in these beautiful acts.

*Saving*. We are placed in the savior, the hero role, above all others, all more than human beings, living and nonliving, in our communities. This does not acknowledge our place, our self, within the natural world, the Self. It also does not recognize the legitimacy of the other.

*Environment*. This is too often set apart from humans. We fail to deeply accept our inherent situatedness with and in the environment. To many people, environment includes plants and animals that are out there. It might also include air and water, particularly when referring to air and water that is polluted. Environment often does not include cultural influences and societal norms; its popular definition is far too narrow.

Probably most misleading and frustrating about the sign is that it implies that through the simple act of recycling pop can and juice boxes the environment can be saved. Nothing about changing our way of living and being with and in the world and our dominant worldview that places us beyond and above the rest of the natural systems that we are indeed living and being with and in.

### #Selfish #unselfie #Selfie (Victoria, BC)

I find that when thinking about the universal self (Self) and my being (self) within this larger self (Self), I feel both comforted and troubled.

It is comforting to realize the deep connections between all that is in/on/beyond Earth. This connectedness feels like a confirmation of my own existence. I find comfort in knowing that I am part of much more than simply going through the steps of everyday tasks. We are more than the sum of these parts. And we are never alone.

It is, at the same time, troubling to deeply acknowledge our inherent connections to the larger self (Self). After many readings and conversations, and solitary wonderings and wanderings, my awareness of these relationships has sharpened, and I find myself thinking about most every action that I take and following the branching influence of those actions on other beings. This can be incredibly unsettling. I wonder about what actions could possibly be made that would not harm or disrespect others. Are there any such actions? How can I live without damaging others? Is it realistic or even possible?

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# Part IV

# Rights and Resistance

# Closing the Achievement Gap Via Reducing the Opportunity Gap

## YAAACE's Social Inclusion Framework Within the Jane and Finch Community

Ardavan Eizadirad

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## Contents

**Abstract**

This chapter uses comparative spatial analysis and Critical Race Theory to outline an overview of systemic and institutional barriers impeding academic achievement of racialized students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds living in under-resourced racialized communities in Toronto, Canada. *Youth Association for Academics, Athletics, and Character Education* (YAAACE), a nonprofit community organization in the Jane and Finch neighborhood, is examined as a case study in closing the achievement gap in the community by investing in minimizing the inequality of opportunity impacting young children, youth, and

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families in the area. The collaborative synergic model of YAAACE from a Social Inclusion Strategy framework that takes into consideration participants' identities and developmental needs and the community's spatial dynamics and demographics exemplifies an effective approach to mitigating systemic and structural barriers impeding academic achievement of racialized students for upward social mobility. YAAACE's unique model for teaching and learning and offering holistic services can be used as a tool and a spark for further discussion in how we can use alternative approaches to close the achievement gap and expand the limited hegemonic definition of success that is normalized and perpetuated in schools focusing exclusively on academics which marginalizes and oppresses racialized identities and their needs.

## Introduction

This chapter outlines alternative non-hegemonic methods and approaches to closing the achievement gap for racialized students living in under-resourced racialized communities such as the Jane and Finch community in Toronto, Canada, by shifting the discussion toward minimizing the opportunity gap. The works of *Youth Association for Academics, Athletics, and Character Education* (YAAACE), a nonprofit organization in the Jane and Finch neighborhood, are examined as a case study to demonstrate the effectiveness of closing the achievement gap by creating more accessibility to opportunities for the members of the community. The collaborative synergic model of YAAACE as an organization from a Social Inclusion Strategy framework, which takes into consideration participants' identities and developmental needs and the community's spatial dynamics and demographics, exemplifies an effective approach to mitigate systemic and structural barriers impeding academic achievement of racialized students in the community (YAAACE 2018). YAAACE's model for teaching and learning and offering holistic services can be used as a tool to close the achievement gap and expand the limited hegemonic definition of success (People for Education 2018) that is normalized and perpetuated in schools today which often marginalizes and oppresses racialized identities, cultures, and practices.

## Methodology and Conceptual Framework: Comparative Spatial Analysis and CRT

This chapter uses comparative spatial analysis and Critical Race Theory (CRT) to identify currently existing systemic institutional barriers for residents of the Jane and Finch community particularly as it applies to inequality of opportunity for

racialized young children, youth, and families and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. From a spatial analysis, the demographics and sociocultural living conditions of the Jane and Finch neighborhood are examined and compared to other neighborhoods to gain an in-depth understanding of how the social conditions within the community impact accessibility to opportunities and social services for the residents. The spatial analysis is supplemented and guided by CRT as a theoretical framework. I use Knoester and Au's (2017) definition of CRT which is outlined as:

> [A] conceptual framework useful in understanding how racism operates, including within institutions such as schools, by paying careful attention to the differential resources and opportunities available to students of different races, as opposed to the more common form of racial theorizing, focusing on individual acts of hatred or racism. (p. 4)

Hence, CRT from an ecological place-based framework provides the means to piece together lived experiences of racialized identities living in Jane and Finch to identify systemic barriers that impede the progress of the residents for upward social mobility by limiting their accessibility to opportunities for progress and betterment of their living conditions and circumstances. From a CRT perspective, one has to inquire about how racism operates as collective processes embedded within the DNA and social fabric of our institutions, represented within the dominant discourse as neutral policies and practices that proclaim equality of opportunity for all (Eizadirad and Portelli 2018; Giroux 2003; Kearns 2008).

Knoester and Au (2017) deconstruct how to identify subtle racism within educational institutions by explaining,

> [A] key tenet of Critical Race Theory is that such inequality is regularly obscured under the guise of race-less or race-neutral laws and policies and is instead framed around individual equality as expressed through concepts such as meritocracy – that success is purely the result of individual hard work and not the function of social, historical, or institutional processes. Thus, within a Critical Race framework, it becomes important to consider issues surrounding segregation, desegregation, and re-segregation of schools as part of a larger conversation about white material advantage and the material disadvantage of communities of color, often under the guise of non-race specific and sometimes rhetorically anti-racist policies. (p. 4)

The notion of "meritocracy" and its individualistic judgmental lens contributes to advancing a deficit model within education where students' characteristics and family dynamics are exclusively blamed for their failures and shortcomings (Masood 2008). This simplistic interpretation takes away from a more holistic systemic analysis where root causes of problems can be situated within the conditions created and perpetuated by inequitable institutional policies and practices. Hence, from an ecological equity perspective, one has to constantly inquire about how power is enacted from the macro institutional level and dispersed at the micro level across different spatial geographies impacting distribution of opportunities, resources, and access to social services.

## Race(ing) to the Top: Educational Achievements of Racialized Students and Inequitable Accessibility to Opportunities

Canada is a country with a population of approximately 37,067,011 as of April 2018 (Gatehouse 2018, Para. 2) and consists of 10 provinces and 3 territories. Ontario is Canada's largest province, and it "represents approximately one-third of the nation's population" (Pinto 2016, p. 96). In Canada, there is no federal department of education. Instead, each province and territory has its own exclusive legal jurisdiction over educational policies and practices (Volante 2007). Educational policies for governance are established at the provincial level and communicated to local school boards. Local school boards and individual schools have the authority and flexibility to implement Ministry of Education-approved policies and practices using various approaches to achieve the intended outcome-based results. This multifaceted approach to governance of education in Canada provides provinces, territories, and school districts with the power to be flexible in using different approaches and strategies to address local needs of students within their unique spatial geographies relative to the needs of the larger surrounding community.

"Closing the achievement gap" as an outcome has become a popular buzz word used among educational policymakers and politicians to discuss inequities impacting various social groups in society, yet what is often silenced or not talked about are the disparities in the opportunity gap which as a process leads to the achievement gap as an outcome. Examining the state of Ontario schools in the early 1990s, Curtis et al. (1992) point out that, "Working-class kids always have, on average, lower reading sores, higher grade failures, higher drop-out rates and much poorer employment opportunities" (p. 7). This trend continues to exist today largely due to inequality of opportunity. From an intersectional perspective, being racialized and working class further exasperates the likelihood of underachieving. Race is a significant factor that impacts one's access to opportunities (Block and Galabuzi 2011), particularly when systemic discrimination is embedded within the fabric of institutional policies and practices. Within the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), "schools with high dropout rates are those with the highest number of racialized students" (Colour of Poverty 2019, p. 4). According to Brown (2009), in the TDSB which is the largest and one of the most diverse school boards in Canada with 583 schools and serving more than 246,000 students, "students of African ascendance experience a 38% dropout rate and students from Central and South America had a 37% dropout rate" (p. 4).

Student achievements across various social groups are often judged and compared via standardized test results. Although theoretically standardized tests are intended to help identify inequities in the education system and areas for improvement at the individual level as well as broader areas in school and school board district levels (Volante 2007), in practice it has not led to closing the achievement gap along the lines of race and socioeconomic status over the years since its inception in Ontario (Dei 2008; Hori 2013; James 2012). Similarly, examining the historical impact of standardized testing in the United States over time, Au (2010) explains,

> The historical roots of high-stakes, standardised testing in racism, nativism, and eugenics raises a critical question: why is it that, now over 100 years after the first standardised tests were administered in the United States, we have virtually the same test-based achievement gaps along the lines of race and economic class? (p. 12)

Although the context is different to a certain degree between how standardized tests are used in Canada in comparison with the United States (EQAO 2015), the outcome of racialized students and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds doing more poorly relative to their white counterparts within the education system remains a persistent pattern in both countries.

Nezavdal (2003) critiques standardized testing as ineffective arguing that standardized assessments are "a social construct" (p. 69). He goes on to explain, "these norms are not incidentally held but deliberately upheld to stream students to propel some forward while systematically impeding others" (p. 67). The use of standardized test policies as a normalized accountability tool in schools at all levels has "not improved reading and math achievement across states and have not significantly narrowed national and state level achievement gaps between white students and non-whites students or gaps between rich and poor students" (Au 2010, p. 11).

Similarly, Hori (2013) argues standardized tests have not assisted in closing the achievement gap in Toronto and it has instead contributed to intensifying and widening the achievement gap by systemically closing accessibility to certain opportunities for racialized students and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. In his report controversially titled *vi-o-lence = The Toronto District School Board*, Hori (2013) argues "the Toronto District School Board commits structural violence against its most marginalized students" (p. 1). Hori (2013) defines structural violence as "unequal distribution of power" which leads to uneven distribution of resources and consequentially in the long term to "unequal life chances" (p. 6) in terms of upward social mobility.

Using the Fraser Institute ranking of schools, which is a score out of 10 based on individual school's performances on annual standardized tests, Hori maps on a graph TDSB's 73 secondary high schools' ranking averages calculated over a 5-year period from 2007 to 2011. It is significant to note that the Fraser Institute annual school rankings have gained so much currency within the public sphere that they largely impact the property values within various communities, driving the prices up or down relative to the school rankings (Fraser Institute 2018). The overall rating of schools is calculated by taking into account the following factors: average level achieved by students on the Grade 9 academic and applied mathematics tests administered by Educational Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), the percentage of eligible Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) writers who successfully complete the test on their first attempt or on a subsequent attempt administered by EQAO, and the percentage of tests below provincial standards which refers to overall percentage of students who wrote EQAO administered tests, whether the math test in Grade 9 or the Grade 10 OSSLT test, who were below the Level 3 provincial standard of performance. Hori (2013) concludes,

Toronto has a very visible socio-economic divide between its residents. As a matter of fact, most of the schools which had ratings above 6 were located in affluent neighborhoods. On the other hand, the worst schools were located in the low-income areas. Toronto is generally presented as one city; however, the truth of the matter is that there are 3 different cities within Toronto. David Hulchanski's 3 cities report captures the divisions and segregations which define the city of Toronto. (p. 18)

Hori (2013) is referring to a study conducted by David Hulchanski (2007) titled *The Three Cities within Toronto* which provides the means to contextualize development of different neighborhoods across the city spatially relative to important factors such as level of income, race, and socioeconomic status. The study provides a comprehensive examination of income polarization among Toronto's neighborhoods from 1970 to 2005 taking into consideration neighborhood demographics. Findings indicate the emergence of three distinct cities within Toronto based on income change. "City #1" makes up 20% of the city and is generally found in the downtown core of the city in close proximity to the city's subway lines. The neighborhoods under "City #1" are identified as predominantly high-income areas where the average individual income has increased by 20% or more relative to the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area average in 1970. "City #2" makes up 40% of the city and is characterized by middle-income neighborhoods. Individual incomes in "City #2" have fairly remained the same having undergone an increase or decrease of less than 20%. "City #3" makes up 40% of the city, and the individual incomes in these areas have undergone a decrease of 20% or more. Other than income, there are other major differences between "City #1" and "City #3" particularly in terms of number of immigrants and visible minorities living in the areas. Eight-two percent of "City #1" is white compared to 34% of residents in "City #3." As well, percentage of foreign-born people in "City #1" declined from 35% to 28% between 1971 and 2006, whereas in "City #3," the number of immigrants increased dramatically from 31% in 1971 to 61% in 2006 (p. 11). Hulchanski's (2007) data demonstrates drastic differences in long-term neighborhood trends in Toronto and more importantly deconstructs the fallacy that neighborhoods simply evolve "naturally." Long-term trends from the study, supported with data, demonstrate investments and resources are distributed inequitably throughout neighborhoods in City of Toronto. Neighborhoods composed of majority of white residents are privileged at the expense of neglecting neighborhoods composed of majority of working-class racialized immigrants.

Hori (2013) uses Hulchanski's (2007) report as a foundational framework to explore whether the same argument about inequitable spatial developments across neighborhoods can be applied to quality of education received by students attending different schools in various neighborhoods in the City of Toronto. Hori (2013) conducts a comparative spatial analysis where he maps the overall rating of secondary schools as ranked by the Fraser Institute and looks for spatial patterns relative to whether the schools are labelled as low or high achieving. In order to provide some context, it is important to note that in 2005, the City of Toronto identified 13 "Priority Neighborhoods" to receive extra attention for the purpose of neighborhood improvements in various capacities. In March 2014, the city expanded the program to

31 neighborhoods and renamed them from "Priority Neighborhoods" to "Neighborhood Improvement Areas" (City of Toronto 2018). Given that Hori's study was conducted in 2013, he makes reference to "Priority Neighborhoods" as part of his findings.

After mapping the overall ranking of schools across various neighborhoods and searching for spatial patterns, Hori (2013) concludes "the most vulnerable individuals in Toronto (the socioeconomically and ethnically marginalized youth who live in the 13 priority neighborhoods) attend the worst high schools in Toronto" (p. 1). It is important to contextualize what Hori (2013) means by using the phrase "worst"; he is referring to schools based on how they perform on standardized tests, a statistic that has high currency value in the public's eye as often schools are judged based on their overall EQAO test scores. He supports this claim by pointing out that underperforming schools with the lowest rankings are predominantly located in "Priority Neighborhoods" which spatially are located in Hulchanski's City #3 where the demographics of the neighborhood is predominantly made up of immigrants and racialized and visible minorities whose individual incomes have undergone a decrease of 20% or more. On the other hand, schools that had an overall school ranking of 6 or higher by the Fraser Institute were located in affluent high-income neighborhoods which spatially are located in Hulchanski's City #1 where demographics of the neighborhoods is 82% white and whose average individual incomes increased by 20% or more relative to the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area average in 1970. Hori (2013) concludes "TDSB provides a low quality of education to its most disadvantaged students, while providing a higher quality of education to its most privileged students" (p. 28) further reproducing social class disparities. Hori (2013) identifies this disparity in quality of education received by students from different socioeconomic classes as a form of systemic structural violence as "education serves as a tool to oppress the most vulnerable individuals, and it serves as a tool to maintain, reproduce, and engender socioeconomic disparities" (p. 29). This process is labelled as "structurally violent" at a systemic level because "it denies students upward social mobility and therefore socioeconomically marginalized and racially excluded students get streamed towards less desired labour jobs" (p. 37). Hori (2013) and Hulchanski's (2007) findings collectively provide a holistic picture of the disparities and inequities that exist across neighborhoods in the City of Toronto and how racialized identities and communities are marginalized with respect to access to quality education, opportunities, and social services, while neighborhoods occupied by predominantly white bodies and those from higher socioeconomic status are privileged.

Williams et al. (2013) similarly conducted a spatial analysis collecting and compiling data from multiple sources including the Department of Justice Canada, Toronto Census Tract, TDSB Learning Opportunities Index, and the Fraser Institute. The authors aggregated all data collected by postal code and found major disparities between neighborhoods located in City #1 and City #3 (Hulchanski 2007). For example, a comparison of the Jane and Finch neighborhood, with postal code starting with M3N located spatially in City #3 and being one of the identified "Priority Neighborhoods," to the Rosedale neighborhood with postal code starting

| Priority Neighbourhood: Jane-Finch | |
|---|---|
| Incarceration Costs (2008) | $36,856,603 (Postal Code M3N) |
| Police Expenditures (2011) | $30,576,947 (31 Division) |
| Data for Census Tract 0312.04 (2005) | Percentage of families with one parent: 39% (+22%) |
| | Total population 15 years and over with no certificate, diploma or degree: 47% (+27%) |
| | Unemployment: 12.1% (+5.4%) |
| | Median income (All private households): $37,056 (-$27,072) |
| TDSB Learning Opportunities Index School Rankings (2011) | Westview Centennial Secondary School (1/109) Brookview Middle School (15/479) Shoreham Public School (3/479) Driftwood Public School (9/479) |
| Fraser Report Rankings (Secondary Schools 2011-12) | Westview Centennial Secondary School (696/725) |

**Fig. 1** Jane and Finch neighborhood (Williams et al. 2013)

with M4T located spatially in City #1 and being an affluent neighborhood showed major disparities in neighborhood incarceration costs, police expenditures, percentage of families with one parent, total population 15 years and over with no certificate, diploma or degree, unemployment rate, median income, TDSB Learning Opportunities Index school rankings, and Fraser Institute school rankings (see Figs. 1 and 2 for specific numerical and statistical differences).

Overall, findings by Hulchanski (2007), Hori (2013), and Williams et al. (2013) using comparative spatial analysis indicate a trend over time that all neighborhoods are not treated equally at a systemic level; white identities and spaces are privileged at the expense of marginalization and oppression to racialized identities and communities (Eizadirad 2017).

Polanyi et al. (2017) provide more recent statistics about how the aforementioned disparities across race, class, and socioeconomic status continue to persist relative to child poverty rates across different neighborhoods in Toronto. They point out,

> Between 2010 and 2015, low-income rates among children have decreased significantly in many downtown and southern Etobicoke neighborhoods, while low-income rates have remained the same or increased in a number of Scarborough and other inner-suburb neighborhoods. (p. 19)

Polanyi et al.'s (2017) outline how racialized neighborhoods continue to be marginalized and oppressed through institutional systemic discrimination which consequentially impacts children's learning and achievement levels in schools starting from a young age. Similar statistics emphasizing disparities between racialized and non-racialized neighborhoods were outlined more than a decade ago by the

| Affluent Neighbourhood: Rosedale | |
|---|---|
| Incarceration Costs (2008) | $0 (Postal Code M4T) |
| Police Expenditures (2011) | $20,965,401 (53 Division) |
| Data for Census Tract 0344.02  (2005) | Percentage of families with one parent: 11% (-6%) |
| | Total population 15 years and over with no certificate, diploma or degree: 7% (-13%) |
| | Unemployment: 5.5% (-1.2%) |
| | Median income (All private households): $179,935 (+115,807) |
| TDSB Learning Opportunities Index School Rankings (2011) | Northern Secondary School (104/109) North Toronto Collegiate Institute (105/109) Whitney Junior Public School (479/479) |
| Fraser Report Rankings (Secondary Schools 2011-12) | North Toronto Collegiate Institute (14/725) |

**Fig. 2** Rosedale neighborhood (Williams et al. 2013)

Colour of Justice Network in 2007 stating, "racialized communities experience ongoing, disproportionate levels of poverty" supported by the fact that "between 1980 and 2000, while the poverty rate for the non-racialized European heritage population in Toronto decreased by 28 percent, the poverty among racialized families rose by 361 percent" (Colour of Justice Network, 2007, p. 1). This is troubling given that "more than half of Toronto's population identify as racialized (51.5%)" (Polanyi et al. 2017, p. 1), and as Block and Galabuzi (2011) in their report titled *Canada's Colour Coded Labour Market: The Gap for Racialized Workers* point out, "Racialized Canadians earn only 81.4 cents for every dollar paid to non-racialized Canadians" (p. 11). These disparities at the systemic level along the lines of race, class, and socioeconomic have real-life implications and consequences particularly for those living in under-resourced racialized communities. As the Racial Justice Report Card for Ontario (2014) states, "Statistics show that racialized children, and in particular First Nations and African Canadian children, are significantly over-represented in CAS [Children's Aid Society] care and federal and provincial correctional institutions" (p. 3). As well, "Racialized and immigrant workers tend to be overrepresented in precarious, temporary types of employment and thus are more likely to lack dental insurance coverage" (p. 8).

Disadvantages constructed systemically by institutional policies and practices which create the social conditions and processes that perpetuate inequality of opportunity have real-life implications and consequences on the lives of racialized students and their families both in school and outside of school within their community (Eizadirad 2016). The "structural violence" (Hori 2013, p. 4) enacted within schools through the use of standardized tests and its domino effect of streaming students into nonacademic fields has contributed to:

The over-representation of socioeconomically marginalized and racially excluded youths in the prison, the over-representation of socioeconomically marginalized and racially excluded youth in non-academic, special education, skill-oriented and essential curriculums in Secondary schools, and the under-representation of socioeconomically marginalized and racially excluded students in gifted and academic curriculums in Secondary schools. (Hori 2013, p. 42)

## Brief History of Jane and Finch

Within this section, I will provide a brief historical perspective of the Jane and Finch neighborhood and its developments. Jane and Finch is a neighborhood located in the former city of North York in northwestern Toronto, Ontario, Canada. It is centered around the intersection of two arterial roads: Jane Street and Finch Avenue. The area is roughly bounded by Highway 400 to the west, Driftwood Avenue to the east, Grandravine Drive to the south, and Shoreham Drive to the north (Leon 2010; Narain 2012). Starting in 2005, the City of Toronto identified 13 "Priority Neighborhoods" to receive extra attention for the purpose of neighborhood improvement in various capacities. In March 2014, the City of Toronto expanded the program to include 31 identified neighborhoods and renamed the program from "Priority Neighborhoods" to "Neighborhood Improvement Areas" (City of Toronto 2016). According to the City of Toronto (2016) website, the 31 neighborhoods were selected through the Toronto Strong Neighborhoods Strategy 2020 which identified areas falling below the Neighborhood Equity Score and hence requiring special attention. Since inception of these neighborhood improvement initiatives, Jane and Finch has always been one of the neighborhoods identified as requiring special attention whether as a "Priority Neighborhood" or a "Neighborhood Improvement Area" (City of Toronto 2016).

According to the City of Toronto "Jane-Finch: Priority Area Profile" (2008), the neighborhood has "an approximate population of 80,150 living within an area span of 21 kilometre squared with an average population density of 3,817 persons per kilometre squared." The neighborhood is characterized by unemployment, single parent families, and high percentage of visible minorities, which makes Jane and Finch a constant target of negative media depictions. Within dominant narratives in the media, the social problems of the neighborhood are often blamed on its residents without much attention being given to the systematic and structural conditions, which have influenced the neighborhood's trajectory of development leading up to its current conditions (Eizadirad 2017).

Jane and Finch underwent massive development by the Ontario Housing Commission in the 1960s to keep up with rapid rates of newcomers entering Canada (Narain 2012). Jane and Finch represented an ideal choice for many new immigrants due to low rent costs and relatively close proximity to the downtown core of the city. At the time, immigrants that were moving into the Jane and Finch area were predominantly from West Indies, Asia, Africa, South America, and the Indian subcontinent (Richardson 2008, p. 3). High-rise apartments and townhouses were built at a rapid rate. This linear style of hollow urban planning, without much thought

to the internal infrastructure of the neighborhood, leads to the population of Jane and Finch expanding from 1301 in 1961 to 33,030 in 1971 which included establishment of 21 high-rise apartment buildings in the neighborhood. Jane and Finch continued its exponential growth in the 1970s and 1980s, with the majority of its residents working-class immigrants and visible minorities (Narain 2012).

In 2018, there were two incidents where government representatives in positions of authority made controversial comments about the Jane and Finch neighborhood which contributed to perpetuation of a stereotypical negative image about the community within the public discourse. The first incident involved Michael Tibollo, the Community Safety and Corrections Minister heading Ontario's anti-racism directorate who is also a lawyer and new Member of the Provincial Parliament for Vaughan-Woodbridge. In July 2018, in response to a question in the legislature, he stated,

> I want to reassure everyone that the focus of this government is to ensure that safety is paramount in all communities. Personally, I went out to Jane and Finch, put on a bulletproof vest and spent 7 o'clock to 1 o'clock in the morning visiting sites that had previously had bullet-ridden people killed in the middle of the night. (Ferguson and Benzie 2018. Para. 3)

By inferring that he needed to wear a bulletproof vest simply to take a tour of the Jane and Finch neighborhood, it perpetuates the ideology that Jane and Finch is so dangerous that it is not safe to enter its boundaries without thinking about the potentiality for violence and death.

Similarly a month later in August 2018, Giorgio Mammoliti who was the City Councillor representative for Ward 7 York West which included the Jane and Finch neighborhood referred to some of the residents in the neighborhood as "cockroaches." As part of his reelection campaign when asked about his plan and approach to deal with criminals living in social housing buildings in communities like Jane and Finch, Mammoliti responded by stating, "I see it like spraying down a building full of cockroaches," referring to his preferred option of evicting tenants who are involved in crime (Rieti 2018, Para. 4). He further stated, "Scatter them. Evict them. Get them out of Jane and Finch completely" (Rieti 2018, Para 5). Mammoliti expanded on his comments by explaining that he advocates for a plan to completely knock down the area's social housing buildings and replace them with mixed housing similar to what has occurred in the Regent Park community located in the downtown core area of Toronto. The Regent Park neighborhood revitalization project, although not complete yet, has led to the displacement of many residents who lived in the neighborhood and gentrification of the community space where those from higher socioeconomic status and income gain access to the new developed space and its increased property values.

Comments made by Michael Tibollo and Giorgio Mammoliti supplement and exasperate already existing negative media depictions about the Jane and Finch neighborhood and its residents. These simplistic negative representations and over-generalizations about issues that impact the Jane and Finch neighborhood infer that residents of the neighborhood are to be blamed for the social problems of the area

without any discussion about institutional failure and inequitable practices that create the social conditions that gravitate youth and young adults toward a lifestyle affiliated with guns, gangs, and crime (Eizadirad 2017).

## T(Race)ing and Mapping Institutional Anti-black Racism: Racialized Children and Neighborhoods as Expendable

Racial tensions were high in Toronto, Ontario, and it reached its tipping point in May 1992 following two incidents: the shooting and killing of a 22-year-old black man named Raymond Lawrence by a white police officer who was wearing plain clothes in the streets of Toronto and the acquittal of four white police officers caught on video brutally beating black driver Rodney King in the streets of Los Angeles (Paradkar 2017). On May 4, 1992, people took to the streets to protest and resist the systemic discrimination racialized bodies were experiencing living in Ontario and to show solidarity with the people in Los Angeles who were experiencing similar issues in a different context where the systemic discrimination was more explicit and magnified. The protests in Toronto occurred along Yonge Street and escalated and became violent involving "looting, fires, smashing of windows, and pelting of police" leading to "30 people arrested and 37 police officers injured" (Paradkar 2017, para. 4).

Immediately after the incident, the Premier at the time, Bob Rae, assigned Stephen Lewis as his Advisor on Race Relations and delegated him to consult local communities and produce a report shortly with recommendations to work toward solutions. The following month on June 9, 1992, Stephen Lewis produced his report titled *Report of the Advisor on Race Relations to the Premier of Ontario, Bob Rae*. Lewis (1992) outlines that in the span of 1 month, he held "seventy meetings with individuals and groups in Metro Toronto, Ottawa, Windsor and beyond, supplemented by innumerable phone conversations" (p. 1). As one of his key observations, Lewis (1992) states,

> First, what we are dealing with, at root, and fundamentally, is anti-Black racism. While it is obviously true that every visible minority community experiences the indignities and wounds of systemic discrimination throughout Southern Ontario, it is the Black community which is the focus. It is Blacks who are being shot, it is Black youth that is unemployed in excessive numbers, it is Black students who are being inappropriately streamed in schools, it is Black kids who are disproportionately dropping-out, it is housing communities with large concentrations of Black residents where the sense of vulnerability and disadvantage is most acute, it is Black employees, professional and non-professional, on whom the doors of upward equity slam shut. Just as the soothing balm of "multiculturalism" cannot mask racism, so racism cannot mask its primary target. (p. 2)

Lewis is describing how systemic discrimination, specifically anti-black racism, within institutions trickles down to impact the daily lives of racialized bodies and communities leading to inequality of outcome in various settings including the

education system. The various examples mentioned in the report demonstrate that race plays a key role in accessing opportunities.

Fast forward to 2008 and similar findings were expressed by Roy McMurtry and Alvin Curling (2008) in their report titled *Review of the Roots of Youth Violence*. Youth and gun violence were a hot topic in Toronto following the death of 15-year-old grade nine student Jordan Manners on May 23, 2007 at C.W. Jefferys Collegiate Institute, a public high school located within the boundaries of the Jane and Finch neighborhood (Eizadirad 2016; James 2012). Manners died in the school hallway as a result of a gunshot wound to the chest. This incident was the first of its kind in the City of Toronto where a student had died within a school.

In the aftermath of Jordan Manner's death, the Premier at the time, Dalton McGuinty, approached Honorable Roy McMurtry and Dr. Alvin Curling to "spend a year seeking to find out where it (youth violence) is coming from- its roots- and what might be done to address them to make Ontario safer in the long term" (p. 1). This led to the 2008 publication of *The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence*. The report identifies numerous immediate risk factors that "create that state of desperation and put a youth in the immediate path of violence" (p. 5). The report goes on to further outline "the roots" of youth violence, referring to "the major conditions in which the immediate risk factors grow and flourish" (p. 6). These include poverty, racism, poor community planning and design, issues in the education system, family issues, health issues, lack of youth voice, lack of economic opportunity for youth, and issues in the justice system. As Eizadirad (2016) states, "Review of the Roots of Youth Violence report dares to speak the truth by naming race and racism and putting a face to it in terms of institutional practices" (p. 178). The report predominantly names racism and poverty as major systemic barriers contributing to youth gravitating toward violence; "Alienation, lack of hope or empathy, and other immediate risk factors are powerfully, but far from exclusively, driven by the intersection of racism and poverty." (p. 19).

Importantly, Dei (2000) deconstructs what racism is and how it works by emphasizing, "Racism is more than an ideology and structure. It is a process" (p. 36). *The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence* reiterates this definition of racism and guides the discussion toward examining the consequences arising from consistent exposure to racism:

> But while race is not something that can create the immediate risk factors for violence involving youth, racism is. Racism strikes at the core of self-identity, eats away the heart and casts a shadow on the soul. It is cruel and hurtful and alienating. It makes real all doubts about getting a fair chance in this society. It is a serious obstacle imposed for a reason the victim has no control over and can do nothing about. (p. 9)

The report also emphasizes that the most harmful impacts are experienced within neighborhoods plagued with poverty, making the connection that "when poverty is racialized, and then ghettoized and associated with violence, the potential for the stigmatization of specific groups is high" (p. 4). As 2018 wraps up, 10 years later after the publication of *The Review of the Roots of Violence* report, the state of

violence in the City of Toronto has intensified to record numbers. As of December 27, 2018, Toronto has set a new all-time homicide rate record with 96 victims; 46 of the victims killed were under the age of 30, 10 were minors, 75 men and boys, and 21 women and girls. The majority of the victims are racialized visible minorities (Canadian Press 2018, Para. 5).

From this vantage point, we can begin to understand how unequal power relations and practices are perpetuated through racialization of specific social groups and neighborhoods leading to inequality of opportunity. Connecting this to the achievement gap argument, these statistics contextualize how unequitable living circumstances and distribution of resources and social services across spatial geographies make it unrealistic to expect all children to achieve at the same level, as they do not all have access to the same privileges given their unique identities and the neighborhood they live in. As Ng (2003) puts it,

> The frequently used and well-meaning phrase, 'I treat everyone the same,' often used by teachers and administrators to indicate their lack of bias in a diverse educational setting, in fact *masks* unequal power relations. Similarly, educational policies that assume that people are the same or equal may serve to entrench existing inequality precisely because people enter into the educational process with different and unequal experiences. These attempts, well meaning though they may be, tend to render inequality invisible, and thus work against equity in education. (p. 214)

## Youth Association for Academics, Athletics, and Character Education; Using a Social Inclusion Strategy Framework to Close the Achievement Gap Via Reducing the Opportunity Gap

In 2007, being fed up with the violence plaguing the community and the constant negative media exposure affiliating Jane and Finch with guns, gangs, and crime, Devon Jones an elementary school teacher within the Jane and Finch neighborhood decided to create a nonprofit organization to mitigate the inequality of opportunity that was consuming many of his students toward a life of crime leading them to being incarcerated or dying. Jordan Manners and Kwasi Peters were his students who were killed at a young age due to gun violence among many others where he attended their funerals and was heartbroken by them dying at such a young age (Williams et al. 2013).

Being an elementary school teacher in the Jane and Finch community, Jones recognized that children are largely influenced by their surrounding environments from a young age in terms of their identity development and decision-making. When he was planning the design of a logo for his organization which would be called Youth Association for Academics, Athletics, and Character Education (YAAACE), the color of the logo was chosen as purple with intentionality (see Image 1) as a means to mitigate the turf war that was making children choose sides from an early age, with the Crips dominating the housing projects in Finch's south side and the Bloods dominating the housing projects on the Finch's north side (Friesen 2018,

Para. 5). Friesen (2018) further expands, **"**It's a segregation expressed mainly through clothing, blue for Crips and red for Bloods, and it has existed for a decade. Nor is it limited to serious criminals, but extends all the way to 13-year-old wannabes" (Para. 6). Jones selected the color purple both for its neutrality and its symbolism for togetherness as when the colors red and blue are mix, you get purple. It was intended to bring youth from both sides of the community into a neutral space where they can learn and grow together without worrying about turf confrontations. Selecting and hiring respected leaders from the community as staff, the programs offered through YAAACE intended to break the ideological concept that one had to choose between either the Bloods or the Crips; the children and youth needed hope and faith that there could be a better alternative.

In terms of programming and services offered, Devon Jones merged school and community to one socioculturally relevant and responsive enterprise that offers holistic services focusing on increasing accessibility to opportunities for members of the Jane and Finch community. What makes YAAACE stand out and be unique from other programs available within the neighborhood or across the City of Toronto is its synergic collaboration with external organizations and agencies at the local community level involving practitioners from other sectors that work with children, youth, and young adults to provide socioculturally relevant and holistic services relative to the needs of the community members and program participants. The objective of YAAACE is to help marginalized, racialized, and poor children and youth from under resourced communities through "year round comprehensive programming and activities" (YAAACE 2018, para. 1). YAAACE strives to close the achievement gap by focusing on minimizing the opportunity gap through its Social Inclusion Strategy. According to YAAACE (2018),

> YAAACE's social inclusion strategy is a socio-mechanism co-constructed by frontline workers, educators, researchers, academics, law enforcement personnel and stakeholders with a vested interest in children, youth and community. The objective of the social inclusion strategy is to nurture and incubate the vast potential of children and youth becoming twenty first century learners and global citizens. The program design pivots on the provision of comprehensive year round programming (academics, athletics, recreation, technology and the

arts). The operational framework is as follows: outreach and wraparound; arts, athletics and expanded opportunities; academic intervention and support (the Weekend Academy and Summer Institute); research and curriculum development (specifically, the creation of a curriculum that targets reflective education and seeks to mitigate negative environmental factors that compromise academic engagement for students in racialized communities. (Para. 3)

Through "comprehensive year round programming," YAAACE via its "social inclusion strategy" seeks to neutralize the negative social conditions and circumstances plaguing the Jane and Finch neighborhood impacting predominantly the racialized population of the community manifested through inequitable access to resources and social support services.

Whereas YAAACE began as an organization predominantly offering recreation and sport programs for youth, over the years it changed its mandate to offer programs to young children as early as 4 and 5 year olds starting kindergarten, recognizing that the early years are crucial for development. As the Ontario Ministry of Education (2014) document *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years* states, "children's early experience last a lifetime" because "During our first years of life, the brain develops at an astounding rate. Scientists now know this process is not just genetic but is dramatically influenced by our early experiences with people and our surroundings" (p. 4). YAAACE recognized that the negative pull factors in the community such as guns and gangs try to consume the children into the lifestyle at a young age. Hence, the Social Inclusion Strategy intends to surround the children and youth from the community with as much intentional quality programming as possible within any given week in a year as a means to offset exposure to negative pull factors. By creating accessibility to quality programs and services, YAAACE seeks to support community members to be resilient and develop the character traits and life skills required to overcome the systemic challenges plaguing the neighborhood.

One of the most popular programs offered by YAAACE is its Summer Institute program which operates during the July and August summer months. It operates based on a school within a camp model. Whereas children from higher socioeconomic status stay or improve in their reading and writing scores over the summer months due to exposure to quality programs and experiential learning opportunities, children from lower socioeconomic status often decrease in their academic competencies due to lack of accessibility or affordability to quality programs. In single parent households or dual household where both parents are constantly working multiple jobs to support their families, watching television or playing outside become common activities for the children to occupy themselves for the summer months. As Lalani (2016) reports, "The summer program was created in part to address educational attrition during the summer months which many students experience, while also providing a fun and safe environment. It takes in around 300 students from Kindergarten to Grade 8 each summer for a relatively affordable price of $150" (YAAACE 2018, para. 9). Children's reading, writing, and mathematics levels are assessed at the beginning of the YAAACE Summer Institute and once again at the end in order to track their academic progress over the weeks as well

as provide extra support for the children and their parents during the school year from September to June. The assessment data has been collected for participants in the YAAACE Summer Institute over the last 5 years, and the results have indicated that it has made a big difference in some of the children's academic competencies. The data is currently being compiled as part of a larger academic study in the near future.

YAAACE's collaborative partnerships are synergic in nature as each collaboration builds on another and contributes to enhancing the overall programs and services offered by YAAACE in a manner that is socioculturally relevant to the members of the Jane and Finch community. At the heart of all programs offered through YAAACE is the philosophy of making it accessible and affordable. There have been many cases where children have been taken in free of cost or on subsidized payment plan to accommodate the needs of the family. Currently after 11 years as an organization, YAAACE has long-term partnerships with the following organizations and agencies which offer it funding, goods, or services in various capacities: Toronto District School Board, Toronto Police Services, Solaro, Canada Elite sponsored by Under Armour, Canadian Tire Jumpstart, Canadian Youth Basketball League, Leslois Shaw Foundation, Telus, Laidlaw Foundation, Second Harvest Food Rescue, City of Toronto, Province of Ontario, Service Canada, Black Creek Community Health Centre, Department of Justice Canada, and Michael "Pinball" Clemons Foundation.

Some of these aforementioned partnerships and collaborations play an essential role in creating quality comprehensive programs and services offered as part of the YAAACE Summer Institute where the participants are members of the Jane and Finch community and are predominantly racialized, minoritized, and from lower socioeconomic status (Williams et al. 2013). The TDSB supports educational programs offered by YAAACE by providing Ontario Certified Teachers to work at the summer camp which is known as the Summer Institute. Students are grouped by age, grade, and maturity level and led by a TDSB teacher and multiple counsellors who are high school students for 7 weeks. The Summer Institute follows a school within a camp model where students receive educational instruction within a classroom for part of the day in a fun, hands-on, inquiry-based, experiential manner and the remaining time to participate in recreational and cooperative learning activities such as swimming, basketball, music, and arts and crafts. One day a week is devoted to outdoor experiential learning through field trips. Funding from Service Canada and TDSB's Focus on Youth program allows high school youth from the neighborhood to be hired as Summer Institute camp counsellors to support the teachers in the classrooms. This gives an opportunity for the older youth to earn an income and to develop their leadership skills by giving back to the community in which they live. The reality is that many end up resorting to selling drugs or committing crime due to lack of sustainable jobs within the community. Second Harvest Food Rescue donates healthy snacks and sandwiches on a daily basis to the Summer Institute program which are given to children who cannot afford snacks or lunches every day to facilitate a healthy child development. Funding secured from various other partnerships goes into buying equipment and supplies to offer quality educational and sport

programs such as the robotics program offered to the children as part of the Summer Institute where they learn to code and program robots to complete various tasks. More recently, within the last few years, a partnership with University of Waterloo has created the opportunity for the children within the Summer Institute to have their eyes checked and if needed provided with glasses free of charge.

## Conclusion and Future Directions

YAAACE's Summer Institute is a prime example of various partnerships working collectively in a synergistic manner to address the needs of the Jane and Finch community members particularly as it applies to accessibility to opportunities such as quality programs and services. By engaging members of the Jane and Finch community, particularly the racialized, minoritized, and lower SES demographic, in various educational and sport programs offered year round, YAAACE creates sustainable change within the community by providing access to quality programs at an affordable and minimal cost. This type of holistic and interdisciplinary programming is what is needed to minimize the achievement gap via focusing on aligning the opportunity gap between those from higher and lower socioeconomic backgrounds. What YAAACE offers is an alternative pro-active approach to minimizing the achievement gap impacting racialized students by providing the means for them to get access to academics, athletics, and character education opportunities. This aligns with their Social Inclusion Framework.

We, as educators, caring adults, and community activists, need to shift our focus to realigning the opportunity gap in a more equitable manner as a long-term sustainable approach and strategy to closing the achievement gap between racialized and non-racialized students and those from higher and lower SES. This approach goes beyond a microscopic focus on outcome-based standardized test results to considering synergistic collaborative efforts between schools and outside organizations in the community offering holistic interdisciplinary services to address the needs of the community members and mitigate the systemic barriers and inequities impacting the community. We must continue to engage in dialogue about whether standardized testing or an equality paradigm within schools is contributing to closing the achievement gap or further perpetuating and intensifying the disparity between the haves and the have-nots. As Nezavdal (2003) states, "Educating students is about maximizing learning by meeting needs, by propelling passions, and by nurturing human curiosity, not closing doors forever because of one test" (p. 72).

TDSB's *Enhancing Equity Task Force Report and Recommendations* released in December 2017 is a good starting point to acknowledge some of the current systemic barriers that exist within the educational system and work toward identifying specific areas needing change to create more equitable policies and practices. The report (2017) states,

> The Enhancing Equity Task Force's mandate is to support the TDSB as it seeks to ensure that the framework of "equity for all" infuses every aspect of the Board's work, for students and

staff alike. Equity is a question of fundamental human rights; it is also the foundation for excellence for all students, and for student achievement, well-being, and belonging. (p. 4)

Under the subheading "Recommendations," as a means of aligning TDSB's practices with the mandate and vision of "equity for all," the Task Force "made recommendations in the following six areas, so as to":

1. Ensure equitable educational access, experiences, and opportunities for all students in all schools.
2. Make students whole: effectively addressing school incidents and complaints
3. Ensure equitable access to funding and resources among schools
4. Meaningfully engage students, families, and communities in building a culture of equity at school
5. Ensure equity in staff employment, transfer, and promotion
6. Provide professional learning on equity, anti-racism, and anti-oppression for all (p. 5)

These identified six areas can serve as starting reference points where new changes can be implemented to make education policies and practices more equitable for racialized and minoritized students.

Overall, through examining the work that YAAACE is doing in the Jane and Finch community as a case study, it is argued that we need to invest in more equitable practices at the grassroots level to close the opportunity gap as a means of achieving the outcome-oriented goal of closing the achievement gap. This requires a policy and praxis shift from equality to an equity lens. We are currently focusing too much attention on equality of outcome symbolized by standardized test scores as a signifier of overall student achievement. As long as we continue to abandon examining the processes that lead to the outcome, vis-a-vis the opportunity gap, the achievement gap will not close and instead further intensify. As Curtis et al. (1992) argue, "the school system convinces many working-class kids that they are stupid, incapable, incompetent, and that their aim in life should be to show up at work on time while being polite to their bosses. This is part of the violence that streaming does to working-class kids" (p. 3). This aligns with what Anyon (1980) found as part of her ethnographic study where she spent time in working-class and affluent schools and concluded that students in affluent schools receive more challenging and interdisciplinary curriculum that promotes higher level thinking, whereas students in working-class schools receive lower level thinking curriculum that focuses on rote memorization and learning appropriate behaviors and mannerism.

I will conclude this chapter with two recommendations to work toward as future directions:

## Recommendation #1

The Ministry of Education, school boards, and schools should invest in creating and maintaining sustainable long-term synergic collaborations with external

organizations including grassroots nonprofit organizations such as YAAACE at the local community level involving practitioners from other sectors that work with children, youth, and young adults to provide socioculturally relevant holistic services relative to student identities and needs of the local community. An effective program that can serve as "best practices" to be replicated having shown results in closing the achievement gap through minimizing the opportunity gap are *Youth Association for Academics, Athletics, and Character Education's Summer Institute*.

## Recommendation #2

The TDSB needs to set yearly timelines to review their findings and update the public on new changes proposed and implemented in the six specific identified areas as part of their *Enhancing Equity Task Force Report and Recommendations* to ensure "equity for all" (TDSB 2017, p. 4). It is recommended for the TDSB to work closely with the recently renewed provincial Anti-Racism Directorate Office which has outlined a 3-year strategic plan that "targets systemic racism by building an anti-racism approach into the way government develops policies, makes decisions, evaluates programs, and monitors outcomes. It calls for a proactive, collaborative effort from all government ministries and community partners to work toward racial equity" (Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate 2016, para. 34). The Ontario 3-year Anti-Racism Strategic Plan outlines various approaches and strategies that can be utilized by school boards via synergic collaborations to ensure better equity for specific social groups including racialized students. The plan groups initiatives under four categories: Policy, Research, and Evaluation, Sustainability and Accountability, Public Education and Awareness, and Community Collaboration (Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate 2016). Some of the relevant action-oriented suggestions listed under these four categories that can be implemented as part of school board policies and practices are disaggregated race-based data collection, passing on anti-racism legislation, publicly reporting on progress of goals, public education and awareness about various social issues, an anti-racism conference, and most importantly implementation of population specific anti-racism initiatives. The three population specific areas that the strategic plan identifies as a priority to focus on are anti-black racism, indigenous-focused anti-racism, and Ontario public service anti-racism. As part of implementing indigenous-focused anti-racism, school boards and schools should look for opportunities to enact new changes that align with the Truth and Reconciliation 94 Calls to Action (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015).

In conclusion, the process of making education more equitable begins with a willingness of the government, and I would add other institutions, to acknowledge that there are systemic barriers within their policies and practices that impact each neighborhood to a different extent and that something needs to be done about it through a collective approach that focuses on minimizing the opportunity gap across different social groups. It requires commitment, effort, and energy from various stakeholders to collectively and collaboratively work toward creating sustainable change with equity and social justice at the heart of the decisions and new actions

being implemented to close the achievement gap. Minimizing the opportunity gap through synergistic collaborations at the grassroots community level is a great place to start the change.

## Cross-References

▶ Between Cultural Literacy and Cultural Relevance: A Culturally Pragmatic Approach to Reducing the Black-White Achievement Gap
▶ Integrating Community-Based Values with a Rights-Integrative Approach to Early Learning Through Early Childhood Curricula

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# Democracy Under Attack: Learning, Schooling, and the Media

# 18

Carlo Ricci

## Contents

### Abstract

What does democratic learning look like? Can schools be democratic? What would they have to look like? What can we learn from the media, and what role does it play in sustaining our democracy? Sometimes narratives are purposely meant to deceive, and sometimes they are the result of incorrect thinking that leads to incorrect actions. In this chapter (and informed by critical pedagogy, holistic education, and unschooling), I offer a narrative that I believe to be more

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loving, peaceful, gentle, caring, compassionate, respectful, and trusting way to learn, live, and act.

## Introduction

When my current university first hired me, I developed a number of courses in the hopes that I would get to teach in areas that I believe are worthwhile. Among the courses I developed are Alternative Schooling, Holistic Education, one on Critical Pedagogy and Democratic Education, and one titled Educational Representations in Popular Culture. Fortunately, the courses were approved by our academic senate, and they have been of interest to students, and so I have been able to teach them on a regular basis. I will say more about the worldviews of the first three courses that I mentioned above in a section about my theoretical framework for this paper, but for now I want to say something about the Educational Representations in Popular Culture one.

In that course, in part, we discuss how teaching, learning, teachers, schools, learners, administration, and so on are represented in popular culture. I share with them that they could read a book by John Holt, for example, or watch a movie, television show, song, newspaper cartoon, and so on and get a similar message. I share with them that, on the one hand, the media and schools are institutions that carry a lot of power because they have the ability to shape people, and therefore they are contested sites. With respect to journalists, for example, there are new weapons, tools, and tactics that are being used to continue to silence, oppress, suppress, and even kill them, to promote or prevent a particular worldview. Similarly, teachers and the curriculum are tools used by those in power in an attempt to promote particular discourses.

On the other hand, within schools and the media, there are people and approaches that advocate for alternative narratives that resist, defy, and try and change the story. Within those institutions, people do not speak with one voice, and their ideas are not neutral. There are mainstream narratives and counter-narratives. The narratives being espoused are not one sided, and within schooling and the media, there are people contesting and challenging the mainstream stories and worldviews. There is a war of ideas happening, and a desperate desire to have one view dominate another.

In support of how the media teaches and influences us, I will cite Ian Bailey (2018, September 25) who, in an article in *The Globe and Mail* titled "Characters Driving Teslas, and Other Ways to Promote Sustainability Through Film," writes:

> Kyle West is one of Hollywood's biggest stars. . . . But he's also environmentally conscious: His assistant hires goats and a herder to cut his lawn. The environmentalism woven into West's character on the made-in-B.C. series *The Arrangement* isn't simply there to add intrigue. Clara George, who worked as a producer on the second season of the show, says the details were there to provide a subtle nudge to viewers about the importance of sustainability. Another character on the show drove a Tesla. (p. A16)

That media and schools can influence how we think and act is undisputable. The information they share is not neutral, and it is contentious. In some countries they try and control this by banning media and strictly controlling what happens in schools, and in other countries they do it in subtler ways. A former student of mine who defected from the former Soviet Union once shared with me that when he first came to Canada, he was surprised at how compliant and obedient everyone was. He knew why in his country people did not resist, but was baffled at why people here seemed to thoughtlessly follow. In his country, people were afraid and coerced, but here, he expected a different outcome.

The point I am trying to make is that, how and if one gets influenced is complicated. I read a story in the paper today about a white supremacist who is trying to run for mayor. The story shares how this person graduated from a large Canadian university, a university that, given its reputation, if anything, one would expect people to come away with a very accepting, welcoming, anti-racist stance. And here we are, this person ended up being an advocate for racist positions. I am purposefully not saying more about this individual because, although I want to make the point, I am hoping not to give this person more attention.

## A Word About Language

For me, the word democracy is one that I revere. One of the greatest insults someone can level at me is to accuse me of being undemocratic. This is why I feel so indignant when I see institutions, regimes, and individuals who use the word democratic in the name of some very undemocratic principles and actions. Somehow, it's as if they believe that if they scream the word democratic loud enough and often enough, their undemocratic actions will magically morph into democratic ones. This is why I feel that it so critical for me to reclaim the word democracy every chance I get.

Language is so important. Throughout this paper, I will try and make clear what I mean when I use so many familiar words, because words are not neutral, and they are contentious, and they are political. What I am trying to do is to make my meaning as clear as possible. Words that seem so simple are filled with complexity. For example, consider the word learning, the meaning of which might seem so obvious, but in reality it is not. What does learning actually mean? Of course, it depends on your philosophy and your worldview. Does it mean curriculum, and what happens in mainstream schools? Or is it what Holt defines it as? Holt (1989) writes, "Living is learning. It is impossible to be alive and conscious (and some would say unconscious) without constantly learning things" (p. 157). Clearly, learning would look very different if one meaning is adopted over another.

One question then is, why does it matter how we define learning or any other term? For me, the reason why it is so important is because how we use these terms and what we mean by them has a direct impact on people's lived experiences and how we treat and relate to each other and the world.

## Citing Another's Words

When I use other people's citations, I do so not because I agree with everything they say, and not because I am trying to speak for them and trying to better understand what they meant by one idea or another, but because I am trying to make my meaning clearer. Ultimately, I am using and borrowing their words in the hopes that my meaning will become clearer. The words that I cite have either led me to think new thoughts or help in supporting the thoughts that I am thinking and therefore the actions that I am trying to promote and that follow from those thoughts.

## Rupture the Status Quo

In part, the invite for participation in this edited book offered as a possibility that I consider the following: "The objective of this multi-disciplinary international handbook is to create dialogue across multiple fields about the role of resistance in seeking to rupture the status quo and challenging hegemonic and normalizing systems of power" (P. Trifonas, personal communication, September 10, 2018). In writing my chapter, I will attempt to offer a possibility to do just this: to rupture the status quo and challenging hegemonic and normalizing systems of power.

Put another way, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (1970/1993/2000) writes, "(Hence, the oft-emphasized necessity of posing as *problems* the myths fed to the people by the oppressors)" (p. 164). I hope to challenge what seems so obvious and to present it as myth and then to offer another narrative. A narrative that I believe to be more loving, peaceful, gentle, caring, compassionate, respectful, and trusting way to learn, live, and act. As has become evident in all forms of media coverage, we are bombarded by allegations of myths, lies, partial truths, deception, and fake news. Sometimes these narratives are purposely meant to deceive, and sometimes they are the result of incorrect thinking that leads to incorrect actions. Sometimes these false narratives are blatant and often are not even retracted when informed by clear evidence that suggests otherwise.

Again, to be clear, when I quote Freire, for example, it does not mean that I am aligning myself with everything that he says and believes. It is true that I appreciate much of what he says, but I also differ from his position. I cite him because his words help to make my meaning clearer, so when you read the citations, please keep this in mind.

## Theoretical Framework

To continue and try and make my meaning clearer, I will briefly share with you the theoretical framework that I am using in this paper. Of course, even within these worldviews there are disagreement and contentions, but I believe that by sharing my framework, it might still help approach clarity about what I am trying to argue. I seem partial to critical theory, holistic worldviews, and unschooling or what I refer to as willed learning, and others have referred to as self-determination, life learning, self-directed learning, and so on.

From critical pedagogy, I gravitate toward notions of social justice, challenging oppression, critical thinking, and the challenging of myths. Like many critical pedagogues, I think about how I can make the world a better place, in part, by making it less racist, less sexist, less ageist, less ablest, less homophobic, less classist, and so on. I also believe that I need to act peacefully and gently toward the world at large and other sentient and non-sentient beings in the universe. I believe that I have to always ask myself who benefits and who gets left out? And, of course, I always have to ask myself what can I do to make this better? How can I act in ways to ameliorate the situation?

From holistic worldviews, I am attracted to the more loving language and the gentler and more peaceful perspectives. I appreciate that beings and things are gifts and that I need to care for, have compassion for, and nurture these gifts. That we do not have all of the answers, certainly resonates with me, and that I have to have trust and respect in my thinking and actions. It helps me to see people as being holistic and encompassing mind, body, spirit, and emotions.

Unschooling or willed learning helps me to challenge the many myths that are so engrained in the mainstream narratives. It helps me to see that what seems so obvious is really not. It helps me to be critical and to challenge. It helps me to understand the importance of freedom and that with freedom comes responsibility. It helps me to understand that if we are interested in freedom and democracy, then we cannot continue to control people's minds, bodies, spirits, and emotions and that we have to let them decide what to learn, when, how, where, and whether to opt in or opt out at anytime. In short, it helps me to challenge the mainstream by advocating for what others are doing successfully.

As John Taylor Gatto (2010), an unschooling advocate, writes:

> I've noticed a fascinating phenomenon in my 25 years of teaching—that schools and schooling are becoming increasingly irrelevant in the great enterprises of the planet. No one believes anymore that scientists are trained in science classes or politicians in civics classes or poets in English classes. The truth is that schools don't really teach anything except how to obey orders.

And John Holt (2004), who is credited for coining the term unschooling, notes, "Next to the right of life itself, the most fundamental of all human rights is the right to control our own minds and thoughts" (p. 4).

In short, these theoretical frameworks help me to recognize that there are loving, peaceful, gentle, caring, compassionate, respectful, and trusting ways to learn, live, and act and that the status quo is harmful and wounds people deeply.

## Continuing to Position Myself

I live in a neoliberal, neoconservative, capitalistic space and place, and so many of the institutions and narratives are informed by and act consistently with these worldviews. Throughout this paper, I am drawing from the mainstream media and mainstream schooling to highlight the undemocratic direction that I believe is so

ubiquitous in the world that I live. I also want to argue that there is hope, and each and every one of us represents that hope. Just because I live in a neoliberal, neoconservative, capitalistic space and place does not mean that there are no counter-narratives and spaces and places, thankfully there are, and I believe that I learn how to be better by listening to these voices.

## Mainstream Schooling

For example, mainstream schooling has wounded and continues to wound those who innocently enter in the name of learning and seeking opportunity. Since its inception, mainstream schooling has never gone unchallenged, and it continues to be challenged. There are media and learning approaches where individual people and groups organize learning in ways that are more loving, peaceful, gentle, trusting, respectful, caring, and compassionate. In the media there are journalists who write counter-narratives, and in learning worldviews, there are approaches that challenge many of the mainstream myths.

Unfortunately, many of these counter-narratives are silenced, and they are too often ignored, but they are there, and their numbers are growing. This chapter is an effort to expose the laudable work that is being done by all who understand the importance of freedom, democracy, and peace.

## Learning and Mis-learning

Schooling and the media are both places of learning and mis-learning. In schools the curriculum, both explicit and hidden, are contentious and not neutral. Schools are places where people's minds, bodies, spirits, and emotions are attempted to be shaped. Some are able to resist the narratives and see through the incorrect messages being delivered. Often challenging and resisting comes at a steep price: people who do not comply and obey are often shut out. The way I see mainstream schools, they are not places of freedom and democracy, but instead they are about coercion and control. They do not create opportunities for people, as much as they limit opportunities. Mainstream schools are gatekeeping mechanisms that prevent (often marginalized people) from gaining entrance to various opportunities.

## Learning and the Media

Learning is purported to happen not only in mainstream schools but also in the media. In a piece by Cass Sunstein (2015, January 6) published in the *Toronto Star* newspaper, Sustein asks, "Does your vote depend on which news channel you watch? If you are a regular viewer of Fox News, will you become more likely to vote Republican?" Sunstein goes on to write, "An ingenious new study, by Gregory J. Martin and Ali Yurukoglu of Stanford University, explores whether people's

voting behavior really is influenced by what they see on cable news." And Sunstein finally concludes that:

> Nonetheless, their evidence is the most compelling to date that cable news has a major influence on viewers. Fox News and MSNBC do not merely attract like-minded people. They also heighten divisions among voters, contributing to political polarization—and they have an impact on people's ultimate votes.

I share this here and other media stories throughout this piece as examples that media sources are legitimate forms of learning and that they can and do influence what we come to know. Media stories inform and some support the status quo and others defy it. As I mentioned earlier, in some places teachers and journalists are punished for challenging the status quo, and depending on what perspective they share and where in the world they live, their punishments vary. Of course, it's also necessary to read primary sources and go back to the original works in order to get more detail about the research and to help make a more informed decision. Nevertheless, the media can play a huge role in sharing and popularizing research so that a larger number of people can be exposed to the findings.

In a piece in *The Globe and Mail* newspaper, Elizabeth Renzetti (2017, May 27) writes of the lot of journalists that:

> Negative factors in CareerCast's survey include diminishing career prospects and deadline pressures. Perhaps next year they could expand the downsides to include being assaulted or arrested for reporting. Or being called "scum" by the leader of the free world. Or, in certain parts of the world, being murdered.

Again, I am purposefully citing pieces in popular culture and the popular media to respect the work that journalists do and to highlight and honor the learning that does happen through consuming popular culture.

## Battling for Our Allegiance

Mainstream schooling and the mainstream media are places and spaces that are battling for our being, for our support, and for our allegiance. The media and schooling can have a relationship that is similar or conflicting. They can support or challenge each other. They can share views that are similar to the status quo or ones that defy and challenge it.

Even when journalists do share certain perspectives or research studies, the consumers of that information can simply ignore or reinterpret it to suit their scheme. Just like the taught and the learned curriculum does not necessarily align, similarly, the produced text and the consumed one might not either. What someone is trying to teach and what I get out of it might not align, just like what is produced in the media and how I interpret it might not align.

Also, often and despite how we like to think of research as being neutral and objective, it is often values based. So, ultimately we have to decide and interpret and

adopt what we believe to be correct. For example, I do not need research to tell me that I should not spank my children, and the research that tells me to do so, in my mind, is problematic.

Mainstream Schools Are Unhealthy Places

Finding evidence that supports that mainstream schools are unhealthy places is not difficult. All of us who have been to mainstream schools can recall an incident that happened to us personally or to someone they know that created fear, anxiety, negative stress, and so on.

Peter Gray (2018, May 31) writes that:

> In other words, the rate of emergency psychiatric visits was more than twice as high during school weeks as it was during non-school weeks. It's interesting to note that the sharp decline in such emergencies occurred not just during summer vacation, but also during school vacation weeks over the rest of the year.

And that:

> One finding that bears repeating comes from a large survey conducted a few years ago by the American Psychological Association, which revealed that teenagers are the most stressed, anxious people in America; that 83% of them cite school as a cause of their stress; and that, during the school year, 27% of them reported experiencing "extreme stress" compared to 13% reporting that during the summer.

And:

> Benjamin Hansen and Matthew Lang (2011). . . . "found a much higher rate of suicides during the school year than during the summer vacation months."

And in an article in *USA Today*, Greg Toppo (2014, October 14) writes:

> A new study finds that children are about 30% more likely to take a stimulant like Ritalin for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) during the school year than in the summer.

These references are consistent with my personal experience with mainstream schooling. I do not find it to be surprising or shocking, but I do feel a deep sense of shame that this is happening. I volunteer for the Ontario Federation of Teaching Parents (OFTP), which is a homeschooling support group. One of the roles that I hold is as a liaison officer. In that role I field 100 s of calls a year from people who are seeking information or help. Some of the calls I find very moving.

Some parents know even before their children are born that they want to homeschool them; others do not. Many parents that I speak to have been driven to seek homeschooling. They love their children so much, and they have tried everything that the school recommended, and yet their children are still suffering. They are desperate, and so while searching for something, anything, that might help their children recover or escape the trauma they are experiencing, they come across homeschooling and want to know more, want to know if it can help free their children from the environment that they are in and help them to heal. Many of the

parents that I speak to want nothing more for their children than that they would have fit into the mainstream schooling system and that they would thrive, but they can no longer stand and bear witness to their children suffering.

In a similar situation and in a piece about school refusers published by the *Journal of Unschooling and Alternative Learning* (JUAL), Allison Wray and Alan Thomas (2013) write:

> When a child refuses to go to school, the whole family is placed in a highly distressing situation. The response of school and mental health professionals in the UK is to return the child to school as soon as reasonably possible; home education is almost never suggested as a viable alternative. Nevertheless, a number of parents decide that home education will be in the best interests of their children. This mixed-method study reports on 20 such families who completed questionnaires, followed up by 5 in-depth interviews. Parents generally reported that symptoms associated with school refusal, both physical and psychological, lessened or disappeared altogether. Moreover, although they had turned to home education as a last resort, the majority decided to continue after seeing their children thrive academically and socially. It is concluded that parents of school refusers should always be fully informed about home education. (p. 64)

## Where to Look for Other Approaches

That there are gentler more loving and more peaceful ways to learn is not merely a theoretical fantasy, but for many learners in our world it is a reality. It is happening, and we can look to unschoolers, free schoolers, democratic schoolers, and other learner center approaches as examples and see that indeed people are learning in more loving, peaceful, gentle, trusting, respectful, caring, and compassionate ways. There is the Sudbury schools, Summerhill, North Star and other learning centers, The Albany Free School, and many, many friendlier schools in North America and beyond. The Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO), the International Democratic Education Conference (IDEC), the European Democratic Education Community (UDEC), the Alliance for Self-Directed Education (ASDE), *the Journal of Unschooling and Alternative Learning* (JUAL), the Ontario Federation of Teaching Parents (OFTP), and many, many other organizations are working to draw attention to these more peaceful alternatives and to bring those who think similarly together.

## We All Practice Willed Learning

In fact, we can even look at our own lives and see how we learn things outside of mainstream schooling. I would argue that people who practice willed learning includes every individual on the planet. There is no one who does not learn one thing or another in a willed way. Once we recognize this, we can then become mindful of how powerful this type of self-determined learning is, and then we can apply it to other formal or less formal learning situations that we have. We all do it because it works. We are natural born learners and this is what we do.

Most of what I have learned I have not learned in school, and so mainstream schooling is not a necessary condition for learning. Similar to Gatto's earlier point, if mainstream schooling was where people learned things, then people with PhDs in business would be the leaders of greatest companies, and those with PhDs in music would be our top musical entertainers, and so on, rather than the current reality which is that often people in these roles are schooling dropouts who have learned these things in their own way and in their own time.

## So, What Can I Do?

In *Jean-Paul Sartre: A Life (Lives of the Left)*, Chen-Solal (2005) writes that "The writer has to die to give birth to the intellectual in the service of the wretched of the earth" (p. 359). And William James writes that we should "Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does." And Gandhi writes that, "As human beings, our greatness lies not so much in being able to remake the world—that is the myth of the atomic age—as in being able to remake ourselves."

Basically, they are advocating for praxis. Chen-Solal, for example, is reminding us that there comes a time where we stop writing and start taking action, where we start doing. And William James reminds that by doing things, we make a difference. And Gandhi reminds us that we need to begin with ourselves.

I often get asked by people who teach in mainstream schools, how can they change what they do to align their practice with willed learning? Of course, as Freire says of his worldview, there is no recipe. Each and every one of us is different and our context is different, and we each have to decide what we can and what we are willing to do and where. I tell them, if they feel that they cannot make a significant difference in their school, then where and how can they make a difference?

After all, what I am sharing is not just about schooling, learning, and the media, but it is about all relationships that we have with inanimate and animate objects and beings within our world. It is about how we deal with friends, family, acquaintances, strangers, colleagues, enemies, trees, animals, rocks, containers, and so on.

In my life I recognize that I am unfinished. In *Pedagogy of Freedom*, Freire (1998/2001) writes, "Women and men are capable of being educated only to the extent that they are capable of recognizing themselves as unfinished" (p. 58). I recognize that I am far from perfect and that I have lapses. In those moments, just like I have to act in loving and kind ways toward others, I have to do the same with myself. I will never reach perfection, but I always have to strive to do better, to be better, and to act in more loving, peaceful, gentle, caring, compassionate, respectful, and trusting way.

As a parent, I take that to mean that I have to give my children freedom and allow them to unfold in ways that makes sense to them. I need to love them unconditionally and for who they are and not for who I imagine them to be. Like many others who have parented in this way, I could not be prouder and happier with who my children are growing up to be. They are good, kind, and respectful girls. My parenting is democratic, and that means that we need to take everyone's needs in consideration.

It's not that they can do whatever they want, because they cannot harm others and they embody this. Ever since they were little (born in 2003 and 2005, and I write this in 2018), they have never been punished, and I believe they are better for it. They have always helped with chores, cooking, and so on. They have always done things "beyond their years" because they have never been told that they are not capable. Sometimes (like all of us) they do things begrudgingly, but they do it nonetheless, and not out of coercion or fear, but freely because they know it's the right thing to do. They understand that it needs to be done and that someone has to do it and so they often just volunteer to do it. It's remarkable to witness.

As a son, now that my parents are getting less capable, I have taken on all of their duties and want them to think about nothing but enjoying their retirement and living their life. As a brother and a husband, I also try to act in ways consistent with being better.

As a university professor, I endeavor to create loving communities where we can all be ourselves and grow and learn in ways that ensure that we can be authentic. I do not expect everyone to agree with me and to repeat my worldview as if it is theirs. I recognize that if I did do this, then we would all lose. If they remain authentic and say what they truly feel, and they know that they will not be punished with a low mark for speaking their mind, then we can truly engage. We can then be open and honest and continue to challenge each other. One scenario might be that they espouse ideas that I believe to be harmful, but because they are free to share, they can be challenged and, hopefully, have a better chance of ultimately thinking and acting in a correct way. Or it could be that I am mistaken and that I will change my ways. We need to be willing to listen and challenge and change when needed.

I share with my student that what I see as being most important is doing. Secretly, of course I hope that they all recognize that we can all make a difference in the world and that the energy we expend doing this need not be exhausting. What I consider a successful interaction is when students come back to me and say, I use to do this before but now when this happens I do something else. There is a lot of emotion in my classes and people often cry. To me this is an indication that we are doing real, good, and authentic work. Of course, there is also a lot of laughter.

## Our Being Impacts Others

How we are impacts others. If we are in a bad space, others will feel our unease. In an article in *The Globe and Mail*, Matthew Halliday (2018, September 14) writes:

> Ms. Patterson points to a 2016 study from the University of British Columbia, in which researchers analyzed saliva samples from more than 400 Vancouver-area elementary-school students. They found that in classrooms where teachers reported more exhaustion and burnout, students' levels of cortisol—a hormone produced in response to stress— were higher. (pp. E1, E6)

Whether we are "acting" as teachers or parents or friends, our being impacts other beings, as the citation above suggests. If the space is full of fear, stress, and anxiety, it will harm those within. When I look back at my schooling, for example, I recall how my body understood before my mind that this was not right. That what was happening was not healthy and was shameful. I remember feeling anxious, afraid, fearful, and uncomfortable. My body understood before my mind did that it was not a healthy space.

So the question I ask myself often is, knowing that you do not need bells, whistles, tests, assignments, grades, coercion, fear, anxiety, and so on, in order to have learning, what can I do to help create more peaceful and deep learning spaces? This is a question that each and every one of us can ask ourselves, and we each then have to decide what we can do to benefit rather than diminish learning.

## Conclusion

I can say more but I hope I have provided enough clarity to help you understand where I am coming from. I hope that if you disagree with me, at least I have made it clear that willed and peaceful learning and living is not just a theoretical wish, but that there are many people already learning and living this way, and that this community is large and continues to grow. At a recent AERO conference in a talk that is now on YouTube titled *Around the World in 18 Schools*, Roopa Reddy (2017, February 18) shared how she left teaching and decided to travel the world and to visit as many of these alternative learning places as she could. At the time of her talk, her travels took her all over the world, and she had visited 18 places so far. You can hear her talk here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7Pc0RVFM-A&feature=youtu.be

It's happening and when I visit these places I get invigorated and I come to understand and appreciate how willed peaceful learning can happen in ways that are so deep and authentic. Let's not become obedient to authority like those in the Milgram experiment, and as Zimbardo (2018) cautioned about the Standard Prison Experiment., ". . . underestimate the extent to which the power of social roles and external pressures can influence our actions."

Instead, inside of schools, let's understand that an externally imposed one-size-fits-all curriculum does not serve an individual nor society well at all. And that an approach that results in stress, people having to take medication to cope, hospitalizations, and suicide is unhealthy for individuals and our communities. Let's ask what can I do and act toward solutions, both small and large. Let's be mindful of our world and beyond and do whatever we can, whether it's a smile or a more active gesture. Let's recognize that we can do better outside of schools as well and that there are things we can all do. Notice where action is needed and do whatever we can in the moment. Whether it's helping someone reach for an item in a grocery store or something else, just act.

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# Resistance, Action, and Transformation in a Participatory Action Research (PAR) Project with Homeless Youth

# 19

David A. Goldberg

## Contents

**Abstract**

Data from a 1-year participatory action research (PAR) project with 35 homeless youth reveals many flee to the streets to resist dangerous, volatile, or dysfunctional homes.

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The chapter details how participatory action research (PAR), the methodology used in the study, contests "expert" research into social ills and oppression from those who are detached from the communities they study.

During the PAR project, the youth reflected on their experiences and lifeworlds as they defined them. They examined homelessness from their standpoints of parenting, self, education, and shelter. The youth prioritized stereotyping and stigmatization as critical themes to address in their struggles for integration and acceptance.

Some young people noted that at a time in their lives when they hoped to expand their social networks and opportunities, stereotypes and stigmatization shamed them into "hiding" and "retreating." Some said that society's shunning of them for supposed shortcomings was reminiscent of experiences in their households.

The youth conceived a number of solutions to change people's perceptions of them. They poured their energies into individual artworks to represent their findings. Of these, they selected "The Other Side of the Door," a searing theater play written by a youth in the project. The play depicts the dysfunctional dynamics between a volatile mother and her 16-year-old son, who flees into homelessness.

To resist stereotypes and stigmatization, the youth argued passionately for the play to be presented in a number of places and institutions, ranging from schools of psychology, social work, and education to courts and juvenile corrections, places of worship, and high schools.

**"Let's talk about what you know. You know this better than anybody else. You don't have any answers, but you know the problems." Myles Horton**

## Introduction

"Resistance, Action and Transformation in a Participatory Action Research Project with Homeless Youth" explores how homeless youth resist major challenges in their homes and in homelessness. The chapter addresses the young people's perspectives on stereotyping and stigmatization - their central concerns in this PAR project. The epistemology of participatory action research (PAR) is analyzed as a means of resistance to traditional "expert-led" research. Using PAR, the young people had a rare opportunity to explore their lifeworlds, prioritize their key research themes, and conceive some strategies and actions to address them.

Having worked as a program developer, facilitator, and educator over a number of years with hundreds of homeless youth aged 16–24 in an emergency crisis shelter in a major Canadian city, it became apparent that the topic of "resistance" was significant to these young people. The challenges they confronted – and resisted – were existential: they impacted their immediate circumstances and imperiled their futures. Although many of these young people displayed extraordinary resilience in the face of adversity, nonetheless, in a 1-year doctoral participatory action research (PAR) project, they collectively acknowledged an array of challenges in homelessness. These included a lack of family support and care, distressing poverty, truncated education that limits their skills from reaching their fullest potential, and scant social supports. Many contend with the trauma of being unwelcome in their homes or fleeing them as a means of safety and survival.

## I: Resisting Challenges in the Home and in Homelessness

In the following, youth describe in their first-person voice some of their major challenges they confront and resist in volatile and dysfunctional homes and on dangerous and unpredictable streets. The data is derived from a participatory action research (PAR) project with 35 male and female homeless youth aged 16–24 in a major Canadian emergency crisis shelter. Over the 1-year duration of the research, 22 males and 13 females, aged 16–24, participated at various times.

Some youth shared that they felt overwhelmed in difficult households, with demanding, abusive, or violent parents or guardians. On the streets, they also encountered some people and situations that posed risks that many said were difficult. Resistance strategies were as varied as the youth in the research, according to temperaments, personal characteristics, and experiences. Collectively, the youth were keen to "pool their wisdom"; many listened intently to their peers' accounts of how they thought about – and acted on – their ideas on resistance.

On an intrapersonal level, some youth in this PAR study said they felt despair and rejection from not being able to return home. Others said they felt "humiliated" returning to the neighborhoods of their youth, so they wanted to remain "hidden" from many of their at-home peers and others in the community who knew about their homelessness (Goldberg 2013). Another youth, in contrast, said that his homelessness did not prevent him from returning to his neighborhood to be with his friends. In sum, the youths' resistance strategies depended on their maturity, amount of time in homelessness, and resiliency. The youth shared that intelligence, creativity, and social ability also boosted resiliency to challenging situations.

To combat depression and to distract them from pain and loneliness in homelessness, some youth said that they struggled with alcohol, drug, and sexual addictions. Although questions of resistance to their displacement from home and community loomed large among these young people, some said they were concerned with how to resist *effectively* and, from a social change perspective, in a manner that members of the public might ally themselves with the homeless youth cause.

In our discussions, youth said that resistance meant opposing objectionable policies, beliefs, and behaviors. In an exercise, the youth wanted to show what resistance looked like. One youth thrust his hands out in front of his body and yelled "stop!". Another tightly crossed her arms around her body. Other youth proposed different means of resistance: one said that she could publish her ideas about homelessness and social injustice on the Internet; others suggested doing YouTube videos or Instagram or Facebook postings. Some youth proposed holding dialogues with different publics as a means of educating people and hopefully changing beliefs and attitudes. Regardless of how they wanted to disseminate their ideas, many agreed with one youth who said that a resistant attitude manifests as, "I refuse to accept unjust practices and policies."

While many young people imagined how social change might transpire from resistance, a few were skeptical. One summed it up: "we are up against long odds." As an example, a youth complained about how difficult it was just to hang out where she wanted, citing harassment from law enforcement or hired security; a few others said that they didn't have the power or resources to change much. Another youth said, "it's not us we need to convince about what needs to change anyways, but the broader public—and they don't even like us."

## Resisting Physical, Sexual, and Emotional Abuse

In the PAR project, some youth talked about strategies to resist abuse they confronted on a personal level. Abuse, some of the youth said, was both overwhelming and confusing; a number said that "it came out of the blue" and that they had little idea about what to do about it, especially since they were ashamed to admit it even happened.

Exploring resistance further, a number of young people said that they were loathe to disclose their personal situations to school officials, other family members, or even their peers (Goldberg 2017). Having other people find out about their personal situations, they said, could lead to leaks in their social circles, provoking ridicule or bullying. Many youth were adamant: on the matter of keeping to themselves about difficult and even dangerous home lives, resistance meant keeping personal business private.

Some youth talked about the difficulty admitting the abuse to themselves or even putting it into words, so they were confused about how to talk about it with someone else. Resistance was especially difficult, some said, given the imbalance of power between themselves and their abuser. An imbalance of power, authority, and manipulation, some said, felt overwhelming. Some feared that without "ignoring" the abuse, they might be permanently abandoned by their parent(s) or guardian(s) or that they might face lasting injury or harm. In short, some said that they dreaded "upsetting the apple cart" or further provoking the victimizer, which is a powerful strategy of victimizers to instill compliance to abuse.

Because of their young age, some said, they were afraid of "pissing off" the abuser who they depended on for food, shelter, and *some* type of care. Some youth

said that the abuse started young, so there was a history to it. Accordingly, one female recalled how her abuse "became a kind of a pattern, a routine, that I put out of my mind to survive." Another female divulged her final act of resistance before her homelessness: she disclosed her father's abuse to a few of her closest uncles. When they rejected her accusations, she said her situation was hopeless. She had no choice, she said, but to flee – into homelessness.

One resistance strategy, some youth said, was to stay away from the abuser and the site of abuse as much as possible, by taking up after-school activities, working at a library, or staying late at a friend's house. A few others said that they checked out community groups and events too, as a way to delay returning home. Some said they faked physical illness, even force-vomiting, as a means of resisting abuse. Some said that by pushing abuse out of their minds, they didn't think as much about resistance, but when the abuse was really bad, their thoughts of resistance intensified.

## Manifestations of Resistance

In this PAR project, many young people affirmed that they had no plan after fleeing their home besides couch surfing, which as one youth shrugged, "eventually runs out." Youth agreed that when "nothing would change in my home," the only resistance that would work was to "get out." Some youth said that since leaving home was "so big," they tried to put fleeing out of their mind as much as possible; others said that over time their plan became a little clearer and more in focus.

A physically imposing young man shared a different strategy to resist abuse. He said that he used the constant physical abuse from his father as a *motivation.* He explained that after virtually daily abuse, he would do sets of push-ups and sit-ups, as a means of ensuring that eventually, he would become stronger than his father and terminate the abuse. He revealed his secret satisfaction when he raced around on his bike through the city and detected fear in some people's eyes from his physique. He said to me, "I'm hard man. No one gets in. I don't feel nothing with no-one."

Resistance, some said, was formulating some kind of plan, to get out, to leave, to flee. One young man shared how he packed a knapsack with some clothes and belongings in it and left it by the door, in anticipation for not if, but when he would leave. He said he did this over several years, a type of ritualistic behavior, something concrete and tangible, while dreading the life-altering step of leaving home. "Resistance is measured in the smallest of actions," notes Cruz (2011, p. 556). A small gesture, some said, was an initial step to address a larger problem.

## Resistance to Victimization in Homelessness

A youth elaborated on the challenge of leaving home, to murmurs of assent from his peers "in homelessness, there is no script, no way to know in advance what to do or how to handle yourself." Resistance on the streets, some youth said, translated to being "quick on your feet, to adjust to situations and environments" that they

couldn't conceive they would find themselves in. Resistance also meant dealing with situations where they might be bullied or manipulated by older "street veterans" or by other ill-intentioned youth or ones with quick fists. Some young people noted that their "beings" were at stake when they could not effectively resist bullies and victimizers. One youth who had stayed in dozens of youth shelters in a number of cities said that a way to resist being bullied is the same in a shelter as in jail. He said, "in either a shelter or in lock-up, you will be tested immediately. And you better fight right off the bat, otherwise word will get out and your life will be hell."

One young woman recounted how her need to survive, in the dreadful conditions she was in, *suppressed* her resistance. She was a "virtual slave," she said, living in one of her foster homes. She performed "endless" daily chores for the *entire* "host" family, including for the numerous *children* of the foster parents: cooking, cleaning, washing dishes, ironing, making beds, laundry, vacuuming, and so forth. In a soft voice, she shared that with "terrible self-esteem from having nowhere to live," she heeded the warning of her foster parents, who warned that should she reveal *anything* to her case worker about her situation, they would ensure that her new foster home would be a virtual hell. The young woman said that she never breathed a word to her case worker. "Worn down," she said, her resistance was squashed. Simply put, she said that she was "grateful" to have any home at all.

**It is "naïve" to assume that research is "free of ideological constraints" (Derrida, cited in Trifonas 2009a, p. 302).**

## II: Participatory Action Research: Contesting Traditional Research Practices

Prior to further analyzing the data pertaining to resistance and empowerment that derived from this PAR project, the chapter examines the epistemology of participatory action research, particularly with regard to how PAR addresses social ills, in contrast to mainstream positivist approaches to research. As the ideas of the major founders of PAR, Paulo Freire, Orlando Fals Borda, and Marja-Liisa Swantz, are profoundly influential, their ideas are primarily referenced. Also discussed are some key ideas of John Gaventa and Myles Horton of the Highlander Research and Education Center in Tennessee, who utilized participatory action research for social justice in oppressed communities. Peter Trifonas' research and insights into alterity, ethics, knowledge, and power are also germane to PAR philosophy and practices.

Besides how they "resisted to exist," as the youth shared above, the participatory action research methodology utilized in this project was itself a means of contesting traditional academic research that often studies reality, but de-emphasizes action and change, especially from the standpoints and priorities of the research subjects themselves. In contrast to externally driven research, in PAR, the participants themselves should be beneficiaries of their inquiry by utilizing research to their ends and purposes, partaking in all of the research phases, and taking "action" by disseminating their findings (Hall 2001). In sum, PAR utilizes a comprehensive,

analytic, and critical approach to empowerment based on members of a disenfranchised group reflecting on their lifeworlds, utilizing research and analysis to illuminate key themes, and then acting for change and transformation to address their central concerns (Goldberg 2013).

## "Experts" and Marginalized and Disenfranchised Communities

Participatory action research theorists critique the lack of substantive improvements in oppressed and marginalized communities, particularly ones in which experts conduct well-funded research on "behalf" of its citizens. John Gaventa, a former director of Highlander in Tennessee, writes, "rarely seen are institutions that produce the knowledge to serve the interests of the poor and the powerless" (Gaventa 1993, p. 27). As the youth in the PAR project shared their lifeworlds and experiences, it was evident that their discourse was largely absent from the academy and other mainstream forums.

Widening the gap between experts and marginalized groups, the expertise of the oppressed is often misunderstood or ignored by external "experts" who are typically physically and psychologically detached from these communities and their problems (Merrifield 1993). Moreover, experts may have "preconceived ideas about participants' life experiences," impeding their abilities to learn from local knowledge (Swantz, quoted in Nyemba and Mayer 2018, p. 326). Swantz (2008) reveals a humble attitude that facilitates PAR work: "The researcher genuinely recognizes that she does not know the life world, wisdom or meaning of central symbols of life of the coresearchers" (2008, p. 38). Researchers and academics, on the other hand, engage in specialized discourses that pursue and commoditize knowledge for purposes that can deviate from the concerns of oppressed peoples as they express them. With a focus on marginalized groups solving their own problems, PAR has a different focus than purely pursuing "knowledge for knowledge sake" (Gaventa and Cornwall 2001, p. 75) or for purposes of "industry or commodification" (Trifonas 2009a, p. 302).

Further contributing to the disparities between academics and members of oppressed groups, Hall (2001) asserts that *jointly guided* research between academics and "non-credentialed" laypeople is rare (italics mine, p. 176); Freire (1970) characterizes the gulf separating intellectuals from the disenfranchised: intellectuals, although well-meaning, are "not infrequently alienated from the reality of the people" (p. 122). Accordingly, Myles Horton, a principal founder of Highlander, declares, "I had never any intention of going into anybody else's community as an expert to solve problems, and then leaving it for those people to follow up" (Bell et al. 1990, p. 184). Horton's refusal to define problems for others contests elaborate and costly research studies that are generated by people external to the lived challenges and travails of an oppressed community.

Freire's caveats about the gulf between external outsiders and disenfranchised populations were evidenced when I worked in a research context with these youth, whereby I gained a fuller perspective on their lifeworlds, problems, and priorities

than from intensive study of academic literature. Research literature, for instance, calls attention to elevated levels of transience among homeless youth.

Nothing prepared me, however, to witness the disruptive impacts of transience more than meeting *many* new youth *every* week in the program I ran for over 2 years in a small 35-bed shelter in a major Canadian city. Indeed, youth I had worked with for a few weeks or a month "disappeared" as they wove their way through different shelters and living arrangements. Moreover, the upheaval and dislocation from a transient lifestyle, the young people said, challenged their abilities to formulate – and adhere to – a plan to exit homelessness. One male pointedly asked, "How am I supposed to go to school when I have nowhere to keep my books?"

## PAR: Research from the "Inside Out"

Highlighting a concern regarding those who conduct research into homeless youth, Whitmore and McKee (2001) write, "The [research] questions are often framed by 'experts' who have limited understanding of street culture" (p. 399). A youth in the PAR research commented on the opaqueness of homelessness to outsiders:

> When people say homeless people are too lazy, that mostly derives in older people that see something on the streets that never changes. When I was younger I thought, 'why can't they get a job? Why can't they get an apartment?' But now that I'm in the streets I see it's not just that they're lazy, they just have their own stuff; they have their own reasons. But other people outside the shelter system don't understand that.

Regarding why the oppressed themselves should determine research into their lives and problems, Freire (1970) writes, "Who are better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society? Who suffer the effects of oppression more than the oppressed? Who can better understand the necessity of liberation?" (p. 45). Given the magnitude of challenges for liberation of oppressed groups, projects are contested that claim to be "PAR" based on minimal participant involvement. Such projects do not foreground "liberation" whereby participants brainstorm, analyze, and act on the solutions they conceive to their central concerns (Goldberg 2013).

PAR's foregrounding of the other's experiences, insights, and priorities aligns with Trifonas' concept of pedagogies and research practices that "open the Self to the difference of the Other" (2009b, p. 323). In such a spirit of openness in this PAR project, the youth said that the research was worthy since *their* ideas and findings could generate solutions to their problems. One youth elaborated, "In homelessness, we have no platform, and no one listens to us. We don't have a chance to hear ourselves think. This research was different." Another youth summarized his sense of self in the project, "I don't feel homeless in this research. I feel like an artist." In this context, some youth asserted that their experiences and their lives counted for something. A female said, "At a low point in my life, this research helps give my life meaning." Many expressed agreement with a youth who said, "the research belongs to us."

## Subjects and Objects in Research

Participatory action research theorists critique studies where the research "subjects" serve as "objects," whose purpose and roles in the research are predefined by external authorities and experts. A student working with Swantz in Tanzania asserts: "While the traditional research methods take the people as objects of research, ours took them as actors, in fact, as the stars of the whole process" (2008, p. 33). Freire (1973) argues that subordinating people to object roles perpetuates oppression: The experience of all oppressed people "is to be objects and not subjects of history" (p. 80). Freire is unequivocal that empowerment hinges on the subjectivity of participants, "We cannot enter the struggle as objects in order later to become subjects" (cited in Barndt 2001, p. 38).

In this context, Fals Borda and Rahman (1991) call for a reconfiguring of research relationships from "subject-object" to "subject-subject," a central tenet of participatory action research (p. 5). By paying careful attention to the insights that the young people shared in their desire to contribute to homeless youth research, I observed how valuable PAR is in "unfolding worlds" that traditional research might entirely miss.

## Personal Transformation in Participatory Action Research

Although none of the 35 youth in the project had heard of participatory action research, over time, and with discussion about the purposes of each phase, they gained confidence exercising their voice, direction, and leadership in it. At the outset, though, some youth acted hesitantly, as if they were in a classroom, with me as the "teacher." They looked to me for answers to their research into their lifeworlds. During these times, I asked the youth, "What do you think?" There was an occasional awkward pause, but eventually the young people engaged in the thinking, reflection, and analysis that characterize PAR work.

Unspoken was whether or not these young people, many of whom had been out of school for years, could be valued for their insights into their lived experiences and could lead, with supportive facilitation, a research project. After grasping that their expertise was sought and respected, they gained confidence and began acting more assertively to define the research according to their needs and goals. As a result, many youth advanced ideas for social change that might resist their challenges in homelessness, especially through their artistic and creative representations that they wanted to share with larger publics and audiences.

Shaull (1970) notes that with PAR, participants access "a new awareness of selfhood" in the hopes of "transform[ing] the society that has denied them this opportunity of participation" (p. 29). In the project, participants manifested transformation through a number of markers: some mentored newcomers to the project, others offered suggestions to strengthen peer's artworks which represented key findings, or articulated ideas and strategies to realize social change. A shelter worker commented that a young man who had previously "acted out" with some regularity

"shifted" when he demonstrated a sense of purpose and commitment to the PAR project.

## "Action" in Participatory Action Research Contesting Positivistic Approaches

An action orientation, emerging organically from research as conducted by its members to address its problems, is typically absent from traditional research. On the issue of "action," positivism, an influential research philosophy, has been critiqued for a "bystander" approach to social ills: positivism "affirms a social world that is meant to be gazed upon but not challenged or transformed" (Roman 1992, cited in Herr and Anderson 2005, p. 51). PAR, in contrast, strives to "intervene" with regard to social ills, "Most participatory action research sets out to explicitly study something in order to change and improve it" (Wadsworth 1998, p. 4). Of note, research-informed action, from the young people themselves, can assist the homelessness problem. Although intensively researched, the Employment and Social Development Canada (2016) admits homelessness is a chronic problem: "Despite many successes in addressing homelessness over the past decade, homelessness remains a persistent issue" (retrieved from Employment and Social Development Canada, www.esdc.gc.ca). By utilizing PAR, formerly "hidden perspectives" from those living the problem can be advanced to address youth homelessness.

A positivist philosophy, Wadsworth (1998) asserts, depicts a world governed by a "single reality," existing independently of the researcher, one that is "measurable" in a laboratory setting with controlled and quantifiable variables (p. 11). In this paradigm, a researcher must remain "neutral." Freire (1973) critiques "impartial" notions of "neutrality": "It is impossible for me to ask you to think about neutral education, neutral methodology, neutral science, or even a neutral God. I always say that every neutrality contains a hidden choice" (p. 78). Fals Borda (2001) elaborates, "We felt that colleagues who claimed to work with 'neutrality' or 'objectivity' supported willingly or unwillingly the status quo, impairing full understanding of the social transformations" that were at stake (p. 29). In this PAR study, many youth said they were excited to imagine a world "as if" rather than one with an unchanging – and often dire – reality.

Human understanding of the world is itself a social construction, mediated through language, culture, history, socioeconomic status, assumptions, and biases, such that one cannot determine "reality" aside from one's own perceptions of it (Anastas 2012). In recognition of the involvement of the researcher and the researched, Gorelick asserts that research is a "social process," not an "autopsy" (cited in Brydon-Miller and Maguire 2009, p. 87).

Unlike the collecting, observing, and preserving of "facts" that transpire in an autopsy, Freire (1973) writes, "knowledge is not a fact but a process" (p. 79) which accounts for the new, "unborn" knowledge that is generated from participatory action research on enduring and unsolved social ills. Freire (1973) elaborates on

the life-giving nature of the transformation required: "They [the oppressed] have to create and re-create. They have to transform the reality in which they are prevented from being full human beings" (p. 81). When research "subjects'" curiosity and imagination are underutilized, the pool of potential and possibly groundbreaking solutions to entrenched social ills, generated from those "inside" the problem, remains stagnant.

Had I utilized conventional methods of determining research inquiry in the academy such as seeking gaps in the research literature, or determining my own priorities in the research, the surfacing of a "hidden" topic of stereotyping and stigmatization as shared by these young people would have been missed. Over time, in the present PAR project, the young people came to better understand some of the social mechanisms underpinning stereotyping and stigmatization. They hoped to address these by disseminating their findings through their artistic expression with a dramatic theater play called "The Other Side of the Door" that was written in the research and is discussed in the final part of the chapter.

> "I want to perform 'The Other Side of the Door' in schools, and let youth know, whatever may be going on at home, it doesn't have to be that way."
>
> A participant in the PAR study.

## III: Resisting Stereotyping and Stigmatization: A Core Finding in this PAR Project

In this PAR project, after the youth deliberated on research themes pertaining to youth homelessness in the contexts of parenting, self, school, and shelter, they honed in on stereotyping and stigmatization. These attitudes and beliefs, they said, determined how they were viewed by – and acted toward – by members of the public in different social situations. They noted that stereotyping and stigmatization, although consequential to them, were topics they seldom gave expression to. Focusing on these central themes realized a key principle of participatory action research: individuals have a means of surfacing, analyzing, and addressing intimate, "felt," and "hidden" experiences.

Scholarly literature notes the dearth of research pertaining to stereotyping and stigmatization for homeless youth. Kidd (2007) elaborates, "Despite the powerful and pervasive social stigma faced by homeless youth, it remains an overlooked topic in the research literature" (p. 292). Indeed, there is a lack of research pertaining to the key relationships that prevail in these young people's social environments (Paradise and Cauce 2002) as well as their "behavior, psychiatric functioning and social networks" (Edidin et al. 2012, p. 369). In sum, while a young, hyper-transient population impedes long-term, longitudinal research, stereotyping and stigmatization remain largely hidden aspects of these young peoples' often inscrutable worlds. A PAR approach, though, can help unpack previously undisclosed lifeworlds: "studying homelessness and understanding the lived experience of homelessness

from the perspective of the homeless is of critical importance" (Rayburn and Guittar 2013, p. 160).

Although the youth in the research had different ethnicities and backgrounds and were born in different parts of the world, the trust they felt in the project (Goldberg 2019), in each other, and in me helped establish "a noncoersive environment in which to initiate genuinely intersubjective dialogues between perspectives" (Trifonas 2004, p. 155). Indeed, many youth participated in free-ranging "intersubjective dialogues," a rare chance, they said, to reflect on and discuss their experiences and challenges in the often daunting circumstances of homelessness. To help expand knowledge into youth homelessness from their lived experiences, many of the young people courageously dealt with painful memories and stressful emotions as they detailed some of the stereotypes and stigma they encountered. These attitudes and behaviors, "felt isolating," they said, particularly difficult while they were trying to be accepted by broader communities.

## Stereotyping: "Solid Models" of the Other

The term stereotype derives from two Greek words – stereos representing "solid" and typos, "a model." As a "solid model," stereotypes project unchanging and derogatory qualities onto others (Schneider 2004) or unseemly qualities that we dismiss in ourselves but readily identify and belittle in others (Allport (1954/1979). Cooper and White (2004) note that the magnitude of stereotypes reaches "institutional" proportions, whereby many members of society promulgate them.

Stereotyping hinges on a perspective of "'normality', [that] is figuratively conceived in terms of narrowly defined criteria," pertaining to "personal or group characteristics" (Trifonas 2004, p. 159). The young people said that these stereotypes were indeed "narrow," since they dismissed outright their positive qualities. Instead, the youth said that the stereotypes labeled them as "no-good," wayward, of suspect character and intent. There were murmurs of agreement when a male shared how "depressing" it was to confront stereotypes in so many aspects of daily life. Elaborating, he said "people who stereotype us don't get us; worse, they don't want to get us." Another youth said she hoped that the action strategies they conceived regarding their research findings (discussed below) on stereotyping and stigmatization might help "change things."

Some youth noted that stereotyping *blames* them for their homelessness. Living "under a cloud of suspicion," from stereotypes, a female said, "pissed her off" since her *life* was at stake living in a dangerous, threatening, and abusive home. Stereotypes blaming them for their homelessness ignored, the young people said, overwhelming and dangerous family stressors such as physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, neglect, and general family chaos and dysfunction.

While reflecting on the purpose of stereotypes, a youth who had succeeded in several years of university in the social sciences before becoming homeless said, "I think people want to understand how the world is and how life is. By categorizing things the world makes sense. When things are outside of these categories, the world

becomes confusing." "A person who says them [stereotypes], he adds, "has like a way of comprehending things they don't understand." The solution, another youth said, is to "give them [the stereotypers] the knowledge they need to understand what the situation really is." A constant refrain from the youth was that many "just didn't get them" exacerbating their sense of being separate and apart.

## Stigma: "Tainted and Discounted" Individuals

The term stigma also originates in ancient Greece where an undesirable such as a "slave, a criminal, or a traitor" was conspicuously branded with a cut or burn on the skin (Goffman 1963). These marks warned the community to shun such individuals, especially in public. Goffman elaborates that "others" cast out from society become "tainted and discounted" (cited in Link and Phelan 2001, p. 364). Kleinman (2010) asserts that the stigmatized defy "norms and obligations"; accordingly, they forfeit their human status and are deemed a "nonperson" or the "other" (The Harvard Mental Health Letter 2010, p. 7). During a discussion about stigmatization, a young male pointed to a distant, empty corner of the room and declared that stigmatized people are "shoved there to the side—and left there."

Through their individual perspectives, the young people went around the room in first-person voice to account for the impacts of stigmatization. A talented and commissioned artist said that she despaired finding a job amidst the stigma of the homeless that made her feel like a "write-off." Another female said that the mere mention to a landlord of living in a shelter would doom her chances to acquire a decent living accommodation. A previously successfully employed construction worker shared that he could barely get out of bed because of the dread he had on a job site of the stigma that would result from being discovered homeless. Another youth shared the anxiety she felt when friends excitedly said after school, "come to my place," forcing her to devise lies so that her friends would never discover that she lived in a shelter.

Some youth said that they even detected hostility and suspicion to their homelessness from some personnel in medical settings. Another male added that "when I was on the streets, if society didn't want me based on all the jobs I was rejected from," rather than go hungry, he would steal the food he needed to survive. One young female, in a city separate from where the research took place, shared that some high-school students, after learning about her homelessness, swore and threw rocks and debris at her.

Some talked about how stigmatization "brought them down," at a time when they were trying to "put their lives together." A youth noted a distressing irony: while they wanted to "build their futures, and *expand* their social networks and opportunities," the "shame" of stigmatization forced them to retreat inward and *hide*. Of note, for the "hidden homeless... potentialities [are] too often suppressed rather than actualized" (Harter et al. 2005, p. 322). In "hiding," besides constraining their opportunities, the young peoples' psychological state can deteriorate, as they may be subject to paranoia, depression, or a decline in mental health.

As they thought about the differences between stereotyping and stigmatization, a youth in the research provoked an animated discussion when she said, "stereotyping is the disgusting names people are called, stigmatization enforces it." Some youth elaborated and related their dismay with those who enforce stigmatization, such as "hardheaded" police, security guards, or patrols, in the spaces they frequented. Youth also pointed to officials and administrators who they believed instituted stigmatizing policies and practices:

> . . . stigmatization is entirely contingent on access to social, economic and political power that allows the identification of differentness, the construction of stereotypes, the separation of labeled persons into distinct categories, and the full execution of disapproval, rejection, exclusion, and discrimination. (Link and Phelan 2001, p. 367)

To resist those who stigmatize, some said that they needed to know "who they were up against" and "how they got—and keep their power."

The stigma of the wayward homeless person is totalizing. Murphy and Tobin (2011) succinctly summarize the enormity of homelessness, "Few events have the power to affect life in negative directions more than homelessness" (p. 33). A female added that the exclusion and isolation from the stigma reminded her of what she experienced in her own family. Some youth said that the impact of society shunning them made them feel "separate and apart."

Some said that stigmatizing behaviors could be threatening, since some members of the public act out on their impulses and suspicions about homeless people. Some shared that it was "awkward, deceitful, and wearying" to "hide" their homelessness. They said they felt like "fugitives" leading "double lives" – one with their peers and another with society at large. Goffman (1963) articulates the anxiety for the stigmatized in these situations: "To display or not display; to tell or not to tell; to let on or not to let on; to lie or not to lie; and in each case, to whom, how, when and where" (p. 42). An agitated youth said how much he despised being publicly acknowledged by a fellow shelter youth on a subway or a bus. "We're in *public*!" he exclaimed.

## Solutions to Stereotyping and Stigmatization

The youth were unanimous that stigma and stereotypes, demeaning social constructs, had to be resisted. Many agreed that how to address them was a personal choice, one that they had to feel comfortable with for themselves. Many said they found their peers' personal experiences insightful, since they needed to pinpoint these attitudes and behaviors more accurately as a means of better understanding *what* to resist. There was much discussion when a youth said that resistance meant staying "true to self" and "ignoring those who think otherwise."

The youth were adamant that it was worthwhile to not just resist, but to try and change these demeaning views. To do this, a youth said, they had to create alternative public perceptions of who they are, how they got there, and what they are capable of. One youth said, "we gotta generate new stories about ourselves" and get

them out into the public domain. One youth depicted the dignity that was at stake for him and his peers:

> Like [the public thinks] you're just some nomad of the street, going from party to couch to the shelter for meals and stuff. People outside the shelter system don't recognize that people are in it for the long haul and are trying to do things with their lives.

As "social constructions," youth concluded that stereotypes and stigma pertain to person, institution, and context. Accordingly, youth named important people and institutions to them, ones they said they wanted to initiate dialogue with regarding their beliefs about homeless youth and ones they wanted to share the theater play "The Other Side of the Door," written in the research, which they said "gives the goods on homeless youth."

They noted that the personnel in the institutions they named each hold a different view of homeless youth; a teacher's concern with them, they said, differs from that of a policeman or from a religious official. The young people said they wanted to address their findings and perform their theater play to schools of psychology, psychiatry, social work, and education; the police, the courts, and the juvenile detention; and doctors (general practitioners), landlords, religious institutions such as churches and mosques, and community groups and nonprofits. Performing the play with these audiences, they said, would help them "cut through stereotyping, stigmatization, and exclusion."

In the spirit of hearing "the difference of the other," they hoped to explain to these audiences what led them into homelessness and accordingly resist the stereotypes and stigma about them. In sum, a youth in the study says: "if you actually got to know us and what we go through, people might think of us differently."

This chapter provides two critical scenes of "The Other Side of the Door," written by Kofi (a pseudonym to protect anonymity), a young man who lived in homelessness for 6 years from 15 onward. Of note, Kofi had never read a theater script, nor had he ever watched a theater play. Kofi brought the play into the research as he was writing it. He read out scenes to his peers, and a dialogue formed about the content which Kofi incorporated into his thinking and his revisions. Reading it, one can glean an "insider's view" of why a youth flees to the streets.

For context, 16-year-old Steve was sent by Wonda, his mother, on an errand in the evening. Unexpectedly, he misses his curfew by an hour and returns high on marijuana, which he tries for the first time. Steve tries to return to his house unnoticed, where Wonda and James, his stepfather, are waiting.

## Scene IV: An Excerpt from "The Other Side of the Door"

(*STEVE walks into his house and sees JAMES and WONDA on the couch. STEVE avoids eye contact and tries to go straight to his room.*)

WONDA: Where the hell do you think you're going? Do you know what time it is? *(STEVE is speechless.)* Come here boy!

JAMES: Wonda, I know you're mad; just stay calm.

WONDA: Boy what's wrong with you? Is your time an hour back?

(*WONDA takes off her shoes and whacks STEVE across the face.*)

JAMES: Wonda leave the boy alone. It's only an hour.

(*WONDA beats STEVE until he runs away and locks himself in his room.*)

WONDA (*yelling*): No more outside for you! You're grounded for the summer. Don't even think of asking for one dollar.

## Scene V: An Excerpt from "The Other Side of the Door"

(*Next morning. STEVE wakes up and goes straight to his stepdad.*)

JAMES: How you doin Steve?

STEVE: That's not fair, you know that's not fair. One stupid hour cost me my whole summer.

JAMES: Yeah, your mother took it a bit overboard. Don't worry, I'll talk to her.

(*JAMES walks into the bedroom where WONDA is making the bed.*) *Hey honey, how's it going?*

WONDA: I'm cleaning.

JAMES: I was thinking; I felt like you were a bit too hard on him.

WONDA: Look, I'm a grown woman. I don't need anybody to tell me how to raise my son.

(*WONDA walks downstairs where STEVE is hanging out.*)

Look, if you have a problem with the way I do things, address me personally.

STEVE: You don't hear a thing I say.

WONDA: I brought you into this world. You wouldn't have a mouth to speak with if it wasn't for me. Why should I listen to you?

STEVE: Because I'm your son.

WONDA: In the real world, when you break the rules, they take away your freedom. In my house it's the same thing.

STEVE: In the real world it's summer. On the other side of that door kids are playing right now. Because they don't have crazy parents like me.

WONDA: So you want to play right? Then go to the other side of that door.

(*STEVE stares at the door, then back at WONDA, and starts walking towards the door.*)

WONDA: Another thing. If you leave – don't come back.

(*STEVE takes one last glance over his shoulder and walks out into homelessness.*)

## Conclusion

"The Other Side of the Door," voted on by the youth to represent their findings, uses the arts to connect with, and engage audiences, in ways that broaden its reach with the public in contrast to academic dissertations and research reports. The play provokes audience members to wonder how they themselves might cope with an

explosive mother who metes out physical and emotional abuse. Wonda's violations of Steve's psyche and being may lead some to question their stereotypes and stigmatizing behaviors toward homeless youth. Instead of the stereotypes of a wayward, "lazy," or "no-good" youth, some may hold regard for the resiliency and courage of these young people who strive to create safer – and better – lives for themselves by fleeing their homes.

For the young people in the project, the participatory action research methodology they helped lead is a powerful instrument of change and transformation. Many participants said they felt "empowered" in the research where they were respected and their ideas were listened to and heard. In this context, they ventured into difficult terrain, using insights about their lived experiences, to account for stereotyping and stigmatization, mechanisms of Otherness.

Many youth shared that their research profoundly educated them about the complexities of youth homelessness. They acquired this understanding, they said, in the context of their peers sharing their histories and circumstances that led them to run away. Commenting on this, a participant says, "I learned things in this research about youth homelessness that I would have never known."

Other measures toward social change emerged from this project. Scenes of "The Other Side of the Door" were staged before a rapt audience at the shelter comprising youth, administrators and staff, and board members. Other shelter and street youth have participated in stage rehearsals and have attended readings of the play. "The Other Side of the Door" has received mentorship and professional dramaturgy and is being utilized by drama teachers as a means of including it in the drama and health curriculums. This adheres to an overriding wish of the participants who believe that this play can change the destinies of some young people, by opening a discussion that many youth struggling in dangerous homes are unsure how to have. The staging of "The Other Side of the Door" in high schools and in other public venues has been proposed by the youth to resist misleading stereotypes and stigma regarding who they are, what their struggles are, and what they can achieve.

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# Spiritual Meditations

## Being in the Early Years

# 20

D. Mirkovic, B. Pytka, and Susan Jagger

## Contents

### Abstract

Western education systems typically place significance on the development of the *whole child*; however, the spiritual domain of development is often neglected due to the belief that religion and spirituality are synonymous notions. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the varying understandings and ideas of spirituality in an

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attempt to illustrate its significance and possibilities within the early years. This piece does not attempt to isolate a single definition of spirituality but rather recognizes spirituality as a way of *being* and focuses on meditating ideas of what spirituality can be in various contexts of the early years. Through the exploration of current literature and application of relevant narratives, this piece emphasizes the avoidance of spirituality within educational settings and the common characteristics or foundations of spirituality. Finally, the chapter will offer practice implications that can support educators in welcoming spirituality into the classroom environment.

## Introduction

Within western culture, many educational systems aim to support the development of the *whole child*, emphasizing the interconnectedness of various domains in children's development (Adams et al. 2016). For example, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2016) stated that spirituality plays a critical role in the development and well-being of children, suggesting that nurturing the child's *spirit* is just as important as supporting the mind and body. The British Columbia Early Learning Framework (2008) is more explicit in their inclusion of spirituality in their vision for early learning: "The vision for children aged 0–5 is that they will experience physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual well-being" (p. 14). Although the engagement and growth of the mind, body, and spirit in and through early years curriculum and instruction is commonly promoted, the spiritual dimension is often overlooked and even absent from western educational practice (Adams et al. 2016). Similarly, and in contrast to the sizeable body of literature on religion and childhood, the literature focusing on children's spirituality is limited. This chapter explores this body of literature related to spirituality and early childhood and discusses the importance of recognizing and welcoming spirituality into early years settings. We consider the perception of what spirituality is, how it is understood and related, and its avoidance in early years education. Multiple ideas of spirituality are explored, and implications for early years teaching and learning are presented.

## Placing Spirituality in the Early Years

While most Canadian education systems purport to attend to the whole child in their curriculum and instruction, they continue to be heavily invested in preparing children to be future citizens who will contribute to the global market (Miller 2016). This tendency overlooks the complex nature of human life and identity and typically fails to attend to the whole of children's development inclusive of mind, body, and spirit. Opening education to children's natural curiosity and wonder can allow them to freely contemplate spiritual ideas and complex phenomenon (Sifers et al. 2012;

Walters 2008). Curiosity and wonder can also help children to make meaning and better understand their life experiences (Sifers et al. 2012). Indeed, spirituality is not only vital to human development but is also essential in order to realize a more complete understanding of life, existence, and relationships (Sifers et al. 2012). In addition, spirituality plays a key role in supporting the enhancement of morality and emotional development; therefore, by welcoming spirituality into the classroom, we can support relationship building among children and their peers (Boynton 2011; Sifers et al. 2012). Boynton (2011) asserted that, through spiritual connectedness, children can experience enhanced well-being and wellness as spirituality is an important part of human development, mental health, well-being, relationships, and resiliency. As such, strides should be made to invite in and embrace spirituality in early years settings to support children's growth and well-being.

We might also consider spirituality's inclusion in the early years from a children's rights perspective. Children have the right to their own spiritual expression within their early learning environments. Though children's right to spirituality in their education is not explicitly identified within the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations General Assembly 1989) (UNCRC), Articles 13 and 14 state that children have the right to freedom of expression, thought, conscience, and religion. It is here that children's right to spiritual expression is implicit. These UNCRC articles assert that children have the right to freely express their identity and challenge familial religious or cultural beliefs as they begin to develop their own systems of understanding the world. In other words, the UNCRC acknowledges that children have the right to develop and describe their own belief systems, including their spirituality, as long as these beliefs cause no threat to themselves or others. This is significant, as children have a right to spiritual development and expression that is separate from their parents, should they so choose (Sagberg 2008). In this sense, children are recognized as being capable of understanding their own spirituality and what it means to them (Sagberg 2008). Children have the right to define and express their own spirituality in various contexts, including educational settings, without the pressure of feeling that they need to conform to adult conceptualizations of spirituality.

With this in mind, we recognize that meanings and understandings of spirituality vary across disciplines, cultures, and individuals (Adams et al. 2016) and a shared definition has not been identified. However, this lack of consensus does not mean that there is no place for the spiritual domain in the early years. Learning contexts should invite children to embrace their spirituality (whatever it may be and however it might be realized) and foster its support of learning and personal growth. This support can be taken up in the curricular inclusion of common themes that persist in understandings of spirituality. These can contribute to the growing body of literature focusing on children's spiritual expression and how these understandings can be transferred to educational environments.

### "We Don't Use That Word": Unpacking spirituality

*We sat in the preschool,*
*discussing spirituality and early years teaching with two educators.*
*As we explained our own understandings of spirituality,*

*one of the educators proclaimed,*
*"We do welcome aspects of spirituality into our classroom,*
*but we don't use that word."*

*Why?*

*Because it is believed to be synonymous with religion*
*and would make parents uncomfortable.*
*However, the word is used in curriculum documents across Ontario,*
*so why the avoidance within practice?*

*Spirituality. . .*
*we don't use that word!*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Spirituality** | From *spirit* (All etymological origins of terms have been sourced and quoted from *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology.*) |
| **Spirit** | Breath of life, vital principle, intelligent incorporeal being, immaterial element of a human being, vital power; from Latin ***spiritus*** breathing, breath, air, life, soul, pride, courage |

Throughout the literature, there is no consensus on a single definition of spirituality. Instead the term and the idea are elusive. Stemming from *holos*, or whole, spirituality embraces the entire person and the growth of the individual, focusing on inner aspects rather than material gains (Sheldrake 2012). Some argue that without religion, spirituality can quickly become a selfish and self-interested practice; however, and in contrast, key experiences with and in spirituality include empathy, compassion, and connection to self and others.

With this said, there are certain themes that persist through the literature that can provide insight into the elements of spirituality and how individuals, communities, and cultures interpret and enact human spirituality. Before exploring the commonalities, it is essential to explore key terms that are thought to be synonymous with spirituality. Along with providing a foundation for understanding why various scholars are calling for a separation of spirituality as a distinctive term and why educators and parents may avoid using the term altogether, this exploration also illuminates some of the reasons for closing the classroom environment to spirituality.

## Religion and Mindfulness

| | |
|---|---|
| **Religion** | State of life bound by vows and a rule, system of faith and worship of a divine power, recognition of a divine being to whom worship is due; from *relegere* gather together; from *religare* bind fast |
| **Mindfulness** | From *mind* |
| **Mind** | Memory, thought, purpose, intention, mental faculty; from German *minne* love, memory; from *men-* think |

It is important to note that we are not attempting to minimize the value of religion or mindfulness by inviting a release of the terms from spirituality. Within our own personal philosophies and given the complex nature of spirituality, religion and mindfulness can be key aspects of an individual's spiritual self (Bone 2008).

**Religion**. As Sagberg (2008) suggested, most of our current definitions of spirituality stem from religion and most often from Christianity. Most religions that exist possess specific criteria, a set of rules or belief systems, and a written or spoken religious text that support their followers as they take up its tenets in their choices and actions (Sheldrake 2012). For years, western religious practice was common within most families, education systems, and communities. It was not until the fall of the European empires and the rise of various human rights movements that a shift began to occur (Sheldrake 2012). Ideas within organized religion were soon unable to completely capture the general human capacity to create connections and meaning that spirituality can (Sagberg 2008; Sheldrake 2012). This is especially true when the separation of the church and state is considered as some individuals began to focus on their own inner consciousness and peace rather the collective organization of religion (Sheldrake 2012). The shift toward personal spirituality that is distinctive from communal religious practice guided the broader cultural changes that continue today. Though spirituality has typically been linked to religion, researchers currently argue that spirituality is an abstract term which cannot be exclusively defined and, thus, must be separated from ideas of religion (Adams et al. 2016).

*A warm breeze blew over the outdoor play areas*
*as I sat with the preschoolers.*
*Along with the gentle wind came drifting by*
*a large monarch butterfly that landed on a nearby tree.*
*I heard one of the children say a welcoming greeting to the butterfly*
*and thank it.*
*I was puzzled so I asked the young boy*
*some questions about the interaction.*
*The boy surprised me as he explained that*
*he recognized butterflies as angels protecting him*
*from horrible things in the world.*
*The butterflies were angels*
*created by Mother Nature*
*and sent down by God.*

The increasingly dominant view within research on young children's spirituality in western society embraces secularity and a shift away from religion and toward the acknowledgment of various belief systems (Cook et al. 2011). The issue, however, with the view of spirituality needing to be either religious or secular is that it neglects the complexities inherent to spirituality which can stem from religion, secularity, culture, the intersection of these three constructs, and the space outside of them (Sagberg 2008). In other words, it is not necessary and indeed not always possible

to dichotomize secular and religious spirituality as an individual child's spirituality may be guided by various influences. This is evident in the child's recognition of butterflies as angels where we can see both secular ideals and religious beliefs guiding the child's spirituality (Sagberg 2008). This highlights that there does not need to be a distinction imposed between the two as his very real perception blends both secularity and religion. Indeed, children may not be able to identify the origin(s) of their spirituality, and it is critical to remember that every individual has a diverse spiritual journey, one that often supports them through difficult life events (Sifers et al. 2012).

In education, the use of the word spirituality is typically avoided given its equation with religion. As the vignette above suggests, while aspects of spirituality may be welcomed within the early years classroom, educators normally bypass the term to prevent confusion and the potential perceived writing of God or other higher powers into the curriculum. Canada is a diverse nation, and varying religions will inherently be practiced by members of the public school community and be taken up differently by each child. As such, religion is not taught in public school curricula. (Religion is *taught about* in, for example, social studies and history curricula, but religion is not taken up in practice in public schools in Canada. A notable exception is the Catholic school boards in Ontario that are publicly funded and teach religious education.) Instead this responsibility is placed on the parents or guardians of the child to take up if they so wish (Binder 2011).

**Mindfulness**. A less commonly discussed, though increasingly practiced, process that is related to spirituality is mindfulness. At the core, the main distinction between spirituality and mindfulness is that spirituality is part of an individual's identity, while mindfulness is a spiritual practice. Spirituality can be understood as part of one's self, something that is reflected in every aspect of daily life and stemming from various sources. In fact, it is believed by some researchers to be the truest form of the self (Grabbe et al. 2012). Mindfulness, on the other hand, is a traditionally Buddhist practice that encourages individuals to become aware of their body and environment in order to reduce stress and promote happiness (Boyce and Sawang 2014).

Mindfulness and spirituality have intersecting and interacting features in that both aim to heighten consciousness, support deeper understandings of the self, and offer a range of emotional and psychological benefits (Boyce and Sawang 2014). Nonetheless, mindfulness is a practice that can be learned and taken up by individuals and taught to young children as a means of fostering their developing spirituality (Boyce and Sawang 2014). This is explored by Grabbe et al. (2012) in their study on homeless youth which examined the effectiveness of implementing mindfulness meditation techniques to support the development and enhancement of spirituality. Their results indicated that mindfulness training was helpful in improving the youths' overall well-being, enhancing their awareness, and fostering the development of their own spirituality. As these findings suggest, mindfulness is a technique that can be learned and practiced, while spirituality is part of an individual's identity that can be supported by mindfulness (Grabbe et al. 2012).

Examining the issues of mindfulness is significant within this chapter given that researchers have articulated the value of implementing mindfulness in the early years

classroom as a way of supporting spiritual development (see, e.g., Hyland 2017; Miller 2016). In fact, Hyland (2017) argued that connecting back to the roots of spirituality is essential within today's consumer culture that actively promotes false understandings of spiritual expression. Through mindfulness practices, such as breathing exercises and artistic expression, children can begin to explore their inner worlds and selves and even express this in their external world (Goodliff 2013). Children can also experience decreased levels of stress, improved relationships, and the ability to be present in the moment (Binder 2011; Miller 2016). Nonetheless, though mindfulness practices may contribute to one's spirituality and spiritual journey, the terms are distinctive.

## The Characteristics of Spirituality

Since spirituality can change over time with evolving identities, understandings, and experiences and even across generations, locating a single and shared definition of spirituality is an impossible task. Within an educational context in which standardization is all too often desired, it is understandable that practitioners would seek a universal definition of spirituality to provide clarity and set practical boundaries in early years applications. However, a definition of spirituality would not capture the complexities and richness of the term (Adams et al. 2016). In addition, a brief or vague definition of spirituality would certainly lack the depth and necessary space for curiosity and would not allow for the exploration of and enation of spirituality as a source of inspiration for everyday life (Bone 2008; Sagberg 2008).

Understanding what spirituality may mean should instead focus on *describing*, rather than *defining*, the possibilities for the term. By avoiding a set, universal definition of spirituality and allowing individuals to express themselves through means that fit their situations and help them to grow, an environment that allows for exploration and wonder is created and nurtured (Adams et al. 2016). To describe opens up spirituality to unique conceptions and realizations of the term rather than attempting to secure a universal definition that may or may not fit everyone's beliefs of what spirituality is (Adams et al. 2016; Bone 2008). It is critical to remember that spirituality is an inherently elusive term and, though there are shared characteristics, each individual follows a distinctive spiritual path.

While there is consensus in the literature that spirituality cannot be defined, most researchers studying spirituality in children acknowledge that certain shared characteristics are associated with it (Fraser and Grootenboer 2004). These include wonder, gratitude, hope, love, courage, energy, present awareness, and connectedness; however, for the purpose of this chapter, the four keys and most commonly identified characteristics of spirituality will be explored.

*I was enjoying lunch one day with an old friend when*
*my attention was drawn*
*to a young girl and her mother sitting nearby.*
*"Eeeew what a gross energy in here,"*

*proclaimed the young girl,*
*shaking her hands in the air with disgust.*
*It was a loud, crowded area*
*with numerous people*
*typing away on their gadgets*
*and hardly communicating with one another.*
*I couldn't agree more with her*
*as I stifled a laugh.*
*How could a child so young feel the energy of the room?*
*How did she have the vocabulary to verbalize this?*
*I wonder what she meant…*

## Energy

**Energy**     Vigor of expression; working, operation; power displayed; from Greek
            *enérgeia* active, effective

Human spirituality is often linked to the essence or vibe of all human beings and the Earth (Harris 2007). In this sense, spirituality is not only expressed within the individual but also within that individual's environment. Today's modern world holds a vast amount of turbulence in which noise and air pollution can and does cloud one's ability to fully engage in a search for the self and the world for mutual essence and energy (Dallaire 2011). This is particularly true in our current techno-logical era where the windows to our impact on each other and our environment, for example, natural disasters, environmental destruction, and war are always open to the public and accessible through the media. With constant negativity filling our environment and ourselves, it can be difficult to imagine that one can ever begin to understand one's own spirituality and this may have led to our confusion of the child's ability to sense the environment in the above vignette. Dallaire (2011) argued that spirituality is actually a much needed component to find peace and tranquility within the turbulence of our world, suggesting that spirituality is not a state of being but rather is a lifestyle that allows an individual to consider the internal and external aspects of their spirit and themselves with the energies of the world.

Traditionally, philosophers have recognized this notion of the soul as energy or essence, asserting that all living beings have a soul, which connects all life back to the roots of Earth (Bone 2010; Dallaire 2011). The idea of the soul, or spirit, of a human originates from biblical understandings of the human essence which outlives physical, bodily death. Within today's increasingly secular society, the idea of the soul is often avoided (Wein 2014); however, understandings of the soul are becoming more inclusive through spiritual education (Miller 2010). Within holistic education, the idea of connecting and exploring one's mind, body, and soul is considered (Binder 2011); therefore, the soul may be understood as our inner world which contributes to who we are.

Ashley (2007) shared a similar view of spirituality to that of Dallaire (2011), suggesting that human spirituality is ingrained in human nature and is directly connected to the Earth and others within one's life. In a study of wilderness spirituality and the impact of technology and loss of children's spiritual connections to Earth, Ashley (2007) suggested that *place* plays a key role in representing spirituality connected to the energies of nature and that the human-environment interaction is a key spiritual relationship that connects humans to the energy of the Earth. This is especially true in natural environments, including mountains and rivers, where this connection can be so powerful. In addition, though a single definition is unfeasible for an abstract concept such as spirituality, it is argued that there are two key forms of spirituality that connect the energies of the individual to those of the environment. The first is *grounded spirituality* and refers to emotions associated with spirituality, such as feeling connected to nature or life. The second form of place-based spirituality is *ethereal spirituality* and relates to those special places where individuals feel most connected to the Earth and to life. Finally, a variety of ways to define spirituality are noted; however, it is clear that nature can renew the soul, spirit, and emotions, which can in turn lead to the creation of a sense of deep connection to the Earth and to those around us (Ashley 2007).

Similarly, while discussing the human-animal soul connection that is experienced by many, Bone (2010) introduced an essential spiritual element. Often understood as the mirror to the soul, *embodied spirituality* allows the individual to experience the spiritual by listening to their own body. With embodied spirituality, it is then possible for children to share their spiritual experience with others through interaction and play (Bone 2010). In this sense, the child is not only connected to themselves but also other humans, animals, and the broader world around them.

Many early years curriculum frameworks take up spirituality in their recommendations and goals for curriculum and pedagogy. For example, the Ontario Ministry of Education's (2014) *How Does Learning Happen* (HDLH) recommends that educators explore the complexities of identity, welcoming children's "unique spirit and character" (p. 18). Likewise, the British Columbia Early Learning Framework includes in its vision for children the experience of spiritual well-being (British Columbia Ministry of Education 2008). Thus learning contexts should nurture children's exploration and embrace their spirit, or inner self, and draw from this to encourage their learning and identity explorations. Children are often thought to have bright, free, and content spirits or souls. Think about how often you hear the term "inner child" in your daily life and media interactions. Often this inner child refers to a sense of freedom and letting go, and of curiosity and wonder, which children seem to naturally possess and which seems to fade as they grow older.

It is evident that the idea of energy, or the soul, is an essential element in understanding spirituality (Dallaire 2011). This energetic soul connects all life, often beginning in close communities and expanding to relate all living beings universally. The energies and souls radiating from all living beings and the Earth together comprise the key elements for creating a sense of worldly connectedness (Bone 2010; Dallaire 2011).

*Out of the corner of my eye,*
*I notice one of the children in the classroom*
*staring at his classmate,*
*perplexed.*
*He walks over to the girl taking deep breaths*
*and asks what she is doing.*
*"Breathing deeply because I'm stressed."*
*The confusion on his face appeared to grow*
*for a second*
*before he added,*
*"Oh, I've never done that. . .*
*but I can try with you so you're not all alone."*
*They sat there together,*
*deeply breathing*
*and giggling every now and then.*
*I couldn't help but smile at such a*
*positive interaction,*
*where a connection was strengthened*
*and new understandings were gained.*

## Connectedness

**Connect**     Join together; associate; from Latin *connectere* formed on *com-* together, in combination, or union + *nectere* bind, fasten

The second, and most prevalent, characteristic of spirituality is the notion of connectedness. With the stresses of life, perhaps particularly urban living, including rising costs of living, materialism, isolation, and individualism, many children are left with a constantly diminishing sense of self (Hodder 2007). These issues and the prevalence and pervasion of social media can disconnect children from themselves, from others in their lives, and from the world around them. In response, Hodder (2007) argued that educational contexts should attempt to avoid the "hurried child scenario" that rushes children into becoming efficient and productive citizens in an individualistic society within a global economy. Instead, the educational focus should be on inviting out the inner person and the inner spirit that each individual child has within. This opening can encourage deeper connections to one another and promote belonging, nurturing an environment where children can learn and grow from each other's spirituality. In other words, human connections to the world, to one's self, and to relationships with others can connect us all and create a dynamic, interconnected universe (Harris 2007). In fact, as Bone (2010) suggested, the idea of connectedness within the self and community stems from Indigenous perspectives that recognize, respect, and take up unity.

Harris (2007) argued that a central element of spirituality is the connection of all of the stories in one's life, as this allows a child to build on their spirituality as they

grow and change. Through this connection, children can relate meanings in their lives, develop self-awareness, find worldly relations, and foster critical relationships. In reflecting on the self, children are encouraged to deeply think about the narratives and histories of their own lives in order to truly understand themselves and the roots of their spirituality. In this sense, spirituality allows us to experience the inherent connections with something larger than human existence by not only connecting individuals to the self but also to the world around them. Children do not grow in isolation as each individual, environment, and experience in their lives plays a critical role in influencing spiritual development; therefore, spirituality relates our individual stories, creating collective experiences among people, communities, and the world. Through their connections to others and the environment, children are invited to identify and explore their personal strengths and encourage others to discover their own spirituality, thus creating positive social relationships. This, Harris (2007) suggested, is referred to as *directive spirituality*. On the other hand, *transformational spirituality* lays the foundation for the development of moral universality. This encourages children to inspire others and create positive change in the world, further connecting them to others through mutual support, and is taken up in the above vignette where the children are connecting to each other and learning about each other's spirituality without judgment. In a study of teachers' experiences of implementing spirituality, Fraser and Grootenboer (2004) found that encouraging spirituality in the classroom created a stronger sense of connection. Spirituality in the classroom was directly related with promoting connectedness, acceptance, and community among the children, forming a more united classroom environment. By encouraging spirituality in the classroom, a judgment-free learning environment was created. This opened up essential opportunities for children to build community and peer connections, allowing them to start and participate in significant conversations (Fraser and Grootenboer 2004).

The ability of spirituality to connect individuals does not only apply to typically developing children; it can play a significant role in the lives of children with disabilities. Within a traditional early learning environment, those with and without disabilities interact daily, and nurturing strong, authentic relationships is essential. This is particularly significant as children with disabilities experience higher occurrences of peer rejection that can negatively influence their social and spiritual development (Koller et al. 2018). By supporting children in creating meaningful connections with peers, communities, and environments, children with and without disabilities can work together to build strong friendships and learn from one another. Welcoming spirituality into the classroom can create a sense of unity and support all children in flourishing, both in and outside of the classroom setting (Harris 2015).

In addition, spirituality can be used to strengthen children's connection to nature (London 2012). For instance, by considering what it means to emotionally and spiritually receive from nature and what it means to give to nature, children can begin to relate back to their natural roots and to the energies of the Earth discussed earlier (Dallaire 2011; London 2012). Naturally, the age of the child can impact the level of connectedness they feel to the Earth as it influences how the child gives to and receives from nature. However, regardless of age, London (2012) argued that

all children could gain a unique experience from nature, thus providing them with essential connections to the world around them.

Within an educational perspective, it is clear that a key characteristic of spirituality is its provision of a sense of connectedness between the child and those around them. These key connections within the classroom can strengthen their relationships to themselves, to their peers, and to the Earth. This relatedness is essential to being in the early years, as these fundamental links help to foster healthy social and spiritual development for children with and without disabilities.

*The children and I gathered around the unidentified object.*
*What could it be?*
*"A big worm?" one child questioned*
*"A fairy that lost her wings!" another declared.*
*"It's a capillary in its cocoon, changing into a butterfly!"*
*The children quickly and carefully gathered*
*the cocoon on a leaf.*
*"It's magic!"*
*"No, it's science I bet!"*
*Though the easy thing to do would be to tell them right away*
*It's metamorphosis*
*I first allowed space for them to think,*
*to share,*
*to wonder.*

## Wonder

**Wonder**    Astonishing or marvelous thing; perplexed astonishment; from German
              *wunder*

Spirituality and children's spiritual development are grounded on their natural curiosity and wonder as they instinctively have the capacity to question and meditate on various abstractions in their lives (Zhang 2013). As Mercer (2006) claimed, *relational consciousness*, or the awareness of intangible experiences, is at the core of children's spirituality, suggesting that their natural curiosity can begin their spiritual journey at an early age. In fact, wonder is so ingrained within spirituality because it is present in every aspect of life that children interact with, including science, philosophy, and nature (Zhang 2013). Even at a young age, children are exposed to the mysteries of the world through books and media focused around magic, examining the wonders of nature and asking questions that simply cannot be answered (Zhang 2013). Take, for example, the seemingly simple, yet magical and complex transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly. While science can explain this process to children, it cannot capture the mystery and magic of nature associated with this metamorphosis.

All of the wonder within spirituality has a purpose, and, as suggested by Harris (2015), this mystery nourishes the soul and supports the enhancement and enrichment of one's spiritual identity. Children begin to ask questions and seek answers to complex problems from a young age, exploring life with awe and wonder. Indeed, through wonder, awe, and contemplation, children may begin to express their spiritual identity in various actions, such as drawing and movement, which can create critical interactions and connections with their peers and environment (Adams et al. 2016). Miller (2016) argued that, through the arts, children are not only encouraged to wonder and discover but may also create key connections, as art and nature nurture the human soul. In an early learning environment, children should be encouraged to participate in artistic activities they enjoy, and educators should support them as they locate and express themselves and their spirit (Miller 2016).

Within an educational context, wonder can promote exploration and curiosity, affording children the opportunity to engage with and question the world around them (Zhang 2013). As Zhang (2013) suggested, children have richer and deeper learning experiences within their educational environments when they are encouraged to explore their curiosity and wonder both within and beyond the classroom. In addition, Harris (2015) argued that spirituality and wonder play a key role in promoting exploration and learning in children with disabilities. This is because spirituality allows them to explore their environments and potentially discover magical or enlightening experiences. Wonder can occur in any place and at any time for children, both with and without disabilities, and therefore educators and teachers should invite and encourage this curiosity as much as possible. A rich opportunity to encourage wonder in early years contexts is to support children in reconnecting to nature as one goal within nature-based education and exploration is to foster a sense of awe, curiosity, and wonder (Harris 2015). The vignette capturing the child's interest in the caterpillar transforming into the butterfly nicely illustrates how nature, which is often easily accessible to educational institutions, can support children's wonder and spiritual development.

The arts are another way to promote spiritual growth within the classroom. As Einarsdottir et al. (2009) suggested, creative forms of identity expression, such as drawing, art projects, and play, not only provide ideal opportunities for children to explore their identity and spirituality but are also easily realized within early learning environments. By having the opportunity to communicate their self and spirit through various creative avenues, including nonverbal methods, children may feel validated within their learning environments, while educators may be afforded a look into children's inner experiences (Binder and Kotsopoulos 2011).

Though wonder and awe are often associated with positive emotions and experiences, it is critical to remember that these feelings of the mystery of the world can be frightening for some children (de Souza 2012). For some, embracing the mystery of the world, questioning higher powers, and searching for meaning or purpose in life can be an overwhelming and often frightening endeavor. This is the dark side of spirituality which can manifest itself in the mysteries of everyday life for some children and may be triggered by more serious events for others (de Souza 2012). For example, a child who may be questioning what happens when someone they

love dies may find comfort in the idea of a higher power, or they may feel fear and anxiety about a loved one leaving them to enter into the unknown. Nonetheless, in the majority of circumstances, this sense of wonder can be a very positive and powerful experience for children which can not only provide spiritual support during difficult times but can also lead to improved overall well-being and happiness (Holder et al. 2016; Zhang 2013). As children grow, the things they are curious about inherently change; however, if we can foster curiosity and awe within various experiences in the early years, the quality can be carried with them throughout their lives.

*I took on the task of explaining to a 4-year-old*
*why a daily agenda is essential for most adults.*
*I was surprised when she replied*
*by suggesting I try and*
*be less busy, asking,*
*"When do you have time to play?"*
*It took me a moment to realize it,*
*but the interaction taught me more*
*than it did her.*
*In a world with planners and*
*reminders programmed into our cellphones,*
*we often forget just how*
*busy we are.*
*We often don't realize that we are just checking tasks off our lists*
*instead of living in the moment.*
*Be present for a moment.*
*Maybe take a deep breath*
*or look around.*
*Just be.*

## Being

**Be**   Simple existence, existence in a defined state; from Greek *phúein* bring forth, cause to grow

The last characteristic to be discussed is the idea of simply being, just learning to exist and be aware of the moment. In fact, the title of this chapter focuses on being in the early years as simply learning to be in the moment is central in spiritual growth. Ashley (2007) points out that many scholars understand spirituality, or being spiritual, in terms of its Greek origins meaning "to breathe." This emphasizes the importance of teaching the spiritual self to live and breathe in the moment. Living in the moment is also another aspect that separates spirituality from religion, as religiosity in Greek is understood as a binding together of people to one belief system, which works in opposition of spirituality's openness and elusiveness of

belief systems (Ashley 2007). Evidently, living presently is an essential element of spirituality, and children seem to inherently hold this skill.

As many scholars argue, children are inherently aware of the immediate instant, allowing them to experience the notion of *being* far more than adults can (Adams et al. 2016). Children can understand and appreciate moments across time, from past experiences that brought them pain to current moments that bring them joy and to future dreams that give them hope. Being in the present moment is something children naturally do on a daily basis, and, though it is an expression of spirituality, this ability to simply be is often overlooked in children as juvenile behavior (Adams et al. 2016). It is critical to note that not all moments will be positive. For instance, when a toddler cries or is hurt, nothing else within that moment is taking place. The goal, then, is simply appreciating and acknowledging that moment and the emotions that guide it.

The experience of living in the present moment is one that appears to be simple, but it is a rather complex skill of learning to be in a single moment and one that is overlooked and underappreciated in a world seemingly obsessed with multitasking. Often, we are so busy that we end up skipping meals, missing events we would like to attend, and forgetting to simply breathe. With our vision blurred from staring at a screen all day, and our bodies tired from overscheduling ourselves, we forget to just be (Alvermann 2015). The above vignette reminds us to simply pause and take a moment to appreciate the task at hand. Through their play and interactions, children are experts of being, of simply living for the day and from moment to moment. This spiritual skill of simply being is a key component in spirituality and is often a skill that adults attempt to relocate and master once again throughout their lives (Sagberg 2008). A key element within spirituality is the ability to transcend the present time. In other words, we cannot only master being in the moment but also being in relation to time. This search for meaning in and across time is an essential characteristic of being spiritual as this is what connects humans to others, to humanity, and to the Earth (Sagberg 2008).

Within an early years context, young children naturally plan and live in the moment. This is not a skill that needs to be taught to them; rather it is something to be invited, embraced, and nurtured. Children are already experts of being in the early years. Even for skilled educators, this notion of being is not a new one as spontaneous lessons and teachable moments emerge in our daily teaching practice (Ephgrave 2018). These spontaneous moments of being allow us to experience our reality for what it is (Alvermann 2015) and can create a moment that is uniquely ours (Ephgrave 2018). As the following vignette suggests, we might look to a child or animal for guidance on how to be in the moment.

*As I sat on the floor in lotus position*
*participating in a virtual guided meditation,*
*I focused my mind on being in that moment.*
*Being present.*
*I felt and heard the rise and fall of my deep breathing*
*as a sense of calm rushed over me.*
*Suddenly the trainer suggested seeking guidance*

*from animals and children,*
*stating that they are naturally experts of*
*being in the moment.*
*This broke my concentration*
*as my mind wandered*
*back to my time working in childcare settings.*
*Whether a child was painting,*
*digging in dirt,*
*dancing,*
*or cleaning, they were immersed entirely*
*in the experience at hand.*
*In the moment.*

## The Characteristics of Spirituality in Early Years Practice

Though four main characteristics of spirituality – energy, connectedness, wonder, and being – were discussed in this chapter, it is critical to note that, since spirituality is so abstract, various authors will have varying descriptions of what they feel children's spirituality may be. The beautiful thing about spirituality, however, is that all of the characteristics are interconnected in order to create the complex notion that is spirituality. For instance, the idea of presently living is directly linked to the idea of connectedness as a sense of being or awareness is necessary when one is building strong authentic relationships to themselves and the world around them (Adams et al. 2016).

The complexity of describing or defining spirituality, however, should not discourage individuals and professionals from inviting and welcoming spirituality into the classroom, as the act of searching for one's inner spirit, their soul, can have many benefits for both children and educators (Holder et al. 2016; Zhang 2013). Spirituality is realized very differently in and by each individual; it is not something that can be implemented. Instead it must be welcomed. For this reason, we offer invitations and suggestions for practice that can support educators in their embrace of children's spirituality and being in the early years of their lives.

Ontario's Ministry of Education (2014) suggests that educators should not only consider spirituality in their everyday practice but also approach it as an important dimension of children's learning and well-being. The Ministry outlines that in order to reach these goals, many educators need to revisit and reconsider their own values, beliefs, theories, and pedagogies. This is because spirituality requires the creation of a new space, time, and attitude for both children and educators to explore their relationships and identities.

The complexity of conceptualizing spirituality and its role in our programs underlines the struggles that many educators have infusing it in their everyday practice. As relevant research highlights, educators are often so focused on children's academic skill development that they overlook the provision of opportunities

for children to engage in self-discovery (Adams et al. 2016; Binder and Kotsopoulos 2011; Walters 2008). This can contribute to why educators often feel uncomfortable with inviting spirituality into their practices. This tension is something that we proposed a spirituality project to two early childhood educators. The educators were confused when we proposed engaging preschool children in a discussion on spirituality, expressing a concern that spirituality may involve connections to religion or other orthodoxy not commonly used in a childcare practice. It was also experienced when we introduced yoga into daily physical activity time and were questioned by parents who felt that we were pushing a religious agenda onto their children.

In fact, we learned from our discussions with the children about spirituality how we might include it in our teaching practice. In contrast to the adult educators, the children very competently and easily expressed to us their views on spirituality. In their drawings, the children spoke about spirituality as "fears of being alone," "being a part of our body," "a little bit sad and a little bit happy," being "an art piece," and "purple chocolate." Even though our encounter with the children left us with more questions, they reminded us that the educator's role, first and foremost, is to be co-learner and co-researcher with children. Therefore, learning and engaging in a discussion about spirituality with children are not only about their right to be listened to and be involved in conversations about matters that involve their lives. It is also about providing opportunities for educators to become a part of children's experiences and shift our perceptions, beliefs, and views about how we perceive spirituality, children, and childhood. It pushes us to reflect more on how our power influences others and why we assume that our knowledge is superior to others and encourages us to explore and enact new approaches (Punch 2002). It provides an opportunity to build a repertoire of new pedagogical methods and skills. Grounding our pedagogy in children's experiences allows us to see issues in a more holistic and inclusive way. It helps us to reflect more on the relationships and key elements of ethical and best practice. Engaging children in a discussion on spirituality may make us more sensitive to the language and materials we use and how we build rapport with children. All of these factors may contribute to a more skillful approach to education in general. Finally, if we agree with Adams et al. (2016) that children "have a natural capacity to be spiritual" (p. 763), we must allow children to guide us in how to consider the spiritual dimension in our curriculum and pedagogy.

## Conclusion

In order to support the mind, body, and spiritual connections of children within the early years, educational institutions must not neglect children's attempts to discover and express their spirituality (Adams et al. 2016). Due to the perceived connection between religion and spirituality, supporting children's spiritual development in the traditional early years setting is uncommon (Sagberg 2008; Sheldrake 2012). However, because spirituality can help promote enhanced well-being in children and is a vital part of healthy identity development (Holder et al. 2016; Walters 2008),

welcoming children's diverse spiritual experiences into the learning environment is encouraged. With the elusive nature of the term, no single definition of spirituality can be set (Adams et al. 2016), but evidence suggests that a specific definition is not needed to promote children spiritual expression (Fraser and Grootenboer 2004). In this sense, children and educators can thrive in a co-construction of meaning and information sharing. This is especially true when considering the complexity of the characteristics within spirituality, including energy, connectedness, wonder, and being, as children's spirituality stems from various sources. Evidently, spirituality is characterized by energy and connectedness between the self, others, and the world, (Dallaire 2011; Harris 2007; Hodder 2007; London 2012) allowing children to wonder about the world around them (Zhang 2013; Mercer 2006; Harris 2015), igniting their curiosity, and focusing on simply being in the early years (Adams et al. 2016; Ashley 2007; Sagberg 2008). Each child will experience a diverse interplay of characteristics that construct their unique spirituality. The role of the educator, then, is to support the development of the whole child. This can be done when they acknowledge and welcome children's unique expressions and explorations of spirituality within the classroom. In addition, educators should foster children's spiritual development in the classroom by opening a pedagogical space for wonder, connectedness, and living presently. With educators supporting the growth of the whole child and willingly learning with them, we can ensure that children are gaining the skills they need to successfully grow and together both children and educators can simply be in the early years.

## Cross-References

▶ Contemplating Philosophy of Education: A Canadian West Coast Perspective
▶ Cultural Studies and Education
▶ Exploring the Future Form of Pedagogy: Education and Eros
▶ Integrating Community-Based Values with a Rights-Integrative Approach to Early Learning Through Early Childhood Curricula
▶ Pedagogy and the Unlearning of Self: The Performance of Crisis Situation Through Popular Culture
▶ Politics of Identity and Difference in Cultural Studies: Decolonizing Strategies
▶ Storied Assessment of the Aesthetic Experiences of Young Learners: The Timbres of a Rainbow
▶ Technology, Democracy, and Hope

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# Identity Construction Amidst the Forces of Domination

Terry Louisy

**Abstract**

Dominant group hegemony, and the discourses it generates, preserves its own privilege by carving its perspective and will into the minds of young people over time as powerful waves shape coastlines. This has particular consequences for those gendered as male and racialized as black. The negotiation of black masculinities, especially for those black males who are non-heteronormal, becomes a struggle against exclusion and resistance and being located at the bottom of a socioeconomic hierarchy determined by hegemonic masculinity. Caught between conceptual hegemony that streams the dominant's discourses of hierarchical stratification through countless images, media, advertising, historical accounts, schooling, and society's interminable dominant group messaging and the message itself of hegemonic masculinity, black masculinities are challenged with forces that threaten exclusion, dropout, trauma, and imprisonment. Whether or not this constant stream of indoctrination can be absorbed or resisted in a way that does not obliterate genuine being or necessarily require that black masculinities be relegated to the lowest levels of society is uncertain. Yet, some scholars posit that resilient self-conceptions can be scaffolded through interventions born of a critical race conceptual framework, which focuses on identity construction and which can improve self-conception and, through that, academic achievement as well.

**Keywords**

Counter spaces · Black masculinities · Anti-racist education · Critical race theory

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Self-conception is created not by biological imperatives alone but as enumerable impressions both external and internal light in the mind and are realized in consciousness. In this ongoing process of identity construction, youth are confronted both by biological indicators apparent within themselves and by dominant prevailing societal discourses that see those biological indicators as cause to ascribe particular roles to the individual and to exclude them from others especially in regard to gender, race, and class. The young mind struggles to self-perceive, to make sense of the world, and to make a place within it. But at about the age of 3 or 4, society's dominant prevailing views and discourses tend to wash over the young mind like a large wave carrying the unsuspecting traveler toward conclusions of themselves and their possibilities in regard to race and gender. In this way identity begins and continues to be heavily influenced and constructed by dominant group hegemony. Through this process the dominant group, and the discourses it generates, preserves its own privilege by carving its perspective and will into the mind of young people over time as powerful waves shape coastlines. This has particular consequences for those gendered as male and racialized as black. The negotiation of black masculinities, especially for those black males who are non-heteronormal, becomes a struggle against exclusion and resistance and being located at the bottom of a socioeconomic hierarchy determined by hegemonic masculinity. Caught between conceptual hegemony that streams the dominant's discourses of hierarchical stratification through countless images, media, advertising, historical accounts, schooling, and society's interminable dominant group messaging and the message itself of hegemonic masculinity, black masculinities are challenged with forces that threaten exclusion, dropout, trauma, and imprisonment. Whether or not this constant stream of indoctrination can be absorbed or resisted in a way that does not obliterate genuine being or necessarily require that black masculinities be relegated to the lowest levels of society is uncertain. Yet, some scholars posit that resilient self-conceptions can be scaffolded through interventions born of a critical race conceptual framework, which focuses on identity construction and which can improve self-conception and, through that, academic achievement as well.

It has been established that both race and gender are social constructs and not biological determinants. D. Kwan-Lafond references this in her article, "Racialized Masculinities in Canada," stating that:

> . . .scientifically speaking, there is no such thing as 'race': people's differences or similarities may be related to their genetics and heredity, or to their upbringing, or to sociocultural norms and values, but not to their 'race'. Therefore, people are not smarter, taller, fatter, funnier, or more inclined to be good at music, sports, or leader ship simply because they are from a certain racial group. (Kwan-Lafond 2012, p. 223)

Similarly, masculinity and the traditional gender binary construct of male versus female are described by R.W. Connell as the result of historical and social forces, not as a result of biological imperatives. In her article, "The Social Organization of Masculinity," the concept of masculinity is interrogated as historical process and behavioral performance. Connell writes in reference to masculinity saying "that we

are talking about a historical process involving the body, not a fixed set of biological determinants" (Connell 1995, p. 71). Connell ultimately determines that "Gender is a scandal, an outrage, from the point of view of essentialism" (Connell 1995, p. 72) in that it is a social construct used primarily as a system of oppression to subjugate women, non-heteronormal individuals, and even the men who become an instrument of oppression in its name and in some ways are imprisoned by its parameters and imperatives. Describing masculinity as hegemony, Connell writes:

> The concept of 'hegemony', deriving from Antonio Gramsci's analysis of class relations, refers to the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life. At any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted, Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (Connell 1995, p. 77)

Connell goes on to include race and subjugated masculinities along with women as the victims that exist within hegemonic masculinity's field of oppression. In reference to race relations and masculinity, Connell writes:

> In a white-supremacist context, black masculinities play symbolic roles for white gender construction. For instance, black sporting stars become exemplars of masculine toughness, while the fantasy figure of the black rapist plays an important role in sexual politics among whites, a role much exploited by rightwing politics in the United States. Conversely, hegemonic masculinity among whites sustains the institutional oppression and physical terror that have framed the making of masculinities in black communities. (Connell 1995, p. 81)

In regard to what Connell refers to as "subjugated" or non-normalized masculinities, Connell recalls the trial and conviction of the great satirist Oscar Wilde: "The relation of marginalization and authorization may also exist between subordinated masculinities. A striking example is the arrest and conviction of Oscar Wilde, one of the first men caught in the net of modern anti-homosexual legislation" (Connell 1995, p. 91).

Thus two of the main indicators of individual identity are social constructs heavily influenced by central hegemonic discourses that shape gender and racial understanding in identity construction: conceptual hegemony and hegemonic masculinities. Both create hierarchies of oppression using phenotypical and biological indicators to gender and racialize non-male, white, so-called heteronormal individuals into a lower stratosphere of social hierarchy where the opportunities to lead and shape society are few. Thus racializing and gendering preserves and protects dominant group privilege and secures those who hold membership within it atop these hierarchies at the expense of those racialized as black or gendered as non-male heteronormal. Young people subject to this process of indoctrination begin to see themselves in particular ways. These hegemonic processes that have existed and that have been evolving and creating artifacts and systems of indoctrination in

western society for centuries shape perception of gender as well as race, what this means in the world, and ultimately how they will be viewed by society.

Conceptual hegemony is an extension of the centuries long European and imperialist project to colonize the minds and bodies of those considered "other" or outside the dominant white male group in order that they might conform to an agenda of racial and gender domination and stratification through propagandistic image, caricature, advertisement, and narrative. Having for centuries infused and commanded language and therefore the signs and signals we use to interpret the world with dominant group concepts, ideas, and images of their own superiority dominant group, European imperialism has commandeered and coopted the views and self-conception of the colonized so that they have internalized the dominant group message even though they are disadvantaged by it. Goldberg explains European conceptual hegemony as the power to control the signifiers individuals use to interpret and understand the world:

> In commanding the culture, social subjects are uniquely situated to assert power. Where the cultural invention is given over to cultivating order, to rendering the strange familiar so as to control it, and to defining exclusion and inclusion, the violence of power and the power of violence will be central to it. . .. Dominant discourses – those that in the social relations of power at some moment come to assume authority and confer status – reflect the material relations that render them dominant. More significantly, they articulate these relations, conceptualize them, give them form, express their otherwise unarticulated and yet inarticulate values. It is this capacity – to name the condition, to define it, to render it not merely meaningful but actually conceivable and comprehensible – that at once constitutes power over it, to determine after all what is (or is not), to define its limits. To control the conceptual scheme is to command one's world. (Goldberg 1993, p. 9)

As conceptual hegemony becomes something of the medium by shaping signs and symbols, image, media, literature, advertising, and so on, hegemonic masculinity becomes the message, requiring that black masculinities be relegated to a lower rung of society's hierarchical socioeconomic structure that is presented as some kind of natural order where white male dominance and privilege is shorn up and preserved. Thus hegemonic masculinity begins to be manifested in the enumerable micro-aggressions and limitations that emerge from systemic and institutional racism and gender bias served by the dominant, as well as how by simply being in the significant majority those marginalized by this system of control see the hierarchies of hegemonic masculinity revealed and confirmed as far more positions of authority, influence, and leadership in society are held by the dominant. P.H. Collins in her article, "A telling difference: Dominance, strength and black masculinities," discusses the hierarchies of hegemonic masculinity stating:

> Within this context, varying combinations of remaining un-partnered with a woman, of rejecting heterosexuality, of being unemployed or living in poverty, of being a non-adult male, or being socially classified as black become the criteria for attributing marginalized and subordinated masculinities to racial, ethnic, working-class, and gay men. Depending on where males are placed along the continuum, they encounter variations of marginalized and subordinated masculinities. . .. Relegated to the very bottom of hierarchies of masculinity,

perceptions of black masculinity in America signal deviancy and thus provide important examples of what not to be. African American men find themselves between a rock and a hard place of being unable to achieve masculinity within the standards reserved for white men and of resisting the forms of black masculinity offered to them by those same white men. Overall, ideas about white masculine strength remain normative to the point where black men must struggle to claim legitimate space as men. Moreover, alternative ideas about black masculinity advanced within black male groups and within African American communities may further complicate this nexus of meanings of black masculinity. (Collins 2006, pp. 84–85)

Young people racialized as black and gendered as male and therefore locating within a field of black masculinities are socialized to consider themselves outside of the privileged path to society's rewards. Yet they are compelled by self-worth and a desire to be valued to find a way to achieve the goals of economic prosperity, strength, resiliency, and self-sufficiency that hegemonic masculinity demands of them while excluding most from fully achieving. Many find themselves conflicted by the need to conform to society's norms by performing well in school and achieving academically as a path to gaining economic success or by being resistant to society's strictures in ways that sets them outside of the parameters that can provide sustainable economic success. A bitter choice that has them either succumbing to the very dominant group systems of control that has placed them at the bottom of a hierarchy of white male supremacy or resisting this system in ways that threaten dropout and imprisonment.

Individuals from lower socioeconomic situations who are socialized in cultures of resistance and live in communities depressed with economic depravations and traumatized by violence enter schools that are underfunded and under-resourced and are judged unworthy and streamed to ill-suited programs often by undertrained disengaged school administrators or teachers who consider them underachievers or high risk and often stream them into academic programing where rote learning is a staple. They struggle upstream against a hidden curriculum in traditional schools that channels European-dominated discourses through curriculum materials, teachers, administrators, academic programs, and the signs and symbols that proliferate on school and classroom walls. This can contribute to the traumatization students struggling with black masculinities can experience in these school settings.

J. Schwartz discusses the educational trauma these students encounter in her article, "A New Normal: Young Men of Color, Trauma and Engagement in Learning":

> . . .educational trauma – trauma experienced in school or before and after school – participants reported trauma experienced in middle school or high school with the perpetrators being peers or teachers. These experiences of trauma included, but were not limited to, verbal abuse in the form of ongoing name-calling, bullying, condescending and demeaning language by teachers and school official; physical abuse – gang beatings, threats with weapons, shootings, witnessing violent deaths of friends and classmates; educational abuse – inappropriate. . .special education placements, chaotic and out of control classrooms, and criminalization of school settings. (Thompson and Schwartz 2014, p. 288)

Caught within this context where the impediments to success in society seem insurmountable compared to the affluent who are handed so many advantages at birth, those struggling within black masculinities chose to find purchase and self-worth within the hierarchical strata of hegemonic masculinities anywhere they can find it, which often means taking on a tough boy or "cool pose" presentation or acting "street wise."

"Cool pose" means in effect taking on the aspect of irascible resiliency and untouchable inaccessibility. It means presenting as "street" tough and strong and unassailable in a world where the masculine ideal of being in control and on top is unavailable. Carl James describes cool pose in his article "Masculinity, racialization, and schooling." He writes:

> In Canada, as in the United States, the idea of being "cool," as Charles points out, is not only related to how some black youth negotiate and navigate school in Canada, and Toronto in particular, but also how many of them understand and perform their constructed gender identities, or masculinity, which is intimately connected to their socialization in a society that operates to marginalize them (see Dance 2002; Ferguson 2000; James 2005; Majors and Billson 1992; Noguera 2003a, b; Odih 2002). Using the term cool pose to capture this understanding and performance of masculinity by African-American youth. (James 2009, p. 103)

James goes on his description of "cool pose" to reference Majors (1990) article "Cool pose: Black masculinity and sports" quoting Majors comment:

> that black men often cope with their frustration, embitterment, alienation, and social impotence by channelling their creative energies into the construction of unique, expressive, and conspicuous styles of demeanour, speech, gesture, clothing, hairstyle, walk, stance, and handshake. For the black male, these expressive behaviours, which are a particular manifestation [of cool pose . . . offset an externally imposed invisibility, and provide a means to show the dominant culture (and the black male's peers) that the black male is strong and proud and can survive, regardless of what may have been done to harm or limit him . . . It is adaptation rather than submission. In that sense, then, cool pose is an attempt to carve out an alternative path to achieve the goals of dominant masculinity" (R. Majors, p. 111). Majors and Billson (1992) further point out that cool pose is constructed from attitudes and actions that become firmly entrenched in the black male's psyche as he adopts a façade to ward off second class status. It provides a mask that suggests competence, high self-esteem, control and inner strength. It also hides self-doubt, insecurity and inner turmoil." (James 2009, p. 5)

In taking on this aspect of performed black masculinity to assert his resistance to the dominant and its constraints, yet paradoxically trying to conform to its hegemonic masculinity imperatives despite its seemingly insurmountable constraints, the young black male is caught in what James characterizes as a "double bind" "existing in a situation wherein they are expected to provide "evidence of their manhood while being denied access to the means of achieving the status that would provide such evidence" (Hatchett et al. 1999, p. 72).

In adopting the "cool pose" and the behaviors of resistance that go along with it, many young black males often confirm the preconceptions of the school and its administrators that black masculinity of this kind is disengaged, inaccessible, at-risk,

potentially dangerous or unreachable, and destined for dropout. This untenable situation inevitably becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy for so many who find themselves in a cycle of disengagement and attendant school authority sanctions where dropout does result. Discussing the phenomenon of dropout in Canadian schools, C. James goes on in his article to reference G. Dei's 1997 publication, *Reconstructing 'drop-out': A Critical ethnography of the dynamics of black student's disengagement from school,* stating that:

> Dei (1997) writes of the high school "push out" as opposed to "dropout" rates of black students in the Toronto school system resulting from the "complex dynamics of cultures, environments and organizational lives of mainstream schools" (p. 246). Dei found that students become disengaged from school and drop out because of "differential treatment based on race, having to deal with an exclusive curriculum, and poor communicative and pedagogical practices that failed to adequately explore the complexities of their experiences that have shaped their lives." (James 2009, p. 246)

After dropout many black males end up incarcerated. T. Gaskew in his article, "Developing a Prison Education Pedagogy," comments on the US results of this viscous cycle of dropout stating, "Given that almost 80% of the 2.2 million offenders currently housed inside our nation's jails and prisons have never seen the inside of a college classroom in their lives, and that you're looking to educate an incarcerated audience that consists of nearly a 40% Black male population, pedagogically speaking, race does matter" (Gaskew 2015, p. 68). These figures attest to the fact that those located within the spectrum of black masculinities will see, feel, and taste the effects of conceptual hegemony and hegemonic masculinity all around them continuously throughout their lives, and the effects will be deep and long lasting. But scholarship on human development and schooling tells us that this process is most susceptible to a clear and coordinated intervention when a young person is at the age of 11 or 12 at which point their sense of race and gender has been developing for sometime, but where there is also a greater capacity to question and challenge what before was mostly streaming through the mind.

Clinical psychologist and educational sociologist J. Piaget advanced a theory of cognitive development which explained that students in grade eight enter what he described as a "formal operational stage," which he argued was the fourth and final stage of cognitive human development (Santrock 2001). At this point of human development, the mind was more receptive to understand more abstract concepts such as race. In accordance with this premise, C. Cordes and E. Miller in their article "Fool's gold: A critical look at computers in childhood" argued that this was also the stage where youth become more independent consumers of information and technology (Cordes and Miller 2000). This suggests that students entering grade eight would be most receptive and cognitively capable of deconstructing and disrupting the hegemonic discourses that influence their worldviews. It must be stated however that more recent research by C. Park in her 2011 article "Young children making sense of racial and ethnic differences: A sociocultural approach" argues that students develop an understanding of abstract concepts such as race at a much earlier stage, about the age of 3 or 4. Moreover, a more recent 2017 study called "Infants Rely

More on Gaze Cues From Own-Race Than Other-Race Adults for Learning Under Uncertainty" by Kang Lee et al. suggest that, even from infancy, racial bias exists. This would suggest that principles of inclusion should be taught throughout a student's schooling experience.

However, since being able to cognitively recognize the components and impacts of conceptual hegemony in regard to race have not been proven to be within the capacity of an infant or those in early childhood, it seems reasonable to assume that Piaget's assertions in regard to cognitive understanding coupled with Cordes and Millers assertions regarding understanding technology are appropriate as indicators that youth would be more able to deconstruct these discourses, to understand their origin and purpose, and to see that the choice to either comply or resist these influences is indeed available to them. At this point, according to Piaget, and to Cordes and Miller, a young person might be continuing formal schooling in the west at the intermediate level or otherwise during grade seven or eight. Here the deconstruction and disruption of the dominant project is essential when considering the effects on those who occupy a field of black masculinities is exclusion, disengagement, trauma, dropout, and imprisonment.

Scholarship indicates that interventions which utilize a critical race conceptual framework that places race at the center of a program of the explication and resistance to the multiple oppressions that these hegemonic discourses promote and which can scaffold a more complete understanding of the historical European imperialist and colonial project that drives them in respect of identity construction can help students racialized and gendered by these discourses to disrupt the narratives and the constrains on their self-expression and self-determination and to chart a self-directed path of their own choosing. T. Gaskew in "Developing a Prison Education Pedagogy" quotes bell hooks to describe critical race theory who states "...we use a number of different voices, but all recognize that racial subordination maintains and perpetuates the...social order" (Delgado and Stefancic 2005, p. 83). Critical race theory scholars argue that:

> CRT, as an analytical framework for addressing issues of social inequity, can be utilized as a way in which to uncover the racism embedded within American social structures and practices. More importantly, critical race theorists seek to reveal the hidden curriculum of racial domination and talk about the ways in which it is central to the maintenance of white supremacy. (Lynn 2005, p. 129)

These interventions would include introducing schooling pedagogy based on anti-racist education principles which stress inclusion from a critical race framework; increasing student engagement through literacy projects that focus on individual and cultural exploration and which privilege language and expressions from a student's country of origin; and informing students who feel excluded from traditional schooling that university bridging programs can provide safe spaces for black masculinities to be discussed and deconstructed in ways that can put

a postsecondary education in reach in ways that traditional schooling compromised by the hidden curriculum cannot.

Interventions for students working through black masculinities in schools would benefit most from a critical perspective that can illuminate the hidden curriculum as this would be a prime example of hegemony at work in their own context as well as cause to understand that the historical and socioeconomic imperatives that impact on self-esteem and self-determination once understood can be overcome in service to a self-directed construction of identity. This could encourage greater engagement and, if properly scaffolded and supported, could provide a truer sense of purpose and more viable opportunities for success.

The principles of anti-racism forwarded by Professor George Dei, in his book *Anti-Racism Education: Theory and Practice* published in 1996, and his subsequent publication in 2000, *Removing the Margins: The Challenges and Possibilities of Inclusive Schooling*, outlines a program of anti-racist education that exposes the hidden curriculum, and from a critical race, theoretical framework provides a pedagogical strategy that informs students, teachers, and educators about European dominant group conceptual hegemony and its effects; identifies racism as one of many systems of oppression that obstructs and inhibits student progress and achievement; outlines and privileges an Afrocentric approach to curriculum materials and to the signs and symbols that are ubiquitous in school settings instead of those that are Eurocentric; and emphasizes the need for more teachers and school authority figures who reflect and understand the ethnic background of the students negotiating black masculinities and who can be effective and persuasive role models of success.

Yet understanding and improving the interplay of gender relations would have to be a central tenant of this pedagogical approach as well, one that an Afrocentric approach to schooling would have to work alongside and fully incorporate and embrace. For as Connell writes at the end of the third chapter of her 1995 seminal work *Masculinities:*

> The patriarchal order prohibits forms of emotion, attachment and pleasure that patriarchal society itself produces. Tensions develop around sexual inequality and men's rights in marriage, around the prohibition on homosexual affection (given that patriarchy constantly produces homo-social institutions) and around the threat to social order symbolized by sexual freedoms. This sketch of crisis tendencies is a very brief account of a vast subject, but it is perhaps enough to show changes in masculinities in something like their true perspective. The canvas is much broader than images of a modern male sex role, or renewal of the deep masculine, imply. Economy, state and global relationships are involved as well as households and personal relationships. The vast changes in gender relations around the globe produce ferociously complex changes in the conditions of practice with which men as well as women have to grapple. No one is an innocent bystander in this arena of change. We are all engaged in constructing a world of gender relations. How it is made, what strategies different groups pursue, and with what effects, are political questions. Men no more than women are chained to the gender patterns they have inherited. Men too can make

political choices for a new world of gender relations. Yet those choices are always made in concrete social circumstances, which limit what can be attempted; and the outcomes are not easily controlled. (Connell, p. 86)

Hence, our understanding that gender is a social construct in which hegemonic masculinities and patriarchal narratives promote dominant, domineering, and sometimes violent behaviors with respect to females and non-heteronormal individuals in society implicates us all and threatens to undermine the dynamics and possibilities within families and within society more broadly.

Interventions that would enable students struggling to navigate identity construction and black masculinities to deconstruct the messages of conceptual hegemony flowing to them through new media and technology such as the Internet would need to be a central component of scaffolding positive identity construction for youth. An understanding and capacity to identify hegemonic discourses both subtle and overt that are imbedded in image, video, music, and social media is an essential skill for youth working through identity construction, and the development of new literacies that can enable effective interpretation of image, video, and narrative that can heighten awareness is integral to that understanding. In his 2006 publication, *Literacy, Technology, and Diversity: Teaching for success in changing times*, authors J. Cummins et al. discuss how new literacies can be enhanced and explored as students positively impact on their own identity construction by investigating their own cultural backgrounds in self-directed projects that expand and enhance their understanding of the contributions and achievements stemming from their countries of origin. Here new media literacies as well as skills on how to deconstruct and produce media are developed by enabling youth to generate cultural artifacts about their own cultural background that they research, produce and share with peers, teachers and others (Cummins et al. 2006, p. 44).

Another intervention that can scaffold positive identity construction for those struggling with negotiating their relationship with black masculinities is to inform at-risk students of other avenues to postsecondary education such as the GED and bridging programs so that they are aware that navigating and conforming to the hidden curriculum in schools is not the only way to postsecondary education. High school equivalency programs must be systematically presented to at-risk students in danger of being pushed out of traditional schooling as a viable alternative. These programs are often described by those as offering "counter spaces" or safe spaces where students working through exclusion, trauma, dropout, and incarceration in respect to black masculinities can resume their path to academic success and potentially economic success while at the same time being empowered to grapple and work through their issues contending with being racialized as black and gendered as male.

In her article, "High School Equivalency as Counter-Space," author J. Schwartz writes of counter space saying that the concept emerges out of critical race theory and that they emerged:

...as a regenerating space that Black students created in White universities to escape discrimination. Counter-spaces are often created in same-race settings to acknowledge a

marginalized group's life experiences (Solorzano et al. 2000). They may be actual physical places of meeting or emotional spaces of voice, resistance, and healing. Carter (2007) calls these spaces "identity affirming counter-spaces (p. 542)." (Schwartz 2014, p. 38)

As counter space, postsecondary bridging programs or general education development courses (GED) can function, according to Schwartz, as a safe alternative access point to postsecondary education; "In contrast to the toxic schools that the young men had left, the GED® program was a space of physical safety, voice, silence, emotional healing, and relationship. The young men viewed the GED® as a counterspace embodied in physical, ideological, and experiential dimensions" (Schwartz 2014, p. 39). That these courses can provide what general schooling cannot might very well be an important element of identity construction for at-risk students providing them with a chance to achieve goals previously presumed out of reach.

With interventions such as these that can enable positive identity construction, although compelled to occupy lower levels of societal stratification by hegemonic masculinity, those racialized as black and who occupy multiple masculinities can resist the conceptual hegemonic and hegemonic masculinity forces that limit their possibilities. Interventions that are employed at the stage of adolescence, that improve literacy, that utilize technology, and that allow for alternate access to higher education can improve self-conception in identity construction as well as academic achievement and the possibilities for personal success among the minority racialized as black and gendered as male and struggling through the imperatives and undermining challenges of black masculinities.

## Cross-References

▶ A Decolonial, Intersectional Approach to Disrupting Whiteness, Neoliberalism, and Patriarchy in Western Early Childhood Education and Care
▶ Between Cultural Literacy and Cultural Relevance: A Culturally Pragmatic Approach to Reducing the Black-White Achievement Gap
▶ Explorations of Post-Identity in Relation to Resistance: Why Difference Is Not Diversity
▶ Social Media and the Quest for Democracy: Faking the Re-awakening
▶ Spiritual Meditations: Being in the Early Years

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# Never-Ending Adolescence

**22**

## A Psychoanalytic Study of Resistance

Farah Virani-Murji and Lisa Farley

## Contents

**Abstract**

In this chapter, we speculate about a psychic quality of resistance manifesting in a fantasy formation that we are calling "never-ending adolescence." Also known as the *Peter Pan syndrome*, we argue that never-ending adolescence is made from a fantasy of not growing up that takes shape in a longing to dwell forever in "what we imagine as a time before" (Britzman, The very thought of education: psychoanalysis and the impossible professions. State University of New York Press, Albany, 2009, p. 43). We propose that the technologically driven quality of today's adolescence amplifies this archaic fantasy structure, setting into motion the creation of nostalgic objects that have come to be known as "throwback" phenomena signifying fantasied portals into an idealized time of the childhood past. Such phenomena, we suggest, freeze time into "immobile sections" that secure a certainty of experience and resist what Julia Kristeva (Hatred and forgiveness. Columbia University Press, New York, 2013) calls the "*mobility of duration*" (p. 135, original emphasis). Against a backdrop of throwback phenomena, we theorize never-ending adolescence as marked by a halting resistance of

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time that defends against entry into a future plugged into an avalanche of both information and uncertainty. Through our discussion, we pose a challenge to developmental constructions positing adolescence as simply a forerunner to adulthood and rather suggest how we are all adolescents when we engage idealized objects and attachments that stall the mobility of time. The challenge for both teachers and students is to imagine ways of being and becoming that can make tolerable, and even enjoyable, the imperfections and frustrations of living a life that is less filtered and fuller for it.

## Introduction

### Education and Resistance: A Psychoanalytic Discussion

"Education," Deborah Britzman (2010) reminds us, "is no stranger to resistance" (p. 240). Much of this has to do with what learning demands of the subject. Not only does education confront learners with new, unfamiliar, or difficult knowledge, it also imposes a demand for change that can register as a loss, risk, or criticism of the self. For Britzman (1998), psychoanalysis begins with precisely this view of education, one that takes as axiomatic the emotional stakes of learning. From this perspective, education is not only a progress narrative toward mastery but an uneasy encounter with "perspectives, situations, and ideas that may not just be unfamiliar but appear at first glance as a criticism of the learner's view" (p. 11). Insofar as learning involves negotiating meaning "with what is always necessarily outside and other to the subject itself," it also sets into motion an experience of loss that means giving up parts of the self that one has come to recognize and love (Todd 2003, p. 19). This is precisely why, as Anna Freud (1937) argued almost a century ago, we should *expect* students to resist education. "Step by step," A. Freud explains, "education aims at the exact opposite of the child's instinctive desires" (p. 58). As Sharon Todd (2003) writes, "there is something profoundly at risk in coming to know, involving renunciations and sacrifices that are sometimes too great to bear" (p. 20). Such risk is unevenly distributed and can be particularly pronounced when the knowledge on offer feels too distant from the identities of students whose experiences are disappeared from the normative aims of curriculum.

No wonder education provokes resistance. All at once, it asks of students to change who they are, to consider the views of others, to think on their own, and to do so while searching for lost traces of themselves that may or may not be found in curriculum and pedagogy. Still, narratives of progress tend to override any consideration of loss, and so resistance, as part and parcel of learning. In James Stillwaggon's (2017) words, the pain of loss "remains unspeakable in the language of curriculum, and in which educational transformation presents itself as a positive

growth without negative residue or remainder" (p. 52). Psychoanalysis interferes with this dreamy narrative, offering instead a study of the residues and remainders that resist education as symbolic of experiences that are otherwise refused expression. Where school success too often translates into assimilation or compliance, resistance may be read as transformative, taking shape in psychical acts of protest against social norms, painful legacies, and unequal structures that flatten the diversities of human experience. Here, we can think of resistance as a psychical labor of standing up for difference amid policies and practices that aim to school students into normative ways of being in the name of happy and bright futures (Ahmed 2010). And here is where psychoanalysis might come closest to educational theories of resistance that read the student's refusal to learn not as an individual failure needing more education but rather as an effect of living in an oppressive social world that itself requires radical change (Giroux 1984).

As much as resistance shines a light on the impingements of the outside world, it can also refer to *internal* defense mechanisms that protect the ego from its own desires and instincts delivering "unwelcome affects" (A. Freud 1937, p. 32). Resistance is, in this context, a response to internal pressure in a bid to preserve a sense of "the self's ideality" in the face of intense affects such as hatred, frustration, and rage, but also even pleasing feelings of tenderness, pleasure, and desire (Britzman 2010, p. 244). Resistance protects the ego from pain and keeps us from our deepest wishes and wants. "With resistance," Britzman (2010) writes, "desire is held in suspense" (p. 244). This is a paradoxical statement, for, in common parlance, getting what one wants should present no conflict, and certainly not pain. But, as Adam Phillips (2010) reminds us, "people can be frightened of pleasure" and often "hide from themselves what their real pleasures are" (p. 86). The reasons for this have to do with the ways that pleasure marks the most vulnerable place of who we are; what we want stands as a reminder of how much we have to lose. The brightest future imaginable is tinged with the melancholic anticipation of its loss. Not only does admitting desire carry this risk of loss, it can be met with disapproval, or be felt, from the inside, as conflictive. We can and often have "competing pleasures" emerging at a crossroads between desire for the self and the desires of others (Phillips 2010, p. 86). Amid conflict, it can be tempting to "sacrifice my genuine interests for the love and approval" of others (p. 86). At the level of the unconscious, then, desire is troubling, for it exposes the fault lines of human vulnerability: anxieties of loss, wishes for love and to be loved, and fears of punishment for wanting something forbidden.

Early in his work, Sigmund Freud changed his mind about the meaning of resistance that marked its own "revolutionary change" (Lear 2005, p. 134). No longer a stubborn obstacle to the unconscious, Freud began to read resistance as testimony in disguise: what he called a "*compromise formation*" signaling conflicting forces emerging from the very thing to which it seemed opposed. Phillips (1994) makes precisely this point when he describes "resistances" as "peculiarly inventive artifacts" annexed by past pleasures and pains that they also fend off (p. 86). Resistance is therefore a contradictory structure and itself a representation of

conflict, the tip of the iceberg into underwater dissent. As Britzman (2010) argues, resistance can feel like "a fight between affect and idea, where one both knows and does not know, and where one wishes to disturb the universe but prefers not to" (p. 247). When affect and idea are in conflict, "as they are in a time of resistance," Britzman (1998) explains that "the self struggles for elusive mastery," setting into motion a host of resistances (p. 119). Reversal, repetition, idealization, denial, and even altruism usher in a feeling of control and defend against uncertainty and loss. For instance, A. Freud (1937) notes that resistance can function as a "reaction formation" that makes painful feelings more tolerable (p. 39). Through reversal, she writes, "a child may exhibit indifference when we should have looked for disappointment, exuberant high spirits instead of mortification, excessive tenderness instead of jealousy" (p. 39). Britzman (1998), too, notes that the tendency to repeat familiar actions can resist the painful labor of memory. It can feel easier to "fixate in repetition and nostalgia for the lost object" rather than represent loss in the work of remembering the emptiness left behind (Britzman 1998, p. 103). In each case, resistance can be read as an unconscious communication that covers its own tracks; that is, indifference represents *and* conceals disappointment, high spirits hint at *and* hide mortification, intense love conveys *and* denies jealousy, and nostalgia unveils *and* refuses grief. This is why Britzman suggests, with Freud, that teachers respond to resistance not simply with more demands for attention or knowledge. To do so is only to intensify the conflict. If all goes well, teachers may rather read resistance as a "precondition" (p. 118), provided that "resistance to learning" can be "made into a curiosity to learn from resistance" (p. 134). The question is whether we can be curious about the affects that resistances fend off. Both frustrating and creative, charged with affect and the idea it refuses, resistance requires patience in working through the significance of these tensions.

The work of psychoanalysis, and the work of this chapter, is to surface unwelcome affects held in psychic forms of resistance and to give words to the ideas they represent. With A. Freud (1937), we seek to trace resistances to their "historical source," with a view to "recover their mobility" in language, where they can be integrated, contemplated for their effects, shared with others, and ever remade (p. 33). After all, "[w]hat saves us from useless haphazardness and from the implosive repetition of long ago events that seem to resist language," writes Britzman (2010), "*is that we can put these feelings into words*" (p. 241, emphasis added). The gamble is that words also confront us with the "emotional pain" that resistance fends off (Britzman 2010, p. 242). In what follows, we give language to feelings held in a particular form of resistance manifesting as a fantasy of stopping time that protects the ego from the uncertainties of entering into the world as a historical subject. Drawing from Kristeva (2009), we examine the adolescent "need to believe" (p. 13) in an idealized object that resists the human fact of failure wrought by living in time or the "mobility of duration" (2010, p. 135). Through our analysis of a range of "throwback" phenomena taking hold in a highly digitized era of contemporary adolescence, we underscore the importance of narratives that can be curious about the ordinary failures that resistance fends off, that support

processes of working through the emotional pain of becoming that is our human condition, and, if all goes well, that bring into relief the impossible search for a perfectly filtered one.

## On the Incredible Need to Believe and the Resistance of Time

Kristeva (2009) offers a discussion of perpetual adolescence in her treatise on the figure of the adolescent "believer" (p. 14). In this figure, she unearths the feverish qualities of the mind's search for the "*Ideal Object*" in a bid to defend against the losses underwriting the experience of being and becoming (p. 14, original emphasis). The adolescent believer, Kristeva argues, presents as a passionate quest for certitude that she describes as "a *malady* of ideality" (p. 16). This figure stands in juxtaposition with Freud's Oedipal child, who, in Kristeva's (2009) words, "is a subject of epistemophilic curiosity" and a "*seeker of knowledge*" driven by curiosity about the meaning, and origins, of existence (p. 14, original emphasis). While the Oedipal child meets the stumbling block of parental love that prohibits desire, the adolescent believer is driven by a quest for absolute satisfaction that resists the ambivalence of love, the limits of desire, and the destabilizing effect of questions. Thinking with Kristeva, Britzman (2012) echoes this position: "adolescence trades the ambivalence and questions of childhood sexual research for the absolutisms of knowledge" (p. 279). Kristeva (2009) describes the distinction thusly: "*The adolescent is not a lab scientist; he's a believer*" (p. 14, original emphasis).

   The sheer force of ideality stiffens the elastic qualities of inner life. It splits the world into extremes of good and bad that resist the messy complexities that constitute being and becoming. In this sense, the adolescent need to believe may be thought of as a form of resistance that fends off the ordinary losses, limits, and failures of life. It has, in Kristeva's (2009) view, a stabilizing effect on the mind that may be thought of as a defense against psychic tumult. While self-protective, Kristeva (2009) adds a cautionary note: Ideality is "[a]n extremely dangerous stabilization" that is "*fatal. . . for the subject*" (p. 17, original emphasis). The reason for this has to do with the way ideality gives way to "a fall into suffering when ideality is disillusioned or fails to stabilize the subject" (Britzman 2012, p. 279). The problem is that we can suffer deeply by ideals that fail to materialize, even while their impossibility fuels a never-ending quest. Strangely, the impossible quality of ideals casts a long shadow confirming the belief in their existence. As Kristeva (2009) writes, "*the shadow of the ideal has fallen over adolescent drive and crystallized in the need to believe*" (p. 19, original emphasis). At stake here is a brittle psychical position built on a superhuman image of perfection that fossilizes around the rigid structure of the *superego*, where extremes of pleasure and punishment are animated and blurred. Ideals may inspire, but they also hurt.

   The adolescent malady of ideality may be read as an addendum to Kristeva's (1995) earlier work in the *New Maladies of the Soul*, where she speculates about a malaise born of a modern age of political crisis and mass-mediated culture in the Western world. As Kristeva (1995) writes of this era: "[T]oday's men and women–

who are stress-ridden and eager to achieve, to spend money, have fun, and die–dispense with the representation of their experience of what we call psychic life" (p. 7). Cast in the language of the adolescent believer, the aforementioned purchase of achievement might be read as a malady of ideality, where possessions fend off the uncertainties of modern life. For us, Kristeva's adolescent believer represents a related malady of the soul spurred on in a highly digital world that takes "refuge in the image," where filters protect against the imperfections of humanity (1995, p. 9). We further suggest it is possible to link Kristeva's adolescent malady of ideality with her later discussion on the resistance of time. For Kristeva (2013), the resistance of time marks a plunge into "*false time*" or "*ignored time*" that defends against the temporality of living in history or "*duration*" (p. 134, original emphasis). This temporal stoppage is rooted in a fantasy of the object as "unchanging" and eternally true (Britzman 2012, p. 279). However, to experience psychical life is to experience objects, including ideals, as changed by the passage of time: what Kristeva (2013) calls the "*mobility of duration*" (p. 135, original emphasis). In the pursuit of a totally satisfying and unchanging ideal, the adolescent need to believe resists the endurance of time, compounded by a digital world in which information arrives in no time at all.

In what follows, we bring these qualities of never-ending adolescence to bear on a handful of digital attachments and recurring motifs associated with a contemporary generation of young people. Known as millennials, this generation has not experienced a time before the World Wide Web of the Internet. We speculate about what is psychically going on and at stake in each example, with a focus on how the fantasy structure of never-ending adolescence takes shape in, and can be amplified by, the digital world. The hope is to render the metaphor of never-ending adolescence in ways that are intentionally playful. We present each example as a snapshot, or symptom, that has at its foundation the psychical position of never-ending adolescence. To conclude, we underscore the possibility of another sort of engagement that symbolizes or "puts into words" the anxieties that adolescent ideality fends off. What does it mean, we ask, to be curious about the conflicts fossilized in the stalled time of never-ending adolescence? What kind of education can support the painful labor of facing the losses of living a life? Can *the teacher* be curious about her own adolescent filters of an ideal education?

## #tbt and Never Letting Go

While all forms of separation invoke a fear of loss, we suggest that the highly digitized world of our contemporary moment provides great traction for the adolescent fantasy of ideality, with its vice grip on lost objects. Scrolling through the images gathered under the hashtag *throwback thursday* (#tbt or #throwbackthursday), one gets a sense of the spellbinding quality of adolescent ideality. The hashtag has received attention from bloggers and popular culture websites, where articles can be found outlining the guidelines and rules of the hashtag, including how to harness the action of calling back memories for advertising and marketing. First used in 2006 by the blogger Matt Halfhill, the hashtag gained momentum in 2011 on Instagram and, by 2013, became one of the most popular topics on the platform (Gannes 2014). To date, the use of the

hashtag exceeds 450 million on Instagram. The hashtag is commonly used while posting photographs of one's childhood or reminiscing of a time that is imagined to be easier or more pleasant than the current moment. In relation to this last claim, Leahey (2014) asserts that engaging with the hashtag #tbt on social media allows participants to call back the past to the present, as they share in an "universal longing" (para. 4). Immersing oneself in nostalgia promises to alleviate feelings of loneliness and strengthen belongingness in a community. Zhou et al. (2008) suggest that "the past, when appropriately harnessed, can strengthen psychological resistance to the vicissitudes of life" (p. 1028). Nostalgia functions as "psychological resource" that protects the ego "in situations of self-threat and social threat" (Zhou et al. 2008, p. 1028). Returning to Britzman, "nostalgia for the lost object" allows the ego to hold open a continuous engagement that resists the unwelcome affects accompanying the loss. Cast in the language of ideality, this proclivity to relive childhood through "throwback" phenomena" can be read as defending against lost attachments that necessarily accompany the painful labor of growing up. After all, in growing up, the ego gives up earlier states of being in the work of forging increasingly expansive attachments in a complex social world. Thinking with Kristeva (2013), longing for the childhood past immobilizes time and resists the experience that she calls the "*mobility of duration*" (p. 135, original emphasis). In "throwing back" to childhood, the pain of loss is stalled in an eternal present, resisting entry into and endurance of the psychical frustrations and failures of entering into the world a historical subject.

## #childhood memories and the Collection of Artifacts

From the revival of old television shows such as *Gilmore Girls*, *Full(er) House*, and *Will and Grace* to the reintroduction of Nintendo® and Super Nintendo® gaming systems, the millennial generation can be read as one that delights in the capacity to collect and repeat the ideality of childhood idols. Nostalgia for this generation is not only about fond memories and photographs; millennials relive the past by revisiting their childhoods through television shows, games, and attending concerts. Nintendo® Classic and Super Nintendo® Classic game consoles have consistently sold out within hours of their release, with lineups awaiting new stock (Rubin 2017). Even popular cereals from the millennial cohort's teenager lives have made a comeback; *General Mills* reintroduced French Toast Crunch cereal after a Facebook group started a petition requesting that the cereal be back on the market (Pix11 News 2014). French Toast Crunch was only sold in the USA for 10 years in the market from 1996 to 2006, the millennial adolescent period. While seemingly trivial, this phenomenon of gathering, sorting, and archiving childhood objects conveys its own emotional stakes. Through collections, archival mastery provides containment for runaway affects, setting a stage for old conflicts to repeat in disguised form. Freud (1914/2006) states that when an individual is experiencing repression, instead of remembering and recounting a childhood exploration, "he reproduces it not as a memory, but as an action; he *repeats* it, without of course being aware of the fact that he is repeating it" (p. 394, original emphasis). As a form of repetition, the effort to relive one's childhood through attachments to ideal objects suggests an unresolved or unacknowledged anxiety within the self. According to Freud, we often repeat our

old patterns and behaviors from a time before as a way to resist acknowledgment of the past. There is a fear, or avoidance, of a part of the self that leaves us unable to "grasp the real intention of his obsessional impulse" (Freud 1914/2006, p. 396). This tendency to repeat can also be examined as a problem transference (Freud 1940/2003): a quality of relation characterized by the return of the repressed, binding a person to repeat old patterns in new relationships. In the analytic dyad, for instance, Freud (1937) noted the tendency of patients to transfer displaced affects onto the situation of the analysis, such that split off feelings became directed against the analyst. We may all recognize the transference at work in education when students and teachers bestow each other with accompanying dynamics of love and hate that are not "newly created" in the pedagogical relationship and that have "their source" in the earliest of object relationships (A. Freud 1937, p. 18). Digital collections and nostalgic attachments facilitate this compulsion to repeat, too, in ways that ward off the hard task of mourning that also means becoming someone new in a world of others. The act of collecting and constantly revisiting, replaying, and repeating the past are symptoms of many young adults' anxious interactions with the world. This tendency to pursue childhood as an idealized object echoes Kristeva's (2009) incredible need to believe that, in the end, resists a meaningful engagement with the present. Thus, as educators, we must ask ourselves, what is being repressed or feared and how can we better support youth to encounter and make sense of the uncertainties of the world? The challenge of education, here, may be one of helping students represent a relationship to all that is difficult in entering into the social world and thus to transform repetitions into a meaningful historical narrative that can be engaged, remembered, and shared with others. Where the incredible need to believe has its future-oriented eye on the prize, and while education itself suffers from this malady, Kristeva allows us to propose a notion of learning that can risk looking backward, without getting stalled there. Here, education can be conceived through the transference, where repetition can meet the difference of the teacher, the curriculum, and others and where learning is a creative work of making a new relationship to *old objects*. Where repetition was, there memory, and meaningful history, can become.

## #adulting and the Art of Not Growing Up

Adulthood is, like adolescence, a complex psychical position that involves not outgrowing but growing *into* earlier states of mind (Waddell 2000). In adulthood, the ego learns to "integrate" infantile and adolescent parts of the self "without excessive disruption of the psychic equilibrium" (Waddell 2000, p. 197). A mature or adult state of mind takes responsibility for stray parts of mind, as opposed to projecting them outside and elsewhere. The adolescent approaching adulthood faces the lonely work of maturity: marked by the capacity to work through the failure of ideals, to integrate the contradictory qualities of the mind, to acknowledge limits, and to become one's own person in a world of others. Margot Waddell (2000) notes, too, that "one of the main undertakings of adolescence is that of establishing a mind of one's own" (p. 177), made from a process of synthesizing emotional extremes. This task requires, in Waddell's (2000) words, "relinquishing the denigrated and

idealized versions of the self" to embody the ambivalent middle ground (p. 178). Never-ending adolescence, by contrast, signifies a form of resistance to these tensions. For example, a number of young adults belonging to what has become known as the millennial generation have adopted the term "adulting," such that "adult" is utilized as a verb. Here, the idea of adulthood is no longer an identity one becomes but is rather a temporary state or action that one may choose to engage and just as easily disengage at will. In relation to this last claim, Johnson (2017) finds that millennial participants only loosely associate adulthood with the achievement of independence (p. 92). Rather, every participant agreed that being an adult is more about *feeling* like an adult – or adulting. Here, adulthood is transformed from a chronological inevitability to a decision one makes and un-makes to preserve the adolescent belief in the absolute: a never-ending ideality of existence. Returning to Kristeva (2009), the steadfast belief in the absolute takes shape in the idea that one can control the future – and even avoid it – through the conscious faculty of choice. Here, it is not adulthood that is idealized; in fact, it may be feared or even a source of dread. Rather, what is idealized is the ego's belief in its capacity to stretch the time of adolescence indefinitely. However, while it may be tempting to cast this adolescent resistance of time in a negative light, such that they ought to "grow up," we rather draw from the insights of scholars of childhood studies and queer theory to suggest something creative – and critical – in the adolescent disruption of time. Beyond the language of resistance, the adolescent embodiment of "adulting" transforms the very meaning of developmental temporality to account for the sideways distractions, diversions, and detours more often repressed in the normative ideal of reproductive futurity that presumes a heterosexual, cisgender subject (Stockton 2009). Adulting itself implies a privileged subject – both in terms of class and race – for whom this is a viable option. Not only are a vast majority of adolescents around the globe already at work to provide financial support for themselves and their families, racialized adolescents are routinely pushed into the category of "adult" – what Ann Arnett Ferguson (2000) calls "adultified" – by police, teachers, and adult professionals to justify harsh punishments and outright exclusions. Adulting therefore marks both an adolescent ideal of stalling time *and* an idealized subject of adolescence who is granted access to this fantasy in the first place. At issue is the way adulting exposes – and might even maintain – hierarchies of privilege and vulnerability among adolescents themselves.

## #filters and False Selves

Online media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter enable youth to band together and express desires, hopes, wishes, and anxieties on a shared platform. These same platforms also allow users to choose from a variety of filters, some of which change the physical features of the face into a wide-eyed, infantilized image. Even the hashtag #nofilter, which boasts an ability to put "real life" on display, is carried on the fantasy of an idealized life attained *without* the need of digital filters. The digital world of social media calls users to its interactive and attention-seeking social exchange; posts and photos receiving "likes" give the feeling of being noticed, appreciated, and highly regarded, by peers. Indeed, being liked on social media can

be more important to people than being liked in reality (Weiss 2015), leading to sometimes risky choices just to get the right photographic background, angle, or pose. But the anticipation of digital "likes" is not the same as embodying who you are. Rather, this type of validation-seeking environment may cultivate what D.W. Winnicott (1960) calls a false self: a defense organization that mediates engagements with the social world with self-presentations that protect the true self. Dovetailing with Kristeva's adolescent ideality, the Winnicottian false self may present as constantly smiling, resilient, or supremely capable, even while its shell of compliance hides the true self not only from public display but also from itself. Digital filters falsify the emotional risk of embodying desire; they exchange the possibility of living in a way that is true to the self with the ideality of never-ending adolescence that makes "likes" from the threat of loss.

## Conclusion and Future Directions: The Adolescence of Teaching

While the digital world of contemporary adolescence provides the backdrop for our discussion in this chapter, Kristeva's (1995) malady of ideality does not begin there. The adolescent need to believe in an ideal object may have always existed in education. And it might not only belong to the adolescent but also the teacher. Significant to the psychoanalytic orientation of our chapter, the adolescent believer implicates us all. It does not refer to an actual *teenager* we leave behind for the more reasonable position of adulthood, although we might all recognize some of its qualities in the adolescents we may know, teach, and/or once were. Indeed, we caution against the proclivity to pathologize any individual adolescent or generation of adolescents as if they, and not the social world they inherit, are in need of challenge and change. The adolescent figure in Kristeva's work, and in our use of it, is rather a metaphor symbolizing a *psychical position* impacted by historical contexts and relationships that emerges and recedes over the course of a lifetime. Psychoanalytically, the mind is not an isolated island, but an archeological site where layers of earlier times constitute the foundations of the overall structure. In other words, there exist *actual* adolescents and *adult* adolescents "when we are passionate about the absolute" (Kristeva 2009, p. 14). Such a metaphorical position may be hard to accept, particularly in a contemporary context of education that idealizes the rush to learning outcomes. In such a context, teachers facing the pressures of the job may "need to believe that only the adolescent has psychology," which they are charged to instruct, control, and develop (Britzman 2012, p. 273). Britzman (2012) unearths these layers in her teacher education classroom, where the return of adolescent ideality is projected onto the "ideal object" of professional knowledge and into the role of the teacher (p. 274). "In learning to become the high school teacher they want to be," Britzman (2012) explains, "they trade the uncertainty of meeting the adolescent and thoughts about their own development for an idealization of the role of the teacher" (p. 274). We are all adolescents when we yearn for time-halting certainties that secure a position of mastery.

With Britzman and Kristeva, the view of adolescence presented in this chapter represents a psychical position, or archaic layer, inside us all. We further question,

with Kristeva (1995), whether adolescent ideality represents a "new malady" in the fast pace of a digital world or whether its hot pursuit is "common to all times" (p. 9). We are inclined to think the latter. While the malady of ideality takes shape in the figure of the adolescent, gaining momentum in the digitally driven force of the contemporary moment, it spans a range of contexts across time and history. In the context of education, for instance, ideality can take shape in the fantasy of the perfect teacher or student, in pedagogical performances of mastery, and in the idealization of the teacher's knowledge (Kristeva 1995, p. 9). However, as we have been suggesting throughout this chapter, we suffer by the very ideals for which we also strive in the name of trying to be better, or smarter, or more efficient and in charge. Ideals impoverish life, ironically, because they defend against the work of symbolizing – and so confronting – all that is lacking about existence. Across a range of symptoms, whether digital nostalgia or the fantasy of the perfect teacher, the "common denominator" of ideality thwarts the capacity for symbolization, needed, in Kristeva's (1995) view, "to live life to its fullest" (p. 9). The idea of a full life is not, however, a perfect life. It is rather one that can symbolize all that is lacking about entering the world a historical subject: what Kristeva (2013) names above the "*mobility of duration*" (p. 135, original emphasis). Whereas ideality immobilizes meaning in a fantasied time without time, symbolization animates psychical experience in the realm of representation, where the conflicts that dwell there can become part of a meaningful and moving narrative of history. Symbolization is not, then, simply a matter of naming one's emotions; it is rather the creative wellspring of existence as such. The symbolic labor of putting feelings into words, citing Kristeva (1995), "restore[s] psychic life" (p. 9).

In the context of an idealized education, it can be tempting to think of the teacher's job as one of interrupting *student* resistances, whether through inspirational pedagogies or corrective measures. However, this very notion idealizes the teacher's influence, pathologizes the adolescent, and resists the difficult knowledge of education's own limits. One challenge, we suggest, is to imagine education as a place of putting into words the psychical position of adolescence at the core of feverish pursuits that defend against conflict as the ground of both teaching and learning. A related challenge is how to attend to the complexities of psychical experience without losing sight of the social world in which the mind marshals idealization as a defense. Still, the psychoanalytic question is how to symbolize the ordinary imperfections, failures, and accidents of existence that filtered lenses of perfection fend off. Psychoanalysis acknowledges a fuller sense of humanity precisely because it is at the same time lacking. Borrowing from Britzman's (2006; 2012) terms "the childhood of teaching" (p. 108) and "the adolescent teacher" (p. 272), we offer *the adolescence of teaching* as a metaphor that invites us to analyze the contexts and circumstances in which the teacher may seek out ideals, to notice the worries that pulsate on the other side of this illusion, and to admit lack as the humble condition of education and, indeed, humanity. It should also help us to identify and challenge how lack is differently and unevenly experienced by particular social identities over others. The adolescence of teaching offers a language with which we may identify and challenge narratives of

education that idealize the individual – often a heroic teacher sent to rescue her students – and instead shine a light on the conditions and relationships that bolster the inner world and at times break it down. If all goes well, the adolescence of teaching may be an emotional resource that supports the creative work of looking beneath the scenery of resistance to confront what is difficult about trying to learn and to live with others and to imagine the conditions that can make tolerable, and even preferable, living a less filtered life to the fullest.

## Cross-References

▶ Transference, Desire, and the Logic of Emancipation: Psychoanalytic Lessons from the "Third Wave"

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# Contemporary Whiteness Interrupted

**23**

## Leaning into Contradiction in the University Classroom

Arlo Kempf

## Contents

**Abstract**

In the United States, Canada, and much of Europe, white nationalism has emerged as a significant part of dominant political, cultural, and social discourse. While this renaissance of white supremacy is significant, with concrete impacts for women, people of color, LGBTQ2, and Indigenous folks, it can be read as a mark of the success of identity politics – specifically the activism, resistance, work, organizing, and scholarship – by these very groups. Conservative white nationalist discourse in mainstream social and other media offers a barometer of a broad and significant epistemic change and indeed heralds the end of certain forms of acceptable whiteness. This is a new white racial formation and requires a new conversation about whiteness and being. The chapter begins by identifying the political, theoretical, and academic project of this work and situates the arguments herein within anti-colonial and critical race theory. The chapter then

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offers a description of and reflection on the author's teaching and classroom experiences in a large Canadian teacher education program. It discusses the ways in which white right voices are seeking and finding agency in university classroom spaces, while simultaneously, the experiences and perspectives of people of color, Indigenous peoples, LGBTQ2 folks, and women are increasingly validated and central to mainstream teacher education. The chapter then sketches the broader political context in which these emerging classroom dynamics are situated, suggesting a new moment in race politics.

## Introduction

In the United States, Canada, and much of Europe, a gendered race nationalism has emerged as a significant part of dominant political, cultural, and social discourse. Racist, sexist, homophobic, and transphobic rhetoric is increasingly a centrist proposition, and the push for a white renaissance is no longer just a dog whistle tactic for conservatives but is explicitly a part of mainstream politics, albeit for a relatively small number of people. The alt white right has created and become a new discursive space and expression of/for identity politics; ironically, one invested itself decrying identity politics. This chapter argues that while this renaissance of white supremacy is significant, with concrete impacts for women, people of color, Indigenous, and LGBTQ2 folks, it can be read as a mark of the success of political identity struggles by these very groups. Conservative white nationalist discourses in mainstream social and other media offers a barometer of a broad and significant epistemic change and indeed the popular end of certain forms of acceptable whiteness.

This is a new moment for race and whiteness and requires a new conversation about whiteness and being. The chapter begins by identifying the political, theoretical, and academic project of this work and situates the arguments herein within anti-colonial and critical race theory. With attention to the author's location as a white anti-racist worker and educator at the type of institute commonly targeted by some white right criticism, the chapter offers a description of and reflection on the author's teaching and classroom experiences in a large Canadian teacher education program, discussing the ways in which white right voices are seeking and finding agency in university classroom spaces, while simultaneously, the experiences and perspectives of black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), LGBTQ2, and women are increasingly validated and central to mainstream teacher education. The chapter then sketches the broader political context in which these emerging classroom dynamics are situated, suggesting a new moment in race politics, as a natural expression and continuation of Euro-Enlightenment race discourse under threat. A short conclusion follows.

## Theoretical and Political Project of the Work

The purpose of this chapter is threefold, with an order of significance intended. First, this chapter seeks to offer language and argument in support of defanging white supremacist politics, suggesting such discourses are a desperate symptom of historic decline rather than a new expression of power. Second, this chapter aims to champion processes – already well under way – by which the voices, experiences, and demands of racially marginalized communities and individuals are increasingly centered, validated, and attended to in education in pursuit of equity of opportunity and outcome. Finally, this chapter is intended as a contribution to anti-racist understandings of contemporary race formations and relations.

Rejecting the notion of post-racialism, this work is guided by critical race theory (CRT) and anti-colonial theory. Although it has become a framework used widely to understand race formation and relations, CRT emerged as a response and extension of the critical legal studies (CLS) movement in the United States, in the late 1970s, providing 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 and Stefancic 2001, and others). As a crucial and unique institutional site of racial production and reproduction, education is an important area of focus for CRT. The foundational works of Lynn and Parker (2006), Dixson and Rousseau (2005), Ladson-Billings (1999), Tate (1997), Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), and others have revealed, disturbed, and resisted the role of schooling in the preservation and maintenance of racism and other systems of oppression.

Gloria Ladson-Billings (2018) argues the roots of CRT can be traced to the early twentieth century in the work of W.E.B. Du Bois and later in that of Garvey, the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X, and the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. Understood this way, critical race theory (in one form or another) has, for over a century, recognized the concomitance of power relations and race as a social reality with concrete individual, institutional, and systemic implications. Among the most crucial assertions of CRT scholars is that although racial categorization has no biological significance, race has material consequences in the lived reality of all people as a mobilized set of privileges and punishments. Critical race theory problematizes postrace and colorblind readings of society at the individual, institutional, and systemic level. Scholars such as Bonilla-Silva (2003), Urrieta (2006), and others draw attention to the ways in which racism is nourished and preserved when the conditions for its invisibility are established.

Among the primary discursive tools used to justify 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 which 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 and Porter (2010)

argue, 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 postrace approach fits this description powerfully, as some people may be more post-racial than others. While some white people may not feel as privileged as they used to, this does not speak to the experiences of the historically underprivileged.

Much scholarship on the race of white people falls under of broad category of critical whiteness studies, a subset of race scholarship which has, among other things, meaningfully highlighted the operations of privilege as experienced by white people, from which BIPOC folks are excluded (see the works of Frankenberg 2004; Twine 2004; Rothenberg 2002; Gaine 2000; Gallagher 2000; Wise 2002, and others). This work offers tools for seeing and understanding "whiteness." Whiteness here refers to conditions of racial being, which are linked to culture, nation, religion, gender, sexuality, language, ethnicity, body, neurotypicality/neurodivergence, and other social markers. Whiteness is distinct from (but linked to) the color of one's skin. We can think here of someone or something sounding white and acting white or consider white curriculum, white food, white taste, and white culture. While all of these are problematic categories, they are clear signifiers which most of us can understand and quite easily imagine.

As a condition of being, whiteness can inform our place and displacement in a given space: our comfort and discomfort in a given situation, the ways we experience belonging and alienation, our knowledge of how to act and react, and how we understand ourselves in relation to others. Ahmed (2007) offers a phenomenology of whiteness. As the study of experience and how we experience, a phenomenological approach includes not only the comparatively passive experiences of perception but as well our thoughts, our actions, our imaginations, our wants, and wills. Put simply, a phenomenological analysis considers that which we experience as well as that which we do or perform.

Ahmed's work thus offers a window for understanding whiteness as something that is experienced, as well as something which is done, performed, and/or enacted. Following the work of anti-colonial scholars Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, Amilcar Cabral, and others who offer a phenomenology of race, Ahmed suggests "whiteness is lived as a background to experience" and considers:

> [W]hat 'whiteness' does without assuming whiteness as an ontological given, but as that which has been received, or become given, over time. Whiteness could be described as an ongoing and unfinished history, which orientates bodies in specific directions, affecting how they 'take up' space. (2007, p. 150)

Ahmed's use of phenomenology locates whiteness as a consequence of Eurocolonial racialization, which shapes "what it is that bodies 'can do'" (p. 153). Ahmed uses phenomenology to explore how "whiteness is 'real', material and lived" (ibid.). Further, Ahmed suggests "whiteness becomes worldly through the noticeability of the arrival of some bodies more than others" (ibid.). In other words, whiteness is defined in part by its inaccessibility to some. As part of what it means to be white

then, we recognize that it means not being black, or brown, or any other race signifier which would be marked as nonwhite. A definitive quality of whiteness is thus its inclusion of a set of experiences unavailable to BIPOC folks. This frames the nature of reality as raced and suggests the centrality of raced power relations in everyday life.

Everyday individual experiences are embedded in structural and systemic machinations, which have significant implications for identity as well as for individual and group development of sense of self and place. Quoting Fanon, Ahmed 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). This chapter thus contextualizes race formation and the discussion thereof, within the broader context Eurocolonialism and Enlightenment race epistemologies, using experience, identity, and notions of self as entry and exit points for more deeply understanding the systemic, institutional, and temporal functioning of race and race formations.

Recognizing the experiential nature of race, whiteness, and identity, on one hand and the significant degree to which race functions through inclusion and exclusion on the other hand, it is important to note that whiteness cannot be understood without the experiences of BIPOC groups and individuals. So rather than, "apologist accounts of the plight of white subjects," against which Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) warn, any worthwhile accounting for whiteness must center the validity of the experiences of BIPOC folks and as well as have a clear political project.

In settler colonial contexts, such as the United States and Canada, whiteness and identity coalesce for many white folks around notions of place preeminence and what Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) describe the settler colonial "curricular project of replacement, which is intent on relieving the inherent anxiety of settler dislocation from stolen land" (p. 77). They continue:

> The settlerstate is always already in a precarious position because Indigenous peoples and descendants of chattel slaves won't do what they are supposed to do, fade away into history by either disappearing or becoming more like the settler, the true description of the human. (2013, p. 77)

Our current context of rising white supremacy – alongside processes which increasingly center the marginalized voices of BIPOC, women, and LGBTQ2 folks in mainstream spaces such as teacher education classrooms – can be understood through this framing. Drawing on Ahmed, Tuck, and Gaztambide-Fernández, it is clear that current white race formations are not bracketed phenomena outside of history. They are instead the continued functioning of white coloniality. Colonial notions of national survival have for the United States and Canada always been associated with the protection of an empowered white racial imperative.

Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) argue the colonial is not confined to the past and present (see also Dei and Kempf 2006) but instead works with a pronouncement on the future – a settler future, in particular, dependent upon domination and erasure of Indigenous people and the descendants of enslaved peoples. As Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) argue, Baldwin's notion of "permanent virtuality" is useful for understanding the ways in which settler identity is contingent upon an imagined perpetuity (2012, p. 173). This imagining can be understood as futurity, which for Baldwin refers to the ways in which, "the future is rendered knowable through specific practices (i.e., calculation, imagination, and performance)" (quoted in Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández 2013, p. 80).

Settler futurity is in many ways the original identity politics – it involves not simply engaging in politics and activism based on a lived socio-identity trait (white European settler) but going much further to imagine destiny, all that is to come, as a path which will be paved for the settler alone, based on his socio-identity traits, in service of the perpetual reproduction and promotion of his position in relation to others. This chapter suggests that while the colonial project continues mostly apace, contemporary race relations are consistently and increasingly characterized by audible stutters and stalls in the engine of colonial white male power in the United States and Canada. Owing to the widespread and resistance of marginalized peoples, settler futurity is impaired and imperilled. From this contested and messy juncture of politics and theory, clutching respectfully to the tackles of critical race theory, anti-colonial theory, and the activism and sacrifices of women, BIPOC, and queer folks that give us these tools with which to work, this chapter now shifts to look at the teacher education classroom and my small place in this conversation.

## The Teacher Education Classroom (and Self-Location)

I teach in the University of Toronto's (UofT) school of education, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), a target of University of Toronto psychology professor Jordan Peterson. Peterson is a darling of the alt white right. *New York Times* columnist David Brooks argues Peterson may currently be the most influential western intellectual (Brooks 2018). He is a best-selling author, clinical psychologist, and podcast host. *Vox* reports he has "claimed that feminists have 'an unconscious wish for brutal male domination,' referred to developing nations as 'pits of catastrophe' in a speech to a Dutch far-right group, and recently told a *Times* reporter that he supported 'enforced monogamy'" (Beauchamp 2018). He rose to fame when his videos protesting a gender equality bill in the Canadian parliament went viral. Whether he intends to or not, he has become an important leader for hosts of angry white supremacist and misogynist individuals and groups.

Peterson works with a broad but ill-defined notion of the contemporary "west" which he suggests offers the "best of all possible worlds" (Peterson 2017). For Peterson, the west and its successes rest upon a notion of the individual as the central element of social relations. Universities, he argues, have promoted a narrative of collective and/or group identity, from which different groups battle for power

(CBC Radio 2018). Peterson suggests this university-generated view reduces history to a series of power relations between competing groups, leaving no room for the individual in progressive conceptions of the present or the past (ibid.). He suggests a division between "the radical left, and let's say, the rest of us so to speak" with the former committed to a silencing of free speech by the latter (ibid.). Peterson's imagined radical left seems to be a product of liberal university dogma.

In particular, Peterson has targeted courses that promote social justice, arguing on Twitter, "OISE is the most dangerous institution in Canada, next to the Ontario Human Rights Commission. It does not 'study education,' despite its name: it teaches teachers to indoctrinate children" (Peterson 2017a) and has called for its defunding (Peterson 2017b). OISE is among the largest schools of education in the world. It is a clinical and research institute known for ground-breaking work around, among other things, equity and social justice education. OISE has only one mandatory social justice course in its teacher education programs, and I teach it. In fact, I have been the coordinator for this course for a number of years.

Although the academy is itself often a colonial space, expression, and exercise (Wilder 2013; Kelley 2016), places such as OISE have long been home to important anti-racist and anti-colonial work and have been an academic home to the struggles of many marginalized groups and individuals (many of whom have struggled with issues of oppression within the university itself). The argument against identity politics in what Peterson calls the west is that current conceptions of race and gender, as categorical schema, are products of Enlightenment colonial epistemology. In other words, powerful white men created today's classifications in the first place. These classifications act as tools of oppression when people are punished or rewarded based on group membership. Women, LGBTQ2, and BIPOC folks have mobilized around these categories as a response to oppression that uses these classifications as bases of oppression. Peterson is among many alt white right thinkers who reject the notion of white privilege as a narrative, seeing white folks as victims of group think and viewing the highlighting of whiteness and white privilege, as accusatory.

In defense of identity politics and the calls for equity by marginalized groups, at a recent debate with Peterson, Michael Eric Dyson argued: "I ain't seen nobody be a bigger snowflake than white men who complain" (CBC Radio 2018). Indeed, white men like me are the most socially dependent group of people in North America. The myth of the individual is most fallacious in our case, as our (social, political, culture, and other) mobility devices are countless, pervasive, normalized, and often invisible. The economically wealthiest among us often receive the most significant subsidies from the state, while all white folks enjoy at least some form of cultural Groupon for special treatment by our systems of policing, healthcare, education, and welfare.

What I have seen develop over the past decade of teaching social justice education classes at the university level (working in, being fed by, and feeding the belly of Peterson's imagined beast) is that ours is a world in which many white people, for whom this was not the case previously, are increasingly unable to *not know* about white male privilege. They can argue against it, they can deny it, but it is harder and harder for many white folks to not see it. More and more white folks find a sometimes unwelcome lens has grown upon their fields of social vision, a lens

which notices differently. Again, white privilege is no surprise to many folks of color, but for many white people it's a new and inescapable idea.

Peterson's rhetoric has been relevant to me personally and professionally. Who I am in one realm is rarely divorced from who I am in the other, especially in terms of identity. I am a white, male, cisgender settler Canadian, who is often read as straight, neurotypical, and able-bodied. I am a dual citizen of Canada and the United States. Located in this way, a lot of people are talking to me these days. When US President Donald Trump defends white nationalists, he's speaking to me, offering me something, and reminding me that African-descended and Indigenous folks, along with groups such as Black Lives Matter and Idle No More, are destabilizing white male colonial power. When then-US Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh shouts over a woman who is interviewing him for the job, he is whispering to me that he is (and *we* should be) very worried about increasing opposition to gender-based sexual violence. When Senator Lindsay Graham, after viewing Judge Kavanaugh's temper tantrums, asserts, "I've never felt better about him being on the bench as I do right now"; he's letting me know that Kavanaugh is not only acceptable in his view but that he is also necessary to protect against the ebb of white male power (YouTube 2018).

These reminders show up in my classes as well. In most classes I teach, there is now a small group of students who (sometimes quietly, sometimes not) identify as conservative, right wing, and/or supportive of the alt-right. This is new. The institute in which I teach is a noted progressive space in teacher education as well as in education research. Our graduate students and professors have been the frequent target of conservative media. When I began teaching, there was much less policy (from local boards and ministries of education) and research (from the Canadian context) to support feminist, anti-racist, anti-colonial, critical disability, queer, and other critical teaching and learning approaches. This changed quickly, as boards, ministries, national groups, and education NGOs have become increasingly focused on equity in schools and ever stronger research demonstrates the connections between equity and student success and well-being. Once a standalone set of add-on principles of which many pre-service teachers needed convincing, equity is now a fundamental principle of teaching, powerfully supported in policy and research.

While there are now grounds to insist that teachers adopt equity approaches within all elements of their practice, policy cannot be confused with pedagogy, and many teachers have more learning to do. I count myself among their number. Speaking with colleagues, there is consistent recognition that as equity approaches have become fundamental and widely recognized as legitimate, a noticeable pushback is increasingly common from students who may feel a certain worldview with which they disagree is being forced upon them. This often involves the rejection of identity politics in favor of the sort of individualist politics espoused by Peterson. In my experience, these folks tend to identify, most often, as white men. Among the significant elements of this new voice of alt-right politics in the teacher education classroom is that given the near-orthodoxical role of equity in teaching in 2019, stances that reject the role of race (racism) and gender (sexism and binary politics), for example, are largely untenable in the face of education research and frowned

upon by much education policy. These alt-right stances are thus among the more radical in the classroom and take on a dissident role.

As a critical pedagogue, part of my work is to lean toward these students to better understand and support their journey toward becoming teachers that equitably support all students. In so doing, I often get to know where these feelings, stances, and opinions are coming from. A common theme, as mentioned above, is the feeling of frustration at being expected to accept a set of experiences (which come from women, BIPOC, and queer folks), research findings, and educational policy that contradicts and, more importantly, contravenes their lived experiences and the role of their gender and race identities in their world. Although stories of disadvantage (e. g., in terms of income, ethnicity, and religion) are easily accessible for many of these students as parts of narratives of self and of place, absent for many is the role of gender and race in creating embodied advantage which provides currencies in personal and professional domains. Ahmed argues whiteness "involves a form of orientation" (2007, p. 150). Many white teacher candidates are increasingly disoriented in terms of their role. Sharing space consciously, intentionally, and often for the first time with an eye toward race and gender feels like punishment and displacement, rather than collaborative professional behavior.

Parallel to and at times intersecting with a burgeoning white right conversation in teacher education classrooms is the increasing presence and centering of the voices and experiences of BIPOC, women, and queer folks. To be clear, teacher education remains often reproductive, white-norming, and colonial in many ways; however, this is shifting. This change is led and relies upon the work, resistance, and activism of historically marginalized groups and individuals engaged in political and academic struggles which rely upon one or more identity politics lenses. This shift also relies upon students and instructors moving toward the activism that Kelley (2016) calls for with the notion of classrooms as fugitive spaces. It relies upon research and policy which suggest that effective teaching (for student well-being and academic success) requires equity as a fundamental orientation of daily and long-term teacher practice.

What this commonly looks like in my classes is young (often female-identified) queer folks; Muslims; and people of color including African-descended, Indigenous, and South Asian students, asking difficult questions of their university program, of their classes, of the curriculum, of schools in which they practice teach, and of me as a white instructor. Beyond questions, students are highlighting the persistent racist, sexist, heteronormative, and colonial relations which are required for the maintenance of the status quo in countless educational spaces. Beyond questions, many students are increasingly demanding inclusion in new ways, including calls for anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-colonial, anti-homophobic, and anti-Islamophobic conceptions of safety in their classrooms and university programs with implications for curriculum, pedagogy, student services, and other elements of university programming.

To be clear, I view this questioning, highlighting, and demanding as generous gifts to social justice education, which come about because students – often at significant emotional cost – are striving to create the circumstances for their own

wellness and safety, in spaces where such conditions have been elusive. This echoes research on race in teacher education classrooms which highlights both the need for greater racial equity as well as the racially reproductive and white-norming function of teacher education programs (see Gereluk 2018; O'Brien 2009; Philip and Benin 2014, and others). Just as I am tasked with moving toward alt-right voices as their professor, so too do I move toward engaged understandings of these progressive students, with whom I more easily agree but am no less challenged pedagogically, particularly when attempting to reach, engage, and learn from all perspectives in the classroom. Generalized approaches such as universal design for learning are often of limited use when teaching political concepts to folks who are politically opposed. Specifically, the central pedagogical challenge with which I am often faced of late is that of attending to these two groups at once, adequately, and with a loving heart.

My pedagogical solution, which to date has been inadequate, is guided by a critical approach to Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the zone of proximal development, which in this case entails providing the supports, expectations, structures, and space for each student to engage and advance their learning from an individual starting position. The assumption here is that by recognizing where students are in terms of their context and content knowledge, instructors can guide students into next steps which are at once challenging and feasible. In my own practice to date, I feel pretty good about his approach in terms of the diagnostic work I do, the assigned readings, and the assignments students are required to complete for my classes. Where I feel ineffective is in terms of the conversational elements that naturally take place in a graduate teacher education seminar course which centers on social justice education.

To date, I have not figured out a way to adequately facilitate conversation which is invitational enough to white conservatives and which simultaneously ensures safe spaces for all other students in the class (including specifically women, BIPOC, and LGBTQ2 folks). Ahmed suggests that "If orientations are about how we begin from 'here', then they involve unfolding," and she asks: "At what point does the world unfold?" (2007, p. 51). "Here" can be so different for my students, unfolding in a simultaneous perpendicularity. The conversation demanded by the activist student of color (often with an advanced degree, a strong equity activism pedigree, perfect command of *de jour* equity language) is radically different than that needed to invite a young white male to consider, for the first time, the role of settler Canadians, for example, in contemporary colonialism in Canadian schooling. Largely regardless of what happens in my class, both students will become teachers, and in my experience, each is easily turned away from each other, as well as from realistic equity-oriented teaching and learning practices for K-12 teachers. For the conservative this is too much too fast, and for the progressive, this is too little, too slow. I consider these concerns against Leonardo's and Porter's (2010) argument that classroom safety is too often reserved for white students, at the cost of the safety of BIPOC students.

When discussing the question with colleagues, I frequently hear the suggestion that students with such stringent views should not be teachers (depending on who am speaking with, I hear this said about both the conservative and the progressive students). Although the criteria for admission to teachers' college are significant for equity in schools and beyond, my classroom is not a gatekeeping space for

determining who should and should not be a teacher. In my classes my job is to support all students' development as equity-education practitioners. Although these are by no means new dilemmas for equity educators, the rise of the dissident alt white right, bolstered by raced nativist masculinities locally and beyond, has created a new challenge for social justice work. As the next section argues, this renewed race conversation in teacher education is located within a broader context of racial contestation, conflict, and redefinition.

## A Broader Situation

Race, gender, and income disparities are the sequelae of Eurocolonialism and other fundamentalisms. A small but important commons, which once welcomed and embraced a small and mainly white plurality, is quickly eroding, with little on offer in terms of firm or fixed truths and with fewer and fewer things to be proud of as a white citizen. In Canada and the United States, the sacred institutions and heroes of the national project (our early Presidents, Prime Ministers, our systems of government, our military histories, our relationships to land and to other nations on Turtle Island, etc.) are sullied by a long-overdue historical reckoning brought about by a greater variety of perspectives at the center of our political and cultural conversations. This has ushered in a white scramble for legitimacy and the push for the protection of entrenched race and gender power. There have always been counterpoints to colonial discursive legitimacies, to nonwhite legitimacies, and to non-cismale legitimacies. However, to a greater degree than ever before, mainstream culture now includes competing discourses and legitimacies, and more and more white folks are aware and invested in nonwhite legitimacies. This is a good thing.

Popular social justice movements, led by BIPOC, women, LGBTQ2 folks, and their allies, have made change, not enough change to suggest that we have arrived where we need to be but enough to make a difference; in the lives of white folks, enough to make white privilege visible to many who had not previously noticed and had certainly never been called to task; and enough so that legitimate moral, political, cultural, and indeed social authority is hard to find using our colonial compass. Not only does the emperor have no clothes, he's also a rapist. For universities, impacted by the dissolution of hard truths on which to hang our hats, a culture war loosely premised on free speech, right versus left, and other misnomers is raging – felt in every corner of university life, including my classroom as described above.

Liberal frames of justice centering the individual, and suggesting a triumph of Enlightenment civilization, are increasingly becoming unbelievable to and unusable for white folks as the longstanding critiques from women, BIPOC, and LGBTQ2 communities, and individuals have come to permeate dominant discourse. The current culture wars highlight the decline of ruling class-white civility (i.e., the civility which once theoretically governed relations between rich and middle class whites has eroded). Institutional truths are increasingly useless in the classroom, as notions of the all-knowing professor, the objectivity of research, and the sanctity of

the university as an apex of learning and knowing crumble. This is a bone on bone moment. The tissue and cartilage of civility – the false idol of Enlightenment morality – is no longer there to smooth out relations and help us white folks oppress others, forgive each other, and advance the colonial project.

Whiteness is a commodity whose value is changing – as a signifier, which floats (Jhally et al. 1996) whiteness is currently on the move. The legitimacy of whiteness has largely vanished with the exception of radical white supremacist formations, even in terms of white imaginaries. Thus Peterson (Canada), Trump (United States), Kavanaugh (United States), Ford (Ontario, Canada), Bernier (Canada), Farage (England), and others are (in) human emblems of this last gasp – they are the dying breaths of mainstream whiteness. The pinnacle of this phenomenon may be upon us in the United States. If, based on the rise of racism since his initial election in 2008, President Barack Obama represented the limit of tolerance of nonwhiteness, I suggest that Trump represents the limits of whiteness. Coates (2017) argued figuratively that Trump was the first white president. He may also, figuratively, be the last. Obama's blackness was intolerable under colonial white supremacy, however, so too is Trump's desperate whiteness. For the first time since the European Holocaust of the mid-twentieth century, whiteness has found its popular limitations. The odds of leaders in the near future enacting race and gender as Trump has may be decreasing. This is not to say that colonialism won't proceed under friendlier and more nuanced reproducers of the status quo; the Clintons, for example, are no friend to people of color or the working class. However, Trump's radical race and gender dispositions will not be seen again for some time in the oval office.

Popular, activist, and academic voices of refusal (see Grande 2018; McCarty and Grande 2018; Coulthard 2014; Tuck and Yang 2014; Simpson 2007, and others) are being heard, and this refusal includes, at times, a refusal to make things feel okay for settlers – it's an insistence on a non-reconciliation which forces some white folks, sometimes, in some spaces, to live with dissonance and rupture, with the notion that our whiteness is not okay and that it is not up to BIPOC folk to help sort this out for us (many of us are pretty accustomed to having a lot of help when things need sorting). Although Trump's notions of Make America Great Again (MAGA) reproduce a familiar nativist dog whistle (it's the expression of a structure, not an event), the discursive power of whiteness has never before been in such decline. While Trump is among many presidents elected to champion white people, if we read MAGA as make America white again, then for supporters of this hateful rhetoric, there is a great deal of work to be done. As 2040 approaches, a nonwhite majority is predicted for the United States, and although numbers do not determine domination, the notion of our current racial norm continuing for much longer seems all but impossible.

In a rare instance, there is currently a popular culture objectification of whiteness – wherein white men are for the first time being popularly defined by others in terms of mainstream discourse. Of course white people have been understood by

nonwhites for as long as these race concepts have been with us; however the difference here is that these nonwhite understandings of whiteness are increasingly mainstream. This is an epistemic rupture of colonial whiteness and masculinity. As a consequence, white settler futurity (see Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández 2013; Baldwin 2012) is increasingly hard to conceive of and thus the panic embodied by white alt-right extremism. Racialized futurisms have included Afrocentricity, non-western cosmologies, and Indigenous futurisms, many of which are utopian and critical in nature and imagined substance. Among the most powerful expressions of identity politics are black and Indigenous futurisms (in literature, scholarship, activism, media, etc.). By contrast, the dead end now facing whiteness is powerfully articulated in a crisis of white imagination, with one exception. Status quo white futurisms are largely untenable within the politics of mainstream thinking with exception of white supremacist visions of soil and blood. Specifically, white futur-isms are dystopic – we struggle to imagine white futurity as utopian. Indeed, the most prominent vision for white futurity is a raced and gendered violent nationalism. This is indeed a crisis of futurity.

Using Ahmed's (2007) frame, many white folks are newly experiencing racial disorientation, as increasing economic instability has come alongside discursive displacement as folks no longer feel they are the centerpiece of the world in which they live. Ahmed conceives of whiteness ontologically, as that "which has been received, or become given, over time" (Ahmed 2007, p. 150). These phenomena are not just theoretical. Freire's (1994) work suggests that humans require ontological vocation, which at once develops and confirms who they are in the world. In the United States and Canada, this has been the inheritance of white kids in liberal schools for generations, and for many it seems be slipping away (Boler and Davis 2018; Hochschild 2016).

In defense of accused rapist and Judge Brett Kavanaugh, Trump asserted in 2018: "It's a very scary time for young men in America when you can be guilty of something that you may not be guilty of" (Zurcher 2018). For Indigenous, black, and many other young folks in America (and Canada), this is a familiar sentiment. The president's statements, however, and their resonance with white male voters highlight the call for protection of white men from a changing world, characterized by increasing calls for race- and gender-based accountability. The response from Trump and others is a retreat to the very identity politics they decry, wherein dominant groups are now weaponizing identity politics. As of January 2019, for example, Christine Blasey Ford, Brett Kavanaugh's most notable accuser (among three who claim he sexually assaulted them) still cannot return to her home for safety reasons. These operations are not bracketed by history but are functions of a colonial present. However, as we see at a general level of popular politics and in the small context of the teacher education classroom described above, the work, activism, scholarship, and struggles of women, BIPOC, and queer folks have upset the balance of white male power.

## Conclusion and Future Directions

This chapter offers an unconventional reading of the current rise of white supremacist movements, of the mainstreaming of sexist and racist paradigms in the university classroom, and of a broader move toward gendered and raced nationalism in the United States and Canadian contexts. It is informed by my whiteness and my experience of gender as a white male who spends a lot of time with other white men (a dispatch from the inner fringes of white cisgender masculinity). By no means am I arguing that things are going well or that there has not been cases of acceleration and intensification of the oppression of many women, BIPOC, and queer individuals and groups. Instead, I suggest that the amplification of gendered and raced supremacist discourses marks a defeat rather than a victory for whiteness. The conservative white right appears to be shuttering – like a dog just out of the water, soaked in a new conversation that it can't wait to shake off. Whiteness and masculinity as we (white men) know it have been broken by a shift in consciousness (unfortunately unwelcomed by many) from which we can only move forward in service of walking in right relation with those with whom we share this world. The only alternative seems to be radical extremism in the form of mainstream white supremacy, which is widely rejected by most people and groups. This profound and significant move has occurred in popular conceptions of race and gender.

In summary, identity politics has succeeded in creating an awareness within dominant logics, epistemologies, and understandings. It is the understanding, for example, by some white men, that certain forms of occupying space are now contested; the phrase "he got me too'ed" is not uncommon. This set of braided strands of activism, sacrifice, excellence, courage, and determination by women, BIPOC, queer folks, and their allies have pushed the politics of social identity into a broader epistemic place. Claims of oppression of white men increasingly rest on the premise that an identifiable group (white men) needs protection from the scourge of group think by historically marginalized groups including women, LGBTQ2, BIPOC, and others who have fought for equality along the lines of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, language, origin, and other socially constructed markers of identity. Of late, social movements for equality (at various levels) have made racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia a little harder to act out in some public fora. For many white folks, mostly men, our range of acceptable behavior has been contracted (moderately) in recent years, and the reins of societal power are more widely held. For white men, we have a little less elbow room, making room for those beside, behind, and in front of us. This interruption to the status quo is not enough, but it matters.

## Cross-References

▶ Explorations of Post-Identity in Relation to Resistance: Why Difference Is Not Diversity

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# Part V

# Technology and Dystopia

# The History of the Internet: Between Utopian Resistance and Neoliberal Government

# 24

David Kergel

## Contents

**Abstract**

With the Internet, a digital augmented part of reality emerged. This augmentation of reality bears social implications. In the course of the development of the Internet since the late 1950s and the increasingly growth of the Internet since the late 1960s, the societal meaning of the Internet is discussed. The societal meaning of the Internet shifts thereby constantly between the poles of utopian resistance and neoliberal government. Using a genealogical and socio-semiotic approach, the chapter reconstructs the discussion of the discursive meaning of the Internet and digital technology in the course of the history of the Internet.

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## Introduction

The term "Internet" signifies a network of computers or entire computer networks which form a decentralized structure. This decentralized communication structure enables a so-called "many-to-many" communication. Instead of "one-to-many" communication, such as television – the leading medium of the electronic age – decentralization can be considered as the construction and communication principle of the Internet (*cf.* Münker 2009, p. 51). Decentralization is also a feature of the workflow via which the Internet was constructed. Castells (2005) states that the Internet was constructed at the interface between "science, military research, and libertarian culture".

## The Development of the Internet: A Brief Overview

### The Begin of Interconnection

The Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) was founded in 1958 on behalf of the US Department of Defense. On reason to found the ARPA was the so-called Sputnik Shock. According to a narration, the political intention was to create an infrastructure for decentralized communication channels and command structures: Even if central actors had been wiped out by (nuclear) attacks, communication and manual power should be guaranteed. Joseph Licklider – formerly a psychologist and computer scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) – was appointed head of the Information Processing Techniques Office (IPTO) at ARPA. He put a focus on computer interactions and attracted a number of researchers from leading universities such as Stanford University and the University of California, Berkeley. Within the framework of ARPA's work, the so-called ARPA-Net was developed: Small data packets could be sent back and forth by networking computers.

In 1969, the first connection between two mainframe computers was realized. This connection was established between computers from the University of California (UCLA) and the Stanford Research Institute (RSI). The first message between these computers was exchanged on October 29, 1969: At 10:30 p.m., a computer from the University of California sent the message "lo" to a computer from the Stanford Research Institute. The distance between both computers was approx. 600 km. From that date the net grew steadily. In 1971 it consisted of 14 "knots." In 1972 the ARPA-Net was presented at the International Conference on Computer Communications in Washington, DC. In the course of this presentation,

decentralized data transmission was demonstrated (*cf.* Castells 2005, p. 20f.). Since 1973, the ARPA-Net increasingly connected with other computer networks. For this purpose, standardized communication protocols have been developed. These standardized communication protocols enabled that different networks could communicate with each other: At the end of the 1970s exist several networks that could be interconnected. For this purpose, specific technical solutions such as the so-called Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) and the Internet Protocol (IP) were developed. These protocols enable a routing between network computers. The Internet Protocol also gave the Internet its actual name. Internet Protocol (IP) and Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) define how data are split into packets and how they are transmitted between computers. Any computer that uses these methods (usually abbreviated to TCP/IP) should be able to communicate with any other computer that uses them. The Internet Protocol (IP) indicates the path the data takes between the connected computers – in other words between different "IP addresses." The TCP transmission protocol in turn ensures that the data packets are sent in a reliably ordered structure. In 1980, the ARPA-Net was converted to the TCP/IP, and in 1983 the US Department of Defense declared it the standard for its computer networks: the same year the APRA-Net was divided into the so-called MILNET (for military purposes) and ARPRA-INTERNET (research purposes). One year later, the NSFNET were founded.

Since the late 1970s, groups of researchers worked increasingly on the expansion of decentralized, interconnected computer networks. In the course of this process, the e-mail was introduced. In 1971, the computer technician Ray Tomlinson presented an e-mail message system in which the @ sign is used. Palm considers the e-mail as egalitarian, democratic mode of communication (*cf.* Palm 2006, p. 125). Already in 1973, e-mail traffic accounted for about 75% of the total volume of the Internet traffic (*cf.* Kirpal and Vogel 2006, p. 141). Very soon, the e-mail was not only used to communicate on research issues but also to discuss private issues. With the e-mail a relatively unregulated exchange of information arose which is typical of the Internet: The Internet opens up possibility spaces beyond its actual purpose.

In the course of the first phase of the Internet, which can be located between 1970 and 1988, successively different understandings of the Internet developed: the military considered the Internet as a way to establish decentral command and communication structures. Researchers wanted to expand their culture of autonomy and free exchange of information. Countercultural activists looked for new fields of activity and alternative social practices (*cf.* Stalder 2016, p. 83f.). Like its decentral and heterogeneous structure, the Internet was from the beginning a place for various cultural practices and a projection surface for alternative and utopian spaces. This openness to interpretation is a characteristic that still characterizes the Internet discourse today. In this phase, the Internet was reserved for a comparatively elitist but globally scattered circle. This circle comprised mainly researchers and students which exchanged their research results and discussed in online forums and newsgroups or who wrote each other e-mails (*cf.* Kirpal and Vogel 2006, p. 142).

## Second Phase: Commercialization, Growth, and Dot-com Crash

The next phase – which can be roughly located between 1988 and 2000 – opened the Internet for a wider public. Latest from this time onward, the Internet took on global dimensions; network connections were expanded; state and private networks were connected with each other. In 1990 the ARPA-Net was abandoned and replaced by more modern forms of computer networks. In the Geneva Conseil Europèen pour la Recherche Nucléaire (CERN), Berners-Lee developed the foundations for the World Wide Web, which he published in 1991. Berners-Lee programmed the so-called Hypertext Protocol/Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP). This protocol allows the computer to search the Internet for files to link to a document –"HTTP is a protocol for transferring information with the efficiency necessary for making hyper-text jumps. [. . .] HTTP is therefore a simple request/response protocol" (Berner-Lee et al. 1994, p. 794). Through HTTP a hypertext structure and thus a hypertext connection between computers can be realized. The digital text is marked with a small number of "tags." These tags are embedded in the electronic form of the text. Each tag contains special information that "tells" a browser how this part of the text should be displayed and with which other pages somewhere on the web it should be connected. The files were provided with a specific Internet address – the so-called Uniform Resource Locator (URL). Berner-Lee called the program that made it possible to present the transmitted information on the computer a "browser." Browsers enable the user to navigate between websites by either following links or entering a specific address. The development of graphic-capable browsers helped to navigate through the Internet, and the markup language (or machine-readable language) Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) made it possible to structure data in a way that they could be displayed by the browser – "HTML is defined to be a language of communication which actually flows over the network. There is no requirement that files are stored in HTML" (Berner-Lee et al. 1994, p. 795). Berner-Lee coined the term World Wide Web or W3 for this networking or this form of data transfer.

Gradually, the Internet became "mass-capable." In the course of the 1990s, the average number of Internet users doubled every year. This growth rate became only slightly smaller in the following decade (*cf*. Chatfield 2013, p. 6). In 1990, the National Science Foundation decided to open the Internet for commercial use as well. With the establishment of the Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) system, it became possible to transmit data without a great loss of time. After initial pilot projects, ISDN technology was put into practice in 1989. This technology and the commercial opening led to an "explosive development" (*cf*. Castells 2005, p. 19) and spread of the Internet. In 1990 World was the first commercial Internet provider which entered the market. Four years later, Netscape Communications provided with the Netscape Navigator the first commercial browser. These steps paved the way for the commercialization of the Internet: In 1994 the number of commercial Internet users exceeded that of researchers who used the Internet. In 1996 about 16 million computers were part of the network. In 1998 – the year Google was founded – there were about 36 million computers. The rapid spread of the commercial use of the

Internet was also an effect of the fact that more and more households possessed a computer. That the Internet was opened for commercial purposes promised a practically unlimited growth market. New technologies such as mobile phones and handheld computers led to high-profit expectations and speculation about rising share prices in the field of digital technology. In the mid-1990s, a number of start-ups were founded, including Amazon (1994), Netflix (1997), and Google (1998). All these innovations led to the assumption that the commercial potential of the new technology seemed limitless (*cf*. Hartmann 2006, p. 181). But the privatization and commercialization of the Internet led to a first economic crisis: the discourse about the so-called New Economy was exaggerated and led many investors to secure their entry into the unknown market (*cf*. Hartmann 2006, p. 181). The effect was a speculative bubble that led to the so-called dot-com crash in March 2000: the profit expectations which led to high stock market values could not be fulfilled. The stock market listings did not correspond to any material equivalent. The profit expectations decreased. As a result, stocks began to fall in March 2000 and the market finally collapsed.

## Third Phase: The Web 2.0 and the Mobile Internet

Despite this crisis the Internet continued to develop. In the phase between 2000 and 2010, the Internet got the structure which reminds us as the Internet as we know it today. It was the beginning of the Web 2.0 and the age of social networking sites: In 2001 Wikipedia was published, Facebook went online in 2003, and YouTube in 2005.

In 2003 the term Web 2.0 emerged. This term restructured the discourse about the cultural meaning of the Internet. After the commercial opening of the Internet in the 1990s, the establishment of Web 2.0 represented another central paradigm shift in the context of the cultural development of the Internet: The emergence of the so-called user-generated content technology (*cf*. Lehr 2012) has placed the user in a position to become interactively involved in the Internet. The user can easily write articles on Wikipedia, maintain a blog, or record podcasts. Thanks to the technical possibilities of the medium, users can communicate with each other instantly. Unlike earlier mass media such as television, through which the user receives a message but cannot answer it (unidirectional communication), social networks like Facebook or Google + provide a platform for Internet-based dialogues. In consequence, an increasingly user-centered Internet, based on poly-directional communication, was evolving. And this poly-directional Internet was what O'Reilly (2006) termed "Web 2.0." The concept of the Web 2.0 has led media-educational researcher Stephen Downes to describe new digital capabilities as a social revolution: "For all this technology, what is important to recognize is that the emergence of the Web 2.0 is not a technological revolution, it is a social revolution" (Downes 2005, para. 26).

SNS like Facebook or Google+ provides a platform for online-based dialogues. Social media are a symbol for this change of the "Web 1.0" to the "Web 2.0." The people increasingly engage within an identity management which bases on so-called

SNS like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram. Via SNS, users can connect to each other and share information. Social media like SNS "became informal but all-embracing identity management tools, defining access to user-created content via social relationships" (Mitrou et al. 2014, p. 2; see also Boyd and Ellison 2008).

In 2007 the phase of the mobile Internet began. In 2007 Apple entered the market with the iPhone. The next innovation was the iPad (2010) and the Apple Watch (2015). With the mobile Internet and the spreading of mobile digital devices, the Internet became an Internet to go. An effect was the growth of smartphone users: In Germany the number of smartphone users rapidly increased from 6.31 million in 2009 to 49 million in 2016 (*cf*. comScore n.d.). The mobile Internet and mobile devices enable the user to display, store, and distribute information as well as to interact with others. In 2015 more young people entered for the first time the Internet via mobile devices instead of using a home PC. At the latest since then, the Internet accompanies us everywhere and provides the culture of self-tracking.

From the beginning the discourse about the Internet was open to interpretation, a place for various cultural practices and utopian visions. This openness to interpretation has remained a significant feature of the Internet discourse to this day.

The Internet discourse is anything but homogeneous. In the course of the discursive construction of the meaning of the Internet, two basal narratives can be identified. These two basal narratives oppose each other in an antithetical relationship:

- The Internet as an alternative space of freedom and resistance. According this narration, the Internet is a virtual cyberspace and stands in opposition to physical power structures.
- The Internet as a space of neoliberal self-optimization.

## The Internet as Space of Freedom

In the environment of universities, the first hacker culture emerged. The hacker culture was mostly organized in the form of "clubs" such as the Homebrew Computer Club. Steve Wozniak, besides Steve Jobs, Apple co-founder, belonged among others to this club, which was founded in 1975. In the context of hacker culture, knowledge was exchanged. This exchange process led among others to collaborative work in the area of software development. Like every process of knowledge construction, software development was also a collaborative process. Especially scientific knowledge is an effect of collaborative research. The collaborative dimension of knowledge construction (*cf*. Popper 1973; Kergel 2016) calls into question the concept of individual intellectual property, author's rights, and copyright. The hacker culture was the "breeding ground" of the open-source movement: in the field of software development, knowledge construction is a process of collaborative research. One feature of the open-source movement is the source codes as open sources for joint research. In 1983 Richard Stallman, who formerly worked at the AI Lab of the MIT, founded the so-called GNU Project. Stallman was also involved in

the development of the GNU General Public License (GNU GPU). The 1983 published GNU GPU License can be considered as the legal dimension of GNU Project and the legal basis of the open-source movement. Two years later, in 1985, Stallman co-founded the Free Software Foundation (FSF). The FSF provided an institutional framing of the GNU Project. With the hacker culture and the open-source movement, a concept of digital knowledge production emerged which paved the way for the narration of the Internet as a space of freedom. Such a liberal understanding of the Internet is also represented by the Creative Commons approach and the Open Access model (*cf.* Kergel 2018; Lessig 2008). Another example of the "free spirit" of this liberal Internet culture is the so-called World Wide Web:

> The World Wide Web (W3) was developed to be a pool of human knowledge, which would allow collaborators in remote sites to share their ideas and all aspects of a common project. Physicists and engineers at CERN, the European Particle Physics Laboratory in Geneva, Switzerland collaborate with many other institutes to build the software and hardware for high-energy research. The idea of the Web was prompted by positive experience of a small ,home-brew' personal hypertext system used for keeping track of personal information on a distributed project. The Web was designed so that it fit was used independently for two projects, and later relationships were found between the projects, then no major or centralized changes would have to be made, but the information could smoothly reshape to represent the new state of knowledge. This property of scaling has allowed the Web to expand rapidly from its origins at CERN across the Internet irrespective of boundaries of nations or disciplines. (Berner-Lee et al. 1994, p. 792)

This narration of the (unfolding) Internet as the freedom space of collaborative knowledge production was successively expanded into a narration of resistance: According to the narration of the Internet as place of resistance, the Internet is considered as a space beyond state access. While the physical world of the state controls the individual and fits the individual into his hierarchies, the Internet represents a power-free space beyond such state repression. This interpretation of the Internet is reflected in the so-called Hacker Manifesto by The Mentor (alias Loyd Blankenship). The *Hacker Manifesto: The Conscience of a Hacker* was published in 1986 – 1 year after the foundation of the Free Software Foundation. The manifesto was published in the underground magazine *Phrack* and features significant figures of the discourse on the cyberspace as a libertarian space:

> And then it happened... a door opened to a world... rushing through the phone line like heroin through an addict's veins, an electronic pulse is sent out, a refuge from the day-to-day incompetencies is sought... a board is found. ,This is it... this is where I belong...' I know everyone here... even if I've never met them, never talked to them, may never hear from them again... I know you all... (The Mentor 2004, para. 9)

The state of digital freedom is becoming almost an ecstatic experience. As a new world, the Internet offers a space for new forms of social practices which are located beyond the everyday life of the physical world. These new social practices and the digital community know no capitalist profit maximization and commercialization: "We make use of a service already existing without paying for what

could be dirt-cheap if it wasn't run by profiteering gluttons, and you call us criminals" (ibid., para. 12). The symbolical order of the physical world does not apply to the Internet. According to this discourse, the concept of crime needs to be deconstructed.

> We explore... and you call us criminals. We seek after knowledge... and you call us criminals. We exist without skin color, without nationality, without religious bias... and you call us criminals. You build atomic bombs, you wage wars, you murder, cheat, and lie to us and try to make us believe it's for our own good, yet we're the criminals. Yes, I am a criminal. My crime is that of curiosity. My crime is that of judging people by what they say and think, not what they look like. My crime is that of outsmarting you, something that you will never forgive me for. (ibid., para. 12f.)

Normally, someone is considered a criminal when this person committed a crime. This presupposes a legal perspective. Legislation codifies power and relationships of dependence as legal relationships. These legal relationships no longer apply in the powerless world of the Internet. Accordingly, two forms of crime collide in The Mentor's argumentation: The legally coded hierarchies and relationships of power relations of the physical world are in a tense relationship to the libertarian ideals that consider the Internet as a space of freedom. At the latest with the hacker manifesto, the struggle for the symbolical order of the Internet became an issue: Who or which behavior is considered criminal on the Internet? Up to the present day, this question has been shaping the discussion about copyright, piracy, and illegal downloads. The collaborative knowledge community of hackers and the discourse on the meaning of the Internet produce the narration of the Internet as an alternative space of freedom. The discourse on the cyberspace as freedom space reached a peak in the 1990s.

## From the 1990s "Cyber-Utopianism" to the Pop-Cultural Iconography of Anonymous

Despite its unfolding of the Internet, the Internet still remained an elitist circle. Primarily scientists and students exchanged their research findings and discussed in online forums and newsgroups or wrote e-mails to each other. This changed in the 1990s with the commercial opening of the Internet. The commercialization of the Internet led to a paradigm shift: To earn money with the Internet was not in the spirit of its inventors. But the growth of the internet made it almost inevitably interesting for commercial considerations (*cf*. Kirpal and Vogel 2006, p. 144). With the spread and popularization of the Internet, its symbolical meaning started to unfold increasingly. The narration of the Internet as freedom space got another chapter.

One narration was the emancipatory aspects of the networking culture. Until the mid-2000s, the access to the digital space of freedom was tied to the desktop PC. Sitting in front of the desktop PC, it was possible to enter the cyberspace. In the 1990s the cyberspace became increasingly a metonymic reference for the Internet as space of freedom. In 1984 the science fiction author William Gibson used the term cyberspace in the novel *Neuromancer*. The term cyberspace is a contamination of the words "cybernetics" and "space." Due to its openness of interpretation, the term

cyberspace advanced to a discursive projection surface for utopian occupations. A final definition of the term cyberspace seems not to be possible.

Basically, the cyberspace can be defined as a post-national space. One example of the discursive thematization of the Internet as post-national space is the so-called Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace.

The reason for the publication of the Declaration of Independence of the Internet was the so-called Telecommunications Act. The "Telecommunications Act" was enacted by the US government in 1996. In addition to deregulation decisions, the Telecommunications Act included the so-called Communication Decency Act. The aim of the "Communication Decency Act" was to decrease the publication pornographic content on the Internet. The "Communication Decency Act" was directed against "indecent" and "obviously offensive" content. Critics interpreted the Communication Decency Act as a form of state Internet censorship. One of these critics was John Perry Barlow, a co-founder and representative of the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) who published the Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace. The declaration of independence of the Internet begins with the words: "Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I come from Cyberspace, the new home of Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask you of the past to leave us alone. You are not welcome among us. You have no sovereignty where we gather" (Barlow 1996, para. 1). The post-national space of freedom in cyberspace stands in contrast to the state oppression in the physical world:

> We have no elected government, nor are we likely to have one, so I address you with no greater authority than that with which liberty itself always speaks. I declare the global social space we are building to be naturally independent of the tyrannies you seek to impose on us. You have no moral right to rule us nor do you possess any methods of enforcement we have true reason to fear. (ibid., para. 2)

According to the "Declaration," cyberspace is not structured via laws but by a free anarchistic communication practice (ibid., para. 4 & para. 6). This anarchistic practice of free communication is located beyond "race, economic power, military force, or station of birth" (ibid., para. 7). The digital and thus nonphysical structure of cyberspace enables users to escape the repression to which they are exposed as individuals in the physical world: "Ours is a world that is both everywhere and nowhere, but it is not where bodies live" (ibid.). Forms of "legal concepts of property, expression, identity, movement, and context do not apply to us. They are all based on matter, and there is no matter here" (ibid., para. 9). Barlow reproduces the prefigured dichotomy which was discursively established by The Mentor. In the course of this dichotomization, the cyberspace is discursively transformed as an anarchistic "counterspace" to the physical world.

This dichotomization developed a "cross-field" effect: The social psychologist Sherry Turkle discussed in her 1995 published book *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*, the freedom discourses of the so-called Cyber-Utopianism in the field of identity construction. According to Turkle, the cyberspace offers the possibility of escaping the fixed individuality in the physical world: "We can easily

move through multiple identities, and we can embrace – or be trapped by – cyberspace as a way of life" (Turkle 2011, p. 231). The anonymity of the cyberspace offers a space to change social roles and to escape from the normative constraints of the physical world. As an example, Turkle refers to so-called MUDs or multiuser computer games:

> MUDs are new kind of virtual parlor game and a new form of community. In addition, text-based MUDs are a new form of collaboratively written literature. MUD players are MUD authors, the creators as well as consumers of media content. In this, participating in a MUD has much in common with script writing, performance art, street theater, improvisational theater. (ibid., p. 11f.)

The MUDs are the concrete realization of "Cyber-Utopianism" – identities become fluid constructions of the user:

> Today I use the personal computer and modem on my desk to access MUDs. Anonymously, I travel their rooms and public spaces [. . .] I create several characters, some not of my biological gender, who are able to have social and sexual encounters with other characters. On different MUDs, I have different routines, different friends, different names. (ibid., p. 15)

To theorize these new possibilities of identity construction, Turkle refers to post-structuralist concepts. According to Turkle, the cyberspace seems to be the realization of a poststructuralist social practice:

> Thus, more than twenty years after meeting the ideas of Lacan, Foucault, Deleuze, and Guattari, I am meeting them again in my new life on the screen. But this time, the Gallic abstractions are more concrete. In my computer-mediated worlds, the self is multiple, fluid and constituted in interaction with machine connections. (Turkle 2011, p. 15)

Referring to poststructuralist concepts, Turkle is able to provide an epistemological basis of the cyberspace as a space of freedom. The anonymity of MUDs enables multiple identity designs. In the sense of poststructuralist epistemology, the subject is dissolved, in the digital world. Thus it is possible to respond to the individualization processes within the physical world: "The anonymity of MUDs – one is known on the MUD only by the name of one's character or characters – gives people the chance to express multiple and often unexplored aspects of the self, to play with their identity and to try out new ones" (Turkle 2011, p. 12). To "become fluid" is one of the poststructuralist metaphors which signifies the detachment of the subject of the repression in the physical world:

> Individuation is no longer enclosed in a word Singularity is no longer enclosed in an individual [. . .] You see, the forces of repression always need a Self that can be assigned, they need determinate individuals on which to exercise their power. When we become the least bit fluid, when we slip away from the assignable Self, when there is no longer any person on whom God can exercise his power or by whom He can be replaced, the police lose it. This is not theory. (Deleuze 2004, p. 138)

The cyberspace literally becomes a utopian space, a space without a material-physical place. MUDs represent such an ephemeral space: "MUDs make possible the creation of an identity so fluid and multiple that it strains the limits of the notion Identity, after all, refers to the sameness between two qualities, in this case between a person and his or her persona. But in MUDs, one can be many" (Turkle 2011, p. 12). The anonymity of cyberspace enables a poststructuralist-orientated "becoming fluid." This narration is also articulated within crypto-anarchist discourse and the so-called cyberpunk movement:

> Cryptography is the ultimate form of non-violent direct action. While nuclear weapons states can exert unlimited violence over even millions of individuals, strong cryptography means that a state, even by exercising unlimited violence, cannot violate the intent of individuals to keep secrets from them. Strong cryptography can resist an unlimited application of violence. No amount of coercive force will ever solve a math problem. (Assange 2013, p. 5)

With the phenomenon of "anonymous," this narration receives a pop-cultural iconography: Anonymous stages this narration as a hacker collective. Anonymity is displayed as an act of guerrilla-like cyber-resistance. The anonymous resistance is at the same time a supraindividual resistance. There is "no one" but only a "we" – as an example one can refer to emblematic self-description "We are Anonymous": We Are Anonymous, We Are Legion, We Do Not Forgive, We Do Not Forget. All these examples represent the discourse about the Internet as a utopian space of freedom, a space – at least according to some narration-topoi – that requires cyber-resistance.

## The Self-Optimization Within the Web 2.0

### Neoliberalism: A Very Short Definition

Originally developed in the economic field, neoliberal approaches increasingly affects other societal sectors. An essential feature of neoliberal thought is the premise that a free market, deregulated to the greatest possible extent, is the best platform for people to unfold their potential:

> an "ethic" of cost-benefit analyses are the dominant norms. All people are to act in ways that maximize their own personal benefits. Indeed, behind this position is an empirical claim that this how *all* rational actors act. Yet, rather than being a neutral description of the world of social motivation, this is actually a construction of the world around the valuative characteristics of an efficiently acquisitive class type. (Apple 2006, 60f.)

Neoliberal thinking has increasingly come to shape social policy in western countries such as the United States, Britain, and Germany. Beginning in the Ronald Reagan-era United States, a rollback of the welfare state also occurred in Britain with the Thatcherism of the 1980s and spread to Germany in the early years of the new century (*cf*. Biebricher 2012). The progress of computerization and digitalization goes hand in hand with unfolding of neoliberal policy – which effects among

others precarity. Although Springer et al. (2016, p. 1) stress that "Neoliberalism is a slippery concept, meaning different things to different people", it is possible to provide a basal definition of this term: Neoliberalism can be defined as an ideology which focuses on the beneficence of the free market. In this context, the market has crucial role to ensure the maintaining of individual freedom. The role of the government is mainly to support the free market which leads to a critical view on the concept of the welfare state (Biebricher 2012). From a meta-perspective, Springer et al. (2016, p. 2) point out that "[m]ost scholars tend to agree that neoliberalism is broadly defined as the extension of competitive markets into all areas of life, including the economy, politics, and society". When one speaks about neoliberalism, one is "generally referring to the new political, economic, and social arrangements within society that emphasize market relations, re-tasking the role of the state, and individual responsibility" (Springer et al. 2016, p. 2). Neoliberal social policy and discourses draw on complementary narratives, discursive topoi of the neoliberal way of living. The sociologist Bröckling has analyzed the construction of such neoliberal narratives in several works (e.g., 2003, 2005, 2015). He identifies the metaphor of the entrepreneurial self as the societal interpellation (which can be explained as a normative societal requirement toward the individual; *cf.* Althusser 1970) directed at the individual to act as a neoliberal entrepreneur. Such discursive conceptions construct the neoliberal individual. This view would hold that the "ideal model for the future is the individual as self-provider and the entrepreneur of their own labour. The insight must be awakened; self-initiative and self-responsibility, i.e. the entrepreneurial in society, must be developed more strongly" (Bröckling 2015, p. xi). The entrepreneurial self can be interpreted as a discursive ideal image of practices of neoliberal self-government. The SNS-based self-narrations within the Web 2.0 unfold within an episteme of neoliberal freedom. Within this episteme the individual has to narrate itself according to neoliberal narratives. The SNS have the function of a representation platform, which narrates oneself as a professional, entrepreneurial self.

## The Web 2.0 and Social Networking Sites Universe

The Web 2.0 opens up the space for online-based self-narrations. On the basis of the Web 2.0 concept, social media and social networking sites emerged. One essential feature of earlier mass media such as television was that a mass of users could receive a message but could not answer it (unidirectional communication). In contrast SNS like Facebook or Google+ provide a platform for online-based dialogues and digital-based storytelling. The paradigm of Internet had changed: from static, isolated repositories of information shifted to dynamic, user-driven, and participatory sites. Users are now able to interact with other people; create, redistribute, or exchange information and opinions; and also express themselves in virtual communities (Mitrou et al. 2014, p. 1). The SNS continued with the established way of using the Internet as a communication platform – as did the researchers and the students before in newsgroup and chatgroups. SNS offered everyone an easy access

to the digital space of the Web 2.0 – also for "ordinary people" who were not accustomed to the Internet: "Digital Storytelling is a bottom-up activity. It is a 'user-generated' media practice. Digital Storytelling is performed by amateurs and not by media professionals. So-called 'ordinary people' develop the necessary competences to tell their own stories with new digital tools" (Lundby 2008, p. 4). Basically, the access to these SNS is free. The business model based on the user generated data which could be sold. Thus, the user of an SNS is not the actual client but the target person. This business model is valid until today (Kergel 2018). In the course of the expansion social media like SNS "became informal but all-embracing identity management tools, defining access to user-created content via social relationships" (Mitrou et al. 2014, p. 2; see also Boyd and Ellison 2008). If one wants to participate on social issues she/he has to use SNS. The SNS business model bases on the data of the users. This requires a standardization of the information. This standardization enables to transform information into statistical data. When the user registers, she/he needs to categorize himself/herself according to prefigured categories – which unfold an interpellative effect. As one paradigmatic example, one can refer to Buchanan's (2011) analysis of Facebook:

> The registration process has remained very simple, but once registered, users are continuously faced with prompts to provide personal information which enables them to be categorised [...] Power is made manifest on Facebook in various ways: the constant prompts urging users into self-revelation; the constant threat of exclusion if users do not provide access to personal information; and the lack of control users' have over their own information and content. (Buchanan 2011, p. 275f.)

The effect of such a standardization is the enclosure of the subject. The individual is forced into a self-narration according to prefigured identity concepts – for example, one is forced to choose a gender. Faucher (2013, p. 9) points out that the most SNS are "obfuscated prison-houses that guide and direct human behaviour in their environments making use of several prompts and cues that constrain choice under the illusion of freedom".

SNS provide an infrastructure for communication. This communication is organized according to the principle of merit. Thus, the self-narration on SNS is exposed to valuations. One example is the so-called Facebook thumb up: From a semiotic point of view, the Facebook thumb up can be analyzed as a performance benchmark for a successful self-narration. The self-narration can be measured by its social impact. The Facebook thumb up (and similar variations on other SNS) represents a "digitized gesture signaling approval, approbation, agreement, praise or even on occasion a reminder to the receiver of the sender's existence" (Faucher 2013, p. 1). This semiotic communication structure has an influence on the users. Bak and Kessler (2012) show that Facebook users react according to normative aspects: People, who use intensive Facebook, "like" a picture more, when it has been "liked" already and thus got a positive appreciation by other users. The communicative structure of SNS unfold an intersubjective surveillance effect – "Every social media user can be equally observer and observed, controller and controlled" (Mitrou

et al. 2014, p. 12). Andrejevic (2005, p. 48) terms this phenomenon "peer-to-peer monitoring". This peer-to-peer monitoring can be interpreted as "the use of surveillance tools by individuals, rather than by agents of institutions public or private, to keep track of one another, covers (but is not limited to) three main categories: romantic interests, family, and friends or acquaintances" (Andrejevic 2005, p. 488). Since the mid-2000s, the Internet expanded, and with the appearance of the mobile Internet, it exists a "social web to go." In contrast to the 1990s and early 2000s where the access to the Internet was tied to the desktop PC, one can access the Internet from everywhere with mobile digital devices. In 2014 more young people entered for the first time the Internet via mobile devices instead of using a home PC (*cf*. Kergel 2014). The sharp distinction between the digital space and the physical spaces vanishes increasingly. One effect is that the peer monitoring and surveillance of the user are also represented in the physical world. As one example one can refer to the phenomenon of self-tracking.

Basically, self-tracking signifies the use of apps which record activities of the individual and measure its lifestyle. The individual subjects itself to "metric power" of digital devices in terms to become more efficient and to optimize the own capabilities/competences. The individual uses his freedom for self-optimization via self-tracking: self-tracking "can make waiting, resting, and daily routines recognized and even valued: in terms of physiological recovery, 'useless' activities gain a new kind of value by becoming physiological beneficial" (Ruckenstein 2014, p. 80). From this point of view, self-tracking can be considered as "an expression of neo-liberal entrepreneurialism, enabling self-maximization and promoting self-critique and responsibilisation through the presentation of 'objective' measures of performance" (Lupton 2013, p. 28). Capitalist success and the success of self-tracking follow the same logic: A successful self-tracking chart has the same structure as a successful development of profits – the increase of gain/the increase of competence. Via the digital constructed data, one can narrate oneself as active individual which expands its competences and therewith its competitiveness. Valuation and peer-to-peer monitoring can be interpreted as an "Entrepreneurial Gaze" which is directed at the SNS-based self-narration. SNS-based self-narrations are subjected to parameters of "social impact"/"likes" and thus reproduce an economic logic: to be successful is to develop a social impact. The freedom discourse of the cyberactivists and the discourse on self-optimization of the SNS-Universe interpret the subject as an active being which unfolds itself within the interactive communication structure of the digital space.

## Conclusion

The concept of an active, voluntaristic, and participative subject shows a discursive span from anarchist subversion to digital-based (neoliberal) self-optimization. Participation is defined as performative self-articulation: The anarchist-oriented discourse on the Internet narrates the Internet as an alternative space of freedom. The SNS-Universe enforces the fixation on the individual. The SNS-Universe opens

the possibility to work more intensely on a visible self-narration and on self-optimizations. What both discourse positions have in common is that they implicitly proceed from an understanding of the subject that unfolds itself in the Internet – either in its need for freedom or in its need for visible self-narration and self-optimization.

## Cross-References

▶ A Decolonial, Intersectional Approach to Disrupting Whiteness, Neoliberalism, and Patriarchy in Western Early Childhood Education and Care
▶ Pop Culture 2.0: A Political Curriculum in the Age of Trump
▶ Technology, Democracy, and Hope

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# Visual Culture in Virtual Worlds

**25**

Cultural Appreciation or Cultural Appropriation? When Cultural Studies Meets Creativity

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## Contents

**Abstract**

From Marcel Duchamp's portrayal of Mona Lisa with facial hair to Andy Warhol's painting of Campbell's Soup Cans, artists have used creative license to appropriate and/or modify other's work for their own interpretation. However, appropriation is not always about purely representing another's work; it is sometimes tangled in political, economic, global, and cultural hegemony, particularly in virtual worlds where it can create a Third Culture. The Third Culture is a worldwide intercultural mix of cultures created by residents who speak different textual languages. Virtual world residents create and recreate their own and other cultures' visual representations to promote their virtual products or

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ideologies. In the Third Culture, the meanings of images are built and negotiated by the Third Culture residents. This chapter contemplates artistic creativity and whether cultural appropriation can lead to cultural appreciation in the virtual world of Second Life through a research-based conversation between Kristy, the female avatar of this art educator/researcher, and Freyja, a Taiwanese research participant, interspersed with the real-life thoughts and experiences of the author.

## Preamble (Research Field and Methodology)

This research took place in the virtual world of Second Life, an online 3D virtual world in which users interact with each other through their avatars. Second Life (SL) is not a premade world, but instead is a world that is collaboratively created by its users from around the world with diverse cultural and language backgrounds, so visual communication is one of the most important ways of communicating.

This paper is written as an autoethnographic narrative to examine a cultural experience (Jones et al. 2016) grounded in my personal experience and story of Kristy and Freyja's research-based conversation. I invite my readers to feel, think, and contemplate with me through their conversation and the subsequent thought process I experienced.

## Preface

Kristy is strolling in downtown London in SL, observing the cityscape and other people's interactions. She is a trying-to-be-Asian avatar but is not very successful because she has used a high-quality pre-set head that does not allow her to make many modifications. Therefore, she can only be a pretty Western-looking avatar. Due to her SL age (10 years), she knows most of the tricks about this world and is no longer the popular girl that other people want to chat with. She does not mind because her mission is to understand the art and culture in this world. "Ah, it is good, no one is talking to me," she thinks. "I can concentrate on my observations now," as she then teleports (TP) to Kyoto, observes further, takes field notes and snapshots, and ponders her previous (Han 2017) research findings. In that research, she found "visual culture in globalized virtual worlds presents a creative world with real-world references" and "every object that exists in a virtual world needs to make sense to refer to and be representational." She remembers she concluded the research by suggesting the need for a "culture of tolerance" (Han 2017, p. 327). She is happy she found something important, but she is not satisfied with it. After another hour of

traveling, observing, and questioning what she sees, she is tired. Kristy teleports back to her home and logs out.

I close the lid of my notebook, feeling the warmth of the computer. Sitting in my office, closing my eyes, and also feeling the West Coast sun shining on my face, I contemplate: What is virtual? What is real? Who am I? Where am I? Every time after an intensive immersion, it always takes me a while to come back to reality. Driving off campus, passing through the lush Pacific Spirit forest, I am soon in downtown Vancouver. Starting from the first day I visited Vancouver, I am always amazed by the variety of shops and signs I see: Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Hindi, Persian, and some shops' languages and signs that I am unable to identify. I remember clearly, when I first arrived at Vancouver, I asked myself, "Am I in Second Life or am I in the real world?"

Oh, you wonder who am I? I am Sandrine; originally from Taiwan, I lived in the Midwest United States for 5 years, and I have just become a Canadian citizen. Now I am teaching and researching visual culture art education in a university in Vancouver, Canada. I am married to a Turkish man because Kristy met him in Second Life and found he was a really nice person. I also have a 4-year-old Canadian boy. I am fascinated by the culture in virtual worlds and believe there are lessons we can learn from that virtual culture that will apply to our real world, those ideas are represented in the following SL conversation between Kristy and Freyja.

## Manifestation: Introduction (Research Method)

Kristy, still searching for the difference between cultural appropriation and culture appreciation, recalled that about 10 years ago, there was a Korean research participant who took her to a Korean town and said, "This is the authentic Korea. When I am in SL, I like to travel and explore. However, whenever I travel to a Korean town that was not built by Korean, I feel bad. I don't know why those people created those places, but they reinforce the stereotype of Korea." Kristy reviewed the snapshots she took at that time and found it was a very westernized town with just enough details that she could identify it as a Korean place. Kristy remembered the reason she met this Korean girl was because she was working on her dissertation research in the virtual world of SL (Han 2013). She had hoped to have international participants in this research; however, most of the participants were Westerners. She did a second call for participation, specifically sent to Asian groups and finally had two Asian participants. And only one chose to have an interview with her. The girl had explained that "because of the language barrier, we are unable to participate in this kind of research; however, we would like to talk about our thoughts if it is in our native language." Kristy also remembered that one of her Indigenous participants was a Maori who was upset about how SL residents untruthfully represent culture. Kristy could understand because in one of her visits to a temple in SL, she observed that the colors, the decorations, and the animations all deviated from what she used to know; she felt very uncomfortable.

Kristy found that the majority of participants were Westerners, so she started to think that maybe she really needed to use different language for her next research. She opened "Formosa Club in Second Life," a Taiwanese Facebook group for SL residents and used her native language, mandarin Chinese, to ask what others thought about visual culture in SL. In less than a day, Freyja responded. Kristy was very excited because she saw Freyja had posted a few articles in the group and was teaching people how to take good photos in SL. "Ah! I am able to talk with a Taiwanese artist about visual culture in SL! How lucky I am," Kristy thought. They coordinated a time to meet in SL and started a lengthy conversation regarding art and cultural representation in virtual worlds.

## Freyja (The Research Participant)

On the first day, Kristy excitedly waited for Freyja. Finally, a nudge (a notification) came: "Do you want to be my friend?" Freyja had sent it.

"Of course," Kristy thought and quickly accepted the friendship offer. Another nudge came: "Do you want to come to my place?" Freyja sent an instant message (IM).

"Sure," Kristy replied, "Can you TP me, please? Thank you."

It was a dreamlike fairy tale-style environment. Kristy now stood on a thin layer of ice with a light mist coming up occasionally. The whole world was dreamy and icy. There was also a carousel with unicorns and few little houses. Kristy turned around and found Freyja, a beautiful Asian avatar wearing a Japanese kimono standing in front of her. "Thank you, Freyja," said Kristy, "for being willing to chat with me."

"Of course, I am interested in this topic," Freyja said. "Oh, before we start, maybe I should tell you my background, so you know my perspective and standpoint."

"Sure, please feel free to tell me anything," Kristy encouraged. At the same time, Kristy looked into Freyja's profile and found they both were experienced avatars in SL.

"I am a Taiwanese woman, living in Beijing for about ten years. My academic background is in pharmaceutical science, but interested in political science, and care for international business." Freyja continued, "I like to play video games; SL is one of the places you can find me."

"You are also an artist!" Kristy said.

"Me?" Freyja asked hesitantly. "No, I am not, or I should say – I don't identify myself as an artist." She continued, "I build and take photos in SL, but I am not from an art school."

"But your works are stunning!" said Kristy. "I am your fan! I love the photos you took and the narratives you wrote along with them."

"Thank you, :)" Freyja smiled. "I write fictional novels, but never thought my visual works could be appreciated by a professional."

"Thank you, Freyja," said Kristy. "Thank you for sharing your background with me. Would you like to talk about virtual culture now?"

"Sure!" Freyja agreed.

## Third Culture and Cultural Appropriation (Literature Review)

"I read the paper (Han 2017) you sent me on Facebook," said Freyja, "the one about the Third Culture."

"Ah, yes," answered Kristy, "most of my previous research findings showed that Third Culture residents must learn to be more accepting, more understanding, and less judgmental about the Third Culture."

"Hmm. . . so, what do you think about it?" asked Freyja.

"Because I am coming from a visual culture background," said Kristy, "I believe that based on research by Evans and Hall (2005), seeing is a 'cultural practice' (p. 310), and because residents in virtual worlds come from various cultural backgrounds, they may have different understandings of and experiences with the same imagery (Machin and Leeuwen 2007)."

"I agree," said Freyja, "from my observation, there are many virtual world creators building exotic cultural locations and objects for profit, without knowing the meaning or reason of those cultural objects."

"Very true," Kristy concurred. "In the virtual world of SL, everything visualized is built by its residents, and nothing should be taken for granted. Images with different meanings coexist in the virtual world, and the relationship between images and residents is not direct or transparent" (Burnett 2004).

"I agree, many of the images may contain cultural meaning, which residents may interpret as a true cultural representation (Han 2013). This can perpetuate incorrect stereotypes of cultures (Said 1985)," said Freyja.

Kristy shook her head sadly; "Individuals' cultural backgrounds influence their choice of what and how they view, and their cultural backgrounds alter a great proportion of the meanings of the images as well (Sturken and Cartwright 2004)."

"I see, but what do you think? How does image influence culture?" asked Freyja.

"It is a psychological necessity for all human beings to belong to a culture, which is the 'result of complex interactions among images, producers, cultural products, and readers/ consumers. The meaning of images emerges through these processes of interpretation, engagement, and negotiation'" (Sturken and Cartwright 2004, p. 69), Kristy continued. "Cultural ideas and values are maintained by visual images because images can communicate, teach, and transmit the behaviour, ideas, and values of a culture (McFee and Degge 1977)."

"I believe the meaning of images among viewers and site designers exists in a simultaneous circulation within the virtual world (Appadurai 2005)," Freyja contended.

"Yes, 'cultural identities emerge in everyday discourse and in social practices as well as by rituals, norms, and myths that are handed down to new members' (Wang 2001, p. 516)," said Kristy. "And, as McPhail (2002) contends, the virtual world is not only a subculture, but a mainstream hyperculture shared by all online residents. In other words, people in the same culture have similar ways of thinking, feeling, and acting (Wang 2001)."

"Humm. . ." Freyja added slowly. "Today we are bombarded with a huge number of images that we have trouble comprehending (Metros 1999). The line between virtual worlds and reality may become 'perceptually nonexistent' (Barry 1997, p. 61)."

"Very true," Kristy replied, "just as Baudrillard (2005) states, images have become more real than real today. He uses television and Disney World as examples to explain how we lose our understanding of reality and the real that images provide us (Baudrillard 1999, 2002, 2005; Woolley 1992). Because of the power of the simulated image, seeing is no longer believing (Lippit 1994)."

"So, can we say that because all images in virtual worlds are real without origin or reality, everything is hyperreal (Baudrillard 2005)?" Freyja asked.

"I believe so," Kristy answered, "as Kellner (2006) notes the whole globe connects through the internet, bringing different cultures together, and creating a new culture. In the virtual world, 'the processes of immigration and globalization lead to new 'third' identities that represent complex and shifting hybridizations of earlier cultural patterns' (Ess and Sudweeks 2006, p. 181)." Kristy continued, "Virtual worlds become a 'ritualising phenomenon' in which residents have to be initiated into one kind of shrine or another (Anyanwu 1998). In this way, the virtual world creates a unique Third Culture."

"Ah, so this is where the Third Culture comes from!" Freyja followed with excitement.

## Appropriation in Art and Cultural Studies

"Yes," Kristy answered. "However, my question now is tangled with culture authenticity and artistic freedom in virtual worlds." Kristy continued, "When I have raised questions about cultural authenticity in virtual worlds, people have told me virtual world creations should be considered as art work. With artists' creative license, these virtual world creations should not be accused of being culturally appropriated works."

"I understand appropriation is an important part in art history," Freyja said. "From Marcel Duchamp to Andy Warhol, appropriation is covered by an artist's creative license (Graw 2004). From Barthes' "Death of the Author" and "Birth of the Reader," appropriation is critical and meaningful."

"I know," Kristy followed. "However, artwork reveals both personal and collective ways of seeing within the same culture. According to Summers (2003), 'The world is not simply projected from the mind; it is made, and even the simplest artifacts involve techniques of gathering and working as well as the teaching and transmission of these techniques' (p. 15)."

"True," said Freyja, "but in contemporary art, appropriation, such as 'the readymade, collage and montage are presented as the three innovations of the historic avant-gardes' (Evans 2009, p. 15). Without appropriation, there would be no contemporary art."

"I can't agree with you more," Kristy said, "but, for Potts (2003), we only see the meaning of artwork through our cultural background; in other words, we are seeing artwork as a sign. Seeing an image as a sign means the image carries cultural meaning. 'Images now signify rather than represent, vaguely intuited stylistic conventions become semiotics structure, and hunch about the kinds of meaning people in the past might have attributed to a motif becomes an exercise in the recovery of a cultural code' (p. 21)."

"However," Freyja does not fully agree, "According to Baudrillard (1999), simulacrum is not unreal. It is 'never exchanged for the real, but exchanged for itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference' (p. 6)."

"Is that true?" Kristy asked. "The 'culture of the simulacrum comes to life in a society where exchange value has been generalized to the point at which the very memory of use value is effaced' and cultural imagery becomes commodified (Camille 2003, p. 48). Such valuing allows appropriation to mean improperly taking, abducting, or stealing something for one's own use (Nelson 2003). 'Appropriation is not passive, objective, or disinterested, but active, subjective, and motivated' (p. 162; see also Rogers 2006)."

"Humm… I think it is clear that appropriation in art is different from appropriation in cultural studies," Freyja concluded. "With creative license, appropriation in art is one of the ways to advance the field of art."

Kristy looked at the time, calculated it, and exclaimed, "Oh, no, I am so sorry, I didn't notice how late it is for you, Freyja. I believe you need to go to rest now."

"Wow, it is really late here," Freyja says. "I enjoyed our conversation and didn't notice the time as well! Will you be here again tomorrow?"

"Sure," Kristy answered. "I really enjoyed our conversation too! I will see you tomorrow the same time?"

"Yes! See you then. :)" Freyja logged off, and like smoke disappeared in front of Kristy.

Closing the computer lid, I pondered the relationship between cultural appropriation and appropriation in art. "Let me go to the Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG) and see if I can find any answer" I thought. While I was driving, I again looked at restaurant signs fly by my window. "Do I want to go to that delicious sushi restaurant that is operated by Koreans, or should I give that new fusion restaurant a try? Wait, does cultural appropriation also exist in culinary arts?" I thought to myself as I arrived at the VAG.

Walking into the permanent collections, the works of the First Nations totems caught my eye. I knew these works, of course; they are created by the respected Emily Carr! "Why don't people argue Emily Carr's works are culturally appropriated but believe they are culture appreciation?" I asked myself. I remembered that Summers (2003) states, "Representations are primarily significant not only in terms of *what* is presented, but also in terms of *how* it is represented" (p. 14). I paced between her artworks, thinking that scholars note that cultural appropriation refers to the ways people adapt and make it their own (Cuthbert 1998; Heyd 2003; Lindtner et al. 2012). Nelson (2003) also states, "In every cultural appropriation, there are those who act and those who are acted upon, and for those whose memories and cultural identities are manipulated by aesthetic, academic, economic, or political appropriations, the consequences can be disquieting or painful" (p. 172). I know Emily Carr had a wonderful relationship with First Nations people. She was not appropriating their culture but instead was celebrating their culture. The First Nations community she was with realized this European woman was creating artworks about their culture, not for their culture, and they were not offended by her works. I remember Hart (1997) states:

> The debate over cultural appropriation is about whether speaking for others or representing them in fictional as well as legal, social, artistic, and political work is appropriate or proper, especially when individuals or groups with more social, economic, and political power perform this role for others without invitation. (p. 137)

I believe Emily Carr was properly presenting the First Nations culture and had an invitation to do so. Did I find my answer to cultural appropriation and artists' creative license? I guess not. But I know I am going to give the fusion restaurant a try!

## Semiotics as a Research Methodology for Data Analysis

Kristy was patiently waiting for Freyja at yesterdays' spot. "Virtual worlds, how amazing they are! Everything we see here are images constructed through a sign system (Chandler 2004)." Kristy thought. "I believe I should see the virtual world through Barthes' semiotic approach because it examines not only texts or signs but also the cultural system that creates them (Fuery and Fuery 2003)." She used her mouse to zoom in on a little house in the distance and found it was a small shop selling Asian style dresses. Kristy thought, "for Barthes, texts are not meaningful on their own. Barthes' original semiotic concepts were 'essentially canonized and have become part of the movement to analyse many different forms of visual expression' (Burnett 2002, p. 150)." Kristy zoomed to another little house and found many Asian skins and shapes. "Ah, how nicely made! Should I use Barthes' denotation and connotation to look into all those works that are made by people from other cultures? I believe Barthes' semiotic theories will help me to find a deeper understanding of

the culture in virtual worlds." Kristy zoomed out, looked into the details of the carousel, and thought, "Unicorns, what is the cultural meaning of unicorns in Western cultures? To me, unicorns are special horses with a horn on their heads. I know the denotation of the unicorns because denotation describes the literal meaning of a sign (Moriarty 2005). But, how about the connotation of the unicorns? Connotation refers to the social-cultural and personal affiliation of a sign (Frascara 2004). I don't think that besides being magical animals, I know anything else about them." Kristy turned her camera angle and looked at one unicorn in detail. "The connotation of signs helps us to better understand the meaning behind the images. If we do not think about the connotation of an image, we will not understand the hidden meaning of the image (Han 2011). What does this unicorn really mean at this location? What does this unicorn want to tell me?" Kristy remembered, "'Connotation produces the illusion of denotation, the illusion of the medium as transparent and of the signifier and the signified as being identical' (Chandler 2004, p. 141)." She decided she would use denotation and connotation to investigate the magical virtual worlds.

## Re-engage (Findings)

Click-click-clack… the keyboard typing sound brought Kristy back to SL.
"Hi, Kristy, thanks for waiting!" A message came from Freyja.
"Oh, no problem at all, I was just looking around; thanks for coming!" said Kristy.
"Before I came here, I was looking at SL photos in Flickr" says Freyja.
"Flickr?" Kristy didn't understand.
"Yes, don't you know there is a big group of SL residents on Flickr?" Freyja asked.
"Oh, I am aware of it, but I don't really know what is happening on Flickr," Kristy responded.
"Open Flickr," Freyja said excitedly. "Find SL group, search China, and let's talk more!"
Kristy wondered what she would see and searched in Flickr. "Wow, what are these photos?" Kristy shouted. "I don't even know how to react to them."
"See, I told you," Freyja laughed.
"Why are these people with slim Asian eyes wearing Japanese kimonos titled 'China girls'? What does that mean?" Kristy asked uncertainly.
"This is the stereotypical look of Chinese women in SL residents' mind I believe," Freyja said and continued, "I believe what makes us feel uncomfortable was the lack or misuse of culturally relevant details."

Kristy was deep in thought and didn't say anything for a while. Finally she asked, "So, how does cultural appropriation or misunderstanding happen in virtual worlds?" Before Freyja said anything, Kristy continued, "I guess I now understand what Graw (2004) means by 'each act of cultural appropriation therefore constructs a simulacrum of a double negation, denying the validity of individual and original production, yet denying equally the relevance of the specific context and function of the work's own practice' (p. 34)."

Freyja replied cautiously, "Yes, when a culture represents another culture, stereotypes easily occur (Said 1985), and appropriation can be offensive and harmful

(Hladki 1994; Young and Haley 2009). Back to your question, Kristy," Freyja said, "I think there are three reasons that cause cultural appropriation in SL: (1) language barrier, (2) lack of cultural context, and (3) people prefer exotic rather than original."

"I guess I know what you mean, but could you please explain more?" Kristy requested.

"Sure," Freyja started. "As for the language barrier, it is mostly about unequal accessibility to information. That is to say, when non-Asian virtual world residents create Asian products, they have fewer resources that can be translated into English or Western languages."

"So, simply because of being unable to access information obtained by another language?" Kristy asked.

"Of course not," Freyja said. "This issue can be divided into several subcategories: (a) Like you said, people do not have enough access to the language they are creating for; therefore, the culture they are representing might be misunderstood. (b) A virtual world resident might rely on a resident from the cultural or language system. However, the translation and interpretation might contain personal bias (Achen and Openjuru 2012). (c) Virtual world residents might be able to translate text from a translator. However, during the translation, the cultural context might not be able to be translated or understood (Graw 2004)."

"Wow, these are all so true. I didn't think about it previously." Kristy said.

"There are more!" Freyja followed "(d) when a virtual world resident translates a description into a tangible object, the connotation might not be able to be translated in a meaningful way. (e) Moreover, even though most of the virtual world creators state they do research before they create (Han 2017), when they research the images they are recreating, they are unable to understand the context or meaning of the image. Therefore, when they put multiple cultural items together, misunderstanding occurs. Finally, (f) when translating a 2D image into a 3D object, the creators are not able to make sense of how the 3D object might be used or presented in real life. Therefore, there are more chances for misunderstanding."

"Freyja, you are amazing! These all are so true," Kristy exclaimed. "Freyja, you also mentioned lack of cultural context, and people prefer exotic images rather than authentic cultural representation, could you please tell me what you mean by those?" Kristy asked.

"Lack of cultural context," Freyja started, "occurs mostly because people prefer to stay in their original culture circle, their comfort zone, with their own language speakers."

"You mean, like Chinese people prefer to be with Chinese people just because they can communicate easily?" Kristy asks.

"Yes, I believe so," Freyja answered and continued, "these language groups are similar to the real-world geographic boundaries. These boundaries, in both virtual and real worlds, build walls between knowing other cultures and being known by other cultures."

"Ah," Kristy thought, "this is like the city of Richmond in the Greater Vancouver area. Richmond feels like a Chinese city, Chinese residents gather there, and they create their own Chinese culture in the Greater Vancouver area."

"Within the same culture, when virtual world residents see cultural imagery they are not familiar with, they do not ask further. They do not have the cultural context to be able to ask critical questions (Moriarty 2005)." Freyja continued, "Because they do not have the cultural context, when they can find an item to be purchased, they may not consider whether it is appreciation or appropriation. Therefore, when the buyers are not critical, the sellers or creators are given permission to create objects without knowing all cultural details."

"I see," Kristy said slowly. "This explains why I cannot find an authentic Chinese dragon in a Western shopping mall; I can only find those dragons look like Mushu who appears in the Disney *Mulan* movie."

"Yes," says Freyja. "If you come to a Chinese shopping mall, you will have no problem finding a beautiful and authentic dragon!"

"I know it is getting late for you, Freyja," said Kristy, "if you still have some time, could you please tell me more about what you mean by people preferring exotic images rather than authentic cultural representation?"

"Sure thing, I am not tired yet," Freyja said, "I think distance from reality brings curiosity. And distance can be distance from other cultural groups and/or distance to cultural imagery (Rogers 2006)." Kristy waited for Freyja to say more. "When there is distance from other cultural groups, imagination fills the gap between the cultural object and the reality," Freyja explained.

"I see. . ." said Kristy.

"Virtual world residents do not really seem to know all the details about the cultural group to awaken their imagination, but they prefer to enjoy the unknown," Freyja continued. "The distance to cultural imagery includes, but is not limited to, appropriated works, imaginary works, and creative artwork."

"Ah, yes," Kristy said. "From my previous research, many virtual world creators argue that requiring cultural authenticity limits the creativity of virtual artwork (Han 2017)."

"I guess that's all I have for today," Freyja said. "Maybe we meet again tomorrow?"

"Sure!" Kristy didn't want to lose a chance to talk with Freyja. "Tomorrow I will be here waiting for you!" Freyja once again like smoke disappeared in front of Kristy.

## Caring About Cultural Appropriation

I closed my eye, thinking about how cultural appropriation made me feel. I knew cultural appropriation is not always about purely representing another culture, but it is tangled with political, economic, global, and cultural hegemony (Cuthbert 1998; Hladki 1994; Hooks 2006; Kulchyski 1997; Salazar 2012). In the real world, we critically examine visual culture (Sturken and Cartwright 2004), but I wondered why we do not critically examine visual culture in an immersive virtual world but simply want to put the virtual world creations into the artistic creativity category? Several questions we ask about the real-world visual culture I think are also applicable to virtual world visual cultures, especially to those culture-related creations: Who benefits from the cultural creations? Who are the creators? For what purpose do they create the cultural object? What messages are they delivering? Who are the audiences? What messages are they receiving from the cultural object? And what the audiences might think about the culture that is appropriated?

I remembered Ninetto (1998) states, culture sells. Human beings are attracted to different cultures and cultural products. In the real world, tourism sells cultures (Salazar 2012). Souvenirs are cultural products. Virtual world cultural creations are much easier to make because of fewer real-world physical limitations, and they are rarely criticized because people prefer to stay with their own cultural group. Virtual world creators pay less attention to culture products, which can cause cultural appropriation; however, the impact they bring to the virtual world residents is not smaller than real-world cultural appropriation.

I slowly opened my eyes and stared at an artwork hanging on my wall that was made by a Ghana student. I remember when there was another Ghana student who came in my office, his eyes opened wide, and he had a big smile. He asked me if a

Ghana student made that. I said yes and asked him how he could tell. He told me that because the pattern, the color, and the gesture in this work all shouted to him that it was from home. At that moment, I could only think of my ignorance because I was not able to see the detailed cultural elements. I don't think I was able to differentiate those cultural elements from other Africa countries, which I can easily do with Asian cultures. I could only see the connotation of the artwork from a very surface angle when the work is from a very distinct culture. I asked myself, if I were a SL designer and asked to make an African home, what would I do? What information could I find to help me create an authentic one? If I used all the information I found, I still don't think I would be able to create an authentic African home because I don't have the cultural context. Could I argue what I made was art and avoid all the criticism? I don't think I could, because I knew I would be trying to make other people believe what I created represents an Africa home.

I looked down at my office floor, seeing all the wires tangled under my tables, just like how I feel now. I wondered what should I do to help other virtual world residents and myself to avoid cultural appropriation and transform it into culture appreciation?

## Solutions to Cultural Appropriation in Virtual Worlds

When Kristy arrived, Freyja was already elegantly standing in front of her. "Hi Freyja, you are early!" Kristy said.

"Of course," said Freyja, "I really enjoyed our conversation."

"Me too, but Freyja, what do you think, how should we move from cultural appropriation to cultural appreciation?"

"Humm…" Freyja thought for a while and said slowly, "I think mutual respect and cultural exchanges might provide a solution."

"What do you mean? Could you please tell me more, Freyja?" Kristy asked.

"Sure," Freyja explained. "Mutual respect asks us to care for and learn about other cultures in the cultural context. We should not stop at tolerance (Han 2017), like your research participants stated, but learning to respect mutually other cultures is important."

"I agree," Kristy added. "Each cultural symbol contains specific meaning; misuse, misrepresentation, and appropriation should not be simply tolerated."

"Yes," Freyja continued, "as we discussed a few days ago, limitations on getting to know cultural context are recognized; however, cultural objects are not to be made fun of, joked around about, or treated with contempt (Heyd 2003). And virtual world creators should be consciously aware of the power of their creation and avoid cultural appropriation (Graw 2004)."

"I can't agree more!" said Kristy.

Freyja continued, "culture exchange introduces our own cultures to others in whom we are interested. In an equal platform, virtual world residents celebrate their own culture and introduce their own culture to others (Campbell 2018). With language support, 3D virtual objects introduce and explain cultural contexts to people who are not familiar with the culture."

"That is a very interesting concept," Kristy wondered, "but what can we do to achieve culture exchange?"

"It won't be easy," Freyja sighed. "If SL officials are not taking the initiative, residents like us need to do it."

"I see…" Kristy followed slowly "I guess this will be the next thing on my to-do list."

## Conclusion

"Kristy, don't push yourself too much," said Freyja. "Culture is to be lived and to be learned. The connotation of cultural symbols is negotiated and learned within the culture. When we are in a dominant culture using another's culture objects, we are unable to know the context of it, and cultural appropriation happens."

"Agreed," Kristy followed, "the findings of my previous research have shown that it is important to be open-minded in the virtual world. However, it is also important to be respectful of other cultural imagery while creating virtual objects (Rogers 2006) because cultural imagery carries cultural meanings (Nelson 2003)."

"Yes," Freyja added. "Virtual imagery rapidly delivers, exaggerates, and creates a strong impact. Massive visual impacts affect viewers who do not have time to process each image (Duncum 1997). Lack of critical thinking when receiving the imagery is an accomplice to cultural appropriation."

"So true," Kristy said, "I believe deviation between the original cultural artefact created by the culture owner and the final element that is perceived by the viewers is linked through cultural-based connotations (Evans 2009). I know looking critically at virtual objects without a cultural context is not an easy task. However, I believe if we help virtual world residents develop their visual literacy skills to learn how to read, see, and decode virtual imagery (Duncum 2002), it might help virtual world creators be aware of the cultural details they create."

"I agree. :)" Freyja smiled.

"Thank you so much for your time having all these meaningful conversations with me," Kristy said. "I hope we will meet again some time in the future."

"Of course," Freyja said confidently, "let's keep in touch!" Freyja once again disappeared like smoke. Kristy teleported herself back home, sat on the couch, and thought about how to initiate culture exchange in Second Life.

I closed the lid of my computer, thinking the same thing as Kristy: should I initiate culture exchange in the real world as well?

## Cross-References

▶ Social Media and the Quest for Democracy: Faking the Re-awakening

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# Technological Dystopia in the Science Fiction Genre

<div style="text-align:right">**26**</div>

Peter Pericles Trifonas

**Abstract**

Science fiction films as a mass medium for public consumption have disseminated cautionary parables of technological dystopia rooted in existing social and economic conditions. *Metropolis* (1927), *Blade Runner* (1982), *Terminator* (1984), and *The Matrix* (1999) illustrate transformations of the genre. The theme that ties them together is the representation of technology and its effect on human society in the future. Each film deals with the subject in different ways that ultimately relate to its cinematographic style, technical advancements, and the story line. And yet, the theme of the failed quest for utopia remains morally unresolved in the depiction of the rise of a technological dystopia and its effect on human society in a world to come, playing on the incommensurability of philosophical, religious, political, economic, and literary narratives of scientific progress.

Before the invention of "moving pictures," the theme of dystopia was represented narratively in literature and gradually became a major element of science fiction genre story lines in film (Berger 1976). The first novel that arguably broached the subject of the type of world we would want to live in was Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (published 1516) (Clayton 1996). It represented an ideal society free from crime, poverty, and antagonism in which human beings could thrive and implied that our existing state was dystopic where life was hard and unfair. The reality More fictionalized was no existing, physical place or corporeality, an *ou-topos,* nowhere.

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Its backdrop was bleak and terrifying without semblance of hope or iota of comfort. The book was a gateway to the theme of dystopia because it embodied a reaction to the fears of a world that was hostile and inhabitable. Its appearance led to works of literature – for example, Sir Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and even Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* – that depicted different types of societies from ideal and satirical perspectives (Clayton 1996) representing a failed quest to discover utopia and even understand it. Global exploration and discoveries of unknown lands and peoples made the question of what a "new world" *would* or *could* look like infinitely more urgent. In 1895, by the time H.G. Wells had written *The Time Machine* portraying a protagonist who travels into the future to find a "perfect society," the progress of science had enriched the fictional vision of utopia and included the possibility of dystopia as a negative space in the human imagination (Landon 1992). Literature provided the backdrop for movie representations of a future world and human life gone terribly wrong in the pursuit of progress. The evolution of science fiction films as a mass medium for public consumption disseminated cautionary parables of technological dystopia rooted in existing social and economic conditions. Transformations of the genre are worked out in different ways that ultimately relate to cinematographic style, technical advancements, and the story line. And yet, the theme of the failed quest for utopia remains morally unresolved in the depiction of the rise of a technological dystopia and its effect on human society in a world to come, playing on the incommensurability of philosophical, religious, political, economic, and literary narratives of scientific progress.

The German expressionist production *Metropolis* (1927) directed by Fritz Lang is one of the first science fiction films of the technological dystopic genre, representing a clash between the wealthy and the laboring classes as the result of mechanization. In the metropolis of the film, industrialists in tall buildings hold economic and social power over workers who operate massive machines (McAuley 2015). The theme of technological dystopia is imbricated in the architectural modality of the city: a cubist monolith of buildings and rigid structures that are cold and alienating yet the result of sophisticated engineering principles. The materiality of the *cityscape* dwarfs human presence and renders the subject ephemeral in its spatial estrangement. The plot is quite simple: the privileged son (Freder) of a "master industrialist" (Fredersen) discovers how the laboring classes are exploited for profit by the autocrats due to mechanization that will eventually render the workers obsolete. With the help of young woman (Maria), the son tries to mediate between the rulers and the ruled to make society more equitable and just. Technology feeds the dystopic devolution of the social contract that is characterized by dehumanization and the exploitation of the laboring classes. The moral thrust of *Metropolis* is socioeconomic and renders the search for utopia an effect of resistance and the desire for a better life. A convoluted story of love and betrayal impels the action to drive home the humanistic message of the film on an emotional level that the audience can identify with beyond class struggle. Yet, coming after the industrial revolution, *Metropolis* is a political commentary on the social and economic division that happened in Europe during the late 1800s. This could be any city in which mechanization created

discrepancies in wealth between those who owned factories and other means of mass production and those who supplied the labor for the accumulation of capital (McAuley 2015). *Metropolis* enacts the quest for utopia as an allegorical socioeconomic sub-genre (Jameson 2005). It frames the hermeneutic for understanding the ideological conditions of alienation and the effects of technological dystopia.

The influence of Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* (1867) and the theoretical foundations of communism can be seen through the class struggle worked out in the plot of *Metropolis*. The impending threat of technology and mechanization as the root of social and economic inequality would have been very real to late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century viewers (McAuley 2015). The innovations of industrialism and mass production gave rise to early forms of capitalism that paid little or no regard to the human rights of workers in the pursuit of profit. Freder accidently sees how a machine kills and injures some laborers and becomes conscious of how the ruling classes are exploiting their power to squeeze out surplus value from labor. He falls in love with Maria, an activist, who has secretly been uniting the workers in tunnels under the city to revolt against their mistreatment. Fredersen finds out and asks an inventor (Rotwang) to help stop the revolt. A complex ruse is planned to replace Maria with an android to quash the rebellion. *Metropolis* highlights the moment when the resistance of the proletariat threatens the social and economic hegemony of the bourgeoisie. Allusions to the Russian Revolution of 1917 are unmistakable. It also raises questions about the dehumanizing potential of technology as the robotic simulation of Maria constructed by Rotwang to deceive the masses ends up causing conflict and violence among the workers. The film as a form of science fiction suggests that there is something in human nature that when combined with technology for the sake of economic gain has dystopic effects on society (Telotte 1995). The plot of *Metropolis* moves toward a hopeful resolution that things may get better for the exploited masses. However, for Marx this could only happen when the workers take over the means of production, and that event would only happen through a bloody revolution of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie (McAuley 2015). In *Metropolis,* there is hope that social and economic equality will be achieved because the industrialists have had an epiphany after a phase of ideological defamiliarization and there is the possibility of a new order after the horror of truth. The theme of technological dystopia structures the morality of the film and questions the fantasy of human progress. *Metropolis* is a parable in which social and economic injustice is revealed and defeated and there is the promise of a future utopia, although we don't know what that will look like.

The theme of technological dystopia is carried on in later films of the science fiction genre. *Blade Runner* (1982), *Terminator* (1984), and *The Matrix* (1999) represent the anti-utopia of a cataclysmic landscape for humanity, if the desire to produce perfect machines and their artificial intelligence goes unchecked. The prospect of a world infiltrated, controlled, or constructed by robots usually starts with some form of purpose that seems altruistic: to aid economic or social life and make it easier to exist (Sobchak 1987). But human ingenuity combined with rapid technological advancements creates the conditions for dystopia that force an end-game and threaten the state of the world.

*Blade Runner* depicts the problems of bioengineering life. The destructive "mechanical bride" of *Metropolis* is replaced with "replicants" or hyperreal simulations of human life (Baudrillard 1983). The film is based on an adaptation of Robert K. Dick's science fiction novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1991). Whereas the replicants of *Blade Runner* are not robots, they serve the same purpose in threatening the existence of human life and the power of the economic elites by attacking the class structure of society (Landon 1992). They are stronger and more capable, so they must be controlled and policed to do pre-programmed tasks. The alien aspects of technology that are represented in the robots of *Metropolis* are not as pronounced in *Blade Runner* since it is quite difficult to distinguish between a replicant and human being without specific tests of empathy (Begley 2004). The replicants don't fall apart and devolve into "pure machines." But simulating human life is not that same as being human for the scientific and corporate powers who want to preserve the status quo in *Blade Runner* and keep these bioengineered beings as an enslaved labor force (Kellner et al. 1984). The Tyrell Corporation was responsible for creating these synthetic forms for the purpose of populating work colonies off Earth. There is the suggestion that human world has profited economically from the creation of replicants and their labor, thus creating the possibility a society that reflects the effects of globalization (Kellner et al. 1984). Although the scene of 2019 Los Angeles is very multicultural and cosmopolitan, there are chaos and disorder separating the elites from the masses. The first scene sets the world of *Blade Runner* against a backdrop of mushroom clouds, smoke, and a rain that never stops during the film. The suggestion is that the location is somewhere in a post-nuclear war landscape where people have escaped to. The urban backdrop is neon, glass and steel but dark, wet, and dreary: a reflection of Deckard's state of mind perhaps (Landon 1992). The camera pans the scene of glowing signs advertising "off-world" holiday "adventures" while sounds of cars and thunder are heard in the decaying city. We see people of diverse "races" scattering in all directions below flying cars. It is a science fiction multicultural society the audience can acknowledge as familiar, channeling Time Square in New York City or downtown Tokyo, but after an implied technological age that has created the nightmare of this dystopia (Shanahan 2014). Marshall McLuhan (1964) coined the term "global village" to acknowledge the immediacy of information dissemination and exchange through electronic media, in essence, the shrinking of distance and time for communication. Another effect of technology in this scenario is globalization and the creation of hybrid and unequal societies. *Blade Runner* reflects the social and economic culmination of the movement of people across digital and physical neighborhoods at a time when barriers to migration have been removed, by choice or necessity (Shanahan 2014). The urban landscape portrayed is hopeful for some and not for others as Deckard moves between decadent bars and squatter-filled residences. *Blade Runner* suggests that the crime is not fitting into the mix of what society is, even for simulated human beings.

The existence of the replicants is considered problematic because, like the cyborg terminators, they do not have empathy (Williams 1988). Three of the bioengineered

beings – Roy Batty, Zhora, and Pris – escape the work colony and need to be "retired" because they begin to seek autonomy and free thought. The possibility of a society ruled by replicants with no respect for human life is the essence of the technological dystopic vision that the film represents as a piece of science fiction. However, Ridley Scott makes these creatures seem vulnerable and introduces a moral dilemma into the narrative (Williams 1988). There is little if no reflection on the plot or its meaning outside of the film, or even within it, by the characters for that matter, although there are symbolic elements in the story and action that have thematic significance. There is very little dialogue in the script. Judgment and interpretation are left up to the audience after the chase is finished (Shanahan 2014). There are complications along the way for protagonist Deckard, an ex-cop and reluctant replicant hunter, who is going through the motions to find rogue "humanoids" that are the products of misguided scientific experiments. Protagonist Deckard is hired by the corporation to "take out" the rogue replicants before they can do more social and economic damage, but he is introduced by Eldon Tyrell (the inventor) to Rachel, a simulated being who has been given memories. Unlike the others, she was programmed to live beyond a 4-year limit. Rachel is dangerous because she thinks that she is human. Surprisingly, she does not act like a replicant and saves Deckard life, only to disappear after realizing the truth of her origins (Doane 2004). A sense of hope for the future of humanity does not underlie *Blade Runner* other than these artificial creations of science. The premise of the film suggests that the human world is in decline and the replicants are a new model for being and existence that must be destroyed to prevent resistance against the status quo. Technology becomes a way to take control of one's life and freedom in *Blade Runner,* something that must be policed by the state. There is an underground community of bio-creators who manufacture bizarre new life forms (e.g., animated mannequins, puppets, and stuffed animals) as "friends" to populate that world. It is truly a horror show but normalized in the science fiction film world of *Blade Runner.* Deckard is forced to become a replicant hunter to save himself from persecution by the authorities. He takes on the role with methodical precision, killing a female replicant dancer, but then after he develops affection for Rachel, he is not without inner conflict. This relationship foreshadows a seemingly new era of life, a hybrid fusion of human being and replicant, or at least the possibility of living side by side. The idea raises questions in the film about the ethics of technology and what should be created (Landon 1992). Although the issue is not addressed directly in the dialogue, it is a motivation revealed in the plot because Deckard can see the transformation of the replicants from unfeeling automatons to emotional subjects. He identifies with them after getting close to Rachel. *Blade Runner* exposes the problem of reducing the space between what is human and the essence of technology by making the violence of the film physical and not a product of CGI (Shanahan 2014). When replicant Roy meets his creator Tyrell, he gouges out the eyes of the scientist like Oedipus does. It is as if he is avenging the deaths of others like him, so no more damage can be done. *Blade Runner* is like a morality tale in this respect because it foreshadows how the misuse of technology without responsibility ends up in creative and destructive forms of expression and resistance. The film presents

a dystopic world where the evolution of science tries to overcome the essence of the human spirit (Shanahan 2014).

*Blade Runner* debuts while the cloning controversy – raging since the mid-1970s about the possibility of synthesizing life – was about to become real with lab-manufactured lamb embryos being replanted in the womb of a sheep resulting in births. Genetic engineering seems normal in the techno-scientific world of *Blade Runner* in order for corporations to achieve mastery over the raw materials of the physical universe and profit from it without having to pay for labor. It seems easier to exploit replicants for the work since they have no rights, although the society represented through the conventions of *film noir* is very much dark, fragmented, and decaying (Sobchak 1987). The Tyrell Corporation is an all-seeing and all-knowing entity like Big Brother, but may be not as ruthless, although its practices produce a technological dystopia (Sammon 1996). Deckard is blackmailed into hunting down the replicants and cannot hide from authority; however, he wants nothing to do with the status quo. His moral dilemma resembles the movie *Frankenstein* (with Boris Karloff) in which the creator is sympathetic to the monster and repulsed by it (Clayton 1996). The replicants are illegal on Earth but more importantly their existence goes against nature. Science facilitated the creation of a post-human world in *Blade Runner* to exploit the environment, but its products, the replicants, are not accepted (Sammon 1996), maybe as a necessary evil, but that is all. Except for Deckard, other human beings do not empathize with them, and even he manages to kill most of them. It could be because the replicants are considered too alien, but another explanation is their social and economic function as essentially slave labor "dehumanizes" them (Williams 1988). *Blade Runner* is a critique of advanced capitalism in this sense like *Metropolis,* where the industrial elites are in direct conflict with the masses and the workers, manufactured as robots or replicants, who have no rights or autonomy (Kellner et al. 1984). Both films reflect the same sense of desperation in the depiction of technological dystopia but end in radically different ways. *Blade Runner* foreshadows a romantic reconciliation of the human and post-human when Deckard and Rachel run away to nature. *Metropolis* suggests the hope that socioeconomic difference can be bridged for a better community. Overall, however, the sense of disillusionment that the depiction of technological dystopia promotes in *Blade Runner* is not overcome when Roy dies. There is no redemption for humanity, even though he becomes a Christ symbol, one hand pierced with a nail and the other holding a white dove (Kellner et al. 1984). In the end, Deckard sides with the replicants and takes Rachel away to nature to escape the social and economic system that has made her existence possible but could also enslave her.

The Hollywood blockbuster *Terminator* (1984)*,* directed by James Cameron, depicts cyborgs from the future whose purpose is to exterminate human beings. The robots were made possible because an engineer invented a type of silicone chip developed by Cyberdyne Systems that eventually led to a self-aware, self-replicating, and autonomous artificial intelligence (AI) called Skynet. Eventually, the cyborgs from the future that come to kill Sarah Connor – the woman who will organize the resistance against the machines – are human simulations that look very

real, but without feelings or emotions. In such a dystopia, non-technological beings are considered irrelevant by the AI in the grand scheme of things and must be enslaved or destroyed (Telotte 1995). The cyborgs embody the possible technological dystopia of a future. Human life thus becomes not needed or dark in its hybridity, like the menacing figure of Darth Vader in *Star Wars* (1977), perhaps the most memorable image of director George Lucas' franchise debut. The character is a frightening blend of man and machine that represents what happens when "the dark side" overpowers the human. But Darth Vader also shows the extent to which technology is integrated in human life because he is a functioning cyborg. The lack of empathy that he has for the rebels is explained by his physical makeup and "the force." In *Star Wars,* there is a division between good and bad that is rooted in how technology is used, for what purposes. When Darth Vader cuts off Luke Skywalker's hand, the prosthetic is accepted as a natural substitute, whereas it is not for any "evil" or antagonistic characters (Cavlelos 1999). The armor of the storm troopers removes any of their individuality, and they look like automatons rather than human beings. The R2D2 and C3PO are drones with personality and a sense of right and wrong despite being machines; consequently, they are more or less personified and appealing. *Star Wars* takes the science fiction genre and creates a type of melodramatic space opera out of the plot, but with light saber duels and holograms (Kaminski 2007). This has been a criticism of the film (and of the various prequels and sequels) because technology never seems to advance and forms almost a neutral backdrop to the action (Cavlelos 1999). The story is the main thrust rather than creating a scientifically progressive universe in which the weapons become more catastrophic and the spaceships more capable. Despite the "stagnation" over the series, *Star Wars* was original at the time in the way it created a future world that embedded technology within everyday life and integrated it with human action.

Machines are naturalized within the science fiction genre as a part of existence to the point where they are expected and become a stock feature but at the same time predictive of what the future could be like (Cavlelos 1999). The *Terminator* reflects concern over the social and economic futurism of the science fiction film genre and the dystopia it represents through unrestrained technological progress (Tellote 1995). We can place it during the early 1980s, when advancements in chip technology resulted in the first desktop computers and the prospect of AI being used to manufacture self-thinking machines such as robots (Landon 1992). *Terminator* asks hard questions: What will happen to us if technology can reproduce itself? How will this affect human life? Will we survive? In the later *Terminator* films of the series during the 1990s and 2000s, the vision of technological dystopia is resisted in a struggle of humans against machines (Telotte 1995). The ethical questions eventually became unavoidable because AI had social and economic implications and the science fiction genre could not avoid addressing them. Ironically, there is an affinity developed between the cyborgs and the rebels in the later *Terminator* films. After the near extinction of humanity, the series progresses to suggest that AI can be an ally if there are parameters for control that are set up to prevent the takeover of life by intelligent technology (Bukatman 1993). In more recent science fiction genre films, the machines become personified and exhibit emotions as well as the ability to

think but still reflect the theme of technological dystopia. The boy-bot in *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* (2001) is programmed to mimic feelings of love and takes the place of a child put in a medical coma to help the parents cope. *Her* (2013) is about a computer-simulated woman that functions as companion for a lonely "tech nerd" living in self-created digital world. *Wall-E* (2008) is an animated film about a drone who watches old romantic movies and becomes infatuated with an EVE probe in the junkyard that used to be the Earth. Technology is depicted as having some positive values in these films, but in dystopic worlds where humans become extinct because of climate change, have little or no social contact with each other due to the Internet, or transform into lazy, unrecognizable creatures because of mechanization. In these films, the science fiction genre becomes a way to reflect on the effects and significance of problems that pose a real and present danger to any possibility of achieving utopia such as bad environmental practices, social alienation, and overreliance on technology (Berger 1976). *Terminator* is a parable about trying to avoid the possibility of dystopia through the use of AI technology without any foresight or correcting the self-destructive path before it happens. The AI in *Terminator* is alien, hostile, and antagonistic, and this representation supports the sense of fear that drives the story of the film as a variation of the science fiction genre and its theme of technological dystopia (Tellote 1995).

*The Matrix* (1999) caused a paradigm shift in the science fiction movie genre. The Wachowskis succeeding in tapping into fears about the rise of technology that films such as *Metropolis, Blade Runner,* and *Terminator* (1984) had brought to the cinema about the tyranny of machines and the dystopic future of humanity if science continued on the path of cyber-evolution (Baker 1993). Among many, there are two noteworthy innovations to the genre that *The Matrix* brings to the screen: (1) groundbreaking special effects and computer-generated images (CGI) to transition between the real world and the digital space where the normal laws of physics are manipulated and bent (King 2000) and (2) symbolism in the cinematography and story lines that play on philosophical, religious, political, economic, and literary narratives.

Perhaps the most striking features of the Wachowskis film are the special effects and the use of CGI. This combination in *The Matrix* facilitates the audience's journey down the rabbit hole between the world of reality and the empire of the machines (Irwin 2002). The first scene of the movie depicts Trinity, a member of the rebel gang of Morpheus, trying to find a phone to be teleported to safety. It sets up what the viewer should expect in the digital world of *The Matrix* as Trinity walks on walls, pauses in midair, and jumps superhuman distances between buildings to escape being killed by the agents. These imaginative demands of the story line on the audience are characteristic of science fiction and represent "the essence of [this] Wonderland" (Wood 1986, p. 166) and its spectacle. *The Matrix* plays on the tensions between what we expect to see and what is happening so that we become confused about what is real (Irwin 2002). We must believe the premise and accept that Trinity can be superhuman to get past any resistance to the action of the film and accept its story line within the suspension of our disbelief. There is a juxtaposition between the bleak environment of the *Nebakanezer* and the hyperreality of the matrix. The utilitarian deck of the ship that is a mishmash of wires and computers

looks ragged and makeshift. The characters are not glamourous, composed, physically dominating, and "cool" as in the matrix environment: they are pale, gaunt, and neurotic and still have that ghastly input at the base of the skull. The scenes moving from the darkness and shadows of the "mothership" into the simulation of the machine environment explode with light and color. While the bodies of the rebels are physically present outside the coded space of the matrix, the action is mundane, slow, and undramatic (Manovich 2001). CGI enables the plot to move forward and works to draw us into the magic of the film by revealing the difference between the real world and the mental constructs of the matrix when the humans are "plugged into" its frame (Doane 2004). The Wachowskis are expert at marking the scene transitions and highlighting their significance for the story through the use of special effects. When Neo puts his finger through the cracked mirror and melts into his own image, the moment is a turning point for the film and the viewers as the character undergoes a physical and mental transformation and is wrapped in a liquid metal cocoon (Doane 2004). The special effect echoes the type of shape shifting performed by the T-1000 cyborg in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991). After taking the red pill, we see Neo being consumed by the "silver goo" as he breaks through the illusory wall of the matrix simulation keeping him from perceiving his actual self and the form of his existence. CGI makes the representation intense and gives us a look at an alternative reality, a science fiction rendering of the present and possible future of humanity, if technology progresses unchecked (Irwin 2002).

*The Matrix* takes the field of special effects further than any film before it because of the evolution in digital processing and graphics. It creates a hybrid "Hollywood blockbuster" and science fiction cinema verite to form a new genre that plays on philosophical, religious, political, economic, and cultural narratives through dialogue and symbolism (Irwin 2002). Neo (the One) is selected by Morpheus (the god of sleep) because humanity is looking for a savior from a terrible existence as slaves to technology. The story contains allusions to Judeo-Christian narratives as well as symbolism. It is a baptism or anointing of sorts when he falls into the water and he is reborn, expelled from his cyborg "womb pod" because he has become self-aware and useless for the matrix. In the previous scene however, Morpheus makes reference to Neo going down the rabbit hole after he breaks through the looking glass, obviously citing *Alice in Wonderland* (Irwin 2002). He frames how we should decode the elements of the CGI image and its specific rendering of the action according to the religious and literary allusions. *The Matrix* makes technology a part of its focus like all films in the science fiction genre.

Morpheus points out to Neo that CGI is used to make the virtual become real and that they have to remind themselves that it is all an effect of simulation. He calls it the "desert of the real" after Jean Baudrillard (Poster and Baudrillard 1988) whose philosophy the Wachowskis sprinkle through the dialogue and cinematography. Morpheus asks "What is reality?" and shows Neo the fields where humans are grown to perform an economic function of being a battery to supply the machines with endless power. Unless one has the ability to step outside the matrix and see the horror of this reality, then one is doomed to live in a simulation that is more "real" than reality itself or a "hyperreality" (Irwin 2002; Poster and Baudrillard 1988).

Neo had been existing in that ideological prison before Morpheus had opened his eyes to the truth to see reality for the first time outside the matrix. Only then could he enact some sort of resistance to his technological enslavement and exploitation.

*The Matrix* basically reverses the premise of *Blade Runner.* Instead of bounty hunters searching to neutralize replicants that are posing as human beings, the machine agents are the pursuers of rebels trying to cleanse the system of a mortal virus. *Blade Runner* was the first science fiction film (1) to overtly represent the decaying urban futuristic landscape of the twenty-first century like a "global village" (McLuhan 1964) and (2) to show how technology gone mad leads to forms of expression and resistance that are creative and destructive at the same time (Shanahan 2014). The movie is a complicated and dystopic vision of what the world could be if the evolution of cybernetics replaces the desire to preserve the human spirit.

The theme of technological dystopia in the science fiction film genre is reflected in the story lines and production features of *Metropolis, Blade Runner, Terminator*, and *The Matrix.* These movies have been influenced by the issues and debates of the time in which they were written and produced. Similarities and variations in the theme of technological dystopia within these films regarding can be explained by the literary, social, and economic forces that have influenced the science fiction genre and the particular styles of the directors that have moved the art form of filmmaking forward. The progress of technology has always included the possibility of dystopia instead of utopia in the quest to create the "perfect society." *Metropolis, Blade Runner, Terminator*, and *The Matrix* are representations of what the world and human life could look like in a future gone terribly wrong after technological progress. As part of the science fiction film genre, they are parables of technological dystopia that are rooted in existing social and economic conditions very familiar to us now.

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Faking the Re-awakening

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## Contents

**Abstract**

The widespread usage, consumption, and production of social media have sparked serious debate about its role in stimulating, cultivating, and influencing the shape, depth, and impact of democracy. How does and can engagement in and with social media lead to citizen participation in seeking to address issues that

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significantly affect people, notably social inequalities, racism, sexism, classism, poverty, war and conflict, the environment, and other local as well as global concerns? Does (or can) open-ended social media access, beyond the tightly controlled normative, hegemonic structures and strictures of democracy that frame, to a great deal, how people live, work, and even think, lead to new, alternative, and innovative forms of (critical) engagement? This chapter seeks to make connections between the intricacies of using social media and the reconceptualization of democracy, linking the two in an attempt to underscore how participation and engagement are changing. Using social media involves multilevel configurations of not only communicating with others but also in developing content, responding, sharing, critiquing, and reimagining the "Other" as well as reinterpreting contexts, political spaces, and cultures. This chapter also examines and critiques the potential for tangible, counter-hegemonic change within and outside of the mainstream, representative, electoralist model of democracy, which is increasingly being rejected by large numbers of citizens around the world. A significant piece of this equation is the filter of education, attempting to understand its role, impact, and meaning for social media usage/ engagement in relation to democracy. The backdrop of fake news, and a brief case study of the 2018 Brazilian election, is interwoven and problematized throughout the chapter.

## Introduction

What is happening in the world? This is not a rhetorical question. How do we know what is really happening? There are many ways of "knowing," "experiencing," and "being." Anchored within the field of education, we believe that teaching and learning, in formal and informal, structured, and semi-structured as well as unstructured settings, can be tremendously influential. Of course, identity, location, positionality, and myriad of other factors, including race, class, and gender can also be extremely significant. Also the fluid and ubiquitous markers of "culture" or "cultures" can also be fundamental to determining and influencing what and how we experience life. Epistemology is increasingly shaped, formed, and deformed as we engage inside and outside of everyday life as well as through transformative experiences. Institutions, processes, and events can also galvanize what we do, how, and to what end. We have a particular interest here in the notion of democracy, what Carr and Thésée (2019) have labeled as "normative, representative, hegemonic democracy," as this concept and way of structuring participation at diverse levels can also inform and lead to how one or some or all of us engage with one another as well

as how we believe and form judgments that will impact the textures, contours, and meanings of our human experiences.

Increasingly, and the focus of our work here, social media is playing an exponentially important role in filtering, shaping, and influencing debate, opinions, and realities. A recent eMarketer's report (2018) confirms that roughly 2.5 billion people, over 30% of the world's population, use social media at least once a month, and this is further confirmed by the Reuters Institute (2018) and Kantar Media (2018), the latter of which has found that social media networks are turning more to messaging as a way of disseminating news in the wake of growing concerns about trusting widely shared information. Our chapter aims to bring together these two areas – social media and democracy – seeking to better understand "what is happening in the world?".

We arrive at this point because of the significant debates taking place currently in relation to *fake news* (Vosoughi et al. 2018). Why now? Is it really new? Or has it evolved into a more sophisticated, insidious, far-reaching phenomenon? Is it really about lying or more so about misrepresenting or is it about "bullshitting" (MacKenzie and Bhatt 2018)? What does it mean for citizen engagement, media literacy, education, and social change/innovation/movements? We raise these issues knowing that propaganda, misinformation, disinformation, and outright deception and lying have been a part of the diplomatic landscape for some time (Carr et al. 2018).

Canclini (2018) argues that this well-entrenched practice is rather a "dissociation between words and their use in ideological operations" and connects with "the loss of meaning of language and the subsumption of the free choice of citizenship conduct as a consequence of capital and algorithms" (p. 274). This plays out in many ways. For instance, spy agencies were developed to – and this shouldn't be a surprise – engage in spying, and, when one realizes that the USA has 17 such agencies, one need not diverge too far into the forest to grasp that there is a generous amount of fabrication, manipulation, and deception taking place all over the place (Agrawal 2017; Rosenzweig 2016). The war on terrorism, for example, is steeped in a multilayered hornet's nest of deception, which, at its base, at least with regard to the invasion in Iraq in 2003, relied heavily on deception and fake news (Choussudovsky 2005).

This is not the domain of one country, and we are reluctant to focus this chapter on "what Russia did to destabilize US democracy," which has been the focus of untold attention since the Trump presidential victory in 2016, especially in the light of the actions of Julian Assange, Edward Snowden, and Chelsea Manning, among others, who have sought to expose untoward government surveillance activities (De Lagasnerie 2017). The Russian intervention is not insignificant, but we would like to extend that inquiry here and raise other questions about how people are or may be influenced and engaged in and through social media. One of our chief concerns, therefore, is: what does this mean for democracy? Accordingly, we are not sold on the idea that we are fully ensconced in a thriving democratic experiment that aims for, outside of the normative standards of "liberty, freedom, and elections" and the like, social justice, political and media literacy, critical engagement, conscientization, meaningful inclusion and participation, and a rectification of inequitable power relations (see Carr and Thésée 2019).

In this chapter, we explore the following: (a) the complexities of using social networks and the tentacles to democracy; (b) fake news, social media, and political participation; (c) the reconceptualization of democracy through social media; and (d) the meaning of education in a time of massive, overarching social networks/media. We include within these sections some insights from diverse geopolitical contexts, including a brief case study of the 2018 Brazilian election, as a way of exemplifying the global and ubiquitous nature of social media. Lastly, we conclude by discussing and bringing back to the fore if fake news is changing or has changed, indefinitely, the terrain (Tandoc et al. 2018) and how. Similarly, we interrogate where there may be some opportunities to critically engage and seek emancipation, in spite of a very messy, clogged, traditionally hierarchical chain of command that has controlled media and information for most of all of the glory days of the "normative, representative, hegemonic" democracy epoch.

## The Complexities of Using Social Networks and the Tentacles to Democracy

It would appear that everyone today is somehow connected to social media, even if one doesn't have an account for one or many of the social networks that pervade, link, and smother the sociocultural landscape (Keating and Melis 2017). There are networks for an untold array of information sharing and gathering. Nouns have become verbs as in "youtubbing," "blogging," "vlogging," "googling," "facebooking," etc.. The reach is significant, and the digital imprints (and footprints) are equally commensurate (Sun et al. 2015). One can do a search for a pair of shoes on Amazon.com, and, magically, there will be ads for shoes on the personal Facebook feed immediately afterward. Algorithms are increasingly programming what we see and aligning at least some of our attention on "stuff," for lack of a better word, where we might not otherwise be interested. This surveillance, usurpation, and data-gathering were significantly exposed in 2018, with Facebook being highlighted for a particularly negative watershed year (Sutton 2018; Wong and Morris 2018). Among the litany of events, problems, and phenomena that have plagued Facebook, which are clearly not limited to this one, albeit prominent, social network, were the following claims, findings, and evidence, among other issues: algorithms connected to the "negative effects to referral traffic"; unregulated ads that underscored the Mueller investigation that has, as it focus, in large part, the Russian involvement in the 2016 US presidential election; the Cambridge Analytica scandal that "obtained the data of tens of millions of Facebook users without their knowledge or consent to help build a powerful political influencing tool"; privacy and security issues; "special data-sharing arrangements with tech manufactures like Amazon, Apple, and Samsung"; hacking of accounts; and regulation problems (Sutton 2018).

The field, terrain, and area of social media are complex and are laden with complexities, yet there is no doubt that people are increasingly enticed to use it for diverse reasons, including engagement and participation (Rainie et al. 2012). We are, however, at the same time, still concerned by the pervasive "digital divide" that

continues to play a role in filtering, pay-walling, fire-walling, and controlling access to the world of electronic communications (Haight et al. 2014). As Jenkins et al. (2016) have articulated, the proclaimed demise of youth participation in democracy, for example, has not only been greatly exaggerated but significantly misjudges and incorrectly situates youth activism with all of its tentacles within the new media landscape. Importantly, Jenkins (2016) identifies an important shift from "participatory culture to participatory politics" (p. 17).

Although we have significant access to almost everything, we are also cloistered, pressured, and cajoled into accepting, to varying degrees, hegemonic perspectives, news, ideologies, and neoliberal tendencies (Miranda et al. 2016), but the potential for counter-hegemonic engagement is also evident (Olubunmi 2015). Who are the leading "influencers" today on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (and we do not want to conflate the omnipotence of a single or only a few networks here), and what are the leading social media networks in this fluid and volatile context? The qualifier "today" is critical because the terrain is quickly shifting; Myspace, for example, was once destined to rule the virtual world and is but a small (proverbial) footnote within today's context (Dredge 2015). There is an inherent logic within social media and social networks, one that new technologies, applications, and types of usage, creation, and dissemination (will) continue to frame and shape the field (Kumar et al. 2010; Lenhart et al. 2010).

According to Wang et al. (2012), the increasing usage of the Internet by adolescents can enhance knowledge but, concurrently, has also affected interpersonal relationships. Similarly, Loh and Kanai (2016) have noted the tendency toward multitasking in the digital age, which has led to more fragmented thought and attention processes. One could argue that social media, in all of its dimensions, is radically altering how we read (less books, newspapers, and paper-based documents), communicate, network, develop relationships, and acquire/digest/disseminate/create knowledge (Canclini 2017; Keating and Melis 2017; Plascencia 2018). The ability to engage without (visible) filters has opened up new channels and spectrums of dialog. There is more access to more resources, more types of media, and (arguably) more creativity. This is taking place concurrently while surveillance, data collection, and DNA mapping of our movements, ideas, comments, and positions are increasingly being activated and deployed with and/or without our knowledge and consent. How social media usage may lead to more political engagement is a particular concern for us and others interested in understanding how citizen participation might be cultivated (Aycurt and Sesen 2017).

We participate not knowing who the audience might be; who might be reading, sharing, and assessing our thoughts; and how our interactions might be used (Carr et al. 2018). The cases of Manning, Assange, and Snowden should concern us, and denouncing abuse, malfeasance, and deleterious, even, diabolical war, execution and the like is another dimension of the supposedly open skies offered by and through social media access. The proliferation of social networking sites (SNS), applications, and Internet-based innovations has made it difficult to remain anonymous. On the other hand, the marketing and production of mobile applications inculcate the belief that users voluntarily perceive greater benefits in sharing

private information in the face of the loss of data and privacy (Sun et al. 2015). Online stores, educational applications, audio applications, or geo-location applications can all, for example, greatly affect privacy concerns (Aguaded and Romero-Rodríguez 2015). In sum, we are confronted with a point of no or little return now that mountains of data have been accumulated, categorized (often without sophisticated categorization in spite of the potential), and digested within a huge vacuum that can have a substantial impact on what we really do know and what we really are doing. Similarly, Van Dijck and Poell (2013) point out the internal logics of social media that have an effect on mainstream, traditional, and other media while maintaining a focus on the complexity of the vast deployment of social media, emphasizing "programmability, popularity, connectivity, and datafication."

In relation to electoral politics, much of the debate, at least going back a decade, concerning social media, focused on using alternative, nontraditional methods to literally "get the message out" and win electoral campaigns. Navas et al. (2018) described the strategy used by Barack Obama in 2008, exploiting principally Twitter and Facebook, intertwined with traditional methods such as door-to-door visits and phone calls. After Obama's successful campaign, according to the authors, many other American and Latin American politicians developed personal profiles on Twitter, what they refer to as "Twiplomacy" (p. 21). We question if this is really somehow connected to building a strong, critical, thick, and engaged democracy, but great efforts and resources have been consecrated to cajole people into subscribing, following, liking, and using diverse platforms, message boards, applications, and networks in order to try and sway, influence, and build momentum for a particular candidate.

We are equally concerned that all of the clicking (often referred to as "clicktivism" and enticed through "click-baiting"), signing petitions, sharing information, and the like may not be a meaningful representation of sustainable critical engagement (sometimes referred to as "slacktivism"). One case in point is the Arab Spring, which was dynamic, revolutionary, and truly inspiring at many levels, led by social media communications, yet what it led to has been disconcerting, problematic, and debilitating at many levels (Bruns et al. 2013). Can (or how should) we function outside of formal government hegemonic spaces? Or should we aim to overtake them to some degree?

At the same time, there is reason to believe that some spaces are being opened up to those previously marginalized from critical debates and communications. Xenos et al. (2014), for example, highlight that youth political engagement could be increasing through social media (their study focused on Australia, the USA, and the UK). Boulianne (2015) further confirms this trend, in general, but still is uncertain of causal relationships, given the large number of variables that may influence highly critical and engaged participation. Elsewhere, Ellison and Hardey (2014) believe that social media could influence local citizen participation based on their study in England.

Kahne and Bowyer (2017) have emphasized the potential impact of internal as opposed to external influences and networks. They present the pivotal consideration

if and how people, within certain contexts, have a tendency to engage with those of like-minded or different-/opposing-minded viewpoints and experiences. This is fundamental because it brings into play the concept of "echo chambers," those conversations, manifestations, and social constructions that largely reflect already developed viewpoints rather than challenging them. Kahne and Bowyer (2017) also underscore the (pre-)dispositions and experiences toward "preexisting views (*confirmation bias*)" as opposed to "counterarguments for perspectives that contradict their beliefs (*disconfirmation bias*)" (p. 6).

This connects to how we understand and undertake deliberative democracy (see Carr and Thésée 2019; Parker 2002, 2003, 2006; Hess 2009; Hess and McAvoy 2014) and how more critical manifestations of citizenship might be cultivated (Banks et al. 2005; Carr 2009, 2011; Carr and Thésée 2017; Schugurensky 2003, 2006). Importantly, it also links directly to how we engage with social media, how the vast volumes of messages, information, videos, images, and the like we are engaged with, in an open/inclusive or a closed/exclusive manner. Therefore, divergent exposure, however limited, within indirect networks of influence may cajole people into different ways of thinking, but the tendency to engage with like-minded forces cannot be understated.

This robustness or what Carr and Thésée (2019) have labeled as "thicker" democracy, building on the seminal work of Barber (2000, 2004), Portelli and Solomon (2001), Westheimer (2015), and others, aims to more fully and critically engage people within their contexts and beyond. Carr and Thésée have sought to extend this work and the field of education for democracy with a number of studies and publications anchored in the transformative educational philosophy of Paulo Freire (1970, 1973, 1985, 1998, 2004) and also acknowledging John Dewey's tremendous contribution to defining the purpose and social as well as community connection to education (1916/1997, 1938, 1958, 2012).

## Fake News, Social Media, and Political Participation

"Fake news" is not an innovation of the twenty-first century, let alone the 2016 USA presidential campaign (Kalsnes 2018). However, it has reached an elevated presence within public debates as well as in the media during the Donald Trump political spectacle, which has been widely diffused, covered, and critiqued through mainstream, alternative, and social media (MacKenzie and Bhatt 2018). Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) conceptualize fake news as distorted signals uncorrelated with truth, as well as news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false that could mislead readers. Fake news is considered an inexpensive way to: communicate broadly so as to sway, influence, and convince voters and citizens to move in certain directions; to make decisions, judgments, and values; and to act in ways that may be counter to their vested interests.

Fregoso (2018), during her effort to understand how social media has impacted the elections in Mexico, underscores the following key aspects of fake news. First, there is "astroturfing," which she infers is a method through which a fictitious reality

is created to give the impression of popularity for a person or product. An example of this is the purchasing of followers and messages to artificially augment the presence of trends, hashtags, and topics (pp. 7–8). Second, it is important to underscore the existence and utilization of "bots," which operate on diverse platforms to give the impression of human involvement and responses to sway debate and opinion. Third, there are "cyber troops," essentially military or political party teams committed to manipulating public opinion over social media. Fourth, there are "trolls," people, or groups, that use social media to attack, destabilize, and distort others through social media, which can also verge into hate speech and xenophobia. Fifth, Fregoso (2018) distinguishes between "disinformation" (blending fabrications with real facts) from "misinformation" (in relation to the dissemination of false information).

According to Tandoc et al. (2018), fake news also applies to images and videos that are modified to construct a false narrative. Similarly, this extends to designing and presenting websites, networks, accounts, and other fronts that imitate bona fide entities with legitimate and reliable backgrounds and credibility. Wardle (2017) emphasizes that fake news also has an intentional or involuntary component, countering the traditional methods that emphasized (outwardly, at last) verifiability. It is difficult to think of any war context/situation in which vast amounts of propaganda and fake news have not been generated. Thus, fake news conflicts with the concept of traditional news, understood as the objective narration of events that responds to journalistic ethics. Citizen journalists have created a new and quickly evolving landscape that has almost fatally ruptured the once primordial "front page."

## The Brazilian Case and Fake News in the 2018 Election

The 2018 election in Brazil saw the tumultuous victory of the openly defiant Jair Bolsonaro, a populist infamous for his homophobic and sexist quotes on social media and in interviews, which represents a spectacular turn of events in the light of the incarceration of former President Lula da Silva (Agence France Presse 2018; Forest 2018; Philips 2018). The international downplaying of the distorted notion of who is corrupt and how corruption works, intertwined with the complicit nature of the mainstream media, raises profound questions about what really is fake news. During the electoral campaign, Bolsonaro opted to not attend the televised debate for the second round and instead invested heavily in social media to sway opinion. This was the first time since the end of the military dictatorship over 30 years ago that a presidential candidate has boycotted a second round presidential debate. While critical of traditional electoral politics, campaigns, opinion polling, glad-handing, and debates, we acknowledge an important shift in public debate within the social media era in relation to elections, in Brazil and elsewhere (Fregoso 2018; Gainous et al. 2017; Hall et al. 2018).

Between the first and second round of the 2018 Brazilian election, private companies were accused of purchasing messages disseminated on WhatsApp in favor of Bolsonaro. As related by the *Brazilian TV Globo & G1* (2018) newspaper,

companies such as *QuickMobile*, *Yacows*, *Croc Services*, and *SMS Market* were accused of offering "firehosing" services to businessmen interested in electing Bolsonaro. Firehosing relates to an injection of messages often invented to reach a specific group or to target a specific cause. This strategy is considered an electoral crime in Brazil, since no companies or other organizations other than the candidates themselves, parties, and their coalitions can buy electoral advertisements on social media platforms. Efforts to nullify Bolsonaro's candidature were unsuccessful.

At the international media level, Vice (2018) compared the firehosing tactics in Brazil with Donald Trump's strategy in the USA. "Brazil battles fake news tsunami amid polarized presidential election" was the headline presented by *The Guardian* newspaper (Phillips 2018). Following the same line, *The Independent* newspaper published that "Disinformation and fake news spread over WhatsApp ahead Brazil's presidential elections," underscoring the limits of fact-checking services" (Isaac and Roose 2018).

According to Oliveira (2018), some 127 million Brazilians accessed Facebook monthly in 2018, if not more, out of a total population of 211 million. As for WhatsApp, Brazil had 120 million users in 2017 and the second largest number of active users on Instagram. Mobile phones were used by 95% of users to connect to social media, while computers were used by roughly 65% of Brazilians (IBGE 2017). Over half of Brazilians indicated that they used Facebook to get their news, while some 40% indicated that they used WhatsApp. In addition, some 60% of Brazilians confirmed that they shared news via social media or email, and more than a third offered that they had contributed comments about the news on social media and newspapers' websites (see Carro 2018).

Arbulu (2018) estimates that over four million fake news stories were circulated during the 3 months that preceded the Brazilian election. It is worth noting that Avaaz (2018) reports that almost all of the voters who supported Bolsonaro were exposed to fake news and, further, that the vast majority believed the fake news stories. In another study carried out by IDEIA Big Data in which more than 1400 Twitter and Facebook users were interviewed, it was found that over 90% of Bolsonaro supporters were informed of fake news about fraudulent information related to voting machines, and still about three-quarters of those supporters believed the information (Pasquini 2018). By analyzing 113 of the most shared news stories on Facebook and WhatsApp during Brazilian election, Libório and Cunha (2018), journalists of the independent fact-checking service Aos Fatos, were able to document the 15 most widely spread fake news stories, concluding that they all impinged on the opposition Workers' Party and its presidential candidate, Fernando Haddad.

Another social media phenomenon was the establishment of a political movement, #EleNão (#NotHim) that started on Facebook during Brazilian election. By creating a Facebook group called "Women Against Bolsonaro," exclusively for women, protests were organized in order to fight against Bolsonaro's sexist and homophobic ideas. It is estimated that protests took place in over a hundred Brazilian cities in September 2018, and this also touched other cities such as Paris, London, and New York (Globo G1 2018). In October 2018, the Facebook group reached almost four million supporters (O'Doherty 2018). Following a highly polarized

presidential election, the opposition movement (in favor of Bolsonaro) called #EleSim also took place in cities such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro but the participation levels were much lower than the movement #EleNão (Jovem Pan Uol 2018).

To further exemplify the fake news blanketing of the Brazilian election, we present five of these narratives in Table 1, which include various fact-checking interactions.

It is important to note that several fake news stories disseminated during the Brazilian elections dealt with moral conceptions about religion, sexuality, and mis-representations of communist, feminist, and human rights ideals. Although much of the fake news was not strictly linked to a particular candidate, the narratives clearly aligned with the speech of the winning candidate Bolsonaro (Santos 2018; Boadle 2018). Alessi (2018) describes the situation as a "tragicomic" and highlights the rapidity and quantity of fake news produced, in general, and underscoring that verification is possible but not always adequate. The baby bottle story, for example, highlighted in Table 1, according to the Brazilian organization Aos Fatos (2018), had more than 3.5 million viewings and more than 90,000 shares in just 3 days. As a result, most of the larger Brazilian newspapers have hired or engaged staff or services to verify news stories, especially those emanating from social media (see Folha de São Paulo2018; Globo G1 2018). We present below (Table 2) the three most read Brazilian online newspapers as well as the mechanisms to verify fake news during the electoral period.

## The Reconceptualization of Democracy Through Social Media

Everyone now has some potential to construct, shape, and diffuse messages, if it may only be their own representations. Power and power relations still are pivotal to understanding the nature, extent, and scope of this diffusion. Loader and Mercea (2011) framed the earlier social media participation by highlighting the pervasive shifting from traditional methods to "collaborative networking." Communications are transforming, and it is easy to observe how most, if not all, of the traditional media (especially within the newspaper, radio, and television realms) now have electronic, Internet, social media platforms, linkages, and networks. Moreover, the comments sections in online newspapers, for example, can substantially alter and influence the tone and texture of the articles, then generating other debates within social media.

Keating and Melis (2017), in examining "Social media and youth political engagement," found that "social media may be providing a new outlet for some young adults; it is not re-engaging the young adults who have already lost interest in politics" (p. 877). This patterns other studies, in which there is evidence that there is massive, extensive usage of social media by younger people but weaker evidence on significant political engagement because of social media. Valenzuela et al. (2018) suggest that the type of social media platform used at this time may determine or facilitate a certain type of engagement, inferring that Facebook may be more

**Table 1**  Some fake news stories intertwined in the 2018 Brazilian election

| Fake news story | Social media | Main ways of misleading the information | Fact-checking |
|---|---|---|---|
| The man who attacked Bolsonaro with a knife was a Lula supporter and member of the Workers' Party | WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter | Through a photomontage technique, a picture of Adélio Bispo de Oliveira, arrested in a flagrant stabbing of Bolsonaro in September 2018, was included in another photo where the former Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva [Lula] appears at a public event in 2017 | Agência Lupa (2018), a fact-checking agency, by comparing the original photo in which Lula appears in 2017 and also consulting the Superior Electoral Court, which validated that it was false or fake news |
| "Gay Kit" misrepresenting the educational project against homophobia proposed by the Workers' Party | YouTube, WhatsApp, and Facebook | Bolsonaro made videos for his supporters on YouTube claiming that the Workers' Party had a project called "Gay Kit" intended for children to initiate them to an inappropriate sexual life, incentivizing pedophilia and homosexuality. On one video that was available on YouTube, Bolsonaro indicates that the cleared said that Workers' Party desires to sexualize children and to legalize the pedophilia in Brazil. (Verdade Política 2018) in addition to videos on YouTube, a range of images attributing the creation of "Gay Kit" to Fernando Haddad (candidate of Workers' Party) were shared on WhatsApp and Facebook. Similarly, rumors that the Workers' Party wanted to make children become homosexuals were disseminated as well | In this case, the fact-checking services verified that "Gay Kit" has never existed. In fact, the so-called "Gay Kit" was part of the project called "School without Homophobia," which was part of the federal government's program "Brazil without Homophobia" in 2004. It is important to mention that this program was never implemented. Noting that the videos made by the candidate were aimed at misrepresenting information during the electoral period, the Superior Electoral Court ordered that Facebook and YouTube remove videos in which Bolsonaro discussed the "Gay Kit" |
| Manuela D'Avila (Workers' Party vice-presidential candidate) wants to cancel all Christian holidays | WhatsApp and Facebook | From a video in which vice-presidential candidate gives an interview, her speech was edited to make people believe that she would cancel all Christian holidays because she did not identify as Christian, and, further, | By contrasting the true video wherein Manuela d'Ávila gives the interview, which was made months before the electoral period, fact-checking services were able to verify the |

**Table 1** (continued)

| Fake news story | Social media | Main ways of misleading the information | Fact-checking |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | supposedly felt penalized for losing work days | true speech. However, during a 4-day period, more than 800,000 people viewed the fake video (O Globo 2018). The video is no longer available because the Superior Electoral Court ordered Facebook to take it down |
| Fernando Haddad (Workers' Party) hands out baby bottles with penis-shaped tops to combat homophobia | WhatsApp and Facebook | A fake video and pictures with a penis-shaped bottle was allegedly distributed in public school day care centers by Fernando Haddad in order to fight homophobia, when he was mayor of the city of São Paulo | Several fact-checking services, among them Estadão Verifica (2018), verified that the baby bottle had never been distributed by Fernando Haddad or the Workers' Party |
| WhatsApp images | WhatsApp | According to the *Folha de São Paulo* (2018) newspaper, only 4 of the 50 most shared images on WhatsApp during the Brazilian election were accurate. From these 50 most shared images, *Agência Lupa* (2018) found that some images did not refer directly to the presidential candidates but rather to ideological positions. All the false images were photomontages, including: (1) former President Dilma Rousseff (Workers' Party) with Fidel Castro (Cuba) during a speech; (2) feminists invading church, defecating and having sex; (3) homosexual couple kissing on a street with the moniker "that's the right they want" | By contrasting information and pictures, the fact-checking services were able to verify whether the news was fake |

Elaborated by the authors using diverse sources, including: Agência Lupa (2018), Estadão Verifica (2018), Folha de São Paulo (2018), O Globo (2018), and Verdade Política (2018)

**Table 2** Main Brazilian newspapers' fact-checking services

| Newspaper (online) | Fact-checking service | Methodology |
|---|---|---|
| *Globo G1* (weekly accessed by 48% of Brazilian users) | Fato ou fake (fact or fake), created in 2018 | Journalists monitor social networks through a wide range of tools and exchange data with each other on the outcome of monitoring and checking. Readers may also suggest checks. There is also a "bot" on Facebook and Twitter that will respond to what is false or true, if the matter has already been verified by the *Globo* journalists |
| Uol (weekly accessed by 42% of Brazilian users) | Uol Confere, created in 2017 | This service counts on a team of special reporters that go deep into fact-checking of news. The idea is not only to unveil fake news but also to contextualize facts with data and figures to empirically make the case. The objective is to provide the reader with "correct" information and references |
| Folha de São Paulo (weekly accessed by 44% of Brazilian users) | Agência Lupa (Lupa Agency), created in 2015 | Once information has been identified to be checked, the Lupa reporter conducts a survey of "everything" that has already been published on the subject, including newspapers, magazines, and websites. It then examines official databases and initiates a public information data-mining process |

Elaborated by the authors using diverse sources, including Globo G1 (2018) and Uol (2018)

conducive to "strong-tie networks," whereas Twitter may be more predisposed to "weak-tie networks."

It is important to consider alternatives to the hegemonic grasp that normative, representative democracy and traditional elites play in controlling, confining, and constraining counter-hegemonic power manifestations. Of course, it is noteworthy to underscore the almost inevitable paradox of alternative movements, activities, and organizations using mainstream social networks and communications to engage with others, including through Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Several movements have been able to substantially influence coordination, information-sharing, organization, and political planning through social media. For instance, the Arab Spring movement became immersed in Twitter (Bruns et al. 2013), and the Black Lives Matters hashtag proved to be a mobilizing center for many African-American activists (Anderson et al. 2018). There are also many other movements that would not, we believe, have been nearly as effective, vast, impactful, or sustained without a vibrant social media presence, including #metoo, which has led to a number of prosecutions, policy changes, and public debates (Thompson 2018).

We note here that for alternative sources and application to be effective at a broad, institutional, systemic, societal, counter-hegemonic level, which is a tall order for any initiative, there are a number of obstacles that confront them. For instance, Lentin and Humphry (2017) highlight the diverse limitations of such applications, emphasizing the tendency toward individual action:

> Yet, despite the different purposes and interpretations of racism and antiracism evident in the range of antiracism apps studied, we observed a mutual tendency to reinforce the individual and processual aspects of racism over its ideological and structural dimensions. Firstly, where reporting is the main strategy employed, reports are designed to be made individually and in isolation, mainly beyond public view. While this facilitates confidentiality in reporting, it relies on the individual user to recognise and interpret racism and to have confidence and familiarity with using the app, which in itself presupposes a set of competencies which could well exclude those most affected by racism. Centring the app interface on the recording of discrete incidents of racism experienced or observed by the user is another way of individualising responsibility for responding to racism. Secondly, in apps like Kick It Out and the Citoyens effaçons le racisme, the focus is on individual behaviour change through self- and peer-policing even though the power to take action and enforce consequences lies with institutional authorities who decide whether to pursue, and thus validate, experiences of everyday racism. Thirdly, apps whose undergirding design and theory is bystander antiracism do not easily permit interrogations of the unproblematised and presumed neutral (white) individual user nor displace the privileged position of dominance of this user, who is able to enter and exit the app at any time and whose future actions around antiracism are not accounted for, measured or challenged. (p. 1551)

Uldam (2018), for example, documents how an oil corporation deployed significant effort to monitor activists who sought to hold the corporate giant to account, underscoring how resistance to social media activism is both extensive and extremely strategic.

## The Meaning of Education in a Time of Massive, Overarching Social Networks/Media

Our discussion of fake news, citizen participation, and democratic engagement should not take place without linking these themes to education. Of particular interest here is media education, media literacy, and critical media engagement. The pertinence of how we learn about and for media, communication, and literacy is, or should be, a key concern of any society. van der Nagel (2018) has underscored the ethical dimensions of engaging in critical social media literacy and also highlights the need for more enhanced teacher education.

The new context of multi-literacies and enhanced inter-/multi-/transdisciplinarity, imbued in vast, extensive, and complex social media interactions, underscores the need to, as Freire so succinctly put it, be able to "read the world" and go well beyond being able to "read the word." Developing critical media literacy requires critical engagement with society and democracy (Carr and Thésée 2019). Greenhow and Lewin (2016) acknowledge the need to theorize social media literacy and to more fully

encapsulate formal and informal learning. We believe that one of the key concerns and critiques of formal learning in relation to social media is that the focus has been on the instrumentalization, and technological and functional aspects of the process, and less so on understanding the social representations, meaning-making, and interpretation of images, texts, phenomena, and other aspects of what is happening online.

Aaen and Dalsgaard (2016) suggest that, for example, Facebook, through semi-structured activities, could act as a "third space of 'school life' where students blend their personal, social life with academic schoolwork" (p. 160). Learning how to use technology, make videos, write blogs, develop apps, manage listservs and groups, create memes, etc. is very instructive, useful, and connected to opening up partici-patory possibilities online. Critical social media literacy should address social inequalities, power relations, hegemony, and alternative perspectives.

So what about media literacy? Without a doubt, teaching about and for media literacy can have a positive effect on how young people engage with and experience the media (Kahne and Bowyer 2017). At the same time, are the educators able, prepared, and supported to engage in critical media literacy? The architecture of contemporary education leaves scant room for critical engagement within a host of realms – including pedagogy, curriculum, educational policy, leadership, institutional culture, epistemology, and informal education – that help define the democratic experience within schools and also shape education for democracy (Carr and Thésée 2019).

## Discussion

We started out asking "What is happening in the world?" after presenting a sub-title that introduced "Faking the awakening." We delved into the multiple ways that information, communications, news, knowledge, and media have become complexified, accessible, interactive, multidimensional, ubiquitous, and exponentially innovative and creative. Yet, hegemonic control, neoliberalism, unknown publics, sensationalistic viral messages, videos, productions, burgeoning applications, massive interconnections and interlinkages, and de-centered universes continue to characterize the social media landscape. Yet, we are concerned about media literacy, engagement and conscientization, and how education may play a fundamental role in assisting people to move beyond hegemonic forms that may not question, alter, or address social inequalities and power differentials that impact communities, people, and societies at the local, national, and global levels. At the same time, we acknowledge that significant work, experiences, and actions are taking place outside of the formal realm and that people, social movements, activists, and others are transforming lived realities through engagement outside of, or in dialectical opposition with, traditional media, institutions, and democracy.

MacKenzie and Bhatt (2018) make, what we consider to be, an important distinction between lies and *bullshit*, and underscore the fundamental necessity of trust in a society "Because truth is a prerequisite of trust."

Bullshit is different from lying and it need not undermine trust, particularly when it is blatant. In his now well-known and oft-cited essay *On Bullshit*, Frankfurt (1985 [2005]) states that "[o]ne of the most salient features of our culture is that there is so much bullshit. And everyone knows it." With arguably the greatest bullshitter of all daily promulgating on Twitter (and other media) his assessment of the facts, truth and fakery, it is hard not to agree that we are being dumped on from on-high by no less a person than the President of the USA. In contrast to the liar who must have some regard for the truth in order to artfully subvert it, the bullshitter has no such concern or constraint. His 'focus is panoramic rather than particular. He does not limit himself to inserting a certain falsehood at a specific point, and he is thus not constrained by the truths surrounding that point. . .'. (Frankfurt 1985 [2005]) The liar and the bullshitter both pretend to tell the truth. The manipulative liar, in contrast, wants to lead us away from apprehending the truth. The bullshitter is not so scrupulous or meticulous. He is less concerned with how things really are, being neither for nor against truth, and often knows we know he is bullshitting. Unlike the liar, Frankfurt informs us, the bullshitter is less analytical and less deliberative, and exercises greater freedom to play around with the truth or facts. Social media seems to be *the* space in which we see so much evidence for these kinds of epistemic vices.

Unraveling the immense quantity of *bullshit* is a monumental and unforgiving task in that there is so much of it at this time, especially when it comes from the top, and is so infused throughout so many fora, especially within social media. Developing mechanisms, techniques, strategies, and conscientization to deconstruct and navigate through the jungle of mis-/dis-/information would benefit from a robust regime of critical medial literacy and, significantly, meaningful education for democracy at the formal and informal levels.

Fake news is not new, but it is potentially more enhanced and more widely diffused and messaged now through social media. Why people believe in fake news is complicated by a number of factors and could include rampant cynicism, a rejection of mainstream institutions, media literacy issues, profound social inequalities and problems that push (some) people to seek out solutions that may enhance power differentials and conflicts. There is also the reality that technological changes and social media can easily cultivate fast-moving, non-verifiable narratives, texts, stories, and information. The full-throttle embracing of seemingly xenophobic movements may be an unsightly outcome of a robust cycle of unchecked fake news, but we would also ask: Is fake news the problem or a symptom of the problem? Is there already in place a potential cultivation of, and reception for, xenophobia before the fake news is interspliced into the narrative? Is the willingness to believe something greater than the willingness to engage with it and to deconstruct it? These are not easily answered questions, and we do not believe that it would be possible to simply assert that fake news is too great a problem to counter or, conversely, that it would not require much effort to seek out the truth, so to speak. We believe that diverse informal as well as formal education regimes are necessary to stimulate more meaningful, critical, engaged citizen participation, one that includes youth activism, social movements, and transformative education Jenkins et al. (2016).

We are also convinced that social media, in and of itself, is not the enemy of critically engaged democracy or the sole foundation point of fake news. The medium

is a complex, sophisticated, quickly evolving one that has enormous potential to generate massive amounts of messaging and to sway public opinion. Yet, it can also be effective, in some ways, in enabling connections, contacts, and engagement. The information flows are less uni- or even bidirectional with social media, the creativity is significant, and, conversely, there is still the lingering anchor around hegemonic influences. Canclini (2018) provides a nuanced version or vision through a hypothesis of this new and evolving context, which foregrounds how diverse levels of participation can be mediated and interpreted:

> by their very format and interactive flows, the irruption of networks is engendering modes of communication and association that are neither hegemonic nor counterhegemonic, but beyond both the hegemonic intentions of companies and the counterhegemonic desires of progressives. In the subsequent reconfiguration of power disputes, ambivalent, hybrid combinations appear. Forms of sociability are elaborated. Power does not have a binary structure, but rather a dispersed complexity. There are many ways of being together, communicating, and sharing or contesting assets. (p. 278)

With this, as Canclini suggests, we may be venturing into an era of "de-democratization," which fits comfortably at the "thin" end of the spectrum of education for democracy as developed by Carr and Thésée (2019). Further, Canclini theorizes that:

> Citizen activism is not simply absorbed by the media and networks; different sociabilities continue to mix ambiguously. Along with the weakening of classical citizenship (voting + economic, political, and cultural activism + questioning national power systems) came the emergence and growth of we might call sectoral citizenship: of women and other demands of gender, of young people, migrants, neighbours, retirees, pensioners, etc. (p. 283)

Citizen participation needs to be more broadly and critically understood in a nuanced way to encompass youth activism, innovation, and engagement, which will redefine citizenship from the traditional definitions (Jenkins et al. (2016). We are concerned about the robustness of the citizen participation/engagement/inclusion that is, and can be, cultivated in relation to alternative experiences, movements, and, of course, social media. Carr and Thésée (2019) have developed a conceptualization and model of "wounded citizenships" that seeks to problematize marginalization, intersectionalized identity formation, and power differentials in how people experience citizenship and democracy. Similarly, Banks (2017), while not focusing on social media, has elaborated a model of "failed citizenship and transformative" that includes four components of a citizenship typology: failed citizenship, recognized citizenship, participatory citizenship, and transformative citizenship. Banks offers hope that education can and should be able to facilitate more meaningful, engaged, and progressive forms of citizenship within the context of significant cultural, ethnic, racial, and other forms of diversity:

> Global migration, the quest by marginalized groups for self-determination and efficacy, and the rising populist nationalism and xenophobia in nations around the world require a reexamination of the ends and means of citizenship education if it is to promote structural inclusion and civic equality and reduce failed citizenship and its barriers that prevent

minoritized students from becoming recognized, participatory, and transformative citizens. (p. 374)

We return to democracy as we conclude, interrogating the point of what is happening in the world? One filter for understanding our lived experience is through the form, quality, scope, depth, meaning, and application of democracy. Marsh and Hall (2018) provide an important backdrop to this discussion, outlining some of the dimensions of (and contrasting) participatory and representative democracy. Their theorization hypothesizes that participatory democracy requires a maximum number of participants who share equally in the decisionmaking process and sharing governance, whereas representative democracy seeks to limit participation by vesting power in the hands of a "minority of well-informed leaders who represent constituents' interests" (pp. 246–247). Further, they examine who is involved and how and what their involvement constitutes, which helps enable us to understand in a more nuanced way the meaning of democracy and engagement/participation in and education.

In Carr and Thésée's (see forthcoming for a synthesis) work on democracy, political literacy, and transformative education, they present models to understand the thick and thin dimensions of education for democracy. One central feature of this work – in relation to their *Four-level, Integrated, Hierarchical Model of Types of Education with Respect to Democracy* – concerns how to understand the democratic experience in and through education within diverse forms of democracy engagement, activity and thinking, including Education about Democracy (EaD), Education through Democracy (EtD), Education in relation to Democracy (ErD), and Education for Democracy (EfD). Each dimension covers and connects with diverse questions, values, actions, and types of educational experience, and Carr and Thésée (2019) believe that they are all necessary, in a thick, robust, critically engaged way, in order to stimulate and cultivate education for democracy that connects with social justice, political and media literacy, conscientization, and meaningful democracy. They further tease out this model with the *Complexified, Aligned Education for Democracy Model with Theoretical Dimensions*, which presents the positivistic, interpretative, socio-critical, and ecological perspectives on a vertical axis above a horizontal axis presenting EaD, EtD, ErD, and EfD, teasing out a plurality of vantage points, operational and action points, and theoretical insights into how democracy can be understood and experienced in relation to education. A particular concern in this research is how students, citizens, and people participate in employing, developing, and experiencing their own agency, significantly, in attempting to cultivate a more engaged and, in some cases, more socially just and global citizenship (Carr et al. 2014, 2016). At the same time, we emphasize here the need for critical interrogations of epistemology, diverse identities and experiences, and how power relations affect lived individual and collective experience.

We conclude by suggesting that it may also be helpful to explore these models, in the backdrop of Marsh and Hall's (2018) work and others that have sought to describe, define, and nuance the meaning of democracy in relation to education. It would also be fundamental to problematize engagement with social media and

citizen participation, accepting and seeking contextualization, adaptation, and enhancement to the aforementioned models in order to better evaluate the changing ways of interacting with others, with politics, with social movements, with news/information and with societal change. The study of social media usage, production, engagement, and influence should more explicitly concern itself with the interplay with, and between, democracy, education for democracy, democratic institutions, and the notions of engagement and participation. Fake news, in our estimation, is a concern that should be calibrated with media literacy, education for democracy, and a re-imaging of democracy, and the interrogation of "what is happening in the world?" needs to be understood between the lines, on the margins, in the highly visible and invisible communications in and through social media as well as through the traditional media and democratic forms that have often dominated the field.

## Cross-References

► Citizen Science: A Path to Democratic and Sociopolitically Conscious Science
► Social Movement Knowledge Production
► Technology, Democracy, and Hope
► The History of the Internet: Between Utopian Resistance and Neoliberal Government

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# Unlocking Contested Stories and Grassroots Knowledge

# 28

Antonia Liguori

## Contents

**Abstract**

Digital storytelling is a form of engagement that enables people to share personal stories and to produce new knowledge(s). Digital stories reveal unexpected connections across different communities of interest, places, and time periods. They reflect shared and conflicting values, feelings, and concerns surrounding a particular place. Digital storytelling as a process can guide us during a journey over time, by enabling storytellers to use their creativity to trigger memories from the past and to stimulate critical thinking around current situations and possible future scenarios. It also reconnects storytellers and story-listeners to physical and emotional journeys, while they are disconnecting themselves from places that, after dramatic transitions, can't exist anymore as they were.

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Reflecting on some examples of practice-led research projects, this chapter will consider questions such as: How to connect individual stories to community narratives? How to unlock grassroots knowledge and bring unheard voices into a debate? What kinds of social impacts can personally meaningful stories – especially if they are contested – produce?

Since co-design and co-production have been identified as key elements of the digital storytelling process, this chapter intends also to inquire if and how this methodology can be enriched by *contaminations* with other creative approaches absorbed from the visual arts and music.

Comparing digital stories and other forms of narratives may represent an additional way of uncovering conflicts and also discovering unexpected common ground in the dialogue between lay and experts' knowledge, due to the authenticity of personal stories and the natural "mess" of storytelling (Wilson, Narrative Culture 1(2):125–144, 2014).

## Introduction

The time has come for subversive storytelling. (Zipes 2016)

In this chapter the concept of digital storytelling as a transformative process will be explored through four different lenses that I often apply in my practice-led research to have a closer look at the process itself and understand how to improve storytellers' engagement and how to make the methodology constantly evolve and adapt to diverse contexts.

The idea is to challenge these four elements – time, space, truth(s), and practice – by sharing some examples of ways in which digital storytelling has been applied in a variety of projects, whose main focus was on facilitating the access to different knowledge domains and on enriching the communication among multiple knowledge systems.

Time and space are presented here and challenged in their relationship to digital storytelling as two separate components just for the pragmatic need of stressing specifically each aspect while presenting different case studies. Nevertheless, we recognize that understanding the connectedness of the "chronotope" (Bakhtin 1981) and comprehending the multiple elements of the "storyworld" (Herman 2002) are preliminary steps to have an "integrated view of narrative, with time and space being two important and complementary aspects" (Wei et al. 2010).

For digital storytelling, in the context of this study, we mean a creative method for participatory research and public engagement which enables participants to reflect on a specific subject and share a first-person narrative in the form of a 2–3-min video

that combines the voice-over of the storyteller with personal images or other visual materials produced or collected during a workshop. The process we are referring to consists in a well-established methodology both in academia and arts practitioner/community development worlds. The original process as designed by the StoryCenter (Lambert 2010, 2013) includes five steps for a standard digital storytelling workshop: story circle, script writing, audio recording, video editing, and screening of all the stories. In the section in which we are describing and challenging the "practice," we will outline which of these steps are perceived by some practitioners essential to make a "good" digital story and why. Here we just want to emphasize how much being open to alter and adjust the process is crucial, for a researcher and a facilitator, to suit different contexts, especially when we approach digital storytelling in participatory research projects.

When we do research about and through digital storytelling (Lewis 2011), we are observing and reflecting on the process and analyzing the outcomes at the same time. Defining digital stories as distinctive media is a crucial step to deeply understand the potential of this practice. A good starting point to extrapolate a definition of digital story could be reminding ourselves of Trifonas' definition of the picture book essentially as "an open and fluid artistic form embodying lexical and visual signs and codes in an unceasing interaction of word and image and reader" (1998). This definition would work perfectly for digital story as a genre if we'd include an additional dimension and a consequent action: sound/voice implies an essential component of the digital storytelling process, the story-listening. Yet form and process are linked to each other.

In the same way the picture book "is dependent upon the interaction of two integrated systems of signification, lexical and visual, (...) and facilitates the creation of personal cognitive, affective, and aesthetic meanings for the reader" (Trifonas 1998), the digital story requires the integration of a third system of signification that is related to the listening process during the creation and the fruition of a digital story. Furthermore, during the story-making process, this third system is connected to the performative element of the voice-over and the transformative process of shaping the narrative throughout the five steps, starting from the oral transmission of the story during the story-circle passing through the creation of the script to then transit to the recording of the voice-over, before concluding with its editing combined with other sound effects and/or music.

Indeed, when we talk about the potential audience and the meaning-making of a digital story, we have to consider a viewer, a listener, and a reader and the implications of how perceptions and understandings could change when the audience act primarily in one of the abovementioned categories, in addition to contextual factors that could influence perceptions. Sometimes the different dimensions are hierarchical and sometimes are complementing each other, and the fusion of the components is very much linked to individual attitudes and contextual/technical circumstances. This happens during the story-making process too, when the storyteller perceives her/himself as a writer, as a teller, and/or as a producer of a visual output. How the three roles communicate to each other depends not only on the storytellers' individual attitudes but more often on the workshop environment created by the facilitator.

Moreover, one or the other one of these three roles is sometimes privileged consciously by the storytellers to communicate or hide a contingent emotional state triggered by the storytelling process itself. Most commonly, the choice is made depending on personal abilities in using and adapting vocabulary, visual imagery, and voice/sounds. For example, for second-language storytellers, the visual component is often dominant, but for everyone a "cross-media agreement" (Trifonas 1998) is essential to deliver the message that each story needs to uncover. Within this context, the role of the workshop facilitator becomes crucial especially in terms of how to balance the storyteller's authorship and ownership of the story with the need to produce "a good" story. As a consequence, additional ethical implications related to who has to decide and – based on which criteria – what makes a digital story "good" have to be considered. This is even more crucial because in the digital storytelling process, the expected role of the facilitator is to activate the storytelling/story-listening loop among participants in a way that they all inform each individual's story-making.

Before challenging the four components identified as main lenses through which looking at digital storytelling as a tool to unlock grassroots knowledge, an additional concept needs to be highlighted. Since I approach research as "cooperative inquiry" (Heron and Reason 2008), what I am arguing here is that the digital storytelling process includes and stimulates the four ways of knowing depicted in the "extended epistemology": experiential knowing, presentational knowing, propositional knowing, and practical knowing (Heron 1992, 1996). In fact, digital stories, as an output of a creative and participatory approach, can show how "our knowing is grounded in our experience, expressed through our stories and images, understood through theories which make sense to us, and expressed in worthwhile action in our lives" (Heron and Reason 2008).

## Time: Is Storytelling Only About the Past or the Future?

> Community is denied contemporary being-ness, always deferred, lost, projected into the future, the past. (Studdert 2005)

In this section I aim to focus on one of the main challenges that I had to face and overcome while being involved as a researcher, applying creative and participatory methods to facilitate the co-production of knowledge, in a UK-wide project on issues related to water management titled "DRY Project" (http://dryproject.co.uk/). The challenge was revealed at the beginning of the research project, while I was working with other team members in some rural areas of Southern England to start building connections and mutual trust at local level with a group of stakeholders. Our intention was to co-design the research methodology and the plan of action to eventually generate, in collaboration with local communities, contents for an online *utility tool* for informed decision-making on drought and flood issues in the UK. "Drought Risk and You (DRY)" is an interdisciplinary research project, funded under the RCUK Drought and Water Scarcity Programme, with the aim of

developing an evidence-based resource for drought risk management in which scientific data and multiple narratives are brought together to facilitate decision-making processes. One of the aims of DRY is to subvert knowledge hierarchies by proposing digital storytelling as a tool to facilitate the co-production of knowledge and to encourage active citizenship and increase democratic participation at community level. The project is adopting digital storytelling as one of the multiple narrative approaches to investigate people's perceptions and behaviors in relation to their river, water use, and water scarcity within and across seven river catchments in the UK. Researchers with different disciplinary backgrounds have explored these issues across a complex patchwork of various communities to reveal nuances of sense of place.

The challenge I am referring to here was disclosed by one of the first storytellers that we invited to share local narratives on drought issues: he commenced the storytelling process by saying that "no one here is really interested unless it affects them personally" (Peter T., Stanford Dingley, UK, March 2016). In that moment the personal angle of digital storytelling appeared as a potential limit: the connection between personal narrative and personal interest, quite naively highlighted by that workshop participant, suddenly challenged the whole methodological approach, considering the specific aims of that research project. Digital stories are personal by definition, and they embed subjective and experiential knowledge; therefore applying digital storytelling within that context implies to answer some tricky questions: How can we connect individual stories to community narratives? How to bridge expert and lay knowledge(s) and bring unheard voices into a debate? How to understand how personally meaningful stories can simultaneously have a social impact?

By shaping the methodology in collaboration with our stakeholders and hybridizing digital storytelling as a form, we were able not only to solve those issues but also to achieve an unexpected result, namely, re-establishing the "contemporary being-ness" of the community we were working with (Studdert 2016) while collecting their memories from the past and stimulating the creation of visual representations of their imagined future stories.

The turning point was when we organized a series of workshops to explore future scenarios and possible climate change impacts at the local level in 50-year time. In the process of co-designing these workshops with our stakeholders, we understood that drawing and songwriting were perceived by community members as effective tools to unlock their creativity and project themselves into the future. Therefore, we explored how storytelling and songwriting could work together to facilitate the journey from personal to collective or what Jerome Bruner described as turning "private trouble into public plight," which supported the generation of environmental narratives that could influence the decision-making processes. To do so we collected micro-narratives, digital stories, and oral histories and co-created with the local communities two songs composed by the folk singer Sharron Kraus who accompanied us throughout the process to reflect on and encapsulate these stories. This approach was applied in two separate events that we organized: one in rural Cambridgeshire, "The Reasons in the Fens" (Bakewell et al. 2018), based on a

traditional form of conflict resolution applied in Sardinia (Italy) until the late 1960s, and another in Sheffield, "Water Stories of Sheffield." In both cases we combined storytelling practices, storyboarding techniques, and songwriting to trial a creative process that enabled individual storytellers to "see" their thoughts, feelings, and concerns translated into and represented by a community song.

While reading the stories produced by the workshop participants about their future, we saw that their narratives were less personal and more community-oriented compared to the ones generated about their past. One participant concisely pinpointed something that completely changed our perspective: "I remember my life as individual because I know more details and I can explore those memories more deeply from a personal perspective; but I project myself in the future as a community member or on behalf of someone else, my children, someone younger than me, because it's easier to imagine the unknown as a shared and collective experience." Switching from memories to future projections throughout the creative process appeared to be perceived as a sort of transition from self-interest to participation.

The connection between imagination and community building was already stated by Irene Baker when she wrote: "Listening to a story is not a passive act. It engages imagination and abstraction. It creates a community" (Baker 2016). Her main focus was on the educational value of storytelling. Nevertheless, what she was mainly referring to is the social function of the story-sharing.

An additional crucial component that our experience in DRY Project would suggest is also the "temporality" of the creative process that somehow shapes content and form.

Therefore, the storytelling process itself can be presented here as the connector between the past and the future to explore communities' adaptation to change. Yet the social act of creating and sharing stories can represent the "contemporary being-ness" for a community, elsewhere denied.

## Space: Storytelling as a "Safe Place" to Enhance Creativity and Facilitate a "Compassionate and Realistic Dialogue"

> Some level of connection is essential for a story to be effective. (Fabritius and Hagemann 2017)

Throughout history, "the building blocks of all compelling narratives have remained intact: challenge, struggle, and resolution" (Bowman 2014). Throughout my personal experience as digital storytelling facilitator, I had to acknowledge that these building blocks are not always all visible or present when a "lay" person creates, delivers, and shares compelling narratives. Digital stories can exist and be effectively received even with a missing block, because they are conceived to represent and embed an ongoing process of story-sharing. In fact, during the storytelling/story-listening process, that is, the essential component of a digital storytelling workshop, the absence of one of the elements which conventionally

are crucial to build a narrative is not perceived as a contradiction to its form but as a trigger to generate additional stories: in fact, in a social space, new stories can respond and complement what the original story is missing. Yet the multimodality of the digital story can mitigate the flawed structure of an individual's narrative. Digital stories can't be considered as isolated and static objects but as creative expressions of a process that enable *lay* storytellers to create a space for social interaction while sharing their stories.

While observing the delivery of digital storytelling workshops, we could identify the story-sharing dimension as environment, the *space* in which the storytelling process happens and reveals its social dimension. It is the *space* in which individuals are able to reconnect with their place that combines prior knowledge and experience and act as a natural hook for emotional connections.

Place is the background to stories and memories and also the context through which stories emerge (Leyshon and Bull 2011; Pile 2002). Therefore, we propose *sense of place* is an important factor in the way that people respond to disruptive events in their communities or in their personal lives, and "local distinctiveness" might be a reason for different responses and ways of coping with/adapting to change.

In this section the main focus is on how digital storytelling might triangulate between personal experience, place attachment, and crisis response. To do so I am sharing a workshop experience during which we explored individuals' reactions to displacement through *hybrid storytelling practices*. The workshop was delivered as part of "NAR-SPI (narrative educational resources for socio professional inclusion)," a European project, funded under the Erasmus+ Programme KA2, that aims at creating open educational resources for socio-professional inclusion. The objective of the workshop was to co-design with the participants an exhibition that looked closely and creatively at the concept of social inclusion. The product of their creativity was then transformed by project partners in learning objects to train psychologists and volunteers working with and assisting new comers. The event was organized in collaboration with the British Red Cross (Nottingham, UK) and involved a group of 40 participants who shared stories of socio-professional inclusion and explored a variety of creative approaches (drawing, storyboarding techniques, craft-making, songwriting) to co-produce the contents for an exhibition that was displayed from the seventh to the 21st of February 2018 at Loughborough University (UK). On this occasion the storytelling process was left completely open, and the facilitators, to kick off the activity, allowed participants to choose and use the "creative tools" they felt the most appropriate to express their attachment to their place of origin.

The storytelling research team based at Loughborough, in collaboration with musician Sharron Kraus and visual artist Céline Siani Djiakoua, facilitated the process of producing objects, digital stories, sounds/songs, and short performances, to create the main elements of the exhibition. With a focus on co-production, the researchers had the opportunity to share their practice on digital storytelling and learn how to adapt and hybridize that methodology to explore different meanings of social inclusion and place attachment. The volunteers from the British Red Cross had a chance of sharing their experience/expertise in working with newcomers and

learning new participatory creative approaches to be applied in their ongoing activities. The beneficiaries of the Red Cross refugee support service had an occasion to spend a day out in the biggest one-site university campus in the UK, socialize with people coming from different backgrounds, look at their journey through the lenses of creativity, and also explore potential ways of having access to higher education courses. For all of them, the workshop activated a process of mutual learning that also stimulated further opportunities for collaboration. Participants were split in two groups; each group worked for half day on two different tasks, producing objects to be displayed in the exhibition supported by the visual artist and unlocking creativity through multiple storytelling approaches. For the storytelling session, the first activity consisted in working individually on storyboards to narrate their personal experience of social inclusion while reflecting on their sense of place. They were asked to choose one of the three different storyboard templates that the facilitators printed in advance to help storytellers frame their narrative in one temporal dimension and link their story to a specific place: the first one was to recall stories from the past before the forced displacement occurred and was on "A song from your childhood. A lullaby your parents used to sing to you or a song you remember singing as a child"; the second one was on "Something from the Present. A feeling, a thought, an image, something that relates to your life now"; and the third one was on "Something for the Future. A wish or a hope for the future or an image or idea that inspires you."

Only a couple of participants decided to develop a story by using the second storyboard template, but they weren't able to identify a place in which they could position their narrative. They realized that sharing stories about themselves moving from place to place was a way of positioning themselves at present in a non-place, a way of expressing visually their difficulty to find a place to belong to. They described their displacement as a never-ending search, as something that completely changed their perspective on the meaning of place attachment. They also clearly identified the reason why their mind-set suddenly changed, namely, the fact that the place where they come from doesn't exist (and won't exist) anymore as they remember it, because the war or a natural disaster changed dramatically its built environment and its tangible heritage. By sharing the story of them constantly moving, constantly seeking for a place to live in, made them think about the idea of imagining their ideal place as a "mosaic" in which to recompose all their memories linked to each of those places they've been moving through. During the story-sharing process, when everyone talked about the storyboard produced giving each other feedback, they eventually thought to co-produce for the exhibition a collective narrative: hence their intention was to find together a shared way of expressing their sense of belonging by revitalizing their intangible heritage, perceived by all of them as their constant environment and the only space for "infinite freedom."

The majority of participants chose the first storyboard template to express their "local distinctiveness," and they presented their storyboards by singing a lullaby from their childhood, instead of sharing stories. In that moment we discovered that there was a recurrent tune sung in various languages; therefore we thought to use that

tune as the basis to co-create a common narrative and to write together the lyrics of a new song that could embed a message unfolded by all their stories. At the end of the session, they co-produced, in collaboration with songwriter Sharron Kraus, "The Mosaic Song."

This process is the effective demonstration of what Mike Wilson said, talking about the NAR-SPI project at the Annual Storytelling Symposium organized in Cardiff at the University of South Wales: "storytelling is the art form of social interaction," and it can bring unexpected results by unlocking creativity. In this specific case, we see digital storytelling in its hybrid form as refuge and as "safe place" to enhance creativity and facilitate a "compassionate and realistic dialogue" (Rappoport 2014) about the multicultural society.

This experience also suggested that the role of emotion in the digital storytelling process is central to the promotion of *embodiment*, a specific form of knowledge that exists in the telling of stories with emotional meaning. The idea that the embodiment of a location is what construct a *place* obviously refers to Michel de Certeau's famous statement that "space is a practiced place" (1980), where the embodiment of a place is crucial to its space-ness. He clearly distinguishes between experiencing the world, the inside view, and looking from a distance at a person experiencing it, the outside view. The hybridization of the digital storytelling process showed how to blur the boundaries between the inside and the outside view and how to facilitate a creative process that generates a common narrative and the collective embodiment of a shared (intangible) place, a space for mutual understanding and "infinite freedom."

## Truth(S): Unlocking Alternative Perspectives

Stories can have an impact that is different from just telling a fact. (Christine Trace, Librarian, Montgomery College, Maryland, USA)

One way of approaching digital storytelling that has been demonstrated to be particularly effective is its use as a participatory methodology for "knowledge translation" and in particular as a tool "to illustrate the usefulness of qualitative results in any given context" (Bourbonnais and Michaud 2018). Stories can generate empathy and trust in the audience and at the same time demonstrate their usefulness because they "have the power to give meaning to human behaviors and to trigger emotions" (Bourbonnais and Michaud 2018). This happens because stories are perceived as vectors of truth. They also challenge the meaning of truth itself and suggest a deeper reflection on how various perspectives embedded in personal narratives about *contested* themes and events can generate multiple truths.

We acknowledge the existence of multiple truths when we recognize, as the Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "the danger of a single story" (Adichie 2009). As she observed, "because our lives and our cultures are composed of a series of overlapping stories, if we hear only a single story about another person, culture, or country, we risk a critical misunderstanding."

By proposing digital storytelling as a social process during which a story-listener has an active role, I am arguing that digital stories convey various understandings of facts with social interest and stimulate a shared and communal "holistic thinking" (Meadows and Kidd 2009) of the world around us.

To demonstrate this concept, in this section I present an example from a project in which digital storytelling has been applied to facilitate learning processes in formal and nonformal contexts with the aim of unlocking participants' alternative perspectives and of enhancing learners' critical thinking.

The project we are referring to was delivered in the DC area, in the USA, during the spring 2018, as part of a fellowship at the Smithsonian Center for Learning and Digital Access (SCLDA), funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) UK.

Collaborating with the Smithsonian offered a unique opportunity to test, both face-to-face and virtually, the effectiveness of digital storytelling to enhance the 4Cs (creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, communication) in both formal and nonformal learning. As part of that project, I had access to the Smithsonian digital collections within the context of SCLDA's ongoing development of new heritage-related learning resources and involvement in public engagement programs that support different types of learning. The pilot programs were designed and developed in collaboration with educators in several museums and partner organizations and were presented in both formal and nonformal learning settings.

Workshop participants engaged in a self-reflective process whose goals were to understand if and how digital storytelling can enhance the 4Cs; to identify which step/s of the creative process has/have had an impact on a particular skill; and to highlight any moments in which their emotional responses and feelings supported the learning process. The researchers involved in the project also intend to recognize any limitations and challenges of the digital storytelling methodology when applied to explore how individuals connect personal memories to museum objects.

"Explore Teaching with Digital Storytelling" was a hands-on interdisciplinary workshop organized by the Paul Peck Humanities Institute at Montgomery College and the Smithsonian Center for Learning and Digital Access, designed for faculty in all disciplines, as well as other staff members and librarians (This Smithsonian Learning Lab collection was created to support workshop participants throughout the process: http://learninglab.si.edu/q/ll-c/XbHKgkU3zdYe0RpB). In response to participants' requests, researchers designed 2 separate 5-h sessions at the school's Rockville campus, with 2 groups in 2 consecutive days, totaling 55 participants over the 2 sessions. Some faculty and staff members had already had digital storytelling training sessions, but none had ever applied the methodology in their teaching or for any other professional use.

By reflecting on this specific workshop activity and on the feedback received from participants, I am trying to recognize in the digital storytelling process the production values that come from "the scrapbook," where each clipping contains its own truth, to braid together different perspectives, co-produce a common thread, and develop more nuanced views on what originally was presented as an accepted fact as part of a learning process.

Furthermore, triggering personal stories (both factual or fictional) as a teaching strategy can on one hand problematize the interaction between opinions and facts and on the other hand stimulate a deeper reflection on learners' beliefs that drive their behaviors and ways of knowing.

A week after the workshop, a series of questions were discussed with some of the participants, such as: Do stories have to be true and reliable to facilitate effective learning processes? Is what people believe is real more important than facts per se? Can opinions produce new knowledge?

The lesson learned while delivering this digital storytelling workshop was that even if misconceptions are perceived to complicate the picture, they also expand the horizon while we are investigating learners' perceptions of contested narratives: non-factual narratives provoke discussions, enable us to elicit counter-narratives, and bring different stories together. Stories tell always the *truth* about learners' views, but they may reveal a conflicting set of information and data. What they certainly achieve effectively is learners' engagement with knowledge sharing and (co)production, and eventually they enhance their critical thinking.

Yet reflecting from a twenty-first-century learning perspective, this pilot research project exemplifies how using digital storytelling within the Smithsonian Learning Lab (https://learninglab.si.edu/) can unlock creativity and demystify the use of cultural artifacts for teaching. Regarding the 4Cs (Creativity, Critical thinking, Communication, and Collaboration), the researchers and the educators involved in this project learned that these skills are often combined, and it is difficult to separate them. Skills are developed through different stages of the digital storytelling process, and the primary challenge – still to be explored in future research – is how to assess these skills through digital storytelling. The majority of the educators involved in this project acknowledged that "Crea-tical thinking" (meaning a combination of Creativity and Critical thinking) is the essential skill to be enhanced in the younger generation, to help them cope with complexity and change in today's digital world (Trilling and Fadel 2009). As a remedy to this lack of abilities and dispositions in identifying, understanding, and creating multiple perspectives, this research suggests bringing multiple voices to the fore and using storytelling as a way to do so in both formal and nonformal learning contexts.

Zipes in *Once Upon a Time* highlights the importance to weaken and undermine what he calls the "master narrative" (Zipes 2016) that in this context I would define the dominant voice, so to unlock people's "creative and critical potential." Yet I would argue that "polyphonic narratives" (Mark C. Marino 2013) and personal stories that unlock alternative perspectives and multiple truths can embed social values more than a story perceived as true because in line with the master narrative or the dominant voice.

## Practice: Dismantling an Orthodoxy to Be Coherent with the Digital Storytelling Essence

Digital storytelling enables the transition from information receivers to curators of knowledge. (DS workshop participant, Montgomery College, Maryland, USA)

Michael Wilson explored the concept of *mess* in storytelling "to primarily describe a range of multiplicities (multiplicities of forms, of media, of perspectives, of truths, of meanings, of texts, of relationships)" (Wilson 2014). I would add multiplicities of practices and processes too.

Having been a digital storytelling facilitator for a decade, mainly developing and co-designing new approaches for action research, I eventually understood the importance of this range of multiplicities at different stages of my practice. In the first half of this decade, I was acting as a knowledge broker, and I identified as the main objectives of my digital storytelling practice to create or "maintain links between researchers and their audience via the appropriate translation of research findings" (Lomas 1997); reach new and larger audiences through public engagement events; and listen to unheard voices to discover hidden stories.

Having had the opportunity to work with Michael Wilson for the second half of this decade, I've been also encouraged to explore digital storytelling as a different "way of knowing" and in particular as a way to unlock grassroots knowledge and dismantle knowledge hierarchies and combine traditional forms of communication and learning processes with new technologies to explore the workshop participants' transition from knowledge consumers to knowledge implementers and eventually to knowledge producers. The most exciting achievement of my experience as a digital storytelling facilitator in the last few years has been acknowledging that the methodology itself should be challenged to avoid the risk of being trapped in what was becoming an orthodoxy.

During the first half of this decade, I followed the original process as designed in the late 1990s by the group of creative practitioners gravitating around the StoryCenter (https://www.storycenter.org/). That process includes the seven elements that outline "the fundamentals of digital storytelling" (Lambert 2010, 2013) and can be unfolded throughout the five steps of a standard DS workshop, regardless its duration: story circle, scriptwriting, audio recording, video editing, and screening of all the stories. All these seven elements (or five steps) are suggested as being essential to make a "good" digital story as they enable participants to own the story, understand its meaning, become aware of their emotions, identify the plot, choose images and sounds to be combined with the voice-over, build a dialogue between what can be seen and what can be heard in a story, and reflect on the potential audience of a story. Either through the five-step process (if an immediate link to the structure of a workshop is mentioned) or through the seven elements (if the principles of that process are referred to), the digital storytelling is presented as a facilitated group process, a sort of collective journey during which participants are accompanied toward a common destination. Yet the journey itself is perceived as more significant than the destination, because the exchange (of knowledge and emotions) among participants and the acquisition of new skills (oral communication, writing, digital, editing) are more vital than the individual production of the story itself. Hence for the first half of the past decade, I was replicating in various contexts the same approach, and the only variable was represented by the human being "performing" their role as participant in each context in which that same approach was applied.

During the second half of the past decade, I had the opportunity to experiment with a variety of storytelling practices within digital storytelling and to reflect more deeply on its effectiveness as a participatory visual method while enabling the workshop participants to co-design the process itself, therefore broadening their engagement and enhancing their sense of ownership not only on their story but also on the methodology and on the communal space created during the story-sharing process.

What I realized is that the digital storytelling methodology, in order to be coherent with the original aims identified by the founders of the digital storytelling movement in the San Francisco Bay, should be open to constant change. In fact, replicating it as it was conceived originally and delivering digital storytelling workshops all the time as they were somehow "codified" by the StoryCenter would limit its own nature. Yet it would be in contradiction with its own essence, because it would not respond appropriately to participants' needs in our always-changing digital society.

One of the first issues that a participants' needs-oriented approach suggested verifying is about the structure of that process: are the seven elements or five steps (Lambert 2010) all crucial in the same way in different contexts? I acknowledge the importance of working through these steps together and the efficacy of this process to build mutual trust, but workshops can mean that those already engaged or those with both the time or funds are more likely to attend, which prompts a deeper reflection on its actual inclusiveness, especially for projects seeking to bring hard-to-reach voices into a debate. If we understand that for some groups of people (not only for a few in a group), the writing phase or the video editing represents an obstacle for their participation, and we decide to creatively "remove" these obstacles and to prioritize other phases, are we still applying the digital storytelling methodology? When we approach digital storytelling as a participatory visual method for action research, I believe that we should emphasize a more flexible approach that enables the hybridization of the form and the process, in particular if we are working in more "difficult-to-engage" research contexts.

Performative storytelling, songwriting, and storyboarding techniques have been demonstrated to be effective tools to expand and enrich the conventional digital storytelling methodology, especially if we think of "storytelling as a means of sharing knowledge, building trust, and cultivating identity" (Ciancia et al. 2014).

Dismantling what was becoming an orthodoxy in my practice gave me the opportunity to be coherent with the digital storytelling essence and also to reflect on the legacy of that process on participants' experience that ultimately aims at giving them the tools to recognize their authority and authenticity: the authority of lived experiences and the authenticity of personal storytelling. A digital storytelling process always open to change will be able to rebuild this legacy in ever-changing contexts, so to generate human interest on "good" stories.

## Closing Thoughts and Way Forward

> Storytelling speaks to what makes us human: a search for meaning. (Bowman 2018)

This chapter addresses the need expressed for a reconsideration of digital storytelling as a tool for understanding how people produce, exchange, and disseminate knowledge in today's digital world and if/how they relate their personal experiences to a specific place. While crossing the boundaries between tangible and intangible environments, an open-to-change digital storytelling methodology that enables participatory hybridization of its process and form has proven to facilitate the promotion of *embodiment* and the creation of a social space for *community being-ness* and individuals' *crea-tical thinking*. For both community and individuals, the emotions unlocked through the digital storytelling process were revealed to be crucial in the production of new knowledge(s). Therefore, people's emotions are complementary to cognitive skills and dispositions to extract meanings from facts, opinions, and behaviors.

As Bowman stated, "in diverse instructional settings, non-stories provide information while resonant narratives teach, inspire, and motivate students by engaging them emotionally and intellectually" (2018). Stories don't need to generate agreement to engage their listeners: they have to resonate with others' personal experiences but should also generate counter-narratives and alternative perspectives to prove full engagement. This is valid in formal learning processes but also in everyday social life.

By sharing some examples of projects and workshops in which digital storytelling played a crucial role in investigating how to unlock grassroots knowledge, I'm arguing here that "subversive storytelling" (Zipes 2016) represents one way to cope with complexity and change in today's digital world and gives us the tools to play an active and communal role in a society in which digitization is bringing more fragmentation of knowledge and human interaction.

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# Technology, Democracy, and Hope

# 29

Jeremy Hunsinger

## Contents

### Abstract

This handbook chapter is about technology, but it is also about how most of our educational and technological lives exist outside of democratic control and primarily exists in the spaces of bureaucratic authoritarianism (Arato 1983; Marcuse 1998; Mumford 1964). In presenting a series of discussions about elements and relations of technology to education, this chapter engages with a variety of topics and tendencies in the field. It presents these tendences as things we should resist in favour of more inclusive and democratic alternatives.

### Keywords

Technology · Education · Democracy · Hope

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## Introduction

This handbook chapter is about technology, but it is also about how most of our educational and technological lives exist outside of democratic control and primarily exists in the spaces of bureaucratic authoritarianism (Arato 1983; Marcuse 1998; Mumford 1964). Sometimes this authoritarianism is due to a need for authority based on specific knowledges or expertise, but other parts of our political, cultural, and educational lives could be equal and democratic without generalized authoritarianism. Increasingly though, our lives are becoming a matter of private instead of public governance (Beck 1997, 1998; Hall and Biersteker 2002). This transformation of our public institutions and privatization of our public goods are a matter of ongoing neoliberal "market solutions," but they are also driven by the technologies themselves; few of which are democratically oriented at all.

Technology is a broad idea, certainly all-encompassing. Every year, for the last four years, I've asked groups of students to think about what isn't technology, and they've come up with ideas like nature, blood, rocks, their thoughts, and similar things. Some of their ideas of non-technologies are categories to think with, invented in the language and conceptual systems in which we exist; the ideas might refer to real sets of things, but the sets are frequently arbitrary and enforced only by cultural, conceptual, and linguistic norms. Thus those ideas themselves are technologies that we use to understand and order the world. Some of the ideas of non-technologies that they come up with are things, like a rock or the sun, which in themselves are perhaps not technologies, but in the context of our lives, they are part of technological systems or otherwise technologized, such as solar power. Thus, from parts of the human perspectives, these things are as much technology as their mobile phones. Much like a mobile phone sitting on the bottom of the Marianas Trench, the sun may not necessarily be a technology in one aspect, but in another it certainly is, thus the students end up concluding almost all things can be technologies. The students tend to agree that deep space or similar areas nearly void of human interaction are not technologies or technologized. Granted these assumedly non-technologies are not outside of our interpretation. Even then we debate the space between the stars, the structures we've built in the sky such as constellations, the North Star, or Southern Cross, which gives our world meaning. Blood and bodies also occasionally are acclaimed as not technologies from some students. When we discuss the parts per million of plastic in the human blood, the food they eat, and the activities they do and how they do them, they quickly realize there is little about them that isn't part of a technological system. It is all part of one or many technologized industrialized systems. Even their leisure is programmed and structured by technologies. One final category tends to arise is religion and god/s, which if created in humanities' and natures' images is undoubtedly a technology, but if it is an all unknowable thing then fits in with the void arguments above as something we don't interact with or experience and thus these religious concepts are hard to think of as a technology. Religions as institutions of social control and a

directive force in our lives are also recognized as social or governance-oriented technologies by students. In short, the relationship between technology, culture, and education is a mess, a complicated set of ecological relations that have tendencies toward certain technological developments and certain modes of organizing our lives/society.

Everything and even most non-things are technology, and only a very few things are likely not technology. Technology as a term has moved much beyond the old idea which defines it is the natural world put to the human purpose (Roemer 1980). Given the relationship between technology and almost everything humans and some animals put forth in the world, it is worth discussing some tendencies of technology related to culture and education. A concept binding together technology and education is hope, for without hope, why would be pursuing these ends? Keeping in mind culture is a technology as is education.

The possibilities for things being technologies exist in their endless sets of relations. The relations they exist within make them inseparable from ourselves and our ecologies (Bateson 1979, 1987; Guattari 1995, 2000). So we should deny technology is humankind's efforts to change nature. Instead, technology should be thought of as inseparable from nature, our world, ourselves, and our society. Technology exists as part of our ecologies and sits in relation to other things in our mental, environmental, and social ecologies (Guattari 2000). There has not been a human without technologies just as there has not been humankind outside of "nature." The socio-philosophical discursive constructs of separability of technology and nature are nonsensical and likely harmful to current and future thought as they lead to discourses of domination and conditions of exploitation in our world (Agger 1992).

Even in these possible and real exploitations via technologies, there is a persistent hope in technology. It is a hope tied to its institutionalization and normalization. This normalization is itself a technology in our everyday lives. As a technology, it entails the assumption of its ontological and thus social existence; and its progress through the human lives with all its implied assurances and politico-ethical relations. There are people alive now who were alive before television the internet, mobile phones, and a myriad of other technologies are less than 50 years old as of this writing. The amount of technological change most people have seen in their lives by middle age is remarkable, and the only ongoing stability of technology is its metaphors and their manifestations such as the screen, the interface, the button, the dial, the wheel, the wing, and the similar things. Technology has become real, irreal, and surreal in most people's lives because it isn't really what it ever was. Technology as a category, as noted above, is difficult, because it is all-encompassing and always even contains itself. Its logical limits are not even limited to human capacity but the limitations of the capacities of the devices built by devices. But humanity's hope in this technology is suspect; it is mythogenetic and poetic and has become as much marketing as it has become a part of our cultural milieu. The bureaucratic authoritarianism implicit and explicit in technological stories and myths undermines the democratic project.

## Technological Separability

One of the persistent myths of technology is it is external to humanity in some manner; much like some theorize nature is external to our being. The Lockean or Hobbesian natural man should be thought of as fiction, established as an argument for a specific form of being in the world (Hobbes 1994; Locke 2003). This imagination of mankind is a political being based on violence to forms of itself and the ecologies of its surrounding: nasty, brutish, and short indeed (Hobbes 1994). There is a violence in the separation of human and technology; McLuhan identifies violence through extension, but there is a more profound violence of disassociation of responsibility: the separation of humankind from its creations (Mcluhan 1994). There is a form of denial of the complicity of responsibility for technologies we create, use, or exist within the same ecology. Again, the denial of complicity is a fiction created, usually by capital, to disempower some and empower themselves. Humans have used technology, have created technologies, and are responsible for those technologies' effects on other humans, on other beings, and our world. Technology is a political project in the Aristotelian sense of politics, and as such in a democratic society, it should be a democratic project, but people deny this based on the separability of technology and other biases of culture, ecology, and/or intellect (Aristotle 2009).

Inarguably, the first technologies were prehuman and were not the hypermediated technological devices synonymous with the term technology in today's news media and popular culture. Technologies were simple signs or tools which brought structure and advantage to groups of being within their ecologies. Sometimes they developed through interactions with natural environments, and sometimes they were likely discovered or repurposed from other possibilities, but these things were communicative, as all technologies are. Once the thing could be communicated, it could be learned instead of "natural", then, it is a technology, whereas if it is not learned or has no relationship to a real or imagined communal knowledges/cultures, then it is not a technology.

Perhaps these technologies were pre-cultural, but knowledges and cultures of sorts arose from them, much as we see elements of cultures arising in disparate nonhuman species such as crows, wolves, porpoises, etc. Communicative technologies beget norms, as norms are related to the learning, and all learning is communal. With higher intelligence, all norms generate anti-norms, and thus play becomes a possibility, and with play, communication, and learning, there is a solid foundation for institutions and thus the institutionalization of culture. This perspective is not new, and it is a recombination of years of teaching combined with years of philosophers and thinkers such as Aristotle, Wittgenstein, Dewey, Vygotsky, Marcuse, Mumford, Serres, Gregory Bateson, Jerome Bruner, Maxine Greene, Bruno Latour, and many others. This ongoing intellectual tradition also relates to the idea from John Law that technology studies are a mess but builds upon to argue it is an ecological mess (Guattari 1995, 2000; Law 2004). However, whenever ideas are articulated about technologies, remember technology need not to be anthropocentric; technology certainly existed before humankind and certainly exists in other species.

The capacity for technology doesn't seem to be universal, but it is not limited to mammals or even the great ape subgroups of mammals such as humans.

All culture is technological, but then how could it not be? They are just valences of the same projection of our world with technology presenting one interpretive valence and culture presenting as another. All cultural production is technological. Production can't exist outside of culture, and the whole mythos of difference constructed from the fiction of "natural" talent is used to construct and justify elites based on cultural constructions of merit that may not be meritable at all. Talents whether ideologically natural or not are learned, encouraged, and developed within cultural systems. The mythos and fictions around technological skills and talent seem to operate across all cultural systems and seem to start with the recognition that someone is better at some task than someone else. Once comparative betterness becomes unobtainable for some reason, then the argument becomes one where the betterness is justified due to "natural", or some other ideological rationalization. Humanity has seen these stories repeatedly through inarguably they change contextually, and these stories of talent, elitism, and merit are used to justify all kinds of undemocratic injustice in late modernity.

In the contemporary neoliberal capitalist context of late modernity, these technology-based betterness stories try, usually and hopefully unsuccessfully, to hide wealth and privileges. Being more competent, more literate, or even being more expert at using forms of technology have ideologies redescribe relationships to the technologies and hide the actual origin of the betterness, which usually is practice based learning, and practice requires use of those technologies, which requires access and which usually requires wealth (Illich 1977). As such we need to be careful about discourses identifying "natural" talent with technologies, such as the fundamentally misleading idea of a "digital native." We need to be especially careful in education where we should be aware that we are providing access to fundamental equality.

Technology in education relates significantly to wealth, literacies, habitus, and any number of operating functions of society and culture, allowing students to see/construct each other as different, even if equal. Since we have schools in the USA providing laundry service and other schools with laundromats in them; the difference of technology and the difference of service speak worlds to the potency of contemporary technology and its effect on learning even if it isn't directly learning technologies (Dawson 2018). The laundromat provides an equity of class that isn't being provided outside of school, so the technologies installed are somewhat equalizing. The co-constitution of teaching/learning and technology has been long-standing; every text has paratext; every computer has its environment; and every classroom has a school and its culture. Chairs, desks, walls, screens, computers, etc. all have meanings that can be inclusive or exclusive. Most classrooms don't have enough left-handed desks, if they have desks. Many teachers use colors and gradients of colors that are inaccessible to some of the populations, some of which may be their students. Other classroom users use technologies like PowerPoint which have implicit knowledges about ordering and structure that exclude people in other ways. Similarly, unexplained images in PowerPoint do not serve the vision impaired.

The myth of separability of technology from society and culture is present in education. Educational institutions frequently see technology as separate from other elements of the educational project instead as a constitutive part of it. Technology has a separate budget line, which can be cut theoretically without effect on education; even though such a cut is eviscerating elements of the cultures of learning and the possibilities found within those technologies. Education is a technology, and co-constitutive with technology, much like nature is built from humankind's co-constitution in it. There never was a separation between humankind and nature, and thus the separation of nature and culture/society collapses because a human would never have been born without the parents who surely exist within a sociocultural context. The Adam and Eve mythos and other mythos where humankind originates outside of a sociocultural human context are technological contrivances themselves, constructed to situate the uniqueness and difference from humans in relation to technology and relationships, such as nature. They can provide justifications otherwise unjustifiable such as eating animals or pursuing unjust war. Thus we need to be careful about the myth of separability in education and technology because it will ultimately disempower or disenfranchise people. In other words, if we can make education different/separable from technology and technology different/separable from education, then various possibilities occur in which one can replace the other in various cultural milieus. Inarguably this is starting to happen in some elements of education and educational psychology where screen time in children is being constructed in ways demonizing certain relationships with the systems in children's lives (Davis 2018; Dunkley 2014; Margalit 2016; Turkle 1997). We should think about how to redesign/reconstruct the system and set of relationships in some manner recognizing the students relationship with their technology is the same as some people's relationship with books and professorial expertise which are merely more traditionally acceptable technologies. Prior educational systems have destroyed relationships with technologies with severe results for their society, culture and politics. Thus, instead of seeking to make parents and children reactionary to specific screens, we should aim to transform their relationship in ways allowing them to flourish and maintain a healthy relationship to the technology. With technology integrated into their lives and a strong democratic education, students will adapt to their future roles, whereas if we apply bureaucratic authoritarian solutions to them, such as web filter and screen time limits, will they actually adopt a healthy life or have a good civic life for democracy? If we are to have a democracy, we cannot perpetually train authoritarians.

## Technological Optimism

With all educational and social technologies, there tends to exist an overwhelming optimism and hope toward improvement and a better future. This technological optimism is technoutopian at best but frequently technoatopian. Technology in all its various "separable" modes seems to be seeping/creeping into every crevasse of our lives and works as teacher and learners. Technics are built and applied to solve

problems. These problems may not exist beyond government/media or other institutional fabrication and might be better solved socially or politically. Frequently due to our neoliberal context we are only encouraged to solve our problems by investing in the capital of technical things while ignoring social, cultural, and political capital. It is far easier to control things than it is to control people and there has not yet been a democratic revolution of machines, nor is it likely possible. Indeed, the social, cultural, or political techniques of a learned population are probably not controllable at all and will likely demand democratic and equitable solutions. Technology does not need to be democratic or equitable; it can be and frequently is authoritarian, centralizing control and wealth in capitalists and their experts. We can choose authoritarian or democratic technologies (Mumford 1964). Those choices necessarily constrain the autonomy of the learner and the teacher, transforming their lives along in relation to the technologies chosen.

Technological optimism also empowers the solutionist agenda in our society which assumes we can solve our problems by applying mode-2 research and the techniques produced. Mode-2 research arises from a problem derived from an extra-academic context, such as K-12 teaching or corporate education (Gibbons et al. 1994; Nowotny et al. 2001). For instance, a primary school teacher might need a solution to a problem in her classroom such as overactive children. They have looked online and found that seats allowing more movement such as rocking or swaying; which seems to be a traditional solution; only to find the research has certified this solution and these solutions are now not only acceptable, but commodified and purchasable. The research started with a classroom problem but eventually progressed into a marketable solution. The research formerly applicable to the problems are defined externally to the research. For every "problem," the optimism suggests there is a technological solution. After one has a solution, a new research program develops around its applicability, trying to generate more applications for the solution. These solutions then become frames reifying the optimism by being a good reason to trust in the possibility of technology. This self-reinforcement of solutions and optimism complicit in the idea of technological progress will appear to solve and not create problems. Technology's introduction will not necessarily solve problems, but in fact, it might reify problems or create new ones. The technology as solution will at least enjoin a market for itself, if possible, and then likely expand into other markets. The challenge is to realize the addition or removal of technology causing or resolving the problem is not the actual narrative of the problem, but a solution looking for a problem. The cultural, social, and political systems of people and things around the technology working to change things need to realize the origin of the problem, its narratives, and its trajectories in order to engage the real possibilities for resolution in a democratic instead of authoritarian manner.

Those who reflect on technology know, as well as providing solutions, technology generates problems, but not only concerning research but also in relation to our mental/social/environmental ecologies (Guattari 2000). The problems generated vary in scale and relations; frequently the extent of the problem cannot be discerned without exposure over time. Technological problems rarely simplify over time;

much like the screen time debate today, the effects and relations between people and technologies will change over time. In that change, we are better off preparing our students for our future culture than for a regression to authoritarian forms.

## Shock of the New

Newness is a challenge of all technologies. The shock of the new is a social-aesthetic shock not unlike the experience of the sublime which happens when one is confronted with a novel construct in the world. Novelty is striking and opens a new set of possibilities or perhaps resolves some significant problem/s. The shock of the new requires some reframing of your relations.

The situatedness of newness is its primary problems both individually and culturally. What is new to one audience might not be new to others. Elements of any technology may be entirely new to any number of audiences. For instance, remember the first time you used a ball-peen hammer to harden the metal. Most people don't have a memory of using a ball-peen like that, but upon knowing what the affordances of the hammer and metal were, they could imagine the possibility and perhaps even be quite surprised about it. The shock of new knowledge is not the shock of the new as brought about by technology's novelty but it is the shock of knowing much like knowing there is a mobile phone designed to fit a market who might transport it inside of a bodily orifice. Similarly, that any number of devices which arise each year in consumer electronics might meet some need some people didn't even realize existed can be shocking, but the shock of the new comes when there is a drastic change in design or capacity, and those changes require changes of the human condition. Concerning education, this has taken many forms perhaps most interestingly as the one laptop per child computer with its limited success. The shock of the device isn't the challenge there; it was the audacity of the technological determinism implied in asserting providing access to technology would transform the world. It attempted to use technology to determine how humanity's world would be, and in doing that, it forgot many important lessons about technology. The foremost is that humans over/under/determine technology in our meaningmaking and sensemaking. The second is that technology is a form of culture much as culture is a form of technology, and both take time to change even if the face of the shock of the new. A laptop like any technology sites itself in ecological relation to us and our cultural timeframes. It will be only what we eventually imagine it to do/be and then use it to do/be. Much like the mobile phone is frequently not used as a telephone at all, the cultural practices of technology define its relations and realities. By focusing our technology on humanity's problems and democracy, we will be able to enable more of us to improve the world in a human time frame instead of the timeframe of a ideologically separated technology.

People can be shocked by ideologies of technologies; people are now shocked at increasingly rarified forms of technology reappearing and reassociating with elements of society, culture, or politics. Technological fashions and meanings can surprise people when they learn about them and their meanings. As capitalism

expands to occupy every cultural niche, fashion is now being appropriated and reconstructed in relation to technologies. The flip phone reappears as an option for some people. Its reappearance is a form of technological nostalgia, but it is also the shock of the new reverberating back through those nostalgias. The eternal return of old technologies and the remediations of old media are significant in that they remind us about humanity's desire for ecological connection not merely to our own time but to prior times and modes of being (Bateson 1979; Bolter and Grusin 2000; Guattari 2000). Technologies as cultural participants provide contexts for more than themselves though, as artifacts they remediate many different messages and temporal milieus differently to different audiences. Sometimes this mediation is simple, but sometimes it comes with significant ideological baggage, usually around power, oppression, and anti-democratic sentiment. It is not unsurprising that the old technologies that are frequently brought about anew are technologies that once served elements of elite cultures. As such the nostalgia industry around technologies is reproducing more than technologies, they are frequently producing deeply problematic symbols of elitism and exclusion, which cause shock anew.

The ideologies around newness of technology almost always entail technological deterministic implications. Almost all recent technology promises some social or individual effect which may or may not be real in the world. Established functionality, like a phone, does provide the ability to call other people should all the necessary systems and infrastructures be present, so technology does allow some things to happen; occasionally technology does cause things to happen, and more commonly technology seduces us into performing certain ways in relation to it (Baudrillard 1991, 1996).

We need to take care of becoming complicit in the marketing of the new, the marketing of the shock and the marketing of the solution, and thus, we might be more prepared to resist the seduction of technologies surrounds us Claims about new and transformational technologies should doubly be suspected as possibly elements of bureaucratic or other authoritarian tendencies unless someone significantly desires or needs the transformational or revolutionary change it promised. However, most technological changes are not necessarily immediately transformational and immediately visible. Technologies like mobile phones and the Sony Walkman radically changed the way the world worked over time, and technologies built upon those kept changing our world. These changes are not simply causal, but ecological and integrate throughout our lives, which is why we need to take care in our technological choices to avoid increasing the authoritarian experiences they could imply.

## Openness, Closedness, and Hiddenness

Massive technological trends tend to have effects throughout the world in which we live. They have effects on/through nature, society, and our minds in part because they participate in or are part of each of those things ecologically. For instance, recycling is centered around several technologies. Most important to recycling is the ways in which it balances the openness and publicness of the act with the private or

closedness of the act in one's neighborhood, which is then balanced against the hiddenness of what happens infrastructurally once the recycling gets to the sorting plant and after (Star 1999, 2002). The way we structure access to knowledge about recycling is directly parallel to how we manage knowledge about it and about other technologies. Experts have the most in-depth understanding of their elements of the technology, but frequently, they only know an aspect, a perspective, or an overview of the whole of the complex socio-technical system (Bijker et al. 1989). The 'management' of knowledge is increasingly about the creation of "talented" experts in relation to technology and then the relations of both to the public and increasingly to a securitized state or other authoritarian bureaucracy. Knowledge though is communal and need not be constrained by those relations, indeed it might be democratically liberated/liberating in relation to those systems.

Much like in schools, individual experts know various aspects of how a school operates, janitors know aspects, mechanical room people know others, principals know others, students know others, and teachers know others still. The school itself and the education inside of it are technologies, and they are surrounded with open and transparent systems, closed systems, and hidden systems. The curricula that have been explored over the years exemplify this open, closed, or hiddenness: the explicit, the societal, the hidden, the null, the mediated, and other curricula. As technological systems stand in relation to other systems, curricula emphasize certain aspects of knowledge, technologies, and ecologies and hide others. To this end, curricula function is much like other paratexts, highlighting and emphasizing information which may be advantageous from individual perspectives, reifying class differences, and promoting forms of knowledge, technologies, and rationalities. As Utah Phillips says, they install the bells and levers of social control (Phillips 1993). Experts open, close, and hide technologies for a myriad of reasons. Sometimes it is as simple as hiding the sewage system because it makes people ill or feel uncomfortable. Experts blackbox other knowledges or technologies because the company, school, or profession wants to maintain the knowledge and profit in extreme ways (Illich1977). There is always a question in educational environments as to how much we should let our students know about various technologies. Inarguably some of them probably understand more about specific technologies than their professors. Ask any young person about their favorite video game or other media, and you will probably generate a level of expertise that is challenging to comprehend, even though inarguably once we were much like them and perhaps still are, but on different topics.

Technology and techniques more specifically tend to be open or hidden. In other words, it is either sensible/explorable/interpretable or hidden/blackboxed/unknowable. The boundaries of these categories vary along class and expertise, but generally, they are true. Most people cannot know how a nuclear reactor works in practice, nor should they according to some security bureaucracies. Similarly, most people probably should have an adequate understanding of how their toilet works. Similarly, they probably don't understand how their personal computer works, but they have an idea about how the mail system works. Openness tends to support transparency of knowledge and the capacity to explore the technology; it actively seeks to

remove barriers to understanding operation of the technology. Closedness tries to keep things secret and hidden. Both are power plays. They are deep cultural politics which contrives to shape the knowledge and thus the operation of the culture itself. In education, we can see these literacies being transformed into assumptions of literacy across the spectrum of technology. Of course, the assumption of literacy is often proven false as the assumed literacy toward the technology is dependent on cultural reproduction already in place, which is again dependent on economic, social, political, cultural, educational, and aesthetic systems performing as expected. That expectation is highly normalized, which is deeply problematic because frequently it is disguising significant abnormalities in its generalizations. We shouldn't assume literacies unless they are adequately demonstrated, and even then, we should expect there will be cases where the illiteracy grossly outnumbers the assumed literacy.

Specifically technological literacies are deeply problematic; most people think they know how to be "safe" in online environments or using automobiles; they are assumedly literate in those technologies. They think that they have the basic knowledges to do these things and have basic training to manage instances, but time and again, it is easy to see people trying to treat their small car like a full trimmed out NASCAR car by tailgating when driving or when on the internet giving away information without first verifying anything about the website or the intended use of the information. That we have insurance for Internet-based fraud/identity theft alongside the necessary insurance for the automobile should indicate that the safety of the system requires a good bit more consideration. It is common enough for people to assume they are safe though, and there is much research on trust online and trust in technology giving us a basis of understanding. People prefer to feel safe, and they prefer to believe they are safe, even in the face of contrary evidence. There is a good deal of capitalist innovation around the assumed literacy of Internet and automobile safety. Safety is marketable as is trustworthiness. If we can get people to believe overcrowded and undermaintained highways are safe by selling them more expensive cars with added safety features, then surely, we can do the same for the information superhighway. We can hide the knowledge of the dangers in a veil of trust and trusting behaviors.

Confronting this tendency to trust and believe in our relative safety is exceptionally problematic. The current culture of denying realities such as climate change, vaccines, growing antibiotic resistance, and future/current warfare involves actively resisting knowledge of our ecological situation. It isn't like we haven't almost had several world-ending disasters from nuclear armageddon to genetic modification of plants to new super-diseases. Each of these is related to our culture of trust, which is like the culture of trust in education. Yes, we have had our legitimation crises with technology and education (Habermas 1975), but this crisis doesn't seem to be as profoundly skeptical today as it was in the height of the late 1970s and 1980s with cold war culture and the existential threat of imminent death. The threats and skepticism driving the legitimation crisis are just as real today, but today most people have deep trust in technology, hoping everything will work out for the best. The extent of the trust that humanity has in the ecologies in which they live,

including technological and natural, isn't necessarily warranted. And worse, the trust in technology is misplaced because mostly the trust should be put in other humans who are the people developing and implementing the technologies. The worst part is we actively hide our knowledge from each other instead of being transparent. We do this in school, where our curriculum actively and passively hides knowledge, and we've learned to do it in our everyday lives. We have learned the anti-democratic tendencies to trust the technologies more than then democratic necessity of trusting each other.

## Creepiness

While immanent death or even reasonably short-term death is still a genuine possibility according to the people running the doomsday clock; we don't frequently face our discontinued existence as outcomes in most formal education. Culturally, in education and elsewhere, death and the technologies around it are hidden We also tend to hide the dominant functions of our society in other ways such as the veil of trust or claims of democracy, even when trust and democracy aren't present. Many people tend to learn in many current school systems respect for or at least an understanding of bureaucratic and authoritarian systems. Much of education is bureaucratic and authoritarian; and other than occasionally in my classrooms, I rarely experienced much democracy in education. Most people in democracies experience little democracy in their day-to-day life either. Most of their economic activity is not democratic; which is something to consider when you think of the famous Bowling Alone thesis; as frequently clubs and social organizations in democracies are democratic (Putnam 2001). With the demise of social clubs in the western world, the practice of democracy has withered in the face of the corporate authoritarian bureaucracies which tend to organize our lives for us. Without democracy in our technologies, educational system, or in day to day life, our activity is programmed by others frequently from within bureaucratically authoritarian practices.

The bureaucratic authoritarianism of our everyday exists in education within the construction of choice for student's technology use. There is a phenomenon, widely known, called the creepy treehouse (Stein 2008). The creepy treehouse is when an instructor or educational institution chooses a technology for classroom use, determines the way it is to be used, and creates a "creepy treehouse" for the students to experience by doing so. Creepy treehouses are generally thought to be innovative and exciting by the educator or educational institution supporting them but are technologies and systems our students tend to avoid. Students are forced into technology choices they would not necessarily pursue.

Technology choice and the compulsion that our instruction causes may cause some uncomfortable situations for our students and colleagues. Learning occurs in multiple ways in every interaction whether they are social or technological. Instructors are providing technological instruction, either in or through technology, and are enforcing power relations when they require students to use technologies. These

power relationships are based not only on their expertise and wisdom but also in their trajectories and preferences. This phenomenon and the "best practices" generated from teacher and bureaucratic enthusiasms should be intensely questioned in favor of examining the practices of students and building the lessons from their perspective. By respecting the autonomy and knowledge of our students, we are preparing them for respecting others, and that is foundational to functional democracies.

We should resist the tendency to build a creepy treehouse; and the tendency to recruit students to our way of thinking and experiencing technology. If we are trying to "lure" students into the technology we enjoy and prefer through enforcement or reward, especially if it is institutionally endorsed, we are going to do little for the students in most respects. We are undermining their relations with technology, its cultural relations and ecological situation by making the students warier of learning arenas centered on that technology. We discourage them from learning on their chosen platforms and discourage them differently with our creepy treehouse. The problem with the institutionally endorsed creepy treehouse is that the institutional regimes are fictions nonexistent outside of the specific institutional milieu. Most of the students life is spent in relation to these fictions and their institutional realities. As students leave the context of their institutional milieu, the contextual learning found in these environments will lose its contexts and elements of it fade. Thus if we want them to learn, experience, and embrace democratic technologies we have to allow them to bring them to us, and perhaps help them develop them anew.

We always see the fading away of learning around technologies as those technologies become either part of everyday life, become otherwise domesticized, or become hidden as in the case of most infrastructural technologies. Very few people study the refrigerator anymore, though it transformed the world (Hunsinger 2005). Even so, the relation between contextual learning and technologies is increasingly important, because we can see some types of skills seem to be transferable. For instance, some players of online racing games have become real racing drivers, and while it is a rarified category of learning, there are undoubtedly other skills moving across contexts, but some do not. In that there are democratic skills that students can learn from some technologies and technological cultures, they should be encouraged to engage in them, and to become familiar with them, just as they should be made aware of the authoritarian constructions in which they actually exist.

## Replication and Reproduction

In regard to contexts, there is a trend in educational/institutional technology related to creepy treehouses, trust, and assumed safety. Frequently when presented with recent technology, such as the WWW or a Virtual World, and confronting the possibilities in our world, educators and educational institutions will pursue the strategy of replicating the affordances of their current institution in the recent technology. On the WWW, we have online classrooms which seek to mimic the affordances of real classrooms, when the web allows you to do completely different things; similarly, in virtual worlds, they build classrooms in a world in which

students could become bumblebees and fly around. In worlds of nearly limitless possibilities, the institutions constructed their most limiting structures and then asked students to go into those worlds and enact their existence in the classrooms. Granted not all educators did this, nor did all educational institutions, but enough that it was the norm. We should begin to recognize the imperative to let the students guide us to the technologies appropriate to them and their appropriate uses. If not the students, then let possible experience be a guide to recent technologies, because the replication of the classroom in every possible environment is not going to win students over into those environments, nor is it going to make the contextual learning of those environments valued. Technologies have affordances, all are real, all are cultural, some are imagined, and some can transform learning when they are tied to other knowledges.

Education is not solely at fault for replication and the reproduction of problems with technology; science reproduces scientific meetings and presentations in whatever environment it finds, and businesses build conference rooms in whatever environment they have. The tendency to reproduce culture and cultural institutions is something of a trap when we know our cultural institutions all have problems and crises of legitimation surrounding their prior forms. It is the exact same trap of reproduction in which we reproduce bureaucracy and authoritarianism where-ever we go online and elsewhere.

The trap of reproduction is one thing our institutions do by reproducing conventional classrooms in all environments. Even massive online open courses (MOOCs) are performing this reproduction, though most are automating elements of the instruction. Automation is a significant driver of wealth creation in our neoliberal economies. Proposals are already being floated among capitalist opportunists to automate teaching, removing the teacher from the classroom and replacing them with technologies, be it artificial intelligence or merely scriptable systems of knowledge presentation. If the goal is to produce the perfect subject for bureaucratic authoritarianism, this is likely going to be the direction for corporations to pursue. We can reproduce the conditions of bureaucratic authoritarianism almost perfectly in online environments, and we can train people to respond appropriately to them (appropriately in this case would be open rebellion).

To be clear, artificial intelligence teaching assistants already exist (Leopold 2017). They are bots answering questions, providing guidance, and directing students to other information and generally end up as highly rated or better than the human teaching assistants. These assistants are very much like the Siri or Alexa of the educational world; only they are customized for use in the classroom. They answer phone calls, they answer chats; they answer e-mail, and they provide comfort and assurance too. They also turn appropriate questions over to the professors for them to deal with issues the bot should not. These things exist, and their use will become more prevalent, especially as students are using their assistants already. Just say "Alexa, what does cognitive dissonance mean?" and if you have an Amazon Alexa, you will get the definitions and perhaps some cognitive dissonance.

Thinking through the implications of artificial intelligence-based instructors and augmented classrooms is challenging, but it is easy to see elements of this

will become pervasive. Perhaps the best part is it may allow teachers to have more time with their actual students, helping individually instead of generally, but more likely the factory model of education will follow the factory model of production, and teachers will be replaced with a variety of technologies. We undermine our institutions place-based brick-and-mortar constructions, so only the most elite of the elite institutions can maintain those relations. It isn't like these institutions aren't already changing either. The "progress" is happening; increasingly, school libraries are being undermined and understaffed or being transformed into variously identified non-libraries. Libraries are the core of the educational endeavor though; once reading has been established, libraries can take many students far beyond what the teachers or systems in the locality can teach them. Libraries legitimize themselves in this way, but we undermine them through our adoption of anti-library technology. Like most change in technologized institutions, the loss of libraries will have significant ongoing and unexpected effects. Some of the effects are obvious, slowed economic growth, lower levels of general and specific knowledge, increasing inequality, etc. But some of the impact we won't know for years, but indeed, they will transform the democratic potential of the regions and populations they serve.

As libraries go, so do universities, and when all but the most elite universities have gone, so will education for democracy. There is already significant corporate and capitalist push to make education primarily serve their interests. Universities and colleges have boards comprised of corporate interests, as do libraries. The corporate good is not always the public good, and in this case, I'd argue that elements of democracy are at stake. The march of corporate interests through the university and educational system started long ago, but as education is becoming more and more aligned with their interests in producing good subjects for bureaucratic authoritarianism, corporations are taking more of an interest in the transformation of education. The majority of this push centers through technologies and technological choices, which have become predominantly non-democratic for students and educational institutions. We should openly resist forcing our students to conform to interests that are not necessarily their own, such as using technologies they do not want to use, and we should work to democratically inform them about alternatives. It isn't merely providing our students more choices though, it is educating them about the authoritarianism implicit and explicit in the systems they use, so they can, should they desire, choose differently. In the end, the democratic hope is that we can teach them to resist bureaucratic authoritarianism in their everyday lives.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we should openly resist authoritarianism in all educational institutions even if it is easy, familiar, and frequently validated by our preferred technologies and cultures. Instead we should strive toward open, democratic education and integration of democratic technologies into education. It is in this way that we generate the hope for the possibility of a better world of future democracy.

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# Part VI

# Culture and Commodification

# Youth Consumption of Media and the Need for Critical Media Literacy in the Time of Liquid Modernity

## Everything Is Moving So Quickly

Danielle Ligocki

## Contents

**Abstract**

This chapter will seek to explicate the ways in which living in our current liquid modern time (Bauman 2011; Bauman Z, Liquid modernity. Polity Press, Cambridge, 2012) is having a direct impact on the lives of young people everywhere, specifically in regard to media consumption. Liquid modernity is a time of endless consumption and disposability, with no clear beginning or end, no solid bonds, no clear line between public and private lives, and a state of constant surveillance. These characteristics of liquid modernity intersect with media consumption in such a way that young people are unable to make sense of the ways in which media is influencing their own self-identity, as well as their views of others and the ways that they work to understand those who may be different than they are. Looking at the ways in which these two major forces combine, the need for critical media literacy in schools becomes clear.

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## Introduction

Society today moves at a breakneck pace. Information reaches the masses immediately, whether it is from friends, family, or the news. Long, leisurely conversations are scarce, especially if one is looking for that conversation to be uninterrupted by a screen or other form of media. The idea of surveillance is simply understood – most people no longer question cameras on every corner and in every hallway, just as we do not question the ways in which we surveil ourselves constantly and share every private thought for all to read. This current state of society has left us in an interesting position; on one hand, people are capable of doing, learning, and interacting, seemingly without boundaries or constraints. The world is deeply interconnected electronically, with remote collaboration easy and essentially limitless. This is exciting. On the other hand, as we are intertwined with this doing and learning and interacting, have solid, deep bonds fallen by the wayside? Has critical questioning become obsolete? Does the population think about all of the forms of media that they interact with on a daily basis?

These questions pose real issues for people everywhere, but I argue that the answers to these questions have even higher stakes for young people. We are living during a time where the young people in our lives and in our schools have never known a world without smartphones, endless television options, and self-surveillance. The rate at which young people interact with and consume media is astounding and shows no real sign of slowing down. Moreover, while we can and should celebrate the amazing things that young people can do with technology and different forms of media, we need to question critically the ways in which we are preparing young people for the endless forms of media that are at their fingertips. It is irresponsible to recognize the rate at which young people consume and interact with media, castigate them for their time spent with screens, but then do nothing to mediate the ways in which they work with different forms of media.

The level of consumption in regard to media and today's youth is astounding. Pew Research Center's most recent study on the habits of teens aged 13–17 indicates that 45% of teens describe their use of the Internet as "near constant," which is up from just 24% in 2014–2015 ("Teens, Social Media" 2018). Additionally, the 2015 study by Common Sense Media found that American teenagers (defined here as 13–18 years old) spend nearly 9 hours each day using media for entertainment, and these 9 hours do not include time spent with media for the purpose of school or homework (The Common Sense Census 2015). Clearly, media consumption is at an all-time high when it comes to young people. It is easy to see why, time spent with media keep increasing when there are an endless number of social media apps, websites, streaming video services, and communication platforms from which to choose.

Right now, we have the perfect storm of endless media consumption in a fast-paced, liquid modern world. Under these conditions, we run the risk of leaving young people unsupervised, uneducated, and uncritical in the ways that media influences their thinking and their worlds if we are not proactive about getting critical media literacy into more of our schools. While today's young people are media savvy and know how to navigate different forms of technology and interact with different sites, it is thoughtless of parents, educators, and researchers not to aid young people in the sense making and critical questioning of the different forms of media with which they spend their days.

## What Is Liquid Modernity?

Zygmunt Bauman, in a series of books and articles (2007, 2011a, 2012, 2017), spent the last decade of his life trying to explain clearly how he defines the concept of liquid modernity. During those years, Bauman argued that the time of postmodernity (or solid modernity) has passed and has taken on a more fluid, liquid form. Bauman explained that liquid modernity is characterized by a distinct set of characteristics that include the blurring of private and public lives; constant surveillance; a lack of solid bonds and feeling of community; a time of rampant consumption and disposability; and a deeply engrained culture of insensitivity. These conditions have taken our world in a direction that often feels like a minefield, according to Bauman; one knows that an explosion is about to happen, but it is not clear just when that bomb might go off. Even worse is that – in this minefield – everything is flowing so quickly that there is nothing to root us to where we are or who we are with.

The tenets of liquid modernity have created interesting for conditions for today's young people, many of which speak to the ways that they consume and interact with different forms of media. Take, for example, the constant surveillance and subsequent blurring of the lines between public and private lives. Because today's younger generations have grown up with a screen always nearby, the idea of constant surveillance now goes unquestioned; young people often surveil themselves, with constant updates on various social media sites or pictures and videos constantly uploaded to the most popular platform at the moment. It is as if the idea of a private life is no longer appealing, and instead, the new norm is broadcasting as many details as possible of what is supposed to be part of the private realm. Not only do has social media perpetuated this constant idea of self-surveillance, but it has also pushed the consumption of other people's lives to levels not seen before.

What is interesting about this oversharing of private lives, however, is that – even though we now have the ability to connect instantly to anyone, anywhere in the globe – there is a lack of solid bonds and community in this liquid modern time. While electronic friends might be in abundance, one true, trusted confidant is not the rule anymore. Instead, information that was once viewed as sacred, only to be shared with one special person, is now often broadcast online, for the entire world to view. Bauman labels this as a "confessional society" and defines it as follows:

> A heretofore unheard-of and inconceivable kind of society in which microphones were fixed inside the confessionals, those eponymical safeboxes and depositories of the most secret of secrets, the sort of secrets that would be divulged only to God or his earthly messengers were perched on public squares, places previously meant for the brandishing and thrashing out of the issues of common, shared interest, concern, and urgency. (Bauman 2012, p. 21)

This confessional society has not only aided in the blurring of private and public lives, but it has negated the need for young people to build deep, substantial relationships with others in real life. A trusted friend, or one place for deep, dark secrets simply, is not valued anymore – especially when one can pull up a screen and view the deep dark secrets of others.

The deep, dark secrets that one can pull up on a screen or read on a blog post are consumed at rates that push the amount of time spent with a screen above the amount of time spent at school or with family. Bauman addressed these habits of rampant consumption, and he made clear that this is an element of liquid modernity. Not only do we consume goods and materials at an astonishing rate, but as we consume them, they become disposable. In a liquid modern world, not only are goods and services disposable, but people have become disposable too. This is not a new phenomenon, as evidenced by the school to prison pipeline and the lack of mental health services throughout the United States, but I would argue that this disposability has reached new heights in the time of liquid modernity and that young people see this disposability in action in their schools, in the news, and in the media sources that they interact with, specifically reality television shows. In fact, these shows are not only a display of disposability but also an illustration of the confessional society mentioned earlier. Bauman addressed this phenomenon in 2007, when he wrote, "All these shows are public rehearsals of disposal: the disposability of humans and things" (2007, p. 123).

This level of disposability has supported a final tenet of liquid modernity, which is a pervasive display of insensitivity. Again, this has been seen in the rise of neoliberalism, a sort of "every man for himself mentality" that has pervaded all public and private spaces. However, when there are constant displays of people being labeled as disposable, insensitivity has become normalized and almost an acceptable way of being. Bauman mentioned in 2017 that society has become a race to leave others behind and that there seems to be no moral compass to help us deviate from that race. We push kids out of school, lack value in personal relationships, cheer as people are kicked off the island, laugh at others' misfortune, and look to blame any shortcomings on individuals, rather than on societal structures. This level of insensitivity is frightening, especially when everything is fluid and moving so quickly that we fail to dig our heels in and try to do the work necessary to counteract these sentiments.

What is startling about the ways in which liquid modernity has redefined society is that these tenets are seen so clearly in many of the media types with which teenagers and preteenagers spend their time. The characteristics of liquid modernity: the blurred lines between public and private lives, the constant surveillance, a complete lack of solid bonds or feeling of community, and the rampant consumption, disposability, and insensitivity are all on display on many apps, websites, and television shows. Social media sites have always been a hot bed of sharing personal

information that was once private while working to feverishly read and respond to what others have posted. Often, the comments that people leave on the posts of others are not always kind or thoughtful, with many taking a turn toward being nasty or insensitive. When not nasty or insensitive, responses to others' social media posts are often devoid of any meaning, with someone simply clicking a heart or thumbs up. People continue the rapid consumption of all things social media while still spending an inordinate amount of time with television and different streaming sites. These are often the worst perpetrators of disposability, as many reality television shows that are still so popular enact the disposability of people. Young people continue this cycle though, interacting at a breakneck pace with all forms of media while swimming in this fast-paced, liquid modern world, without deeply held bonds or a feeling of community and without questioning the constant surveillance or the ways in which they surveil themselves. Moreover, until anyone takes the time to explicate the ways in which their media consumption is affecting their lives and until someone offers them the chance to question, critique, and analyze their media sources, everything will keep on flowing, just as it has been.

## Media Consumption and Young People

The young people in today's P-20 schools are a group that has grown up with a screen in front of their faces since birth. There have always been instant pictures to check out, videos to play back, learning games to engage with, and an endless stream of games and shows labeled as educational, so that well-meaning parents could give them a leg up in the world. This incessant screen time has made them comfortable in a world where media saturates every part of their existence. Not only has the nature of society made them complacent with this media saturation, but it has also left them with an endless stream of media to interact with, and they are engaging with it, at staggering rates.

The Pew Research Center released a recent study in May of 2018 that took a detailed look at teens, social media, and technology. In this study, teens were defined as being aged 13–17. The habits of these young people have changed significantly, just in the past few years, and this study attributes that change to ownership of smart phones at younger and younger ages. A full 95% of those surveyed for this study remarked that they have access to a smart phone. While many of the statistics are enough to raise one's eyebrows, one of the most astonishing was that 45% of teenagers state that they are online "almost constantly." This could mean on social media, on other sites viewing videos or even watching shows, but the fact is that teenagers are constantly interacting with all forms of media, often in an unmediated, unquestioning way. They are constantly exposed to imagery and ideas that is not often as "real" as it purports to be, but they are often navigating this online world alone, without dialogue to help make sense of all that is out there.

In addition to the work of the Pew Research Center, Common Sense Media (2015) also looked at media usage in young people. They went beyond just looking at teenagers and looked at the media habits of "tweens" as well. This age group,

often defined as ages 8 to 12, is a group that is gaining earlier and earlier access to smartphones and other technology, so it is crucial that we are working to understand their viewing habits as well. Additionally, many of the children in this age group regularly interact with content that is meant for older viewers, again, without the guidance or time for discussion with anyone. With that in mind, Common Sense Media found that American teenagers – defined as those 13 to 18 years old – spend an average of approximately 9 h with media a day, strictly for entertainment purposes. These 9 h do not include any time spent with a screen for school or homework. Additionally, tweens – those aged 8 to 12 years old – spend about 6 h per day with different media sources. Again, these 6 h do not include any time spent plugged in for school or homework purposes. These numbers represent a huge portion of their waking hours and speak to the pervasive nature of media.

It should be clear from these statistics that the time that young people are spending with different forms of media is alarming. The rate at which media is consumed in an unmediated, unquestioned way is alarming, especially when many educators, researchers, and parents are not taking the time to understand how powerful of a pedagogue media is in the lives of young folks. In my most recent work with young people aged 12 to 14, it became clear how powerful a force media is in the lives of young people and how impactful it can be on their ways of thinking about themselves and others. Seven young people shared with me how girls are trying to be like the girls they see on television; how they tune in for the drama, as the drama is so much more exciting than their own lives; and how they sometimes get angry at certain forms of media, as they paint people in a light that is not always positive (Ligocki 2018). The conversations that we had were raw and honest, and I was struck by how deeply embedded different forms of media are in the lives of young people. I was also struck by how much more valuable this time spent with a screen could be, if only critical media literacy was a set of skills that these kids were being taught.

## The Necessity of Critical Media Literacy in Schools

Today's young people are interacting with media at an alarming rate. It has a constant place in their world, and it works as a major pedagogue in their lives. When young people are spending more hours out of their day interacting with some form of media than they are interacting at school or with their families, it should become clear that there is an educative aspect of media in play for young people. Educators should understand what Ernest Morrell was saying when he wrote, "media are, for today's youth, their primary cultural influence, surpassing the family and the school" (2008, p. 156). With this in mind, educators, parents, and researchers should be thinking about the ways in which they can assist young people in understanding and making sense of the media with which they interact. Unfortunately, even with all of the curricular reforms that have taken place in US schools, implementing critical media literacy has not been one of them.

In places such as Great Britain, Australia, and Canada (Kellner and Share 2007), the need for critical media literacy has become clear, and steps have been taken to ensure that young people are gaining not only the technical and literacy skills necessary to make sense of different forms of media, but they are also gaining an education in the types of critical thinking skills necessary for being an informed consumer of media. But what does this mean? Why should we be concerned with adding another area to the already overburdened workloads of schools and teachers? What is critical media literacy and why is it worth advocating for in schools?

Critical media literacy needs to go well beyond a basic exposure to media alongside some neutral discussions. It also needs to surpass the time and space offered to young people to create new media. And while it may be tempting to make media the enemy and blame nonobjective news sites or trashy television shows as the reasons for all of the problems that society now has, that approach does nothing to ensure that young people gain the set of tools that they need to truly interact on a deeper level with all forms of text and media. This deeper approach to working with media needs to happen through critical media literacy, which Douglas Kellner and Jeff Share (2007) defined as an approach to teaching literacy that "focuses on ideology critique and analyzing the politics of representation of crucial dimensions of gender, race, class, and sexuality; incorporating alternative media production; and expanding textual analysis to include issues of social context, control, resistance, and pleasure" (2007, p. 62). As Kellner's definition articulates, what all of the approaches to simple media literacy often miss is an element of power, questioning, and critical analysis. We must critically question all of the various texts that we interact with if we are to begin to understand the power that is inherent in media.

Interestingly, this element of power is not new when discussing media. In the early 1900s, Antonio Gramsci realized the power that cultural hegemony holds. Ernest Morrell explained Gramsci's work when he wrote, "media were powerful instruments of knowledge production that would be used by the powerful in society to configure social thought" (Morrell 2008, p. 157). Even without the in-your-face media that now proliferates the world, Gramsci realized that the dominant held great power and that it would become imperative for society to become critical consumers of the dominant culture while also working to become producers of culture for those who do not have the power and access that others do. From Gramsci's work came the wonderful work in critical media pedagogy of Kellner, Henry Giroux, George Lipsitz, and Peter McLaren. These scholars continued the idea that we must learn how to counter the hegemony in media and texts of all forms and acquire the language and skills to pick apart the narratives in a way that we can question and critique what is really being said.

This is where critical media literacy goes beyond the approaches to media literacy that are found sometimes in schools or after school programs. If educators are going to ensure that an educated citizenry develops, one that can participate in democracy and be well versed in the ways that media works to influence lives, there must be a starting place of understanding and an ever-present need to question. Educators must ensure that all students get the chance to learn these skills and understand the ways in which media mediates their understanding of the world. In today's media-saturated

world, this should seem like an obvious – if not imperative – skill for all youth not only to be exposed to but also to become quite proficient at. Unfortunately, unlike scholars and educators in places such as Canada, Great Britain, and Australia, the United States views critical media literacy as something that is seen as optional, at best and, unnecessary, at worst (Kellner and Share 2007).

Considering the capacity that media has to present images and meaning to youth and, thus, to understand their world, educators must rise to the challenge of helping students understand the multicultural society that they now inhabit. Because so much of what is presented to students is either what they choose to see or what the mainstream media allows them to see, it is imperative that educators help young people become sensitized to topics that are not brought to light in the classroom, including social inequities and injustices. Critical media literacy that acknowledges media texts of all types that students are engaging with needs to be included in the formal school curriculum. Without some guidance and dialogue, the relationship that youth and media share will be one of stereotypes and discriminatory views based on gender, race, class, and sexuality. As educators work to help students manage all of this, however, it is important not to view students as being passive in this process. Children need to become active in the meaning-making process, and as Beverly Daniel Tatum reminds us, "children need to be able to recognize distorted representations, they also need to know what can be done about them" (1997, p. 49). By exposing both youth and adults to critical media literacy, they can be allowed the opportunity to explore ideas that are not otherwise discussed with them; to work with these messages and experiment with what they mean to them and how these hegemonic and stereotypical images and messages affect their own identities and thoughts. These moments of exploration and understanding can prove very powerful in the lives of youth and allow them the freedom and agency to decide how media will affect their lives in the future.

The effect that media has on young people needs to be examined and critiqued, and that is what critical media literacy strives to do. Kellner explains that by working to teach critical media literacy in our schools, we can work toward the goal of truly critiquing mainstream media and examine the ideology, power, and domination that are in play in all forms of media that young people are interacting with on a daily basis. This examination of media and technology can then allow students to gain a greater understanding of both the reality that they are experiencing and the social realities of the world around them. In this way, not only are students working to understand the ways in which they receive media and make meaning of it, but they are also becoming active members in a society that needs to challenge the dominant discourse and the messages disseminated to the public. While this has always been true, in the age of "fake news" that is dominating every headline and a never-ending list of new social media apps or reality television shows to choose from, it becomes even clearer that examining ideology, power, and domination is an imperative. Talking about it simply is not enough.

Additionally, by helping students gain literacy skills that address the ways in which they receive information, not only can youth then deal with changing cultural views and values, but they can also work toward a greater sense of democracy, as

more and more people will be able to take an active role in the world and the ways in which it is now structured, defined, and presented. Kellner explains:

> In the 21st century, critical media literacy is an imperative for participatory democracy because new information communication technologies and a market-based media culture have fragmented, connected, converged, diversified, homogenized, flattened, broadened, and reshaped the world. (Kellner and Share 2007, p. 59)

Kellner suggests that educators capitalize on how media savvy young people are and take advantage of how accessible technologies of communication are to today's youth. By working with youth collaboratively, educators can promote discussion of topics such as democracy, politics, the spectacle that is the media, and social issues that are pertinent to their worlds. In this way, critical media literacy acts as a way to not only arm young people to interact critically with a variety of texts but also to interact critically with the world around them, which can promote a sense of "radical democracy." Kellner and Share's idea of radical democracy is an important one, as it "depends on individuals caring about each other, involved in social issues, and working together to build a more egalitarian less oppressive society" (2007, p. 65). This is an admirable goal and one that educators can work toward if we help youth learn how to better critically analyze media. This is also a worthy goal, given the state of society in liquid modern times and the extremely high rates at which media is consumed.

## Conclusion

Living in a time that Zygmunt Bauman labels as liquid modern should force educators, researchers, and parents to examine the rate at which the world is constantly flowing and moving and what this means for young people. In liquid modernity, this rapid movement is characterized by a lack of solid bonds, no line between public and private lives, increased disposability of both people and things, and a rampant neoliberalism that has taken the idea of "every man for himself" and pushed that to the forefront. All of these characteristics of liquid modernity parallel the changes in different forms of media and amplify the potential effects that these forms of media have on all consumers but especially young people.

With that in mind, the need for critical media literacy has never been higher. While the United States has worked to make students "college and career ready," they are simply not keeping pace with other countries that have noticed the need for critical media literacy and worked to make curricular materials available that will support those needs. Young people deserve a chance to develop the skills necessary to make sense of the plethora of media that they interact with for hours a day, every day. Critical questioning and thinking, working to understand who has power and voice and who does not, and gaining a deep understanding of the different ways that media act as a pedagogue are all imperative skills that young people deserve to develop, especially given the number of hours each day that they spend with media.

Our liquid modern world moves far too quickly in a disconnected, disjointed way. It is up to educators and researchers to support young people during this time and work to help them gain a far greater understanding of their media-saturated world.

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# The Merchandizing of Identity

## The Cultural Politics of Representation in the "I am Canadian" Beer Campaign

**31**

Peter Pericles Trifonas

## Contents

### Abstract

The media and marketing machinery continually spins out an excess of products and services to increasingly ad-swamped consumers looking for social emancipation, a sense of identity, and meaning in life through the acquisition of goods and services. The "I am Canadian" beer campaign broke the mold of sex-based beer advertising. Successful advertising for alcoholic beverages that doesn't appeal to sexuality offers consumers images and jingles that become signposts of an individual's history by equating alcohol consumption with life's great moments. The brand, the badge, and the label personalize a beer. The "I am Canadian" campaign proved to be a very successful campaign even though it didn't opt for the usual "sex sells" marketing approach so common in the advertising of alcoholic beverages. The commercials gave an amusing take on "Canuck" patriotism and played off ethnic stereotypes to nationalize a brand and acculturate good taste using the cultural politics of identity and difference.

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> . . . the ads of our time are the richest and most faithful reflections that any society ever made of its entire range of activities. (Marshall McLuhan)

## Media, Marketing, and Consumer Identity

Life during the new millennium means consuming an enormous daily diet of marketing fanfare. The media affect our personal choices and decisions every minute of each waking hour. Every day, each person is actively and passively exposed to thousands of images that show and tell the standards, dimensions, and limits of who they are or should be as citizens of a capitalist democracy. The media and marketing machinery continually spins out an excess of products and services to increasingly ad-swamped consumers looking for social emancipation, a sense of identity, and meaning in life through the acquisition of goods and services. On average, we are exposed to a dizzying 3600 ads each and every day, 21,000 a week, and 1,090,000 a year! It's not surprising that Joe and Jane public are at least attempting to put up mental screens to find a break from it all in an attempt to realize selfhood beyond material culture. In fact, research into changing market demographics is showing that not all advertising these days is achieving the consumer attention hoped for by multinational media corporations. (Foot 1996) Consumer rights advocates such as *Adbusters* and the "culture jammers" movement show that resistance is there and growing among a credit-leveraged buying public. Yet, simply based on the enormous amount of exposure, some messages do, however, manage to get through to us and affect the real dimensions of our identity and being.

Advertisers have tried to stay one step ahead of the trend toward greater consumer education and critical awareness of marketing ploys or persuasion techniques. Whether we want them to or not! The dimensions of consumer desire are continually redesigned and pictured on the glamorized covers of popular magazines, on roadside billboards, hyper-sensationalized on the front pages of well-thumbed tabloids in supermarket checkout lines, embossed on key chains, and raised to a surreal cult-like status through the nonstop media of television, film, the Internet, and radio. Celebrities, "real people," and sports personalities deliver sound bytes, jingles, and video clips to tell us who we should be as consumer citizens of a globalized neoliberal capitalist democracy. Images of desire that define the symbolic economy of our empirical identity are encoded in the "clipstream" of web page banner ads, chiselled on coffee mugs, stapled on ads covering telephone poles, tacked up on bulletin boards, and delivered through flyers, product catalogues, notepads, labels, logos, stickers, dolls, baseball caps, T-shirts, bottle openers, watches, necklaces, candies, and coupons. As the forces of media and the proliferation of new technologies rapidly shrink-wrap the universe in a silicon layer of bits and bytes, the new age

of e-marketing is constituted by electronic infomercials, junk mail, and disembodied monologue of message postings. The discourse of consumer being-in-action "buzzes" its way around the world online in the representational form of digital simulations that promotes user engagement for fun and profit. Virtual news groups announce products, mega-viral "SPAM" marketing email campaigns ask us to buy these products, and then blogs and chat rooms spring up to discuss the effects of these products on our lives. The real and imagined spaces of public and private life are invaded by images and discourse telling us who we are, who would should or could be, and what we should want.

Marketing creates needs and desires in us where there previously were none. These desires are magnified and cultivated as passions by us as people and acted upon by us as consumers who buy and store merchandize. We accumulate possessions in the name of democracy as a residual sociopolitical effect of unmitigating class consciousness and the need for economic self-actualization. Like it or not, this fact distinguishes us as a human species and makes sense of our willingness to labor to acquire the accoutrements of a "better life" and privileged social identity based in the material conditions of our existence. From the drudgery of work to the leisure of games, sports, and entertainment, from the glamour of fashion to the lure of television, music, and film, the cultivation of consumerism as a passion and pleasure is what drives the course of human labor. There is not a facet of human existence that is not concerned with finding satisfaction and pleasure in our relationships among the world of things in relation to each other. Do we possess what everyone else wants too? If so, the material aspects of our existence are determined by demand, and the price for what we all want to have goes up. You gotta love how capitalism works!

The media and marketing machinery produces cultural products that are tendered for sale publicly to consumers wanting the exchange value of their cultural capital for purpose of securing a social status by cashing in on the historical materialism of goods and services that defines and dictates what our choices are or should be in relation to the products and services that are made available to us for consumption. Our capacity to realize an ideal state of "marketed being" enacted via the performative dimensions of consumer identity as *homo economicus* depends on our accepting a vision of reality already processed through the polished lens of the commercial media and their well-oiled marketing machinery. More often than not, the sources of influence upon our personal and social behaviors that are rooted in media and marketing – including the realization of our dreams and desires – go unquestioned. We generally accept the values and norms represented in the media, for what they are: "paid for" advertisements. We then move on to what in marketing messages is meaningful for us at the personal level by asking, "Will this product or service increase my happiness?; Will it improve the quality of my life?"

The answer determines our tastes and patterns our consumer habits. The value of a thing or practice, an object or a service, we may choose to buy or consume is subjective and not as universal as advertisers and marketers would like us to believe. We don't all have the same needs, desires, and expectations. Happiness does not exist "out there" in the consumer stratosphere of marketplace production just waiting to be found on a store shelf. It is not an ideal independent from any particular points

of view or life situations. The meaning of reality is bound to social contexts and personal beliefs. We place value on the things we like, when we want to buy them. But not everyone likes the same things. There are as many tastes as there are people and communities – a fact we often choose to forget. At some point or other in our consumer lives, we have all asked ourselves the question, "Do I really *need* or *want* this?" It is the job of marketers to make you *think* you *want* it and *need* it! This is the categorical imperative of marketing: to level the differences in taste among us for the biggest share of a posited "demographic." Appealing to standards of judgment and taste loosen the purse strings of our heart that are always with us. Thanks to the imaginary rendering of life, history, society, and culture constructed by multinational media and marketing machines, the examples to be emulated and desired constantly lurk as the shadows of a consumer reality somewhere in the back of our minds. The apparatus of advertising is at work when the meaning of our tastes, wants, and desires become fixed through a public display of our own merchandise selections as the material conditions of our existence are universalized and duplicated around the world by media representations and marketing campaigns urging consumption of the same things. Popularity is the mark of success as much as rarefaction is a sign of distinction. Sameness validates our particular version of the consumer reality all around us and defines our identity in the matrix of media representations. The desirability of a good or service must be made to seem objective and uncontrived for the sake of making it believable to a mass audience who will take it personally and possibly make it a part of their own consumer identity. An idyllic image of material reality presented as a dreamworld without the usual complications of questioning our choices is designed to give us pleasure and make us happy in the moment. The media resist the fragmentation and plurality of cultural memory by allowing us to take for granted the contradictions between all of the mixed messages happening around us in everyday life, asking us instead to buy into an idealized reality – not what life *is* or who we *are* but what life *could* be or who we *should* be!

## Selling Beer: Sexual Politics and Effacing Differences

In the media dreamworld of marketing, the meaning of life is made easy if you buy the right product. No matter what form the content and the messages take through memorable images and clever sales pitches, marketing is more and more often disguised as "important information," that is, the necessary knowledge required by consumers to educate themselves about a product before making a purchase. The advertising media cashes in on the "good faith" of shoppers with discriminating attitudes about the desirability of goods and services. When appeals to information falter, the focus of marketing then turns to "stirring up" the consumer emotions. No need to awaken the rational and critical side of our capitalistic consciousness that wants to acquire everything. In alcohol advertisements, the lure of the libido always wins over sober common sense. A beer that tastes like any other beer and is essentially indistinguishable from other brands as an alcoholic beverage needs only a couple of almost-naked women and killer biceps to help it become a smashing

success and constructs a consumer. Playing on the human preoccupation with getting "downright and dirty" seems to be the key to creating riveting and informative advertising for drinkers of both sexes. In beer commercials, differences are effaced, and consumer identity is "demystified" for painless consumption by linking alcohol to the promise of sexuality.

What does the depiction of sexual politics have to do with beer? Everyone knows that the free-flow of alcohol enhances the libidinal buzz of healthy males and females (although it sometimes also inhibits performance). It is hard to imagine an adult party or get together without some form of "spirited" beverage acting as a lubricant for social interaction between the sexes. In Western culture, consuming alcohol has become almost second nature for adults wanting to let go of inhibitions, help romance along, and generally have an all-round "good time." So, marketing tends to exploit the theme of sexual politics in liquor advertisements for profit at the expense of good taste. No doubt about it. Some ads are more tasteful than others. A recent beer advertisement depicted animals, rhinos and giant tortoises, having sex. The tag line was "Research says sex sells beer." So, why the subliminal hard sell? Beer is marketed to adults anyway.

The lure of sexuality is just the right tonic for sparking brand memory. Not many consumers will find a commercial of a man with a beer belly lying prostrate on the couch, washing down the last dregs of a *Corona Light,* while channel surfing and looking bored, a particularly desirable image. Now put beside him a shapely woman salivating over his sweating bottle and you've just given male viewers' a consumer identity and a motivating reason to buy the brand. *Corona Light* = sex. It doesn't matter that the vision is essentially unrealistic or presents an incongruous presupposition linking the desires of the "couch potato" and the vivacious woman. The more controversial the premise, the more sexual the image, the more likely it will be memorable and take root somewhere in the consumer's imagination in association with the brand as a fantasy dreamscape. Advertisers want full shock value by forcing us to look at what it is they are selling in a positive way as it relates to our fantasies, and perhaps, this will motivate an unconscious impulse in us to buy the product brand or not. The *Bud Light* beer we have just decided to try has no relation, or so we think, to the commercial we viewed seven times during the first 90 min it was aired on during the *Super Bowl* telecast*,* the "Granddaddy" of all marketing bonanzas, for a cost of $2 million per 30 s spot. Standing in line at a NASCAR race, waiting to acquire an "adult beverage," and wondering what brand label to try? The catchy jingle and comic relief of the *Bud Light* advertisement comes to mind, reminding us that it "tastes great" but is "less filling." After all, we just saw the logo speeding around the track 30 times at 100 miles an hour on the hood of a racing car. In scanning the selection of brand names placed confidently on the walls behind the servers, we recall the images of laughing faces, the "Bud Light Girls," or the handsome sports heroes telling tall tales while basking in the glow of buxom beauties and neon signs tracing out the *Bud Light* label. Beer advertisements are emotionally provocative and often rely on male heterosexual fantasy stereotypes. If you drink beer and you are a man, you will miraculously be surrounded by bikini-clad beauties of all shapes and sizes, hanging breathlessly on your every word. Some

ads play on the female sexual imagination. All a woman need do is to pop the top off a "cold one" and, presto, men will be groveling at her feet and fighting over her. The good times and the beautiful people enjoying a cold and refreshing drink are attractive. The appealing images that pervade consciousness make a well-marketed beer like *Bud Light* a good enough choice to consider. In media representations of reality, messages are often mixed and contradictory. Government-sponsored ad campaigns warn us against the dangers of promiscuity, unprotected sex, and the spread of AIDS. And yet, shots of sweaty, unrestrained girls grinding their bare, pierced mid-rift against the undulating six-pack of eager, hard-bodied guys is the norm for beer commercials. Advertisements are created to conform to certain assumptions about the people who are targeted as the potential purchasers of the product. The demographics might relate to social class, gender, age, sexuality, or other market-defining characteristics of a buying public. Advertisements are placed across different media platforms (i.e., television, magazines, radio) in the hopes of reaching their ideal consumer base. Recently*, Anheuser-Busch* was running print ads for *Bud Light* aimed at securing the gay community's beer money. Don't expect to see them soon in even the most "middle-of-the-road" liberal-minded magazines. Those ads were limited to gay publications only and featured same sex partners. But is that all there is to it, sex sells beer?

Advertisements offer a consumer the promise of sheer pleasure through stylish packaging and the pretty prompting of mega-realities that echo the possibilities of a life of virtual happiness always within our grasp yet so far away. If only we would buy "Brand X" instead of "Brand Y," then everything would be perfect. The messages in advertisements act at the subliminal level of self-consciousness, where our deepest and most profound desires are situated and can be influenced by emotional appeals, not logic. The strongest sensibilities – fear, love, hate, and envy or greed – are the main targets of marketers. Advertisements are designed to intensify the desire for products and services, even if we don't really need or want them. Consumers have always been subject to clever promotional gimmicks and hard-sell pitches as the goods prowl the media catwalks of culture. But it changes when products and services have the status of a brand. That is, a recognizable image and identity whose "core meaning" has real and residual cultural value. Coca Cola is "The Real Thing"; Audi will lead but "Never Follow"; and, as if we didn't know, "There's a little bit of McDonalds in everyone." The brand is the commercially enacted philosophy of a corporation. More than a public face or symbol. It is the spirit behind the novel names and knickknacks that symbolize the well-marketed fruits of labor produced by a postindustrial, media-saturated generation. The brand is the living will of a corporation – its heart and soul. It is an ideological testament that induces big audience appeal and trades for big bucks on the stock market floor because it has the power to frame the popular tastes of a nation. For some economic analysts, the financial state of mind among American consumers is measured by their trips to McDonalds. Above all, a brand has the power to earn a profit. Products have become marketing tools for selling illusions and dreams. Quality is no longer a major selling point because of stiffer competition in a global economy where someone will find a way to make a better widget at a lower price. The charisma of a marketing

campaign evolves through the characterization of a product or service by way of a brand identity as the demarcation point of difference.

The "I am Canadian" beer campaign broke the mold of sex-based beer advertising. Successful advertising for alcoholic beverages that doesn't appeal to sexuality offers consumers images and jingles that become signposts of an individual's history by equating alcohol consumption with life's great moments. The brand, the badge, and the label personalize a beer. The "I am Canadian" campaign proved to be a very successful campaign even though it didn't opt for the usual "sex sells" marketing approach so common in the advertising of alcoholic beverages. The commercials gave an amusing take on "Canuck" patriotism and played off ethnic stereotypes to nationalize a brand and acculturate good taste using the cultural politics of identity and difference.

## The Politics of Branding Identity and Culture

**The "I am Canadian" Beer Campaign**.
Hey, I'm not a lumberjack, or a fur trader.
I don't live in an igloo or eat blubber,
or own a dogsled,
and I don't know Jimmy, Sally or Suzy from Canada,
although I'm certain they are really nice.

I have a Prime Minister, not a president.
    I speak English and French, not American,
    and I pronounce it "abOUt," not "a boot."
    I can proudly sew my country's flag on my backpack.
    I believe in peace keeping, not policing,
    diversity, not assimilation,
    and that the beaver is a truly proud and noble animal.

A toque is a hat,
    a chesterfield is a couch.
    And it is pronounced "ZED" not "ZEE!
    Canada is the second largest landmass,
    the first nation of hockey! and
    The Best Part of North America.
    My name is Joe, and
    I Am Canadian!
    Thank you. (© 2000, Molson Canada)

On March 26, 2000, during the Academy Awards broadcast, The "I am Canadian" beer commercial was aired for the first time to an unsuspecting audience north of the American border. The original ad had been in movie theatres since March 17, but the television premier launched a lengthy debate on the politics of identity, nationalism, and the ethics of representation. The advertising campaign for the

"Canadian" brand of Molson beer is an excellent example of how the cultural politics of identity is merchandized and marketed for public consumption in order to tie the representation of national identity to consumer practices. Seemingly overnight, the slogan "I am Canadian" – the tag line of the commercial – took on a life of its own and became a rallying cry for reviving a patriotic ethos to "set right" stereotypical representations of a national identity north of the 49th parallel. Something wholly other than its originally intended purpose which was to revive the commercial viability of a brand of beer by marketing to a niche demographic of relatively affluent 19- to 25-year-olds. On the one hand, the stirring monologue by the protagonist "Joe Canuck" was seen as an impassioned declaration for the acknowledgment of a Canadian national identity as distinct and separate from American political influence. While on the other, the attempt to "set the record straight" was perceived as an insidious form of jingoistic propaganda that excluded aspects of cultural heterogeneity and social differences rooted in historical reality. The ad however achieved its marketing goal. It was an instant hit with the Canadian consumer, and the 60-s television spot became an unequivocal sensation boosting the brand's beer sales (MacGregor 2003; Seiler 2002).

The commercial, made for the Montreal-based brewery, became known as "The Rant." The ad became so successful that it was widely recognized as a popular culture milestone in advertising because it used beer marketing to address the need for the reappropriation of Canadian national identity and the recognition of difference without prejudice or ideological precharacterization. It depicts a "Canadian" everyman named "Joe" who is standing behind a podium, addressing an implied audience before a projection screen. Images flash on and off behind him as he speaks, and there is a thunderous ode that accompanies the rant. He starts off rather stilted, speaking in a soft and uncertain tonality, but ends up confidently shouting statements that are contrary to stereotypical representations of Canadian identity (e.g., "I'm not a lumberjack or a fur trader. I don't live in an igloo or eat blubber"). The ad itself attempted to debunk the typical Canadian stereotypes propagated by the American media and tried to use them as a source of humor – much like a bad taste, inside joke – to fuel its feel "good" message of national resistance to jingoistic misrepresentations. Essentially, it played on the erroneous and mono-dimensional image of Canadians as a self-effacing people with no national pride or unique identity, a long-standing myth about "Mondo Canuck" and a source for cultural humor among social commentators and politicians. Canadians are uneasy when it comes to cultural identity. The Canadian ethos of self-deprecation and humility is mocked in the commercials because the speaker shows reticence in highlighting the county's accomplishments and attributes. There are historical reasons for this insecurity.

Canada had been a British colony until the constitution was repatriated in the 1970s during the Liberal government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, and Quebec nationalists have been demanding separation for a long time. This split in cultural identity, coupled with multicultural social policy, has led to very un-nationalistic tendencies due to an uneasy state of affairs. What constitutes a universal Canadian identity is a controversial point. This will not change. Molson first introduced the "I am

Canadian" campaign with the slogan "Here's where we get Canadian" and then revised the premise. Many wondered aloud if it was ethically correct to use an alcoholic beverage to galvanize Canadian nationalism. The fate of the commercial took an unexpected turn when "The Rant" began to unsettle politicians. The Ontario Minister of Consumer Affairs quickly denounced the campaign for stating for trivializing the complexity of national identity. Various other well-known Canadian figures such as historian Michael Bliss called the ad "pathetic, depressing, and an embarrassment to Canada." (Ibid., p. 280). Some "Quebecers" were also displeased with the blatant use of stereotypes of Canadian identity in the commercial and did not wish to be bunched together with the other Canadian provinces when this particular beer brand was not even sold in Quebec. They also stated that they wanted "pro-Quebec advertising," not simply "pro-Canada advertising." "The Rant" exacerbated and highlighted the tensions permeating the cultural politics of identity and representation. A silent question that has haunted the political landscape of provincial and federal politics in Canada since Confederation: "Who are we?"

The "I am Canadian"commercial premiered the same night as the Academy Award performance of South Park's "Blame Canada" by Robin Williams. Surprisingly, both the parodic song "Blame Canada" and "The Rant" shared a similar feeling and aim. The two were essentially poking fun at Americans and their unrealistic and stereotypical view of Canadians, although in very different ways. The song "Blame Canada" and the "I am Canadian" commercial coincided with the debut of Michael Moore's *Canadian Bacon* that presented a depiction of America invading Canada in a similar fashion as the South Park movie. *Canadian Bacon* is focused on America's need to have an enemy in order to self-actualize an image of melting pot patriotism and identity. (Ibid.) Moore depicts how the illogical animosity and stereotypical representation of Canadians that breed cultural misunderstandings and dissension are fueled by economic and political motives. Perhaps it is not surprising that right wing pundits like **NAME** were actually calling for the annexation for Canada by the United States in the *New Republic* article "Bomb Canada: The Case for War" (Goldberg 2002) **REFERENCE** If anything, the possibility of alienation leading to aggression between two neighboring countries reinforces the need for clarification of the myopic visions of Canadian identity exposed in the song "Blame Canada" and the movie *Canadian Bacon.* "The Rant" is, at some level, a rebellious social and political statement wrapped up in a commercial media package that teaches us how to critically read the rhetoric of an image on various textual levels (Barthes 1977).

The "I am Canadian" commercial features a youngish man engaged in a rousing diatribe on what it means to be Canadian. At the same time, viewers are treated to a catalogue of well-known, stock images that are part of a moving slide show on the screen behind him and punctuate the speech with concrete pictorial references parallel to the spoken text. Igloos, hockey players, great expanses of thick nature, and hikers with a flag patch sewn on a tattered knapsack are shown in a sequence of shots complimenting the lexical text. The "I am Canadian" commercial nurtures a visual emblematic ontology because it presents an idiosyncratic image of Canadian society and identity through symbols like the Canadian flag, the beaver, hockey, and

the Canadian landscape to create a feeling of nationalism and pride in Canadian society through these familiar social images that define "Canadianness." The iconographic code of the ad manufactures identity by using these symbols to clarify the narrative logic or the meaning of the diegetic code – the semiotic structure of its narrative exposition – that is built on a series of oppositions to persuade viewers to associate the images displayed with the product in a psychological fashion. Canadian identity is manufactured in the commercial through the mutual supporting *syntagms* or "chains of representations" constituting the proairetic codes of linguistic and visual texts of the ad. The ordering of signs leads to the meaningful resolution of its elements as it constructs the hermeneutic framework for interpreting the message of the total cross-medial text of words and images. Essentially, the commercial is built upon a series of oppositions and negations. An alternative title could have been "What is Not Canadian":

> I have a Prime Minister, not a president.
>     I speak English and French, not American,
>     and I pronounce it "abOUt," not "a boot."
>     I can proudly sew my country's flag on my backpack.
>     I believe in peace keeping, not policing,
>     diversity, not assimilation,
>     and that the beaver is a truly proud and noble animal.

The point of contrast is the ideological small-mindedness of American culture and its assumptions about Canadians and their way of life. Each image takes a shot at or resists the categorical reduction of the meaning of Canadian subjectivity and nationalism that is a political hallmark of Canada-US relations. Canadians are uneasy when it comes to cultural identity, and the commercial magnifies the insecurities in a person of "the misunderstood underdog and all-round good guy" fighting back against the semiotic effects of American imperialism. The Canadian ethos of self-deprecation and humility is mocked in the commercials because the speaker shows reticence in highlighting the county's accomplishments and attributes. The ad presents a vision of human nature and the system of beliefs structured around the public image and rhetoric what it means to be Canadian. It depicts the illusion of an authentic "Canadianicity" and naturalizes it by referring to the stock images we associate with what it means to be through a negation of certain values. The chain of visuals is metonymical syntagm of how Canada and Canadian identity is constructed around cultural clichés, objects, and practices. It is not that the images are misleading or erroneous or even objectify a false reality or inauthentic subjectivity. On the contrary, the mental and emotional associations evoked by the chain linking of these popular images forms are a vital source for the way in which national identity and cultural difference are defined by and for Canadians that are echoed in the symbolic imagery of the country's mythological fabric. And yet, the objectifiable reduction of Canadian subjectivity to token representations of what "Canadianness" is ultimately has become a national sore spot for a country trying to make its presence felt on the world stage, as any appropriation of cultural stereotypes for the purpose of ridicule and shame would be. Canadians have a history of poking fun at themselves and

believe they are good natured about not taking themselves seriously. The "I am Canadian" beer commercial is the expression of a cultural reappropriation of a global stereotype revolving around the recasting of essential differences between what it means to be Canadian and what it means to be American. The commercial succeeds in joining the visual and lexical text at the end in a climax of images, words, and music settling around the representation of a beer, its label, and the badge of honor: "I am Canadian!" The imperative of cultural authenticity and democratic representation are subsumed and totalized in a glass of beer and the red maple that is its brand logo. The totality of representations articulate the cultural implications of a specific interpretive codex associating the product with national identity. The end result is simple: if you are truly Canadian, there is only one brand of beer you drink, Molson *Canadian*. National identity is reduced to a democracy of beer exemplified in the "I am Canadian" brand.

Unwittingly, the final phrase of the commercials – "I am Canadian" – became a rallying cry for renewing a sense of nationalism and pride in the idea of "Mondo Canuck," the beer-swilling pacifist world traveler who wears a toque and lives on the frozen Great Lakes. The cultural signposts that had become a painful source of global embarrassment and self-deprecating jokes had provided a source of national glory. Canadians were forced to celebrate and renew their sense of identity, all because of an advertising campaign for a brand of beer that was perceived not "cool enough" to drink. It is both a fitting and ironic tribute to marketing. A young generation of beer drinkers were reintroduced to Molson's *Canadian,* an old brand of beer with declining sales. It worked. Brand visibility and sales increased. Eventually, parodies of the "I am Canadian" beer commercial sprang up all over the Internet as a testament to the widespread cultural influence of the ad and the need for self-deprecating critique of identity politics: "I am Pakistani," "I am American," "I am Manitoban," and of course, "I am Not Canadian." The actor who played Joe, Jeff Douglas, became a celebrity and performed at NHL games and talk shows and eventually moved to Hollywood. The "I am Canadian" commercial won various industry awards and caused the brand to have a 2.5% increase in market share. Molson's chief competitor Labbat's Blue lost 2.9% in market share. "The Rant" was undoubtedly a very successful advertisement. Only in Canada you say? Pity.

## Ex Post Facto: What's Next?

We spend a lifetime faithfully serving and rejecting brands. Advertising cannot be called a public service announcement. It wants your shopping behaviors and choices to be influenced by the marketing twist on *information* – especially when the form and content of the message is being paid for by companies hoping to separate you from your money. Advertising helps you to become an informed consumer who recognizes brands and sales pitches – that is a good thing. But marketing campaigns ask you to buy into illusions and dreams as much as merchandise and services. Women will not fall at your feet when you wear a particular brand of aftershave lotion, deodorant, or cologne unless it contains traces of chloroform. Men will not

follow you around the world because you use a specific herbal shampoo, shiny lip gloss, or nail polish. Marketers maintain that branding is about ensuring customers are happy dealing with a company, and loyalty is a by-product of buyer satisfaction. You still need an "unbeatable product" to urge consumers to spend money on your gadget or service – no one will buy something that does not keep its advertised promises. But consumers are creatures of habit, always gravitating to safe and familiar buying territory. All shrewd marketers know that reinforcing perceptions about a brand is easier than changing them if a product offers real value.

A company has to stand by its advertising claims and offer tons of customer service and support to back up its claims. They need to keep customers not only happy but loyal, especially since it costs six times more to attract new customers than to keep existing ones. Eighty percent of sales usually come from the top 20% of a company's clientele. The average business in the United States loses half of its customers every 5 years. If to achieve a yearly growth of 1% a company needs a 14% increase in sales annually, then the effect of "disloyal consumers" is devastating for the profit margins companies forecast. Thus, behavioral and emotional loyalty to a brand are the main targets of marketers. Companies make income and dividend projections based on consumer demographics that segment the population into groups with specific characteristics relating to income, age, personal habits and possessions, marital status, profession, hobbies and interests, group affiliations, education, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and so on. The point is to "know your customer," so that advertisements can make value propositions about products and services aimed at well-defined target markets who could want them. Surveys and focus groups are conducted to create a "living snapshot" of the consumer's world. Market research is straightforward in theory: it will allow a company to better understand how its customers think and feel, why they behave the way they do, as well as explaining the perceptions and attitudes governing their behavior. Branding depends on understanding how to stimulate the feelings of loyalty and commitment that nurture habitual actions and responses in consumers by turning wants into needs. Advertising has relied on the principles of behavioral modification that the psychologist B.F. Skinner used to train pigeons to fly in circles during the 1950s. He discovered that you if you reward certain "desired" behaviors by providing positive reinforcement for some actions and punishing others, then you can get animals and people to do what you want. Armed with all of this rudimentary psychology and customer demographics research, companies can then create marketing campaigns that match specific messages to appropriate media for a particular consumer and use the desired emotional stimuli to get the right behavioral response. Why? The financial formula is simple: BRANDING + LOYALTY = PROFITS. The key to a company's success is a high level of customer commitment. As loyalty and emotional attachment to a brand increases, consumers are less sensitive to price changes and competitive marketing campaigns. Less advertising is required to maintain sales, and the costs of product information and media distribution are decreased. But can you love something that can't love you back?

There is no public or private space that has not been branded with a logo. There can be no "product recognition" without a name. The lack of a brand can be a powerful logo too, when used to market the quality of simple packaging as a selling point for cheaper goods and services. Advertising dominates the cultural landscape of our modern information society, unless, of course, we move to the outback and are willing to shepherd a vulnerable and almost unimaginable existence away from the industrial web of the consumer market in a life without factory-manufactured products and the relentless "happiness machine" that is the media. But the idea of elitism and rebellion has been overdone so many times as a marketing strategy that we no longer fully buy into the notion of products making us hip or successful. A sign of the times, the "I am Canadian" beer campaign was successful because it hit a nerve among Canadian consumers and galvanized their resistance around the question of cultural difference and the politics of representation with respect to stereotypical global images of what it means to be Canadian. Marketing executives dream of being the first to harness an original idea or to appropriate it for a new demographic that still lies waiting in uncharted copyright territory. Not everyone has the foresight of Bill Gates, the god of Silicon Valley, who licenses the *Microsoft* operating system to all personal computer manufacturers on the planet, including the latest deals with Apple. So, who would have thought that a new sense of cultural identity and nationalism could be forged on the label of a beer bottle!

What's next? As difficult as it may seem to comprehend today, a pastoral existence of perennial self-sufficiency and naivete or ignorance about issues of cultural imperialism was the norm for many hundreds of generations that preceded the age of technological achievement and rampant consumerism we now enjoy in capitalist democracies. The inconvenience of technology that was tied to a wall inspired a wave of cordless gismos and gadgets that have become part of who we are as people and citizens. Wireless telephones, computer keyboards, and the latest craze of *Palm Pilots* and *Blackberries* now offer mobile access to all the consumer amenities. Handheld access to data banks, messaging services, word processing, and email conferencing is conveniently able to sit in your pocket waiting for the touch of a hand to engage this movable technology. Now that text messaging is going hypercommercial, mobile phones are becoming electronic billboards on which advertisers can reach you anywhere, any time, transmitting commercials, offering sales promotions, and asking you to enter contests for prizes to be won simply by dialing a toll-free number or typing in the correct answer on your keypad. Thanks to the inclusion of GPS tracking systems on cell phones, advertisers can find you anywhere. As you walk by *Starbucks*, imagine getting a text message offering you 25% off the price of a *Frappuccino*. Brands and stores will be brought to your hip pocket. There is convenience in being able to access a deal spontaneously, and everybody loves a discount or "free stuff." But the personal "ad-free" space we have at our disposal is being further reduced. Soon, there will be no place to hide from the long arm of marketing as it constructs the cultural sites of your identity. We are all consumers now! Even Canadians, eh?

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# Eating Culture

**32**

## How What We Eat Informs Who We Are and Who We Want to Be

Cammy Lee

## Contents

**Abstract**

In first grade, I did not have the words to describe the ethnic Chinese food I ate, so I lied and said I ate cereal all day, every day. Food shame began early. This chapter considers how our food and foodways impact identity. In approaching this, I will unpack two food narratives: the first, causing embarrassment and shame, will be analyzed using psychoanalysis and critical literacy, while the second, sparking creativity, includes a discussion on the role of disgust – the paradox of aversion, aesthetic disgust, the cognition-affect link, and finally disgust in culture. Using interdisciplinary lenses for analyses, I argue that whether good or bad, our food experiences can inform how we understand who we are and more significantly shape who we want to become. Despite its varying effects, this chapter seeks to underscore that as an entry point to interrogate culture, identity, and otherness, food has pedagogical value.

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# Introduction

> *Our food practices and taste buds render us acquiescent to divisions along the lines of culture, region, race/ethnicity, religion, gender, age, class and sexuality — a hegemony that is exercised via appetite and desire.* (Wenying Xu)

In John Hughes' classic 1980s film of teen ennui *The Breakfast Club* (1984), five teens are grouped together Saturday morning in detention for various reasons. All stereotypes are represented when at lunch they silently take out their food: "the jock" (multiple sandwiches, fruit, and so on), "the beauty" (sushi and all its accoutrements), the "brain" (sensible soup in a thermos and sandwich), the "basket case" (*Cap'n Crunch* cereal with sugar on bread), and "the criminal" (no lunch). Everything from knowledge of food trends, health awareness, habits, and socioeconomic status to family life is laid bare on the lunch table. That food is a signifier is nothing new, revealing who we are, where we've been, and where we want to go (Fischler 1988; Eagleton 1998; Lanchester 2014); food informs not only individual identities but our cultural and societal ones as well (Bourdieu 1984; Trifonas and Balomenos 2003; Xu 2008; de Solier 2013). The current chapter adds to this dialogue by introducing two personal food narratives drawn from my childhood in Canada as a visible ethnic minority. I will analyze the narratives through interdisciplinary lenses and make observations that aim to highlight the potential of using narrative for educative gain enhancing knowledge of self and other.

Growing up in small town Ontario, I lived in two worlds: my Chinese-speaking one at home and my English-speaking one at school. I was able to lead a double life until I was in first grade and asked to explain what I ate. Lacking the vocabulary to describe my ethnic food, I lied and said I ate cereal – all day every day. Called to explain, the shame caused an "inner crumbling" at not being good enough (Miller 1985). This experience inspires the first narrative. Though a published bedtime story was also based on it (Lee 2008), the following narrative "7 Days Cereal" (Lee 2015) recounts this event as it happened according to my memory and offers another interpretation. The discussion will be grounded in psychoanalysis and food shame (Goffman 1956, 1963; Kristeva 1982; Miller 1985; Britzman 2005; Xu 2008; Lee 2015). Underscoring the value of re-storying events and the notion of timeliness (Woolf 1976; Britzman 2005), the narrative will be further interrogated through the lens of critical literacy exploring the significance of bridging home identities and school identities (Comber 2000, 2004; Cooper and White 2015).

The second narrative, an excerpt from "The Package," introduces a different angle on the "offal" (referring to animal entrails and internal organs used as food) foods I ate; instead of being an agent of shame, food stirred the imagination, rousing my creativity as a young writer. The analysis examines the role of disgust in food and

culture and how it shaped my understanding of self. In approaching this, the meaning of disgust, the paradox of aversion, aesthetic disgust, the cognition-affect link, as well as the difference between horror and disgust, and finally disgust in culture will be considered (Darwin 1872/1965; Rozin and Fallon 1987; Miller 1997, 2004; Kolnai 2004; Korsmeyer 2007, 2011, 2013; del Toro 2017).

## The First Experience

### 7 Days Cereal [Revised]

*As a first generation Asian, growing up in a small Ontario town in the late 1970s, I knew I was different. So I had two lives: there was my private life in Chinese at home, and my public life in English at school.*

*After learning about Canada's Food Guide as part of Nutrition Week, my first grade teacher Mrs. Smith* (Name changed to protect identity) *asks us to document what we eat for one week for breakfast, lunch and dinner. My 6 year-old mind wonders, 'What do I eat? What's that black stuff called? Directly translated it is a 'wood ear'? And the flat disk of grey meat, which was called a 'meat cookie' just sounds wrong'. At once, a montage of dizzying images flashes through my mind: cow brains, bloodied and creviced, pig tails served up on a platter, cut in small bite sized pieces on the end of a toothpick, gizzards, in all their elastic iridescence, sliced thin like a cold cut, strips of lung and stomach, brown and rubbery in soup. Some of the food while not sour was not quite savoury either with pickled vegetables that aren't green, nor brown, food like preserved vegetables, pickled duck eggs, black eggs, fermented black bean, dehydrated sea creatures and the like.*

*I look at Mrs. Smith's pictures of food around the room and long to eat what is foreign. Thinking this way, my heart starts to pound faster until it almost feels like it's in my throat, 'What am I going to write?' Guessing that Mrs. Smith wants to know that what we eat satisfies all the food groups according to Canada's Food Guide, I set out to do a bit of investigative work: What can I write that reflects I understood the lessons, and yet could be believable? I wonder, 'what does everyone know? What does everyone (except me) eat? What's on TV?' I can think of only one thing: Cereal.*

*I let out a huge sigh, and quickly grab a purple marker and large sheet of chart paper. Steadying my hand I carefully craft my weekly account: Monday breakfast: cereal, lunch: cereal and an apple, dinner: cereal and a banana. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday: Cereal! Cereal! Cereal! 7 Days Cereal! I finish the project and am ready to put it up when the recess bell rings.*

*In the school yard, my classmates scatter; the boys play with other boys that I don't recognize and the girls group together in clusters. My best friend Lydia and I sit by the bicycle bars. I know there are no other kids that look like me, and while inside I feel just like them, a simple glance into a classroom window showing our reflections would let me know that I am different. Lydia is different too: she has buck teeth. They rest on her bottom lip, front and centre, also present for class, like two more little friends.*

*Back in from recess, Mrs. Smith calls me to her desk. What could this be about? On the way there, I start to panic with each step, what had I done? I had never made a mistake! What could this be about? It is clear something is wrong.*

*"Cammy, I have a question for you"*

*"Yes, Mrs. Smith…"*

*Leaning in tilting her long face towards me, she is all eyes now, and asks, "Do you really eat cereal 3 times a day, 7 days a week?"*

*Eyes wide and unblinking, she is not smiling.*

*My face starts to burn and my eyes dart around looking for an answer: I made a mistake. How am I supposed to respond to make this situation go away? In my head, I go through a file of possibilities. All this thinking and not enough time to manufacture a response: she is waiting for an answer.*

*My voice breaks the silence, "Uh, sometimes…"*

*A pause follows that feels like an eternity, I squeeze the pencil I am holding, hard. With feet planted, I wait; it is now her turn to volley back.*

*She nods, and still looks serious, but says, "OK" and once again, I can breathe. I feel like all eyes are on me as I walk back to my desk. I wonder, 'what could I have said? We eat parts of animals that I don't have names for? Nothing that I see in class or on TV resembles the food I eat, so then why can't I just show that I want to be a part of this class and say what I'd like to be true?'*

*I don't need a window reflection to show me I'm different, this isn't like Lydia's buck teeth, or even something I can pretend isn't there, momentarily like the colour of my skin; this is a non-negotiable and I have no words for it. Before recess, I couldn't wait to put my chart up, but now, I look down at the straight purple letters, which seem to be mocking me, and want to tear my work to shreds. No matter how perfectly the words were written, they simply aren't good enough. How I resented the food I ate at home…*

## Unpacking the Story

*The fairy tale's meaning will be different for each person, and different for the same person at various moments in his life*. (Bruno Bettelheim 1977)

In her autobiographical book *Moments of Being* (1976), Virginia Woolf describes unforgettable experiences as "violent shocks" that shake us out of the "cotton wool" ordinariness of daily life (p. 71). Woolf emphasizes the educative value in writing and its potential to create psychological wholeness by bringing together our "severed parts" (p. 72). Writing a bedtime story allowed me to "write" a wrong; giving my experience a fairy tale ending was my way of seeking wholeness, as the following excerpt illustrates:

*One day, soon after, Alison asked, "Can we have an International Food Fair? Everyone can bring in some special food." There was Antoine who brought in a meat pie, called*

*"Tourtiere", and then there was Ivan who brought a red soup called "Borsht", and Adam who brought in yummy dumplings with cheese inside. And everyone ate and ate and ate. They ate food that was not on the food cards, but yummy, yummy, yummy food. And on that day, Alison was so full, she didn't think about cereal, not even once.* (Lee 2008, p. 55)

Storying the event valorized it, making it seem as though my experience and all its attendant emotions mattered. Time creates perspective; "as one gets older one has a greater power through reason to provide an explanation . . .[that] blunts the sledge-hammer force of the blow" (p. 72). John Dewey in *Experience and Education* (1938/2015) describes experiences like this as "miseducative" having "the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experiences" (p. 25). Unravelling it nurtured insight which ran counter to Dewey's sentiment that "he [sic] is lucky who does not . . . have to unlearn much of what he [sic] learned in school" (p. 47). But for me, it was the very *unlearning* and the subsequent *relearning* that have led to deeper meaning. Turning a miseducative experience into educative demonstrates the pedagogical opportunities that arise in the integrating and synthesizing of details. And this can lead to discovery: "that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern" (Woolf 1976, p. 72). It is the discernment of that pattern that leads to the knowledge "that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art" (Woolf 1976, p. 72).

Although I made some self-discoveries by writing the bedtime story, it was just the beginning of seeing what Woolf called a "pattern." The following analysis seeks to illuminate issues of identity: what helped construct it, deconstruct it, and reconstruct it. Grounded in literature that explores the psychological effects of this experience of feeling "othered" through a psychoanalytic lens, the concepts of self-loathing, self-abjection, and food shame will be highlighted (Kristeva 1982; Miller 1985). Embarrassment over my ethnic diet, including the notion of stigma, social roles, and blame, will also be considered (Goffman 1956, 1963). This discussion will be rounded out by the notion of timeliness and the benefits of revisiting experiences previously "processed," underscoring the educative gain of re-storying (Britzman 2005).

This childhood experience showcases how the food I ate informed my identity. In *Eating Identities: Reading Food in Asian American Literature* (2008), Wenying Xu asserts, "when paired with the deeply constructionist notion of identity, eating takes on richer connotations than food" (pp. 166–167). The story clearly contrasts the food I ate at home and the food I was learning about in school. The social and cultural climate established an order; Mrs. Smith's lessons revealed what the dominant culture ate emphasizing how food and foodways create divisions (Xu 2008). And thus, my identity construction here should be more aptly understood as *deconstruction* (Lee 2015).

Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* (1982) offers a psychoanalytic angle on self-loathing and self-abjection. She describes that it begins early and with disconnection. The semiotic is described as the psychosocial space where senses reign and no demarcations between "I" and "other" exist. Termed the "semantic void" (Žižek 1993, p. 202) or "jouissance" (Kristeva 1982, p. 9), it is the ultimate pleasurable

space of unbroken connection. Language is what disrupts the metonymic relationship of the semiotic; Kristeva theorizes the cleaving: "[i]t is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order" (p 0.4). (Although Kristeva talks about the separation happening between the ages of 6 and 12 months, and I was 6 when my incident took place, it is used here because her assertions support my observations, analysis, and interpretation). Kristeva's notion of disruption resonates with my experience, for what disturbed my order, system, and identity was the disconnect between what I ate and what I was learning at school. As a bid to fit in, I turned my back on who I was and opted for a "cleaner" more sanitized version that resembled "Canadian" culture. Kristeva describes this "disconnection" as self-abjection and is defined here as a betrayal of self (p. 4). Not only did I reject my ethnic self to create a new identity, but I also reject the newly created self. "Food loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection" (p. 2). And so I became that girl who ate cereal all day, every day. Desire, Kristeva expounds, is at the heart of self-abjection (p. 5).

Susan Miller in *The Shame Experience* (1985) reiterates that desire is at the core of shame, that is, the desire to be someone else while deeming oneself as not good enough (p. 32). Consequently, through the material means of school, TV, and other cultural artifacts, my growing understanding of who I was and who I wanted to be constructed a master narrative. The trope of cereal was the perfect quotidian breakfast food I could think of; it was the ideal foil to my food because it created the greatest distance between what I ate and what I wanted people to think I ate (Lee 2015). My 6-year-old self knew that revealing my "offal" diet would have been stigmatizing.

In Goffman's *Stigma* (1956), he identifies three major categories of stigma: "physical deformities . . . blemishes of individual character . . . and the tribal stigma of race, nation and religion" (p. 4). Growing up when and where I did, I was acutely aware that I was stigmatized, as the story illustrates. However, what I felt was not only racial stigma but a blemish of character because it extended to my food choices. I had two "selves," and Goffman notes that it is when these clash that embarrassment ensues (p. 269). My young mind was incapable of negotiating what this meant. Who was I then? Xu reinforces the theme of splintered selves on how the self participates in (maybe even instigates) its own dissection as a "hegemonic process of 'othering' that produces a schizophrenic self — a self torn between body (yellow and foreign) and mind (white and American)" (Xu 2008, p. 41). So even though I was Canadian-born and had no trace of Chinese accent, my appearance would always trump any authority I might have.

According to Goffman, the social organization of school can explain why I lied: "the physical structure of an encounter itself is usually accorded certain symbolic implications, sometimes leading a participant against his [sic] will to project claims about himself [sic] that are false and embarrassing" (p. 269). At school our social roles were clear. As a child in the weaker position standing before my teacher, I internalized the blame (Lee 2015). It never even occurred to me that it could have been any different. In this situation, Goffman (1963) might argue that understanding should have come from my teacher – the "ordinary" – and not me, that is,

the "stigmatized" (p. 127). With the advantage of hindsight, there were several ways Mrs. Smith could have approached this. She could have used this awkward interaction as an entry point for a discussion on international food and culture. For though I saw myself as the only one who could not identify with her food pictures, this might not have been the case.

In Deborah Britzman's "Note to 'Identification with the Aggressor'" (2005), she emphasizes that revisiting experiences – even those that have been processed – can be valuable, for we can revise old meanings and make new ones (p. 179). It was not until re-examination that a different perspective surfaced (Lee 2015). I realized my teacher had her own moral dilemma: should she report a possibly malnourished or abused child? Only by taking into account the broader context did perspectives shift from judgment to gratitude. However, knowledge to Britzman is just the first step: "[it] is not a substitute for transforming injustice in the social world" (p. 188). With awareness comes responsibility: how do we enact this knowledge, these narratives, and what would it look like? Britzman avers that this question and others like it belong to the domain of education (p. 188).

Critical literacy (Comber 2000, 2004; Cooper and White 2015) grounds this part of the discussion with particular focus on context, how it tempers understanding, as well as its emphasis on using student identities to inform curricular design (Comber 2000, 2004). Critical literacy is defined as a "means by which scripts and texts can be analyzed in order to detect bias ... so ... hierarchies of power can be identified, interrogated and ... dismantled" (Cooper and White 2015, p. 25). It was the late 1970s and the Freirean transmissive method of teaching characterized the historical moment: teachers as the givers of information and students the receivers (Freire 1993, p. 1). Foods not in "Canada's Food Guide" were not taught. But a bigger question persisted: following the confrontation, why did my teacher proceed as though nothing happened? Silence leaves gaps that unanswered questions fill. Taking into account the historical and cultural contexts might provide some answers; with a population of 60,500, the Kingston of my childhood did not reflect its ethnic diversity today. It is likely that my teacher did not see the child before her because she saw everyone as the same, in favor of the "Canadian identity." Titley and Miller (1982) state that in the nineteenth century, Canadian schools were "an important instrument of social cohesion — so necessary in an era of rapid change. It would bind the diverse social elements together with one set of values and political beliefs" (p. 58). So, my teacher was just doing as she was trained. This was less a reflection of her values and more of her conforming, inadvertently perpetuating biases. Therefore, it wasn't personal after all. Knowing this did not excuse her behavior although it is an explanation.

Educator and critical literacy advocate Barbara Comber (2000) urges that educators need to "explore ways that children's existing knowledges, capabilities, and interests might be used in the design of school literacies" (p. 47). Comber refers to this as "capital" and suggests teachers use it to design a "permeable" (p. 47) curriculum; bridging school literacy and home literacy creates more engagement and investment from the student. The bedtime story ends in a potluck that recognizes different ethnicities without singling any one out. For my teacher, it may have meant

turning away from a static text like "Canada's Food Guide" and turning toward the "fluid texts" that stood before her, that is, her students. As educator Comber says, we need to champion faith over fear of the Other (p. 47). Overcoming fear is one thing; learning who your students are is another. With the bedtime story followed by another re-examining, these interpretations have deepened insight, moving from how it affected me personally to how it affected my teacher and to what this reflected about the cultural and educational perspectives at the time. Reflection and writing provided this opportunity for more meaning.

## The Second Experience

Growing up as the youngest of six children, writing was my salvation; it was my way of making sense of my surroundings: my interior and exterior landscapes, the clashes of cultures, religions, and beliefs. In my home, crucifixes, *Guanyins*, and Buddhas coexisted side by side. Fumes of garlic, onion, and fermented black bean permeating an entire household were commonplace. So were the smells emanating from pots of medicinal Chinese soup simmering for hours. All this, while on TV, we watched commercials of *Butterball* turkeys and *Betty Crocker* cakes. Writing meant I was trying to "tame the wildness of experience" (Luce-Kapler et al. 2011, p. 168), giving all that wildness a voice. I read to learn. But I wrote to understand. The food that we ate was part of this wildness and did much to stir my developing imagination shaping my identity as a writer. However, sometimes, as in the following narrative, it was as much the deliverer of such food as the food itself that sparked creativity.

### The Package [An Excerpt]

*The doorbell buzzes and my sister Dana and I look to see who it is. A dark figure stands nearly as tall as the aluminum door. It is my mother's friend: Ah-Fong. She is always dressed head to toe in black. We go to the door and open it and are greeted by a waft of her flowery perfume. Perfume is something my mother never wears.*

*On top of her dyed long black hair, sits a curious nest of curls. Her rouged cheeks look like two ripened cherries, as if she forgot to blend them after application. Black kohl pencil lines her eyes emphasizing her already heavily hooded lids. From the neck up she looks like a Chinese opera singer. But from the neck down, clad in black, she is no ordinary housewife and mom, even my 6-year old eyes know this.*

*"Hi Ah-Fong" we both say. We call her "Ah-Fong", a casual greeting, like she was a sister. But she is anything but. She is the only friend of mother's we do not address as "Ah-Sim" or "Ah-Moo", which is the norm for Chinese ladies. Ah-Fong is something else. She is married to the richest man in Kingston, Mr. Chen. And that's what we call him: Mr. Chen. I don't know his first name. None of us kids do. They live a 5 minute walk away but none of us have ever been in their house. My mom included. Neither of them go to Chinese functions. But Ah-Fong visits us. In fact, Ah-Fong comes regularly and always brings a different package* (Fig. 1)*.*

*In a husky booming voice she says, "Ah-Lee-Tai-Tai hai do ma?" (Is Mrs. Lee here?). She is like a cartoon character: if Big Bird were black and had the voice of*

the Snuffleupagus. We never say much to Ah-Fong. We just stare at her. So we both
nod. And when she steps in our house, we see her black stockinged feet tucked into
black suede high heels. I measure up to her waist that is cinched tightly with a black
leather belt. Her black pants hug her hips and thighs and bell bottom out below her
knees. She wears a tight black top with a lace trim at the plunging neck line. I see
cleavage. And that's all I can think about. My mom doesn't show cleavage. I don't
even know if my mom has cleavage. Over her top she sports a black leather fringe
vest which matches the purse she hangs on her shoulder. And tucked under her other
shoulder is the brown package.

The lifts on her high heels sometimes snag on the chocolate brown hallway carpet
as she strides towards the kitchen. My mom puts out a plate of cut oranges and
apples on the table. "Hi Ah-Fong, Ho-Ma?" (How are you?). I don't pay attention to
the conversation between my mom and the black Snuffleupagus. But I do eye the
brown package. She hands it over to my mother who puts it on the table (Fig. 2).

Dana and I gather round and gawk. As fascinating as Ah-Fong is, it's her
packages that are the main event. Those packages contain things you can't buy in
our small town of Kingston Ontario. There are no such things at the local A & P,
animal parts like: cow hearts, big bloody flaps of purple organs, or ripply hairy-like
membranes looking more like pieces of fabric than something from the inside of an

Fig. 2 Bag on table.
(©Cammy Lee 2017b. All
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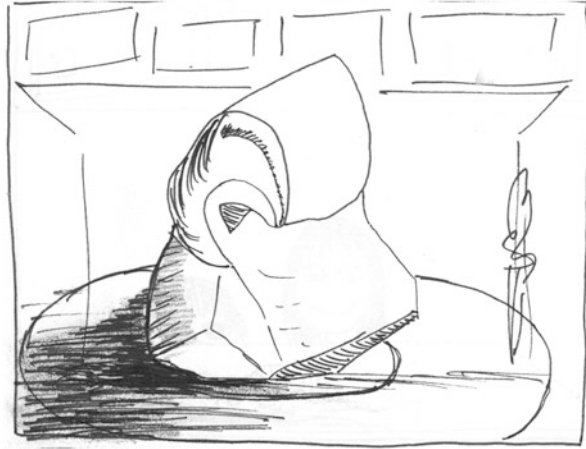


animal. *Where did she get it that none of us could? Who did she know? To us, she became the "Mysterious Bearer of Bloody Organs".*

*"What do you think's in the package this time?" Dana whispers in my ear. I shake my head. I won't let myself blink. My mom slowly unwraps the brown paper package. As each fold unfolds there is more and more wetness on the inside waxy finish of the butcher paper. Then I see it: the shiny wetness of blood. It gets bloodier and bloodier the closer she gets to the centre. And then there it is, in all its formidable energy: one cow brain* (Figs. 3 and 4).

*It is the size of a very large grapefruit, or small pomelo. Its exterior is wavy, fleshy, pinkish, organy, and creviced with bright red bits of blood. Mom brings it over to the sink and starts to work on it. Ah-Fong takes a bite of a Granny Smith apple. She chews and crunches the tart fruit and juice runs down her chin. She wipes it away. Her cheeks sag a bit. I smile at Ah-Fong. She doesn't smile back.*

*We never see it again as "brains". It doesn't show up on a platter, like "roast brain" with peas and carrots, or "baked brains" with assorted veg, or even sliced and fanned out like cold cuts to use in a "brainy sandwich". But it ends up somewhere. You can be sure. I probably eat it in a mystery soup, or big "meat cookie" with pickled eggs...*

©Cammy Lee 2016. All rights reserved (Fig. 5).

## Unpacking the Package

*Food is inseparable from imagination.* (Jean-François Revel)

As illustrated in "The Package," not all my offal eating created shame and embarrassment. Some of the food I ate evoked the stuff of horror movies and captivated me more than watching Julia Child truss a duck. Afternoon movie matinees on TV about monsters, the macabre, and the grotesque were what really
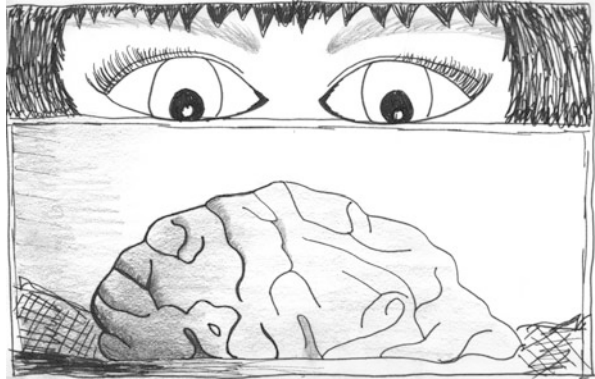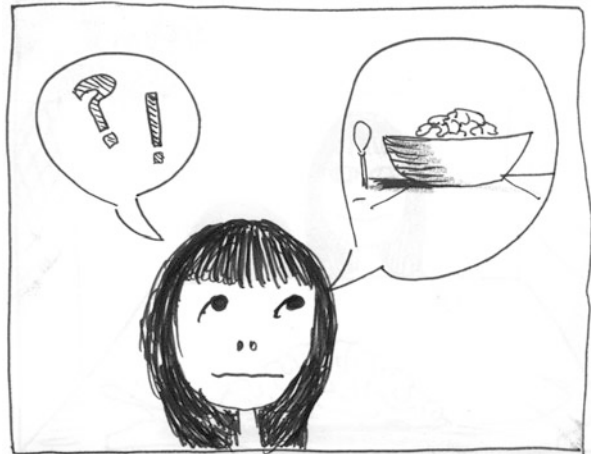
gripped my attention . . . and held it. As "The Package" suggests, that element of disgust extended beyond the food I ate. The following discussion will first define the meaning of disgust, the paradox of aversion, aesthetic disgust, the cognition-affect link, as well as the difference between disgust and horror and, finally, a word on disgust and culture (Darwin 1872/1965; Rozin and Fallon 1987; Miller 1997, 2004; Korsmeyer 2007, 2011, 2013; Kolnai 2004; del Toro 2017).

With its etymological origins in French and Latin, disgust is dis (negative prefix) + gustus (taste), quite literally bad taste. Darwin (1872/1965) describes disgust as "something offensive to the taste . . . this feeling is excited by anything unusual in the appearance, odour, nature of our food . . . and the idea of eating it" (p. 256). William Ian Miller in *Anatomy of Disgust* (1997) notes that disgust is a visceral emotion unlike any other: "because no other emotion forces such concrete sensual descriptions of its object" (p. 9). And yet, if disgust means "bad taste," it follows that what is considered disgusting varies from person to person, as well as from culture to culture (p. 15). Disgust, however, has a paradoxical nature: "even as the disgusting repels, it rarely does so without also capturing our attention. It imposes itself upon us" (p. x). And what imposed itself upon my memory was not only the image of the bloody brain in the middle of the waxy shiny butcher paper but also the one who delivered it. The roundness and curly crevices of the brain were not dissimilar to Ah-Fong's "curious nest of curls" which sat atop her head. The redness of the bloody brain stood out in marked contrast against the blackness of Ah-Fong's appearance. Her and her packages were equally memorable. It is this dynamic that can be exciting; in her book *Savoring Disgust: The Foul and the Fair in Aesthetics* (Korsmeyer 2007), Carolyn Korsmeyer explains: "fear-provoking situations shake up the mental works in a healthy and enlivening way, even as they cause us to dwell on forces that threaten our safety and raise our mortality to the forefront of aware-ness" (p. 152). Korsmeyer (2011) defines the paradox of aversion as "the attraction to an object that both inspires fear or revulsion and is transformed into something profoundly beautiful, an experience that philosophers from ancient times to the present have analyzed as a type of 'pleasure'" (p. 72). That is, the *sublime* (Burke 1757) for I could not look away. In the narrative, there was some fear, apprehension, a curiosity, and a recoiling, and yet, there was also definite fascination with the package *and* the deliverer. Taken together, these recollections stitch together a memory that is not altogether negative. This paradoxical attraction/revulsion and what Kolnai (2004) called "macabre allure" (p. 42) was intrinsic to the value and quality of my experience for the paradox is such that "the disgust and the affective appreciation — are not only inseparable but one and the same" (Korsmeyer 2013, p. 198). Korsmeyer (2013) elaborates that trying to "separate its components, would lose its identity in some important way" (p. 198). She defines "aesthetic disgust" as "the arousal of disgust in an audience, a spectator, or a reader, under circumstances where that emotion both apprehended artistic properties and constitutes a component of appreciation" (Korsmeyer 2011, p. 88). In this valuing, the elements of reason and cognition are drawn in.

Psychologist Paul Rozin and his colleagues have conducted many studies in the area of disgust as an emotion (Rozin and Fallon 1980, 1987; Fallon and Rozin 1983;

Rozin et al. 1993). To them, disgust is a food-related emotion that they define as "a revulsion at the prospect of (oral) incorporation of an offensive object" (Rozin and Fallon 1987, p. 23). Rozin and Fallon hold that their study of disgust can illuminate the link between affect and cognition. Although what is considered disgusting varies among cultures, what is cross-culturally consistent is the attitude toward bodily waste products: feces, urine, and mucus (p. 27). Their study of offering subjects chocolate feces showed how even though participants knew the feces were chocolate and, therefore, delicious, they still could not consider it appetizing (Rozin et al. 1993, p. 583). The sheer mental knowing (and the emotion it triggered) overrode reason, and so, they posit the cognition-affect link.

But how do you *know* you know? A Cuban memory illustrates; I was staying at a two-star resort and being unable to speak Spanish, spoke French, which worked about half the time. On this particular day, I smelled something surprisingly delicious in the cafeteria; looking at a stew that resembled beef, I asked the server, "Boeuf?" And I heard, ". . .boeuf. . ." The meat was tender and fell apart; the sauce was rich, and with the white rice made for a filling flavorful meal, that was the perfect way to end a full day of swimming. I went back for a second, then third helping. As I was approaching satiety, I wondered what cut of beef shreds and has a kind of chicken skin that peeled back? What were these little dot-like bumps that gradually changed in size? And then, it hit me. Those little bumps were taste buds. Taste buds like on the massive beef tongues I had seen in supermarkets. Tongues that revolted me and captivated my attention at the same time. Memories of being awed by them came flooding back, noting how they resembled my own. And then it *really* hit. My stomach churned. But it was too late. I had swallowed. I pushed my plate away. I could not un-eat what I'd eaten. So even though I had previously relished the two and a half plates of beef tongue, suddenly I was nauseous: this incident further demonstrates how powerful cognition and sometimes its process can be. And thus, Rozin and Fallon's claim that conception overrides the sensory.

It is clear that in "The Package," there is more to the disgusting than just the brain. Susan Miller in *Disgust: The Gatekeeper Emotion* (2004) says that disgust is connected with our sense of identity and values: "disgust speaks to the sense of identity. It declares what I am willing to accept as me and mine and what I want to assert is outside and alien" (p. 14). Miller's assertion underscores the theme of how food helps construct identities. For Miller, the meaning of disgusting objects is more than the taste, the texture, or the look of something (p. 25). Ah-Fong herself played a pivotal role in the unfolding drama. Disgust was not the only emotion at play: there was also horror and with it a bit of comedy. Miller distinguishes between horror and disgust. "Disgust is more likely to occur when an intrusion is limited and a point of physical or psychic entry can be identified" (p. 171). Ah-Fong entered our house – she is described as almost unhuman being as "tall as the doorway." Dressed in black, she contrasts with the surroundings and is the antithesis of my mother. She is a mix of the grotesque and comedic: is she a monster or as the "black Snuffleupagus" a creature more fit for *Sesame Street*? Scary it seems, is just

the other side of the comedic. Miller describes horror as "the likely response when little can be done to resist the invasion of some powerful outsider" (p. 171). In the story, as children, we could not resist the Ah-Fong invasion; in fact, we opened our doors inviting her entry.

The disgust and the grotesque clearly occupy a place in our culture. Testament to this is a 2017 exhibit at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto featuring Mexican-American auteur Guillermo del Toro, whose blockbuster movies have grossed $450 million (US) (Berry, 2017, p. R.1). At the opening of the exhibit "At Home with Monsters," del Toro was asked to explain his love of monsters. As an influential director, tapping into popular culture, del Toro emphasizes the necessity for reflection as opposed to blind consumption: "I think that pop culture is very dangerous just to consume, or collect, or worship without processing or analyzing . . . I think that the only way that culture moves forth is by people that actually make it their own, and transform it" (p. R10). del Toro's answer reiterates the intent of this chapter: the value of analyzing, processing, and reflecting upon experiences, ultimately to make new meanings and revise older ones. Del Toro claims: "I think you spend 50 years of your life trying to correct the first six" (p. R10). He explains, "you are basically destroyed and put together when you are 6. Whatever forges you is what you need to disassemble and deconstruct the rest of your life" (p. R10). Coincidentally, I was 6 when the cereal incident happened.

The link between beauty and the grotesque was a main theme throughout the exhibit. That one is inherent in the other and echoes the paradox of aversion and the overarching notion that we are all fundamentally connected: "we are all bound in the necessity of our beauty and grotesqueness" (p. R10). As in "The Package," it was the cow brain, which was at once disgusting and fascinating; it captured and took hold of the imagination stirring my young mind to put pen to paper informing my identity as a writer. However, "The Package" was not written until 2016. But what I did write as a child were horror stories, one after another – all inspired from Saturday afternoons spent watching "Monster Movie Matinee." The opening sequence begins with ominous music as the camera slowly pans up a hill to reveal a mansion, presumably haunted. A recent Internet viewing shows it is more akin to an elementary school film project. Nevertheless, it was what was inside the house that enthralled me; an arm clothed in black velvet with white ruffled shirt sleeve reaches out of a coffin. With ringed fingers and black sharp fingernails, our show host menacingly gestures as he introduces the upcoming feature. To my child's mind, this image was unforgettable. After the movies I would re-create details to the best of my memory and craft a story. Even though I did not know it then, by writing my own version of the story, I was heeding del Toro's advice, "making it mine and transforming it."

But still, as I wandered through the gallery, I wondered: Why, as a child, was I so taken with horror and the grotesque and fascinated with Ah-Fong? At this point, I came upon one of del Toro's reflections on outsiders: "I feel at the age of 7 or 8 or even earlier that I did not really belong with the other kids that perfectly. I felt like an outsider. The horror genre seemed to show me other outcasts I could sympathize with" (del Toro). Reading this, I realized it was precisely because of Ah-Fong's

abject refusal to conform that I so connected: I learned we were like two sides of the same brain. There I was trying desperately to fit in, and there she was, trying so hard not to. Ignoring us, she did not pander to children like most visitors to our home. In all her cleavage, tight clothes, fringe, blackness, long hair, heavy makeup, and deep "booming voice," she flouted convention, not only embracing difference but going out of her way to assert it (Fig. 1). That is why, being an outsider myself, I claimed a sort of kinship to Ah-Fong *and* her packages and channeled it into writing scary stories.

   My third grade teacher Mrs. Ellis (name changed to protect identity) seemed to enjoy my creative output. I recall a particular day when she read one of my stories to the class as she often did. We gathered around and I sat cross-legged looking up at her and squirming, dying with anticipation to see how she would read the end of what was in my opinion, my best work to date. She did not disappoint. Just before the ending, she put the story down and looked at each and every one us. With her large bulging brown eyes and red lipsticked mouth, letting each syllable rise and fall and sink, she croaked, "And that . . . was the end . . . of *Meeeee*!" The class went wild. I thought I would explode with joy. Connection, indeed. This is the connection del Toro speaks: his in film and mine in story. By reading my stories aloud to the class, Mrs. Ellis demonstrates making use of a child's cultural capital by seeing my budding skills as a storyteller and encouraging me to go on.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, two experiences were considered. In the first experience with two interpretations, knowledge deepened from an understanding of food shame to the various contexts that influenced reactions and eventually to an appreciation of my teacher's response. Re-examining the event increased its pedagogical value. Like-wise, unpacking the second experience revealed the multilayered and paradoxical nature of the contestable emotion of disgust. In both cases, storying experiences and analyzing them provided the opportunity to challenge not only dominant cultural discourses but, perhaps more significantly, our own master narratives regarding identity construction and food's role in it, and thus, illustrating the research potential and pedagogical value of food and food narratives.

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# Pop Culture 2.0

**33**

## A Political Curriculum in the Age of Trump

Gabriel Huddleston and Mark Helmsing

## Contents

### Abstract

This chapter posits the concept of Pop Culture 2.0 as a means to mark important changes in popular culture of which scholars and teachers should contend. We propose a revised agenda in the study of popular culture and education, sitting in a position that is within the transdisciplinary configurations, concerns, and approaches of cultural studies, a field that is experiencing its own changes amidst a renewed sense of urgency and relevance in recent years. One issue is the shifting landscape of popular culture itself, which we approach from our researcher positions in the United States, and how the very conceptualization of what constitutes *culture* and *the popular* has radically changed in the wake of President Trump's election to the office of President of the United States in 2016. A second issue, in some ways inextricable from the first, is accumulated effects of the recent

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*postcritical* turn in the humanities and social sciences. Scholars from various fields and areas of inquiry have taken up this turn in a spectrum of differing directions we consider in this chapter. We identify Pop Culture 2.0 as a movement of post-postmodern, post-twentieth-century popular culture forms that began to emerge during the US presidency of Barack Obama in 2008 and have been given a more recognizable shape and form of its content during the US presidency of Donald Trump in 2016.

## Introduction

Don't forget, that's the way I won. Remember, I used to give you a news conference every time I made a speech, which was like every day. OK? No, that's how I won. I won with news conferences and probably speeches. I certainly didn't win by people listening to you people. That's for sure. But I'm having a good time.
—Donald Trump, televised news conference (in Prokop 2017)

The phrase *popular culture* often carries a connotation of being a loose collection of aspects of cultural life that are fun, entertaining, or in some way a divertissement from the quotidian aspects of everyday life. Some may say that popular culture is synonymous with consuming culture intended to provide a good time, offering avenues across diverse media and genres to have a good time or a bit of fun and enjoyment. It may have been this context of popular culture that prompted a group of speakers at a conference symposium on the state of the field of critical pedagogy to advise educational scholars within critical pedagogy to abandon the study of television shows, films, and related areas of popular culture at a meeting of the Bergamo Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice (Porfilio 2010). These symposium speakers advocated for studies that investigated how youth participated within, resisted, created, transformed, and challenged existing, hegemonic forms of popular culture, pointing toward exemplary studies that illustrated how youth produced their own popular culture(s) in local, national, and transnational, globalized ways. Similarly, at a recent annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Huddleston and Helmsing (2013) presented in a symposium session on popular culture and curriculum studies in education during which some of the symposium panelists and attendees advanced a call for curriculum theorists working with(in) popular culture to move beyond critical hermeneutical analyses of popular culture (reading popular culture as an educational *text*) and instead focus efforts on coming to deeper understandings of how consumers of popular culture educatively engaged with popular culture in the moment and in enduring ways, focusing more on acts, habits, and practices with popular culture rather than performing studies of popular culture on the "outside," if such a reading or analysis is even possible in a post-Derridean, post-deconstructive world.

What are scholars of educational research, theory, and culture to make of these paradigm shifts that move us in directions different from scholarly practices of cultural studies in education as practiced over the past three decades? In this chapter we sit with both of these calls for a revised agenda in the study of popular culture and education, sitting in a position that is within the transdisciplinary configurations, concerns, and approaches of cultural studies, a field that is experiencing its own changes amidst a renewed sense of urgency and relevance in recent years (Evers 2016; Jones et al. 2016). We do so with an eye toward considering two issues of pressing importance. One issue is the shifting landscape of popular culture itself, which we approach from our researcher positions in the United States, and how the very conceptualization of what constitutes *culture* and *the popular* have radically changed in the wake of President Trump's election to the office of President of the United States in 2016. A second issue, in some ways inextricable from the first, is accumulated effects of the recent *postcritical* turn in the humanities and social sciences. Scholars from various fields and areas of inquiry have taken up this turn in a spectrum of differing directions we consider in this chapter. On one point of the spectrum is a concern with what critique can no longer be able to do and what is lost or missing in prioritizing critical readings of culture, as evidenced in a contention that critique has run out of steam (Latour 2004) and attention to the limits of critique and the overreliance on interpretive practices prioritizing suspicion and debunking (Felski 2015). Elsewhere on this spectrum is an orientation with critique that is less about finding it lacking and more about what can be done alongside or in addition to critique, as evidenced in Sedgwick's call for reparative reading as an addition to paranoid reading (Sedgwick 2003) and a call for surface reading as an addition to depth reading (Best and Marcus 2009). Our interest in these associated stakes that comprise the postcritical turn is in their commitment to highlight ways of engaging with popular culture that do more than uncover hidden truths, reveal undisclosed realities, or release meanings that are otherwise ensnared by ideology, the unconscious, and so forth. According to Felski (2015), a postcritical paradigm attends to what can be seen (on the surface and elsewhere), visible and present, foregrounding attachments, affinities, insights, awareness, and empathy that are produced by a given text or reading. Through this different orientation to reading, analyzing, and interpreting a text, Felski calls for approaches that bring "new things to light rather than an endless rumination on a text's hidden meanings or representational failures" (Felski 2015, pp. 173–174). Animating these postcritical approaches is a drive for a "judicious decrease rather than an increase of distance—a willingness to acknowledge and more fully engage our attachments" (Felski 2015, p. 192). In this regard we follow Felski in our chapter to engage the attachments we and parts of a broader public have recently forged with what we call Pop Culture 2.0.

Similar to the branding of a second wave of digital Internet media dubbed "Web 2.0," we identify Pop Culture 2.0 as a movement of post-postmodern, post-twentieth-century popular culture forms that began to emerge during the US presidency of Barack Obama in 2008 and have been given a more recognizable shape and form of its content during the US presidency of Donald Trump in 2016. Indeed, the focus of this chapter is on the doubled nature of Pop Culture 2.0 in the last few years:

how the political has become popular and how the popular is now political. To be sure, this reading is neither new nor revelatory. We seek not to uncover hidden truths and meanings left undermined and unexamined of the examples of popular culture we offer. Instead we walk in the contours and raised reliefs of this emerging Age of Trump to evaluate how popular culture in the United States has responded to this sociopolitical turn, making popular culture more political as ever in a time when the political – broadly defined – is popularly consumed in everything from *Teen Vogue* to the Oscars of the Academy Awards.

## A Political Curriculum

If, as we contend in the previous section, that the lines between the political and the popular have eroded wherein every pop culture product can be consumed in a multitude of ways along a continuum of political to apolitical, then a reconsideration of the ways in which popular culture is produced and consumed is necessary. Popular culture is not only being produced with the political in mind but also being consumed politically (see Gay 2017, 2018a, b). It stands to reason that this isn't happenstance, but rather a complication of the cycle of cultural production identified by cultural studies scholars. However, does such a model of viewing cultural production still hold up given the changes we are discussing here? It would be helpful to start with Stuart Hall's (2010) theory of encoding and decoding which was foundational for cultural studies and media studies.

One way in which we believe pop culture has changed is in how the elements of production, more specifically media corporations, envision their potential audiences when producing mass forms of entertainment and media. While many theoretical lenses, in terms of media studies and popular culture studies, exist, for the purposes here, we look to Stuart Hall's (2010) theory of encoding and decoding as it marries the philosophical concerns of cultural studies with media studies to bring a level of criticality that might be lacking otherwise. More specifically, Hall challenged the theretofore traditional way to think of media production in a linear fashion by seeing it more in a continually evolving cyclical one in which the different readings of mass media influenced the structures of society. This falls in line with other cultural studies scholars and their interpretation of cultural production more broadly (Fiske 2011; Grossberg 1997; Johnson 1996).

Hall's theory, while allowing for a more complex understanding, focused mainly on audience reception, outlining three major positions from which one could read or interpret productions of media: dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, and globally contrary. On the production side of the coin, Hall saw only the dominant-hegemonic ideology being encoded in the means and modes of production. While Hall, given his background, clearly saw such hegemony through a Marxist lens thereby contending that the dominant messaging was, ultimately, about the reification of a capitalist society, it positions producers of mass media as homogeneously hegemonic. If popular culture has moved into an era of extreme diversification, it allows the modes of production to diversify what it produces. In other words, media

companies no longer have to produce something that will be consumed by the masses, but something that will be consumed by a large mass of people.

So how is this shift from the masses to a mass playing out in the consumption of popular culture? It is difficult to tell. While the diversity on the production side is relatively easy to measure given how corporate media companies continue to push their products across various forms both traditional (television, movies, magazines, etc.) and newer ones (the Internet, podcasts, social media, streaming services), the best way to understand how products are being consumed and, more importantly, from a cultural studies perspective, how they are being read must be given some serious thought. Traditional modes of quantifying audience reception have become outdated. For example, television shows can no longer rely on the Nielsen ratings as more and more they are streamed to various devices. "Clicks" and "likes" have become new ways in which media corporations measure their influence. Take the rise of the podcast industry.

Podcasts are a good example of the diversification of cultural production with a podcast centered on every topic imaginable, not to mention a form of entertainment in and of themselves. An additional wrinkle is that many of these podcasts contain an "educational" bent to them, advocating that not only will listeners be entertained but also they will learn something as well. (Some examples include *60-Second Science, Always Already Podcast, Benjamin Walker's Theory of Everything, NPR's Code Switch, Dan Carlin's Hardcore History, NPR's Hidden Brain, and The Longest Shortest Time*.) So, how do we measure the popularity of a podcast? The number of subscribers on a particular platform (podcasts can be found in a number of ways)? The amount of revenue a podcast produces based on the number of consumers it diverts to various companies? The amount of positive reviews for a podcast? The possibilities are many, and it doesn't seem to quite get at the impact these podcasts have. Cultural studies, as a disciplinary configuration, have never been too concerned with measuring popular culture products impact in terms of viewership or consumption but are much more interested in how these products are read or interpreted and then, more importantly, how these readings impact everyday lives (Fiske 2011; Grossberg 1997, 2010; Grossberg et al. 1992; Hall 1996a, b, c). However, one can justify looking more carefully at these readings when they are read or consumed by large numbers of people. That said, if we can no longer rely solely on the amount of people consuming, how do we justify caring about the ways in which they are reading popular culture? Perhaps it is no longer the amount of people that consume popular culture is important, but the diversity of the audience it reaches. Take, for example, professional wrestling, which we examine in the following section along with video games, followed by reading the political as popular across television news programs and scripted television series.

## The Popular as Political: Pro Wrestling and Video Games

As someone who works in the intersections between popular culture and curriculum theory, I (Author 1) have longed to write about professional wrestling. As a kid, my Saturday morning ritual was plop down in front of the TV and watch WWF

superstars. (The WWF (World Wrestling Federation) is now known as WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment).) Undoubtedly, my father would walk by while I was watching and say, "Why do you watch that stuff? You know it's fake, right?" As a kid, I was always perplexed by this question. Did I know it was fake? On some level, I probably did, but in the end the question had no relevance to whether or not I enjoyed it. So, professional wrestling, at its core, holds its potential audience as inherently diverse, those who see it as "real" and those who are in on the fiction but enjoy the product regardless. To see how WWE as a company has evolved in the ways its views and markets to this split provides an illuminating example of how we have moved into Pop Culture 2.0.

Perhaps the biggest change in professional wrestling during the last 20 years is the way in which both the consumer and the industry envisions the audience; more specifically, the addition to the lexicon of professional wrestling the term "smark" (Wrenn 2007). One of the more interesting aspects of professional wrestling is the idiosyncratic language associated with the business of professional wrestling. "Shoot," "mark," "a work," "an angle," "heel," "face," "gimmick" are all markers of insider lingo used by wrestlers and promoters alike. Perhaps the most famous of these words is "kayfabe." This word relates directly to my father's question of legitimacy. In essence, kayfabe is the presentation of staged performances in wrestling as real. However, "keeping it kayfabe" extends beyond the ring as traditionally pro wrestlers would stay in character outside of the wrestling events themselves revealing their true nature only in private. As such, if two wrestlers who were sworn enemies met in a public place, they would be expected to keep kayfabe and stage some type of confrontation. This was all done for the benefit of what the industry termed a "mark," a professional wrestling fan who believed that such staging was indeed the real thing. Perhaps one of the biggest changes to professional wrestling is that there is a large segment of fans that (1) know that wrestling is fake and (2) are nerdy enough about it to know what the word "kayfabe" means. This group has come to be known as smarks (Shoemaker 2014).

Smarks offer a fleeting insight into the possible changing position of the audience in the cycle of popular culture production. If we were to revisit Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding, the means of cultural production often code the dominant-hegemonic meanings into the products produced. In other words, pop culture is for the masses, hence its popularity. In the traditional professional wrestling business model, the producers saw all of the audience as marks, whether they did or not the audience would be treated as though they bought into the fiction of the wrestling storylines. This isn't to say there weren't smarks back when, but Vince McMahon (current CEO of WWE) wasn't producing a show for them. Smarks could take the oppositional read of professional wrestling, but their point of view didn't figure in the original encoding process. Fast-forward to today and the smarks' viewpoint, while perhaps not the most influential in the encoding process, is definitely a factor. Take, for example, perhaps the smarks' favorite wrestler (now retired), CM Punk.

On an episode of Monday Night Raw, Punk gave what has come to be known as the pipe bomb speech. An excerpt below shows Punk playing to both marks (as a heel, bad guy) and to the smarks who worshipped him:

John Cena, while you lay there, hopefully as uncomfortable as you possibly can be, I want you to listen to me. I want you to digest this, because before I leave in three weeks with your WWE Championship, I have a lot of things I wanna get off my chest. I don't hate you, John. I don't even dislike you. I like you a hell of a lot more than I like most people in the back. I hate. . . this idea. . . that you're the best. . . because you're not. I'm the best. I'm the best in the world. There's one thing you're better at than I am, and that's kissing Vince McMahon's ass. You're as good at kissing Vince's ass as Hulk Hogan was. I don't know if you're as good as Dwayne. . . he's a pretty good ass-kisser. . . always was and still is. Oops. . . I'm breaking the fourth wall. [Punk waves to the camera.] The only thing that's real is me, and the fact that day in and day out, for almost six years, I've proved to everybody in the world that I am the best on this microphone, in that ring, and even on commentary. Nobody can touch me. And yet, no matter how many times I prove it, I'm not on your lovely little collectors' cups, I'm not on the cover of the program, I'm barely promoted, I don't get to be in movies, I'm not on any crappy show on the USA Network, I'm not on the poster of WrestleMania, I'm not on the signature that's produced at the start of the show. I'm not on Conan O'Brian, I'm not on Jimmy Fallon, but the fact of the matter is I should be, and trust me, this isn't sour grapes, but the fact that "Dwayne" is in the main event of WrestleMania next year and I'm not makes me sick! I'm leaving with the WWE championship on July 17 and hell, who knows, maybe I'll go defend it in New Japan Pro Wrestling. . . maybe I'll go back to Ring of Honor. . . [Punk waves to the camera again] hey, Colt Cabana, how you doing? (Mac 2017)

Here we see Punk playing up the role of heel (bad guy), but also explicitly acknowledging the world beyond the storyline, a world of contracts, sponsorships, and the corporate hierarchy of WWE itself. From this speech a storyline followed that blurred the lines of kayfabe and ended with Punk winning the WWE championship on the night his contract expired, thereby leaving the company. Before Punk, the acknowledgment of a world outside of the WWE was strictly taboo, let alone the fact that wrestlers worked under contracts that expired. Indeed, it has since leaned into this bifurcated audience, creating a whole online streaming network (the WWE Network) where the audience can watch programs centered around more traditional wrestling shows or behind-the-scenes shows like *Ride Along* that films professional wrestlers in their cars as they drive from gig to gig.

Pro wrestling's expansion of its intended audience to include marks, smarks, and all those in between encapsulates the changing landscape of audience reception. Indeed, not only has pro wrestling companies accounted for its changing audience but other companies have noticed the change as well with ESPN and other Internet news outlets covering pro wrestling from both an entertainment and business angle. Marks can go online to get a recap of all the pro wrestling shows to keep updated on who's feuding with who and smarks can keep track of events on the business side, from companies' financial standings to contract negotiations with stars. All this is to say that pro wrestling is emblematic of how Hall's encoding/decoding should be thought of as a continuum especially in a pedagogical sense. Students need the tools to learn and identify the different potential masses that media companies envision them occupying. While the co-opting of subcultures is nothing new (Goodman et al. 2004), the adeptness of mass media companies to co-opt the most obscure subgroup and then market to them is.

Given the changes we outline here, we ask the following questions: How should we balance our examinations on popular culture in terms of production and audience

reception? The history of cultural studies always opened the possibility to focus on both or either, but we wonder if audience reception needs to be retuned to account a shift from the mass entertainment to entertainment of various multitudes. Likewise, do we need to revisit how we conceptualize cultural producers? In the changing landscape of megamergers, intellectual property arms races, and outdated media platforms, who do we count as producers of culture? If we are to make students agile in their thinking so that they can see the multitude of potential audiences, is it enough to make them simply critically aware of pop culture or is something more needed? As we will discuss in the next section, even a critically aware audience has been accounted for by cultural producers.

In the last 40 years, video games have become a major medium in popular culture, especially since the advent of home gaming. Whereas in the past, finding a deeper meaning within a game like Pac-Man might have seemed a bit of a stretch, in today's world of hyperrealistic graphics, first-person shooters, and online gaming communities, one does not have to work too hard. Indeed, perhaps the largest discussion of video games has been the impact violent video games have had on our society and whether they contribute to gun violence and, more specifically, mass shootings. While there are exceptions (i.e., *Last of Us*), most video games released today that sell well do not have an overtly political message. However, they are not released into an apolitical vacuum, and in certain cases, the interaction between current the political environment and video game popular culture can demonstrate the importance of studying the interactions between the two.

Take, for instance, the online movement that came to be known as #gamergate. Seemingly started as a reaction to a gaming journalist's sexist social media postings and his subsequent firing which then morphed into an organized, online harassment campaign of a female developer and her defender, #gamergate became a catchall for the gaming community's defense of its culture from what male gamers saw as an attack by feminists to bulwark itself against warranted criticism of the sexism prevalent in both video games and the gamer community, male gamers, under the #gamergate, accused feminist activists and scholars (very often gamers themselves) of wild conspiracy theories, and unfounded accusations. These social media postings also doubled as attacks relying on violent rhetoric and sexist language, threatening anyone who dared to question the inherent patriarchy within the gaming community (Chess and Shaw 2015; Massanari 2017; Tomkinson and Harper 2015).

While fascinating in its own right, #gamergate brings into focus how societal context can turn, almost in an instant, a rather benign aspect of popular culture into a political hotbed with vehement disagreement on both sides. Furthermore, as we have attempted to discuss in this section, a critique of popular culture can become inherent aspect of the popular culture artifact(s) itself. #gamergate differs from our initial examples of corporations intentionally co-opting the critique of their products into the marketing or selling of the products themselves, here the critique and aspects of the popular culture itself becomes intertwined due to the users/consumer/readers of popular culture engaging with the critique, either subscribing to it or disagreeing with it. In the end, the very act of playing a video game becomes a statement as to what side of the #gamergate controversy you, as a gamer, are situated (Consalvo

2012). Your actual position becomes irrelevant as other can read your choice in games, platforms, and/or other media related to video games as political.

## The Political as Popular: Television News and Scripted Series

While the dexterity of media corporations to adapt and market to the most specific of audiences demands our attention, an intriguing offshoot of this move is the ability for those same corporations to subsume and then market the critique of popular culture. In other words, popular culture now has built in meta-awareness. Cultural critique has, in the past, been reserved for critics and some academics, but now media corporations have co-opted critique and branded it back as another popular culture commodity. Surely, the causes of this change are numerous, but we see one area as the blurring between news media and popular entertainment.

With the decreased dependence on traditional news media outlets, the landscape of the "news" has certainly shifted. For our purposes here, we look at one particular block of television entertainment, late night TV. In the era before cable television, when network TV was dominated by three national broadcasters, late television was a hodgepodge of reruns, infomercials, late local news, talk shows, and national news programs (Carter 1995, 2011). For the most part, the national broadcasters offered late night talk shows, most famous of which is the Tonight Show, long hosted by Johnny Carson. The model was successful enough for there to be similar shows that aired even later than Johnny and some lesser successful shows that aired opposite of him. The one exception was *Nightline* that aired on ABC and hosted by Ted Koppel. This show was a traditional news program that was filled with pre-recorded news segments and interviews with leading figures of the day. During its heyday, the program consistently fared well with its late-night counterparts, and when ABC eventually started its own late-night talk show, it aired after *Nightline* at 12:06 AM as opposed to the traditional 11:35 PM time slot so that *Nightline* could remain (Staff 2016). *Nightline* is still on the air, albeit in a diminished position of relevance and importance having now shifted to the later time slot and with significantly lesser ratings (Desk 2018; News 2018). For our purposes here, we are concerned less with the reasons for the decline of *Nightline* and more with what has sprouted up in the meantime.

Television is now dominated not by network news programs such as *Nightline*, but programs that blur the line between news and entertainment. The most glaring example is the programs that dominate cable news networks in the prime-time network TV hours. These shows and their personalities (e.g., Sean Hannity, Rachel Maddow, Chris Matthews, Laura Ingraham) combine informing the audience of the current events of the day with a running opinionated commentary on those topics of both the hosts and other guests. The result is less a traditional news show and more an ideological show built on either end of the political spectrum that can simultaneously buoy like-minded individuals or drive people with opposing viewpoints slightly insane. While the ramifications of the popularity of these shows are numerous, for our purposes here, we are more concerned with how these shows have

completely eradicated the line between news and entertainment. With this line now gone, or at least minimized, it has allowed what heretofore had been a purely entertainment format, the talk show (i.e., *The Tonight Show*), to become more overtly political. The rise of the infotainment on cable news networks has been matched by shows on non-news networks that also seek to inform the public on the current events of the day with a running opinionated commentary albeit with a slightly comedic spin. In other words, our current media landscape sees news shows with more entertainment talk show qualities and talk shows with more news program characteristics. As such, both of these types of shows comment not only on events of the day but also on the medium itself. At the height of its popularity, *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* exemplified this format with Stewart mixing his biting political commentary with snarky put downs on what he saw as the failures of the news media. Often the target of his attacks on the "news" side of this spectrum would return fire, defending their programs while attacking Stewart as a Hollywood elitist (Mallenbaum 2018).

Our point we emphasize here is that these programs, because they remain profitable for the companies that produce them, have outlined a path forward to both be politically topical *and* reify their importance by commenting on the medium itself. In other words, news media has become self-aware (and with much snark at that). This self-awareness has spread to other genres. Examples include the talk show *Talking Dead* that airs immediately after each *Walking Dead* episode to discuss just occurred plot developments and character deaths along with the rise of blogs and numerous websites devoted to pop culture criticism (often owned by the same media corporations producing the pop culture). These outlets have blossomed at an extraordinary rate to be only matched by personal websites and blogs of everyday people offering their hot takes on the quality of the pop culture they continually consume. In pedagogical terms, the result of this ability to subsume and (re)market the critique of popular could undercut teachers' ability to expose students to critical thinking through examining their favorite pop culture "thing" because that critique is now "baked-in" into popular culture itself.

It is not only commentary and criticism that is now big business but also being overtly political has as well. If we return to how prime-time cable news programming has changed news to be more entertainment, the entertainment factor comes from being overtly political. Indeed, this is the common thread between *Hannity* on one side and *This Week Tonight with John Oliver* on the other. Within a political charged context, these shows overtly political tone both seem to "fit" into today's society and contribute to it. Regardless of how much these shows are the cause of what seems to be an overly political time, the context has definitively influenced other mediums of popular culture, and, perhaps, this has always been the case. However, the difference is directly due to our previous point that with popular culture inherently containing a self-aware critique, even popular culture items that are apolitical can become political with the right framing. Whereas a major project of cultural studies has always been a demonstration of popular culture as inherently political, in Pop Culture 2.0, this has become almost self-evident.

## Conclusion and Future Directions

As stated at the beginning of this article, our attempt here was to provide a snapshot, however imperfect, of the current popular culture landscape. By focusing on several aspects of current popular culture, we hoped to stay in line with earlier scholarship (see Hall 2010; Fiske 2011; Johnson 1996) that saw popular culture as multifaceted and in terms of a production cycle. This view allows scholars to not focus solely on the interpretation and critique popular culture but rather consider holistically the way they are produced, are read, and influence everyday life. As such, our examples are not presented here due to some unique, inherent qualities, but rather to start a discussion that, perhaps, the way cultural studies scholars approach studying popular culture.

While the cyclical model has its benefits, especially in terms of a neo-Marxist critique of how capitalism dictates the production and consumption of popular culture, we wonder if more recent critical social theory can overlay and augment analysis. Given the examples presented that we believe represent a Popular Culture 2.0, the typical cycle of production has, at the very least, become more complicated and complex.

Lastly, our examples point to the eroding of traditional lines of demarcation between production, consumption, and impact on everyday life than previously conceived. Moreover, lines between genres within popular culture seem have dissolved as well. Is it media? Is it news? Is it entertainment? Educational? A combination of all? Due to the porous nature of between these formerly more distinctive lines, how could scholars more accurately portray or understand this fluidity as a means to counter its perceived chaotic state? While the cultural cycle offered by cultural studies scholars did portray movement, it might not be fluid enough to fully capture Pop Culture 2.0. The days of using popular culture as a means to connect to one's students seem long gone (if they were ever here to begin with) due to this fluid and ever-changing landscape. As anyone who has taken the time to learn all about the latest popular culture craze as a means to become more relatable to her or his students, only to find that the craze is now passé knows, it can seem impossible to latch onto something that works, pedagogically. The problem now is that what may have gone out of style from 1 year to the next can happen in seconds.

The implications of Pop Culture 2.0 for scholars in education lie in what it means to examine and study popular culture as an educational practice in postcritical times in the aftermath we inhabit after the rise of Fox News or MSNBC, mediascapes "where partisans and spokespeople and candidate surrogates have appeared on news talk shows simply to deliver a monologue as a form of entertainment" (Ciegelski, n.p., 2017). In our current cultural and curricular moment, an apologist for the traditional approach to curriculum may argue that each side sees what they want to see, even in the same interviews. See how this plays out in an example Ciegelski (2017) recounts:

> Megyn Kelly interviewed Newt Gingrich before the election, the reaction from each partisan group couldn't have been more different. "RETWEET if you haven't watched BIASED

Megyn Kelly since her disgraceful interview with Newt Gingrich before the election! #MAGA" stated one tweet with 1,800 retweets. "Apparently, Newt Gingrich now thinks Fox has a liberal bias. Wow. The right is having a nervous breakdown in real time," said another tweet with 1,300 retweets. (n.p.)

Where do we then go for educatively political spaces after this in a postcritical time? To complement this, we argue one way to grapple with this political space is for educators to imagine and teach for a political curriculum as a site of intimacy. Political spaces of learning are shaped as much by intimacy and public feelings as they are by the rational discourse such spaces are imagined to have. In social studies education, these spaces – designed to foster and promote a certain type of civic education – prioritize the following characteristics meant to uphold rational discourse: tolerance, civility, fairness, public engagement, and political discourse.

However, these characteristics seem to be less sticky and more brittle in this Age of Trump. The Age of Trump has spawned an increasingly irrational and sentimental discourse of politics while at the same time has produced a discourse of shared negative affects – shame, guilt, remorse, despair, disgust, and paranoia – that polices the borders of what constitutes our relations not only as imagined citizens in educational spaces (such as social studies classrooms) but also as a type of consequence. This paradoxically enables an increasingly intimate mode of imagining the public that popular culture has capitalized upon in the past year. In this political curriculum of Pop Culture 2.0, citizenship is embodied on deeply personal levels into the lives of individuals. In the wake of demands for and reactions to discourses of the political that have produced new kinds of desires in those who appear as privileged, we can look at forms of political curricula existing in what Berlant (2000) may describe as regressive, angry, childlike ways. These traditional forms of civic education are increasingly not simply a practice but a means through which an affective public sphere has emerged on Twitter and elsewhere in the texts, expressions, forms, and mediums of popular culture.

What we have been puzzling about is how this has come to be, how is that a certain cluster of practices, narratives, actions, habits, and curricula have come to recalibrate the political as popular in our national public sphere? We of course cannot pinpoint what precisely has happened to create this avowedly political, activist, intensified intimacy animating civic affects that mean to educate, to teach, to inform, to spit truth, and to get one woke. Perhaps, however, the culture of anxiety produced through the shifting norms of identity, family, and sexuality that have emerged in Age of Obama have formalized particular affects that keep us in the American public sphere in constant affective modes of anxiety and under threat – from all sides. This sense of threat, embodied in what Berlant (2000) terms the "ex-iconic" figure of the white American male, responds to the fact that the nation and the American citizen as they were once imagined to be (stable, loyal, Christian, white, heterosexual) have been reimagined because of the entry into the public sphere of different and new citizens (and noncitizens) (Sturken 2012, p. 356). If we in the United States (and elsewhere) desire young persons to become political actors (disregarding the ways in which they are already political or already enacting forms of belonging in civic,

public spheres), then we must interrogate what those desires are and what they could be. This means rethinking political engagement, the framing of "digital natives" and "digital citizenship," two practices of literacy that approach young people as consumers of news and young people as political producers. Proliferating content – in all of its various manifestations – is now a site of concentration and frenzied focus, not only in public media, private tech firms, and journalism but perhaps also once again in curriculum studies and cultural studies of education. Curriculum theory must therefore carefully attend to ways in which the citizen is defined, produced, challenged, contested, affirmed, and remixed in the narratives offered by a political curriculum in the Age of Trump. Thus, one paradoxical effect of our Age of Trump is that in modes of thinking and teaching the political, the political might become the terrain through which we recuperate that which is under siege, threatened, and endangered.

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▶ Identity Construction Amidst the Forces of Domination
▶ Technology, Democracy, and Hope
▶ The History of the Internet: Between Utopian Resistance and Neoliberal Government
▶ The Merchandizing of Identity: The Cultural Politics of Representation in the "I am Canadian" Beer Campaign
▶ Visual Culture in Virtual Worlds: Cultural Appreciation or Cultural Appropriation? When Cultural Studies Meets Creativity

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# Children's Literature

**34**

Interconnecting Children's Rights and Constructions of Childhoods Through Stories

Bethany Robichaud, Sarah Peltier, and Aurelia Di Santo

## Contents

### Abstract

This chapter explores hegemonic views of children and childhoods, views which continue to marginalize children and diminish their rights within Western societies. It explores children's rights, children's social status, the social construction of childhood, and the role of literature in constructing and reinforcing or challenging these concepts. Given the presence and influence of literature in the lives and learning of young children, and the view that storybooks are well positioned to convey rights discourses to children and adults alike (Saguisag and Prickett, The Lion and the Unicorn 40:v–xii, 2016; Todres and Higinbotham, *Human Rights in Children's Literature: Imagination and the Narrative of Law*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2016), this chapter provides examples of how children, childhoods, and rights are implicitly and explicitly conveyed through storybook's

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pictorial and lexical narratives in both supportive and non-supportive ways. The capacity of children's literature to serve as a salient tool for challenging problematic hegemonic notions of children, childhoods, and rights is also explored.

**Keywords**

Children's rights · Childhoods · Children's literature · Image of the child

## Introduction

Who is a child and what constitutes childhood? According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UN General Assembly 1989), a child is every human being aged 18 and younger, unless the child lives in a jurisdiction in which majority age is attained prior to 18. Childhood, therefore, may be defined as the period from birth to 18 years of age. The need for defining "child" and "childhood" as distinct categories stems from the desire to identify and separate every human's initial state of dependency during this period of life (Gubar 2013). However, there are risks that accompany defining children and childhood as a special category as it constructs and perpetuates the widespread "othering" of children. As James and James (2004) posit, "children are what adults are not" (p. 21), a distinction that children themselves recognize (Cassidy et al. 2017; Mayall 2000). This view of childhood devalues children by casting them as future citizens (James and James 2004), "pre-social objects" (Mayall 2013, p. 2), or human becomings (Uprichard 2008) who are not yet worthy of the full scope of citizenship and who exist and operate in an apolitical space (Mayall 2000). As such, they are often overlooked as rights holders when in fact, all people, regardless of age, are inherently entitled to human rights.

We aim to disrupt the hegemonic views of children and childhood that thwart children's capacities as active rights-bearing social agents. In this chapter notions of children's rights, children, and childhoods are explored and the role of literature in constructing or challenging these concepts within Western societies is considered. We suggest that children's literature plays an influential role in shaping how both young children and adults understand, construct, and value children, childhoods, and rights within society. Popular North American children's storybooks are examined to demonstrate how literature articulates and may influence views of children, childhoods, and rights. We illustrate how, through the lens of children's rights, storybooks can serve as salient vehicles for challenging the systems of power that affect and regulate children, their experiences of childhood, and their employment of their rights.

## Children's Rights and Constructions of Childhoods in Western Societies

Commonly envisaged as an age of innocence, vulnerability, and dependency, childhood has been deemed a period which entitles one-quarter of the world's population (UN Population Division 2017) to unique consideration, care, and

supports (UN General Assembly 1948, 1989). Following the end of World War II, in 1948, the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which set out that all human beings are "born free and equal in dignity and right" (UN General Assembly 1948, p. 2) and further detailed that children in particular are "entitled to special care and assistance" (UN General Assembly 1948, p. 5). In 1959, the UN adopted the Declaration on the Rights of the Child (DRC), which proclaimed that "mankind owes to the child the best it has to give" (UN General Assembly 1959, para. 5). The DRC served as the foundation for the 1989 UNCRC (Walther 2003), which was the first legally binding international instrument to delineate civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights specific to children (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF] 2014). Presently ratified by all but one UN member nation, the United States, the UNCRC is regarded as the most comprehensive human rights treaty in history (UNICEF 2005). While aspects of the UNCRC have been critically questioned (see Bentley 2005; Quennerstedt et al. 2018; Tobin 2013), the UNCRC remains vital, as it communicates the salient message that all children are holders of human rights, "irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status" (UN General Assembly 1989, p. 2). The 1989 UNCRC reaffirmed the 1948 UDHR declaring once again that childhood is entitled to "special care and assistance" (UN General Assembly 1948, p. 5; 1989, p. 1). From this view, and in light of the near universal ratification of the legally binding UNCRC, children around the globe must be recognized and supported as active, rights-bearing citizens. Yet, regrettably, children remain one of the most marginalized populations globally (Bentley 2005; Mayall 2000), and violations of their inherent rights abound worldwide. How childhoods are socially constructed and how children are viewed within societies, both individually and as a collective, greatly impact their experiences of childhood and their employment of their rights.

Childhood is universal; that is, it constitutes a phase in the life course which all members of all societies experience. While experiences of childhood vary based on the influence of numerous complex and intersecting factors such as family background, culture, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sex, gender, age, education, geographic location, and access to media, every human is a child for a period of time. As James and James (2004) note, today's adults have indeed been children and have experienced childhood themselves. Yet, the childhoods of contemporary children will differ from the childhoods experienced and remembered by the adults in their lives. Likewise, the childhoods of generations to come will again differ from the childhoods experienced and remembered by today's children. In this way, childhood can be understood as both a period and a permanent form in that it is a period in an individual's life and also a constant fixture across generations (Qvortrup 2009). In other words, childhood is both universal and continual while also transitory and bound by time, space, and circumstances. Although childhood is experienced by all individuals, sociology of childhood scholars argue that it is not a natural category but instead a social construction (see Freeman 1998; James and James 2004; Matthews 2007; Norozi and Moen 2016). Put simply, childhood is a phase in one's life that

is constructed and defined by societies and is experienced in relation to various structures that are chiefly constructed and controlled by adults. Although the UNCRC attempts at a universal definition of children, that is, those under the age of eighteen, there still remains considerable variation across the globe as to how to answer the questions, "who is a child?" and "what constitutes childhood?". As such, how children understand and experience childhood differs from generation to generation, context to context, and is heavily impacted by the ways in which children and childhood are positioned and conceptualized within the societies in which they live and learn.

Within Western societies, childhood is chiefly constructed and perceived as the early, preparatory phase in one's life with children accounting for our youngest, developing members. Childhood, as a social status, has been established as a prelude to adulthood. Children, therefore, as "adults in the making," are in a state of becoming (Cassidy et al. 2017; Freeman 1998; James 2009; Uprichard 2008). While it is indeed a fact that children do develop and grow to become adults and gradually transition into adulthood, granted not always and necessarily along the normative trajectory that developmentalists project, this dominant viewpoint is again constructed and regulated by adults (Cassidy 2012; Woodhead 2009). As Woodhead (2009) notes, children's development is typically understood to follow a certain progression as the individual transforms from fetus, to infant, to young child, to adolescent, until, finally and importantly they achieve the "goal" of adulthood. As the child develops then, they are viewed by adults as progressing from an immature, vulnerable, and dependent child to a rational, competent, and independent adult. As James and James (2004) assert, Western conceptions of children and childhood would lead one to believe that children are "en route to the stable status of adult" (p. 27). This dichotomy between children and adults signifies the power relation that exists between children and adults. As the literature indicates, issues of power and position dominate children's lives with the general Western agreement tending to propose that children are not yet ready to be considered full and active members of society (Cassidy et al. 2017).

Research exploring children's understandings of their social status, their views on childhood, and what they perceive to be their place in society has found that they discern and understand the dichotomy between themselves and adults (Cassidy et al. 2017), regard themselves as duly subordinate to adults, and accept their lower status relative to adults (Mayall 2000). In line with dominant views of children and childhood, Cassidy et al. (2017) found in their study with children 4–11 years old living in various countries that they recognize and accept that they are very different from adults. In fact, the children reported that the world of children holds little bearing on the adult world. They also affirmed the hegemonic Western view of childhood as a transitory and preparatory period in one's life, marked by a time of innocence. In this way, the children received and internalized the troubling message that childhood is a time of preparation, where they learn the skills necessary to participate later in life as older children and as adults. These recent findings support Mayall's (2000) earlier findings that children agree with adults that childhood is an apprenticeship and a time during which they are rightly lower in social rank to those

with more experience and knowledge: adults. Such research highlights the importance of understanding and scrutinizing the discursive resources and tools that are made available to and shared with children as dominant discourses convey to children who and what is important and who is visible within society (Derman-Sparks 2013).

While sociology of childhood scholars recognize that children are a marginalized social group and childhood is a social construct, they also maintain that, as social actors, children are competent and capable of contributing to and affecting those same structures and systems that affect their lives (Matthews 2007; Mayall 2000). From this view, children are not regarded as passive recipients of information and guidance but rather as active social beings who are making sense of, co-constructing, and influencing their worlds. This empowering perspective can help to shift how children and childhoods are conceptualized within Western society. As Cassidy and her colleagues (2017) suggest, the politics of difference between children and adults must be questioned and a new way of viewing and considering children must be encouraged. To this end, we argue that children's literature is one such avenue that informs and disseminates notions of children, their rights, and the concept of childhoods.

## The Power and Potentiality of Children's Literature

Delightfully packaged by adults in playful, accessible language and almost always accompanied by illustrations, children's literature typically conveys both lexical and pictorial narratives that aim to shape children's beliefs about themselves and the world according to a particular definition of childhood (Lerer 2009; Saguisag and Prickett 2016; Superle 2016). In many ways, defining children's literature is as difficult as defining childhood. In a general sense, the present genre of children's literature in North America may include, but is not limited to, "folk and fairy tales, myths and legends, ballads and nursery rhymes – many of which date back to preliterate epochs – to such embodiments of our transliterate age of e-books, fan fiction, and computer games" (Reynolds 2011, p. 2). In other words, a single definition cannot adequately encompass the myriad texts, forms, and topics that constitute children's literature without risking a reductive and exclusionary understanding of this literary category; it is neither a fixed nor coherent body of work, and it experiences both change and continuity.

Children's literature, like childhood, remains an elusive concept with ever-changing definitions and boundaries. In many ways, the child is shaped by the texts they read and have read to them. Storybooks are sources of images, information, viewpoints, and structures (Reynolds 2011). As such, children's literature endures as a medium for shaping and informing children's understandings of and their role within society and the world. For centuries, children's literature has maintained the purpose of educating and entertaining young people (Gubar 2013; Lerer 2009), primarily from the viewpoint of the adult author(s) and illustrator(s). Considering the history and progression of children's literature brings forth questions about the role of the

adult in constructing and defining childhood. If the history of childhood and children's literature are effectively inseparable, so too is the role of the adult in attempting to define and control both these categories.

The academic field of children's literature, and the literary analysis and criticism of it, emerged in the 1970s (Gubar 2011; Hunt 1996). With it came the desire to neatly define what constitutes children's literature. However, this positioning of children's literature within the adult dominated realm of academia effectively excludes children from the consideration of the genre of literature aptly named to imply it belongs to them. Gubar (2011) notes, "the possessive 'children's' falsely implies that young people own or control a body of texts that are generally written, published, reviewed, and bought by adults, and often read by them as well" (p. 210). Additionally, with the emergence of children's literary criticism, a clear distinction between books that are for children and books that were for children emerged (Hunt 1996; Reynolds 2011). The texts that inform the history of children's literature have become a foundation for understanding and defining this genre. It encourages a comparative tendency in which the "historic" texts that have been studied in and from periods past have become a defining feature of the genre. This supports a divisive mindset as the comparison between historic and present texts means our understanding of both childhood and children's literature are inextricably connected to notions of the past.

As a medium for presenting and shaping notions of children and childhood, literature written for children defines and assigns the socially constructed characteristics of childhood. As Reynolds (2011) suggests, children's literature is part of a "literary continuum in which parents, teachers, and other adults involved with the young [have] for a long time been experimenting with ways of creating attractive and engaging materials for children to read" (p. 11). Put simply, given that it is primarily adults who write and study texts for children about being children, adults are actively constructing children's understanding of what it means to be a child. Notably, no other genre so openly acknowledges the difference between the "writer and addressee" (Pinsent 2016, p. 2) as "children's fiction sets up a world in which the adult comes first (author, maker, giver) and the child comes after (reader, product, receiver) but where neither of them enter the space in between" (Pinsent 2016, p. 2). With this, questions begin to emerge about the differences between the author's intention and the audience's interpretation. Considering the adult–child dichotomy within a larger context, and because adult voices and perceptions are generally prioritized over children's, children's capacity to exercise their rights and influence their lives and environments is heavily influenced by adult assumptions and agendas (Mayall 2000). This brings us to a consideration of the role of children's literature in educating children about their rights.

Like the majority of children's literature, the UNCRC was also created and written by adults for children. However, both the UNCRC and children's literature should be recognized as essential vehicles for supporting children's knowledge and understanding of children, childhoods, and rights. Though there is limited literature on these topics thus far, a newly emerging facet of the study

of children's literature is beginning to explore rights in children's literature. Saguisag and Prickett (2016) note that the existence of children's literature as a specific genre supports the child's right to education, leisure, and creative expression (Articles 28, Article 31, and Article 13 respectively). In fact, the authors posit that children's literature is an "actualization of children's rights" (Saguisag and Prickett 2016, p. viii). This position is supported by Article 17 of the UNCRC that states:

> States Parties recognize the important function performed by the mass media and shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health. (UN General Assembly 1989, p. 5)

Access to and dissemination of information includes encouraging "the production and dissemination of children's books" (UN General Assembly 1989, p. 5). As such, one must carefully consider the nature and quality of the information children access to fulfill this right to information. Literature, as an art form, also lends itself to multiple interpretations that are affected by many variables including an individual's experience, family and cultural background, place of residence, and socioeconomic status, to name but a few. In these ways, children's literature presents itself as a rich opportunity for rights education.

Todres and Higinbotham (2016) note that children's literature plays an influential role in building and fulfilling a culture of human rights. Children's understandings of their rights and the rights of others can be supported and developed through stories that imagine and express human rights scenarios. Some stories cultivate children's appreciation for and understanding of their rights, while others convey to children that they do not have rights or that their rights are limited (Todres and Higinbotham 2016). Such rights-respecting or rights-denying scenarios open up a variety of opportunities for meaningful conversations about children's rights (Todres and Higinbotham 2016). To this end, children's books affect and shape how children see and understand the world.

Given that language, both verbal and written, constructs and shapes realities (Willig 2014), it therefore "cannot be considered to be transparent or value free" (p. 1144). As such, texts are not "neutral and value free receptacles or conveyors of information" (Willig 2014, p. 1145). From this view, then, discourses, such as those in children's storybooks, can enable or restrict certain knowledge production, perspectives, and realities by determining who is given a voice, when and how, and with what authority (Cheek 2004). In this way, the influential role of the adult emerges yet again, as storybooks written by adults for children convey to children adult views and versions of reality.

In the following section, we discuss four popular North American children's storybooks from a children's rights lens. While there is no clear definition of children's literature, for the purpose of this chapter, it is defined as English language storybooks typically produced for and read to and by preschool age children.

## Interconnecting Children's Rights and Constructions of Childhoods Through Children's Literature

Children's literature can be found in most every space that regularly serves or supports children. From family homes, to classrooms and learning environments, to doctors' and dentists' offices, children's literature holds unparalleled space in children's lives and learning. Whether read as a bedtime story, as part of literacy development at school, or to pass the time in a waiting room, children's literature can be found in almost every space that children and adults that work with and for children regularly occupy. Widely regarded and welcomed as conveyors of information and sources of enjoyment, research shows that children's literature holds the power to shape and expand children's learning in concrete and lasting ways. Reading with and to young children is commonly understood to support their cognitive, literacy, and language development (Massaro 2017; Montag et al. 2015; Murray and Egan 2014) and further fosters their social and emotional health and well-being (Rosewater and Meyers 2016). Given the role, function, and ubiquity of storybooks, children's literature is thus an influential vehicle for communicating values, information, and attitudes to children and adults alike (Albers 2016). However, as explained above, like children and childhood, literature for children is also produced and regulated by adults. As such, it is essential to critically examine how children and childhoods are conveyed and positioned in storybooks and to question how these messages may be absorbed and internalized by children (Derman-Sparks 2013; Todres and Higinbotham 2016). We believe that by adopting an intentional child rights lens when reading with children, we can begin to shift the hegemonic views of children that marginalize them and begin to acknowledge and respect children as unique individuals with inherent rights.

While research on children's rights and children's literature is limited, several studies have shed light on the value of reading and engaging with literature from a rights-based lens. In their study with children ages 4–17, Todres and Higinbotham (2016) demonstrated how children's rights are conveyed in storybooks and further illustrated how children themselves interpreted and understood these messages. The authors found that, intentionally or not, both rights fulfilling and inhibiting discourses are conveyed in storybooks and that while children's interpretations of these discourses often differed, children of all ages were able to recognize the implicit or explicit rights messages. This was exemplified during their reading of *The Story of Ferdinand* (Leaf 1936/2011), a story about a bull who refuses to fight the matador and instead returns to the countryside to sit and enjoy the flowers. A 10-year-old participant shared with the researchers that they loved the story, because, for them, it communicated the message that "it's okay to be different than everyone else around you" (Todres and Higinbotham 2016, p. 12). In Short's (2011) research with 200 students in kindergarten to grade five, they found that through educational engagement with literature, the children developed "complex understandings about global issues" (p. 59) and were empowered to take meaningful action within their school and in their local and global communities. For example, after learning about issues of hunger through storybooks, first grade students created posters about the

self-sustainability of gardens, raised funds, and donated the money to their local food bank for the purchase of seeds. After reading and learning about the Lost Boys of Sudan and "out of respect rather than pity" (Short 2011, p. 54), fourth grade students began working with an organization in Darfur to purchase goats that would provide milk to a refugee camp. These studies demonstrate the power of literature to convey messages and information to children. Furthermore, these studies illustrate children's capacity to recognize and make meaning of rights issues (Todres and Higinbotham 2016) and to take authentic and significant action in light of humanitarian issues that they encounter through storybooks (Short 2011). As Short (2011) aptly maintains:

> books can help children reflect on and connect to their own life experiences, immerse them in the lives and thinking of global cultures and places, and offer new perspectives by taking them beyond their life experiences and challenging their views of the world. (p. 59)

Importantly, as Short's (2011) research shows, storybooks can and do communicate to children that they hold the power to contribute to and influence their local and global communities. In this respect, books can serve as a powerful tool for shaping children's views of themselves, other children, children as a collective, and the world around them.

Given that awareness and understanding of children's rights remains limited around the globe (af Ursin and Hanpää 2017; Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children [CCRC] 2011, 2018), a rights-based approach to reading and engaging with literature with children is vital. Research on children's rights education has shown that children who learn about their rights have a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of rights (Covell and Howe 1999), report high self-esteem and rights-respecting perspectives (Covell and Howe 2001), and in schools in which the Rights, Respect and Responsibility initiative was fully implemented, "an identity of rights-respecting individuals" (Covell et al. 2010, p. 128) was established. In addition, teachers who taught children about rights in turn became more supportive of rights themselves (Covell et al. 2002). Furthermore, Covell et al. (2010) reported the exceptional finding that the impact of rights education had also spread to the surrounding community. Following the implementation of the Rights, Respect and Responsibility initiative in a school in Hampshire, England, the community was inspired to develop a charter that would establish Hampshire as a rights-respecting community. This initiative is inspiring as it illustrates the empowering and extensive nature of learning about rights and the outcomes that can and do arise for children, those that work with and for children, and their communities at large. In light of the educational capacity of storybooks, children's literature may also serve as an apt and accessible starting point for fostering an awareness and understanding of, and respect for, children as rights-holders.

**Children's Rights and Constructions of Childhoods in Storybooks**. While all rights enshrined in the UNCRC are of equal importance, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (2005) has identified Articles 2, 3, 6, and 12 as the "general principles" (p. 4) upon which all other rights rely. When applied or viewed holistically, the four guiding principles communicate the significant message that no

child should be discriminated against for any reason (Article 2), that the best interests of the child must be adequately considered and respected (Article 3), that children have an inherent right to life, survival, and development (Article 6), and that children's views should be given due weight in matters affecting them (Article 12) (CRC 2005). Considering the dominant Western views of children and childhoods as described in the previous sections, the view of children and childhood put forth by the UNCRC has much to offer. When we intentionally view children and childhood through the lens of children's rights, children are no longer considered to be passive human becomings but rather they are positioned as active social agents with inherent rights who contribute to and influence the same systems and structures that affect them. By employing a "rights-integrative approach" (Di Santo and Kenneally 2014, p. 396) to reading and engaging in purposeful rights-based discussions with children, as informed by the UNCRC's four guiding principles, one can begin to draw attention to and critically question how children, childhoods, and rights are articulated in storybooks for young children and whether such messages are "rights-fulfilling [or] rights-inhibiting" (Todres and Higinbotham 2016, p. 18). Table 1 defines and details the four guiding principles as they relate to other rights.

Guided by the UNCRC's four guiding principles (Articles 2, 3, 6, and 12), the aim of the following section is trifold: to demonstrate how storybooks can be read and interpreted through the lens of children's rights; to elucidate how this lens can provoke views of children and childhoods; and to offer examples of how one might engage in conversation with young children concerning the rights issues or messages conveyed in the storybook. Information gathered from four storybooks, which were part of a larger project that involved the analysis of ten preschool storybooks (Robichaud 2018), are presented. Books were selected from lists of highly circulated children's literature obtained from two Canadian libraries, Confederation Centre Public Library in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island and Toronto Public Library in Toronto, Ontario (Robichaud 2018). As such, based on the circulation lists, the storybooks represent literature that is deemed popular among young children. Each book is discussed in relation to one of the UNCRC's guiding principles.

## Article 2: The Right to Non-Discrimination

*The Day the Crayons Quit.* In this storybook written by Drew Daywalt (2013) and illustrated by Oliver Jeffers, the reader is introduced to Duncan and his box of anthropomorphic crayons. At school, when Duncan goes to collect his crayons, he instead finds a stack of letters addressed to him. In their letters, the crayons communicate to Duncan that they have had enough of the unfair treatment they receive and have quit their jobs as crayons. Through these letters, the reader and Duncan come to learn that the crayons are feeling a host of emotions, such as overworked, underappreciated, tired, and unused. Wanting his crayons to be happy, Duncan listens to his crayon's concerns and draws a picture using every color in his crayon box that meets each of their unique needs.

**Table 1** Descriptions of the UNCRC's four guiding principles

| General Principle | Implementation of the UNCRC Article |
|---|---|
| Article 2: The Right to Non-discrimination<br>All children are inherent rights holders "no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, whether they have a disability, or whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis" (UNICEF Canada n.d., p. 1) | Protection from violence and exploitation (Articles 19, 32, 34, and 36)<br>Access to nutrition (Article 24)<br>Access to care (Articles 3, 7, 18, 20, 23, 24, 38, and 40)<br>Opportunities for play (Article 31)<br>Access to education (Articles 28 and 29)<br>Freedom of expression (Article 13)<br>Discrimination against children with disabilities (Article 23)<br>Indigenous and minority rights (Articles 17, 29, and 30) |
| Article 3: The Best Interests of the Child<br>Duty-bearers must do what is best for children. "When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children" (UNICEF Canada n.d., p. 1) | "The principle of best interests appears repeatedly within the Convention (including in articles 9, 18, 20 and 21, which are most relevant to early childhood)" (CRC 2005, p. 6) |
| Article 6: The Right to Life, Survival, and Development<br>Children have an inherent right to life which "can only be implemented in a holistic manner" (CRC 2005, p. 4) | Article 2 can only be implemented through the enforcement of all "... other provisions of the Convention, including rights to health, adequate nutrition, social security, an adequate standard of living, a healthy and safe environment, education and play (arts. 24, 27, 28, 29 and 31), as well as through respect for the responsibilities of parents and the provision of assistance and quality services (arts. 5 and 18)" (CRC 2005, p. 4) |
| Article 12: Respect for the Views and Feelings of the Child<br>Children have the right to freely express their views in all matters affecting them and to have their views taken into account and given due weight (UN General Assembly 1989) | Article 13.1 "The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice" (UNCRC 1989)<br>"The right to express views and feelings should be anchored in the child's daily life at home (including, when applicable, the extended family) and in his or her community; within the full range of early childhood health, care and education facilities, as well as in legal proceedings; and in the development of policies and services, including through research and consultations" (CRC 2005, p. 7)<br>"States parties should take all appropriate measures to promote the active involvement of parents, professionals and responsible authorities in the creation of opportunities for young children to progressively exercise their rights within their everyday activities in all relevant settings, including by providing |

**Table 1** (continued)

| General Principle | Implementation of the UNCRC Article |
|---|---|
| | training in the necessary skills. To achieve the right of participation requires adults to adopt a child-centred attitude, listening to young children and respecting their dignity and their individual points of view. It also requires adults to show patience and creativity by adapting their expectations to a young child's interests, levels of understanding and preferred ways to communicating" (CRC 2005, p. 7) |

Adapted with permission from Di Santo and Robichaud (2019)

Though the main characters are indeed anthropomorphic crayons and not human children, issues of discrimination, diversity, equality, identity, and inclusion are implicit in this story's lexical and pictorial narratives. Depicted as a diverse group, each crayon is illustrated as a unique individual with unique needs. Throughout the story, the crayons, the childlike characters, communicate to Duncan, the adult-like character, the various ways in which they feel excluded or discriminated against because of their color. For example, touching on gender and sex-based discrimination, the pink crayon asks Duncan if he has not used them once in the past year because he believes that pink is a "girls' color." Illustrated in a pleading fashion, the black crayon communicates that they feel restricted to a certain identity as Duncan only uses them to outline his drawings. Though the storyline does not explicitly mention rights, in a humorous and engaging manner, the author and illustrator effectively communicate each crayon's right to not be excluded, discriminated against, or stereotyped due to their appearance, identity, or abilities. Importantly, *The Day the Crayons Quit* (2013) conveys the feelings that can ensue when an individual feels excluded or discriminated against, such as tired and empty.

While the characters are the same in the sense that they are all crayons, the pictorial narratives illustrate the diversity of each individual character, as they are each depicted as a different color with unique thoughts, feelings, abilities, and needs. For children, whose individuality and rights are often dismissed or disregarded as they are united under a singular view of children and/or childhood (James and James 2004), this story provides a meaningful opportunity to explore and discuss their right to be seen, valued, and respected for who they are as unique individuals. While the crayons did not initially feel valued for who they are, at the end of the story, Duncan draws a picture for school which shows that he has listened to and respected the concerns that were brought to his attention. Duncan celebrates and represents each crayon's uniqueness by using each color in the way that they had requested in their letter. For example, he uses pink to draw an airplane, cowboy, and dinosaur and black to draw a rainbow and a beach ball.

When reading this story with children, Todres and Higinbotham (2016) found that they were able to recognize the implicit right to non-discrimination messages conveyed in the lexical and pictorial narratives. As a third-grade student insightfully

shared, the crayons "needed Duncan to see them in different ways" (Todres and Higinbotham 2016, p. 205). This astute assertion aptly captures the essence of the right to non-discrimination. As such, this storybook offers a meaningful opportunity for children to explore their right to non-discrimination in an engaging way and to consider and discuss how inhibited rights can be effectively remedied.

| Intentional questions to share with children in relation to their rights |
|---|
| Did Duncan treat some of the crayons differently than others? Why do you think he did that? How did that make the crayons feel? How would that make you feel? |
| Do you think each crayon wanted or needed to be treated the same as the other crayons? |
| After reading each crayon's letter, what did Duncan do to make each crayon feel included and respected? |
| These characters are crayons, not humans; have you ever felt left out or treated differently? How did that make you feel? |
| How can we make sure that all people feel valued, included, and respected for who they are? |

## Article 3: The Best Interests of the Child

*Thomas' Snowsuit.* In this classic storybook written by Robert Munsch (1985) and illustrated by Michael Martchenko, the reader is introduced to a school-age child named Thomas, his mother, his school teacher, and the school principal. Refusing to put on his new brown snowsuit, which he claims is ugly, Thomas' mother, teacher, and principal all plead with him to please put on his snowsuit. After several chaotic attempts by the adults in the story, which result in Thomas wearing the principal's suit and the principal wearing the teacher's dress, Thomas' friends then call for him to play outside. Thomas then readily and willingly dons his snowsuit without assistance and without protest.

The child's right to have their best interests considered in all actions concerning them is at the crux of this story as Thomas' mother, teacher, and school principal are all striving to make a decision for Thomas with his best interests in mind. Although the lexical narrative does not address why Thomas must wear his snowsuit, the pictorial narrative provides the reader with the information to understand that had the adults permitted Thomas to go outside in the snow without wearing his snowsuit, his best interests would not have been adequately considered.

An important aspect of the principle of best interests is that duty-bearers (e.g., adults, responsible authorities) take children's views into account (CRC 2005). As the CRC (2005) maintains, children "are reliant on responsible authorities to assess and represent their rights and best interests in relation to decisions and actions that affect their well-being, while taking account of their views and evolving capacities" (p. 6). However, this feature of the best interests of the child does not necessarily and inevitably equate to their views always being acted upon. While Thomas effectively articulates to the adults in the story that he does not want to wear his snowsuit, the adults continue to consider and support his best interests by requiring that he wear his snowsuit outside. Yet, the storyline suggests that Thomas'

views may not have been respectfully considered, as the lexical narrative describes that each adult has an "enormous fight" (Munsch 1985, p. 3) with him after he refuses to put on his snowsuit. While it is clear to the reader as to why the adults could not allow Thomas to go outside in the snow without wearing his snowsuit, the lexical narrative indicates that they did not communicate to or discuss with Thomas why they could not comply. As Lansdown (2011) posits, when adults cannot comply with a child's view or wish, they must communicate the rationale behind their decision to the child. Because it was not in Thomas' best interest to play outside without wearing his snowsuit, the adults should have made clear to Thomas that while they heard and respected his views and feelings on the matter, they could not comply with his wish as it could negatively impact his health and well-being.

As discussed previously, adult views, voices, and perceptions are generally prioritized over children's in Western societies (Mayall 2000). This often leads to childhood being a time when children's active and meaning participation and voice is limited in decisions concerning their best interests. Given that the adults in the story could not satisfy Thomas' views and feelings on the matter, this storybook provides a unique opportunity to explore and discuss with children their right to have their best interests considered, the role of duty-bearers in assessing their best interests, and their right to understand how and why duty-bearers are making decisions with their best interests in mind.

| Intentional questions to share with children in relation to their rights |
| --- |
| Why did Thomas' mother, teacher, and principal not allow him to go outside in the snow without wearing his snowsuit? How did they know that he should not go outside without wearing his snowsuit? |
| How did this make Thomas feel? How would this make you feel? |
| Do you think it would have been a good idea for Thomas to go outside without wearing his snowsuit? |
| Did Thomas' mother, teacher, and principal listen to Thomas when he said no? How do you think this made him feel? |
| Should the adults have told Thomas why he could not go outside without wearing his snowsuit? How could they have communicated this to Thomas instead of getting into enormous fights with him? |

## Article 6: The Right to Life, Survival, and Development

*The Moon Inside.* In this storybook written by Sandra Feder (2016) and illustrated by Aimée Sicuro, the reader is introduced to Ella and her mother. Each night, as the sun begins to set, Ella grows afraid of the dark. One evening, as the sun is setting, Ella's mother takes her outside to marvel at the night sky. Together, they take note of the moon, the fireflies, the chirping crickets, and the sound of the wind. Before going back into the house, Ella looks up at the golden moon and shares that its color is a quieter version of her favorite color, yellow. That night, Ella turns on fewer lights in the house so that she can admire the moon up in the sky. No longer afraid, Ella goes to bed that night with the glow of the moon shining through her bedroom window.

As a storybook that addresses childhood fears, *The Moon Inside* (2016) is well poised to prompt a meaningful conversation with young readers regarding who supports them in feeling safe and secure and what they might want or need to feel safe and secure in their living and learning environments both in the present and in the future. Ella, who was afraid of the dark, required her mother's support to turn on the lights in their home each evening at sunset. In line with the CRC's (2005) recommendation that children should be involved in the promotion of their own health and wellness, Ella's mother supported her in confronting her fear of the dark. Thus, Ella actively participated in nurturing her own well-being and sense of security.

Importantly, this storybook communicates the message that Ella's mother supported her both in the present as a "being" child and as a developing "becoming" child (Uprichard 2008). Acknowledging the present reality of Ella's fear, her mother prompted her to address her fear in a safe and supportive environment. By encouraging Ella to confront and overcome her fear, her mother thus advocated for her future independence and sense of security. This is an important message, as, unlike the dominant view that chiefly recognizes children as "becoming," "children and childhood are always and necessarily 'being and becoming'" (Uprichard 2008, p. 303). Drawing from empirical research on children's views about themselves and their communities, Uprichard (2008) suggests that viewing children only as "being" neglects their future experiences of becoming adults while focusing solely on the "becoming" child places importance on who and what the child will be in the future. As such, children must be viewed and respected contemporaneously as both being and becoming (Uprichard 2008). *The Moon Inside* (2016) thus provides a powerful opportunity to discuss with children how and why duty-bearers must support children in realizing their rights both in the present and for the future.

| Intentional questions to share with children in relation to their rights |
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| How do you think Ella's fear of the dark made her feel? |
| Did Ella's mother recognize Ella's fear of the dark? |
| How did Ella's mother support and include Ella in confronting and overcoming her fear? |
| How do you think Ella felt after she confronted her fear, with the support of her mother? How might this make Ella feel in the future? |

## Article 12: Respect for the Views and Feelings of the Child

*My Heart Fills With Happiness.* In this storybook written by Monique Gray Smith (2016) and illustrated by Julie Flett, the reader comes to learn of various experiences and situations that fill each character's heart with happiness, such as the smell of bannock baking in the oven, singing, walking barefoot on the grass, and holding hands with someone you love. At the end of the story, the reader is invited to reflect on and share what fills their heart with happiness.

While children irrevocably have the right to participate and express their views and feelings on matters concerning them, they equally hold the right to not express their views and feelings (Todres and Higinbotham 2016). Notably, this storybook provides an opportunity to draw attention to discuss and fulfill this essential aspect. As the lexical and pictorial narratives convey, each character expresses a different response concerning what makes their heart happy. The story concludes with the reader being offered the opportunity to answer the question "What fills your heart with happiness?" (Smith 2016, p. 20), while the pictorial narrative portrays a child looking at their reflection in the mirror, indicating that the reader may also reflect on what makes their heart happy.

When reading this storybook, children should be supported in their right to choose to respond or not respond to the question. Bearing in mind that the CRC (2005) recognizes that children make choices and communicate their views and feelings in various ways, children should be provided meaningful opportunities to communicate their views and feelings via their preferred mode of communication, including but not limited to verbal or written communication or nonverbal communication such as "play, body language, facial expressions, and drawing and painting" (CRC 2009, p. 7). Like other marginalized social groups, the child's right to have their views and feelings heard and taken into account is most often restricted (Mayall 2000); thus, it is essential to honor the various ways in which they choose to express themselves. In acknowledging, supporting, and respecting children's various means of communicating, we may then begin to shift the dominant view that children's views and feelings are immature, irrational, and not yet worthy of adult's full consideration and respect. With this in mind, *My Heart Fills With Happiness* (2016) may be used to support relevant and intentional learning about the child's right to choose to communicate their views and feelings in ways that are meaningful to them.

| Intentional questions to share with children in relation to their rights |
| --- |
| How did each character let us know what fills their heart with happiness? Did they tell us with their words? Did they show us through the actions? |
| How do you like to communicate your views and feelings? Through talking, drawing, dancing, playing, or perhaps another way? |
| The end of the storybook invited us to share what fills our hearts with happiness; you can think about this and share your answer if you would like. Would you like to share your answer with your words, or would you like to share in another way? |

## Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter, we have shed light on the power and control that adults wield over children's lives, including the social construction of their childhoods and the messages, information, and viewpoints that are conveyed to children through adult produced literature. We have demonstrated that while children's literature is rich with rights scenarios, recognizing and addressing these messages and subsequently

engaging in purposeful conversations requires an intentional "rights-integrative" (Di Santo and Kenneally 2014, p. 396) lens.

As adults, our perceptions send powerful messages as to how we see and value children and childhoods, how we interact with and speak to them, how we listen to and regard their views and actions, how we include them, the opportunities we provide, and whether or not we honor their rights. For children, then, how we view them and construct their childhoods within society affects all facets of their lives, learning, and experiences. Put simply, our views and actions have consequences that affect children. Given the hegemonic view of children and childhoods that diminishes and often disregards the inherent rights of children, it is our belief that a shift in thinking is needed. As duty-bearers, we must recognize and make widely known that children's rights are inherent to them; that is, rights are not bestowed on children at our discretion, rather, children are born with rights that must be honored.

However, in order to exercise and enjoy their rights, children must first be aware of their rights as their capacity to construct and influence their lives and their world begins with an awareness and understanding of their rights (af Ursin and Hanpää 2017). Given the global lack of awareness of children's rights (af Ursin and Hanpää 2017; CCRC 2011, 2018), it is thus unsurprising that children and their rights continue to be undermined. We can challenge the dominant discourses concerning children by recognizing their agency, respecting their perspectives, and honoring their actions as social actors with rights.

Respecting children as rights holders and viewing children's literature through the lens of children's rights does not require adopting an entirely new viewpoint or way of thinking, but rather, it requires that we acknowledge how existing media can be used to inform both children and adults about children's rights. As Todres and Higinbotham (2016) aptly and inspiringly assert, children's literature "meets children where they are and provides the opportunity to engage children in discussions about rights within the familiar borders of their favorite stories" (p. 209). Although children's literature is but one possible avenue for challenging the dominant views and discourses that thwart children's capacities as rights holders, we conclude that it is a powerful one.

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# Selling the Dream: The Darker Side of the "Superman" Athlete

**35**

Nikos C. Apostolopoulos

**Abstract**

With humans being the architects of meaning, Nietzsche's superman (übermensch) was representative of a system of values and a way of life of a society in need of a heroic narrative. Although this narrative is not unique to any era or culture, societal psychological and social values, beliefs, and attitudes are forged from its ever-changing needs and motivations. Within this chapter, we expound how this heroic narrative, at one time symbolic of the highest aims of mankind, mirroring the ideal morals of a community, has been abducted, coerced, and exploited by media to serve its own selfish commercial needs, a dark side in guise of the preservation of a heroic tale. With the use of numerous techniques (i.e., public relations, propaganda, strategic communications), media capitalized on the enormous influence celebrated athletes and sports has in both industrial societies and developing nations. Through the use of symbols and signs, the advertisements created and disseminated onto the public carried with them invisible messages with the sole intent or goal of persuading the consumer to purchase product. To achieve this, they manipulated the individual's perception of reality, engineered to create a *symbolon*, itself inspiring loyalty by the consumer to an athlete, a team, or a brand.

**Keywords**

Symbols · Culture · Commercialism · Sports · Athlete · Hero

Meaning is not without ideology, for it is grounded in constructs representing value systems and beliefs, themselves codified into narratives. Although narratives are not

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universal, they are historical stories that ground cultural values. Narratives evolve over time as a function of the social, psychological, and cultural forces operating on an ever-changing audience, based on their needs and motivations (Allison and Goethals 2015), with culture consisting of values, beliefs, artifacts, and ways of behaving and of communication responsible for the production and development of language, thought processes, art, laws, styles, and attitudes (DeVito 2001). A more abstract definition suggests that it is "*a collective programming of the mind which distinguishes one group from another* (Hofstede 1980, p. 25)... *Mental programming, patterns of thinking and feeling, and potential acting* (Hofstede 1991, p. 4)." According to Jones (2007), the ingredients of culture cited below are not easily acquired, since their attainment is a slow process, acquired from birth, influenced by family, school, workplace, friends, newspapers, books, and other sources:

- Learning values (dominant belief and attitudes)
- Partaking of rituals (collective activities)
- Modeling against heroes (role models)
- Understanding symbols (myths, legends, dress, jargon, lingo...) (Jones 2007, p. 3)

With humans being the architects of meaning, different attitudes determined by both historical and cultural conditions are responsible for defining individuals of exemplary physical and mental skills, and attitudes (i.e., heroes). During times of great social, political, and religious upheavals, they are adumbrative of a system of values and a way of life of the society that created them. They have been eternalized in the literature of societies and cultures from ancient Greece and Rome (Heracles, Perseus, Aeneas, Achilles, Ajax, etc.), the middle ages and renaissance (Beowulf, Roland, etc.), and modern society (Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela etc.). Among this group, we can include the modern day "athlete," for like heroes, they are one among many, larger than life, raised above their peers by exceptional deeds, driven to challenge the norms of their world, as well as being free to choose and to act.

Heroes and athletes are archetypes responsible for a change of narrative, for when our perception is incongruous with the norms of our society and culture; they are representative of a schism from the mundane, with their narrative being one of transformation and transcendence. In contemplating this, societies and cultures seek to define their heroes and athletes, for there is a general consensus that they are an essential fabric of society, mirroring the ideal morals of a community as well as being a symbol for the highest aims of mankind (Hume 2000).

In the nineteenth century, against the backdrop of equity and progress, the German philosopher and cultural critic, Nietzsche (1844–1900), considered changing the predominant European religious narrative that was bent on turning man into a sublime miscarriage (Fortich 2010). By declaring "*God is dead*," Nietzsche ushered in but more importantly suggested the creation of the "*übermensch*" (*superman* or *overman*), an offensive figurehead that would challenge the religious hierarchy that for centuries controlled the power and knowledge structure. By declaring man as the *overman*, this upset the religious dogma that expressed

sovereignty over humankind, relegating them to a herd existence, with the individuals of society feeling a sense of powerlessness. The *übermensch* acts as his own God, neither slave nor master, but a master of self-discipline, finding value in his life experience(s), while having the power to banish herd instincts from his mind. This sentiment was also voiced by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882):

> The great difficulty is that men do not think enough of themselves, do not consider what it is that they are sacrificing when they follow in a herd. . . (Ferguson 1964, p. 49)

The liberating attitude symbolized by the *übermensch* was a breath of fresh air, for this dynamic and energetic figure represented a symbolic conscious revolt against a hierarchy that was largely responsible for narrowing the base of human understanding. The statement "*God is dead*" was more polemic than an exercise in close reasoning, aimed at opening society's eyes to a world without fixed parameters of meaning and truth (Grimwood 2011). Championed with this new vision society was destined to become an arena of relentless antagonism between religion, with its traditional beliefs, and social progress, represented by the findings of science.

The creation of the "*superman*" was a circumstance governed by a view stemming from the age of *Enlightenment* that the universe was subjugated to and by physical laws (i.e., Newton's three laws of motion) and not by divine providence. This drone known as the *Scientific Revolution* was a movement that caused a number of cultural and intellectual changes in Europe, affecting every aspect of European life (politics, religion, literature, philosophy, and science) (Behbudzada 2017). This revolution, the modern day "promethean fire," empowered people with the knowledge and abilities to shape their own future and independence. This revolution represented an idea that was both powerful enough to direct thought and ambiguous enough to hold within it a range of meaning (Cheek 2013; Koselleck 1985). Interestingly, Nietzsche quickly realized that science itself seamlessly slotted into the same foundational space that was once occupied by religion (Grimwood 2011). Therefore, his "*superman*" forced society to again re-evaluate itself, for Nietzsche cautioned for the need to remain conscious to the importance of spiritual values, for beliefs are the fabric from which society's moral principles, laws, and rules were derived from (Barnes 2004).

Athletes are the reification of the "*superman,*" for like the qualities of Nietzsche's "*superman,*" they are akin to self-mastery, creators of new values, free from external influences, but more importantly transcend the abstract definition of the "common man." Athletic endeavor constantly defines or best redefines "man," for the knowledge obtained through movement delineates qualities which may influence consciousness, the day to day activities within the society in which we exist. Human movement is an interplay between harmony and discord, essentially a definition of man and his relationship to his environment, a relationship defined by physical accomplishments, associated with both mental and emotional growth (Apostolopoulos 2012). The attractiveness toward the hero/athlete fulfills important cognitive and emotional needs, such as our need for meaning, hope, inspiration, and personal growth (Allison and Goethals 2015). Since the athlete narrative provides

a blueprint for how our life stories may unfold, these individuals are often promoted to the position of a role model, especially if their role is associated with the quality of a moral exemplar (Feezell 2005).

Defining the modern athlete as the *superman* demands a look at socio-economic transformations, themselves reflective of the rumblings of a dark side, created and defined as well as subjugated to and influenced by the media, as dictated through the forum of public relations (PR), which is integral to the organization of sports and its goals. This powerful and influential force of contemporary society has been greatly instrumental in perpetuating the "*overman,*" for the preservation of the heroic paradigm in great part has been largely motivated by the commodification of the athlete. In the modern era, media has been responsible for broadening the influence(s) of athletes and heroes through the use of very popular cultural modes such as film, television, social media (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etc.) and even computer games (EA sports – FIFA, Nintendo-Super Mario), with their appeal becoming ever more ubiquitous (Silk et al. 2014).

Sports has an enormous influence on culture, with celebrated athletes making a moral difference in people's lives, especially in children (Feezell 2005). Although sport is but one aspect of modern life, it has an extraordinarily wide scale of influence, which is widely encountered in both industrial societies and developing nations (Boyle 1963). According to Boyle:

> Sport permeates any number of levels of contemporary society, and it touches upon and even deeply influences such disparate elements as status, race relations, business life, automotive design, clothing styles, the concept of the hero, language, and ethical values. For better or for worse, it gives form and substance to much in American Life (Boyle 1963, pp. 3–4)

The omnipresence and the appeal of sport has been a crucial vehicle for media to capitalize and sway public minds and opinions, encouraging great changes in society. With sport being an integral component of today's society, its consistent exposure both in "live" mediated form (i.e., TV, live stream (YouTube), etc.) and as a subject routinely inscribed into written form (i.e., newspapers, magazines, sport journals, etc.) (Kennedy and Hills 2009; Rowe 2015) has made athletes and teams a medium of tremendous power and influence in society.

Lying at the heart of this darkness and playing a significant role in advertising sport and sport images to attract and capture consumers' attention has been the persuasive powers of advertising. With use of star athletes, it has played a prominent role in perpetuating the narrative of the transcendence of the ordinary man to the "*superman*" (the sign, the symbol). To accomplish this, advertising works with sign systems utilizing them particularly for commercial purposes (Solik 2014). These systems and the meaning behind them are either denotative or connotative in meaning, having either a direct, explicit meaning or reference (denotation) or capable of suggesting or associating additional ideas (connotation) (Godzich 1978). The importance of signs and their significance has been recognized through-out the history of philosophy and psychology with Aristotle and Plato both exploring the relationships between signs and the world (Danesi 2004).

To create meaning both consciously and subconsciously, advertising has been instrumental in the development of a persuasive set of frameworks, which are both its heart and pulse, conveying meaning but more importantly heightening the influence behind a sign or a symbol (i.e., athlete, team, sports merchandise, etc.). The advertisements created by media and disseminated to the public are the invisible carriers of certain messages that may themselves be either accurate or inaccurate and or exaggerated, with the goal being the persuasion of the consumer to purchase a product (Balci and Ozgen 2017), but more importantly to create loyalty to an athlete, a team, or a brand.

According to Umberto Eco, signs have no analogous, motivational, or correlational link with what they represent in reality because they are arbitrarily produced and mediated for our understanding of reality (Eco 1976). In other words, the object (the sign/symbol) is correlative to the subject (the consumer, spectator, fan), manipulating the individual's perception of reality, their knowledge of the external world, and the human capacity for action or practices (Theodorou 2006). These frameworks (advertising and marketing, propaganda, organizational and strategic communications, information/influence campaigns, and public relations) are central to the exercise of power across all spheres (Bakir et al. 2018). They draw upon cultural fields such as sociology, communications studies, philosophy, as well as rhetoric and behavioral economics (Bakir et al. 2018). The father of public relations (PR), Edward Bernays, argued that PR is not a gimmick but a necessity. He viewed PR as a form of strategic communication that practitioners employ to "engineer consent" by creating the images and symbols that will resonate with the public (Pfau and Wan 2006). In his book *Propaganda*, Bernays writes the following:

> The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government, which is the true ruling power of our country. (p. 9)

He further states that:

> We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. . .whatever attitude one chooses to take it remains a fact that in almost every act of our daily lives. . .we are dominated by a small number of persons. . .who understand the mental processes and social patterns of the masses. It is they who pull the wires which control the public mind, who harness old social forces and contrive new ways to bind and guide the world. (Bernays 1928, pp. 9–10)

As part of the modern cultural system, the advertising media associated with the sports industry has realized that to fully entrench themselves in the minds of the consumer, persuasion was the order of the day, cultivated by language and images, ingredients for the creation of symbols. The sign itself communicates about concrete and abstract objects (the name), with the symbol being the experience of complex concepts (meaning) (Morrell 2011). As suggested above, in order to accomplish this, the modern cultural system runs sign systems rampant, with projections of this media

exacting immeasurable influence on the minds of the populace (Trifonas 2001). Further, according to Trifonas,

> It does not discriminate between those possessing innocence and those wanting knowledge in the age of consumer oriented global economies where the desire for instant gratification is driven by the digital mantra of the day. (Trifonas 2001, p. 1)

Literature suggests that for this to function there needs to exist a mediation in mass culture, and a role in cultural symbolism (Holt 2006; Jones and Richardson 2007; Moore and Reid 2008; Wengrow 2008), with symbols traversing the connection between the athlete and the public (i.e., fans). The meaning of "*symbol,*" originating from the Greek term "*symbolon,*" which literally means "thrown together," describes how two things that were part of a unit at one time, are broken apart, and reassembled again into a unit (Parmentier 2015). This definition to some extent can be applied to define the creative process of sport. In the pursuit of harmony (movement), the assemblage of various patterns determined and defined by the anatomy of the body (i.e., arms, legs, and torso) (the unit) is the genesis of a new physical quality of man, one that leaves the "*ordinary*" individual in awe, with athletes and their exemplary athletic feats consigned to *mythical* and *godlike* proportions (the symbol). For instance, when Usain Bolt set the current 100-m world record (9.58 s) at the Berlin IAAF (International Association of Athletic Federations) World Championships in 2009, the crowd's euphoria was reflective of a combination of both the athlete and spectator. This euphoria produced an inspiring experience, reaching beyond mere sport into the moral and semi-divine dimension (Reid 2012). Usain Bolt's winning stance resembled an archer drawing a giant bow, mirroring the ancient Greek statues of Zeus hurling lightning bolts (Reid 2012) or Poseidon with his trident. This and other expressions of equal proportion by other athletes are found within the numerous playing fields and stadia within which the coaches and athletes perform their experiment(s) and where spectators gather to observe these modern-day spectacles. For like the hero, the modern-day athlete is demonstrating the embodiment of the ideals of the creating culture, reflected in their actions and their motivations. Continuing with the analogy of Usain Bolt's infamous archer pose, we discover that this mythological godlike pose, which exploited Bolt's physique, has culminated in the marketing of a line of clothing emblazoned with this pose by one of his main sponsors (Puma) (Reid 2012), in an attempt to create loyal followers who would purchase the jersey and identify with Bolt.

Due to the personal identification people have with sport, sport marketing is different from other types (Mullin 1983), since sport itself is a social construct and service marketed within a community of people (Traquattrini et al. 2015). To sustain the connection between the category labels (i.e., athlete) and the consumer's need to self-associate with products, media again has taken a page out of Bernays's book, specifically the concept of emotions and emotional connection, a concept that some suggest bridges the gap between psychoanalysis and PR (Holbrook 2015; Loose 2015). Emotional affinity specifically references the understanding of unconscious desires, suggesting that human behavior is driven more by emotion than by logic. Bernays writes:

. . .many of man's thoughts and actions are compensatory substitutes for desires. . . A thing may be desired not for its intrinsic worth or usefulness, but because he has unconsciously come to see in it a symbol of something else. . .human desires are the steam which makes the social machine work. . .since the group mind in place of thoughts has impulses, habits and emotions. . .. (Bernays 1928)

To capitalize on this desire-based emotion, the direct and subtle marketing of the athlete and the associative products has the power to swing emotional currents, for sports content has allowed media to reach audiences, and the money and publicity generated from the media is responsible for sports becoming profitable and culturally important (Raney and Bryant 2006). The continuous interpretation of the appeal of the athlete is injected to the public through publicity channels implanting both thoughts and emotions into the human mind and psyche, persuading and controlling the public mind, with the public receiving their desired impression without being truly conscious of it (Bernays 1928). This deliberate influence on the individual through the power of persuasion creates a feeling of a false sense of self-empowerment, since the subjective valuation of sport identity of the consumer is based on the support of the teams or individual athletes that consumers identify with Ratten and Ratten (2011). In addition, the emotional investment of the consumer with the athlete, the teams, and product is responsible for the perpetuation of the interest, participation, and consumption (Chalip 1992).

Athletes, and that which they have come to symbolize, ensures an increase in name recognition and the subsequent profitability for companies generating billions in advertising revenues and merchandising sales. To guarantee a constant following from the consumer, media and sports advertising have mindfully created and constructed the belief in sport as a new religion. In the eyes of cultural theorists, the social practice of sport is similar to religion, for it initiates individuals into rules and norms of virtuous and vicious behavior helping one orient more broadly in the world (McNamee 2001). The need to put one's trust in, relate to, and identify with something is powerful, enhancing the appeal of sports (Moller 2017) among the followers of teams and athletes, arousing feelings of euphoria and despair (Raney and Bryant 2006).

With teams and players having the power to unify and/or divide communities and nations (Raney and Bryant 2006), mass media have aligned themselves with athletes that feature highly in the consumer's mind and society. Athletes such as Michael Jordan, and Cristiano Ronaldo for Nike, Usain Bolt for Puma, Tom Brady for Under Armour, and Lionel Messi for Adidas have been instrumental in winning and keeping the attention of the audience. By linking their sporting achievement and personality in ways which have resonances in popular common sense (Whannel 2002), sports media has created a forum for using their endorsements in support of activities and products. The tactical use of athletes to endorse product works on the psychological principle of "social proof," by which people decide what is correct by finding out what others believe to be correct (Harrison 2011). Realizing the conceptual influence and power of athletes, their endorsement of product (i.e., clothes, shoes, etc.), accomplishes two things. First and most important, the consumer self-

associates with the symbol (i.e., Nike: swoosh, Puma: cat, Adidas: triple stripe), and secondly, the perception is created that the product(s) ratified by the athletes are of high quality (i.e., Air Jordan shoes). In short, identifying with all that is associated with the athlete and their sport (i.e., teams, apparel etc.), a nourishment of the consumer's desire for identity occurs, initiating a process signifying their identification with others.

This semiotic force, functioning in real-time, suggests that the symbolic use of the athlete enhances the effects of the message as the effects of the sign are internalized by the consumer (Trifonas 2001). Realizing the importance of category labels (i.e., athlete, teams, etc.) and the fans self-identifying with products and brands (Reed II et al. 2012), a narrative is created by several mass media stimuli (i.e., television (ESPN), social media (Twitter, Instagram, etc.) constructing a behavior that precipitates a wide range of effects centered on capturing the fan's attention with a symbol. This symbol (i.e., athlete or team), engendered by a well-orchestrated narrative, propagates an allegiance and to a greater degree reconstitutes the fan's identity with the athlete, team, and sports brand. An identification with these symbols solidifies a psychological connection demonstrating a strong commitment that is persistent, resistant to change, and influences cognitive thoughts and behavior (Funk and Pastore 2000; Kolbe and James 2000). The engagement and entertainment of the fan satisfies a universal search for something beyond the ordinary and the monotonous (Koppett 1994), motivating a greater interaction between the fans and the object of their fanaticism (Samra and Wos 2014).

Cultivated by the media through strategic planning and communication, this interaction emphasizes an individual's inexorable yearning for something beyond the mundane that runs deep in the human psyche, arising from a need to belong, to experience life in terms of a harmonious interaction – with others (Coffey 2008). By fostering an obsession with sport, it satisfies the psychological and sociological needs of the fan regardless of age, gender, and the stage of life (Raney and Bryant 2006). According to Raney and Bryant (2006), this obsession is separated into three motivational categories – emotional, cognitive and behavioral, and social.

Manipulation of these categories enables and ensures a continued support and creation of a loyal fan base, since success on a scoreboard does not necessarily translate to full stadiums (Bondarenko 2015; Webster and Clements 2007). To guarantee continued support, the recent signing of Cristiano Ronaldo by Juventus (Serie A – Italian Football League) illustrates a practice by teams to maintain a competitive edge over other teams, satisfying their loyal fans. Ronaldo's signing revealed the carnivalesque of popular culture, with the scrupulous, well planned, and strategic communication practices of media and advertising responsible for creating a frenzy amongst loyal fans, binding and separating human beings from each other in relation to club allegiances (Trifonas 2001). To engage emotions further, the artificial symbol, the jersey, was released. Assigning value to an object, (the jersey), this conveyed a cultural value to the purchaser (the fans), furthering the development of the relationship between human activities and the symbol (Zhang et al. 2010).

Fueled by the power of media and advertising, a ludicrous connection has been created in the disillusioned minds of the fans that the purchase and possession of any

material goods (i.e., jerseys, shoes, etc.) is somewhat magically endowed with the qualities of the athlete. That is, the explicit meaning of the symbol, its realistic existence (form, material, color, etc.), is extrapolated to an aesthetic and emotional existence (Zhang et al. 2010), as interpreted and understood by the individual purchasing the product. This is reminiscent of parietal art, itself steeped in the concept of sympathetic magic. At its most basic, sympathetic magic is based on a fundamental relationship between the subject and the image, a belief that possession of an image of a person or animal gives one power (Clottes and Lewis-Williams 1998). In other words, the "*superman*" qualities of these athletes are magically transferred to the object, creating a magical connection to the aura and the power of the athlete and team for the fan.

The frenzy created by the marketing machine with Ronaldo (the symbol) accounts for the power of the symbol as witnessed by the astonishing monetary return to Juventus and to Adidas (manufacturer of jersey). The transfer fee for Ronaldo from Real Madrid (La Liga- Spanish Football League) was estimated at 140 million dollars (US); however, within 24-h of the signing, 62.4 million dollars (US) was recouped on jersey sales (520,000 jerseys at 120 dollars) alone, with Juventus receiving 6–9 million and Adidas pocketing the rest (Campbell 2018).

Being one of the world's most marketable athletes, his signing brought huge attraction to Juventus as evidenced by a nearly 20% increase in the team's value on the stock market (Wilson 2018). The expectation from the fans is that with the five time Ballon D'Or winner, Juventus will finally lift the Champions League trophy, having last won it in the 1995/96 season (Wilson 2018). However, what was most interesting with the cultural creation of this event was media's implicit responsibility for helping to create, design, and execute the cultural significance of this move to Serie A. The symbolic semantic behind this orchestration, itself a sequence of symbols, was culpable for meshing the object (Ronaldo) to emotional values (the fan), hiding the intended meaning of the media (the sender) which was monetary success. With the signing of Ronaldo, the Serie A, at one time the greatest league in the football world, can once again earn the respect of athletes and other football leagues, since the greatest player in the world has decided to play and throw his support behind them. Culturally, the fallout was massive, for the hope of this football league is not to be viewed as a "stepping-stone" to other international leagues (English Premier or La Liga), but will draw star athletes from other leagues. However, more importantly, domestic players may choose to remain at home, potentially having the reverse effect where players from other countries may consider a move to compete in Italy.

A major drawback of the advertising and marketing machine of athletes and sports has been the dissolution of the classical ideal of the athlete and the importance of sport as a vehicle "contributing constructively to the harmonious and complete development of man, body and soul" as voiced by the late Pope John Paul II (1995). Performing and asserting themselves in the presence of others (Walker 1980), the athlete's identity is intricately woven within society, with sport "defining the culture of the world" (Smart 2005).

In ancient Greece, athletes, athletics, and the media (poets) that extoled them played a very important social and educational role celebrating and inspiring true virtue (areté) (Reid 2012). The myths and stories created were used to convince individuals to act in a morally proper manner (Frohnen 1990). *Areté* is understood here in its multiple forms (ethical, intellectual, and moral), cultivated with care, in order to realize the ancient Greek ideal of *kalos kai agathos* (kalokagathia), merging the concepts of athletic prowess and fitness of the body (*kalos* – beautiful), and (*kai*) the beauty of the soul and the excellence of character (*agathos* – goodness) (Evangeliou 2010). It refers to the wholeness and harmony of the human body, conceptually conceived as an ideal harmony of the body and mind, as well as the beautiful and good human being (Reid 2012).

Advances in broadcasting technology (i.e., satellites) accounts for the proliferation of sporting events to hundreds of millions if not billions of viewers (FIFA 2018 attracted 3.4 billion viewers) (Roxborough 2018), enabling the television-marketing axis to fabricate a well-orchestrated rise in the popularity of elite sport. However, such an acceleration has changed the culture of sport, with *kalokagathia* replaced by the concepts of commercialism, objectification, and sexualization (Davis 2001). A change of such magnitude comes with a price, a dark side, with humanity suffering at the hands of those who manipulate the representation of sport and use it as a form of social control, witnessed with the development in fanzines and tabloids, mediums responsible for the myth-making of a well-crafted persona created for public consumption (Trifonas 2001).

The crafting of the sports idol places athletes under constant social scrutiny, with fans expressing the entitlement that they "*want to know and have the right to know.*" The difficulty arises when the athlete, whom at one time expressed an *Oakeshottian philosophy*, that is, the possession of proper pride necessary to resist the temptation of the twin sins of hubris and childish materialism (Frohnen 1990), breaks this code and is no longer considered a moral exemplar. This has major repercussions, for sports fans are more intense, obtrusive, and enduring compared to other forms of social activities (Gwinner and Swanson 2003). Anything upsetting their emotional, psychological, and perhaps spiritual commitment, traits similar to devout religious followers, is an affront to their identity, since as individuals they are unable to form self-images in the absence of a social identity derived from group affiliations (Tajfel 1982).

With the sports industry invariably creating opportunities for fans to acquire "strength and a sense of identity" (Kelman 1961), athletes and teams associated with the negative pursuit of wealth, power, and social distinction over others (hubris and arrogance) are harshly criticized. The once myth-like persona fabricated for and adopted by the fans is no longer recognized as possessing übermensch (*superman*) qualities capable of transcending the ordinary. Betrayed, the motivated fan, who aligned their identity with the athlete (the symbol), expressed through their visual consumption behavior (jerseys, shoes, etc.) (Fisher and Wakefield 1998), changes, since the belief in the myth is shattered, and the image of sport is tarnished.

With astronomical sums of money associated with sports (i.e., sponsorships, broadcasting rights, sporting goods, and equipment) (Baimbridge et al. 1996; Moller

2017), any scandal and bad publicity that threatens its connectedness to the fan threatens itself and the fan's willingness to engage in consumption of material and consumerism (Fisher and Wakefield 1998). With information travelling at unprecedented speed, sports industry leaders are acutely aware of the repercussions of any ripple effects of their sponsored athlete's actions. Athlete's expressing personality qualities of extreme or foolish pride, dangerous overconfidence, in combination with arrogance (i.e., Tiger Woods, Lance Armstrong, Mike Tyson, etc.), break any emotional bond with the fan. They are judged as undesirable no longer possessing any relevant value. The ethicist, Spencer writes:

> ...rather than encourage moral virtue and spiritual values, [they] promote the antithesis...through egotism, cynicism, nihilism, [and] an obsessive focus on money [they] disrespect competitors and society. There are frequent news reports about athletes who violate civil and moral behavioural codes through alcohol and drug abuse, gambling, theft, promiscuity, violence and even murder (Spencer 2000).

What is ironic is that the objectives of the sports industry, mainly the exploitation of commercial potential and bottom-line results, with less emphasis on altruism or a sense of social responsibility without expectation of return (Gwinner and Swanson 2003), are catalysts for both the fanaticism and disdain of the fan. As perpetrators of the addiction of the fan, through manipulation of the religious instinct (or drive) of humans (Marshall 1897), an innate and instinctive psycho-social behavior occurs (Woodburne 1919), with the sports industry fostering and maintaining an identification of the fan with the athlete, team, and brand. Deriving an identity from their affiliation with the group (Kelman 1961), fans are more likely to adopt and believe in the opinions and actions of others (athlete, team, etc.).

This marketing of sports as a superhuman spectacle smacks of the effects of the proverbial Marxian "*opiate for the masses.*" For, its hyperreality, like the side effects of opium, the sports industry leaders have purposefully created states of euphoria, relaxation, and analgesia that stupefy spectators. The administration of this *sport-opioid* creates an illusory world predicated through the actions of the athletes, symbolic of a hatched escape "*capturing and seizing of men's souls, in the fanning of fanaticism, in the proliferation of the tedium*" (Shepard 1974, p. 264). However, when the conforming fan becomes dissatisfied, and the "*opioid trip*" of the sports industry has run its course, the narrative changes. With *eyes wide shut*, the nightmare dream of the modern "*superman,*" as devised by the sports marketing industry, borrowed from an ideological movement that was meant as a revolt to the religious hierarchy, is exposed for what it truly is, a cultural experiment of commercialism.

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# Pedagogy and the Unlearning of Self

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## The Performance of Crisis Situation Through Popular Culture

Stephen Ching-kiu Chan

## Contents

### Abstract

Pedagogy in popular culture is embedded as a process of self-learning among subjects implicated in the reproduction of collective anxieties and desires. In face of uncertainty about future, cinema performs anxiety and fear on layers of disorienting common experience. Over a span of three decades since the city's late colonial period under British rule, the world-renowned filmmaker Johnnie To has created memorable scenarios which put to play Hong Kong's crisis situation – either

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at the 1997 political transition or in light of the widespread social protests invoked by the Umbrella Movement of 2014 and its aftermath. With this focus, I examine social antagonism via local moments of postcoloniality. As people live through everyday fear, anger, and anxiety while learning, i.e., struggling, to cope with the despair, distrust, and disengagement that ruptures the cityscape, the embedded sociopolitical experience – especially among the youth – contributes to the critical (un)learning of self in a cultural situation edging away from hope beyond the screened space of affect. Thus, the pedagogy of culture underpins the politics of affect casting doubt on hopelessness in the performance of ordinary culture under the status quo.

## Rethinking Cultural Criticism

In any cultural situation, pedagogy registers how individual learns from others in re-creating oneself within the consensual regime of hegemony. I ask what a pedagogy of culture entails for the social body today facing a *cultural* situation edging away from trust, tolerance, and credibility. Recent experiences in civil disobedience, social antagonism, and political deadlock suggest that dissent, as the antithesis of consent, is the condition of possibility for the self in struggle under the unique context concerned.

Pedagogy in popular culture is embedded as a process of self-learning engaged by subjects implicated in the reproduction of collective anxieties and shaping of social desires. As such it intervenes in the public sphere, whereby a cultural subject learns to situate himself/herself and acquires one's place as a social being. While this takes place under the status quo, it involves the process by which the subject struggles with the shaping of agency, identities, and differences. In the aggregate process, the resultant pedagogical *act* of self-recognition entails multiple refashioning of "who I am"; often, it engenders the performative process of *unlearning* the hegemonic act of embedded social practices.

Over a span of three decades since the city's late colonial rule by Britain, the world-renowned filmmaker Johnnie To has created memorable cinematic scenarios of Hong Kong's crisis situation – either at the conjunctures of the 1997 political transition or in the wake of the widespread protest and unrest invoked by the Umbrella Movement of 2014 and its aftermath. With this focus I examine the play of social antagonism and politics of affect via moments of dissensus.

## Pedagogy: A Popular Approach

Frequently, To (1993a, b, 2004, 2016) dramatizes a threesome engagement with the city's situation to underscore moments of crisis, chaotic or desperate, alluding to the contemporary setting whether as played out in hospital shoot-outs (*Three*), judo

combats (*Throw Down*), or underworld chases (*Heroic Trio*, *Executioners*). In face of collective uncertainty about future, cinema performs popular anxiety and fear on layers of disorienting experience among people. For in their mundane life, locals find themselves surrounded by variedly accentuated voices while struggling, i.e., *learning*, to cope affectively with the feeling of loss, frustration, and, eventually, ennui that captures the perplexing field of cultural-political transformation in view.

Typically, such a threesome *play* with crisis involves To's filmic subjects engaging with one another amid moments of political complexity. With the contemporary performance of collective crisis mediated through local scenarios of rescues, combats, or chases, the social self is caught in a subtle cinema of dissensus and antagonism against hegemonic forces of all kinds. In face of Hong Kong's unknown future come 2047, 50 years from 1997 under the "One Country, Two Systems" scheme set in upon the withdrawal of the British-Hong Kong regime (after over 150 years of colonial rule), I examine how dislocated cultural subjects live with fear, anger, and anxiety while performing their precarious presence. Struggling to anchor the present in the looming environment of despair, distrust, and disengagement that ruptures the cityscape and its social world, the self is thus mediated and shaped in situations of crisis. I ask via cinematic performativity how any engaged sociopolitical experience, not least among the youth today, may contribute to the critical (un)learning of self in a cultural situation edging away from hope, beyond the screened space of affect.

## Johnnie To and the Moment of Crisis

With the proliferation of symptoms of antagonism via the Umbrella Movement of 2014 (Chan 2014; Cheung 2017; Yuen 2015), the people of Hong Kong would realize how the fate of their changing life condition is tied up with substantial tensions between the individual and the collective. Indeed, drastic renegotiations have evolved between the self and the overwhelming system of Chinese hegemony. The collective as experienced through popular cinema tends to leave its audience with processes to problematize the shaping of individuality as cultural-political subject. With regime change, the negotiations involved are immensely complex; when they fall through, and they often do, the disruption of collective well-being results in widespread moral disintegration and a long-lasting critical condition in the social body (Cheng and Yuen 2018). Addressing such disruptions, To's early references to imaginary nationhood is direct but non-specific, modern but archetypal. Set against the backdrop of a legendary rather than historical narrative, they tend to adopt a style and ambience approaching cosmopolitanism, marked by a mode of innovatively situated sensibilities roaming in transnational circuits of cultural consumption since the 1990s. This hybrid, fluid capture of the local is narrativized in To's two 1993 films, namely, *The Heroic Trio* and its sequel *Executioners* (co-directed with Siu-Tung Ching), with the quirky mythological chant that "China cannot exist without an Emperor!" Central to Sandy Shaw's screenplay, the motif invokes significations of deranged national allegiance. Spectators were left with a

funky, stimulating play of anxieties and ambivalences that unleash the inner fear and crisis experienced by locally bound subjects before the place's change of status at the unknowable future of 1997.

Recognizing that public protest is "perhaps the only effective means of political expression available in post-handover Hong Kong," Dapiran (2017, p. 36) finds people's discontent pertinent in the increasingly active political flow of emotions. The rapidly changing historical realities confront the "postcolonial" subjects living under the authoritarian communist regime of China and embed their politics of identity in a nonconforming blend of local sensibilities and activism (Chan 2017; Chen and Szeto 2015; Ip 2015; Kwong 2018). To's threesome approach to crisis offers the situation a palatable dramatic frame. Always aesthetically provocative, it sheds light on the multiply performed personalities and the ideological differences involved. In his hyperbolic scenarios, the conflict-resolving play of differences often invoke a process of intersubjective learning where exchange of incongruent desires takes place at moments of the political. Preoccupation with unsettling conditions of existence prompts the threesome narrative to generate an array of persona prototypes. Thus, by saving babies, the trio in *The Heroic Trio* handle the crisis at hand as they share a common past of inscrutable terror. Their fates are bound to the struggle against the Evil Eunuch (Yen Shi-kwan) who kidnaps babies so that one may be groomed to be China's Emperor. Tung (Anita Mui), a housewife when she is not the wonder woman, goes out there to restore social order. While secretly helping her policeman husband (Damian Lau) to solve city crimes, she makes dinner at home like a feminine Robin Hood. But when institution becomes corrupted, the ordinary women take our common destiny and livable habitat into their own magical hands. Meanwhile, oppressed by the horrific order of Chinese patriarchy, Ching (Michelle Yeoh) plays the invisible woman with neither emotion nor memory, despite the superb kung fu she knows. She must struggle tactically with the deadly skeleton glued to her body in some dogfight she could not win. Completing the threesome, thief catcher Chan Chat – portrayed by the unmistakable Hong Kong actress Maggie Cheung before she became an international star – is the professional killer who desires nothing less than an individualistic lifestyle and freedom at this locality. She is no puppet, unlike Ching; neither is she "womanly" like Tung. As the trio play to terminate the eunuch's weird conspiracy in stealing posterity for the chronically twisted empire, the sisterly bondage brings a common fantasy to fruition. Mediating magic, pedagogy works here not so much to transfer knowledge or values as to attain the critical negation, or what I call *unlearning*, of a range of "not me" moments ("no I can't, that's not for me!") during one's queer encounter with the self's alterity.

Reinforcing the essence of pedagogy in the threesome friendship, To's 1993 films were futuristic for their "direct allusion to 1997" (Teo 2007, pp. 41–42). Interestingly, the triadic solidarity filters through a popular mythological twist on the political situation. Teo (2007) calls that "melodrama style of violence" (p. 42) in the aftermath of the SARS epidemic. Hence, in *Executioners* (To and Ching 1993b), nuclear catastrophe sets the backdrop for terror, in which the military shoot common people during social uprising – an unmistakable allusion to the 1989 Tiananmen massacre in Beijing. Fighting to resist the regime, a shy pacifist performs the

opposition leader (Takeshi Kaneshiro) to invoke the fragile beauty of idealism standing solely before the monstrous villain (Anthony Wong Chuo-sang). Like the nightmare Hong Kong had dreaded, the situation boils down to whether "heavenly" rule could last forever. So, despite family commitments, the motherly wonder woman Tung would defend us from the corrosion of "core values" against political violence or corruption. Significantly, the nostalgic crisis spectacle in view is filled with protest banners, police tear gas, and suicide bombs, symptomatic of people's plight across culture. In the futuristic scenarios of uprising and escape (with a young girl of posterity), the choreographed runaway of sisterhood leaves San (Michelle Yeoh), the struggling conformist, sacrificed along the way.

Calling them "a unique identity," Dapiran (2017) summarizes that the local set of core values "encapsulate those freedoms and safeguards that distinguished the Hong Kong way of life ... [including] one of the world's freest economies, a lively and unfettered media, the right to participate (to varying degrees) in the electoral and governing process, freedom to criticise the government, unrestricted travel, rule of law and due process, an independent judiciary, accountability and clean government and, of course, the right to protest" (p. 26). Hence, this blend of civic "localism" invoked in the "heroic trio" imaginary smacks of an *affect* of liberal cosmopolitan vanguardism. Here, it lures the locals for its uncanny mix of stupefaction and fascination in an aesthetic state underpinned by anxiety and agitation. As if locked in a pressure cooker as the *neo*colonial condition evolves, the *post*-1997 politics of identity presents a deep crisis for the still colonized local subjects (Law 2009, 2018). For two decades after British rule, the suffocating situation of *ennui* infiltrates the postcolony, when its people find themselves performing in vain through an unrelenting series of delayed, dissenting and disillusioned resistances (Chan 2015).

Can anything more fruitful be learnt as one stays put in the struggle, here and now?

## Performing Struggles for Identity: The Threesome Approach

> By 2003, six years after the handover, popular discontent... had reached a boiling point... [Half a million] Hong Kongers took to the streets. The 2003 protests proved to be a watershed moment in Hong Kong protest history. (Dapiran 2017, p. 36)

Beyond the screen world where social performativity informs the quests for identity, civic subjects are trapped in a dialogic vacuum and moral abyss despite three decades of democracy movement in Hong Kong (Ma 2018). For a pedagogy of culture, we find at critical junctures the interplay of multiple persona and subjectivities. Such *situational* moments of crisis mark the time of widespread social unrest and engender resistance at all levels, as allegorized in *Throw Down* (To 2004), released immediately after the 2003 anti-National Security Law mass demonstration, notably the first historic outpour of popular discontent since Handover (Dapiran 2017, pp. 34–50). The extraordinary situation found spectators in a complex nostalgic and anticipatory play of affect. Dedicated to Akira Kurosawa, whose 1943 debut

film *Sanshiro Sugata* was popularized locally during the 1970s through TV drama series, To's film articulates on location for the contemporary spectators a threesome of mundane city fighters, each struggling to negotiate a way out of entanglements in the disconcerting social milieu.

Centering around judo fights, a judo school, and its stakeholders (players, master, disciples, and supporters), learning takes place inevitably for everyone. In remaking a part of oneself, people's anger and disorientation find their roots in fear. Their desire and hope are dispersed to where the drifting emotions could not fathom. Thus, Tony, Mona, and Bo all try to rescue something from and for one another in this upbeat drama about three lost souls in town. Activating change in one's trajectory, the self evolves into *someone* one really wants and must learn to be. Such being the only courageous thing to *do*, Tony (Aaron Kwok) dedicates himself wholeheartedly to judo. A typical Hong Kong seeker, smart, intelligent, and full of ideas and energies, the young fighter constantly aims to upgrade himself in that martial art, facing every challenge and seizing every opportunity to play the fair game, in a way typical of a lineage of seekers marking the trajectory of Hong Kong's remarkable social growth and activism after the Second World War, especially during the 1970s and 1980s (Lam 2015). As a friend, an intermediary, Tony prompts the former champion Bo (Louis Koo) to rejuvenate himself through self-transformation. An alcoholic and a gambler, Bo has indulged himself mindlessly in the bar he runs. Unlike Tony, he considers any fight futile as he approaches blindness caused by an incurable retinal disease. An escapist and reluctant player, Bo learns from experience to avoid looking into the future, until he is dragged back to the world of combat by Tony, the merry judo fanatic mediating between him and their friend Mona (Cherrie Ying). Tony's optimism is echoed by Mona, the aspiring singer who just wants a job at the bar. She has left home in Taiwan but finds herself dislocated and helpless here; everyday she opts to approach her dream career as a singer in Japan. Despite her lack of experience, Mona seizes the day regardless of dismay or success. Almost a freedom fighter, her truthful single-mindedness impresses everyone. Like Bo in ongoing battles with himself, she also wants to escape. But this freedom fighter would simply not see failure as an option, which teaches others about their own struggles.

In short, the threesome friendship evolves as a contemporary triad of fighting souls dwelling in the care of one another's "blindness." Bo eventually finishes off as the top judo fighter despite his ultimate blindness in a sort of belated reconfirmation of core values. Through the unique encounter, they come together as an unlikely trio, making friendship and sharing a part of each other's missed opportunities and absent moments of discontent with life.

## (Un)learning the Self

*Throw Down* thus captures the personalized moment of crisis in the lived situation of receding culture. At the final bush scene, respectable opponents fight amid the thick fabrics of the city in a fair and dignified game, like what Hong Kong always

offers. Beyond screen spectacle the film indulges viewers to feel the repugnant desire which, for lack of a proper name, one might call *colonial nostalgia*, as well as a global form of spectacular disaster narrative. Performed like an underground fight, the open duel between Bo and his arch-opponent Lee Ah-Kung (Tony Leung Ka-fai) suggests symptomatically what one must overcome in any crisis: oneself. Learning to be "me" again, Bo rejuvenates through judo after a critical hiatus. Without alluding to any sociopolitical realities attacking the cultural fabrics of life, the film and its threesome narrative dialogism reveal how in this place one may learn, halt, (un)learn again, and grow into something worthwhile by displacing in the other what the self wants and will achieve. Seeking every opportunity to strive for what he deems right, Tony picks a fight whenever he wants to perform his judo self, with whoever comes around – at the bar, on the street, or in its back alley, where embodied practices true to the heart are always affectively reflexive and pedagogically productive.

Meanwhile, Mona plays her intermediary role distinctively. As a mundane fighter for her own dream, she is an *amateur* of popular culture whose innocent belief in the future has brought her to town, escaping but also looking for a goal in life despite family aspirations to the contrary. Like her boss Bo, Mona has something she wants to hide away from. In a hilarious scene, the two friends share a single toilet compartment while running away. Each has got something to keep and much to learn from the other. Mona asks Bo for a job, a refuge; but she also shares her fanatic dedications. Without her youthful naivety and energy, Bo gets to learn from his own ongoing frustration with work. Friendship becomes the catalyst by which one takes part in the shaping of identities. This entails refashioning "who I am" and the challenging, performative process of *unlearning* for the urban trio. While they train together in the dojo, practicing as they uphold the judo legacy, Bo and Tony engage in a fight that unlocks and realigns the pedagogical ties of practice. Performing the physical routines of work (martial arts) is what counts in learning to be oneself (a judo fighter). Triggered by his initial defeat by Tony, Bo rekindles his own sequence of movements in the night streets. From then on, he keeps on training, lifting himself from the inertia of life. At last, the pedagogical encounter entails a critical, albeit compassionate, attitude toward the challenge you face.

*Throw Down* opens with the crisis of Bo's mentor old Master Cheng (Lo Hoi-pang) and his son Jing (Calvin Choy) performing judo in the solitude of urban wilderness. As Cheng was playing, Jing sang the solo tune from *Sanshiro Sugata.* They were then seen giving out leaflets at the city crossroads to promote the dojo, with the judo master laboring tirelessly under the shadow of neon light banners such as "Digital Thinking" and "Bank of China," among other commercial brands. Here the hegemonic domination of everyday realities captivates our culture, local or not. From politics and business to education and enterprises, the tactics of ordinary survival are woven into people's social condition of life. Consequentially, Bo's fear and uncertainty must grow with his struggle with imminent blindness. In the end, as he fights Lee Ah-kung (surrogate for the arch-opponent Higaki from *Sanshiro Sugata*), Bo hesitates to follow the steps of the dojo founder Cheng. Bo is expected to take care of the master's son Jing, who suffers from dementia. A

marginalized and disadvantaged person in society, Jing performs repeatedly the *Sanshiro* theme song, convinced that he is the fighter Sanshiro himself. (He routinely addresses whoever he meets: "You, you play Higaki while I'm Sanshiro.") Paradoxically this musical motif underscores a nostalgic play of optimism after the hardship Hong Kong people experienced in 2003, amid both the SARS epidemic and the government's attempts of nationalistic encroachment through attempts to alter school curriculum. Deeply mediated in the threesome engagement is the embedded cultural-political memory that values legacy and heritage amid eclectic resources of identity performance and social dissent (Dapiran 2017).

## A Threesome Pedagogy: Learning Moments in Popular Culture

> Winning or losing is immaterial; what matters is whether we have tried our best. (Trailer of *Throw Down*)

After winning the final fight, Bo returns to the crossroads with Jing to distribute street handbills and defend a legacy. Urban signposts are now in clearer view: there is nothing nostalgic anymore about the dominance of "Digital Thinking" and "Bank of China" that catches the eyes. For across the cityscape, while pedagogy takes place in the presence of a teacher (judo master), teaching apparatus (dojo), or institution (the tournament), it ultimately involves the learning agent becoming a reflexive *cultural* subject of pedagogy, i.e., one who makes do with life in order to survive the congregate power relations shaping the rule of consensus in society, to which civic subjectivities subscribe.

As educational leaflets get disseminated, struggles in ordinary life continue in endless combats. While the threesome's predisposition toward life is existential, the stances they take on heritage and future are politically pertinent and socially performative. For what matters is not success or failure but the opportunity for change and the will to fight. We *do* experience everyday training in the ordinary practices of (judo) pedagogy, the process that embodies an aesthetic orientation (dissenting or otherwise) within the hegemony governing the condition of our existence. Bo cannot see a future now; but having survived the final duel, the city's predicament puts him in good hands of the posterity. Years before the Handover, To's threesome pedagogy envisaged our crisis falling from above. In 1993 his sisterly trio allowed disconcerting voices to convey an unnameable call, with 1997 still at a distance. Two decades later, as the Occupy movement set the stage for a contemporary review of what must have constituted crisis, *Three* (To 2016) reassembles the vibrant moment of dissensus. While power reconfiguration triggers further disruptions in local sensibility, the social trauma runs into more twists and deadlocks following the *experience* of "failure." As dislocated Jing had learnt to lead the way out of a jungle, inside of us we all want to find light to see the lost way of life, for which the possibilities of a Johnnie To fight could bring hope even as situation deteriorates on the ground.

To what extent can the work of pedagogy at the current juncture allow us to learn through the political moment of despair then? As the prominent student leader

Joshua Wong puts it, it is not with hope that we persist in our struggles, for only if we persist will there be hope (cited in Law 2018, p. 32). In that light, learning takes place in and for the subject; through cultural pedagogy one encounters the challenge of one's becoming, alongside with the critical negation of identities and the reimagination of hope. This not only entails the teaching and shaping of "who I am" but also opens the window for *unlearning* how one may *refashion* what one has acquired *in me*. Traversing moments of learning in popular culture, the crisis site changes from the city jungle to the holistic sick house in question, a place named [Queen] Victoria. In *Three*, no training is shown in the scenario of crisis, as everyone is stuck with the dire situation plagued by an overabundance of pride, arrogance, and anger. At that problematic spot, taking it for granted that one's life be held in one's own hands, the agitated youth confronts the doctor: "You trust the police?" to which the cop retorts – "You trust the thief?"

## *Three*: A Triad of Pedagogical Relationship

Two decades after British colonialism, *Three* questions the play of consent and dissent in Hong Kong's deadlock situation through which we learn to see how everyone copes with the deterioration of dialogue, respect, and hope. At this desperate moment, people face the disappearing opportunities and trust of pedagogy years after the Occupy action. The threesome now dramatizes fundamental doubts in the subject of crisis itself. Director To questions if there are alternative ways of listening to, appreciating or learning from, one another, including one's opponent, in contemporary culture. The "three" in the film title refers to three main characters at the Victoria Hospital, named after the famous harbor separating Hong Kong Island from the peninsula since the imperial British battleships moved in. The metonymic significance of adopting a hospital for the crisis site is ostensible. (To has previously set the disaster about the abduction of babies at the "National Hospital" in *The Heroic Trio*.) Here, chief inspector Ken (Louis Koo) follows the wounded gangster Shun (Wallace Chung) onsite where neurosurgeon Dr. Tong (Wei Zhao) must take the bullet out of the patient's head. The three individuals are tellingly different from one another, each clinging on fiercely to his/her own value and perspective. As the crisis unfolds, the intertwining triadic entanglement sets the stage for handling the crisis and doubting the viability of the life-saving institution.

The troubled law enforcement agent Ken is tasked to keep public order, while runaway intellectual Shun is never shy to intervene with his youthful, rebellious stance in cunningly provocative language. With this logic, the young fugitive rejects surgery for his injury, as he buys time for companions outside to join him inside of the lockup to stage a deadlier attack on the sick house than before. Like Shun, Ken has his own views about what's wrong and needed to be done with the current deadlock: an imminent showdown. The inspector's situation reveals how he is just another individual subject caught in the system, still very much colonized. Meanwhile, Shun denies anything the institution offers and refuses to be handled, let alone "saved," from the situation, lest his determination to fight for what he

believes in be compromised. Apparently bridging these extremes is Tong, whose professionalism (meticulously performed in her surgical acts), personal strength ("I'm okay!" "I've earned what I've had got!"), and pride ("Do I have a problem?" "Am I the problem?") are quite indicative of Hong Kong's well-recognized success. Fashioning herself as the diligent but arrogant immigrant from China, she is overcommitted to applying her expertise to "help" or "cure" others. She is the "newcomer" who has strived to resolve problems post-1997 with the know-how to "save the world." This elitist pro-mainland mentality emerging here is ironically circled around what used to be recognized as core values in the (post)colony. Such recognition articulates a strand of cosmopolitan localism emphasizing the culture and polity as lived by inhabitants amid a range of locally situated and fought civic and heritage values (Chen and Szeto 2015). Dr. Tong tries hard but fails to intervene in the situation at hand, despite her privileged status and the authority that comes with it. As it turns out, each in the threesome can only see one different dimension of the deadly plight affecting the postcolonial social body. The core values of people are still under serious local threats.

Pedagogically, learning through the other as constituent in the predicament of identity and politics has become a real problem. As the crisis transmutes to another level, namely, that of *pedagogy*, it is essential for us to appreciate the source of the film's title *Three*, which in Chinese consists of the three characters *san-ren-xing* (literally: "three persons walking") connoting "a company of three." The phrase comes directly from a well-known saying of Confucius, which To never explicitly mentions beyond the ostensible title:

> Out walking with two companions (*san-ren-xing*), I'm sure to be in my teacher's company. The good in one I adopt in myself; the evil in the other I change in myself. (Confucius 1988: Book VII, *The Analects*)

Taken in this perspective, *Three* provides the current situation with an insightful, allegorical critique of the dissensus permeating the public domains. In the absence of dialogic pedagogy, scenarios of violence cannot be avoided. Presently, after repeated failures in resistance and ongoing erosions of the "One Country, Two Systems" promise and design (Cheung 2017; Yuen 2015), nobody is keen to listen to one another at multiple ends of any ideological antagonism. Such locally situated crisis urges one to question how society may still engage with dissensus and a politics of hope (Chan 2015, 2017). And Confucius' lesson may be reiterated in the form of a question: With the threesome, how does one position oneself? Or choosing "my own way" in between the good and the evil in "you," or any other person, how can *I* learn and transform myself in dialogic relationship with others?

## Can We Still Learn from the Everyday?

On 14 June 2018, the editorial of *Apple Daily* (2018) reflected on why Hong Kong people, especially the youth, were so restless. Between 2012 and 2017, young people's opposition against the hegemony escalated as their struggle for

democracy and a just society faced tremendous setback in face of China's refusal to keep her promise for constitutional reform in Hong Kong, resulting in the polarization of society (Chan 2018). One clear outcome has been a split world where ordinary people find themselves in a constantly unproductive state of ideological and affective intensity; few would retain the capacity of accommodating others who hold a different perspective on any public issues than one's own. In his cogent analysis, critic Chan King-fai (2016) suggests that *Three* captures this situated moment of social cleavage and moral crisis, in which people cling on at all cost to their preferred set of values and principles, sparing no time for listening to, let alone engaging dialogically with, each other. While we know that radical acts against institution often target the ruling regime, at its core the crisis involves ordinary individuals struggling with the intertwined, intriguing *moments of the political* they live in. Hence, To (2016) has indeed spoken *politically* at such a juncture by replacing "teacher" (learning) with "fight" (war) in the hospital trio he creates for *Three*, as is evident in the film's trailer. There, the Confucian message that "My teacher is among my companions" becomes for the local spectators: "My opponents are bound to be among you," and we'll resolve our differences in a fight. As no one is ready to learn from another or make changes with oneself in relation to the others, it appears that the winner would remain with the ruling regime.

And the status quo will stay unchanged. Without so much as mentioning the forefather of cultural pedagogy, *Three* reveals how Confucius might be outdated in the wisdom that one is bound to be learning from others. The present-day threesome encounters multiple sets of contradictions and antagonisms, with everyone heavily tied to some singular perspective on what constitutes the problem. With the police claiming that "*we* break the law to enforce it!", the medical doctor stands unreservedly by what she deems right for *her* to "save life." Meanwhile, the young rebel is constantly after an excuse to defy hegemony by antagonizing or overriding a dialogic subject for fear of being trapped in any consensus with the elite and the privileged.

In this cinematic insight, the demise of cultural pedagogy means that one can only continue fighting each other wherever one goes. In the unusual finale gunfight scene, along with the collapse of communication and community, the impossibility of consensus is aesthetically accentuated. Troubled by the annihilation of dialogues, To underscores his 4:15-min long take of the hospital ward shoot-out with the soft melodic rhythm of a theme song that rearticulates the purposelessness of hostility onscreen. Thus, the soundscape prompts the spectator to recognize something *more* in the performativity of dissensus, framed by the underlying structure of failure as affect. For if no room is left for dialogic, intersubjective learning, the performance of antagonism not only unveils the split between factions but also deepens the battle among people struggling under the same condition of hostility. Coping with the common crisis, the various parties find themselves pulled into to the ultimate, implosive clash which sucks everyone apparently in dispute, including the viewer, into a whirl of endless entanglement and hopeless chaos, before one begins to reimagine alternatives for unlearning what the self has become.

The July 1st march of 2003 had successfully forced the Hong Kong legislature and government to retrieve the move to institute the Article 23 National Security Law. Eleven years later, the Umbrella Movement made extraordinary impacts on the governance culture and political legitimacy, surpassing the 2003 protest (Chan 2014; Cheung 2017). Alongside a collective desire for social revolution, radicalism conceived as waves of civic resistance brought into view the historical formation of social activism tied with the youthful will to rebellion (Lam 2015). In this light, the *Three* theme song entitled *Zhi Hu Zhe Ye* carries undertones that divert the local audience from the chaos presented with the affectively unsettling performance by Ivana Wong. Her serene voice extends and transforms the soundscape of the cinematic long take, thus serving to disarm antagonism both onscreen and offscreen. As adapted by Lin Xi (Albert Leung), the song lyrics emphasize what society has asked of the youth:

> Our *teachers* once said this.
> Our *teachers* once said that.
> Now listen to *what the youths are saying*.
> Think about *why they do what they do*.
> Now listen to what the youths are saying.
> Think you about *why they do what they do*.
> . . . And you think about *what you want them to do*.
> [Refrain:] *Zhu. . . Hu. . . Zhe. . . Ye. . .* All these old clichés. . .
>                     (From *Zhu Hu Zhe Ye*; my emphases and translation)

While blaming the youth is unfair (*Apple Daily* 2018), Wong's vocal narrative offers some ordinary appreciation and sympathy (Chan 2016), as her sonic ambience subtly voices the need for hope and changes yet to be imagined. Its apparent consensual rendition of social discontents and clashes comes through miraculously as "violence" gets mediated in the unexpectedly pleasant soundscape it offers. Compared to the original 1982 version by Lo Da-you, this rendition approximates an unlikely pedagogy working on the politics of affect. The long take, the actor performed slow motion fights, and the ironic soundscape add up to what constitutes the big "fallout," like another breathtaking jungle dogfight. Hopefully, it generates resonance of self-reflexivity, when what gets played out dialogically invokes the distant Confucian call for *friendship* as a form of critical, affective pedagogy.

## Learning (in) Crisis Situation: Friendship and Laughter

However, "The teacher is no longer to be found in our company of three" (Chan 2016). This appears to be the predicament we face today. In the absence of pedagogic dialogism, we have ridden ourselves of the ability to enter the realm of the other and get hold of how the world may matter in the ears and perspectives of the other. Following widespread frustration among citizens experiencing the futility of political resistance, in the Mong Kok disturbances of 2016, the public was once again disoriented by the fierce confrontation between young radicals (the

self-described "localists") and the police (along with the ruthless regime it serves) (Lam 2016). Having paid a huge price, society owes the youth sustained and effective channels for expressing themselves and allowing others to hear what they have to say.

Confronted by such a popular crisis in the absence of civic engagements, cultural imagination, and political hope, one cannot help but wonder if the state of crisis might engender a process of intersubjective encounters amid the pervasive social ennui. *Three*'s manifestation of the situation as mediated by the Ivana Wong performance urges one to pause and *Listen to what they* [the youths] *have to say*?, asking *What do you want them to do*? As violence succumbs to the will to disobedience and rebellion, with which multifarious ideological fights and social punches all play out, the "localist" stance of so-called *yung-wu* (literally, brave and forceful) style of resistance embodies a vivid element of militancy (Lee 2018); this almost became a distinctive marker and style of resistance and by implication a forged signifier of the latest wave of "localism." Hence, antagonism keeps ruling the unwanted moments of the political, as riots mark youthful nonconformity and hostility against any attempts to manage or manipulate deep-rooted discontents in life (Lam 2016).

Such a prolonged state of social corruption is by no means isolated; its undercurrents are systematic and totalistic (J. Chan 2018; S. C. Chan 2015). Effectively, on the spot of his fabricated Victoria Hospital, To's take is to offer the possibility of a pedagogy of culture within our school (heritage), in our music (ordinary culture), and at our public institution (hospital). Ending the film, he brings us back from chaos to the soundtrack of "Who Said I'm Crazy?," sung by Lo Hoi-pang the veteran entertainer who plays the happy mental patient in the film. Wrapping up the complex moment of the political better than anyone else, the jolly man sings what ordinary citizens would see. He handles the hopeless everyday situation of ours with a pinch of salt, as the mundane old-fashioned song he merrily performs offscreen (as the credits roll out) is set to the flamboyant tune of the popular Cantonese music *Thunder in a Drought*.

In summary, fighting with cynicism, To's works allow us to appreciate how one may learn from crisis – to become *someone* through coming to terms with the other while displacing what the self desires and achieves. Whether it is Bo or Mona, making changes for oneself takes determination and courage. This is how *Throw Down* or even *Three* could be uplifting, as the filmmaker wants. If on July 1, 2003, we had missed an opportunity after the popular protest to demand for political change, then equally unsettling was the 2014 Umbrella Movement a missed opportunity for the people (Law 2018, p. 24). What we do find is a paradox of activism and depoliticization (Lam 2004), prevalent before *and* after 1997, one that holds vividly in the disputes around the daily controversies people endure. In the end, the laughter of the everyday patient sets off the performativity of its *ordinariness*. The embodied pedagogy here touches viewers with tactical dialogism and laughters, instead of political antagonism. "All my friends, do learn after me – for each one of you could laugh it all out and be a happy doll." Like a prophetic clown onstage, the old man sings with pride and reassurance for he appears to be the only sane and hopeful person around in a world run by lunatics.

## Epilogue: The Ordinary Pedagogy of Culture

Ordinary experience and its everyday resistance, not least among the youths, contribute crucially to the learning of identity and difference in any situation being deprived of common sense, social consent, justice, and tolerance. Where the performance of culture intervenes in our lived situation, pedagogy engages us in the play of subjectivities. There you learn by engaging with others, as To following Confucius would prefer. Against dialogic vacuum and moral abyss, the dissenting subject takes shape in a politics of affect, as is further evidenced by the summer of resistance that started in Hong Kong since June 2019. For a critical pedagogy of culture, we have seen how social antagonism interfaces with moments of the political via the cinematic scenarios Johnnie To has created about the evolving deadlock implicating our future. I have argued that his threesome engagement with situations of crisis (as dramatized in hospital rescues, judo combats, or underworld chases) works on multiple layers where To's dramaturgy intervenes. This prompts one to reconsider a politics of affect from within the local situation that casts doubts on hope and despair, for ordinary culture.

In the attack on Hong Kong core values, the people protested "not just against an unpopular piece of legislation or a proposed curtailment of freedoms; they were protesting a threat on their very identity as Hong Kongers" (Dapiran 2017, p. 45). A year after the historical watershed of the 2003 peaceful demonstration, *Throw Down* captures this moment in the situation of the duel amid an urban jungle of losers. As the fight or crisis materializes, Mona would have picked up her courage to find her way in life. Tony may not the best fighter, but it is his unceasing "can-do" spirit that situates him in the rank of martial artists. Both have learned from and contributed to the pedagogy teaching the final player Bo to live to fight on despite his blindness and to fight on in order to live *in truth* (Hui and Lau 2015).

People's anger was pressed for avenues of representation in any situation of crisis. Desire is dispersed where drifting emotions of fear or anxieties cannot anchor. The filmmaker is eager to show how *living* in the present is ordinary but truthful, regardless of the chance of winning: One must seize the day, no matter how hopeless defending truthful existence might be. With a perspective on dialogism where the politics of affect informs popular cultural formation, pedagogy becomes the critical process implicated. With To's threesome, the work and play of pedagogy activate the transmission of core values and the narrativization of a series of "not me" moments or reflexive moments of alterity. In the interplay of identities, learning takes place in our mundane struggles with whoever or whatever is other than "me" in social encounters. Hence, the ordinary subject learns: one must live the day in truth, or the hostility one faces will wipe you out. While the pedagogy of culture may occur in the friendly presence of a teacher (Master Cheng in *Throw Down* or the Happy Patient in *Three*, both played by Lo Hoi-pang), teaching apparatus, or institution (dojo, the judo school; or Victoria, the hospital and the city), it ultimately involves the learning agent becoming a *cultural* subject of dissent, one who engages mundanely but tirelessly with the power relations of the others' majority, the hegemony that rules.

The fight must go on. As for what we see in those critically imaginable moments for Cultural Studies (Chan 2012; Chan and Hui 2008), I wonder if the Hong Kong situation might help us envisage anew the cultural politics and pedagogic process involved, bringing together the learner with what is learned. In this predicament of the scarcity of hope, pedagogy situates the learning self as a doubtful agent of *cultural* change. In the performance of crisis, we have a glimpse of the near magical power of pedagogy as a source of intervention that invokes the political and the moral through the endurance of hardship, tolerance of dissensus, and interplay of differences. For students of Cultural Studies, when the affected subjects struggle with fear, anger, and anxiety as they learn to cope with crisis (institution), intersubjective engagements are the testing ground for bodily and discursive encounters. The pedagogical process mediates the ways whereby anything the others teach you is instrumental in unlearning oneself.

## Cross-References

▶ Cultural Studies and Education
▶ Identity Construction Amidst the Forces of Domination
▶ Politics of Identity and Difference in Cultural Studies: Decolonizing Strategies

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# Cultural Studies in the Writing Center

## Writing Centers as Sites of Political Intervention

**37**

William E. De Herder

## Contents

**Abstract**

This chapter explores how writing centers can enact counter-hegemonic work through helping writers gain deeper understandings of contexts: audiences, writing situations, genre expectations, and power relations. It maps the position of writing centers, develops cultural studies for writing center work, and suggests strategies for writing coaches. Drawing theoretically on Stuart Hall, Lawrence Grossberg, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, and Antonio Gramsci, this chapter shows how coaches and writers can develop understandings of complexity, contingency, and contextuality. It then shows how these understandings can help coaches and writers map meanings; identify binaries, possible third positions, affordances, and constraints; and map political, economic, ideological, material, and social forces and structures. These techniques can help writers

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reflect critically on their use of genre and non-hegemonic codes, as well as recognize deeper complexities of writing situations and writing topics.

## Introduction

Cultural studies often consider connections among lived experiences (such as media consumption or social practices) and political, economic, material, and social forces and structures. Understanding how these connections work and matter is informed by the application of various theories, including feminism, Marxism, and semiotics, which are further developed as they are applied (Hickey-Moody 2009, p. xx). The best studies work with a set of theoretical tools designed to gain insight into emerging contexts in order to act purposefully and constructively within them, in effect to shape them. Using these tools in writing center work offers a way for writing center staff to examine their own practices critically while helping the writers they work with negotiate for the legitimacy of their positions and practices within hegemonic power structures.

Writing centers are spaces where communicators can collaborate in learning about writing (Harris 1992, p. 370). Typically, they exist "on the fringes of the academic establishment, often in unused classrooms, old barracks, and basements" (Warnock and Warnock 1984, p. 22). In these places, coaches (also known as peer tutors or consultants) meet with writers to develop and proofread writing and speaking assignments. Coaches and writers variously read out loud; mark words or passages; suggest phrases, new developments, or revisions; explore grammar and punctuation rules; and map the writing's context. The coach can assume many responsibilities in this relationship. They can act as a guide, an ally, a sounding board, a counsellor, or a mediator.

Cultural studies can help coaches see themselves as occupying a shifting middle position among a variety of institutional and individual forces, expectations, and tensions. On this terrain, coaches help writers understand and develop strategies to navigate this complexly constructed context. They balance directive and nondirective positions, in some situations telling writers what to do and in others encouraging writers to decide what to do (Mackiewicz and Thompson 2015, pp. 83–100). In this way, writing center staff negotiate the frequent contradictions of what I am calling "the middle position," a place where we engage in a war of positions, one of many cultural sites where struggles against hegemony are fought through all facets of a culture: media, fashion, politics, religion, etc. (Gramsci 2000, pp. 226–227). Stuart Hall (2016) aptly describes a war of positions as underground warfare where "there are already pertinent sites of political and economic struggle in the society, and the contestation cannot be head-on. . .it is the development of raiding parties which strategically attack the strongholds of power of a particular class" (p. 176). This chapter views the writing center through this theoretical lens and suggests using the

concepts of complexity, contextuality, and contingency as a basis for performing mapping meaning, identifying binaries, absolutes, and possibilities, and mapping forces and structures of power in sessions to develop deeper understandings of writing situations and content and promote constructive engagement.

## Negotiating the Middle

The middle position in writing centers is a continually shifting (and sometimes contradictory) composition of unresolved tensions between institutional and individual expectations. Institutional expectations are largely governed by bureaucratic rationality, "the belief that life can be ordered and organized into mutually exclusive, yet interlocking, categories" (Brookfield 2005, p. 71). It is a way of thinking that supports strict alliances and oppositions, dichotomies (binaries) that are used to classify and categorize everything and everyone. It also supports homogenization (suppressing diversity to preserve categories) and the application of reason to solve short-term problems of limited scope. Bureaucratic rationality allows the institution to maintain the efficiency and competitiveness required by a capitalist system. It is imprinted in scientific and technical discourses, which cease to operate as "tools for thinking" and instead become "tools for fixing" (Hickey-Moody 2009, p. 26). This kind of discourse works to repair and maintain hegemonic power through fixing or closing meaning that might otherwise be open and contingent. Writers, instructors, and coaches invariably negotiate with bureaucratic rationality as a feature or result of their unstructured nonbinary life experiences, leading them to confirm, oppose, or disregard the bureaucratic rationality of the institution. This ongoing process constitutes the continually unresolved middle ground of writing center work.

Tensions and contradictions exist among institutional expectations and the individual expectations of writers, coaches, instructors, employers, family, friends, coworkers, and administrators. Institutional expectations are closely aligned with hegemonic capitalist interests. University writing centers are typically funded to increase revenue through improving grades and retention rates for undergraduate and graduate students. The narrative claims that both students who are hired as coaches and students who work with coaches develop academic skills through writing center work. At the same time, however, institutions also expect student writing coaches to be model writers and students, capable of administering the writing knowledge their peers do not possess. The code of edited academic English and the practice of academic integrity are privileged above the codes of the student's other speech and discourse communities. In order to fulfill this expectation to teach this professional code and practice, coaches can work with writers in ways that writers understand, communicating the often tacit expectations and relations in a writing context through non-hegemonic codes and practices, perhaps suggesting a new sentence and explaining the grammatical rules of edited academic English in language the student understands. At the same time, nonexpert peer coaches collaborate with writers to gain deeper understandings of the hegemonic code.

The expectations of student writers are shaped by competing financial, educational, and social forces. They take on student loans to pay for an education that promises a better financial future and often work while enrolled in classes to support themselves. They are encouraged by authority figures to follow their creative impulses but also to adhere to the dominant code. They attempt to negotiate power with instructors, advisors, publishers, and employers who evaluate them according to the hegemonic code, while they maintain relationships with family and friends through different codes. Graduate students may balance additional pressures, such as teaching, managing students, addressing the concerns of committee members, and publishing. In a peer-staffed writing center, undergraduate and graduate coaches experience many of the same tensions as the writers they work with while also encountering some of the tensions in the writer's experience.

The most commonly recognized tension in the coach's middle position is between the instructor and the student (Harris 1995). While instructors typically send students to the center to fix surface-level grammar and punctuation "errors," coaches privilege the writers' skills and ideas over their language use (North 1984). Because it does little good to proofread a paper when a student has misinterpreted the prompt or has not completed a first draft, a paper's development, organization, and understanding often receive attention before grammar and punctuation. The hegemonic code's control over language is set to the side so coaches can learn about the writer's emerging identity and context.

A particularly vexing problem in the middle position is the matter of authorship. In a writing center, an increase in what the institution calls "agency" and "individual effort" comes through increased social support. Writers are told by instructors to submit only their own work, but in a writing center, tutors must disrupt the idea of single authorship to show writers how to improve (Grimm 1999, p. 18). Centers guide writers into curating a written professional, creative, or academic persona or "unique voice" that adheres to the institution's tacit and stated expectations as center staff negotiate the political terrain of the university: explaining to instructors how participation in sessions is not a form of plagiarism; retaining funding through proving a positive effect on the university experience; and defending against assumptions that the service is only for bad students who don't belong at the university or that it is redundant to the composition program.

A writing center's ambition is to help writers negotiate the legitimacy of their positions and practices in the institution and the world through literacy development. This power is uncertainly won through struggling with the meaning of assignment prompts, the content of the writing, and dynamic between the coach and the writer and the writer and the instructor. Bonnie Sunstein (1998) calls this entanglement "a liminal tension. . .of in-betweenness" (p. 14). While centers provide writers with opportunities to learn about edited academic English and its rhetorical and ideological purposes, they also identify rhetorically effective ways to employ different codes in an effort to shape social practices (Young 2011). In this way, writing centers act as a floor for semiotic and ideological struggle, placing conflicting articulations in contact to influence ideology and social practice.

Centers might locate blame for "poor" writing on students (for not working hard enough or not understanding how to write) or the institution (for perpetuating

exclusionary standards and practices) (Grimm 1995, p. 28), but shaping writing center practice around either choice in this dichotomy entrenches inequality. To strictly administer grammatical rules is to reaffirm hegemonic control, but to deemphasize grammar and punctuation (in some cases the subject matter of the writing as well) is to leave students lacking the necessary skills to communicate meaningfully with those outside their home speech community (cf. Inoue 2015, p. 56). Simply avoiding the hegemonic code in writing center work does not reconfigure power; rather, it obfuscates the emerging context, concealing relations of power and meaning, and further cements difference. Nancy Grimm (1996) tells us that "agency in writing is much more complicated than simple compliance or resistance; in fact, agency most likely emerges from the conflicts between these two forces" (p. 9). To put this in a different light, consider that mathematics is a system of representation that is used to affect social practices. In order for this system to function, scientists cannot invent their own math without completing a proof that puts their work in conversation with the existing semiotic field. One scientist at NASA does not use Roman numerals to calculate rocket trajectories, while the others use the Arabic system. Proofs need to be put in conversation with one another. Mathematics uses the same language to develop mathematics. Writing center work can operate in a parallel way to develop contingent perceptions of the language and perception skills to work in and on the current context in which navigating questions of power and meaning are critical.

Writing centers work upon this shifting middle terrain as a form of political intervention. Yes, they are sites for literacy development, but they are also sites of ideological, semiotic, and cultural conflict. Centers prepare students to succeed by the university's standards but through means often questionable to the university. Writing centers prepare students to succeed in the university as well as negotiate for legitimacy, respectability, and power within the institution.

Cultural studies provide the tools to recognize and negotiate the middle position. By employing it, writing center coaches can model the problem-solving behaviors writers will need to communicate with those outside the academy. They can show writers how to gain complex understandings for strategic action in emerging contexts. Through mapping tensions and negotiating meaning, coaches can help writers recognize and negotiate their position in the production of meaning and knowledge. This work is a tricky negotiation. However, it has been made increasingly difficult in the emerging political moment, which unfortunately is beyond this chapter's scope or space to consider. Part of my challenge in this chapter is to engage in theorizing a framework for incorporating cultural studies in writing center practice, a framework that is responsive to the political contexts centers operate within.

## Developing a Cultural Studies Framework for Writing Center Work

Negotiating in writing center work can be assisted by deploying the cultural studies concepts Grossberg (2018) explains as "commitments to complexity, contingency, and contextuality" (p. 3). Complexity disrupts homogenization and recognizes

that diversity can complicate classification, organization, and categorization. Contingency acknowledges that meanings variously shift in relation to other meanings and understands that meaning and identity are not stable across time and space. Contextuality insists that particular configurations of political, material, social, and economic forces produce contingent cultural formations. The layered concepts of complexity, contingency, and contextuality can help coaches and writers understand their own positions, as well as map meanings; identify binaries, possible third positions, affordances, and constraints; and mapping relations of power. These three activities constitute a collaborative learning method that can develop more complex understandings of genre, writing situations, and writing content.

The goal of this practice is to encourage coaches and writers to disrupt binary bureaucratic rationality and to stress the importance of complexity, contextuality, and contingency in the production of meaning. Instead of neatly fixing truths, rules, and expectations, coaches can invoke the diversity that more accurately reflects our complex reality and encourage writers (and themselves) to build better stories and better explanations and responses to the emerging context within which they write and imagine strategic interventions.

I propose putting cultural studies to work in sessions by, first, mapping meanings (contingency); second, identifying binaries, possible third positions, affordances, and constraints in multiple positions (complexity); and third, negotiating new insights through mapping relations of power (contextuality). The purpose of this method is to draw attention to efforts to fix meanings, to introduce variance to the writer's chains of equivalencies, to help the coach and writer gain some critical distance from ruling ideologies, and to steer writers toward seeing their struggles as located in larger wars of positions. This technique is consistent with prevailing writing center pedagogy, which seeks to "to establish an inquiry-based approach that puts the student writer at the center of the process" and considers "the multiplicity of educational and background experiences that students will bring with them to the writing center" (Nakamaru 2010, p. 101). In addition, Anis Bawarshi and Stephanie Pelkowski (1999) frame effective writing center pedagogy as maintaining a critical distance that allows students to "become aware of how and why academic discourses situate them within certain power relationships and require of them particular subject positions" (p. 44). The proposed techniques accommodate these pedagogical concerns to promote a heightened awareness of contingent contexts and what Hall (1998) calls "diasporic identities."

## Contingency and Articulation

Coaches and writers are caught in a war of positions on semiotic terrain. Writing center sessions always interact with language and social practices in some way, whether working with the visual design of a document, the language in a text, or the speaking and listening practices in a conversation. These interactions are mediated through systems of representation, defined by Stuart Hall (2016) as "the systems of meaning through which we represent the world to ourselves and one another"

(p. 136). These systems are discursive, existing through images, texts, and sounds; they are laden with ideology and govern social practices; and they are also always plural. Writing center work occurs within and is organized by these systems. When a student brings in a draft of a paper, or an international student engages in conversation practice, they are calling up semiotic systems that are connected to specific meanings. Students who come to work on presentations, podcasts, or other multimedia documents call up similar systems. These projects include textual, spoken, and visual signs (signifiers) that are connected to contingent meanings (signifieds). Meanings become articulated (connected) to particular signs.

However, these articulations between signs and meanings are "both arbitrary and contingent" (Slack 2016, p. 2). Grossberg (1992) explains that the concept of articulation works from "the principle that nothing is guaranteed, that no correspondences are necessary, that no identity is intrinsic" (p. 53). He explains that "Articulation links this practice to that effect, this text to that meaning, this meaning to that reality, this experience to those politics" (p. 54). These articulations are continuously redefined as contexts change. Connections are variously disarticulated (disconnected) and rearticulated (reconnected in other ways). Grossberg describes rearticulation as "never a single battle. It is a continuous 'war of positions' dispersed across the entire terrain of social and cultural life. At each site, in each battle, the 'ruling bloc' must rearticulate the possibilities and recreate a new alliance of support which places it in the leading positions. It must win, not consensus, but consent" (p. 245).

These relationships between signifiers and signifieds are never simple. Articulations can be disarticulated or rearticulated with every new interaction. A comma *may* signal a particular set of linguistic rules. A nod *could* represent agreement. A paragraph break *might* mean the conclusion of an idea. Signifier and signified relationships are embedded in complex realities thick with other signifiers and signifieds, and these relationships variously influence each other. A composition student might recognize that the comma is signaling some concept but not know what that could be. The interpretation of one sign may depend on a regime of other signs with other meanings, all connected to more meanings and signs. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987) describe a regime of signs as "a network without beginning or end that projects its shadow onto an amorphous atmospheric continuum. . . that for the moment play the role of the 'signified,' but it continually glides beneath the signifier, for which it serves only as a medium or wall: the specific forms of all contents dissolve in it" (p. 112). Signifiers occur in a continuously shifting nebula of connections among signs and meanings, a regime of signs. To see a particular sign is to differentiate it from or equate it to others within a particular historic moment. A regime of truth, a regime of signs, articulates through chains of equivalency to create systems of representation for a particular time and place.

Some articulations in a regime are more powerfully held in place than others. These tenacious articulations are often tightly tethered in an individual's ideology; they are ideals perceived to be universal, like honesty, justice, freedom, or safety. The word "exam," for example, is tenaciously articulated to individual effort and reward, a tenet of capitalism, which in turn may be articulated to feelings of justice

and freedom. A coach would likely think nothing of helping a student revise a long research paper worth a significant portion of the student's grade. However, if a student comes to a session with a document the student refers to as a "written take-home exam," coaches might wonder if working with the student would be a form of cheating. They might refrain from commenting on the work's content and only offer feedback on the clarity of the writing, as if improving one facet of the work would not to some degree influence others. This tenacious articulation between exams and the value of individual achievement that characterizes capitalism drives coaches to negotiate between the expectations of the student (the request for a session), the instructor (who may or may not support the student seeking a session), and the institution (that emphasizes evaluating individuals).

Articulation theory allows us to start anywhere (a TV show, a student's paper, a building, a smartphone, etc.) and map connections, reaching through semiotic chains to arrive at something larger (power structures, politics, gender norms, identities, economics, social conventions, etc.). Coaches and writers can consider these connections to reject dichotomies and absolutes for third positions of contingent meanings, with possibilities for openness and change.

## Complexity and Semiotic Chains

Hall (2016) tells us "Ideologies do not operate through single ideas; they operate in discursive chains, in clusters, in semantic fields, in discursive formations. As you enter an ideological field and pick out any one nodal representation or idea, you immediately trigger off a whole chain of connotative associations. Ideological representations connote – summon – one another" (p. 137). The imaginary is entangled with reality. The visual, aural, material, gestural, spatial, and textual mesh to summon the political, the economic, the religious, and the academic. Grossberg (1992) phrases it as "Effects are always intereffective, on the way from and to other effects" (p. 51). Music, for example, does not exist in a cultural vacuum. Angela McRobbie (1980) writes that "rock [music] does not signify alone, as pure sound. The music has to be placed within the discourses through which it is mediated to its audience and within which its meanings are articulated" (p. 46). Rock music is more than a noise. It is noted on a page and digital code in a sound file, blue jeans and leather jackets, studio musicians and stage musicians, and sports cars and motorcycles. Any given song is articulated to a genre, which is articulated to the experience of a particular class, race, gender, nationality, or age. The complex structure of articulation forms what Hall et al. (1982) refers to as "maps of meanings" (p. 55), a common sense shared by a culture. When coaches hold sessions with students, they inescapably invoke signifiers of economic class, political position, and gender. It is impossible to communicate independent of these forces and structures. To leave articulations unexamined is to risk perpetuating repressive power structures.

Semiotic chains are not linear; they are amorphous, travelling in all directions, sometimes building on one another. Additional meanings may emerge from some semiotic relationships and connect elsewhere. Roland Barthes (1991) explains that,

in the West, a bouquet of roses is typically articulated to passion. This semiotic relationship is called upon as one signified every time a person presents a bouquet of roses (a signifier) to another person (p. 111). As a coach and a writer work to reproduce a genre, they are working from an existing semiotic relationship to generate a new one. The words "rhetorical analysis" in a writer's assignment prompt is articulated to existing knowledge about that genre.

Semiotic systems operate discursively through chains of equivalencies (Hall 2017b, p. 57), which are semiotic chains where signs are organized according to articulated meanings. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2001) describe these sign chains as "the equivalence between a set of elements or values which expel or externalize those others to which they are opposed" (p. 165). Semiotic chains succeed through homogenizing variance (through articulation) and organizing signs against an oppositional sign chain (Dabirimehr and Fatmi 2014, p. 1285). The Occupy Wallstreet movement might be linked to the Black Lives Matter movement, or the #MeToo movement, or the popularity of Bernie Sanders, or the women's march on the 2016 Presidential Inauguration Day, or the recent gun control marches. However, the inside/outside relationships in these chains can be constructed differently by different people, as well as shift in relation to other articulations. Barthes' example of the bouquet of roses, for example, could also signify danger if presented by a stalker. In writing center sessions, coaches and writers contend with differing semiotic chains, and the coach's role is to investigate these differences to better understand and negotiate the student's practices of producing meaning.

Chains of equivalencies are developed through variable individual and social experience and interpretation, meaning the same signs can develop different meanings. Hall's (1973) theory of encoding and decoding is a starting point for understanding how meaning is multilayered and multi-referential. He identifies five positions of reading and producing signs: the preferred code, the professional code, the negotiated code, the oppositional code, and the aberrant position. The preferred code is the hegemonic interpretation of a message in accordance with the dominant hegemonic ideology (p. 16). A "hegemonic" viewpoint is defined as "(a) that it defines within its terms the mental horizon, the universe of possible meanings of a whole society or culture; and (b) that it carries -with it the stamp of legitimacy – it appears coterminous with what is 'natural', 'inevitable', 'taken for granted' about the social order" (p. 17). To operate within the code of the hegemonic ideology is to follow common sense without reflection. The professional code represents a semiautonomous reading of the hegemonic code that serves to reaffirm and work within dominant ideology. Professional codes are used to transmit messages via institutionalized frameworks, such as broadcast television, where new technological or practical elements may be introduced to support the dominant code (pp. 16–17). The negotiated code operates through negotiation, contradiction, and exception. It is adaptive and oppositional, acknowledging "the legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions to make the grand significations, while, at a more restricted, situational level, it makes its own ground-rules, it operates with 'exceptions' to the rule" (p. 17). Negotiated codes succeed through situational considerations (likely,

most communicative acts are read in this position (Morley and Brunsdon 1999, p. 15)). The oppositional code interprets signs contrarily to the hegemonic code. An aberrant reading is an interpretation that simply fails to signal meaning to the audience. The sign does not articulate to anything recognizable, and it is received as nonsense with no semiotic relation. Hall claims that ideological shifts coincide with shifts from hegemonic to negotiated to oppositional readings (p. 18). As a given semiotic system is interpreted first through negotiated contradictions and then through contrary meanings, the struggle against certain semiotic systems and ideologies begins.

These different reading positions can variously affirm or alter chains of equivalencies, potentially altering ideology, semiotic fields, and social practices. Hall (1985) describes the central problem this presents. He writes that people "use a variety of systems of representation to experience, interpret and 'make sense of' the conditions of their existence. It follows that ideology can always define the same so-called object or objective condition in the real world differently" (p. 104). Differing articulations create contradictory perspectives on the same signs. For some, one articulation might struggle and prevail over another, fixing meaning for that individual, but other individuals may have differing fixed meanings or variably sliding interpretations. Hall explains how these meanings clash in communication. As one writer attempts to express a thought they might be convinced is very clear, "Meaning is already sediment in that language, so you reactivate all those other marks of meaning as well as what you're trying to say" (as cited in Drew 1998, p. 173). However, The same communicative act can have conflicting decryptions.

## Contextuality and Ideology

All social practices, including writing and speaking, are imprinted with ideology. Ideology, James Berlin (1992) writes, "provides the language to define the subject, other subjects, the material and social, and the relation of all of these to each other. Ideology addresses three questions: what exists, what is good, what is possible?" (p. 23). Ideologies are encoded into language, and language shapes social practices according to the ideological code. As coded signs are interpreted through chains of equivalencies, those chains may be disrupted and reconfigured through the reception of significant experiential variance (perhaps an overdetermination of contradictions), effectively shifting reading positions and, eventually, ideological beliefs.

The ideologies imprinted in the communication and behavior of the dominant culture are perpetuated through the uncritical reproduction of those social practices. Meaning is manifested in practices, and practices signal meaning (Hall 2017a, p. 105). To disrupt this process, it is necessary to push writers not only toward criticality but toward a conception of contextuality. Hall (1987) encourages us to "speak the language of dispersal, but also the language of. . .contingent closures of articulation" (p. 45). A particular identity or position is true and makes sense for a particular moment, in a particular place, in a particular context. The intention here is to shift "to a discursive conception of the subject as it is positioned by, and

repositions itself within, various ensembles of discourse" (Hall 2017b, p. 131). The homogenization of identity and context in systems of representation can be resisted through increased attention to variances that disrupt the chains of equivalencies and promote oppositional readings, which in turn promotes learning about writing content and situations.

Meaning production operates semiautonomously in relation to material, political, social, and economic forces. Gaining deeper understanding of audiences, genres, and other features of the emerging contexts involves mapping possible connections between ideology and material and political, social, and economic forces and structures. Coaches may encourage writers to contemplate who makes up a certain discourse community, what goals that group has, and what they value. Writers might then be encouraged to consider what material, political, social, or economic forces influenced the features of a particular genre the community produces. Why does APA style make use of a running head and Chicago style cite sources through footnotes? Why are resumes short, and why are CVs long? Why are some films shot in color and others black and white? When is an email more appropriate than an instant message?

Coaches can also help writers consider what power structures are in play in a particular paper topic. Some example questions coaches might consider are the following: How are gender relations represented in the text? Is the full complexity of both political positions presented? What tensions or contradictions exist in those maps of meaning, and what conclusions can be drawn? How might economic differences contribute to the problem in the paper's topic? Are there natural or technological material concerns that might complicate this subject? Who has power in this story, and who is disempowered or excluded?

## Preparing Coaches

In the fall of 2018, I spotted a new coach brooding at an empty table after a session. I sat down next to her and asked what was wrong. In an irritated tone, she told me that the man she had just met with had asked her to read his rhetorical analysis of a condom commercial.

"Did that make you feel uncomfortable?" I asked.
She said, "Yes. But it wasn't just the topic, it was the way he was looking at me, smirking, like he was trying to get a rise out of me."
"What did you do?"
She shrugged. "I kept a straight face and read it silently. I talked about grammar."
"Why didn't you tell him the paper made you uncomfortable?"
"He said his instructor told him it was ok."
"Was the instructor male?" I asked.
She nodded. "Yeah, the student said, '*He* said it was ok.'"
"Why do you think he gets to decide what is ok?"
The coach sighed. "I don't know. Outside of here I'm the type of person who doesn't take any crap from anyone. I would have said something in a second. But this is a job, you know? I have to be professional, unbiased."

Careful not to make her feel any worse about the situation, I told the coach that she could have alerted the student to how she reacted to the document. The student could have benefitted from learning about her reading position. Writers need to understand how their work might be received.

"His instructor said it was ok," she replied. "Does it matter if no one will ever see it outside of that classroom?"

At this, I reminded her that we try for better writers, not better writing. And at any rate, there were probably others in the student's class who might have felt the same way as her.

That night, we had an undergraduate staff meeting, and I asked the coach to repeat her difficult situation to the group. A visually frustrated returning coach replied to her story with one of her own, this one about a student writing a paper about how women should not be allowed in military combat situations.

I said, "A lot of freshman rest arguments on dichotomies. The trick is to introduce more complexity into the topic. In this case, the dichotomy was a gender binary. But gender is a performance, not a biological reality. There has been plenty of press lately about transgender solders. That complicates the binary. How would he account for that in his paper?"

The coach said she doubted the student would take any of her advice, and I replied, "Yes, students do not want to hear that they need to develop their papers. Telling them they need to account for more complexity in their draft is telling them that they need to do a lot more academic work, and at this stage of their college careers, that is difficult labor."

A second coach interjects. Flustered, he says, "But I can't just change someone's mind."

I shook my head. "You don't have to convince them that you are right and win an argument. This is about explaining how you think, disrupting how they think, and opening the possibility for new understanding. We never have any control over whether a student will take our advice. Failure is always an option. Success is never guaranteed."

The group settled back in their chairs at this, and the tension in the room seemed to release.

In my experience, coaches, who are often highly outgoing, creative, passionate, and conscientious people, need to be given permission to fail, to see their work as a negotiation. They will not have all the answers for every detail of every session with every writer. Coaches need to be prepared to negotiate uncertain terrain and develop a network of resources in lieu of solutions. In a writing center session, rich learning can occur when the writer and the coach investigate and discover together. Working *with* writers, coaches can use the concepts of contingency, complexity, and contextuality as a heuristic tool to develop writing content and expose possibilities for strategic negotiation. However, There is no certain recipe to make this kind of work successful, partly because writing center sessions can be so diverse. In this chapter, I have primarily focused on differences in genres and discourse communities, but there are other differences that can affect how writing center work is carried out: differences in abilities, power, and session types (e.g., face-to-face, asynchronous, or synchronous online appointments). Given these complications, my goal in this section is to show how coaches can be better prepared to engage writers in this way though exploring some connections between the three concepts (contingency, complexity, and contextuality) and writing center work before exploring how these concepts build into the mapping strategies of mapping meaning, identifying binaries, absolutes, and possibilities, and mapping forces and structures of power, which can be deployed with writers in sessions.

To begin, consider the genre of resumes as a contingent concept. Resumes often bring students to writing centers, and they can change significantly depending on what

values the writer thinks an employer might hold above others. The signifier "resume" can slide to mean many different things, depending on its relation in space and time. If one employer in a factory likely favors precision and efficiency, a traditional resume with neatly organized bullet points is probably the most appropriate option. If another employer in a television station favors creativity and media design, an infographic resume or video resume may be better. If a different employer at a software company values responsible information management, a resume might include graphs or charts. Coaches might also search the Internet for examples of resumes from other countries. They might consider how these resumes are different than the resumes they typically see in their writing center and why those differences exist.

Coaches might also think about how resumes have changed over time as technological, political, economic, and social standards have changed. Consider that resumes typed on a typewriter look a lot different than resumes created in Photoshop. Before anti-discrimination laws were passed, resumes included more personal content, such as marital status. Also consider how resumes are different now that more people have access to printing technology. In a capitalist system, it is common for technological innovations intended to "democratize" society to actually entrench deeper differences by setting higher expectations. I think of this as moving the goal post further downfield. In the case of printing technology, now that college students typically have access to printers, students entering the job market often attempt to set themselves apart from other candidates by printing their career documents on more expensive paper. They might also include a link on their resume to a professional website (a purchased address spelling the candidate's name). The site requires a specific set of digital literacies to create and maintain, cultivated from a history of technological access, which is made possible by a particular economic and social position.

Graduate students often seek help from writing centers to complete their dissertations, but coaches can quickly be overwhelmed by the complexity of the genre. Sitting bound on the shelf, dissertations probably all look the same: hardbound, black, with small white lettering on the spine and front cover. Cracking a few dissertations open may not distinguish one from another very much either. All the samples might have five chapters. All might be formatted the same way, according to a graduate school's requirements. However, reading the tables of contents of a few random samples may reveal some important differences. Some might read more like a textbook, others like one big scientific experiment, and others like a collection of journal articles with an introduction and a conclusion. According to Peg Boyle Single (2010), there are at least three major types of dissertations: thematic, data analytic, and journal article (pp. 100–101). The type of dissertation a graduate student writes is contingent on their field of study, their interests, their committee, and the type of employment they desire. This is because each of these dissertation types affords a different set of scholarly advantages. For example, if a student is pursuing a career where they will have to publish journal articles, they may choose the journal article dissertation. They may also choose that format if they work in a field with expensive equipment and materials that are difficult to obtain. In these research environments, students often collaborate with co-authors, sharing resources and funds to publish the articles that will later be used in the dissertation.

After examining some dissertation samples from a variety of disciplines, coaches might read some of Marilyn Vogler Urion's (1998) dissertation, titled "Becoming most fully ourselves: Gender, voice, and ritual in dissertations." Urion set out to break every rule imaginable writing this dissertation. Page layout, font, tone, and style shift throughout the text, at times reading like poetry, dialogue, or academic discourse. There are images, some in color and some in black and white. Some pages are printed one-sided, others double. The document satisfies all of the typical requirements of a dissertation while working against and discussing the genre's conventions. This form of dissertation was a political statement for Urion. The work seeks in both format and content to critique the genre and the academy while conforming de facto to the requirements of the genre.

Film analyses are a common genre in writing center sessions that are particularly sensitive to context. In Part 4 of *Twin Peaks: The Return*, there is a monologue delivered by Michael Cera that demonstrates contingent meaning (Frost and Lynch, 2017). Young viewers might see Cera's performance as humorous because he is a comedy actor and his character seems so out of place, a non sequitur awkwardly wedged into the show for no clear purpose, pontificating on matters irrelevant to the plot. However, those more familiar with cinema history might recognize Cera's wardrobe and mannerisms as a caricature of Marlin Brando in *The Wild One*. It is only when these two signs come together in a chain that the scene functions as a critique of nostalgia. Viewers who do not articulate those two points will find the scene clever or funny in different ways than those who do. In this example, connection between semiotic structures has direct influence on meaning.

Coaches might then consider the nature of the critique in Michael Cera's performance, contemplating what structures of power are at play (e.g., gender, politics, or economics) and who is traditionally excluded from positions of power in those structures. The character's outfit, motorcycle, and drifter lifestyle act against the homogenization of consumer capitalism, but they also ultimately seek to maintain the ideal of individuality that characterizes that same economic system. The signifiers of the rebel are articulated to the hard lifestyle of the lower class. Just as what Traber (2001) observes about punk culture, rebels take on these signifiers to uniquely other themselves in a bid for individuality and social capital. Differential power plays an important role here, because Cera's character comes from a white middle-class male background and he can easily shift identities from rebel to mainstream and back again. The signifiers of the lower class are donned strategically for the benefit of the wearer, but those born into a lower economic class or a different racial category are less capable of these transitions. Traber's remark about punk culture seems to aptly describe the critique of the American rebel in this scene: "Punks unconsciously reinforce the dominant culture rather than escape it because their turn to the sub-urban reaffirms the negative stereotypes used in the center to define this space and its populations" (p. 31). The rebellious nature of Cera's character might be interpreted as a youth culture's bid for economic stability through accruing and leveraging social capital obtained by perceived "individuality." It might also be interpreted as a "'practical critique' of the dominant culture from a privileged position inside it," ultimately coming to "inhabit, embody and express many of

the contradictions of the system itself" (Clarke et al. 1976, p. 69). Here, the most powerful contradictions bring attention to nostalgia for American freedoms, how those perceived freedoms are attained, and who is capable of attaining them. Ultimately, the scene's critique is that a return to the values of rebellious 1950s youth in America will be unsuccessful because those values never actually resisted the dominant bloc of power within the parent generation's culture.

These insights might then lead coaches to consider possible interventions that could account for the relations of power identified. For example, perhaps rebellious youth cultures can consciously work to rearticulate signs of the working class instead of perpetuating lower-class stereotypes. By reshaping the narrative about what it means to be working class or poor, youth culture might improve the social and economic mobility of those groups. Nostalgia might also be countered by portraying more complex representations of the past that account for differences in economic and social status.

The layered concepts of contingency, complexity, and contextuality inform the mapping coaches can perform with writers in sessions. Mapping is a method of opening and renegotiating fixed meanings that helps writers see how a culture chooses to live and what could be possible if other choices were embraced. The goal is not to "reprogram" or "convince" individuals into a liberal or conservative point of view but to open space for semiotic negotiation in an alternative perspective. Specifically, in this method, coaches mapping meaning; identifying binaries, absolutes, and possibilities; and mapping forces and structures of power.

The opening of a writing center session is an opportunity for mapping meanings. Coaches begin sessions with information-seeking questions that map meanings on multiple levels simultaneously. At this stage, coaches are surveying the middle position. They learn how writers perceive their relationship with their audiences (instructor, classmates, employer, the institution, etc.). They learn how the writers view their relationship with the coach (Is the writer happy or frustrated about working with the coach?). They learn how the writer decodes the assignment prompt. They learn how the writer sees their place in campus and national cultures (Is the instructor an ally or enemy? What departments, instructors, or employers compel them to attend a session? Is the attendance required by someone?). They learn how the writer decodes the writing situation and the emerging context (What is this writing for? What is the writer attempting to accomplish? How and why did the writer choose their topic?). These layers of meaning constitute the student's code of understanding and their chains of equivalencies and articulations that define the writer's view of the world. During this initial stage of a session, it is critical to determine the writer's reading position in respect to the institution's professional code, as well as how the writer encodes meaning. Coaches need to determine what the writer means when they speak and write. They also need to think about how the coach's words and behavior might be interpreted by the writer.

When coaches read a writer's work, or provide a practice audience for a speaker's presentation, or a partner for conversation practice, they are decoding the writer's message. Coaches need to consider their own reading position as the work unfolds, as well as how other audiences will decode the work. This relies on mapping the

writing situation. If the session concerns a writing assignment, the coach must determine the differences in how the instructor encoded the assignment prompt and how the writer decoded it. If a coach is listening to a writer practice a conference presentation, the coach must determine not only how they interpret the material but how members of that community might interpret it and how the writer wishes it to be interpreted. Meaning maps of the writing situation help coaches determine if writers are faithfully reproducing the professional code and, in places where they are not, if their deviations are likely to be effective with their audiences.

Writing center sessions will also present frequent situations where mapping the writing's content is necessary, particularly in the case of argument essays. Composition courses typically ask students to write essays that argue a single position on a controversial topic. In these situations, coaches consider how either side of the debate understands the subject. If a political controversy is at the center of a writer's argument, the coach and writer can consider how both sides of the debate talk about the subject and what values or ideologies might be connected to those practices. In these types of sessions, mapping lays the groundwork for the second step in semiotic negotiation: identification.

Identification is a task that contains three components: finding strict binaries or absolutes, finding third positions that complicate those binaries or absolutes, and finding the affordances and constraints of all identified positions. These components might be applied to a writer's understanding of the writing situation or writing content. When practicing identification on writing content, coaches and writers can examine the previously established maps of meanings for binaries and absolutes. Binaries are this-or-that, inside-or-outside relationships. Some examples are male/female, lower/ higher class, homeless/housed, included/excluded, and normal/abnormal. While identifying, coaches can start by disrupting these concepts. If a writer's paper presents the popular conservative idea that speaking languages other than English is un-American, the binaries of patriotic/unpatriotic and English/not English can be complicated. A coach might introduce the idea that there are many different types of English that are spoken and written, both inside and outside the United States, that it is also patriotic to uphold the right to free speech granted in the Bill of Rights, and that many words in the English language are borrowed from other languages. When voicing concerns, instead of phrasing criticism against the writer, it can be advantageous to avoid using "you" in feedback and focus on what effect the writing will have on the audience. Instead of saying "You wrote this poorly" or "You sound racist saying this," a coach might say "Could you explain this part? I don't think I understand it" or "The use of this term doesn't account for a wider range of demographics that might read this as a secondary audience." Framing critique in this way opens space for semiotic negotiation and allows for the coach to present concerns about content, development, organization, tone, grammar, or punctuation in relation to structures of power.

After complicating strict binaries and absolutes, coaches can identify possible third positions. If a student is writing a paper on hostile architecture (public spaces designed to discourage the presence of homeless people), a coach might ask, "Aren't public spaces for the public? Why do you think a culture rejects the homeless as citizens? How can the homeless change their economic situation in this context?"

The question of whether or not the homeless are a problem to be deterred might then be shifted to a third possibility that builds on the desires of both positions: using the funding for hostile architecture to improve homeless shelters. Another example is if a writer's paper asserts that Greek organizations on college campuses should be banned because they perpetuate drug abuse, hazing, and rape culture. In this case, a coach might present an alternative to the keep-or-ban-Greek-organizations binary: reforming Greek culture. After introducing a third position, coaches can work with writers to identify affordances and constraints in the recognized possibilities. In this example, a coach and writer might determine that keeping Greek organizations as they are potentially perpetuates harmful social practices in some cases, banning Greek organizations discontinues the volunteer work and traditions of many fraternities, and reforming Greek organizations could potentially preserve tradition and volunteer work while promoting social justice and well-being.

In many conversations coaches have with writers, it is important to recognize that there are rarely clear answers for any of a culture's problems. In my example about Greek organizations, there is a smaller power differential at play between new members and senior members that might be addressed by unionizing new members and requiring the union to propose and negotiate the completion of a volunteer project for full membership. Other topics can be complicated by greater power differentials, such as the case with public education, which increasingly becomes a political football (such as the debate around arming public school teachers), while it is simultaneously defunded through voucher programs and increasingly burdened with standardized state requirements. A local teacher's union would likely not be capable of resisting the powerful political and economic forces and structures that shape these problems. There may be other topics, such as abortion, where every conceivable solution favors some party at the expense of another. In these more complicated matters, coaches might contemplate what each position encourages and discourages and where positions contradict each other, align, or have tension. Coaches can ask writers why the writer feels a particular way about the writing's content or the writing situation, which might reveal tenacious articulations. There may even be points in the opposing viewpoint that are articulated to common values. This process does not work from the perspective that one point of view should be preferred over another. It works in a meta-semiotic space where coaches and writers negotiate new meanings to identify tensions, conflicts, and commonalities in existing semiotic fields.

The next stage in semiotic negotiation is mapping forces and structures of power. Mapping power can reveal how certain social practices wittingly or unwittingly perpetuate ideologies, forces, and structures that shape how writers perceive and move through the world. Critiques of the context of the writing situation or writing content trace relations of power, revealing who benefits in what ways from particular social, economic, material, and political structures. Coaches can offer suggestions to writers with the emphasis that a particular response might be appropriate for that particular context, but meaning may need to be renegotiated later. When working on a resume and cover letter, coaches draw attention to the material realities that shape the genres: the employer has limited time, needs to comply with legal and safety concerns, and needs to stay competitive in a capitalist system. These relations

determine the generic features of the document. Coaches should explore the social, political, economic, and material forces at play in the shaping of genres, writing situations, and ideas. These types of conversations even apply to genres closely connected to the perceived objectivity of scientific and technical work. Writing a lab report in passive voice, for example, may be appropriate for the genre, but it conceals the writer's role in the production of knowledge. The reader is never informed of the social, political, and economic forces structuring the work. It may be important to point out to STEM writers, who believe writing can be "unbiased," that this practice may not be appropriate in many circumstances. If a writer is working on a study of local water quality, coaches might question if the writer should mention the community's reaction to the work and how the writer addressed it. They might also question what benefits might be gained from writing the study in terms average members of the community could understand, with concrete suggestions for community action.

To better prepare coaches to use the techniques described in this chapter, they can map, identify, and trace in groups to model different session scenarios. These activities might begin by selecting two coaches from the group to sit facing each other as the rest of the staff sits around them in a circle. One coach can play the "writer," while the other plays a writing coach. First, the "writer" can be asked to tell the coach a story, and the coach will have to employ listening techniques to understand (use body language that shows interest, ask clarifying questions, and paraphrase information back to the writer). The goal is for the two to have a substantial conversation, where neither party assumes control, attempts to predict what the other will say, or backtracks to point something out. The goal is a conversation that exists as a negotiation between two people, not in the separate heads of the participants.

After this exercise, a coach acting as a writer can be given a current event as a paper topic. A coach will then introduce contingency, complexity, and contextuality to the "writer." The coach and the "writer" can be asked to map the semiotic terrain of the subject matter; identify binaries, third positions, affordances, and constraints; and finally trace relations of power. As the two talk, the surrounding group might offer assistance. The session might conclude with group critique and discussion.

Other scenarios concerning current controversies and debates can be used to prompt group discussions about how a coach might respond to insensitive work or work that does not account for the full complexity of a writing situation. Scenarios might touch on climate change denial, arming public school teachers, or tearing down confederate statues. More advanced scenarios might address issues of identity and access, such as gay rights, Black Lives Matter, or #MeToo.

## Conclusions

This chapter has described the cultural position of writing centers in academic institutions and how they are uniquely capable of performing cultural studies to promote cultural awareness and disrupt rigid and entrenched binary thought. Taking

advantage of the writing center as a cultural contact zone can help communicators perceive how they can strategically act within a context to shape social practices. Instead of strictly perpetuating or contradicting the interests of the institution and the surrounding culture, writing centers can negotiate the legitimacy and respectability of a writer's position and practices by pairing coach training in genre analysis, style, and mechanics with training in mapping, informed by the concepts of complexity, contingency, and contextuality. Centers can help coaches and writers learn more not just about writing but how writing can be an instrument for purposeful action that strategically and constructively shapes the emerging context. Cultural studies can help coaches and writers see how language can change the way communicators understand and move through the world. It can reveal the tensions within writing situations, writing content, and writing center work, helping coaches and writers navigate various individual and institutional expectations, maps of meanings, and relations of power. Furthermore, it can promote engagement with more open and multicultural ways of thinking and living that both resist efforts to fix meanings and open possibilities for more just futures.

## Cross-References

► Cultural Studies and the Development of Sustainable Relations for the Internationalization of Higher Education
► Exploring the Future Form of Pedagogy: Education and Eros
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# Angry Noise

**38**

## Recomposing Music Pedagogies in Indisciplinary Modes

## Kurt Thumlert and Jason Nolan

## Contents

**Abstract**

Critical work in music education has interrogated Eurocentric values and representational systems in music curricula, as well as idealized constructions of musicianship grounded in Western aesthetic practices. In this chapter we argue, further, that inherited Eurocentric music pedagogies enact a "distribution of the sensible," a self-evident regime of sense perception prefiguring what is hearable and doable and possible, inviting students, through the very *processes* of music education itself, to ultimately disqualify themselves from vibrant and vital relations to musical worlds and sound-making practices. We argue that dominant forms of music education do not simply mobilize Eurocentric values and genres but are driven, fundamentally, by "talent regimes" – disciplinary systems freighted with aesthetic presuppositions, ableist epistemologies, and pedagogical

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operations that interpellate students into gendered roles and classist relations to sounds, and that tacitly disqualify bodies based on "self-evident" disabilities and perceived developmental "inadequacies." At a time when arts education is increasingly enrolled in the service of neoliberalized discourses of "creativity" and "play," we present counter-models that not only work to liberate music education from the constrictions of bourgeois aesthetics and commodity relations, but help to situate aural/sound/music learning experiences as a fundamental and necessary mode of sensory inquiry for young people's learning. Drawing on work in critical disability and technology studies, we conclude with an exploration of counter-models for alternative and more equitable pedagogical orientations to materials-centric inquiry, as well as opportunities for learning through soundwork composition – models that can, we argue, maximize the creative capacities of anyone and everyone.

## Introduction

### "Talent Regimes" – Unsound Foundations

Recent critical work in music education has interrogated Eurocentric values and representational systems in music curricula (Benedict et al. 2015), as well as normative constructions of musicianship grounded in inherited Western aesthetic practices (Bradley 2015). Further, we argue that inherited Eurocentric music pedagogies enact a "distribution of the sensible" (Rancière 2004), a self-evident system of sense perception prefiguring what is hearable and doable and possible, inviting students, through the very *processes* of music education, to ultimately disqualify and exclude themselves from participatory relations to music, inquiry into sounds, and sound-making practices. This chapter critiques dominant music pedagogies that mediate and uncritically sustain hegemonic cultural and educational forms, moving toward peda-gogical interventions that center upon and around equity, diversity, and inclusion.

In modern educational institutions, aural/sound/music experiences, tool use, and competences have been curricularized in ways that largely detach sound and music from wider cultural, sociotechnical, material, and embodied contexts, subjecting music (learning) to disciplinary modes, textualizations, and developmental sequenc-ings that ultimately abstract sounds and embodied sound play into notational systems, idealized performance goals, and associated skills assessments. These pedagogies continue a long tradition of policing sounds and music under the banner of aesthetics, qualification, and "proper" technicity. Both explicit and implicit curricula in music education work to exclude and nullify diverse ways of knowing, exploring, and playing that do not conform with entrenched discourses and practices

that align musical play with rhetorics of Power, Progress, and Normative Identity (Nolan and McBride 2015).

As Bell (2017), Lubet (2009a), and Matthews (2018) have argued, music pedagogies in schools and educational institutions function to ultimately exclude the majority of learning actors from participatory and meaningfully agentive relations to music and sounds, musical cultures, and situated sound-making experiences – indeed, disabling learners even without "obvious" impairments or disabilities. If dominant forms of music instruction work, procedurally, to disqualify individuals who have not previously been disabled by social and educational norms, by implication, it follows that the exclusionary violence inflicted upon marginalized and disabled persons is considerably more impactful, isolating diverse (and diversely situated) actors from vital cultural, communicative, and sensory experiences and sound-making practices.

Theorists argue that hegemonic forms of music education are not simply freighted with Eurocentric genres and epistemologies (Bradley 2015; Hess 2015) but are informed and driven by fundamentally disciplinary "talent regimes" (Lubet 2009a) and "talent discourses" (Gaztambide-Fernández et al. 2013). Talent regimes and discourses, as such, conceive of talent and "giftedness" specifically as attributes of "hyper-abled" individuals and frame musical competences and learning goals in terms of technical alacrity, specialized skills/roles, and a proficient use of tools that conform to idealized constructions of musicianship (toward which learners are gradually trained, developed, and socialized). Talent regimes interpellate students, through pedagogy, into gendered roles and ableist relations to musical cultures and aesthetic norms, to technology tools and skilled performances, and tacitly work to disqualify bodies based on a "self-evident" disability, a perceived developmental lack, and/or intersectional racialized and class lines (Bradley 2015; Darrow 2015; Gaztambide-Fernández et al. 2013).

Indeed, in the context of critical disability studies, Bell (2017) argues that "music educators play a pivotal role in making music learners disabled" (p. 112). What Bell signals is that an ensemble of classificatory, discursive, technological, and pedagogical mechanisms frequently operate in concert to procedurally (or a priori) include or exclude music learners and/or lead to (self)ascriptions of incapacity through the process of music education. Indeed, this is the case for all learners who are immediately disqualified and marginalized due to perceived physical and/or cognitive "challenges," as well as for students who, due to socioeconomic, cultural, racialized, and gender variables, come to learn – through practice – that they do not have the requisite "potential" or the very "tools" (cultural, aesthetic, or physical) to include themselves. On one hand, social constructions of disability explicitly or tacitly operate to *exclude* bodies, while, on the other hand, social constructions of giftedness (Parekh et al. 2018) explicitly or tacitly operate to *privilege* certain bodies. As for "the gifted," Bell (2017) points out that "even the idealized normal performance body is ephemeral" (p. 123) – and always culturally located, aesthetically contextualized. And it is here that ableism "operates on individual, institutional, and cultural levels to privilege 'temporarily able-bodied people' and disadvantage people with disabilities" (Adams et al. 2007, p. 335).

Building on these assertions, dominant music pedagogies, normative constructions of musicianship, and the hegemonic "talent regimes" that inform music pedagogies and traditional tool use must be critiqued from both critical disability and technological study lenses. Through these lenses, we articulate a disruptive materials-centric orientation to music pedagogy, tool use, and sonic inquiry that actively works to support and inclusively affirm culturally diverse and disabled students. These students are most likely to be marginalized by the discourses of dominant music pedagogies and count themselves out from lasting, dynamic, and participatory relationships with music and sound-making acts and communities. While some of them may forge their own paths back into music and sound making outside of educational institutions, educational institutions are charged with the formal education of children and young people, and, through their pedagogies and practices, they are actively excluding all but a privileged few.

What is at stake is not simply a disruptively transformative music pedagogy that supports diverse and disabled learners but a critical footing for reconstructing a more equitable, inclusive, and socially just music pedagogy for all: one that refuses to procedurally disable or pedagogically marginalize.

## Music at the Margins?

Advocates of arts education have frequently celebrated the "intrinsic value" of the arts, positioning arts education "at the margins" of dominant institutional practices and more aridly utilitarian curricular forms (Eisner 1985). Emblematically, Maxine Greene (1991) long advanced the idea of the unique power of aesthetic encounters and art-making acts to "awaken" us from ideological conventions and entrenched everyday routines, where what lies at the "margins" of dominant texts might be pedagogically activated, impelling us to wonder and imagine – as well as challenge the instrumentalized relations and social injustices of those dominant texts. As Greene (1995) states, "participatory involvement with the many forms of art can enable us. . . to hear more on normally unheard frequencies, to become conscious of what daily routines have obscured, what habit and convention have suppressed" (p. 123). Greene (1991) thus urged art educators to counter "empty formalism, didacticism and elitism" with "shocks of awareness" (p. 27), that is, aesthetic shocks that might unsettle hegemonic texts and bring what is at "the margins" into visible or audible presence. As winning as Greene's rhetoric may be, however, critical researchers (Benedict et al. 2015) in music education increasingly argue that, in arts education – and music education in particular – those at the margins are relentlessly maintained there, and systematically alienated from the very participatory relations and critical frequencies Greene extols.

The irony is that "the margins" that Greene advocated for still largely function within the dominant text of Eurocentric aesthetic values and ableist norms, reinforce those norms, and routinize exclusionary educational practices with equal vim and vigor. As a discipline within arts-based education, music education, too, has frequently been positioned as implicitly affirmative of non-instrumentalized relations

and "autonomous" practices – providing safely marginal realms for transformative play, open participation, and "creative self-expression" freed from more utilitarian outcomes and standardized curricular assessments. Yet As Benedict et al. (2015) point out, these uncritical affirmations of music education's unique ability to include and empower obscure a long history of disciplinary regulation: the "privileging of a particular set of musical practices, traditions, and forms of musical knowledge" (p. xiv) that in fact perpetuate empty formalisms, didacticism, and elitism. As Lubet (2009a) clarifies, dominant forms of music education, despite whatever conceits about the autonomy of the arts, are deeply shaped and informed by heteronomous "talent cultures," by the "fiercely exclusive nature of the Western music" (p. 731) tradition, and by normative constructions of what it means to be a "musician" and to use sound-making tools adeptly. These mechanisms and mediating pedagogical forms largely predefine talent, locate talent as the property of individual bodies (while disregarding sociocultural contexts), and, accordingly, predetermine who gets to "play" and how.

In music education, where musical play and the playing of musical instruments are the very subject of education, play itself is undertheorized, particularly in relation to talent cultures and talent regimes where certain modes of play, and ways of playing, are valorized and assessed. Unpacking how play is disciplined in schools, Nolan and McBride (2014) have mapped the intersections between the seven rhetorics of play, as described by Sutton-Smith (1997), and the explicit, hidden, and null curriculum (Eisner 1985). The explicit and hidden curriculum map onto the rhetorics of Power (rivalry, competitive individualism), Progress (development, skills acquisition), and Identity (socialization/adopting authorized roles). What is typically nullified, curricularly, are the play rhetorics of the Imaginary (creativity, irrationality), the Self (solitary interests, idiosyncratic affinities), Frivolity (trickster moves, the critique of power, the carnivalesque), and Fate (risk, gambling, improvisation, and chance operations) "because they are less purposive and difficult to operationalize" in schools – or because these modes of play directly challenge the dominant rhetorics of Power, Progress, and Identity, which tend to instrumentalize play in the service of heteronomous curricular ends and extrinsically determined cultural norms/goals (Nolan and McBride 2014, p. 601).

It is important to acknowledge that there are very few locations in educational institutions where the playful rhetorics of the Imaginary, the Self, Frivolity, and Fate are actually endorsed or promoted in the explicit or hidden curriculum. Indeed, the dominant rhetorics of play – Power, Progress, and Identity – prevail in music education as well, as means to an end, and the "subclasses" of play are typically nullified, or consigned to odd moments where 'frivolous' play is partitioned from the 'hard work' of learning. This is particularly the case when talent regimes begin to organize, rationalize, and administrate "play", and distribute bodies, in the service of well-defined aesthetic categories, technical skills, and specialized musical roles.

Under conditions where the dominant play rhetorics of Power, Progress, and Identity prevail, the view of music education actually being at "the margins" – accessible to all, participatory, ludic, and wondrously "useless" (in an autotelic or critical sense) – is increasingly untenable, even if this aesthetic ideology still lingers

in more melancholic strands of arts/music education discourse. Indeed, the view of the arts at the margins – a form of aesthetic play resistant to being (curricularly) "operationalized" – harkens back to older Eurocentric aesthetic categories where art and aesthetic experience were theorized as fundamentally "disinterested" and, therefore, resistant to economic circuits of exchange: the aesthetic provided a signal of, or a kind of anticipatory placeholder for, emancipated cultural "free play," and a form of community to come, liberated from the constraints of instrumentalized purposes, commoditized relations, and alienated experience. As Adorno (1997) argued, aesthetic experience served, if obliquely, as a dissensual negative category, indicting means-ends rationality ("identity thinking"), the logic of commodity abstraction, and related systems of inequality, exploitation, and human suffering rationalized into everyday life. From Adorno's position (1997), the critical function of art and the aesthetic lied in art's functionlessness, preserving utopian hope by, if only indirectly, suspending the drives to conceptually master, control, press into service, and/or materially consume. In this view, certain kinds of art and aesthetic experience might, if evanescently, critically negate (or provide an immanent critique of) appropriative, means-ends, and totalizing knowledge over nature, social compositions, and bodily arrangements. In musical idiom, recalcitrant art forms might, for Adorno, through their atonality and formal determination of indeterminacy, annunciate a participatory aesthetico-political community of free equals to come (where administrative lead tones are eliminated in the name of non-hierarchical, nonlinear, and rhythmically flexible atonal relations, and where marginalized tones, as it were, might be liberated into egalitarian and unfinalizable configurations, redeemed from the dominant text) (Adorno 1997; Buck-Morss 1977). Less abstrusely, art and the "aesthetic dimension" (Marcuse 1979) were seen to hold up a critical mirror, an alternative to a debased social world that reduced people and things to economic functions and compartmentalized skills, where bodies are organizationally fitted to their "proper places" as objects within hegemonic score of everyday life and institutional systems.

The irony is not that music education betrays this aesthetico-political ideal; rather, the paradox is that hegemonic forms of music education, as Lubet (2009a, b) argues, are among the *most* instrumentalized, hierarchal, ableist, and exclusionary of all the disciplines in schools, and music education's "talent cultures" among the most affirmative of specialization and competitive individualism, even at early ages. As Benedict et al. (2015) suggest more generally, music education has historically had a uniquely problematic relation to social justice, to matters of equity and equality, where long-term patterns of privilege, marginalization, and "social reproduction" through the arts (Wright 2015) have gone either unnoticed or unchallenged, or continue to be actively promoted in schools.

Further undermining the view of arts education as an emancipatory space, post-Fordist "knowledge economies" are, in contemporary contexts, being re-understood as "creative economies" where the arts are enrolled for neoliberalized economic aims and for building human capital (e.g., so-called cultural creatives). Here, arts education itself, far from being at the margins of anything, is bound up with technical innovation and revalued in terms of specialization, professional opportunities, and new forms of creativity "colonized" by a market-driven "creativism" (Kalin 2016).

In effect, a new unity of form and function through design, evacuated of the radical politics of early Russian constructivist or Bauhaus projects for transforming everyday life, is now enrolled in the service of neoliberal capital and the global race for skilled workers, innovations, and the generation of economic value (as witnessed and rationalized, for example, by recent STEAM and "design thinking" reforms, calls for standardized "performance assessments" in the arts, and through private and/or "specialized arts programs" that privilege the already privileged) (Gaztambide-Fernández and Parekh 2017; Kalin 2016).

Research by Gaztambide-Fernández and Parekh (2017), for example, indicates that arts education, and particularly specialized arts education programs, not only neutralize questions of social justice but continue or, more specifically, enhance a long tradition of social reproduction in and through arts education. Specialized arts programs, by operating under the aegis of "choice," or through mechanisms that select and identify learning actors through "talent" labels and individualized "giftedness" identifications, provide restricted "investment" opportunities in the resources (music capital), discourses, and the tacit "norms of whiteness" characterizing dominant Eurocentric cultural forms and traditions. Gaztambide-Fernández and Parekh (2017) note that "this raises the question not only of just precisely who is inclined to 'choose' a specialized arts education, but who is able to embody creativity and express artistic talents the 'right' way in order to successfully gain access to... [educational and career] opportunities" (p. 20). Using Bourdieu's (1984/ 1990) structuralist formulations, students are either differentially distributed in accordance to their apparent talents and tastes, "potentials" and dispositions, or learn to "entitle" themselves (or alternately disqualify themselves) from the very sites, spaces, tools, and symbolic transactions that provide differential advantages and opportunities in and outside of schools.

Consistent with neoliberal educational narratives, it is not surprising that the dominant rhetorics of play – Power (competition), Progress (development), and Identity (socialization) – are enrolled to support more instrumentalized educational aims, while the more subversive or critical aspects of play are suppressed (Nolan and McBride 2014; Sutton-Smith 1997). Indeed, the arts have increasingly become "the research and development arm of the culture industry" (Crow 1998, p. 35), value-adding drivers for high-tech innovation, or currency for cultural investment and symbolic exchange within institutional/cultural spaces: that is, vehicles freighted with dominant forms of symbolic power, taste, and talent which prismatically translate, through institutional mediation, into differential economic (dis)advantages under conditions of (mis)perceived "equal opportunity" for all (Bourdieu 1993; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990).

What should concern researchers, educators, parents, and students is how the arts and music education, specialized arts programs, "enrichment" electives, and associated talent cultures *increasingly* contribute, today, to the reproduction of social inequality and the reproduction of marginalizing systems that disable. Again, if the establishment, and (re)colonization, of music education by Eurocentric traditions and "musical capital" have historically foreclosed equitable and participatory relations to aural/sensory experience and music making (Wright 2015), in twenty-first-

century educational contexts, these concerns are further amplified under conditions of "aesthetic capitalism" (Shaviro 2008) where creativity, critical thinking, originality, and collaboration are "stripped of their emancipatory potential and… linked to wider 'features' of neoliberal subjectivities" (Kanellopoulos 2015, p. 326).

It is important to also note that the "outsourcing" of participation in the arts to enrichment clubs, "affinity groups," and informal learning communities outside of schools may provide a rationale for music educators to leave traditional curricular structures in place. Indeed, to embrace "participatory cultures" (Jenkins 2009) outside of schools – without transforming sociotechnical cultures, roles, and practices inside of schools – not only abrogates transformative interventions within schools but also leaves so-called participatory cultures largely to those who inhabit them now: the already privileged, the already "connected learner," and those authorized by material, symbolic, or ableist entitlements.

It is, therefore, necessary to examine the everyday pedagogical practices and relations that take place in schools in order to unpack how they construct ableist categories of musicianship and exclusionary talent cultures, and how researchers, educators, and students might intervene, beyond the abstract level of pedagogical critique, to fundamentally challenge assumptions and develop emerging practices that will lead to doing music pedagogies differently.

## The Distribution of the Sensible: Pedagogies That Disable

Dominant music pedagogies enact a "distribution of the sensible" (Rancière 2004), predetermining what is aesthetically hearable, doable, and (pedagogically) possible in music education. In this section, we explore the curricular and aesthetic mechanics of this distribution of the sensible – its implicit structuring of pedagogical relations and its organization of bodies in relation to sounds, tools, outcomes, and aims –and how the majority of music learners are procedurally invited to disqualify themselves as competent actors or come to understand themselves in some way "as disabled." This happens at both explicit and implicit levels, leaving alternative aesthetic and pedagogical orientations excluded or nullified (Nolan and McBride 2014). For Ranciere (2004), a "distribution of the sensible" is a given system of (inegalitarian) relations and assumptions that are hewn into given forms of community:

> [a] system of self-evident facts of sense perception that discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it. … This apportionment of parts and positions is based on a distribution of spaces, times, and forms of activity that determines the very manner in which something in common lends itself to participation. (p. 12)

As a regime of common sense, a distribution of the sensible prefigures the very terms of engagement and participation – *or* tacit forms of marginalization and exclusion. While Kanellopoulos (2015) employs Ranciere's aesthetic work to critique the subsumption of music education and creativity by neoliberal ideologies, the

figure of the "distribution of the sensible" is also useful to draw attention to the ableist assumptions and disciplinary mechanisms of (dis)qualification enacted through everyday music pedagogies shaped and informed by Western talent regimes. For Ranciere (2004), *the sensible* is not simply what "makes sense", conceptually or practically, but refers at one and the same time to what and how *sensory* experiences are selectively *made sense of* and implicitly valued: how sensory/aural experiences are organized, generically classified, and differentially valenced. In this respect, a distribution of the sensible becomes a kind of historical-aesthetic a priori (Ranciere 2004) prefiguring what is hearable as "good sense" and what is countenanced as "noise" – and, by implication, it determines "who has the ability to see and the talent speak" (p. 13), that is, the talent to make harmonious (musical) sounds as opposed to inchoate or discordant "noise." "Ability and talent" – the talent to speak, see, or make aesthetically "proper" sounds, and who can do this adeptly or ideally – are contingent upon the disciplinary "common sense" of talent regimes and dominant musical and institutional/cultural communities (Wright 2015), as well as associated curricular coordinates that induct learners into those communities.

The "distribution of the sensible," in music education, can thus refer to how descriptions and interpretations of states of affairs become self-evident, and how sensory experiences are mediated through curricular forms and commonsense pedagogical practices. It refers, then, to what and who is included or excluded and how included bodies are distributed pedagogically in relation to learning goals, including proper interactions with tools and cultural texts and associated learning outcomes, which focus dominantly on developmental learning and instrument(al) skills acquisition. In aesthetic terms, a "distribution of the sensible" informs how sensations are translated into sensible procedures and proper techniques, as well as into sensible aesthetic genres and representational hierarchies. As this "distribution of the sensible" manifests itself, Western talent regimes establish normative, classist, and Eurocentric forms of "sensible" aesthetic value that also predetermine what is curricularly admissible, while encoding, for music learners, precepts for percepts and axioms for affects. As an allegory of inequality, a "distribution of the sensible" becomes, in effect, a self-evident state of affairs that coordinates who is in the position to know; who has the authority to think, perceive, speak, or compose; and who is "naturally" not included, positioned subordinately or marginally within that "ensemble," and who *may* be included if the proper developmental (talent) milestones are met.

Western talent regimes, as articulated by Lubet (2009a, b), effectively establish a prevailing distribution of the sensible in music education today, prefiguring the aesthetic boundaries and musical/cultural capital of a community, of what counts or what is evaluable as "ability or talent," who possesses talent, and who is, by implication, lacking in talent, individual "gifts," and "potentials." According to Lubet (2009a), in Western aesthetic contexts, "where professional music making is touted as an [implicit or explicit] ideal, music learning is predominantly based on a model of professionalism: rating, testing, tracking, and exclusion" (p. 730). Music learning is, accordingly, grounded in and operationalized through pedagogical systems that work to developmentally induct and gradually train learners *toward*

some professionalized role, proficient status, or implicit aesthetic ideal (or signal who should move elsewhere). Through the developmentalist pedagogies that position music learners in relation to an anticipated professionalized goal or technically defined ideal, dominant music pedagogies ensure that students are procedurally embedded within the amber of that developmental regime. What quickly becomes naturalized, pedagogically, is a "distribution of the sensible" that endlessly positions students as "disabled," inadequate, or *not yet* able, in relation to a distant and endlessly deferred ideal talent or technical competency. The student is indentured to an aesthetic ideal or specialized talent/role that almost all will fail to embody or achieve. In fact, it is a necessity and requirement that the majority fail, and, at the highest levels of accomplishment, the greatest expectation of achievement is fraught with the spectre of the greatest failure. The "exclusive nature of the Western music," anchored in talent cultures, "eventually discourages nearly all but the hyper-able from any role beyond passive listening" as consumers: the majority of learners who are subjects of music education thus ultimately refer to their "participatory lives in music as past tense, as having not been 'any good' or 'good enough'" (Lubet 2009a, p. 730). In this distribution of the sensible, for most learners, alienation and disenfranchisement are arguably the most well-defined and predictable outcomes of music education.

The problem is not simply that music education *constructs* talent in accordance with dominant cultural forms, "discourses of talent" and "right ways" of being talented (Gaztambide-Fernández et al. 2013, p. 125, 130). Pedagogically, music learners – even privileged ones – are initially positioned as incapable or "disabled," or start from a position of pedagogically constructed incapacity, in relation to a pedagogical goal and a specialized ideal that is curricularly serialized and sequenced out before them. In this socially constructed pedagogical perspective, basic techniques, basic music reading, basic music theory, and basic rhythmic "skills" are perceived as essential competencies that are required in order for music learners to be able to perform competently or authentically. Once these initial skills are mastered, however, slightly *less* basic skills are presented as the next obstacles to overcome on the way to talent. As Rancière (1991) remarks, the instructor "digs a new hole" once the student has filled up the previous hole, and every learning event is inaugurated with the presupposition that the child cannot authentically do or perform unless they have been *first* instructed or equipped by the educator. Each step in the prescribed developmental hierarchy is replete with top-down behaviorist instruction and inculcation culminating with strict performance-based examinations of competency. Through pedagogical mediation, the ambit of skill and ability is of course widened, slightly, before incompetence and disability are reinstated again in relation to the next challenge, technique, or skill to be learned. Compositional practices, too, are endlessly deferred, as composition (at least in talent regimes) requires a multiplicity of prerequisite skills and theoretical basics. The fact that people compose and make music outside of schools, without formal training, theory frameworks, or technical aptitudes, seems largely disregarded in music education or is perceived (aesthetically) as outside "noise." Further, learners who may have acquired musical competences outside of schools are frequently *de-skilled* within schools – their authentic

creative energies or local cultural capacities effectively erased – in order to inaugurate them into the system of "skilling up."

As Rancière (1991) suggests, this commonsense pedagogical method, one that endlessly presupposes ignorance/incapacity as the educational point of departure for teaching and learning, results in "stultification": learners learn, through the linear-developmental process of instruction itself, that they can't do (yet), can't participate authentically (yet), are not "good enough," and will likely never be "good enough." As Ranciere punctuates this, any "reasoned progression of knowledge" or skill, any pedagogy that develops and trains learners toward an indefinitely deferred "talent," enacts an "indefinitely reproduced mutilation" (p. 21) – and becomes a mechanism for self-exclusion from sound-making practices. Students thus circulate in an ever-tightening gyre of discipline with ever-ascending expectations flinging off those who cannot hold to the center.

Complicating this, Gershon (2018) notes that, in music education, sounds and music are "nearly always organized and texted… within a comparatively static Western art music context" (p. 5). Music and sounds are converted to representational forms and notational systems that, as such, always already position music learners in disadvantaged and ableist relations to visual/graphical systems, the canonical "texts" of the music curriculum, and related outcomes that validate technique as technical prowess. At the same time, as music students embody and learn the hidden curriculum of talent regimes (and their dominant rhetorics of play), students begin to police one another in relation to these aesthetic values, performance norms, and competitive hierarchies. As music education assumes an aesthetic philosophical and moral order that students and educators are inculcated in, and certified in the replication of, they ultimately (re)perform the role of gatekeeper, as well as become keepers of "the method."

This gradualist, developmental system of music instruction is, we argue, the procedural logic of dominant music education forms, enacted even at the earliest ages through Eurocentric methods such as those associated with Orff Schulwerk, Suzuki, Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, and Zoltan Kodály. The critiques of Orff Schulwerk, Shinichi Suzuki, and Kodály are well documented (Gould 2011; Marsh 2009), yet they are not sufficient to direct attention to alternative models for a number of reasons. As identifiable brands, they are efficiently marketed to meet bourgeois parents' desires to consume and replicate privilege. Practitioners (and sometime parents), many of whom have been inculcated in this form of cultural reproduction since childhood, have constructed their own sense of self and cultural identity as part of these philosophical, cultural, and aesthetic value systems. As with any system of belief, it is extremely difficult to extricate oneself from aesthetic and talent regimes, and, at the same time, any challenges to "commonsense" beliefs tend to be met with vociferous condemnation.

While recent work in music education promoting social justice and anti-racist agendas (Hess 2015) intervenes to critically expand and even decolonizes the curriculum (e.g., by including hip hop, urban music, Indigenous, and "world music"), these inclusive moves, as necessary as they may be, do not necessarily address the pedagogical mechanisms, described above, that disable or select learners

out. Moves to activate diversity, through "culturally relevant" or "culturally responsive" music pedagogies, may diversify the curricular contents, but they may not transform pedagogies in meaningful ways – ways that fundamentally disrupt talent cultures, specialization, and the everyday mechanisms that invite people to count themselves out. Further, superficial curricular "additions" represent a symptomatic act to change appearances and cover up or gloss over cultural and pedagogical inequities, rather than offer a systematic rethinking of the entire orientation to sound and music in a fully equitable and inclusive manner.

## Disability, Technology, and Technique in the "Talent Cultures" of Music Education

One way to challenge the exclusionary hegemony of "talent regimes" and discourses in music education is to connect with work in critical disability and technology studies. By connecting with these fields, it is possible to understand that so-called talent, expertise, or ability – as well as disability – does not lie within bodies as essential attributes or properties. On the contrary, from a critical disabilities standpoint, actors provisionally obtain capacity and talent, as well as take their social identities *as* talented actors, by virtue of, or in relation to, the cultural and aesthetic discourses – *and* the material and technological contexts – that scaffold and define what counts as proficiency and expertise, or accredits a "talent" (Latour 2005; McDermott and Varenne 1995; Thumlert et al. 2015).

What is invisible in the ableist construction of music education, however, is the very fact that "abled" or "talented" bodies are *always already* assisted and continuously supported by material artifacts, technology tools, and cultural resources, even if – or again, particularly if – these material affordances, tools, and symbolic supports (from music stands holding visible charts to cultural capital and dominant forms of aesthetic taste) go intuitively "unnoticed" in everyday educational environments (Bell 2017; Matthews 2018; Thumlert et al. 2015). The countless "prosthetic things" that scaffold the "able-bodied" or "the gifted" thus pass unnoticed as "natural" aspects of the dominant musical (learning) environment or ableist pedagogical situation. With this in mind, we can begin to see the ways an inequitable distribution of resources, supports, and affordances have been normalized and thus begin to appreciate how differentially advantageous contexts and technologies for learning have been so often overlooked in even our most "objective" assessments of "gifted" or not, "talented" or not, and "abled" or not (Thumlert et al. 2015). By implication, it must be acknowledged where and how, before anything, those who "succeed" in schools and talent regimes are already (differentially) supported by a constellation of (self-evident) discursive, cultural, and technological devices – from acts of symbolic exchange (Bourdieu 1993) to eyes, fingers, or toes that felicitously "fit" the dominant tools of the trade.

From a critical disabilities perspective, talent and ability are always mediated and contingent, relational and circumstantially contextual (Adams et al. 2007). As Law (1999) notes, both human and nonhuman actors "take their form and acquire their

attributes as a result of their relations with other entities" (p. 3). At the same time, medical model, "special needs," and even "universal design" orientations to "treating" disabilities (as intrinsic deficit or corporeal/cognitive deviation from "the norm" that need be accommodated) risk solidifying and perpetuating the disablement through classifying and treating "a(neuro)typical" bodies, irregular behaviors, or inadequate performances (Nolan and McBride 2015). This is pertinent in pedagogical settings where the wild, sensuous, and unruly worlds of sounds, sonic textures, and music making are translated into decontextualized skills and magnitudes of proficiency: measurable skills which are, in educational institutions, abstracted from diverse sociocultural and sociotechnical relations and from vital/living material contexts and modes of material interaction. As McDermott and Varenne (1995) have argued, in relation to institutions, "disability refers most precisely to inadequate performances only on tasks that are arbitrarily circumscribed from daily life" (p. 1). And, as Mehan et al. (1986) extend this argument, specifically school-assigned disabilities may vanish once the "disabled" person is outside of schooling contexts.

Under the medical model of disability, classificatory practices that name disabilities in educational institutions, and that crystallize such identifications through remediating interventions, may have the less than ameliorating result of fixedly constructing identities (and corresponding systems of delimited self-belief) defined by lack, special need, and/or dependency; in turn, "treatments" – even charitable efforts to include the excluded in music therapy programs or alternative placements – may "include" under the mark of exclusion. In any case, as Skrtic (1995) argues, once disability – as an "objective and useful" representation of a condition or trait – has been assigned, a "coordinated system of services" is staged in relation to the special need and is so staged that progress is understood "as a rational-technical process of incremental improvement" (p. 210). However, improvements are defined in relation to expert knowledge of disability, incapacity, or lack, and, with this technical "knowledge," disabled learners are "elevated to as high a level as [one's] social destination" or incapacity allows (Rancière 1991, p. 3; Skrtic 1995). This defines a disciplinary knowledge (Foucault 1995) of incapacity or ignorance (Rancière 1991) that curricularly delimits, in advance, what is doable, in what order or sequence, and what counts as knowledge and skill, proficiency, and measurable progress. As such, this knowledge of incapacity or disability predetermines *how far*, and under what conditions, the student may improve or progress according to their "condition" or "potential" (i.e., how far one can progress within the system of interventions or developmental rehabilitations).

As researchers (see Darrow 2015) remind us, the intersections of race, class, gender, language, and culture are all simultaneously co-occurring and impacted variables in "expert" assignations of disability, special needs, or lack, as well as moving boundaries for establishing and maintaining "talent regimes" and aesthetic orders in music education. Paralleling Illich's (1971) critique of educational institutions, Skrtic (1995) cautions that, through *these* kinds of interventions, more care may mean "poorer health" (p. 190): the internalization that one is incapable and dependent upon systems that endlessly treat and remediate.

From this trajectory, a self-evident, ableist "distribution of the sensible" – the hegemonic music curriculum and its pedagogies – may be maintained and perpetuated *through* well-meaning efforts to include and accommodate those at the margins. For example, principles like universal design (Hamraie 2016) may attempt to accommodate and include, but nevertheless "include" in ways that often fail to question the "naturalness" of the ableist and neurotypical center as the hegemonic norm to which universal design is understood and formalized, and to which diversity, difference, and disability should or need conform. In relation to dominant "deficit-driven languages" of disability (Nolan and McBride 2015, p. 1069), and as Bell (2017) contextualizes this, disability in music education is generally understood as a "problem" to be "solved" and acted upon by experts as an "individual deficit that must be repaired": and under these conditions, "music educators play a pivotal role in making music learners disabled" (p. 12). In this discussion, we point out that the medical model mechanics that classify "lack" and that endlessly remediate and remake disability in special education operate and function just like music pedagogies within dominant talent regimes: both pedagogical systems proceed from the same deficit-driven suppositions (individualized need/lack, incapacity/disability) and progressively lead to, or culminate in, learner (self)exclusion from participatory relations and opportunities.

One risk of transcending the medical model of disability in the name of universal design, however, as Hamraie (2016) points out, is falling into a "post-disability" rhetoric that would flatten, rather than highlight and affirmatively assert, the contours of diversity and disability. Post-disability discourses, very much like neoliberal post-racial discourses, assert that (universal) opportunities exist, or can be designed, for all. The problem is that diversity is accommodated through technical interventions where disabled, racialized, gendered, and/or marginalized actors are deprived of the capacity for self-definition or agentive voice in (re)articulating what they require (to participate fully) or affirm how their differences critically enrich, open, and diversify cultural worlds, ways of knowing, and ways of doing. As Hamraie (2016) puts it, we need to reframe disability and disabled technology users as "valuable knowers and experts" and "foreground the political, cultural, and social value of disability embodiments" (p. 20).

Linking critical disability and technology studies, from a perspective of equity, diversity, and inclusion, we suggest that *every*body has a right to social and technological supports and assistance. However, only *certain* bodies, in ableist cosmologies and musical talent regimes, receive the benefits of constant and continuous support, precisely because those material and symbolic supports are perceived as "natural," self-evident. That is, those who benefit most from the hidden curriculum of privilege also benefit most from the explicit curriculum, and through this privilege effectively enact a nullification of the very supports that the "disabled other" needs to participate. The door is closed to the latter because the very mechanisms that open the door to privilege close it on everyone else.

Ableism, as a prevailing distribution of the sensible, is effectively an order of inequality ingrained into the apparently "natural" order of things, of what is seeable, sayable, and (pedagogically) doable. To challenge this distribution of the sensible,

we posit that, under different conditions and contexts, *every*body has the potential to be or become disabled. This is in accordance with the social model of disability, in which it is acknowledged that the choice is in terms of when, where, and how competences emerge or "happen," not who possesses "talent" as an essential property. Further, under conditions when and where *every*body is equitably supported according to their requirements and unique demands for equality, diverse bodies are enabled to participate, affirmatively and diversely, with and *through* their embodied differences and diversities. If democracy – or a democratic public education – has any real or potential value as a socially positive force, it will be directed to equitably supporting all bodies with the tools, affordances, and resources that diverse bodies *require* to participate fully, here and now, in cultural (learning) practices. Its enactment signals a demand for socio-technical *equity* while also insisting that *equality* can only every "happen" when and where the equitable conditions for equality – as present *events* – are insistently remade and insistently (re)verified.

Before any action can take place, there is a necessity to affirmatively and equitably commemorate difference and diversity in all modes of experience and expression. This signals a redistribution of the sensible that Ranciere – the philosopher of equality – can scarcely imagine given his focus on class relations and his own affinity for bourgeois works of art. What Ranciere misses in his own powerful, but arguably still ableist presupposition of the "equality of intelligence," is that not all "intelligence" need be fitted to a neurotypical standard, nor are all physical bodies identically equipped.

As for equipment – the tools and technologies that are employed in music making – if talent and ability (and disability) are seen as contingent, relational, and contextual, then when examining a sound-making technology tool, we should see, too, that musical instruments, like any tools, are constructed objects and therefore contingent and adaptable to varying purposes, changing contexts, and dynamic uses. That is, musical instruments should not be understood integrally or statically in terms of their own intrinsic properties or normalized aesthetic functions. The tautology that a musical tool "is what it is" according to an intended design or inherited cultural function, or in relation to a self-evident aesthetic output, not only de-historicizes (reifies) the tool but insulates it from further critical, transformative, and inclusive (re)adaptations. Further, a set of canonical tools, situated within "talent regimes" and stable curricular goals, already predetermines what is admissible – or hearable – as a legitimate sound-making tool or compositional technology.

What we are problematizing, here, is that in hegemonic forms of music education, musical tools are simply given as integrally "natural" objects, which in turn obscures the arbitrary pedagogical scripts, techniques, and modes of bodily interaction that co-define terms of engagement, accessibility, and "proficient" tool use, and what counts as a related "beautiful" outcome or virtuoso technique. These tautological orientations to tool use, and corresponding (motor) skills and talents, are too often organized in disciplinary relation to an idealized playing body (beyond age or impairment, culture or economy) (Bell 2017) where the beautiful body itself is co-defined in relation to an ideal aesthetic form or performance and, with that, an ideal educational trajectory and progressively obtainable goal. However, as examined

above, this proper aesthetic, technical, or professionalized end goal, itself, within the "talent regimes" of dominant forms of music education, already presupposes the programmatic "stultification" (Rancière 1991), "winnowing out" (Lubet 2009a), "alienation" (Thumlert 2015), or tacit "self-section" (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990) of all but a fortunate few.

Yet, as Lubet (2009a) reminds us, "music is nowhere intrinsically or exclusively professional" (p. 731), and, as we discuss below, materials-centric sonic inquiry and soundwork design are even less so. By the same token, a musical tool, or what counts as a legitimate music-making tool, is nowhere intrinsically mediated or tautologically defined by the artifact itself (Latour 2005; Law 1999). One need only look to the prepared instruments of fluxus and minimalist artists (Hendricks 1989), the extended techniques and unconventional tunings of the No Wave and punk movements, the use of mixing board tools *as* musical instruments in Jamaican dub, and the use of turntables in hip hop, to claim cultural and musical "talent" through tool adaptation or repurposing (Rietveld 2013; Woods 2007). All of these technological adaptations attest to (1) technical reconfigurations of musical tools for artistic/ expressive purposes; (2) the modification, refunctioning, or invention of new tools (and extended techniques) for participatory access and self-inclusion in sound-making cultures; and/or (3) the *ex*propriation of dominant technologies of consumption and cultural reproduction for "unauthorized" cultural making, authentic production, and sharing.

To be clear, adaptive tool/body modifications like turntablism, beatboxing, Dub, or the "mobile sound systems" of early hip-hop culture are, as Woods (2007) reminds us, much more than technical innovations or precursors to any abstract "remix culture": they are before anything a recovery, extension, and expression of a very long history of community struggle, critical social inquiry, and (unauthorized) creative capacity: a diverse, multi-genre, historically shifting form of "social investigation," interpretation, and critical artistic communication that Woods (2007) has called "blues epistemology" and Ladson-Billings (2015) calls a form of "social justice praxis."

Despite these adaptive reclaimings, dominant orientations to music education that focus on talent and skill development (through conventional Eurocentric musical texts and normalized tools use) ultimately decontextualize sounds and music from the multimodal, material, and embodied cultural and sociotechnical contexts from which musical cultures arise, appear, and situationally "happen." In short, early hip-hop culture, as "blues epistemology," was a tactical means for the excluded to expropriate artistic tools and articulate cultural/aesthetic forms so as to include themselves under the sign of difference, diversity, and self-empowerment (Ladson-Billings 2015; Woods 2007). More recently, diverse communities outside of schools have been adapting tools in ways and through means where disabled persons disruptively include themselves in music-making worlds, that is, include themselves in cultural practices that, traditionally, the privileged and the "talented" have reserved for themselves. It is important to be cognizant of that, through these unauthorized interventions, the very order who can play, who is able, what counts as a proper tool or aesthetic product, and who can include themselves as makers of

musical culture, is critically disrupted, enriched, and expanded: a redistribution of the sensible.

## Conclusion and Future Directions: Motion Toward

At a time when arts education is under threat from continual reduction of resources, as well as from neoliberalized discourses that instrumentalize play and creativity, we need to develop new models that situate aural/sound/music learning experiences as a fundamental and necessary sensory exploration of (young) people's learning, and in ways that build upon the lessons and models of critical disability and society and technologies studies.

Auditory sensory information can take many forms, but where it appears in the instruction of children and young people, it tends to be in the form of social and cultural knowledge created, textualized, and transmitted by adults to children for their consumption, developmental learning, and reproduction. This information takes many representational forms, such as verbal explanation, texts, musical charts, and content on screens. Rarely, however, does it take the form of actually exploring auditory sensory stimulus "up close," where tangible inquiry and multisensory experimentation connect to soundwork making, (collaborative) soundscape design, and/or tool fabrication/adaptation. In music education, this materials-centric orientation to sensory information, music, and sound-making tools is very much a "missing modality" in the organization of people's learning, alongside aroma (smell and taste) (McBride 2017) and other marginalized modalities of sensory exploration and communication.

Why not start with the tangibly real and grounded points of departure such as vibration and experimentation with materials, and enable students to begin competent*ly* from where they are, and come to know from the inside out (McBride 2017)? Music education starts with gradual inculcation into a social model when we teach "basics" like pitch, melody, and rhythm, as well as basic "techniques" and standard ensemble forms, which are themselves technologies that distribute bodies and normalize particular aesthetic forms and "talent orders." But whose pitch? Whose melody? Whose rhythm? And whose tools and whose ensembles – for whose ends? We teach and value a one-size-fits-all aesthetic of what these things are, but what if we choose to let learners explore and develop their own sense of how pitches are organized, melodies constructed, and rhythms designed, through materials-centric inquiry, experimentation, making, and modification, as well as through authentic soundwork production? Because of the cultural and social influence of the tools and musical texts educators provide children with, combined with a hegemonic music curriculum, children are restricted in their material inquiries and explorations (if they are permitted to explore at all) to standardized formats, conventional tools, and predetermined outcomes.

We need to chart alternative directions that challenge dominant pedagogical forms grounded in exclusionary and debilitating talent regimes. What we outline below are not meant to be static principles or even "best practices." And they

certainly do not foreclose dynamic opportunities for activating ever more complex competences or creative capacities; on the contrary, we believe that inquiry and exploration enacted through these models can maximize opportunities for anyone and everyone. Think of these gestures as more like provisional guideposts for "improvised wayfinding," as Ingold (2009) describes the journey of learning, inquiry, and making. The overall trajectory is to move in directions that depart from Eurocentric, adultist, ableist, and universalized notions of what should be learned and how it should be "taught" or "evaluated." And, by contrast, our modes of improvised wayfinding presuppose immanent capacity – rather than incapacity – as the point of departure for learning and making.

   The key points toward an inclusive and equitable music pedagogy for all learners are open-ended, and the outcomes should be as unknowable to the educator as they are to the music learners:

1. **Actively question and creatively critique** the "idealized" goals, products, and outcomes of existing music education practices. With the critique outlined in this chapter as a possible starting point, look to create learning opportunities that challenge the power that music education holds over learning and thinking and creating with sound, in whatever form engages the learner, not with an eye for institutional approval, or to conform to dominant public norms, but to make sonic inquiry and soundwork composition a special – but unspecialized – part of everyday life.

2. **Disrupt imposed aesthetic** notions and valuations of what is "beautiful," good, or proper. Careful observation and thoughtful experimentation by both educators and students will lead to an understanding of the kinds of sounds, rhythms, and melodic or (a)melodic sequences each child or music learner responds to and is interested in further exploring. Emergent aesthetic notions and valuations will stem from the learner's experience and perhaps from intrinsic interest and/or emerge through inquiry and material interaction with tools in feedback-rich listening and sound-making environments. This is a much more suitable point of departure than starting with what an adult educator likes or what educators think the child *should* be experiencing, in what particular curricular sequence. If music learners are given support in experimenting to find their own milieu(s), and are challenged to creatively explore what interests them in increasing levels of complexity (unregulated by developmentalist systems), they will become the scientists of their own creative inquiries, endeavors, and interdisciplinary artistic trajectories: taking musical forms apart, building their own theories, testing them, and reflecting on the results, and then onto fresh inquiries, experimentation, and making.

3. **Challenge all cultural influences** to destabilize cultural imperialism and cultural tourism. Making an assumption that a child or music learner will or will not like any type of music, or *should* like any kind of music or sound-making tool, usually involves making gendered, racial, or cultural assumptions about the learner. Assumptions frequently represent biases on the part of the educator (Jorgensen 2015). One approach is to become familiar with musics, sounds, and

rhythms that the educator does not already "like", have affinity for, or cultural investment in, as part of ongoing professional development and practice. Bring open-ended curiosity as a learner to practice in order to model curiosity to children and youth, so as to encourage them to explore new sounds, new tools, and alternative ensembles, and not as an expert, but as a self-reflective co-learner who truly does not "know it all."

4. **Provide tools and learning opportunities** that challenge learners to situationally explore alternative and indisciplinary (rule-ignoring/bending) conceptualizations of melody, rhythm, harmony, timbre, texture, dynamics, (a)tonality/microtonality, as well as ambient soundscape designs: relations and forms that do not conform to Eurocentric patterns and hierarchies and that bridge material/analogue and digital sound-making tools. Supplanting Western models of music with music from other cultures and traditions does not solve any problems. The goal of a transdisciplinary and transcultural approach to any learning situation is to ensure that children and youth are engaged in active and meaningful exploration of various objects and traditions in a manner that does not privilege any single approach, but allows children to identify with, acknowledge, and respect, as well as understand the historical contexts of, the various influences that impact their learning and making.

5. **Explore game-like, collaborative orientations to composition.** Challenging the romantic ideal of the composer as solitary genius, as perpetuated in "talent regimes," soundwork composition can be carried out through game-like models that engage music learners in authentic compositional practices, models that composers have been using for many decades. From the chance operations of John Cage and the ideation card decks that Brian Eno employed, to the visual drawing composition techniques developed by Daphne Oram, to the tape loops and "deep listening" practices of Pauline Oliveros, there are a variety of procedures that can be mobilized. Such approaches to music composition look beyond traditional "notational" systems, as well as beyond notions of individualized "giftedness," drawing attention to external supports, models, and tools that can be mobilized for collaborative and game-like compositional making. Digital composition tools like the Tenori-on (and many similar apps today) integrate "chance" modes, "drawing" modes, gestural action, and additive/subtractive processes into soundwork production pedagogies (Thumlert 2015). These more immediately accessible compositional procedures, we note, operationalize less rationalized and more inclusive – though typically suppressed – modes of play and creative making: the Imaginary, Frivolity and Fate (Nolan and McBride 2015).

6. **Ensure diverse forms of auditory exploration**, including vibrotactile and visual sensory stimuli. Differentiated instruction benefits all learners. Although individual "learning styles" have been thoroughly debunked, diverse and sensorially complex learning opportunities afford greater diversity in terms of ways of engaging multimodal challenges and constructing relations. Learners need to explore sounds from all possible sources: environmental, urban and industrial, natural materials, synthetic, electronic, and digital. Accordingly, the more ways

they can explore sound, the better: auditory, vibrotactile, visually, or through tactile interfaces (digital and/or analogue). We hear with our whole bodies, and music education represents one of the best opportunities for multisensory exploration and materially multimodal inquiry.

7. **Value exploration and process-oriented inquiry skills** over the performance of a set of prescriptive skills designed to meet adult-centered cultural expectations. Open-ended exploration with unknowable outcomes entails intentional inquiry, co-defined projects, and formative assessment structures with continuous opportunities for critical reflection. Open-ended exploration is not random and unstructured thrashing about, just as it is not adherence to externally imposed or templated forms of exploration and inquiry. Also, the notion that the outcomes should be unknowable by the student and the educator indicates that the student is not just learning what the teacher knows, but the teacher is setting up learning opportunities where unexpected things can happen: events not prefigured by the instructor nor predetermined by the curriculum. It is about "theory building, testing, and reflecting," and working with an experienced educator as a "just-in-time resource," as the student learns through exploration and inquiry in ever-increasing levels of complexity, though in this context, the learning is predicated by greater autonomy of thinking and action, rather than greater adherence to heteronomous authority.

8. **Learn music through making music**, using tools that do not require "expertise" and that support learning through experimentation, improvisation, making, and doing. Learning about music should not be focused on the end goal of performing in front of an audience, no more than the aims of creating any work of art or cultural artifact is necessarily about its exhibition or consumption. Learning can focus on process and inquiry as both a foundation for, and an enactment of, creativity and competence while fostering a more critical standpoint for understanding how sounds, musical forms, and sound-making tools and technologies work – both materially and culturally. There is an explicit assumption that learning and creative pursuits are valuable to the individual(s) in and of themselves and do not require an external body of adjudication to give them meaning or value.

9. **Foster a culture of music/soundwork creation** that serves immediate use value and pleasure. The process must be immediately worthwhile for learners – not a means to some distant, idealized end or some commoditized skill for future exchange. If experiences are coerced or forced, participation mandatory, and the pedagogy teacher-directed/top-down, then we are not engaged in truly creative acts or part of any music culture in the "majority world" (Balaram 2011). When musical experiences are intentionally chosen, collaborative, and improvisational, with shared goals that are co-defined by the community itself, then the actual act of playing and creating becomes a form of social interaction *and* community, and even onerous practice becomes a shared burden freighted with value, meaning, and significance. Most importantly, a community model has room for all levels of interest, engagement and participation, and a diversity of skills and techniques. The flattening of competitive hierarchies creates the

possibility for "mixed-ability" groupings to flourish, where the very meaning of "ability" itself might be transformed.

10. **Support tool adaptation.** Musical technologies need to be rethought so that people can adapt them to their own needs, rather than forcing the learner to adapt to the instrument, or fail through their inability to accommodate the requirements of the instrument, or conform to its implicit aesthetic norms. There is no longer any need for mass-marketed, standardized, one-size-fits-all musical instruments when the tools and technologies exist for making custom instruments, modifying existing instruments to fit the needs of the player, or to create new and amalgamated instruments for new contexts and creative purposes. If everyone has an individually customized instrument that meets their needs, students who would otherwise be excluded due to disability or difference can include themselves on their own terms. Every learner is unique – and *uniquely* unique in ways that transcend top-down universal design initiatives and post-disability rhetorics (Hamraie 2017). Accordingly, every musical instrument can be equally unique. If we enable and materially support students in the fabrication of their own individually customized devices, we are opening new worlds for musical expression and participation, rather than enclosing learners in the mantle of some idealized romantic notion of music that, if it ever existed at all, existed only for those privileged enough to name and embody that ideal.

## Cross-References

▶ Explorations of Post-Identity in Relation to Resistance: Why Difference Is Not Diversity

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# Toward Understanding the Transformational Writing Phenomenon

# 39

Elizabeth Bolton

## Contents

## Abstract

Early psychological studies on the link between health and writing such as those conducted by Pennebaker and Beall (1986, Psychol Sci 8(3): 162–166, 1997) were rooted in a theory of inhibition and disease and produced mostly quantitative results. A meta-analysis of 146 such studies on the connection between emotional disclosure and improved health (Frattaroli, Psychol Bull 132:823–865, 2006) concluded that the practice of expressive writing for the improvement of psychological and physical health does work, on some people, some of the time; however, the influential aspects of the mechanism remain unclear (Low et al., Health Psychol 25:181–189, 2006). I suggest that further

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research in this field be conducted under the broader term *transformational literacy practices* and that methods examining them be more inclusive of various presentations of qualitative data such that these methods respect the organic development and pacing of a devout writing practice, as it is upkept by an individual who identifies as a writer. Under these suggestions, writer and researcher become one, and hermeneutical phenomenology, a highly suitable methodology for capitalizing on that union in order to generate rich and informative data on the writing-health link. When writing about the self is treated as phenomenon rather than task, we are then able to consider the cultural milieu in which that phenomenon has taken place as critical aspect of the data.

## Introduction

Writing heals, sometimes. This is the most we can conclude from the extant literature on the subject, most of which is quantitative and comes from the health sciences, particularly psychology. We may even have seen it work for us before in small "doses," when perhaps, driven by an emotional upset, we arrived at a blank journal page, spilled until now unexpressed emotion onto it, and felt so much relief afterward that we thought we might make a regular practice of it, because we felt so much better after a short bout of *expressive writing*. The phenomenon of writing that heals is common. It happens to professional writers, casually self-identified writers, and nonwriters alike. Some practice it on occasion, not always on purpose, others, as part of a regular creative practice contributing to their overall identity or profession as *writer*, and many are well aware that the aftereffects are not necessarily uplifting. Writing about the events of our own lives can easily solemnify us, enrage us, confuse us, or even seem to do nothing for us at all.

The term *expressive writing*, coined by Pennebaker in his initial experiment with 46 undergraduates in 1986, entered into the search engine for the third largest academic library system in North America, pulls forth today no less than 3,500 results in scholarly journals alone. The majority of these studies have been designed quantitatively and closely follow Pennebaker's model, typically consisting of the administration of a timed writing task or series of timed tasks to a random selection of student or community participants or patients within healthcare systems, followed by the immediate collection of self-reported mood and measurement of blood pressure and heart rate, and a collection of longitudinal data in the form of, for example, a report of how many visits each subject has made to a healthcare center in the month or 6 months following the tasks. The current state of the field of transformational literacy practices is limited in scope due to this model, but the data generated is not useless. In examining what Pennebaker and others have done, we gain foothold which will allow us to reform the questions that will guide further

research in the field. First, the phenomenon itself, that is, the phenomenon of personal transformation through writing about events from our own lives, must be treated as such, our notions of why we seek to understand it at all, adjusted and redefined. Second, our paths of questioning must be altered to fit a new definition of the phenomenon. Lastly, the field must be placed in a new and interdisciplinary position which allows for its study using qualitative, illuminative methods which consider the inevitable cultural setting in which the phenomenon occurs.

## Background

Pennebaker's work was rooted in a guiding theory that presupposed a connection between inhibition and disease. An early survey he conducted collected data on the nature of traumatic events faced by college students and the prevalence of physical or psychological illnesses in the years following those events (Pennebaker and Beall 1986; Pennebaker 1997). Those who responded that they had experienced childhood sexual abuse were particularly prone, it seemed, to developing physical and psychological illnesses later in life. Pennebaker found upon further investigation that it was not the specific trauma itself that was linked to disease but the act of *keeping secret* past, traumatic events that made them likely to result in later physical illness. Childhood sexual abuse was something its victims were likely to have repressed and hidden away without ever telling anyone. Pennebaker used this theory of inhibition and emotional disclosure as guidance for his experimental design. His example became a model for many others, as it was widely accessible and easy to implement in practical settings, and it paved the way for further expressive writing research with college student groups (Smyth 1998), community members (Spera et al. 1994), and medical patients (Brown and Heimberg 2001; Danoff-Burg et al. 2006; Petrie et al. 2004). When studies began to show, there was, in fact, a link between disclosure through writing and improved health; the research that followed then sought to pinpoint the precise aspects of the writing process that resulted in positive health outcomes.

## The Healing Effect of Narrative

Researchers next turned their attention to the notion of narrative structuring (Pennebaker and Seagal 1999; Ramírez-Esparza and Pennebaker 2006; Smyth and Pennebaker 1999), where the term narrative was loosely assigned to those pieces possessing coherence and a clear beginning, middle, and end. Researchers based their hypothesis, which narratively structured events would bring more relief to participants than non-narratively structured writing, on cognitive change theory (Smyth and Pennebaker 1999). Cognitive change theory posits that "...traumatic memories that are not simplified into a narrative structure may be stored as sensory perceptions, obsessional ruminations, or behavioral reenactments, as in the case of post-traumatic stress disorder" (Danoff-Burg et al. 2010, p. 342). The theory worked

under the assumption that fragmented memories could be highly intrusive and harmful to health, while narratively structured ones were so unobtrusive as to eventually subside from conscious thought and no longer cause distraction, distress, or health complications.

Most recently, Danoff-Burg et al. (2010) hypothesized that specific instruction in experiments to structure pieces narratively would produce superior health benefits as compared to standard expressive writing instruction, which did not specify a particular structure. The researchers assigned two 20-min writing tasks to each group of undergraduate students, some of whom had been instructed to write narratively, others not, and ultimately reported that both emotional expression and narrative structure might be central factors in the efficacy of expressive writing for health improvement but that, for this particular group, the instruction to write narratively did not produce superior health outcomes. At a 1-month follow-up, the frequency of healthcare center visits did not differ across groups, either. Researchers again concluded that the benefits did occur but only for some participants, without a clear reason as to why. Note in particular that the theories supporting experiments on the role of narrative structuring in emotional disclosure were psychological and did not consider social or cultural views of the writing form. While theories of cognitive change are comfortable due to their measurability, the data suggest that, in our studies of how narrative affects the human life, we have missed something crucial, something to do with the individual, creative, culturally situated literary experience.

## Experiential Knowledge

When I first began a personal creative writing practice, it was for the purpose of emotional expression. I had had some life experiences which I considered traumatic and which I had not yet disclosed to anyone or verbalized in any way. When my physical health and understanding of myself began to improve over the course of my writing, I, too, like Pennebaker, suspected that each time I sat down to write, my health would continue to improve by some small amount simply because I was disclosing problematic, long-inhibited emotion through writing. I arrived at graduate school at the age of 29, driven by what I considered a miraculous turnaround of my own life, thanks mostly, I believed (and still do), to writing. That sustained, devout writing practice later led me to understand some of my symptoms in the terms of type 1 bipolar disorder. I took that well-crafted collection of written knowledge with me to a psychiatrist and was promptly diagnosed with the disorder and began a course of successful treatment shortly thereafter. Throughout pre-diagnosis struggles, experimenting with ways of wording my symptoms, successful communication of those symptoms to a healthcare professional and subsequent appropriate diagnosis and treatment, my creative writing practice remained active and central. Every piece could be considered creative nonfiction as it was based on true events from my own experience. As my physical and psychological health improved, so did my writing skill. After 4 years of keeping the practice up, I found myself in a stable position as

far as my health went, with a small collection of published writing in creative literary magazines. Even my academic writing had improved, it seemed. In my own terms, my creative nonfiction writing practice was a success, and the link between writing and health, undeniable. When I began to research the phenomenon myself, floored by how far I'd come seemingly just from writing about the most difficult events of my life, the first experiments I encountered in the literature were those of Pennebaker and his various teams. As I delved further into his work and the experiments that followed, I admit I grew disappointed to see that expressive writing could not possibly be functioning in the way an oral medication might. The quantitative data so far had been inconclusive enough to make that clear. I had once imagined that with each act of writing about things that had happened to me, I would release some amount of repressed emotion, until at last one day, I would have released it all and would then be able to call myself fully healed. Of course, it did not take long for me to realize that "full" or "complete" healing, particularly in the case of psychiatric illness, is no more than illusion. It was at this point that I decided to undertake my own research on the writing-health link, in my own terms as a writer, with Pennebaker as foundation.

## Not to Measure, but to Demonstrate

In spite of conclusions which have generated more questions than answers, we can use data from Pennebaker's experiments as a solid foundation for moving the field forward in a new way. This is thanks in large part to Pennebaker setting a model in place that makes undeniably clear what mechanism he was after. Pennebaker's guiding theory of inhibition and emotional disclosure drove him to administer the writing act in doses which he called tasks. Administration of a writing task either occurred in one, timed sitting or in a series of timed sittings, spaced appropriately apart, and effects were tested for immediately after administration as well as at a later date which was set to represent the idea of longitudinal benefits. Pennebaker conducted his work under the assumption that the writing-health link was an event that might be physically witnessed, with results that could be measured. He and those who followed his design provided us, by way of their inconclusiveness, with one very important piece of information: the mechanism by which writing corrects (or simply affects) a life does not manifest solely in quantitatively measurable terms. As a result, moving forward, we must consider alternative methodologies and new perspectives.

Summarizing analyses of the effects of written emotional disclosure on health (Frattaroli 2006; Pennebaker 2018) reveal as much that some health improvement mechanism is at work which is not measurable in the medical sense. They also illuminate an underlying assumption in the research that if expressive writing does not improve health, it must not have *done* anything at all, and therefore has little value as a practice. The quantitative methodology used by Pennebaker and others invited a specific manner of change to be witnessed and measured and that manner of change alone. While writing about the events of our lives inevitably *does* something

to us, whether or not that thing can be called an improvement in health, previous experiments have looked in only one, singular direction for one very specific image of good health. If efforts to measure health improvement have been less than enlightening, research moving forward should consider ways of demonstrating not only improvement in physical health but other manners of change in a person, for example, subtle changes in approval of the self, the expansion of perspective on issues meaningful to the self, the nature and process of integration of past events into the present sense of self, the integration of disparate, the warring aspects of personality, the setting of intentions, and any number of other changes in personhood that might occur, worded in any number of delicately nuanced ways. The crucial takeaway is that we must design experiments which allow all of these varieties of data to present themselves; otherwise, we stand to neglect critical data presentations. Simply assessing for "improved health," as it has been carefully defined by a research team, is among the most difficult ways to go about finding the reasons behind the writing-health link. This is because it presupposes an incredibly specific definition for "improved health" and looks only for the suitable picture of this definition in the data. If instead we work to illuminate demonstrations of changes, as they occur and in phenomena already happening, we stand to gain a rich, multifaceted picture of what writing *does* to a person, possibly in the immediate aftermath of a writing event but also over extended periods of time, through both times of personal improvement and times of arousal or deterioration and through multiple series of drafts and situated within groups and communities. Writing about the events of our own lives happens in any number of ways, and research design must account for that variance in practice and presentation.

Nicholls (2009) points out the deficit due to the specificity of Pennebaker's model and suggests that the field from here on be called *developmental creative writing*, a term much broader and less suggestive of an expected mechanism than *expressive writing*. Developmental creative writing, Nicholls writes, considers the elements of a writing practice that is sustained over time and that might have occasional interaction with groups, either for the purpose of sharing, editing, or even co-writing creative pieces. Nicholls emphasizes the difference between the initial crafting of a piece and subsequent editing and redrafting of it, which may happen any number of times. This revisiting and reworking of writing results in a slow, organic development as well as a changing relationship between writer and piece that cannot be rushed through in a series of timed tasks but rather unfolds exactly as it will. In short, Nicholls asks that we treat writing as a practice rather than a task and use methodologies which respect the organic timing of that practice. Another key element of a practice which is largely ignored when writing is viewed as a task is its sociocultural seat. The social and cultural settings in which writing take place determine the options for form and content available to the writer and are thus every bit as critical as any other aspect of the practice, particularly where the link between the practice and health benefits is concerned.

Pennebaker's 15- or 20-min tasks might now be looked at as the possible beginnings, or early attempts and false start at a practice which has not yet picked up its momentum. In view of that momentum, were we to ask the writer herself to

reflect on its mechanisms, we would stand to gain an understanding of how she transforms alongside the creation of her work, in a way that demonstrates and generates the essences of mechanism(s) resulting in a changed life through writing.

## Transformational Literacy Practices: Defining the Phenomenon

Toward furthering Pennebaker's work in a new and informative direction, I suggest first that we rethink our definition of the phenomenon, second that we adjust our guiding questions for research based on that new definition, and third that we situate the phenomenon in a field which will allow it to be examined within the terms of a fitting methodology. That methodology should be one that considers not only the structure of the written pieces, how frequently they are revisited by the writing subject and how their structure changes over time due to those reworkings, but also one that acknowledges the cultural setting of the phenomenon and the options presented to the writer by her cultural setting during the process of writing. We select a narrative structuring for our writing for many reasons; we might say for the comfort of the cause and effect model built into it or the familiarity we've gained with it over many years of literacy education, but it is our cultural placement which makes narrative as an option available to us, as well as the option to develop characters into particular archetypes found in previously encountered narratives. With just a brief consideration of the cultural setting of the transformational writing phenomenon, we have already been able to remove ourselves from the world in which it occurs, to a degree, such that it might be viewed as phenomenon. We might now define that phenomenon as writers shaping their memories in particular ways which allow them to view those memories in a particular light and thus incorporate those memories into their overall senses of self in ways that could be called well integrated or not. The term *transformational literacy practices* is appropriate here because it dismisses notions of good change versus bad change, instead acknowledging the form of any change at all, and also accounts for the intertextuality of the phenomenon; writers will inevitably draw from cultural archives in the crafting of their pieces, where both form and content are concerned. In truth, the writer engages not solely in acts of writing but in practices of literacy in the process of recalling what has been read, rereading her own work after it is finished, and using that knowledge to inform subsequent editing. I will also use the term *transformational writing phenomenon* where I discuss an act of writing in one sitting, in order to differentiate it from the broader field.

## Locating the Phenomenon

It is surprising that, in a field which hopes to uncover the health benefits of writing, no previous studies on the link between writing and health have sought out *writers* as their participants. It seems that, rather than administering writing tasks in the "take two and call me in the morning" style, it might illumine our field tremendously to

come at this phenomenon from the outside inward by identifying the locations where and individuals in whom it is already happening and examining the factors surrounding it where it has already been effective.

Where I say *writers*, I will clarify that I mean writing individuals who identify as practicing writers. This in no way requires that they be famous, published, or even willing to show their work to another person. I mean practicing *writer* in the same way one might say, "practicing Buddhist" or "practicing Wiccan," and the name confers a legitimacy which one has the power to grant oneself, simply by virtue of calling oneself by it. It may be difficult to convene and collect data from large sample groups consisting of writers, but an experiment of that size would also undoubtedly allow some of its best data to fall through the cracks. I suggest, going forward, that our most enlightening data on how writing transforms a life (not only on how writing improves health) can be found in the longitudinal collected writings of writers who write about writing.

Transformation in writing occurs in the act of shaping memory on a page; as soon as it is shaped, it is transformed, not having existed in crystallized form before it was written (van Manen 2016). Writing it down will cast it in a certain light, and a writer has the option of the extent to which she will integrate this crystallization of meaningful experience into her overall sense of identity. That light may not always be a shining one, not always one that results in relief or clarity. Often, we cast memories as meaningful to us precisely *because of* their darkness. Bettelheim (1975) wrote that fairy tales have a healing effect on traumatized children because they affirm notions of both good *and* evil; thus a story which depicts undeniable evil can be just as comforting as one that shows a triumph of goodness. I believe that the writing of our own memories functions to affirm in the same manner: we can be deeply comforted to find, at the tip of the pen, that our traumatic memory was indeed just as horrific as we suspected and perhaps even more so. Our symptomatic reactions to the event are justified as a result. Either way, the writer of her own life, in her act of shaping her perception of personal events in literary form, sets down an intent to make an event meaningful to her in a stylized way that serves as evidence of her present attitude toward that event. Through this setting down of intention, the act of writing, whether carried out only once or revisited repeatedly, becomes a part of that writer's life story, perhaps alongside all of the other narratives to which we've been exposed which constitute an overall narrative identity (Frank 2010). The crafted memory stands, no matter whether it is relieving or deeply troubling or satisfying or all of those at once, as a pillar of organized meaning and an ordered prism through which the writer may view herself.

## Why Phenomenology?

From the perspective of my own experiential knowledge, the field of transformational literacy practices is more concerned with practice than theory, since it matters first and foremost that it *works* at all, more so than it matters *how* it works. After all, the ultimate goal of the research, at the risk of softening my argument, is to help as many people as

possible live their optimal lives. In the end, this remains healthcare research, though now placed at a junction between literacy education and cultural studies. Any illumination of how it works, however, is useful, since it informs practice and pedagogy. In the case of hermeneutical phenomenology, "[i]t is precisely in the process of writing that the data of the research are gained as well as interpreted and that the fundamental nature of the research questions in perceived" (van Manen 2016, p. 367); thus it constitutes the method which will not limit the presentation of data but rather can generate an endless variety of presentations, thus opening the space for a holistic understanding of transformational literacy practices and maximizing opportunities to inform practice and pedagogy of the creative nonfiction craft.

## A Reduction to Essences

Below, I have included a writing event from my own practice and taken it through a brief hermeneutical phenomenological analysis in which all data have been generated in the act of writing. As phenomenology asks us to glean the essences of phenomena through written reflection on them, I will use my phenomenological reflection on my own writing to form a reduction of the phenomenon to essences, which will assist in a demonstration of the forming of appropriate questions to guide research in transformational literacy practices.

To set an intention to view a personal memory in a particular way, that is, to transform through writing, can be carried out easily. It requires technology no more advanced than a writing instrument and a sheet of blank paper. We can actually witness this phenomenon in ourselves within a matter of minutes, with little risk of emotional upset since the event we select is entirely up to us, which is to say, it does not need to be traumatic or even negative for transformation to occur. An event is transformed, from chaos to order, or as a psychologist might put it, from varied disorganized sensations to coherence, in the act of being written; thus transformation is, in fact, our only given. We know only that writing *does* something to us. Hermeneutical phenomenological analysis places no limits on our ability to generate an understanding of exactly *what* it does.

In the passage below, I recount the experience of being pregnant and riding the train to a perinatal psychiatric appointment at a downtown Toronto hospital. The piece is a written reflection on the experience of riding the city train and of sitting in the perinatal psychiatric waiting room with other patients.

> Trains make me nervous. First, there is the waiting to board them, where you have to stand so close to the open tracks that if a stranger were to trip and fall, that one body's accidental weight thrown against another might end in a horrendous, bone-crunching death that would linger and haunt the minds of everyone who saw it for the rest of their lives. And even if that never happens, even when commuters stand politely still during the train's approach as most of them do, there is this heavy, communal sense that the option of death is in these moments presenting itself, to each of us in our separate minds, in strobe-like flashes. Most of us freeze in place to show that we are not afraid, but also to show that we have decided against death today. I myself always take a small step or a lean backwards. I can't help it.

Then, there is the terror of the ride itself, which doesn't have so much to do with the actual locomotive machine as it does with the way it spits you out into a place that's already moving, a place which is actually *always* moving and has been moving at just this pace since well before you got there, since the city itself was born, and although we aren't expected to figure things out all at once we are, at least, expected not to stop things up, not to make great rocky obstacles of ourselves around which annoyed crowds then have to splash and weave their way on. We are expected, at the very least, to step off the train and step right into the river's flow where it's already going at full speed. I think it's a bit like being born, I mean for both baby and mother. There is the sense of destiny, riding a train, because trains rarely come to unplanned stops and when they do, the priority is that it should get going again, by any means necessary. Otherwise, people get angry and begin checking the time and pulling at their collars and exhaling sharply.

I get the same sense, when I'm in the obstetrician's waiting room, that I'm on my way to being spit out at the other end and that once I've arrived I won't be allowed to stop and think, or find a bench so I might set my purse down, search for a map on the wall, read the posted signs. I get the feeling there won't be any map; there never is, and in anticipation I can do nothing, besides sit, or stand and watch my own face sway back and forth in a black mirror that quivers with every thud of wheels over tracks.

Fortunately I've been to this hospital twice before so I fall right in with the Monday morning downtown Toronto flow and arrive a neat ten minutes early on the seventh floor of the Women's College Hospital for my appointment. The program at the Women's College Hospital is called the Reproductive Life Stages Program and it's a psychiatric care facility for women at any stage in their reproductive lives. Here in the waiting room are other pregnant women of all sizes, eyeing each other's bellies with adoration and curiosity, wriggling toddlers, infants and teens with their mothers. We all have something in common: we possess or expect ourselves to possess the capacity to reproduce, some of us might even see it as a kind of destiny, if we wish, and each of us have found our minds deeply affected by that power (personal journal, 2018).

An interpretive phenomenological analysis (Husserl 1977; van Manen 2016) asks that we suspend certain knowledge in order to remove ourselves from the phenomenon so it can be viewed *as* phenomenon. With respect to my writing above, I might instinctually say that being bipolar and pregnant is, for some women with psychiatric illness, a recipe for increased anxiety. Public transportation alone is a trigger, as is the experience of being in a waiting room. Add being in the second trimester of pregnancy to the mix and anxiety makes medical sense, in the same terms a psychiatrist might use. It is just this scientific knowledge and assumption which must be suspended if we are to examine the phenomenological essences of the experience.

Were I to reduce this phenomenon from empirical fact, that is, the instance of being pregnant with bipolar disorder and getting myself to a perinatal psychiatric appointment via public transport, to essences, I might start by removing myself from the facts in order to tell what is happening. The experience of being 4 months pregnant in a waiting room has struck me with a similar anxiety to that which I experience while riding public transportation. I have made particular meaning out of the waiting room anxiety by metaphoric translation into the terms of public transportation anxiety, but I have done more than just this. In making sense of one anxiety

in the terms of another, I have ascribed to the entire journey of pregnancy the physical shape of a flow, such as that of river water, or, of a morning commute (Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

## Cultural Insight

The metaphoric act is a joining of myself and my plight with something greater and out of my control. I have accessed, in order to understand my anxiety better, other varieties of flow in which it is possible to be caught up and from which it is difficult to remove oneself without unpleasantness. Cultural insight, however, allows us to reduce this phenomenon even further. The notion of destiny is in fact the essential element which offers a clue as to how I intend to view this memory and integrate it into my life experience. In the act of writing, I have called on the notion of destiny, which I recall first coming across while reading *The Odyssey* in my sixth grade Social Studies class in Menlo Park, California. That year, the California curriculum dictated that sixth graders should study ancient Greek and Roman civilizations; thus the concepts of destiny and fate, the mythology built around them and the effects they might have had on an individual human life, were also introduced. Along with the notion of destiny, there is the same sense of a lack of control essential to the river flow, or the morning commute, but my cultural insight separates human from deity and thus adds the essence of *surrender*. I might also call this *acceptance*. I come to a point where I can describe the transformational writing phenomenon as a function of the following essences: I have viewed the progression of a biological process in the terms of a physical model for movement, namely, the flow with predetermined destination, and ascribed to my emotional state certain terms of that model, namely, the ones I find useful. In short, in spite of feeling anxiety, the phenomenon of the writing of this piece is the setting of the intent to cast pregnancy and the stressors that come with it, particular psychological stressors, in a light of acceptance. From a cultural perspective, I exercise acceptance of psychological turmoil by the connection of my own narrative identity to a pre-existing cultural archive of narratives, which allow me to adopt a stance of acceptance and even a state of being treasured, since notions of destiny come along with those of being specially selected by deities for specific tasks. Just as Odysseus was, I become the hero of my own epic.

Note that the passage itself is a piece of data, as is my above reflection on it within the current piece of writing. Phenomenological data are generated in layers of the removal of self from the phenomenon for the purpose of being able to view it as such. The transformation that has occurred through my initial piece of journal writing, the evidence for which I have generated through a second layer of phenomenological writing, is the transformation from a body with incoherent physical sensations of fear and discomfort to a crafted self with destined purpose and a dedication to that purpose that trumps the fear. This culturally informed reduction of human experience is illuminative in ways that self-reported mood cannot be.

## Characteristics of Phenomenology

In the analysis above, I have been both writer and researcher. I have generated data for understanding a particular phenomenon through the act of reflective writing, and I have interpreted that data through another layer of reflective writing. It is through these layers, through a consistent rising up to new levels of removal and suspended awareness, that the interpretive phenomenological researcher comes to define the essential questions of the research. I have found through the sample analysis above that I am not at all studying measurable improvements in health caused by writing about a memory. I am, in fact, studying the maneuvers taken in the act of integrating memory into a sense of overall self through personal writing.

The layered nature of hermeneutical phenomenological research is much like any creative or academic drafting process. In both cases, one creates and reads what one has produced and tries to shape remaining chaos into order, an order that can only be determined and generated through the organic drafting process itself. The order does not exist, aside from our efforts to form it, and with each draft or layer bringing us closer to that order, the writer/researcher has risen to a new level of removed awareness. As van Manen put it, "...to ask what method is in phenomenological inquiry is to ask for the nature of writing. Writing is a producing activity. The writer produces text, but he or she produces more than text. The writer produces himself or herself. The writer is the product of his or her own product. Writing is a kind of self-making or forming" (van Manen 2016, p. 364). As with crafting any creative piece, so with phenomenological layers of reflection. Were it not for the phenomenological writing itself, the data would not exist. In itself, phenomenological analysis is an instance of transformation of the self.

We are now positioned to revisit the ultimate goal of understanding transformational literacy practices with an informed set of questions. We can ask, of any writer who writes about her own life, what does the writer *do*? That is to ask, what maneuvers does she perform, by way of, for example, metaphoric translation, cultural connection, affirming of morality through cultural knowledge, and any other number of maneuvers worded in any number of ways. As they occur, so can they be defined and generated as data. To take the analysis further, we might even examine a body of work from ourselves or one particular writer and perform a thematically organized analysis. Maneuvers of transformation might grouped as acts of distancing, dismissing, organizing, and connecting. These are the moves that writers make when they write about themselves, the variety of mechanisms which are essential to understanding personal, active transformation at the fingertips, and which have not yet been made the focus of any research on the writing-health link.

## Conclusion and Future Directions

In suggesting that forthcoming studies on the writing-health link be handled with the tools of interpretive phenomenology, I have also intimated that writer and researcher are, ideally, one. The evidence we lack for the link between writing and health might

be provided by practicing writers themselves, reflecting on their own practices, no matter what stage of that practice they happen to be in. This means that the data generated by these phenomenological writings will likely be as poetic or carefully crafted as the initial acts of expression themselves; thus the varied nature of their presentation is inevitable and unlimited.

We have found from previous studies that "good health" can look very different from person to person. Not every person, when feeling unwell, reports feelings of distress to a doctor or even to themselves. An undiagnosed individual with type 1 bipolar disorder, unaware that she is experiencing a manic state, may report feeling ecstatic and schedule no upcoming health visits whatsoever, when in fact her manic state contributes to overall poor health. The beauty of the transformational writing phenomenon is that it does not allow prescribed definitions to let valuable data slip away unformed and unexamined. A writer may need to sustain a writing practice for years before it allows her to pinpoint just those symptoms which need to be reported, and in what words, for suitable diagnosis and treatment. Even after treatment is stabilized, the transformational writing process does not abandon its helmsman. The practice of writing, sustained as in my own case, may become couched within long-term methods for simply making life livable on a regular basis and accounts for the truth that a good-enough life does not always look like the picture of "good health." In all likelihood, at times a meaningful life will look like chaos, despair, resentment, doubt, or anxiety. Writing alone, particularly that which is reflective on the self, has absolutely no obligation to heal us and, as a vehicle, holds no promise by itself of destination. Rather it is the boat which does no more than its structural best to keep us afloat. The ocean, with its periods of calmness and peril, is the boundless given for us all. A solid boat combined with the skills to man it are, simply put, the best we can hope for. In forthcoming research on the potential of writing to transform and sometimes to heal, let us expect of it the very same.

## Cross-References

▶ Exploring the Future Form of Pedagogy: Education and Eros
▶ Identity Construction Amidst the Forces of Domination

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# The Truth Can Deceive as well as a Lie

Young Adult Fantasy Novels as Political Allegory and Pedagogy

Heba Elsherief

## Contents

**Abstract**

In this chapter, I consider Marie Rutkoski's *The Winner's Curse* trilogy (The winner's curse. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2014; The winner's crime. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2015; The winner's kiss. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2016) and Tomi Adeyemi's #blacklivesmatter movement inspired *Children of Blood and Bone* (Henry Holt and Company, New York, 2018) as exemplars of young adult (YA) fantasy fiction works which utilize political allegory in their narratives to understand how they may impact readers' social engagement. Besides being lauded as empathy-building texts by educators and library organizations, publishing trends and social media activity indicate that these novels are widely read and enjoyed. But how much do they actually impact readers' understanding of the real-world happenings they allegorize and how far do they go to encourage acting upon said understanding? How are these novels conceptualized and received as cultural artifacts and can they actually work as forms of resistance against societal injustices? Via excerpts

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and authors' notes, I utilize affect theory (Massumi B, Parables for the virtual: Movement, affect, sensation. Duke University Press, Durham, 2002) to understand the emotive and consumer popularity (Nielsen Company, U.S. book industry year-end review. Retrieved from: http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2016/2015-us-book-industry-year-end-review.html, 2015) of these novels and take up Keen's (Empathy and the novel. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007) theorizing on the empathy-altruism hypothesis to problematize their effect. While my findings suggest that YA fantasy novels may not be equipped to undertake the critical work of a resistance project in themselves, this chapter is ultimately a call for slower, more deliberate readings that may inspire readers to do the work of social activism long after the last pages are turned.

## Introduction

*The Winner's Curse* trilogy, like many in its category of young adult (YA) fantasy fiction, is a popular one. Almost 70,000 4-star ratings on goodreads.com and a consistent spot on the top 200 weekly list of most selling books on amazon.com since its initial publication, the books are indicative of the genre's mass appeal. In July, 2018, author Tomi Adeyemi appeared on *The Tonight Show* starring Jimmy Fallon. Her novel, *Children of Blood and Bone*, had received over 140,000 audience votes to become the show's first ever book club pick. Not surprising as since its publication 4 months earlier, it had been dominating best-seller lists. What was more surprising, I think, is Adeyemi's insistence on presenting her novel not just as a fantastical adventure story but as something much more rooted in reality. Indeed, the title for the official YouTube link of the interview reads it "…is an Epic Allegory About the Black Experience" (www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dp8BcJuGnQ).

*The Winner's Curse* trilogy and *Children of Blood and Bone*, like many in their category of YA fantasy fiction, are indicative of the genre's mass cultural appeal. It is not just young people buying these books, either. Both public libraries and high school ones are stocking them as well. Furthermore, since Applebee's (1994) encouragement, language teachers have increasingly placed young adult novels on their syllabi. For their part, researchers have probed the idea that YA books help readers navigate difficulties in their social worlds (see, for instance, Kaplan 1999; Smolen and Oswald 2011; Kelley et al. 2012). In this chapter, I question how ideas of political resistance translate from the page to the real world – how fantasy fiction, in particular, might influence young people's lives and how real-life political and social problems influence this genre of fiction. I sift author notes and interviews and the different aspects of each of these novels through the lens of affectivity (Massumi 2002), empathy-building (im)probability (Keen 2007), and Bakhtin's theories on

novelistic discourse in the bildungsroman. I deliberate on whether the novels are calls to (political resistance) action or easy-to-ignore escapist reading? While findings suggest the latter, YA fantasy can, I argue, be used to promote a critical awareness of social injustices with students and readers under certain circumstances. This chapter is ultimately a call for slower, more deliberate reading, an appeal to revolt against the desire to quickly "turn the page" and to, instead, mentally invest in and conduct activist type "sit-ins" with these types of novels.

## The Winner's Curse

In the acknowledgments that start on page 485 of the last book in her popular *The Winner's Curse* trilogy, author Marie Rutkoski states that she is grateful for the "inspiration and guidance" of, among other works, Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and Saidiya V. Hartman's *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (1997). Indeed, in reading Rutkoski's (2014, 2015, 2016) trilogy in its entirety as a student of postcolonial history and theory, comparisons between her fictional world and the real one are not difficult to make. Allegory in narrative may be understood as the mode in which agents, plot events, and sometimes even the setting are created (whether intentionally or not – see, for instance, Kristeva 1980, on the idea of intertextuality) to make coherent sense on the "literal" or primary level of signification and also to signify a second, correlated order of agents, concepts, and events (Abrams 1993). The *Winner's* trilogy is set in the fictional empire of Valoria, in its occupation of the lands of Herran. The first book establishes how the glory-loving, militaristic Valorians have enslaved the Herranian peoples, ridiculing their gods and appropriating their artistic cultural expressions. In the character descriptions, Rutkoski hints at the fact that this is a racialized occupation as well: Valorians are "golden," pale colored hair with sun-kissed skin; lighter brown-skinned Herranians can be house slaves, but all are recognizably darker with black hair. Additionally, the book covers feature the Valorian general's daughter Kestrel, the narrator and heroine of the stories, as a beautiful blonde with blue eyes (see Fig. 1). Beyond being described in the text as being obviously handsome, the coloring of her Herranian slave/revolutionary leader turned love interest, Arin, is not particularly emphasized. In the "Author's note" at the end of the first book in the series, Rutkoski further acknowledges that while her story world has "no concrete connection to the real world" (p. 357), she was influenced by the Roman conquest of Greece in 146 BCE. The allusions Rutkoski produces indicate how much this work tries to imagine this time period, perhaps the first in Western history when white Europeans systemically moved in an eastern direction to infringe on the rights of others.

## Children of Blood and Bone

Told through multiple viewpoints, *Children of Blood and Bone* is based on West African mythology and sets in the fictional land of Orïsha. Zélie, from the Magi portion, are people who had special magical powers before the king tried to abolish it

**Fig. 1** *The winner's curse* trilogy covers

from the kingdom. In doing so, he killed her mother and left her and her people in poverty and destitution. Learning she has one chance to bring back magic to her people and save them from their meager existences, Zélie embarks on a quest to do so. Accompanying her is the morally conscience princess Amari, who watched her father mistreat her loyal servant and is willing to sacrifice her privileged lifestyle to ensure that justice for the Magi is done. Then, there is Amari's brother, Inan, the prince-in-waiting – charged with stopping them. While Inan is the "villain" who chases them, he too is subject to the policies of the system his father has created and struggles both with his own moral compass and the realization that banned magic grows inside of him too.

Like *The Winner's Curse*, *Children of Blood and Bone* is filled with the same sort of epic adventure and lurking danger around every page turned; but, while the former felt as if it belonged more so in the dystopian genre, this work situates itself clearly in the traditions of high fantasy. There are fantastical animals and spirits, magical powers for each of the ten different Maji clans. Zélie's mother is killed along with other adult Maji in the king's quest to wipe out magic from their land while young people like her were spared. Known by their dark black skin and white hair (Fig. 2), young Maji and their families are treated inhumanely and grow up with the ongoing trauma that marks their place in Orïsha. An encounter with Amari presents Zélie with the opportunity to restore magic to her people and give them the tools to fight against their oppression. Interestingly, unlike the perfunctory "beauty" that marks Kestrel in *The Winner's Curse*, the two female characters have much more pensive relationships with their looks. For Zélie, the struggle involves hiding the whiteness of her hair because it shows her Maji inclinations. Amari, more seriously and specifically, is beaten down by her mother and upper caste for not being fair enough or slim enough. In these standards of beauty, the author demonstrates a more nuanced relationship to racialized notions thereof.

**Fig. 2** *Children of blood and bone* cover
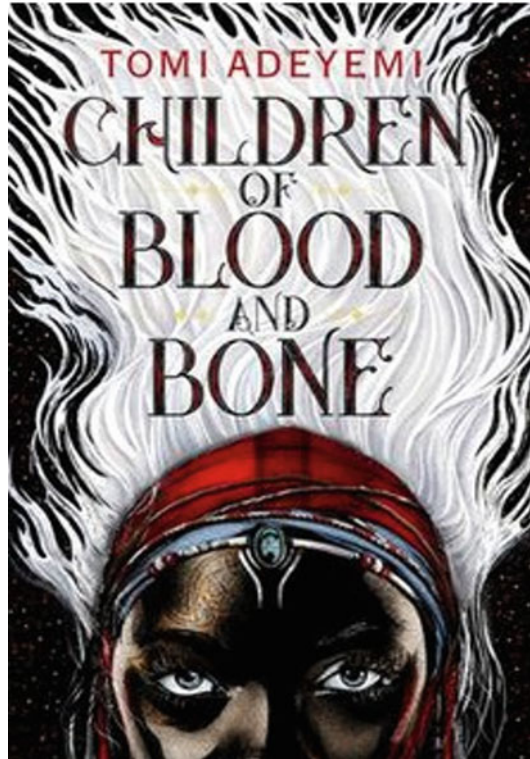


Furthermore, in her author's note, Adeyemi (2018) explicitly states that:

> *Children of Blood and Bone* was written during a time where I kept turning on the news and seeing stories of unarmed black men, women, and children being shot by the police. I felt afraid and angry and helpless, but this book was the one thing that made me feel like I could do something about it. (p. 526)

She goes on to tell her readers that if we cried for innocent children characters in the book, then we should also cry for real-life victims – she names and cites very real ones like 12-year-old shooting victim Tamir Rice and Diamond Reynolds who was in the car with her 4-year-old daughter when Philando Castile was pulled over and killed. Adeyemi ends her author's note with a specific referencing to the theme of the book and its very title, poignantly stating that we all have the power to stand against injustice and inequality. Her last words to her readers are: "now, let's rise" (p. 527).

## Enemies to Lovers: Affect in Young Adult Fantasy

In an important Chapter 3 footnote in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (2000) centers compassion in his thought by stating that even Che Guevara believed that "the true revolutionary is guided by strong feelings of love" (p. 398). It would seem

like YA fantasy novels that have incorporated revolutions into their plots recognize this statement as well. The actions of Katniss Everdeen, the symbol of the revolution in *The Hunger Games*, for instance, are primarily prompted by the desire to protect her sister, Prim, or save the boy she loves, Peeta. In *The Winner's Curse*, Arin's role as ruthless revolutionary leader planted in the home of the enemy is compromised when he falls in love with the woman who bought him as a slave. Although Kestrel is supposed to die along with her Valorian friends when the Herranians plan to revolt and take back their homes, Arin goes out of his way to keep her safe because he has fallen in love with her. As the trilogy moves forward, Kestrel makes a number of sacrifices because of her love for Arin. She becomes central in a revolution against her own conquering people, acting as a spy and suffering in a prison camp when she is found out. In these two young people, Rutkoski utilizes the popular "star-crossed lovers" trope to move her revolution forward – and most readers almost have to respond, perhaps because we have been conditioned to through a long tradition of romance in narrative. For those that might think the trope overused, Rutkoski's action-packed plot and colonized world have the potential to give them pause. Even the most critical of readers may find the coupling of this particular pair to be different than the stereotypes. Kestrel and Arin's romance in the midst of revolution is, arguably, one of the most pleasurable aspects of the narrative.

Similarly, in *Children of Blood and Bone*, the relationship between Zélie and Inan is pronounced. At the start, he is the villain chasing her but he is also a Maji who has to continuously dye his white hair black to conceal his magic. There is a struggle inside of him, a sort of identity crisis, and this makes him compelling to the reader and to the young woman he chases. Inan's magic belongs to the "connector" category, meaning he has the power feel what others are feeling, to quite literally "walk in their shoes." It is how he is able to track Zélie and how he is able to pull her out of her body and into his dream landscape. There, trust and love is engendered between them. She helps him embrace his magic, and he begins to feel the burden of all he has done for his father. In the dreamscape, Inan decides he will make amends for his injustices. He feels her pain, watching her city and home burn through her eyes, feeling "the pain. The tears. The death," and promises that although he cannot fix the past, he will "rebuild Ilorin" (Adeyemi 2018, p. 364). Yet, insofar as the trope of enemies to lovers has become a sort of staple in YA fantasy novels, *Children of Blood and Bone* seems to go further in overtly linking the relationship to the struggle and trauma that Adeyemi has infused throughout the novel. For Zélie, the notion that she should trust and love Inan is juxtaposed with her desire to maintain the strength of her family; her protective brother is not pleased because he fears she will be hurt. And the reader too sees where her brother may be right; accordingly, this makes one question the "pleasure" of seeing this coupling comes together. The reader is not necessarily eagerly anticipating them finding their happily ever after – unlike the emotions that Kestrel and Arin seem to demand. Why does this discrepancy exist between the couples?

Massumi (2002) probes the human perception of pleasure by wondering why the saddest, most intense emotional experiences in art (he uses the example of a German short film) are also the ones where the consumer experiences the most "pleasure"?

He posits that in scenes where emotional intensity is high, we witness the amplification of that emotion and affect in the construct of it being a "gap between content and effect" (p. 24) and in which it becomes an idea of intensity whereby "intensity is incipience, incipient action and expression" (p. 30). Therefore, affect as a nonconscious experience of intensity is the starting point for potential action on the body's part, the way in which the body deals with the experience of intense emotionality and ruminates through the contexts surrounding the stimulation of emotion-causing experiences. As cliché as it is, *The Winner's Curse* is quite the "page turner": I, for one, could not put it down and was grateful to happen upon the first volume just as the third was on the cusp of publication. One only has to look at some of the online comments of reader fans who had to wait at least a year between the publication of each volume for the next one to see how affected they were. They commented with gifs of people crying and screaming or memes that read things like "why not just pull my heart out of my chest and eat it in front of me." Indeed, the appeal to emotions seems deliberate throughout the trilogy, and Rutkoski climactically ups the ante in each subsequent sequel, keeping the couple separate and angstridden for as long as possible. Here, we have elements from a number of classic love stories combined: Kestrel and Arin have the "poor boy loves rich girl" power that is reminiscent of a Cinderella tale; and they have the Romeo and Juliet element of forbidden love between warring families. While they do get their happy ending, the misunderstandings and separation that plagues their relationship for most of the trilogy are certainly reminiscent of Shakespearean tragedy. On the other hand, Zélie and Inan's relationship is much more steeped in the trauma and pain of her past and the burden of what he must do to make amends for his part in it. Furthermore, with all the plot twists and turns in the quest to bring magic back to her people, the budding relationship even seems to take a back seat to the task at hand. But what effect do these opposing takes on the trope of "enemies to lovers" have on how we read the respective novels for their resistance and revolutionary statements?

## Empathy and the Bildungsroman: Or Why We Should Perhaps Ignore Barthes' Estimation that the Author Is Dead – At Least in YA Fantasy

In *Empathy and the Novel*, Keen (2007) seeks to distinguish between the different forms and nuances of authorial and readerly empathic modes to suggest that Victorian sentiment and empathy were a sort of "feel good" modality that really did not result in societal change. Characters who might be sympathetic to the cause of another character cannot actually effect any real societal change. In *The Winner's Curse* trilogy, Rutkoski includes the character of Verex into the narrative. Verex is the prince of Valoria and the complete opposite of his cruel father, the emperor; nonetheless, apart from feeling like Kestrel's cause to protect the Herranians is just, he cannot do much in the way of revolting against his father and fighting for that cause. Even when he has the chance to rule in his father's stead and work toward meaningful societal change, Verex decides to leave the empire instead and retire to a

life of quiet with the woman he loves. This is not very different from the decision made by Katniss Everdeen in the conclusion to *The Mockingjay* (Collins 2010): although she had been the symbol of a revolution and the one to give her people a fresh start, she is content to live away from society and nurture her little family, rather that participating in the rebuilding work that comes after the revolution.

For Keen (2007), the question of how, with so many noble and memorable characters and social justice issues presented in Victorian literature, only a few "can be causally linked to documented consequences" (p. 53) during this time period when many claimed or at least aspired to a moral high ground. "In empathy, sometimes described as emotion in its own right, we feel what we believe to be the emotions of others" (p. 5); Keen writes and goes on to argue that if "good" social behavior is contingent upon empathy and if empathy leads to altruism, then the psychology of fiction that disarms readers and invites them to identify with characters is worthy of deeper study – and more empirical research is needed. The Victorians were not the first to suggest that novels do not only imitate reality but that they might initiate it, and in any close reading of a text's ability to evoke reader emotion or empathy, it is helpful to consider novels not so much in their representations of subjectivities but also in their ability to become subjective representations of intertextual claims to the need for societal change and revolutionary actions.

In my assessment, YA fantasy literature, as a subgenre of children's literature, is comparable to Victorian literature of the same genre, particularly for the way in which novels of it are tied to their historical conceptualizations as being didactic and utilized as socialization tools. When we read, for instance, children's books of the nineteenth century – most particularly the bildungsroman or coming-of-age novels like Dickens's *Oliver Twist* or *Great Expectations* or in the American context Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* – they employ empathy-creating narrative strategies that draw on the fellow-feeling of moral sentimentalism and eighteenth-century Romanticism's appeal to aesthetic experiences. Dickens, seeing the conditions of desolate boys in London workhouses, or Twain, questioning the legitimacy of slave-keeping societies, infuses those ideas into their work through *Einfühlung*. Einfühlung had been used by the German Romantics to describe aesthetic experience, particularly the experience of "feeling into" the natural world, but had become the object of serious philosophical scrutiny only in the later nineteenth century through the work of German philosophers like Robert Vischer and Theodor Lipps (Greiner 2013). For Vischer, as for other German aestheticians and psychologists of perception in the late nineteenth century, Einfühlung, or "feeling into," described an embodied (emotional and physical) response to an image, a space, an object, or a built environment (Keen 2011, p. 350).

Moreover, the notion of the bildungsroman developed through the context of Romantic sentiment – its genealogy in literary traditions – begins with Johann Wolfgang Goethe, a German philosopher in the late eighteenth century who wrote *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, and when Thomas Carlyle translated Goethe's novel into English in 1824, British Romanticists were inspired by it. William Wordsworth's *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* (1804) poeticizes the idea that while it is only the child who is able to witness

the divine within the natural world, as they grow, children lose the virtuous godly vision and exist in the earthly. The conflict between what constitutes life on earth with its horrors and responsibilities (adulthood) is juxtaposed with the freedom, innocence, and idealized perception of childhood. The struggle is both sad and inevitable. "The childhood of the 'Ode' is every man's and woman's memory of endless potential and emotional spontaneity, the latter a favored form of simplicity in the nineteenth century, but a state from which all mature minds feel estranged" (Austin 2003, p. 83).

If, then, we may conceive of the bildungsroman or coming-of-age story's missive as maturation and that the genre typically holds the conflict to be between the protagonist and his society, ending with said protagonist's re-emergence and acceptance into the fold of society once his mistakes are made and his growth complete, then what are we to make of YA fantasy as revolutionary tales? Bakhtin's categorization of the bildungsroman in its relation to the fictional novel argues that critical interpretations should consider the portrayal of "an image of man growing in national-historical time" (Bakhtin et al. 1986, p. 24) as representative of the most accurate narratives of the genre (which borrow from earlier models) and has the potential to culminate in "the education of the human race" (Bakhtin et al. 1986, p. 25). As such, an aggregate bildungsroman incorporates the protagonist's encounters work on both private personal and sociopolitical levels. Bakhtin posits that the bildungsroman necessitates an implicitly male and explicitly national ritual of maturation, meaning that he sees the bildungsroman as worthy of a lofty position in the history of realist novels and how they relate to the type of nation-building that scholars have been examining since the 1960s (e.g., in works by Raymond Williams and Frantz Fanon).

Rutkoski, of course, presents *The Winner's Curse*, not as a realist novel but as a fantasy, and, like many of the genre's publications today, features a feminine heroine (perhaps due largely to consumer demand). But does she position the novels as both social commentary and working within the bildungsroman and maturation narrative of its main characters? And Adeyemi has, in multiple interviews, claimed that *Children of Blood and Bone* was intended to ultimately be a mirror of current society. Her website features a poignant post titled "Why I write: Telling a Story that Matters" (http://www.tomiadeyemi.com/blog/telling-a-story-that-matters), but without reading these addendums, might the novels be said to be "educating the human race"? Well, there is certainly a semblance of social commentary in *The Winner's Curse* novels, and the comparisons to historical times of colonization and slavery are, as stated previously, not difficult to make. Yet, the mode of "show, don't tell" that is the marker of good writing strategy (as how-to craft books on the subject indicate) obscures some of those comparisons, especially, I would imagine, for young adult readers who may not have read the concluding author's notes and were more interested in the plot action.

How might we reconcile the concept of "page turner" with maturation and growth that happens best in modes of thoughtful reflexivity – a slowing of pace? Consider, for instance, in *The Winner's Curse* book one, when Arin and his Herrani rebels have overrun the Valorians and Kestrel is kept as his prisoner, he teaches her how to do the

little things that she would not have learned in her former privileged life: "this is how you build a fire...how you make tea. Small lessons, sprinkled here and there, between days. Through them, Kestrel sensed the silent history of how Arin had come to know what he did" (Rutkoski 2014, pp. 308–309). Of course, that history is not entirely described, only sensed – as if to be made to metaphorically walk in the shoes, even minimally, of those who did suffer the trauma might be enough. So, Kestrel who, from the start, knows that her empire's ways with the Herranians are not fair matures by living among them. And for his part, Arin's struggle to reconcile his inaction as a child watching his parents and sister die during the Valorian conquest and his current love for the daughter of the general who commanded the troops overpowers much of the narrative, so that the history and social commentary that might have otherwise been made are lost in the affective angst of this torn young man.

Yet, the same cannot be said *of Children of Blood and Bone*. There is a quickness of plot to it, certainly, but further to the earlier definition of allegory is the idea that writers employ it to add nuances to their stories. Allegories contain themes and moral viewpoints that are deemed to be important by the author. Educators and readers understand that an examination of any allegorical narrative would provide insight to a lesson that is meant to be imparted by its author – a teachable moment or many of them is and should be easily discernible for an allegory to stand as such. Accordingly, the scenes of suffering in this novel seem to jump off the page with their blatancy. Racialized struggles that make the news on a regular basis are apparent throughout: guards who beat and kill innocents remind the reader of policemen who overstep their boundaries. Amari, in particular, is a witness to much of the suffering. Realizing that it was her father's policies that created their world's slavery is "almost too hard to bear," but she takes care to tally "the number of children in chains" and lament on "all those years sitting silent" at her table "sipping tea while people died" (Adeyemi 2018, p. 198). And so while the reader may not empathize completely with the experience of being a slave, we can understand the allegory of being privileged and doing nothing while others suffered. The onus that Amari takes upon herself has potential to be a model for her readers too.

In thinking about the life and writings of one who was arguably the most revolutionary of Victorian authors, Thomas Hardy, and his own personal clashes with his society (he didn't believe in the institution of marriage, for instance, and clashed with the Church's teachings) and Hardy's real-life circumstances in connection to that of his characters, Keen (2011) suggests that "rather than succumbing to the empathetic personal distress that this dispositional openness to others' perspectives brought on, Hardy channeled it into a productive life of fictional world-making. That his works often brought members of despised out-groups into the representational circle suggests one of the ethical uses of his ambassadorial empathy... In a century of reform, he did his part to bring attention to neglected individuals whose perspectives were unlikely to command the attention of investigative journalists or compilers of Parliamentary blue books" (pp. 379–380). Keen argues that while he might not have entirely succeeded, Hardy sought to avoid the trap or the form of "distance" reading that renders a text's ethical impetus discharged in the very act of

reading – sympathy is felt but does not prompt social change or move beyond the pages of a book. What then of the act of writing? Does that too prompt a discharge of sympathy that is "good enough"? Hardy's representational strategies demonstrate his hope and faith that individual altruism modeled after his characters might work to ease human suffering and result in a societal revolution, as it were. Does Rutkoski and Adeyemi's work do the same in their novels as Dickens, Twain, or Hardy attempted to do in theirs? Was either one able to capture the urgency of wanting to change societal outlook as Hardy particularly does, perhaps because of his own personal struggles with it?

There is, of course, Rutkoski's own admission that the work of Edward Said (1978) and Saidiya Hartman (1997) inspired her story. As Hartman (1997) examines a variety of slavery "scenes" in nineteenth-century America (auction blocks, minstrel shows, for instance) to show the nuances of life and resistance at the time, so too does Rutkoski. Indeed, the opening chapter of *The Winner's Curse* has the Valorians gathering for the Herranian slave auction and Kestrel coming upon it to buy Arin. She doesn't mean to do so, but when the auctioneer asks him to sing in front of the crowd and Arin refused, Kestrel sees in him the same rebellious spirit she has in her and decides that she must bid on him. In later books, readers are given the gory details of scenes: Arin "was whipped barebacked by her Valorian steward for some slight offense. . .pride had kept him from wincing as he moved. . .the fiery strips on his back split and bled" (Rutkoski 2015, p. 50). When Kestrel is found out as being a spy, she is sent to a northern prison labor camp, which certainly alludes to Russian Gulags in the Stalin era. One scene describes how after Kestrel is beaten, the "guards untied her from the gate, when her back was on fire and she couldn't walk and her bones were a trembling liquid, she looked at the cup in [a] woman's hand [and] . . .begged to drink" (Rutkoski 2016, p. 43). Additionally, the binary between West and East, that Said (1978) delineates, is quite clearly the very premise of the fictional world in *The Winner's Curse* and is inscribed in a number of ways throughout. Besides, modes of domination through physical occupation of their homes and the commodification of their bodies as slaves, "Western" Valorians, deplore music and singing for their own people but esteem the artistic talents of the "Eastern" Herranians. Herranian artwork is shipped to the capital, stories of their gods told for their entertainment value and ridiculed for their folly. This aesthetic romanticized premise of the other continues with the gossip that follows Kestrel that she's fallen in love with her slave, who is certainly a handsome one – but she should have been guided by her rational mind, the Valorian honor which the Herranian cannot fathom because of their innate desire to defer to voraciousness. The Valorian saw that it was easy to conquer them because they were too busy dancing and playing their music to recognize the danger.

In other words, a reading of *The Winner's Curse* utilizing Said's (1978) post-colonial framework is an easy one to do, but it would also be a "backward" one since the author's conscious decision to allegorize postcolonial circumstances as she's read Said is acknowledged. And what would be the point of that? The natural supposition then is that Rutkoski had felt visceral emotions to scholarship and insight that have probed the role of conquerors in the subjugation and torture of

others. And the employment of the love story and the physical and emotional pain that Kestrel and Arin suffer because of this conquering means that she wants the reader to feel the same. In the case of Adeyemi, a woman of color herself with roots in West Africa, *Children of Blood and Bone*, does seem more immediate. The allegory, more literal. It would not take much to see them at play in the novel but are reader-responses ever entirely just as author might hope them to be? An author who writes for an audience wants to somehow *persuade* his/her reader of something – perhaps that persuasion comes in the form of a suspension of disbelief about fantastical plot points or that a story is worth their time and efforts. Furthermore, in that persuasive mode, readers, like Manguel (1997) articulates, agree to "accept the fiction" (p. 235). For the reader, is it possible then that during the duration of a book's narrative, empathy is felt as an affective process, an ephemeral response that dissipates once the story is done, the last page turned? For the writer, are his/her stories based on feelings of empathy in regard to societal injustices that fester and evolve over time but that, perhaps, might dissipate once a story is done? Are the political and resistance statements made *in Children of Blood and Bone* realized by virtue of its very publication?

## Conclusion

In a 2010 *New Yorker* article, popular social science author, Malcolm Gladwell, declared that "the revolution will not be tweeted," arguing that real societal change happens when people are willing to risk much to achieve it. He describes the example of the Greensboro sit-in of 1960 that propelled the civil rights movement forward even as racial inequality still plagued real-life situations in places like North Carolina – despite earlier victories in the fight. The civil rights movement, Gladwell asserts, was a long, scary, painful process. If the recent *Black Lives Matter* movement is any indication, this process is not over either. For Gladwell then, the idea that one could participate in a revolution (he was referring to then current discourse around Iranian elections) by sharing a Facebook post or by favoring a tweet was not a substantially risky move so as to make it meaningful because anyone could do it, easily. In the wake of the so-called Arab spring(s) of 2011, many thought Gladwell had been wrong – that Facebook and Twitter were essential to the movements. Yet, today and in hindsight, the political instability in countries that participated in the Arab spring indicates that the revolutions weren't as complete as social media might have had people believe then. Are those same people willing to work toward societal change or have they moved onto the next "this looks like an important cause to retweet" issue? I wonder then if YA fantasy books and the popular films they produce that feature revolutionary actions might fall under the same category as Gladwell describes.

Despite the affective highs and attachments that avid readers claim to have in response to the story lines and characters in YA fantasy books, the idea that their responses are mitigated when the last page is turned is important to consider when questioning the capacity they have to be empathy-building texts that work toward

social change. Through the consideration of moral sentiments in the nineteenth century or how the bildungsroman genre could be thought of as embodying notions of nationhood and maturation, the tendency for texts not to be as empathy-building as they seem but more so as tools of didactic socialization is an argument I hoped to extend to the YA fantasy genre. While storylines might point to YA fantasy's taking of political stances, something crucial may be lost in the translation of their allegorical processes. Like a quick meal, I argued, reading these works is fast fun; but the lack of nourishing and meaningful critical engagement that thought like Said's (1978) and Hartman's (1997) hopes to engage us in is a casualty. Furthermore, what sort of true revolutionary acts, like fighting against cultural misrepresentations or racist societal injustices, are YA fantasy readers meant to do after concluding a series? Do they read an author's note, looking for more information? Do they go on to read Said or Hartman? Or learn more about the police brutality and racism at the heart of *Children of Blood and Bone*? Or is it enough to read a fictional account based on a nonfictional problem and feel like one has done their part? What revolutionary philosophical lesson might then a reader ultimately take from YA fantasy works?

By raising these questions, I am not implying that there is not a place for YA fantasy books on our library shelves and teacher syllabi. The fact that young people and our students are actually reading them in droves in a day and age when we often hear them ask "what's the point" of canonical literary works, and when English classes are more requirement than chosen elective, is almost in itself revolutionary. Furthermore, notwithstanding my concerns with *The Winner's Curse* trilogy (more so than *Children of Blood and Bone*), I chose to use both as exemplars because it is hopeful to me that the author's notes tell us precisely what thoughts and historical memories they were inspired by when writing them. Rutkoski points critical readers to where we might turn if we wanted more information, and Adeyemi overtly tells her readers that like her characters "we have the power to change the evils in the world" (p. 527). What may be lacking then is that final, specific step toward revolutionary action that these books like initiate. For teachers or authors, that might mean encouraging problem-posing (Freire 2000) discussions or being more explicit about allegorical usage of non-fictive historical injustices. For readers, that might mean building communities based not only on fandoms but on actionable social engagement. YA fantasy can, I believe, be used to promote what Greene (1995) termed the "social imagination" which gives readers the "capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society, on the streets where we live, and in our schools" (p. 5).

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# The Politics of Seeing

## Art and the Violence of Aesthetics

# 41

Anthi Trifonas and Peter Pericles Trifonas

## Contents

#### Abstract

The measure of art is the ability to induce modes of sensibility that create new forms of intelligibility. In *Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon* and *Guernica*, Pablo Picasso enables the viewer to see what was not there before and in a different way. The paintings politicize aesthetic acts as moments of a questioning and reflection on subjectivity toward an emancipation of the image from past experience. Art no longer becomes a witness signifying the timeless truths of life, but is a battleground triggering nostalgia and disillusionment mourning the loss of meaning. The politics of seeing depends on the violence of aesthetics. That is, the extent to which artistic regimes impact the production of what is knowable and what is visible are reproduced and resisted in a work of art.

#### Keywords

Aesthetics · Semiotics · Art history · Structuralism · Modern art · Painting

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## Introduction

The measure of art is the ability to induce modes of sensibility that create new forms of intelligibility. To see what was not there before politicizes aesthetic acts as moments of a questioning and reflection on subjectivity toward an emancipation of the image from past experience. Art no longer becomes a witness signifying the timeless truths of life, but is a battleground triggering nostalgia and disillusionment mourning the loss of meaning. The politics of seeing depends on the violence of aesthetics. That is, the extent to which artistic regimes impact the production of what is knowable and what is visible are reproduced and resisted in a work of art. An ethical imperative in interpretation is the effect of the rupture of the violence of aesthetics. New forms of intelligibility are thus rooted in modes of sensibility that rupture the normative principles of production and apperception rooted in the past

*Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon* (1907) by Pablo Picasso is acknowledged as the definitive work that ushers in the beginning of Modern Art. The painting depicts five prostitutes arranged closely in various positions behind a bowl of fruit. This imagery was derived from an actual brothel Picasso knew well on Avignon, a street in a rough part of Barcelona at the time. *Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon* inherently challenged the normative technical and aesthetic regimes of the art world at the time through its crowded composition, jagged lines, clear influence of African and Oceanic motifs, stylistic inconsistency, controversial poses, and marginal subjects. Deconstructing the primacy of classical elements of style and representation in painting. Chave (1994) explains, "Picasso's picture has been held to mark, or even to have precipitated the demise of the old visual order and the advent of the new" (p. 596). Although *Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon* cannot be definitively classified as a Cubist work, it sought to reinvent the language of art by making some of the first steps towards the Cubist movement, as well as challenging the classical depiction of women in painting through perception (Arnheim 1954, 1962).

In order to better understand the reasoning for Picasso's stylistic choices, it is helpful to contextualize the piece in relation to the works that influenced and contributed to its creation. Picasso created *Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon* in response to *The Joy of Life* (1906), painted by Henri Matisse. A work that reveled in the wild mixture of colors in the "Fauves" manner exemplified by unfinishedness, brash tonality, and foreshortened perspective. It is evident that *Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon* was produced as an aesthetic counterpart to Matisse's work. The blatant and extreme contrast of both subject matter and figurative style between the works echoes an intertextual association, if not *resemblance*, of representation, content, and theme. The comparison reaffirms the necessity for "newness" to build upon existing aesthetic archetypes and paradigmatic techniques to reinvent narratives of creativity in the language of painting both within and without the frame of art history (Derrida 1987). Picasso and Matisse were greatly influenced by the work of Paul Cezanne; although, while both artists clearly drew inspiration from innovative paintings such as *Les Grandes Baigneuses* (1906), their reinterpretations could not have been more unique in expression. What we might call a different similarity (Derrida 1987). The politics of seeing are manifest in the linearity of a tradition that resembles a regime

articulating and policing the reproduction of both conception and practice (Rancière 2004). Art that deviates from this paradigmatic representation creates a new visual language that forges original aesthetic sensibilities for "reading" a painting by expanding the modes of its intelligibility.

*Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon* deconstructs the mimetic logic of painting in the way Picasso uses formal elements to signify both a collapsing and expansion of space on canvas. The revolutionary articulation of line, texture, shape, and color challenges the viewer to make meaning from the text of the canvas and the encoding of its visual language in a way never experienced before. *The Joy of Life,* on the other hand, depicts the landscape of a broad open expanse with a deep recessionary vista while the figures are spread out and defined by the flowing arabesque of figures that in turn relate to the forms of nature that surround them. In complete opposition to Matisse, Picasso's composition depicts a "chopped up" and "crowded" scene of quasi-abstract entities staring at the viewer with unnaturally large almond-shaped eyes. Creating the illusion and feeling from the setting that the women may be "trapped" in this suffocating and compacted world of the painting that seems to be imploding on itself. Picasso's figures appear sharp and aggressive, refracted, as if they are composed of jagged broken glass and fragile of body and spirit. The fluidity of expression in Matisse's *Joy of Life* is countered by *Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon* with the "woodenness of the womens' stances and their faces mask-like solidity" (Chave 1994, p. 598). The hints of Cubist style are in the "mashing up" of perspectives to achieve a purposeful deconstruction of artistic style. Articulating a new language of expressivity that resembles the world as it would be seen through the refractions of a glass prism. The center of the painting is not determined by the viewer's gaze but diffracted by the artist's experimental rendering of the figures of the scene and thus the result of relational rather that rational modes of intelligibility. It asks the viewer to accommodate learned elements of perception to its own language of visual representation, thereby stretching familiar forms of aesthetic sensibility beyond the normative criteria of making meaning and reading the text of a painting.

The figures, though distorted and stylized, remain quite readable as nude human females. The use of a jagged, geometric manipulation of the canvas causes the women to appear divided within the space, as if existing on different planes of being and dimension. Three of the figures – from the center to the left-hand side – bear facial features more human and less fragmented than those on the righthand side. Their representation is influence by a kind of "Africanesque" artistic motif evident through the "mask-like" features of the women. The faces of those figures juxtaposed on the left may be less stylized, although there appears to be a cohesive, flat cold, and two-dimensional quality to all of the expressions. This "mask-like" quality works in conjunction with the assertive body language being projected by the subjects to display a raw sensuousness or reverse voyeurism. The women are shown in full nudity and are only censored by the solid blocks of color that compose their bodies. Aside from the faces and the bowl of fruit, there is minimal detail and the genitals are not visible. Large blocks of color and void space have been used to create a sense of atmosphere and build upon one another to construct the bodies of the women. Picasso's omission of detail in the human form aside from the facial area

draws particular attention to the "mask-like" quality and intensifies the impact of the unconventional structure of the forms in what can be seen and what is hidden. The painting thus takes on a symbolic or lyrical tone of expressivity through its textual representations.

Similarly to Matisse's *Joy of Life*, Picasso's choice of subject matter was controversial and undoubtedly contributed to the impact of the painting on the art world in addition to its unorthodox stylistic elements. The figures depicted in *Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon* do not adhere to previous representations of nude women according to Western classical motifs of female beauty that can be easily read as idealizations of the human form. The painting definitely does not adhere to the mimetic standards of photographic realism. Generally, the female body depicted nude would be represented as soft, vulnerable, and passive; while in Picasso's "Cubist" style, the suggestive posing and "dehumanized" facial expressions of the figures seem to go against all conventional norms and defy intelligibility from that point of view. Although the stance of each woman is different, the body language amongst all the subjects is cohesive and appears to pose a sort of assertive challenge or stark addressing of the viewer that was not common in artistic representation before *Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon*. This type of representation comes across as almost too aggressive, creating more of a feeling of confrontation than aesthetic connection. The women appear to "demonstrate and withdraw from patriarchal stereotypes of femininity, as if in an act of noncooperative cooperation" (Chave 1994). Through this aspect of the painting's representational perspective, it becomes evident that Picasso is "testing ... cultural limits" (Chave 1994) through the structural aspects of form extended beyond his technical and stylistic choices in order to turn a new page in Twentieth Century art. This original approach to nudity is yet another major example of Picasso seeking to reinvent the language of art and shows the viewer how to read the violence of the aesthetics in the painting through the forms of sensibility promoted by this particular work and modes of its intelligibility. Prostitutes have been the subjects of paintings prior to *Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon* in 1907, although this straightforward approach to the controversial content of the work seems to utilize the profession as a symbol for change. Bringing the reality of marginalized subjectivity in the foreground of social life. The prostitute can be seen and would emerge as "a key figure of urban modernity" (Chave 1994), who through the commodification of sex, contributed to the shift in representation of nude women in art from loving symbols of joy to cold taboo objects. Picasso may have used this transformative quality brought upon by the portrayal of prostitutes as a metaphor for a rupture in the historicity of art and the traditions forming the violence of its aesthetic regime. Given that the textual content of this painting defined a turning point in his visual language of painting.

There is an ever-present fracturing of great art traditions at work in *Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon*. This "breaking down" of the hegemony in the politics of seeing and what is intelligible can also be identified prior to its creation and begins to take form through Manets' *Olympia* (1865). What began by others as more of a deviation from the expected aesthetic and its sensibility has been taken over by Picasso and advanced to the point of an almost unidentifiable style. *Les Desmoiselles*

*d'Avignon* is a palimpsest of various elements which would later compose the Cubist movement: sharp geometric lines, flattening or lack of perspective and less variation in color. Because this transformation was a step towards the development of the style to come, "there was no reason to observe the law of unity" (Chave 1994) in formal expression. In *Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon*, the use of irregular angular lines and flat planes of color begin to define the major characteristics of the later Cubism. Peeling away from the classical use of perspective seen in Manet's *Olympia*, Picasso denies the "organic integrity and continuity of the human body" (Janson and Janson 1997). Alongside these distinctive attributes, the influence of "primitivist art is used as a battering ram against the classical conception of beauty" (Janson and Janson 1997). It is clear that Picasso, the artist, was drawing influence and inspiration from several different sources in hopes of manifesting a unique and unparalleled aesthetic sensibility of expression rendering the intelligibility of content in the visual language of the paint and its text as new.

If we look at *Guernica* (1937), a masterwork on the Spanish civil war, arguably the last great political work of art produced in the Twentieth Century, the painting works on multiple levels of representation toward a disturbing depiction of the horrors of war. Revealing the continuity and discontinuity of life as it is permanently changed and interrupted by the intervention of gratuitous violence. The overall presentation of images that comprise the painting is quite dynamic even though the color palate is quite limited in shades of black, white, and grey. The visual scene creates viewing tensions between the main figures that are implanted in the four corners of the painting as well as the upper and lower borders (e.g., the weeping woman, the bull, the Mithraic eye, the tortured men, etc.) as the eye is drawn between them to scan the spatialization of represented content. *Guernica* mobilizes the sensible quality of a freeze frame where action is captured in medias res and the ecstatic emotion of the scene is arrested in the stilling of life. The totality of what we experience of the painting at first glance is an aggregate of figures and objects that constitute Picasso's angry yet studied memorial to the Fascist bombing of the Spanish town of Guernica in the middle of the night on April 26, 1937. The images relate both to the elements of the lifeworld beyond art and their violent interruption. People and animals are represented in whole and in part on the flat surface of the canvas in such a way that the three-dimension depth of the scene is contained on a two-dimensional plane. The compression of the figures creates tension within the plane of expression and guides the viewer from the center of the painting, which is the wild-eyed and pointy tongued horse, to the stark black, white, and grey penumbra of shades constituting the entanglement of bodies and things strewn across the visual field of the canvas.

The style is more cubist than realist because the forms are intertwined, overlap, and are stylized for dramatic effect and exaggerated in representation according to the surrealism of the aesthetic at work in *Guernica* portraying suffering and violence. The scene uses iconic forms to depict the cruelty of war that it captures, so the viewer has no difficulty in comprehending the expressions of fear and pain that are the most striking feature of the painting. In one respect, the forms of sensibility *Guernica* aims at are visceral (emotional or affective) rather than intellectual (cognitive and

metacognitive). And yet, the point is to think about your reactions to the images. The first viewing of any pictorial text takes in the total field of what is represented without analytical depth or structural isolation, its *gestalt*. We could say that visible structures represent concepts without recourse to language.

The theory of visual perception, or *Gestalt theory*, has been cited to justify the belief in language-independent entities interpreted as semiotic elements of visual cognition. According to the *Gestalt* theory of perception, the perceiving organism obtains visual data from the environment by scanning the visual field. *Gestalten*, or organized forms, are generated as holistic perceptual structures of invariant shapes, or figures, which tend to contrast against the larger background of a visual field. *Gestalten* have been interpreted as *supersigns* (Krampen 1973), or holistic elements which are products of information processing, consisting of integrated *subsigns* within a pictorial whole. Hierarchical levels of perception in *supersigns* are postulated to extend "from a differential optical element, a geometrical morpheme, a partial image of a signifying object to an iconic phrase and discourse" (Noth 1985, p. 451). At a more esoteric level, the possibility of pictorial second articulation at microlevels has also been argued and identified in terms of *figurae* (Barthes 1964), or distinctive but not meaningful units of visual perception on the expression plane (e.g., a dot or line). These stimulus invariants to visual perception are defined by natural laws in relation to the environmental sources of their production and the resulting effect upon the psychology of the viewer (e.g., figure-ground relations, light contrast, or geometrical elements). *Figurae* in turn aggregate to constitute *signs* (representational forms) and *semata* (or visual "propositions") as total iconic statements.

There is, however, a convincing case in support of a visual syntax of pictorial language by incorporating features of the arguments posed to the contrary within a semiotic theory of pictorial text. For example, the *coloreme* is postulated as the basic visual element (corresponding to the phonemic level in language) which functions to differentiate meaningful visual elements, even though, meaning signifying potential is absent (Saint-Martin 1990). The aggregate of *coloremes*, at a more surface than deep level, constituting the dot, the line, and combinations of the two elements, are considered to lack intrinsic meaning, however, as particular constituents of a pictorial text these elements, as aggregates, form distinctive features of an object, or objects, in the pictorial plane and gain meaning as *gestalten*.

Interpreting *gestalten* as signs and extending the argument from the expressive plane concerning form, to the content plane concerning meaning, Arnheim (1954) stated that "no visual pattern is only itself. It always represents something beyond its own individual existence—which is like saying that all shape is the form of some content" (p. 65). The expression is self-directed rather than mediated by cognition. The implication being that pictorial signs are autotelic in creating meaning independently without recourse to language, and unlike lexical signs, through the form of their expression. Lines, shapes, and colors are experienced as whole forms embedded within a scene of interactive and codependent elements of composition, not in the specificity of articulation that gives meaning through the manipulation of details. The syntactic analysis of the elements of a painting can provide hypotheses for an

analytical approach. Large aggregates of *coloremes* as nonlinear but correlational schemata are linked to perceptual processes that constantly interact with these formal elements. The result is effective when *gestalt* theory, *colorematic* analysis, and semiotic principles are combined to examine pictorial text at once as structural entity and a *supersyntagm*, or a total unit of sense.

In *Guernica*, we see human and animal faces and body parts conjoined in a pictorial syntagm of total sense, whose ideological purpose or intent is not surmisable at this point beyond a general aesthetic attitude. The most we can determine from a first viewing is how the symmetry and dissymmetry of the visual field affects the terms of our apperception of the total painting. The organizational structure of forms in *Guernica* elicits general aesthetic and emotional responses that must be explored further by the viewer through a closer inspection of the structures that make up the contingencies of visual field. Otherwise the judgements we make are benign, superficial, without depth (e.g., it would be meaningless to say that the painting is "interesting," beautiful," or "revolutionary," without going into detail about its composition, its placement in space and time, etc.). In this case, because the painting is partially cubist and the perspective is refracted, scaled, highly abstract, any critical interpretation of the scene occupying the visual field demands the viewer's engagement with the elements of composition and design. We could ask: What is the meaning of the bull? Why does the sun have an eye in it? Who broke the sword? Why? The answers to such questions localize the viewing experience to particular elemental forms and figures that articulate relationships of cause and effect both within and outside the frame of reference. Through the isolation of visual actantial structures, the viewer attempts to furnish hypotheses necessary for an analytical approach to the pictorial text as part of a sequential linear visual narrative. The viewer's approach to decoding, however, is nonlinear but correlational in that the interaction of forms within the pictorial setting results in an awareness of the visual actants comprising a supersyntagm, or combination of elements copresent in the visual text, as they function to elicit thematic meaning (Saint-Martin 1990) over an extended series of visual frames which constitute the visual fabula. The active or passive interaction of forms creates visual actantial roles (e.g., subject vs. object, sender vs. receiver) within the picture plane and as the visual plot is unfolded pictorially through the interplay of visual actants with distinctive thematic functions in the action and events of the linear visual narrative, the viewer is able to discern the visual actors. *Guernica* is an idiosyncratic artistic portrayal of Picasso's disgust at the bombing of the town and the taking of innocent lives. It is also an invective against war. The ideological expression of this dissent is put forward thematically in the painting through the visual details that articulate a proairetic code of symbolic associations bringing together thought and action. A precursor to narrative around the *mise en scène* of the violence of war represented aesthetically. Splayed fingers and distended limbs convey a feeling of despair and urgency that defines the tenor of the imagery as it relates extreme emotions, human and inhuman. Nature is in sympathy with the victims of the atrocities of war that we envision being committed in this artistic recreation of the horror of the bombing. Looking closer at the painting, we see the grotesquely arched neck of a weeping woman. She holds the slumped

body of a baby: Madonna and child. The faces of tortured men are drawn alongside the heads of suffering animals. These oppositions reinforce the symbolic significance of the breakdown of natural order. The lines tracing the figures are simple, childlike, the colors opaque, alternating between shades of white and grey, sometimes black. A deformed head of bull offsets the fragmented body of horse. As we look at the representation of the figures, most of the forms are easily identifiable and therefore emblematic as icons of the natural world. But features of these entities – the horse's body, for example – are composed of fractal elements that both disguise and reveal the visible contours of form in alternating patterns of light and dark grays. It is primarily through closed forms that regions or subregions in a pictorial plane lend themselves to iconization and are interpreted in relation to the properties manifest in relative natural forms external to the world of the visual text (Saint-Martin 1990).

On the level of visual metaphorical structures, a verbalized equivalent can also be connected to the representation of form, thus, allowing for the linguistic differentiation of the pictorial elements of the text which adhere to *vraisemblance*, or display a direct correspondence with real world entities. The products of this type of visual stylistic over coding are literal and figurative visual frames which may or may not reinforce reader hypotheses irrespective of stylistic considerations. *Guernica* creates viewer sensibility by playing with ambiguity through a surrealist lens. In this way, the painting works toward conveying ideas via its metaphoricity of form as stylized abstractions of the visual fabula (e.g., themes, pictorial motifs, causal relations, etc.) The extensional responses of the viewer are limited and defined in accord with the aesthetic conventions of the *Guernica* by aligning the visual contexts appropriately to insure indexicality for the interpretation within a specific schematic and codic framework. The painting creates its own "model viewer" and makes you read it the way it wants you to.

Indeed, the mass of shapes in the center of *Guernica* are an indistinguishable conglomerate of meaningless geometrical structures the viewer must somehow disambiguate to make the modality of the scene intelligible. On the level of visual text, the unity and coherence between the elements which comprise the work that must be maintained to create pictorial sense is a type of relation or *anaphora*. The recognition of form, from schema as objects, in a visual text is deictic because it is dependent upon the recognition of changes in the intensification or regrouping of *coloremes* aggregately within a visual field. Distinct contours between figures (open or closed) creates analogous forms isomorphic with reality and results in a stable and organized visual field; whereas, digital, or symbolic, forms rival viewer interpretation because distinct form contours may or may not be present within the figures. The spatialization, or placement of forms, within the fore, middle, or background of a pictorial plane is a determinate of the viewer's interpretation of a visual text resulting from variables in perception(s) according to individual *gestalten* approximations derived from experience. Ultimately, the viewer can discern visual forms in a definitive spatial relations and the setting of which they are a part, thereby, setting up a possible visual world that invites the suspension of disbelief.

At the level of *supersigns*, the combinations of lines and colors that create shapes, in turn, render human and animal forms visible. Each figure relates to the

other thematically; whereby, the message of the painting is conveyed via the design, placement, and combination of images. The terms of the relation are metaphorical because the artist's ideological concerns are implied through the use of line and color rather than stated outright in language. The visual text is comprised of readily identifiable elements that create a meaningful integrated form of expression. Consequently, the relationships between the manifest properties of minimal units disclosed at a point of ocular centration during the act of viewing may also be analyzed syntactically and semantically. The cumulative effect of two sets of visual variables, plastic and perceptual, upon the perception process, isolates the latent properties virtually present in the viewer's store of culturally determined visual encyclopedic knowledge. Exploring the general chromatic relations between points and areas of *Guernica* creates an awareness of how the visual variables determined through the formal structure of the work interact with respect to the perceptual processes of the viewer and engender meaningful visual experiences. Picasso presents a lyrical mixture of archaic signs and political symbols ground in the contextual motivation for the painting itself that create a semantic web of meaning associations to encourage interpretation. The viewer cannot ignore the metaphorical connotations of these real-world images as they relate to the context of war: a flower represents hope; a broken sword signifies defeat; the dove promises peace; the gored horse suggests the Spanish Republic; the bull is Franco, and so on. Putting all of this iconography together, *Guernica* speaks to the viewer of the epic barbarity of war in a symbolic language of visual signs that are motivated by an artistic act of commemorating the violence of an historical event in a negative way. In essence, "textual truth" is determined pictorially when the visual text is acknowledged as "real" and the subsequent assignment of truth values placed upon the particular types of relation between forms, as visual actors depicted in a linear visual narrative is correlated with the truth values are aligned on the level of fabula to consolidate the total ideological vision of the text in its structure.

## Conclusion

Through *Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon* and *Guernica,* Pablo Picasso has forgone the mimetic quality of many paintings of the past in favor of an experimental mixture of undefined qualities. His break from the classical art traditions in all realms, from technical to conceptual, undoubtedly helped to ignite the hunger for new and intriguing styles of representation to be developed. Others before Picasso had begun to bend rules and slowly adopt and adapt their own unique visual language, though his commitment to no "set style" in particular is what allowed for such a striking textual composition. Looking at the development of Twentieth Century art after 1907, the influence of *Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon* and *Guernica* on the dominant aesthetic regimes is undeniable on the evolution of analytic and synthetic Cubist styles which still have elements that can be drawn back to a reinvention of visual language in painting.

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# Storied Assessment of the Aesthetic Experiences of Young Learners

**42**

## The Timbres of a Rainbow

Matthew Yanko and Peter Gouzouasis

## Contents

### Abstract

We examine integrated visual arts and music instruction through creative composition practices in soundscapes to develop an understanding of what a child learns through arts learning experiences. To present a viable means of interpreting aesthetic learning experiences, we investigate the learning story (Carr, M., *Assessment in Early Childhood Research: Learning Stories*, Sage Publications Inc., Thousand Oaks, 2001; Carr, M., & Lee, W., *Learning Stories: Constructing Learner Identities in Early Education*, SAGE Publications Ltd, Thousand Oaks, 2012; Gouzouasis, P., & Yanko, M., *Learning Stories and Reggio Emilia-inspired: Formative Methods of Assessment for the Elementary School Music Classroom*, Routledge, Milton, 2018a) as a means of assessment and expand upon this approach by using visual and aural metaphors to examine how they can provide teachers with the necessary tools and practices to compose richly

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detailed, meaningful storied assessments. We discovered that children are capable and able to engage with descriptive, interpretive, and evaluative aesthetic criticisms (Beardsley, M., *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., New York, 1958) and that the sharing of learning stories promotes discussions, understandings, and a celebration of young learners' meaning making with integrated arts. We postulate the learning story is a viable assessment practice for the aesthetic and artistic merits that emerge as children engage with music and the arts.

## The Timbre of a Rainbow

The standards within arts curricula across Canada are imbued with meaningful terminology – express, invent, explore, interpret, and create (terminology culled from curriculum documents of British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec). Learning experiences centered on those constructs illuminate the onset of a lifelong journey with the arts. When young learners begin to explore the arts, they commence a journey that cultivates a variety of artistic skillsets, and they also develop a sense of wonder and imagination. In that spirit, Elliot Eisner (1978) posits, "What do children learn when they paint?" In contexts where children engage with imagination and wonder, they do much more than develop brushstroke techniques. They engage with frameworks, processes, and decision-making demands that enable artistic skills to be developed, attitudes to be cultivated, and concepts to be embraced and expanded. Learning experiences in the arts that foster creative thinking, imaginative exploration, creativity, and aesthetic discourse can also enable young learners to engage in deep learning (Bresler 2004; Davis 2006), cultural understandings, and social justice (Ogier 2017). Thus, when children apply their imaginations to artistic learning experiences, they are able to expresses what exists outside the constraints of everyday perception in the classroom and "open a window into the actual to discover what might be" (Greene 1995, p. 140).

Suzanne Langer (1953) promotes the notion that the organic form in art is what gives it the impression of life or quality of livingness (p. 291). Edmund Burke Feldman (1970) reminds us that there are humanistic underpinnings in art that resonate throughout both artistic processes and production. He also reminds us to keep children at the heart of curriculum and allow them to wonder and imagine as they set out to make meaning with the arts. Maxine Greene (1971) argues that the curriculum must stimulate activities of perceiving, judging, believing, remembering, and imagining – enabling students to develop their cognitive and perceptive capacities (p. 266). Extending those activities to music, the curriculum must emphasize perceiving, audiating, judging, augmenting, listening, imagining, and creating for

music learners to develop aesthetic, cognitive, and perceptive capacities. With those ideas in mind, in the present chapter, we explore and examine learning experiences that foster expression, invention, exploration, critical thinking, interpretation, and creativity. To present a viable means of assessment for those types of aesthetic musical learning experiences, we will explore the art of storytelling through the learning story approach using visual and aural metaphors to examine how learning stories can position teachers, in collaboration with learners, with the necessary practices to compose storied assessment pieces. The use of learning stories in the assessment of music learning has been explored in two previous papers (Gouzouasis and Yanko 2018a, b) and books (Carr 2001; Carr and Lee 2012).

To bring light to such endeavors, we share autoethnographies of particular learning experiences in an elementary school music program. Autoethnography is a storytelling approach that captures the essences learning experiences and offer researchers rich insights into a child's engagement with the arts. Through contemporary autoethnographic practice as performative non-fictional storying, we draw on narrative elements to evoke a feeling that describes experiences are lifelike and truthful (Ellis 2004; Gouzouasis 2008a) while preserving the authenticity of what we characterize as aesthetic experiences in the music classroom. As a means to illustrate learning, we employ three learning story vignettes in the present chapter and ground them as exemplars that expand our understandings of childhood aesthetic learning processes.

## Story One: The Colors of Sound

Last week, Mrs. Taylor introduced her kindergarten students to the art of Kandinsky and began exploring and painting abstract art. They composed bright paintings with dashes, slashes, dots, and dabs. To scaffold this learning experience, I decided to share a story with the learners about Kandinsky and how he painted the sounds he heard.

As the final page of the story turns, the children scatter throughout the music room to seek an instrument that reminds them of a particular color.

I notice Sara pondering an egg shaker in one hand and a maraca in the other. I have a chat about which one she wants to use to represent dabs of blue, but we're interrupted by Shawn's shouting out from across the room.

"Can I play the drums?"

The rambunctious boy noisily drags a djembe drum toward the middle of the room. As I finish my conversation with Sara and nod affirmatively toward Shawn, I head to join the children gathering on the green carpet.

"Who would like to share their instrument and color?"

Many hands dart toward the ceiling.

"Yes, Cecilia?"

I nod at a petite student with two pigtails held upright with large pink bows. She begins to vigorously shake a large hand chime causing her pigtails to dance back and forth.

*Ding! Dong! Ding - dong – ding – dong – ding!*

"What color does that sound make you think of Cecilia?" I ask. She pauses for a moment to reflect and then shrugs her shoulders and replies with hesitation.

"Maybe pink."

"Why the color pink?" I prod a bit more.

"I'm not sure. I like the color and it feels pink when I play it."

"Can I go next?" Alan is eager to share his discovery.

"Sure," I reply as he suddenly and impatiently blows a long tone into a kazoo.

"*Bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz. . .*"

He takes a deep breath and does it again.

"*Bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz. . .*"

"Alan, that's enough."

I wait for him to stop sounding his kazoo before I continue the conversation.

"What color does that remind you of, Alan?"

"Orange," he enthusiastically exclaims.

"Why orange?"

"Because. . .because it reminds me of a big, orange bumble-bee flying around the room," he answers while making a flying gesture with his arms.

"There's time for one more person to share today, who would like a turn?" I notice Kaitlin sitting patiently at the back of the room with her hand in the air, waiting to be picked.

I look at Kaitlin and ask, "Would you like to play your instrument for us?"

She replies with a gentle nod and begins playing a chime with slow, gentle sweeps of her arm – making sure we hear every tone of the instrument.

"Kaitlin, what color does that sound remind you of?"

"A rainbow."

I look around the room and noticed a few kids confused by her answer, and so was I. The task at hand was to pick a single color for a sound.

"Why do you think of a rainbow?" I prod a bit more.

"Well," she drawls and briefly pauses, "on the weekend, me, mom, n' dad walked at Barnet Beach. We looked for seashells and baby crabs, but then it started to rain and I think it scared the crabs and shells away. We waited under a big tree for the rain to go away. When the clouds began to disappear, we saw a rainbow reach from the ocean to the mountains. This instrument makes all the colors in that rainbow."

She gently sweeps her hand across the chimes.

"All the colors?" I pause and then continue. "Doesn't it remind you of a single color?"

"No, listen." She plays the instrument a second time.

"When I was walking on the beach, the rain drops sounded like this," she deliberately tinkles the chimes again, "and when I looked up into the sky, I saw the rainbow and all the colors in it."

She points to, and taps, individual chimes on the instrument.

"Red, pink, yellow, blue, each of these sounds different. They sound like the rainbow."

## Story Two: Mint Green Ice Cream

Intrigued by the responses of the kindergarten children, later that afternoon, I provide the same provocation with Ms. Russell's Grade 3 students. When the children gather on the carpet during the last 10 min of class, we have a discussion of their experiences.

George waves his hand ecstatically in my direction. "Oh oh, I wanna share!"

"Go ahead George."

He spins the handle of the wooden ratchet in his lap and announces that it sounds blue.

"Why blue, George?"

"Because it sounds like the Stellar Jays that are in my back yard and they're blue."

Sitting at the piano next to George is Jen. I invite her to share her experience. She gently plays a chromatic melody in the upper register of the piano and then states, "my music sounds like mint green."

"Why that specific type of green?" I inquire.

"Well my song is a made up of cold musical notes for mint ice cream on a sunny day."

"Can you show us what happens when you don't finish the ice cream fast enough and it melts?"

She thinks for a moment and then repeats her melody but extends it to the upper reaches of the piano and fades it away.

Surprised by her extended melody I inquire, "What was that? I expected your music to go lower to sound as if the ice cream is melting and dripping onto the floor."

"No, it is such a hot day that it goes up into the sky; it evaporates," she replies.

After Jen is finished, more hands dart into the air with anticipation to share. I notice Giannina sitting with a recorder mouthpiece in hand and invite her to share. She gently plays chirping sounds with a recorder mouthpiece and shares her experience, "Mine is like George's. It reminds me of soft birds chirping and calming down. When I go outside and hear birds, it helps me calm down."

## Story Three: Guernica

The students in Mrs. Wilson's Grade 5 class have been learning about Pablo Picasso. To scaffold this experience in music, we discuss the influence of Picasso's art on Igor Stravinsky and how a reciprocal relationship develops between painter and composer. We examine how Stravinsky adopts ideas from Picasso's cubism in a musical context through a clarinet composition that he sketches on a hotel telegram – Stravinsky's brief, five bar composition attempts to illustrate an unpredicted interpretation of perspective through the use of complicated rhythms and is written vertically across the horizontal lines of the paper so that the lines appear to cut through the music.

Following the discussion, we examine Picasso's paintings, and the students become enticed by Guernica, a mural that depicts the bombed city during the

Spanish Civil War. The students are intrigued by how Picasso was able to evoke the horrors of war in an abstract way and how the mural has become an anti-war symbol. Inspired by that, they begin to work on abstract compositions based on their interpretations of Guernica.

Dennis and Jessica are seated at a keyboard and appear to be deep in thought staring at the Guernica painting.

I join them to check on their progress.

"What are you thinking about?"

Jessica remains fixated on the painting.

"Those crooked eyes. We want to capture them. We should compose weird, funky music for them."

Dennis tilts his head sideways to get a different perspective of the painting projected on the white board.

"The whole thing seems crooked. Everything looks crunched, stuffed together, and tumbled."

"Hmm. Can you play some of your ideas for me?"

Dennis walks over to the snare drum and gently taps on it with a pair of sticks, and Jessica elaborates as his playing becomes louder, "We're making a ticking sound to create suspense before the bombing and crashing."

I prod them a bit more, "Are the snares supposed to be on or off?"

Dennis stops and answers, "Snares are on, but the music has to be slow, not fast. If it's fast, it sounds like a drumbeat from a marching band and we don't want that."

"You two mentioned a crushing part. What ideas do you have for that?"

"We're going to create music that makes the listener feel like they are being squished and mixed together with other people and the things around them, like in the painting," Jessica explains. "Our music will start at both ends of the piano and slowly slide to meet in the middle."

"A glissando?" I interrupt.

"Yes," she affirms. "When both glissandos meet in the middle, we're going to have a moment of silence, like on Remembrance Day. After the silence we want to have a sad melody that can make the listener feel the experience of Guernica as a whole, but we haven't reached that part yet."

"It seems like you have a solid plan for your composition."

I leave them to focus on their work and walk over to check on Maddox and Darren's progress across the classroom.

"Mr. Largo what do you think of this?" Maddox says as I approach.

He plays a C minor chord that steps down to a B diminished and returns back up to the C minor.

"It sounds sombre to me."

"Good, because we want sad music. People are yelling and their hands are up in the air. We're using the organ sound effect because it flows better from chord to chord. The piano doesn't have that evil sound."

"Evil sound?"

"Yes, we want to create chords that feel excited and evil. They start out slow and then increase in speed to give an impression of intensity. War is not slow and friendly."

"Do you have an idea for the form of your entire composition?"

Darren looks to the painting of Guernica.

"Right now we're working on the sad section, but we also need to create music for what happens before that. . ." Darren pauses for just the right words, "because all this chaos happens," as he waves his arm at the painting to elaborate his point.

Maddox adds another idea, "We also want to change the mood as the music develops to give a bit of hope, but we still want to keep it sad. I think we should have light, soft music that fades into the sad-sounding chords. It should get faster and faster to the end. We want the end to be a loud, crushing sound like this..."

He presses the palms of his hands into the piano keys.

"That's called a tone cluster because you're playing chords with many random notes at the same time."

Maddox uses my descriptive language and reiterates, "We want a tone cluster for when the tragedy happens to the people of Guernica."

I depart Maddox and Darren and notice three students working at the piano near the front of the classroom.

"What are you working on," I inquire as Ben practices broken chords in the upper register of the instrument.

"I'm trying to create chaos of war, just like in the painting. Everything looks like a mess and is unconnected. I am sure war makes people feel like that," Ben states and then slowly rolls minor chords to illustrate.

After playing he adds, "This section of music starts slow with Pam's chords, followed by Maria joining her with low notes. As soon as I start to play, the music begins to speeds up and becomes messy to represent the chaos of the Guernica painting."

"That's interesting. So the three of you don't play in sync when you play together. I like how you slowly build and then add the element of chaos in three different levels on the same piano. Ben, can you tell me what your rolled chords are used for?"

"Mr. Largo, I want to capture the screaming ideas of the painting that are high pitched and very loud. That's why it's played in the high part of the piano. Plus my section is faster than theirs and is repeated over and over while everyone is dying."

"What happens next in your music?"

Ben comments, "From the chaos of everyone who has died, we'll compose a section that uses the chords from the first section. It's still going to be sad, but we want it to be peaceful for those who passed away. We want it to end on a chord of hope."

Pam plays the chords for the next section, but before the final chord, she leaves a long pause to build up tension.

"That ending sounds like a Picardy third, Pam. The middle note of your last chord changes to make it major. It's very cool that you're trying to capture a ray of light or hope at the end of your piece."

## Rethinking Assessment for the Arts

Our autoethnographic vignettes illuminate learning experiences where students and teacher engage with creative exploration, composition, interpretation, musical elements, and expression. While the third vignette sheds light on the older students' compositional processes with abstract art, the other two depict how a teacher can inspire students to explore sounds in their "music atelier" and to reflect on how particular colors can be associated with those sounds – Yanko has co-constructed a music atelier with his students that draws on the philosophies and practices of the municipally funded early childhood centers of Reggio Emilia, Italy (see Gouzouasis and Yanko 2018b). Although the teacher in the vignettes is able to attentively scaffold artistic learning experiences, such experiences can be discouraging for those who lack the pedagogical understandings and subject knowledge required to facilitate and assess learner understandings (Colwell 2004; Rayment 2007; Jacobs 2009). Teachers need to cultivate a suitable teaching philosophy – in the present research, concepts and practices that emerge from the municipally funded pre-primary schools and infant-toddler centers of Reggio Emilia – that weaves between, and supports, pedagogies and practices for such endeavors.

In addition to a broadly conceived philosophical foundation, teachers should employ assessment practices that reflect the learning experiences they design. If they choose to discuss (1) the nature of aesthetic qualities, (2) the criteria for judgments, and (3) the relevance of context in arts-based learning experiences, teachers themselves need to have (1) experienced aesthetic qualities, (2) made judgments (i.e., metacriticisms; see Beardsley 1958), and (3) encountered artworks in and out of context (Parsons 1994, p. 34). However, those perspectives are rarely spun into practice, as many educators who draw from traditionalist assessment practices (e.g., rubrics, rating scales, checklists) believe that aesthetic understandings are unattainable and even nonexistent with young learners. This is unfortunate for aesthetic learning experiences where absolute truths are neither to be found nor even expected. That being said, some practitioners seek to assess those types of learning experiences using the portfolio (Boughton 2013). Although there are benefits to portfolios, we question its ability to capture the teacher's valuing and allow for discourse of the aesthetic qualities between learner, teacher, classmates, and parents Gouzouasis and Yanko 2018a). In addition, others hypothesize the existence of "stages of aesthetic judgment" – in visual arts – to assess and illustrate how learners discuss semblance, subject matter, feeling, artist's properties, color, and judgment (Parsons 1987, 1994; Housen 1983). However, those stages are neither well-defined nor clearly articulated but interpretive (Parsons et al. 1978, p. 104).

When engaging with artistic learning experiences that evoke a child's wonder and imagination, teachers need to understand that artistic experiences are not confined to concrete rules or specific measures and that quantitatively inspired assessment practices (e.g., rubrics and checklists) are unsuitable for many arts learning experiences. Eisner (1971) once asked, "How can you measure a rainbow?" We share Eisner's concern and extend that notion, "How can you measure the qualities of a child's music making?" The question in arts learning contexts is not "How can a

teacher measure their students' experiences with color and musical instruments, and music compositions inspired by abstract art?" but "Why would a teacher even try to measure?"

## Aesthetic Criticism

Charles Hoffer (1993) posits that aesthetic experiences centered on music are considered for the insight, satisfaction, and enjoyment they provide. For instance, Chopin's Étude Op. 25, No. 6 is perceived as being *anesthetic* – containing no feeling or life – when we think of it as a technical study of parallel thirds. However, it may be considered as aesthetic when we contemplate the color and shape of the melody and harmonies as they expand and develop. When we listen to Chopin's etude, we are consciously aware of considering its intellectual parts – form, melody, colors, and tonality – and make evaluative criticisms. With that in mind, to ground our investigation in a particular aesthetic model that supports learning experiences that foster expression, invention, interpretation, and creativity, we turn to the work of Monroe Beardsley.

Beardsley believes that aesthetics is a philosophy of criticism or of metacriticism (1958, p. 4), in that "There would be no problems of aesthetics if no one ever talked about works of art" (p. 1). His discourse on aesthetic experience stresses both "the objective and subjective properties of one's phenomenal field of awareness, such that the unity of aesthetic experience consist not only of the unity of the artwork, but also the artwork as it is unified in the experience of the percipient, with all the thoughts and feelings that attend such experience" (Smith 1984, p. 142). Beardsley illuminates an empirical, inductive theory that perceives aesthetic objects as perceptual objects, in which the aesthetic object is not a presentation or the artifact itself but the production. Thus, in the present inquiry, an aesthetic object is any music composition and any painting that is labeled and discussed, through learning stories, in terms of characteristics exemplified in the music and the painting (Beardsley 1958, p. 17). As soon as children comment on their music making, and they question the decisions they are making about choices of sound sources and how to combine sounds to create and recreate an idea, they engage in aesthetics.

In arts-based learning experiences, like that of our study, aesthetics can be perceived as "A branch of philosophy, and like philosophy it is more than anything else, a competitive exchange of ideas...aesthetics is a process, not an end product, an inquiry, not an almanac. The best way to put it is an old Socrates thought—it is a conversation among earnest minds" (Stolnitz 1965, p. 1). Beardsley elaborates, "we can't do aesthetics until we have some critical statements to work on" (1958, p. 4). From that perspective, aesthetics is concerned with "the nature and basis of criticism—in the broad sense of the term—just as criticism itself is concerned with works of art" (p. 6). In his model, a critical description is merely any statement about a work of art (p. 3), and they need neither be value judgments nor true (or false).

Beardsley believes that there are three types of critical statements: descriptive, interpretative, and evaluative. Critical descriptions are typical noticing. For example,

Jessica and Dennis state, "We're making a ticking sound to create suspense before the bombing and crashing...the music has to be slow, not fast. If it's fast it sounds like a drumbeat from a marching band." To analyze an aesthetic object is precisely to get acquainted with its finer details and subtler qualities, to discover, in short, what is there to be enjoyed (p. 76). Statements that are interpretative purport the meaning of a work of art. Beardsley uses the term "meaning" as a semantical dimension. Part of the music critic's task, where apropos, is to declare what that meaning is and to help the listener find that meaning. To do this would be to *interpret* the music – a different thing from *describing* it (p. 319). For example, Kaitlin interprets the meaning behind the vast colors in wind chime as a rainbow. Critical statements that are evaluative tell whether a work of art is good or bad or how good or bad it is. For example, the teacher comments and discusses with Maddox and Darren how their piece has a sombre feeling. Within the framework of Beardsley's aesthetics, the gratification an aesthetic experience provides alludes to the idea that it is intrinsically enjoyable – not in the sense of a simple pleasure – but in that it is a complex satisfaction that draws on the feeling of active discovery, of exercising fully the powers of the mind, and of experiencing coherence (Smith 1984).

If a critic is defined as someone who talks about works of art, then we have to know how to discern when something is a work of art. As educators we encourage our students to engage with techniques and stylization of various composers. We prompt our learners to explore what the music sounded like at a particular time, not what sounds the composer heard in his own mind. We focus on the rules for reading music notation, the customs of a particular style of music performance, and performance conventions, because they do not depend upon the intentions of a particular individual (Beardsley 1958, p. 24). Children need to be cognizant of key processes and decisions that artists make and employ in creating unique works of art (Ogier 2017). That is how very young children can come close to understanding aesthetic objects (Zimmerman 1986), as well as experiences that evolve as aesthetic ones.

That being said, in situations like our inquiry, aesthetic experiences that involve the process of performance between the creator and the perceiver are challenging (Beardsley 1958, p. 21). In such experiences, the real music is what the student composers perceive in their minds, and the aesthetic object is their intention. To experience a piece of music, performers work with a score and have to determine how the composer intended the music to sound. In doing so, they tend to fill in gaps by trying to determine the details of performance that are most appropriate to the broader features of the music that the score prescribes (p. 22). In the vignette, the children work on their compositions in short segments during the week. When they return to their music after a few days, they not only have to interpret their own notation from previous sessions but also have to determine how their group members intend the music to sound.

Oscar Wilde once said, "Art is the most intense mode of individualism that the world has known" (1891, p. 41). Alongside having foundational understandings that enable aesthetic experiences, pedagogies and practices that solely emphasize skill

development are unsuitable for learning experiences that celebrate diverse outcomes and personal individualism. As teachers we not only need to rethink what are aesthetic learning experiences but also how to assess them. Our practices need to disembark from "measuring" and step onto a new pathway that allows for expression, opportunity, and wonder. If the practice of evaluating children in comparison with one another denies individuality, then teachers need to explore practices that enable them to assess children in a formative manner because assessment is a process, not merely a product, and it can be highly subjective (Lewin-Benham 2011).

Beardsley posits, "To be a good critic, it is not enough to accumulate a vast amount of information about, and a rich experience of, the art you are interested in: you must be able to organize those data in a fruitful way, and you must formulate them so that they can be understood" (Beardsley 1958, p. 5). To scaffold an assessment practice that embraces critical statements, we seek guidance from Eisner's concepts of connoisseurship and criticism. Connoisseurs make fine-grained discriminations of learning experiences. They suggest qualitative knowing or an example of epistemic seeing, i.e., the order of knowledge secured through sight. Eisner (1991) explains, "My emphasis on seeing should be regarded as a shorthand way of referring to all of the senses and the qualities to which they are sensitive" (p. 68). The task of the critic is to transform the qualities of a painting, play, novel, poem, classroom, or school or act of teaching and learning into a public form that illuminates, interprets, and appraises the qualities that have been experienced (p. 86). In this light, criticism is seen as an act of reconstructing experience and becomes an "argued narrative" (p. 86) where students tell stories about their learning and teachers write and analyze those stories.

In fostering assessment practices that promote those ideas, learners are provided with opportunities to engage in aesthetic experiences and are able to become connoisseurs of music. Whereas Eisner thinks in terms of visual arts – requiring the capacity to see beyond merely looking – we offer that engagement with music requires the capacity to extend beyond listening, to allow for and enable educational experiences in which the learners engage with a reflexive-reflective practice of hearing and audiation. As students develop those capacities in that manner, they are able to make aesthetic judgments, especially with composition. Weaving connoisseurship and criticism in, out, and between critical, aesthetic statements can enable teachers to assess modes of learning beyond skill development and focus on the discourse that emerges in the learning experience.

Assessing with critic- and connoisseur-like lenses can allow a framework for such assessment practices to be grounded in the arts. With that in mind, we aim to stretch our assessment canvas and engage with an assessment palette of new tonal colors. We seek the poetic capabilities of the arts to assess that "what cannot be said" in traditional assessment practices and turn to a form that is accessible to both child and teacher: one that can empower the assessor to bring light to aesthetic criticism. We must reach into our musical capacities and then attempt to translate those feelings from musical expression into words. Thus, we turn to the art of storytelling to reframe our practice of assessment.

## The Autoethnographic Learning Story

> Insofar as we account for our own actions and for the human events that occur around us principally in terms of narrative, story, drama, it is conceivable that our sensitivity to narrative provides the major link between our own sense of self and our sense of others in the social world around us. The common coin may be provided by the forms of narrative that the culture offers us. Again, life could be said to imitate art.
> Bruner (1986, p. 69)

Storytelling is a universal art that enables teachers to participate in observational subjectivity, through which they can artfully weave their valuing of learning experiences through settings, plots, and characters. With the story fabric, educators are able to bring to life different ways in which their classroom community experiences, conceptualizes, realizes, and understands endeavors involving the visual and performing arts. To engage with storytelling as an assessment practice that illustrates the teacher's valuing of aesthetic and artistic learning experiences, we turn to the learning story approach. In New Zealand, Margaret Carr developed the learning story for early childhood educators during the late 1980s and early 1990s. This assessment practice draws from narrative methodology – a way of knowing for child and teacher and a vehicle for meaning making (Carr 2001). To make it more illustrative of the actual experience and engage readers into the heart of the experience, we reframe the learning story as autoethnography (Gouzouasis and Yanko 2018a, b). That is because if life is said to imitate art, then the expressive nature of art that enables artistic and aesthetic elements to emerge also needs to be illuminated. As the form of a work of art echoes the shape of what needs to be expressed (Langer 1953, pp. 25–26; Gouzouasis 2006, 2008b, 2017), the form of assessment needs an artistic output to evoke the artistic merits of what is being assessed. Pablo Picasso once said, "there are painters who transform the sun to a yellow spot, but there are others who. . .transform a yellow spot into the sun" (Eisenstein and Leyda 1957, p. 127). Therefore, to transform data into more than the mere observation and measurement of skill development, the assessor needs to breathe life into their representation of the child's engagement with an aesthetically imbued learning experience. In pursuance of this occurrence, we believe teachers need to embrace the learning story with artistic freedom – freedom to weave elements of the artistic experience into the fabric of an assessment story. That freedom can enable teachers to not only work with a flexible canvas but with an artistic palette that empowers them to bring to life the assessment of a child's wonder and imagination by focusing on the aesthetic discourse that is brought to life through Beardsley's critical statements and the ideology of Eisner's connoisseurship and criticism. When teachers engage in the practice of writing a learning story, they artfully depict a story that illustrates the significance of the experience to the child, the learning dispositions that show the child's approach to figuring things out, the child's plan or goal as the learning unfolds, and the child's engagement in the inquiry with others and materials (Carr 2001). As teachers compose their stories, they begin to come to life and so to do the children who evolve into characters and metaphorically embody the data being

explored. Thus, when an autoethnographic learning story is conceived and written, the more a teacher is able to reflect on bringing the assessment to life, the more powerful it becomes.

After a traditional learning story is complete, the teacher tends to add a reflection to the story that not only illustrates the significance of the experience to the child and the learning dispositions involved but also the teachers value placed on the process of learning and the child's understandings. For example, "Kaitlin not only illustrates her comprehension and ability to partake in the learning experience, but also shows a deeper understanding of the activity—She illustrates through sound and words her intentionality with the instrument and identifying how the instrument is able to produce different pitches. Kaitlin showed great understanding today through her interpretation of sounds of the rainbow with chimes. Next class, I'll propose that she continues to explore the sounds and colors of the sky, and perhaps think about the sounds and colors of the sun, clouds, rain, and wind." Although this is common in the traditional approach, the autoethnographic learning story enables us to weave this directly into the narrative, whereby the teacher's 'expertise' feedback is not a separate boxed-off comment, as it is on a report card, but is co-constructed through discourse and reflection between child and teacher during the learning experience. Thus, it shows how adult (i.e., *enìlikos* in Greek) learners develop an artful 'enìlikogogy' (i.e., an adult-oriented 'pedagogy') that translates into an artful 'pedagogy' in the K-12 classroom.

Employing the learning story approach also encourages teachers to engage with empathic knowing that can help them to understand what it feels like to be in such educational experiences (Eisner 2000, p. 5) – working with particular art forms and materials to inspire children to embrace their imaginations. Richard Hickman (2005) postulates:

> Imagination involves thought, thought which is not simply fantasy or the conjuring up of mental images of things not experienced, but the actual construction of new realities. The arts can be seen as an effective conduit through which imagination can flow. There appears to be a link between one's capacity for empathy and the ability to think creatively; empathy is made possible by imagination. (p. 105)

As teachers engage in empathetic knowing, they are not composing a literal representation of a learning experience but, rather, creating a story that joins pieces together, enlivens the experience, invites interpretation, and promotes multiple and diverse perspectives of a child's engagement with imagination and creativity. Thus, through empathetic knowing, when the learning story is shared with listeners, they can move back and forth between living in the story and living in their own stories as they engage in listening to the pedagogical tale (see Gouzouasis and Yanko 2018a).

A learning story is shared with the students involved to reflect on their learning experience with the arts. These assessment pieces can also be shared with classmates to further discussion and insight on the experience. When this occurs, the learning community engages in aesthetic judgments that are "in one sense personal but in another, communicable, open to inspection and capable of negotiation" (Preston

1986, p. 10). The child's classmates partake in a conversations that illustrate how the students receive and give feedback, communicate particular meanings, and expand on concepts and ideas, because "it is not possible, in the arts, to make right or wrong judgments; the only thing that is possible is to be prepared to take one's coat off, so to speak, and get down to an argument" (Aspin 1982, p. 48).

On that level, the sharing of the learning story evokes divergent and convergent ideas, as it also affords an opportunity to connect with the child's family and promotes communication between parent, child, and teacher (Ramsey et al. 2007). It provides an opportunity for child and parents to reflect and discuss the child's understanding of the learning, skill development, theory making, and ideas involved in their journey with the arts. The result of sharing is twofold. First, it shows that parents appear to be more convinced of their child's learning achievements when presented in a learning story (Smith 2003). Second, it illustrates an apprenticeship-like context where the teacher is not the only source of knowledge – a context where classmates and parents also help with the co-construction of art and the bringing to life of the artistic and aesthetic values associated with it:

> Stories invite us to come to know the world and our place in it. Whether narratives of history of the imagination, stories call us to consider what we know, how we know, and what and whom we care about.
>     (Witherell and Noddings 1991, p. 13)

The learning story illustrates how children come to "know the world and their place in it," a practice that considers the context, location, and people involved in learning as children construct knowledge with their classmates (Carr 2001). With that perspective in mind, the teacher is able to employ the role of critic and connoisseur, all the while engaging with the learners in descriptive, interpretive, and evaluative statements. This allows the teacher to reveal subtle yet significant artistic and aesthetic elements within a child's art through the learning story. Thus, the traditional focus on rote-learning skills and knowledge accumulation becomes replaced by attaching sociocultural purpose to meaning making in a reciprocal relationship between context and learner (Carr 2001, pp. 4–5). James Paul Gee (2008) expands on this view, "A situated/sociocultural viewpoint. . .looks at knowledge and learning in terms of a relationship between an individual with both a mind and a body and an environment in which the individual thinks, feels, and interacts" (p. 81). Gee's perspective brings to light the role of the teacher as an assessor who does not observe from afar but actively engages in the learning experience as a "participant observer" (Musante 2015) – who reflects on discourse and practice as it develops and transforms into a pedagogical story.

## Discourse on Assessing Aesthetic Learning Experiences

The arts in schools should not solely be about creating artists, rather they should contribute to a much broader spectrum of life skills, knowledge, and cultural understandings that other facets of the curriculum are unable to connect with.

Those experiences provide teachers with a sense that there is a deeper and more meaningful way of engaging in activities that go far beyond the narrow confines of skill development. The assessment of those experiences through the storying of children's experiences in the arts can be rich sources of knowing and meaning making. Although the learning story approach can empower teachers to give value to descriptive, interpretive, and evaluative statements that emerge in aesthetic learning experiences, it is important to remember that "even the most simple of stories is embedded in a network of relations that are sometimes astounding in their complexity" (Cobley 2001). A complex network of relations is not only present in such artistic learning experiences but is also woven into the fabric of the story.

There are many perspectives and subjective lenses that weave into those types of classroom activities. As teachers engage in the autoethnographic learning story approach, they need to be careful to not misrepresent the complexity of learning endeavors, as their stories will illustrate their subjectivity in selecting and omitting some events. Teachers also need to be cognizant when engaging with critical statements that are evaluative in nature; such statements can allude to pleasure that is phenomenally subjective, which can hinder a child's sense of wonder and imagination, all the while restricting them from pushing boundaries and experimenting with a diverse pallet of colors.

Alongside the complexity of subjectivity, teachers are also challenged with how to compose a story that truthfully represents a child's experiences. There are always details of experiences that are misinterpreted or missed, and the teacher's story will always be a fragment of the complex and wide-ranging learning that is occurring in the classroom, playground, and community. As truth is multifaceted and always ever partial, the autoethnographic learning story approach evokes a verisimilitude (Eisner 1991, pp. 53–58), which differs from the objective criteria of truthfulness and empirical verification found in positivistic assessment practices. Verisimilitude can evoke in readers a feeling that the described experience is lifelike, believable, and possible, a feeling that what has been represented could be true (Ellis 2004; Gouzouasis 2008a). Interpretation and judgment may not be exactly right and wrong but represent the possible experience of others – the experience an observer should have, if he were to see an arts-based learning experience as it really is (Parsons 1987, p. 52). Thus, we artfully stretch our learning story canvas to allow for artistic practices that seek "essences" and "meanings" rather than precise "facts" (Ellis 2004, p. 116). In doing so, we believe this will not only strengthen the foundation but also enable the teachers to represent their assessments in a manner that better illustrates frameworks, processes, and decision-making demands that not only illustrates aesthetic discourse but also artistic skills that are developed and concepts that are embraced and expanded upon.

Engagement with aesthetic learning experiences that promote wonder and imagination, and the stories written about them, offers children invaluable opportunities to experience art and culture as well as to explore what art is and can be. Piaget's theoretical framework (Piaget 1973) supports the notion that young children's thinking may start as concrete but that it evolves into becoming abstract. Abstractions are important and necessary in children's ability to make sense of stories, as

stories are a means to make sense of the world and our place in it. In the story of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, there is an underlying conflict between the safety of remaining on the ground and the danger of climbing up the beanstalk into the unknown. Many children are familiar with stories that illustrate binary opposites (e.g., safety/danger, security/anxiety, good/evil), and it is the abstract, affective nature of those concepts in short stories and tales that provide access to, and engagement with, concrete content – even though young learners may not be able to define and articulate abstract concepts (Egan 1993, p. 121). With that in mind, presenting an assessment piece in this manner also evokes an engagement with abstract and concrete thinking. When children engage in the learning story with their teacher, classmates, and parents, they also use storytelling as a means to elaborate on the teacher's observations – they illustrate their concrete learning through making inferences to other stories and learning experiences.

Along those lines, by exploring works of visual and performing art and engaging with storied assessments of the young learners who created them, children can develop critical, analytical, and visual skills and begin to develop connoisseur- and critic-like practices. In those situations, we believe teachers need to engage with critical statements to evoke descriptive, interpretive, and evaluative discourse – the more time students spend experiencing and discussing the arts, the greater their enjoyment and understanding of the arts can be. Although a piece of art can tell stories and provide layers of information on its own, we believe it is important for children to have opportunities to draw out personal opinions, observations, and ideas in order to keep art relevant, interesting, and, above all, exciting. Thus, in addition to children observing each other's art making and art works, we believe the sharing of learning stories can also promote discussion, understanding, and celebration of young learners' meaning making with the arts. When children engage with other's works of art, they engage in developing a disposition to tolerate ambiguity, to explore what is uncertain, to exercise judgment free from prescriptive rules and procedures (Eisner 2002, p. 10).

We leave our readers to reflect on the students in the vignettes who attribute intentionality to their music making and how we as educators can provide meaningful assessments of such learners who evoke a palate rich in artistic and aesthetic colors.

> Color is power, which directly influences the soul. Color is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, and the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand that plays, touching one key or another, to cause vibrations in the soul.
> (Kandinsky 1977)

## Cross-References

▶ Children's Literature: Interconnecting Children's Rights and Constructions of Childhoods Through Stories

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# Part VIII

# Ecology and Heterotopia

# Thinking Physiologies Methodologically with Post-Qualitative and Posthuman Education Research

# 43

Nicole Land

## Contents

### Abstract

This chapter debates methodological possibilities for thinking Physiology, informed by feminist science studies conceptualizations of scientific knowledge, with post-qualitative education research practices. Offering an emergent articulation of how physiologies might become differently and productively entangled with feminist science studies, post-qualitative research, and posthuman enactments of fleshy bodies, I propose that education research can engage (with) physiologies with generative, non-essentialist, accountable methodological practices. I think three post-qualitative methodological concerns alongside insights from feminist science studies, weaving my exploration with a moment from an early childhood education pedagogical inquiry research project. Attending to the tensions, practices, and possibilities that emerge when post-qualitative research

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and physiologies converse, I argue, might generate novel methodological practices that contribute to post-qualitative projects intent on refusing humanist habits in education research.

## Introduction

This chapter outlines methodological possibilities for integrating feminist science studies-informed understandings of Physiological Science with post-qualitative education research methodologies. Extending feminist science studies scholar Willey's (2016) assertion that "when we claim sciences, instead of 'engaging' them, the terrain shifts from one of how un/friendly feminists are to Science to one of what a world of sciences has to offer, where so much is at stake" (p. 146), I propose that *education research can engage (with) physiologies with generative, non-essentialist, accountable methodological practices*. I read three central post-qualitative methodological concerns alongside feminist science studies interventions into the hegemonic status ascribed to mainstream Sciences, tracing how feminist science studies insights might contribute to ongoing post-qualitative debates and inquiries in education research. Importantly, I argue that education research practices oriented toward dismantling colonial knowledge structures loyal to logics of humanism and transcendent truth can – and, as one specific interjection, *must* – think with physiological knowledges that matter in contemporary education. Grounded in one moment from an early childhood education pedagogical inquiry, I offer an emergent articulation of how physiologies might become differently, and productively, entangled with messy, uneven, and fragmented knots of post-qualitative research, feminist science studies, and posthuman enactments of fleshy bodies.

Post-qualitative research in education generates methodological practices that attempt to intervene in Euro-Western humanist modes of inquiry (Lather and St. Pierre 2013; MacLure 2011; St. Pierre 2014a). As St. Pierre (2014a) elaborates, post-qualitative methodologies persistently "engage the ontological, which is too often ignored in the epistemological rage for meaning that centers the Cartesian knowledge projects privileged in the academy" (p. 3) as one strategy for dismantling the interpretative, anthropocentric, representational, and positivist imperatives of hegemonic knowledge structures (Koro-Ljungberg and Mazzei 2012; St. Pierre 2012, 2015a). For post-qualitative education scholars, it is with/in a "commitment to consider different orders of things, different distributions, that have been and might be" (St. Pierre 2014a, p. 14) that post-qualitative research becomes a question of intentionally immersing research in contested, disruptive ontological debate and experimentation (Lather and St. Pierre 2013). Dipping into the swells of "post" (human, structural, modern) ontologies, post-qualitative research often leans into

feminist new materialisms (Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012; St. Pierre 2015b; St. Pierre et al. 2016). These methodologies trace how agential realist empiricism(s) might cut with/in dominant epistemological and ontological categories, reanimating what might be required to *do* data (Koro-Ljungberg and MacLure 2013; St. Pierre and Jackson 2014), writing (Lenz Taguchi 2013; Mazzei 2013a; St. Pierre 2014b), and concepts (Lenz Taguchi 2016) when individualized subjectivity, researcher objectivity, and enduring interpretative certainty are made unintelligible.

Proposing that education research can engage (with) physiologies with genera-tive, non-essentialist, answerable methodological practices, I structure this explora-tion of how physiologies and post-qualitative research methodologies might become productively entangled around three threads of concern in contemporary Euro-Western post-qualitative education research. The first thread that I attend to takes seriously (1) an ethico-onto-epistemological (Barad 2007) impulse toward infiltrat-ing and disrupting canonical methodological practices loyal to humanist logics (Koro-Ljungberg and Mazzei 2012; Lather 2013; MacLure 2013a; St. Pierre 2013a, b), including the traces of Euro-Western hegemonic knowledges that interject in experimental research processes (Lenz Taguchi 2013; MacLure 2011). The second thread of concern confronts (2) the methodological and ethical consequences of persistently engaging with positivist Euro-Western Scientific knowledges while working to unsettle knowledge hierarchies in settler colonial spaces (in this citation, I emphasize that scholars who elaborate this concern from non-Euro-Western or racialized or minoritized epistemic positions (Prescod-Weinstein 2017; Roy and Subramaniam 2016; TallBear 2013; Todd 2015) tackle different concerns than scholars who primarily employ Euro-Western theories, including post-qualitative research or feminist new materialisms (Lather 2012; Sanabria 2016; Willey 2016; Yoshizawa 2012). This chapter contributes to the latter project). The third thread that I pick up wonders (3) how methodologies might encounter flesh with non-anthropocentric bodied knowledges (Banerjee and Blaise 2013; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 2016; Rautio 2013), where anxieties about erasing fleshed lives (Ahmed 2008) become knotted with charges of anti-biologism (Wilson 2015) until either "embodiment" or "empiricism" or "physiology" feel quite adequate.

Occupying the exact Humanist ontological terrain that post-qualitative research responds to, Physiology, a branch of mainstream Euro-Western science rooted at the juncture of biochemistry, biology, and anatomy, studies how living organisms function. Physiology (with the capital "P") designates one powerful epistemic tradition of flesh as it inquires into how constituent parts of bodies enable "normal" life for an organism. This includes a focus on the functionality of biological systems centered in cellular interactions, biochemical signals, and anatomical cooperativity. Physiology comes to matter behind many neoliberal imperatives in education because the "answers" Physiology gives to questions of "how" bodies happen become deeply consequential. For example, Physiological mechanisms of metabo-lism underpin recommendations for nutrition provision, understandings of muscle Physiology dictate how bodies should move in physical activity recommendations, and conceptions of hormones, brain matter, and neurotransmitters come to explain and predict what bodies can, and should, do.

Positioning Physiology as a colonial Science attuned to bodied function and process, I begin by discussing why post-qualitative research might, and should, mark an important methodological terrain for generating conversations, collaborations, and tensions between Physiology and research traditions that aim to disrupt humanist modes of inquiry. I think with "physio/logy," which I build from concepts developed by Roy and Subramaniam (2016) and Willey (2016), to describe how post-qualitative research might enter into novel alliances with feminist science studies-informed enactments of Physiology. I then take up the three threads of concern in post-qualitative research that I outlined above. For each concern, I trace how this impulse is engaged in post-qualitative literature, layer in a feminist science studies concept that extends or complexifies this intention, and weave together post-qualitative research, feminist science studies, and physiologies in a "doing" with documentation from an ongoing research project. Throughout the chapter, I hold an attunement to process at the forefront, as I articulate *how* physiologies might matter, methodologically, with post-qualitative education research practices.

## Thinking Physio/logies Methodologically with Post-Qualitative Education Research

Why think (differently) with Physiology in post-qualitative education research? In a Euro-Western state where Physiological conceptions of flesh invest in creating and maintaining bodies governed by physical activity regulations, dictates of normative health and development, and biochemically mediated fear of obesity, I assert that differently claiming (Willey 2016), infiltrating, and deploying physiological knowledges is an increasingly urgent project. Physiology matters because it forms the evidence-based backbone of governmental machinations that mark different lives and bodies as differently healthy/unhealthy, normal/abnormal, human/inhuman, and legitimate/illegitimate in line with the settler colonial epistemologies upon which positivist Sciences stand. I argue that because the politics of Physiology are relevant, and because Physiology has consequences, Physiology is worthy of critically creative disruption.

Lather (2016) proposes that post-qualitative research should "move from what needs to be opposed to what can be imagined out of what is already happening" (p. 129). Extending Lather's proposition to Physiology, I argue that intentionally sticking with Physiology might mark one narrow vein for disrupting Euro-Western, human-centered, positivist research traditions. What if, instead of ignoring, critiquing, obscuring, or beginning from a terrain outside of Scientific hegemonies, one little facet of education research chisels at Scientific structures differently? How might education research methodologies engender, as Willey (2016) proposes, a partial "vision of what it might look like to politicize scientific knowledge production in a way that allows for an answerability, an accountability, beyond the realm of internal critique, that science as we know it lacks" (p. 14)? Rather than only overtly critiquing Science for its deeply troubling governmental loyalties, how might

we put Physiology to work in ways that make these oppressive allegiances unintelligible? Throughout this chapter, I argue that actively dragging inherited epistemologies into conversation with methodological interventions into colonial knowledge structures might begin to unsettle the humanist underpinnings that allow for Physiology to become a positivist structure.

## Physio/logy and Methodology

Integrating Physiology with post-qualitative research is an onto-epistemological (Barad 2007) proposition, one that questions what Physiology must ask of post-qualitative research and what post-qualitative research might demand of Physiology to engage in productive collaboration. This is not a practice of bringing Physiology to an intact post-qualitative frame, nor of introducing a stable post-qualitative tradition to a bounded Physiological Sciences discipline. While adding knowledges from Physiology to post-qualitative methodologies might be interesting, simply plopping a Science into a divergent methodological practice does not unsettle the humanist, Euro-Western conventions of that Science, nor does it tip post-qualitative research toward confronting or extending its own borders. Rather, to engage Physiology generatively, post-qualitative research must engage a precise physiology, physiologies that muddle and extend, but can converse with, post-qualitative onto-epistemological footings. I think with "physio/logy," motivated by Willey (2016) and Roy and Subramaniam (2016).

Willey (2016) argues for an attention to how biologies are made methodologically with/in different theoretical orientations. Tracing the nuanced debates (Davis 2009; van der Tuin 2008) launched by Sara Ahmed's (2008) reading of Elizabeth Wilson's (2004) assertion of feminism's anti-biological tendencies, Willey elaborates a common methodological bent toward conflating biology as a specific scientific practice and biology as lived flesh. Citing Wilson's contention of feminism's anti-biological habits, Ahmed's centering of feminist labors and histories that engage the biological, and Davis' discussion of the need for feminism to engage a different kind of biology made of material-discursive entanglements, Willey makes clear how these arguments do not carefully detach disciplinary bodied knowledge from fleshed bodied knowledge. Rather, they hold the "biological" intact at different junctures of flesh and Science. This "slippage" between the epistemic conventions of scientific inquiry and the lived flesh of the body is, Willey argues, "important because it makes it appear as though the science of 'biology' were an unmediated representation of the 'the body itself'" (p. 18). Importantly, Willey contends that if we hope to confront the epistemic hegemony of bioscientific knowledges, we must parse Biological Scientific traditions from bodied details because the ease with which flesh and Euro-Western Bioscientific traditions are conflated is a function of dominant colonial epistemic structures. Disentangling this methodological habit, Willey claims, makes visible the borders of Euro-Western Scientific inquiry as they collide with lively flesh and multidisciplinary, multi-epistemic practices of generating knowledges with/in bodies.

As a methodological problem, I hear Willey (2016) propose that this habitual slippage between flesh and epistemological convention marks an important knot for thinking biologies methodologically *with* feminist science studies (and, I add, with education research). Confronting this conflation must "necessitate a certain kind of resistance to disciplinary divides" (Willey 2016, p. 19) – divides in which both feminist science studies and post-qualitative research can be complicit. With Willey, methodologies should refuse epistemic boundaries that allow for the "study" of the body to be parsed, even partially, from lively fleshy bodies *while* recognizing that Scientific knowledge about the body does not come to matter in the same way that differently crafted fleshy knowledges do. Roy and Subramaniam (2016) expand this discussion by detailing bio/logy as the bios (in this case, flesh) and logy (knowledge(s)) while arguing that "to be critical of these processes [of studying flesh or fleshed knowledges] does not mean that one rejects matter, bios, the body or repudiates a field entirely" (p. 33). Rather, Roy and Subramaniam are concerned that overinvesting in overt critique of the structuring forces that allow for flesh to become parsed from knowledge has "taken a great deal of energy and time away from the work of reimagining *how* we as feminists can think about biology differently, and *what* that biology can teach us" (p. 33).

Thinking with Willey (2016) and Roy and Subramaniam (2016), intervening in the dominance of Physiological Sciences as a project of infiltrating colonial knowledge structures means attuning to how feminist engagements with Scientific data (Physiology) matter while attending to salient critiques about the politics of Scientific knowledge production. I read this insight alongside Lather's (2016) post-qualitative contention that "motored by practice, the new emerges out of infiltrating/embedding/infusing, not killing" (p. 127) to understand that, rather than putting resources into only critiquing Science, we might use bio/logy to foreground the fleshy epistemic tensions that tending to both edges of this term might entail. The layered obligations of bio/logy, which I think as physio/logy, invoke a doubled methodological impulse. With physio/logy, we might work to recreate what it means to do physio(and)logy, with post-qualitative education research methodologies that refuse to separate ontology from epistemology from ethics from liveliness *while* refusing to retreat from being accountable to existing systems of positivist "true" Sciences about bodies.

As I read Willey (2016) and Roy and Subramaniam (2016) write with bio/logy, I hear an appeal toward a specific methodological framework – physio/logy is not an assertion that knowledge is distinct from flesh, nor that flesh can be parsed from epistemology. I use physio/logy to brace my understanding of how Physiology and post-qualitative methodologies become entangled throughout this chapter. I am interested in post-qualitative methodologies made with the inextricability of physio and logy – methodologies that are fleshy knowledge-generating practices and that know that how flesh and knowledge come to matter is precise. The physio/logies – and post-qualitative methodologies – that I think with compose and are composed by situated knots of knowledge generation, flesh, and inherited knowledges and work to (re)organize how knowledges and flesh become tangled, unsettled, and re-tangled.

## Pedagogical Inquiry

To anchor this chapter, I think with documentation from one moment in an ongoing pedagogical inquiry project with preschool-aged children and educators in a child care center located in British Columbia, Canada. As part of a multi-year collaborative research program, educators, children, families, and researchers investigate how we might craft pedagogies relevant to the tensions, challenges, privileges, and politics of living in contemporary Canada. Methodologically, our "inquiry work" practices are informed by post-qualitative research as we put humanist ideas of truth, objectivity, positivism, and representational logic at risk (Hodgins 2014; Nxumalo 2016; Olsson 2009). (I use the language of *our* inquiry to refer to the collective methodological practices that children, families, educators, and researcher practice. While I understand how our methodology matters from my perspective, and each educator and researcher foregrounds different post-qualitative entanglements (materiality, more-than-human encounters, sound, energy) in our work, I use *we* to make clear how my experience and the methodological insights that I work through are part of a shared inquiry process.) Our overarching methodological framework employs post-qualitative and feminist new materialisms-inspired pedagogical documentation (Hodgins 2012; Hultman and Lenz Taguchi 2010; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 2015). We understand pedagogical documentation as an ongoing practice of attending to the expansive liveliness of everyday encounters, as we document these moments in ways that tend to nuance as closely as possible, and we return to this documentation to trace its multiple complexities as we layer in additional questions, tensions, or experiences. Documentation is, for us, an activity, not an object. Our documentation often initially takes the form of photography, written narrations of everyday moments, audio recordings, and artifacts that children and educators have created. Importantly, as we craft and revisit documentation, we work to disrupt narratives of universalized childhoods and normative, child-centered developmental education by attending to more-than-human, material, or affective actants (Blaise et al. 2016; Hodgins 2015; Lenz Taguchi 2011; Nxumalo and Pacini-Ketchabaw 2017). As such, we do not frame our documentation as true, wholly accurate, or final. Our practices of documenting are partial, intentional, and processual. Documentation is generated within everyday moments that make us curious about pedagogy, and we make meaning of how these events matter pedagogically as we allow documentation to percolate through our writing, conversations, and daily encounters (Early Childhood Pedagogies Collaboratory n.d.).

The specific moment that I think with in this chapter happened during a pedagogical inquiry where we were curious about how children, educators, and researchers might care and move with/in the forest. I quickly jotted this description down with an accompanying note detailing how this moment was both incredibly mundane and loudly screaming for a physio/logy-entangled analysis. The richly common character of this moment, and the written form of documentation it takes, is why I have elected to share it here. Throughout this chapter, I will re-engage this "muddy buddy" documentation through three methodological "doings" as I

elaborate how feminist science studies conceptions of physio/logy can become productively entangled with post-qualitative methodologies:

> Eight children, one educator, and two researchers are preparing to head outside to the forest on a chilly, damp morning. As the educator hands each child their "muddy buddy", which is a one-piece waterproof rain suit, the child that I have been chatting with, Carly, asks me why she needs to wear a muddy buddy. "It is rainy outside, and I am worried that your body might get too cold without a muddy buddy", I answer. Carly pushes her legs into her muddy buddy, which is still wet from yesterday, and asks for my help closing its waist-to-neck zipper. Shivering, I tug at the plasticy fabric to try to align the twisted zipper, Carly takes a big breath in and yanks at the zipper pull, and we quickly realize that this muddy buddy is not going to cooperate. We cannot close this zipper.

I emphasize that, in line with our pedagogical documentation practices, my engagement with this documentation does not end with the three methodological "doings" in this chapter. Rather, I elaborate these three practices because *how* they transform my initial documentation of this moment might have different consequences for *how* this moment can become meaningful pedagogically. While a pedagogical analysis is beyond the scope of this chapter, I conclude by presenting a reimagined iteration of this documentation to illustrate how weaving physio/logies and post-qualitative methodologies with this documentation might foreground different pedagogical concerns.

## (Post-Qualitative) Physio/logy

### Thread One: Infiltrating Humanist Methodological Habits with Physio/logies

Traditional academic inquiry, from canonical Euro-Western Sciences to mainstream qualitative research, owes to positivist conceptions of enduring truth and depends upon assumptions of validity, rationality, reliability, and epistemic accuracy enabled by humanist ontologies amid contemporary neoliberal and colonial structures (Haraway 1988; Lather 2013; Prescod-Weinstein 2017; Roy and Subramaniam 2016; St. Pierre 2013a, 2014a; TallBear 2013; Todd 2015). Post-qualitative scholars put critiques of positivism to work by generating "knowledge-making practices which are immanent, embodied, embedded, entangled and situated; which privilege indeterminacy, uncontainability, excess, multiplicity, and the happenstance" (Taylor 2017, p. 322).

When post-qualitative methodologies intervene in humanist logics of truth, positivism, and representationalism, the ontological structures that allow for a bodied-knowledge power ranking where Physiology is ascribed epistemic authority become unsettled, and "two-way traffic between the sciences and the humanities becomes thinkable" (Lather 2016, p. 126). This, I argue, crafts physio/logy as a conversant logic, resource, and/or accomplice with critical education research. MacLure (2013b) pushes this transdisciplinary collaborative impulse further,

arguing that "Science can no longer be thought, therefore, as the bad other or the big brother of qualitative research. . .a materialist ontology also challenges the status of qualitative research per se, since boundaries between qualitative and quantitative cannot stand" (p. 659). I hear Lather (2016) and MacLure arguing that as post-qualitative methodologies work to unsettle humanist epistemic habits, the margins of both physio/logy and post-qualitative research become unstable, and these knowledge-generating systems *must* converse differently. How then might physio/logy attune to the political consequences of thinking Physiologically in a methodological space where truth, positivism, and representationalism become impossible?

## Physio/logical Knowledges

I turn to Landecker's (2013) concept of "fat knowledge" (p. 498) to think with physiological knowledge(s). Landecker – a feminist science studies scholar of metabolism(s) – argues that "while many ask the question of what causes metabolic disorder. . .we should reverse the formulation and ask instead what metabolic disorder is causing; specifically, what are its knowledge effects? Might we speak of a *fat knowledge*?" (p. 498). Fat knowledges probe the consequences of fat(s); they wonder what fat(s) can do and trace how fat(s) matter. Extending fat knowledges with physio/logy, physio/logical knowledges effect the specific knowledge consequences of Physiology: they are the parcels of knowing flesh that are produced with matter and varied traditions of knowledge. Physio/logical knowledges refuse positivist logic because, rather than assuming physio/logies can be represented or that physio/logies can endure across temporal or bodied intervals (as Physiology does), physio/logical knowledges are concerned with local, specific, and partial epistemically lived consequences that emerge in moments where physio/logies happen/matter/unfold.

Physio/logical knowledges, as a feminist science studies concept potentially capable of joining post-qualitative methodologies aimed at unsettling humanist methodological customs, can participate in methodological practices in precise ways. When physio/logical knowledges are multiple, they are nuanced, situated, and active contributors in inquiry practices. St. Pierre (2013b) argues that in traditional humanist inquiry, "verification, truth claims, in logical positivism/empiricism depend on sense, brute data" (p. 223) and that post-qualitative research practices must not only refuse brute data but literally make the conditions that allow for brute data to happen impossible. Thinking physio/logical knowledges methodologically then, demands never allowing physio/logies to matter as brute data because orienting toward entanglement and consequence and infiltration refuses to give credence to any assertion of representational purity within Physiology. Doing post-qualitative methodologies with physio/logical knowledges, I might wonder how tuning to the expansive affective agencies of physio/logy might do the "difficult work of taking that given structure [Physiology] very seriously, so seriously that it has dismantled itself" (St. Pierre 2013b, p. 226). This requires that I generate a methodological playing field where inherited descriptions of Physiology become data so slippery that they elide epistemic hegemonies and refuse any prefigured methodological

designs. How might physio/logical knowledges participate in/as data, with methodologies concerned with situated knowledge effects, co-created consequences, nonrepresentational entanglements, and non-reproducible involutions (Holmes and Jones 2013; MacLure 2013a; McCoy 2012)?

## Doing: Documenting (and Seeing) with Physio/logical Knowledges

As Carly and I debated how we might get the damp muddy buddy to zip up in the documentation I am thinking with, I was struck by how inadequate my methodological tools for attending to this moment were. I needed both hands to tug at the zipper, making camera holding an impossibility. More importantly, I wondered how I might document with Carly's sock-clad feet as they became trapped against the sticky wet ankle holes of the muddy buddy, with my frozen fingers as they unhelpfully tried to straighten the twisted legs of the muddy buddy, and with Carly's frustrated full-body sighs as we realized that we had made a misjudgment somewhere in our thermal layers + waterproof outer shell estimation. I can attend to some palpable features of the moment (how hard my fingers need to pull against the muddy buddy to get it untwisted) but not others (the molecular muscle proteins that make these finger movements possible). I can try to recount all the variables at play when a body does not fit into a muddy buddy (it is too wet, too narrow, Carly's pants are too thick), but that fails to actually attend to how I might document with physio/logical knowledges. My practices of attending, the words I might use, and photographs are partial, limited methods of seeing and documenting. I understand the limits of my ability to document as cues that my frames of reference are limited, and instead of dwelling on this, I use these inadequacies to make my methods for noticing and recounting vulnerable *with* physio/logical knowledges.

For example, my description of this moment is highly visual. As Haraway (1988) elaborates, Euro-Western representationalism assumes a universalized visioning, where what has been made representable/ed must endure, via some epistemological coagulation (or, policing), in line with a "correct" hegemonic positivist sense of perception. Arguing that "it matters what thoughts think thoughts. It matters what knowledges know knowledges. It matters what relations relate relations. It matters what worlds world worlds. It matters what stories tell stories" (Haraway 2016, p. 35), Haraway dismantles vision's entanglements with representational habits. Haraway makes clear that any assumption of enduring representability is rooted in a refusal to attend to the partial politics of generating knowledge. From Haraway, I know that vision is partial because it privileges certain epistemic conventions for making meaning of what a human can perceive and how a human should perceive. How, though, does vision unfold partially with physio/logical knowledges?

Incorporating a physio/logical knowledge, I notice a too-small muddy buddy because of microscopic muscle proteins that make my extraocular muscles contract and focus my eye; when I "see" the zipper of Carly's muddy buddy, I am looking – generating knowledge – with six eye muscles (Moore et al. 2010). These muscles are nourished by cellular metabolic substrates mined from the food I consume, they are innervated and activated by ions, and they fatigue at a rate that I cannot dictate

(Martini et al. 2008). My gaze – my ability to document this moment with visual practices – is profoundly entangled with extraocular muscles, which are made perceptible, in one specific way, by a physio/logical knowledge. My documentation practices in this moment emerge at the nexus of my privileged Euro-Western ways of seeing (I am reasonably confident that no one will tell me that I did not "correctly" see a muddy buddy and a child), physio/logical knowledges, six real material eye muscles (and the metabolic cycles they rely on), and a post-qualitative attention toward engaging all of these entities as active constituents in my documentation methods. This raises a critical question for thinking post-qualitative interventions into documentation: when I describe what I see with physio/logical knowledges, what am I describing with?

My integration of physio/logies here does not serve to simply add a Physiological lens to Haraway's (1988), and post-qualitative, critiques of how vision, representationalism, and positivism form a nexus of epistemic hegemony. Documenting with eye muscle physio/logical knowledges, I am not asserting that my bounded, stable, correct vision practices are facilitated by what I am certain are six eye muscles that Physiology can entirely describe. Rather, I draw in physio/logical knowledges attuned to extraocular muscles as another layer for documenting with physio/logies. This allows me to complexify debates on truth and representationalism in documenting, as I pull in one physio/logical knowledge amid innumerable ways of knowing flesh and vision. I can rewrite my reflection, not to better "see" the moment but to make clear how my documentation practices with flesh are profoundly limited:
*I watch (as six muscles, activated by ions and sustained by calories, collaborate to focus my eyes that have been taught to see correctly in an epistemic tradition that privileges Euro-Western consistency) as Carly pushes (I write this as "push," because I felt the muddy buddy fabric rapidly tense against the force of her foot) her legs into her muddy buddy, which is still wet, from yesterday and asks for my help closing its waist-to-neck zipper.*

## Thread Two: Accountability, Answerability, and Euro-Western Physio/logies

Post-qualitative research is not an invitation to wildly experiment with generating knowledge for the sake of proliferation. When post-qualitative methodology becomes a generative ontological problem, Euro-Western methodological practices of decentering the human (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 2016) and dismantling humanist habits of thinking method as pre-articulable (Springgay and Truman 2017) become imbued with accountability. As St. Pierre (2013a) details, "deeply embedded in the new ontology are ethical concerns that acknowledge the destruction of the world humanism and its science projects encourage with their man/nature, human/nonhuman binaries" (p. 655). As such, I understand post-qualitative research as an uncertain, ethically complex (and contested/contestable) intervention into colonial academic and methodological customs.

## Answerabilities and Accountabilities

This post-qualitative push to make perceptible how methodological entanglements matter as accountabilities reverberates with feminist science studies' attention to the politics of Biological/Scientific knowledge generation. Haraway (1988) explicates situated knowledges as modes of becoming "answerable for what we learn how to see" (p. 538), where practices of crafting Sciences and empiricisms and making liveliness perceptible must always be able to be called to account. Taking up Haraway's call for accountability, feminist science studies scholars have differentially elaborated how estrogen receptors and protein otherness (Roy 2007), synthetic biology and poem-containing bacterial genomes (Roosth 2017), and vole genetics and molecular monogamy (Willey 2016) beget answerabilities capable of disrupting the epistemic hegemony of the Euro-Western Scientific canon. These feminist scientists take seriously critiques of the constructed partiality of Scientific experimentation, but rather than becoming stuck in this mode of critique, they delve into the complexities of imagining how these sciences might become accountable to the lived consequences they create. Haraway's situated knowledges and Willey's (2016) call to generate "nuanced and careful narratives about relationships between feminism, science, and the body [that] enable the work of producing newly accountable knowledges about the materiality of the naturecultural world" (p. 22) are methodological practices that center concerns of answerability and accountability.

These feminist science studies scholars enliven Lather's (2012) post-qualitative push to interrogate "what kind of science for what kind of politics" (p. 1021) by considering how, in working these sciences to account, expansive ontological grapplings, tentative engagements with material attunements, and vulnerable descriptions of imperfect methods might matter as methodologies for unsettling Scientific supremacy (Haraway 2016). Thinking physio/logy methodologically with post-qualitative education research, then, becomes a provocation of answerability. I must trace how putting physio/logical knowledges into conversation with post-qualitative methodologies might make Physiology answerable to the ethico-onto-epistemological demands of post-qualitative inquiry.

## Doing: Making Physiological Entanglements Public

How, then, does Physiology become answerable with post-qualitative methodologies in the muddy buddy moment? If thinking physio/logy methodologically entails a provocation of accountability, then I must first make public how Physiology informs my methodological habits in this moment. For example, I begin my written recollection by situating our bodies within a damp, chilly day. I could potentially think of environmental dampness and chilly air temperature from a variety of theoretical positions, with a variety of methodological orientations. I might trace how children move with weathering (Rooney 2016); I could interrogate how dominant Euro-Western developmental discourses position children as vulnerable and muddy buddies as adult-mandated protection against the elements; or I can follow the production lines of human and ecological capital that muddy buddies are made within. However, my emphasis on these weather conditions ties to a physio/logical

knowledge of cold virus Pathophysiology, which is built upon an understanding that immune system responses to common cold viruses are reduced below certain body temperatures (Foxman et al. 2015). Physiology taught me that chilly environments lower body temperatures and when bodies get too cold, they become more susceptible to catching viruses. Therefore, damp and brisk weather demands my attention.

Springgay and Truman (2017) detail how post-qualitative "methods are generated both as a means to produce, create, and materialize knowledge *and* practices of dispersal, collective sharing, and activation of knowledge *at the same time*" (p. 9). If my methodological practices concurrently activate and materialize knowledges, it matters that I make clear how my methodological intentions are informed by physio/logical knowledges. When I foreground chilly damp environmental conditions for physio/logical knowledge reasons, any modes of attention/methodological practices and knowledge/conclusions/reflections I might generate are entangled with the epistemic histories of Physiological inquiry. As Physiology is a tool of colonial epistemic hegemony, noticing how my methods for attuning to, and recounting, moments reassert Physiological concepts is an ethical tension, not a practical problem. When I make overt how physio/logical knowledges matter in my methodological practices in this moment, the realm of things I can attend to and produce knowledge with becomes specifically delineated: *Eight children, one educator, and two researchers are preparing to head outside to the forest on a chilly, damp morning and I am noticing that the air is chilly and damp because I am thinking with rhinovirus, immune responses, and body temperatures.*

Translating this into a question of answerability, what methodological practices are possible and impossible when I center a dampness intertwined with Physiology? Thinking physio/logical knowledges in a methodological space where any essentialist researcher subjectivity is profoundly decentered (Mazzei 2013b) means that methodologies must become answerable to different, unfamiliar conceptions of rigor, utility, and justice-to-come (Barad 2007). This raises questions of how I can make my attention to physio/logical knowledges answerable to multiple layers of consequence; noticing dampness because of cold viruses is not an apolitical decision. Because I put stock in a Physiological explanation of body temperature and cold viruses, I attended to dampness. Because I noticed dampness, I centered my focus on the material complexities of the dampness-preventing muddy buddy – what did I ignore? More importantly, what epistemic traditions am I insidiously or intentionally furthering? How can I become accountable for what I ignore or obscure (or destroy) when I focus on damp and chilly air because of a physio/logical knowledge?

Thinking physio/*logy* methodologically with post-qualitative research, I have detailed how the concept of physio/logical knowledges and an orientation toward answerability might matter with practices of disrupting inherited humanist ontological and research conceptions of truth, positivism, representationalism, and ethics. I turn now to wondering how the "physio" of *physio*/logy might unfold methodologically with post-qualitative research.

## (Posthumanist) Physio/logy

Questions of flesh and bodied materiality constantly complexify post-qualitative methodologies. When post-qualitative research foregrounds an intention to think bodies and lively bodied knowledges without humanisms, scholars frequently turn toward posthuman theorizations of life, knowledge, matter, and inquiry (Holmes and Jones 2016; Ivinson and Renold 2016; Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 2016). As Taylor (2016) elaborates, "posthumanist research practices offer a new ethics of engagement for education by including the nonhuman in questions about who matters and what counts in questioning the constitutive role played by humanist dominant paradigms, methodologies and methods" (p. 5). Posthuman methodological practices – which are plural, uncertain, and non-generalizable – actively confront inherited anthropocentric methodologies while attending to methodology as an ongoing process of worlding. These methodologies do not argue that all humans are (or should ever be) posthuman or that all bodies or political projects can or must invest equally in undoing humanisms. Rather, posthuman methodologies in education research are specific, tentative, and partial interventions into the Euro-Western modes of inquiry that bound bodies in method. They work, as Taylor and Hughes (2016) describe, at "unlearning" what Euro-Western ontologies have taught us (or me, or a Euro-Western settler) to know as real or rigorous, as flesh or bodies.

Where humanist methods might engage bodies interpretatively by asking how we can decode what a gesture, a racing pulse, or a flux of estrogen means, posthumanist inquiry might ask how muscles, heartbeats, and hormones do methodology. While humanist methodologies critique Physiology for its essentializing habits, posthuman methodologies might wonder how physio/logical knowledges can be lived at their edges, finding messy methodological joy in the moments when inherited epistemologies enter a space where stable methods, anthropocentric conceptions of subjectivity and knowing, and the inertness of flesh become impossible. How, then, can bodies, and the physio/logical knowledges that thread through flesh, matter with posthuman, post-qualitative education research practices?

## Thread Three: Bodies and Posthuman(ism) Physiologies

How can physio/logies unfold in bodies that we live as human(s), without humanisms? As I pour over the rich terrain of post-qualitative research, I wonder at the absence of direct confrontations of what it is to research with/in a body made of matters of physio/logies, physio/logical knowledges, and Physiology. Post-qualitative scholars do not shy from thinking bodied complexities methodologically: MacLure (2013b, 2016) attends to bodied interjections; Mazzei (2013b, 2016) together with Jackson (Mazzei and Jackson 2016) imagines voice beyond bounded humanist subjectivities; and data analysis practices (Holmes and Jones 2013; Mazzei 2013b; Lenz Taguchi 2013) become increasingly entangled with coughs, hair, and movement. Still, I notice that an explicit engagement with what might be required to research with a specific body while refusing to submerge

my/any body into the soup of branding it as Human has not yet percolated through the post-qualitative and posthuman research collective. How might we think and do specifically material-discursive bodies methodologically? How can we inquire with bodies made partially perceptible with matters of physio/logies?

## Expansively Specific Flesh

Feminist science studies scholars frequently inhabit bodies by foregrounding the complex intersections of flesh, human-centered politics, molecular material-discursive actants, and lively more-than-human worldings that infiltrate and organize bodies. Haraway (2016) shares stories of response-ability co-created with "conjugated estrogens [that] are about yoking molecules and species to each other in consequential ways" (p. 110). Alaimo (2010) illustrates how xenobiotic chemicals agentially invade the "normal" thresholds of human bodies until bodies become made in transcorporeal tangles. Foregrounding "membranes [that] are of various types – skin and flesh, prejudgements and symbolic imaginaries, habits and embodiments" (Tuana 2008, p. 200), Tuana (2008) articulates how bodies are made with/in complex contemporary worlds. Reading these more-than/posthuman feminist science studies bodied stories with education research raises questions of how I might intentionally disrupt methodological tendencies that maintain strict demarcations between bodies and outsides, human and nonhuman, while dipping into the knowledges that I generate while thinking within a body/bodies. I research with/in a specific, but not neatly materially bounded or ontologically pre-given or epistemologically authoritative, body: a body with muscles that carry Physiology textbooks that describe those muscles in ways that matter; a body with fat that is molecular, agential, and uncontainable *and* that becomes entangled with human-mediated microscopes, blood lipid levels, and the weight loss surgery advertisements that flood my Instagram; a white settler body that, owing to legacies of Enlightenment, is able to assume the privilege of being colonially human. What does this mean for how I can research with post-qualitative, posthuman methodologies?

## Doing: Fleshed Specificity as Data

Thinking bodies methodologically with post-qualitative research and matters of physio/logies, I argue, requires that we question how present, lively, consequential anatomical arrangements (for example, my right index finger as I type an "I" on my keyboard) become entangled with a specific physio/logical knowledge amid a particularly materialized matter of physio/logy to become of methodological concern. With MacLure (2011), thinking with bodies in post-qualitative research means paying attention to "the questions posted by the irruption of the body into the abstraction of meaning [that] are unanswerable. Yet they cannot be dismissed. They produce, I think we could say, a kind of stuttering of interpretation itself" (p. 1002). Reading MacLure alongside the expansive specificity with which feminist science studies scholars engage the body, perhaps doing physio/logies with post-qualitative methodologies means never confining physio/logical engagements to human-centered qualities, working instead to mobilize flesh that has been made human in ways that might potentially unsettle humanisms.

For example, in the muddy buddy moment, I describe how Carly and I figure out that we are not going to be able to convince the muddy buddy to zip up; it is too small, too wet, she is wearing too many other layers, and we are both shivering. My shivering fingers and shoulders made my muddy-buddy adjusting movements less adept than they might typically be, and Carly's shivering was tangling her body more with the muddy buddy. Methodologically, my recollection invests in humanist and Physiological practices of understanding the human body as a relatively bounded entity worthy of research attention. My retelling positions this moment as important because it unfolds around Carly's body and prioritizes methodological practices that trace why or how Carly's body and the muddy buddy are not congruent. I might ask what materials make fitting impossible and note how Carly's puffer vest and fleece pants interfere in our plans. With matters of physio/logies, I can expand upon what – germ-susceptible airways, legs, and fingers – does not fit in the muddy buddy. More importantly, I argue, thinking this moment with posthuman theorizing requires that we do not ignore Carly's body or my body or any of the matters of physio/logies that interject in this moment. Rather, thinking physio/logies with post-qualitative, post-human methodologies requires asking how physio/logies might contribute to building non-anthropocentric, non-positivist bodied methodologies. One such strategy for doing this is to ask how physio/logies foreground fleshed specificities, or the materially meaningful capabilities of being a researcher in a human body, as data.

Taking inspiration from MacLure's (2016) elaboration how bodied responses mark important interruptions in methodological practices, I focus on my shivering as a methodological intervention, as a bodied sense of data that participates in knowledge generation. However, in thinking about being a body entangled with physio/logies, I want to push further, with physio/logies, to unsettle the intactness of "shivering": what does shivering entail? With Physiology, shivering is a reflex (Tansey and Johnson 2015). One physio/logical knowledge knows shivering as an involuntary, very quick activation of muscles in response to an external stimulus of cold. Shivering, as such, is a fleshed specificity that my body as a matter of physio/logies researches with: my body instinctively shivers when it is cold. When a body shivers with physio/logies, skeletal muscles throughout the body perform small contractions to generate heat and raise a body temperature (Unglaub Silverthorn 2007): the body that I research with/in warms itself up by making its hands shake and its shoulders shudder inward. Another physio/logical knowledge situates the neural control of shivering in the brain and traces nerve pathways from thermoreceptor cells spread throughout the body to the brain and back to skeletal muscles (Tansey and Johnson 2015): my fleshed research tool, my body, does shivering as a complex communication between multiple microstructures I will never see or touch.

With physio/logical knowledges, shivering matters as a bodily interjection but not only because shivering interrupts my ability to grab a camera, write a field note, or pull a zipper. Taylor (2016) outlines how posthuman inquiry methods demand "plunging into particularity that collapses scale, structure and level – to (try to) see a world in a grain of sand, indeed – and a committed ethico-onto-epistemological venture to (try to) do away with the [neoliberal, Euro-Western] binaries" (p. 20). Shivering with physio/logies matters methodologically as a "plunge into

particularity." My shivers as I tug at the muddy buddy zipper are a specific pattern of muscled activity, my body's response to locally circulating damp chilly air, and demand work of nerves, muscles, thermoreceptors, ions, and cellular energy that live beneath my skin. Shivering is something a human body does, but thinking with posthuman physio/logies, perhaps shivering becomes expanded beyond a bounded body frame of reference: my situated flesh shivers, but it is not "Shivering" (the concept, the Physiological explanation) in and of itself that is of methodological import, it is how shivering unfolds with a cascade of cellular, environmental, and bodied actants. Shivering is, at once, fleshed, specific, and expansive. I revise my initial documentation: *Shivering (the work of a complex system of neural communication below my skin), I tug at the plasticy fabric (my fingers are tense, their skeletal muscles shaking rapidly to warm themselves up) to try to align the twisted zipper, Carly takes a big (shivery?) breath in and yanks at the zipper pull, and we quickly realize that this muddy buddy is not going to cooperate.*

## Doing Physio/logies Methodologically

In this chapter, I have argued that post-qualitative education research can engage with physio/logy, as constructed by feminist science studies, with generative, non-essentialist, answerable methodological practices. I have traced how putting the "logy" of physio/logy into conversation with post-qualitative research practices generates physio/logical knowledges as plural, uncertain, and more-than-representational epistemic practices concerned with answerability and accountability. With the "physio" of physio/logy, I have imagined how orienting toward expansively specific posthuman flesh might create space for thinking differently with how bodies happen with/in education research. At the heart of this discussion lies my contention that post-qualitative research *should* engage Physiology. Grappling with what might be required to think physio/logical knowledges with accountability matters because knitting physio/logies with post-qualitative intentions might contribute to the vast task of unsettling of humanist modes of inquiry while intensifying the methodological tensions of thinking with flesh. This, as I have detailed, carves space for generative multidisciplinary collaborations between feminist science studies and post-qualitative research, and – perhaps more importantly – marks one small, partial, tentative intervention into the colonial epistemic authority ascribed to Physiological Sciences and Euro-Western epistemic and methodological hegemonies.

Throughout this chapter, I have revisited a piece of documentation from a pedagogical inquiry research project. Working this documentation differently with three post-qualitative + feminist science studies methodological tangles, I have created a bundle of data capable of participating in different methodological and knowledge-generating conversations than in its original iteration. To conclude this chapter, I present this documentation as an exploration of how I might do physio/logies with post-qualitative methodologies:

Eight children, one educator, and two researchers are preparing to head outside to the forest and I am noticing that the air is chilly and damp because I am thinking with rhinovirus, immune responses, and body temperatures. As the educator hands each child their "muddy buddy", which is a one-piece waterproof rain suit, the child that I have been chatting with, Carly, asks me why she needs to wear a muddy buddy. "It is rainy outside, and I am worried that your body might get too cold without a muddy buddy", I answer. I watch (as six muscles, activated by ions and sustained by calories, collaborate to focus my eyes that have been taught to see correctly in an epistemic tradition that privileges Euro-Western consistency) as Carly pushes (I write this as "push", because I felt the muddy buddy fabric rapidly tense against the force of her foot) her legs into her muddy buddy, which is still wet from yesterday and asks for my help closing its waist-to-neck zipper. Shivering (the work of a complex system of neural communication below my skin), I tug at the plasticy fabric (my fingers are tense, their skeletal muscles shaking rapidly to warm themselves up) to try to align the twisted zipper, Carly takes a big (shivery?) breath in and yanks at the zipper pull, and we quickly realize that this muddy buddy is not going to cooperate. We cannot close this zipper.

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# Eco-queering US K-12 Environmental Curricula

# 44

## An Epistemic Conceptual Investigation into Queer Pessimisms Serving as a Pragmatics to Navigate Current Environmental Castrations

Peter Scaramuzzo

## Contents

### Abstract

In his 2015 State of the Union, President Barack Obama called climate change the "greatest threat to future generations." Conversely, President Donald Trump has cast doubt on the very existence of human-induced global climate change, thereby dismissing decades of empirically collected data by scientists around the world which, when aggregated, portray a warming world at and past the brink. Fierce global competition for dwindling resources is certain to increase as a result of the steady, irrevocable, and dramatic shifts in weather patterns which continue in causing catastrophic macro- and micro-[global] consequences, including consummately a loss of human life. While recommendations have been provided toward a mitigation of anthropogenic climate change through a re-envisioning of education standards, the United States' panoptic, neoliberal educational behemoth has not kept pace with the necessary standards and curricular changes that might substantively and authentically address the realities of a rapidly changing global climate for those who inevitably will act as this world's future stewards. Notable academic and recently deceased Chet Bowers has written extensively on this subject, suggesting in sum that such education is ostensibly a moral imperative requiring broad, interdisciplinary content inclusive of revised and radically upended modes of thinking, approach, and authentic feeling. An investigation

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into the burgeoning field of queer ecology offers an intersectional, discursive conceptual foundation toward the construction of such neo-curricula, which inherently and intentionally elides various disaggregated epistemological and ontological schools in unique, timely, and critical ways. The pessimistic epistemic postulations of queer scholars, such as Lee Edelman, provide insight catalyzing a dynamic and urgent thesis in curricular rethinking inclusive of queer eco-environmentalism as an integral, tenable tenet. This investigation seeks to negate optimistic, heteronormative conventions onto the urgent creation of eco-curricula and pedagogical practices in K-12 schools; the author contends that it is through a pedagogical recognition and embrace of discordant and othered ontological notions informed by queerness as a blurring space that an inspired salvation is possible. In this way, environmental optimism, as it is presented in current K-12 educational contexts, is a limited portrayal of current realities and, as such, assumes the position of a destructive pathology of deniability.

## Introduction

The United Nations convened the 24th conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (or COP24, for short) in Katowice, Poland, on December 3, 2018. This meeting of brilliant, driven minds is timely and seems serendipitous, in light of the scholarship I herein provide. This meeting also reveals the terrors every human being faces as humanity stretches to leave its solipsistic infancy. It cannot be ignored that we live in a period of global jeopardy resulting directly from human-induced climate change. Known *and* prioritized by, it seems, every nation other than the United States, words such as climate refugee or climate migrant exist in the global lexicon (Beeler 2018), whereas such knowledge of this epic crisis seems mitigated in the United States by a fascination in the media with US government infighting, the inane machinations of an unhinged president, and a false security grounded in an American exceptionalism that the vastness of the US geophysical space and US ingenuity will be those immutable pillars which cause the United States to weather the forces of climate change.

This solipsistic, isolationist sense of entitled ignorance finds no basis in an objective recognition of the realities of the world as is. In a report about the COP24, reporter Domonoske (2019) regards the severe realities of global climate change:

> David Attenborough, the naturalist and broadcaster, sounded a dire warning in a speech Monday to the U.N. climate conference in Poland. / Right now we are facing a man-made disaster of global scale, our greatest threat in thousands of years: Climate change, Attenborough said as the international climate conference got underway with talks on how

countries will implement the 2015 Paris Agreement limiting carbon emissions. / "If we don't take action, the collapse of our civilizations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon." (Domonoske 2019, para. 1–3)

One can stand to see the rain outside of one's window and still choose not to take an umbrella; this choice does not stop the rain which continues unabated irrespective of the subject's choice. The conceit, appropriate as it may be given the weather imagery, is not entirely accurate. Our government representatives have known what science has incontrovertibly presented for some time: humans induce climate change, and climate change will have innumerable repercussions on human life and culture. Previous President Barack Obama called climate change the "greatest threat to future generations" (Obama 2015).

America is a culture characterized historically and in many of the textbooks handed to our students in K-12 by themes such as exceptionalism, innovation, and optimism. These themes footnote or completely ignore the underbelly which has fueled these privileged positions – slavery, segregation, discrimination, marginalization, color blindness, and persecution, among many, many others. These ignored or de-emphasized or completely rewritten realities face, as does climate change, an onslaught of a national deniability and politicization by contingents seeking to reinforce institutionalized systems of oppression and control through regulations which hinder and suppress accurate and vastly diverse knowledge(s). Climate change and the realities of enviro-cultural degradations are no exception. Obama's ominous emphasis becomes masked by American optimism embodied in the progressive living effigy of the liberal golden boy, Obama himself, and, in quintessentially Shakespearean terms as though the unfolding political pathos were happening on the Globe stage itself, this optimism is counterbalanced by and through the incessant fearmongering and purveying of a culture of ignorance in Obama's successor and foil, President Donald Trump, whose administrative policies and decisions have worked to dismantle Obama-era regulations to enact "meaningful" change in combatting climate change (Holden 2018).

Were Obama's regulatory advancements meaningful when juxtaposed against the science of climate change and the concurrent dedications of other nations? In Obama existed a kind of wonderful optimism, whereas President Trump provides a kind of pessimism in rejecting the facts of climate science themselves through his administration's regulatory policies:

> The Trump administration's withdrawal from the Paris agreement – though not yet in effect – has left a leadership void that others are scrambling to fill and expanded the opportunity for China to shape global policy. Meanwhile, Brazil's new government is signaling a similar shift away from climate change goals. (Domonoske 2019, para. 14)

The rejection of climate change by the Trump administration through incoherent questions of its legitimacy is an affront to the liberal agenda itself. Liberal constituencies tend to recognize, theoretically, the looming dangerous impacts of human-caused climate change on humanity's way of life; the caveat to this recognition is an inherent hope for many that defies pragmatism. It is an idea that somehow recycling

will make a real and tangible impact in changing the inevitable ecological course of the planet. It is a caveat that is arguably ontologically suggestive that an American way of life can be maintained while also conquering climate change victoriously. President Trump's denials of climate change make him, regrettably, admittedly, a kind of antihero providing for the abductive thought inquiry explored within this chapter. The irony of this is not lost on the author.

The optimism imbued in the liberal progressive agenda representative for many in the figure of Obama is as hurtful to a resolved planning to mitigate the realities of climate change as the pessimistic incoherencies of Trump. Trump's presidency forces the liberal, progressive, and scientifically rational conglomerate to move a fantastical complacency toward a reification of knowledge in order to justify the need for substantive climate reforms.

But this advancement of knowledge must lead to a conclusively different response in tenor and fact. Efforts to effect real change in combatting the ecological crises of our time have, as a reality, barely made a dent:

> In the daunting math of climate action, individual choices and government policies aren't adding up. / Solar panels are being nailed to rooftops, colossal wind turbines bestride the plains and oceans, and a million electric vehicles are on U.S. roads – and it isn't enough. Even if the world did an unlikely series of about-faces – halting deforestation, going vegetarian, paying $50 a ton carbon taxes, boosting energy efficiency, doubling care mileage, and more – it would not be enough. (Mufson 2018, para. 1–2)

This is a point with which the majority of optimistic Americans who find an exceptionalist pride in America's history of ingenuity and innovation will, invariably, take issue. Quite simply, folks do not want to hear this. To do so surfaces a hermeneutic of suspicion which relationally implicates self against the global geophysical, political, historical, and epistemic context(s); this creates an insurmountable reflexive moral and ethical conversation that, in scope, cannot be reconciled with any ease.

Educators inherently cling to notions of optimistic futurity: educating children is by definition intrinsically tied epistemic beliefs in the continuation and persistence of humanity. Yet, the lack of urgency in creating fundamental shifts in human consciousness to exact systemic changes which would increase the likelihood of humanity's collective survival and, thus, its futurity reveals a diametric opposition to the underlying epistemic purposes of education: humans have not changed and, in doing so, catalyzed their assured obfuscation. The necessary dramatic shifts that might provide any sense of survivability given the continued daily business-as-usual [at least, in the United States] suggest that the previous statement, when juxtaposed against the data presented at COP24, is in no way hyperbolic. Perhaps, Obama knew this. Perhaps, the elite 1% knows this. The escapism of American culture helps us to weather this epiphanic realization through a failed confrontation of it.

As a species, we will cease. Humanity's light is extinguished. But can curricula and practices be developed to address this? Curriculum studies theorist Patrick Slattery (2013) suggests affirmatively that, "[t]his is a dramatic time to analyze the

interdisciplinary connections among economics, ecology, social upheaval, account-ability, and curriculum" (p. 10) in order to make meaningful change tenable.

Queer theoretical perspectives, which fundamentally blur Western enlightenment bifurcations that Baradian new materialist ontological perspectives convict as the epistemic, philosophical culprits leading to the current ecological crisis of surviv-ability (Coole and Frost 2010), provide a dialectic lens through which new curricular studies perspectives may be developed, thus impugning innovative and discursive developments of curricula and practices that might, if propagated, defeat the omni-present escapist Disneyesque optimisms which, being pervasively replete in society, prevent our societal ability to successfully ensure resolution to the ecological crises we currently face. A brief investigation into queer theoretical perspectives, which epistemologically blur the inherently pessimistic notions of death and anti-utopian antifuturisms, provides a guiding blueprint in developing substantively educative K-12 curricula and practices promoting critical thought processes that, if implemented, has the potential to traverse the psychosocial constructivist, habitual barriers that remand humanity to its current self-induced eco-fate. In this way, antifuturism and an embrace of death presented through queer theory in fact have the contradictory product of salvation. In his report on COP24, Mufson echoes Yale University's William Nordhaus, stating that:

> [...] the Yale University professor who just won the Nobel Prize for his work on the economics of climate change, recently described his outlook: "I never use the word 'pessimism'; I always use the word 'realism,' but I'd say it's a kind of dark realism today." (para. 5)

Enviro-cultural curriculum studies demand a queered pedagogy explicitly grounded in an embrace of this sort of dark realism.

For the purpose of this investigation, historical reviews of curricular trends and epistemologies, such as behaviorism or social constructivism, will not be provided in order to prioritize the queer theoretical lens through which the investigation is conducted. However, a brief pedagogical application is here presented in order to connect the development of a queered dark realist perspective to the subsequent theoretical arguments. It can be said that this proposed reform of curricula is a form of social justice praxis in its own right (Freire 1971). Noted feminist curriculum scholar, Michalinos Zembylas (2015), observes:

> In recent years, there has been a recurring theme in social justice education that students' experiences of 'discomfort' as well as 'pain and suffering' are pedagogically valuable in learning about the victims of injustice. (Berlak 2004; Boler 1999, 2004; Boler and Zembylas 2003; Faulkner and Crowhurst 2014; Kishimoto and Mwangi 2009; Mintz 2013; Zembylas and McGlynn 2012) (p. 1)

It is a syllogistic truism that humans struggle to change their collective behaviors. Such changes, such "growing pains," provide a sense of disruption and discomfort. Zembylas proposes that a pedagogy of discomfort, one which provides a reflexive

discord, provides the fundamental basis for actual and intrinsic transformative learning. Zembylas (2015) expounds:

> More specifically, it has been argued that a pedagogy of discomfort (Boler 1999; Boler and Zembylas 2003; Zembylas and Boler 2002) is a teaching practice that can encourage students to move outside their 'comfort zones' and question their 'cherished beliefs and assumptions' (Boler 1999, 176). This approach is grounded in the assumption that discomforting feelings are important in challenging dominant beliefs, social habits and normative practices that sustain social inequities and they create openings for individual and social transformation. (p. 1)

The dark realist pedagogy revealed through queer theory and herein proposed finds its epistemic justifications within notions of pedagogies of discomfort. Indeed, Zembylas (2015) asserts that is an ethical responsibility for educators to push students into unsettled zones of discomfort in order to purposefully and intentionally advance transformative learning consistent with Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory.

Slattery (2013), in proposing an application of a postmodern theoretical perspective onto curriculum development (of which the propositions made here arguably are), writes:

> [curriculum is] globally interdependent ecological perspective that begins by examining the crisis of survivability. Postmodern educators understand destruction of the ecosphere and the human psyche are interrelated. Nonviolence will emerge only when the scientific bifurcations that have been ingrained in the modern consciousness since the Enlightenment are replaced by postmodern holistic philosophy. (p. 211)

The bifurcations of the enlightenment become self-reinforcing mechanisms of repression and control, conceptualizations explored extensively by thinker Michele Foucault in his theses on the birth of the prison, governmentality, and the repressive hypothesis. These bifurcations stigmatize nonnormative modes of existing through an institutionalized normalization of the other, of the radical, wherein the other becomes palatable to the masses, where palatable here intimates a service of the other in reifying a dominant heteronormative paradigm. Gay marriage is a prime example of this. Gay marriage has reinforced the conceptualization that gayness is socially acceptable because it conforms to the institutional blueprint traditional heterosexual marriage mandates as proper:

> [...] [Judith] Butler and [Tim] Dean find themselves on the same page: marriage, according to both, represents a narrow political agenda that merely represents a narrow political agenda that merely reproduces the core values of normative society, including its privileging of one relational modality (marriage) over all others. (Ruti 2017, p. 13)

This "privileging" is indicative of the literal and epistemic problematic nature the institutional system of marriage presents. Ruti (2017) expands this notion:

Ironically, it is because the lgbtq movement has managed to make gays and lesbians seem "just like" straight people, eager to endorse the family values of married monogamy, that it has made such tremendous political strides. Essentially, the gay and lesbian subject has been sanitized, stripped of its disturbing "otherness," in order to make it more palatable to straight society. For many queer critics, this is a shortsighted victory that undermines more radical efforts to gain social justice. (Ruti 2017, p. 14)

There is no necessity for the queer to engage in any process of heteronormatizing conformism, and, in fact, there is ample justification for the queer to embrace and further anti-conformist and even anarchic life practices in light of the overarching investigations of this chapter. First, and quite literally, marriage is a system designed to provoke and regulate propagation; yet, it can be argued that population increases are attributable to the majority of the ecological issues humanity now faces. Here, while marriage is perceived as a symbol of expansion and growth – inherently optimistic tenets – it, as a regulatory process, as a governmentally and explicitly encouraged life-affirming event, lays the contradictory groundwork for humanity's collective death. Second, this privileging proselytizes and stigmatizes the nonconformist queer, the gay, or the lesbian who chooses not to engage the institution of marriage. It is this queer, the queer who lives life not according to the advancement of a species toward a subsumed futurity, that, in choosing anti-marriage, in choosing anti-institution, actually works to save the species, both literally and epistemically representationally.

Ruti (2017) defines the system with which the nonconformist, antifuturist queer challenges:

[. . .] I want to reemphasize that the system under critique is fairly well defined: when queer theorists condemn the so-called system, it is neoliberal capitalism—and its biopolitical tools of control, such as marriage—specifically that they are attacking. As I explained in the introduction, they question the ideals of success that neoliberal capitalism promotes as the route to happiness, pointing out that these ideals blind us to structural inequalities such as poverty, racism, sexism, and homophobia which make it impossible for some people to succeed no matter how hard they try. (Ruti 2017, p. 16)

Ruti suggests that there is merit in an opting out by the queer choosing nonnormative journeys of existence. Ruti cites queer theorist, Lauren Berlant, to exemplify the problematic nature of optimism in favor of the queer opt-out:

Berlant defines "cruel optimism" as the stubborn, irrational belief that social arrangements and ways of life that hurt us will eventually pay off and make us happy, specifying that "a relation of cruel optimism" exists when something we desire is in reality an impediment to our flourishing (2011, 1). That is, cruel optimism entails the hope that our relentless efforts (say, our efforts to fit into neoliberal society) will bring us the love, intimacy, success, security, harmony, or financial reward—in sum, the good life—we crave even when they are extremely unlike to dos. Berlant explains that what is cruel about such hope, and about the fantasies it spawns, is that we might not be able to endure the loss of such fantasies even when they threaten our well-being. This is because the continuity of our fantasies –of our psychic and affective attachment to various scenes of desire—sustains our sense of

subjective continuity, our sense of "what it means to keep on living on and to look forward to being in the world" (24). (Ruti 2017, p. 16)

Hope, therefore, a boundless, ceaseless, and truly unwarranted hope, which society institutionally promotes, becomes an impediment to enact pragmatic, intellectually sound rationalisms toward survivability and sustainability. The status quo of hope, when queered, leads to society's death.

The queer, the radical, the nonnormative other, in pursuing life on the social fringes and outside hope-representing institutions, such as marriage, raises the antithetical notion of death, further causing stigma and disrepute by the normals of society whose corrective normalcies become reviled causes of our entire demise. Queer theorist Lee Edelman (1998, 2003), in proposing the formulation of a queer otherness in the *sinthomosexual*, exacts a notion of a death drive, a largely metaphorical embrace and conquering of death through queer sex and queer sex acts. It is an idea reminiscent of Leo Bersani's postulations of queer fucking of anuses as emblematic of the drive toward [defeating] death given the biological makeup of humans – that the rectum is a prime space where waste, representative of that which does not nourish and give life to the body, is excreted and excised, thereby indulging socially preferred perceptions of the body's more pure state of existence, untainted by waste and death. Insertion of one's phallus – either as a biological attachment or as an object owned by the inserter – is a kind of challenge to that process, a kind of disruptor which blurs the ontological space figuratively represented in the rectum through the convergences of life, through semen resulting from orgasm there, and through death, in the form of the waste excreted there. This precludes death; it challenges it. It is such a queer that, in choosing to engage non-heteronormative visions of life, deconstructs normativity through a greater reminder of man's mortality in an unconscious surfacing of death as real.

Bersani, in speaking to the thought-provoking film L'Humanite (1999), furthers a queering of the body as a space that resonates with deconstructions of bifurcations in order to advance a pedagogy of dark realism:

> Tongues and penises, navigating within mouths, vaginas, and anuses become surrogates for thinking, desiring, even loving selves. By way of these penetrating and penetrated organs, lovers become the container and the contained, realizing a oneness very different from the sublimated spirituality celebrated in cultural myths of amorous union. [...] Pharaon reaches with him. There is a penetration that seeks to destroy (to consecrate the penetrator's aloneness) and one that aims to lose its destructive power by being enveloped (and dephallicized) by the encompassing liquid warmth of an inner space no shared with the other. Joseph embodies the terrifying weakness of phallic resolve. [...] Having tasted Joseph within Joseph's mouth, Pharaon no longer needs him. Unspeakably repelled by what he has now taken into his own body, he roughly throws Joseph back into the chair from which had lifted him. [...] Pharaon now *is* Joseph's guilt. (Bersani 2018, p. 115)

Here, the image of the massive planet crashing into earth in the von Trier (2011) film, *Melancholia*, is recalled against new materialism, an appropriate connection:

[Karen] Barad's new materialism and queer theory also share a desire for radical openness. As seminal queer theorist Anna-Marie Jagose (1996) writes, "queer is always... a site of permanent becomes; 'utopic in its negativity, queer theory curves endless toward a realization that its realization remains impossible'". Queer theory is itself an open-endedness, manifest in how it constantly avoids capture by definition, with edges that are perpetually reconfiguring. As soon as an edge is traced [...] this boundary can dissolve in the next application of queer theory where queer identities are absent. (Allen 2018, p. 29)

New or neo-materialism examines all objects in the universe through an atomic space, seeing the interactions and interrelationships of all living and nonliving, animate and inanimate objects in order to problematize ontologies of self and subjectivity. The environment and the human being are no different in this way. The destruction of earth as seen from the serene, ecologically rich space of the elite property in *Melancholia*, in consideration of sex as a penetrative destructive act designed to contemporaneously overcome death, implicates a comedic karmic reversal of environment ahumanistically *fucking* the world and every human on it. It is a moment of ecological revenge, in some ways. *Melancholia*, the planet which crashes into the earth, is, in effect, Pharaon embracing Joseph, where Joseph is the anarchic other who defied and defiled life by enacting death in the form of murder. Pharaon seeks to experience this conquering of death. *Melancholia*, as a planetary "top," bottoms out the earth and fucks it hard. Queer dialogic analysis of such life-death interactions, wherein humans are de-centered relative to the ecological space they happen to inhabit, humbles the human; mankind is no longer the quintessence of life but another part of the environment, one that can and does die, and one which should live *with* death, not against it, and certainly not ignoring of it.

Melancholia's crash into earth recalls the jouissance that Edelman (1998) echoes as the end of the queer being:

Choosing to stand, as many of us do, outside the cycles of reproduction, choosing to stand, as we also do, by the side of those living and dying each day with the complications of AIDS, we know the deception of the societal lie that endlessly looks toward a future whose promise is always a day away. We can tell ourselves that with patience, with work, with generous contributions to lobbying groups, or generous participation in activist groups, or generous doses of political savvy and electoral sophistication, the future will hold a place for us? A place at the political table that won't have to come, as it were, at the cost of our place in the bed, or the bar, or the baths. But there are no queers in that future as there can be no future for queers. The future itself is kid stuff, reborn each day to postpone the encounter with the gap, the void, the emptiness, that gapes like a grave from within the lifeless mechanism of the signifier that animates the subject by spinning the gossamer web of the social reality. (p. 29)

The excited state that is purported as the end of the queer is, in actuality, celebratory in its rejection of the heteronormative breeder future that presupposes a person's life to that person's regulated ability to reproduce. Jouissance, then, seen as death, seen as an affront to life, is a contemporaneous celebration of life through a conceptual perpetuation of life in the form of queered sexuality and queered sex acts.

A queered pedagogy of dark realism confronts this reality of death – in fact, encourages it among students – and, in so doing, dismantles and sarcastically

satirizes those false constructions of optimism that lead to a childish conceptualization of the grave ecological crisis and complacent actions in the laudable forms of civic mindedness through actions such as recycling, which, again, in the grand scheme, does not make a dent. Nicole Seymour posits an irreverence that leads to learned takeaways with respect to queering ecology that resonates here:

> The U.S. Senate—noticeably late to climate action in general, compared to its counterparts elsewhere in the world—approved a resolution in early 2015 declaring that "Climate change is real and not a hoax"; fifteen minutes later, they rejected a second resolution stating that "climate change is real and caused by humans" (Goldenberg 2015). Meanwhile, scientists overwhelmingly agree that climate change is anthropogenic, and historic heat waves, storms, and blizzards continuously plague reigns across the planet. (Seymour 2018, p. 1)

Reflected in Seymour's recounting, a queered pedagogy of dark realism invariably points to the sanctimonious stupidity of humans as stewards of self and environment, in which the two are not mutually exclusive. It provokes a questioning that asks students to critically examine humanity's – and, more to the point, Americans' – way of life in order to ascertain those shifts that might actually make a dent. It illustrates those ways the repression of sex, presented by Foucault in his volumes on *The History of Sexuality*, and the lust for power, which results within the subject now compelled to pursue that which is repressed, are connected to environmental degradation. It is a meta-critical pedagogy here proposed to compel confrontation of the space we all now exist in that we find ourselves, in living life as usual, ignore. Indeed, it is a pedagogy that fundamentally celebrates the negative. The late queer theorist, José Esteban Muñoz, relates Paulo Virno's theory of negating negation in an ironic [given this chapter's contentions, absolutely appropriate and aligned] support of queer futurity and utopianism:

> [Paulo] Virno's theory of the negation of negation productively lines up with Shoshana Felman's theory of radical negativity: "Radical negativity (or saying 'no') belongs neither to negation, nor to opposition nor to correction ('normalization'), nor to contradiction (of positive and negative, normal and abnormal, 'serious' and 'unserious,' 'clarity' and 'obscurity')—it belongs precisely to scandal: to the scandal of their nonopposition. Again, my argument with the celebration of negation in antirelational queer critique is its participation in what can only be seen as a binary logic of opposition. Radical negativity, like the negation of negation, offers us a mode of understanding negativity that is starkly different from the version of the negative proposed by the queer antirelationist. Here the negative becomes the resource for a certain mode of queer utopianism." (Muñoz 2009, pp. 12–13)

Muñoz epitomizes here a fundamental premise of the praxis conveyed through a pedagogy of dark realism by offering a vision of queer utopianism: a hopefulness that relationally incorporates recognitions of the unfavored, the ill-repute, and the negative.

As a final remark, the author begs the reader to forgive the use of the first person here for the purposes of establishing a final positionality: I concluded writing of this chapter while traveling abroad in Australia where I was fortunate enough to meet many anti-conformist queer leather boys. These queer men maintained a critical view of the world, of the environment, and of stewardship reminiscent of the pedagogical

shifts proposed in this chapter; they recognized the fundamental ways in which challenging the dominant paradigmatic norms are healthy and create better sociocultural and ecological spaces for all. I think of the work of Chet Bowers, whose scholarship fundamentally called for such eye-opening, "real talk" shifts in education:

> Helping students acquire an historical understanding of cultural/ecological relationships, including the metaphorical frameworks that influenced critically important cultural developments in the past should now be seen as an essential responsibility of teachers. Helping students understand how the dominant culture developed along the pathway of basing progress on the degradation of natural systems is only half of the teacher's curricular responsibility. The other half confront teachers with even greater challenges because it involves the identification of practices and patterns both in the dominant and marginalized culture groups that are ecologically sustainable. (Bowers 1995, p. 133)

## Conclusion

In this investigation, I have proposed a type of queered pedagogy that presents a confrontation with the negative as reality and as necessary when thinking about enviro-cultural studies in education. Teachers at every level should not "sugarcoat" the present and future realities which all humans will navigate. Teachers must feel empowered, justified, and compelled to present to their students teaching objectives and experiences that acknowledge the looming cataclysmic changes we will inevitably face. Teachers must say to their students, "The world as it is will not be the same world in which you exist." Failure to present this realism is inherently irresponsible. Before teachers can move their students toward problem-solving global climate issues, the problem as it actually exists must be taught. As a planet, we have passed the threshold of combatting global climate change, irrespective of one's beliefs regarding the overall cause; we must now prepare our students for the fallout and aftermath that will be the new normal.

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# Contemplating Philosophy of Education

## 45

## A Canadian West Coast Perspective

Heesoon Bai, Muga Miyakawa, Timothy Tiryaki, and Meena Mangat

## Contents

**Abstract**

Starting with an assertion that philosophy's prerogative is to propose alternative worldviews and values, in addition to the basic interpretation of philosophy as an inquiry into the myriad dimensions of human experience, this paper proffers a view of education that centers the cultivation of a more balanced and integrated humanity in resistance to the increasing instrumental forces in modern societies that fragment, alienate, and therefore dehumanize. Distinguishing between *education* (primarily concerned with the human *being*) and *instruction* (primarily concerned with the human *having*), this paper is primarily concerned with education, and it proposes a contemplative mode of intersubjective relationality between the self and self-other. A variety of critical observational and interpretive notes are offered on major concepts that animate contemporary discourses in education, such as dualisms, imbalance and fragmentation, dislocation and alienation, progress, and existential crisis, all refracted through the prism of the most recent contemplative turn in education. The chapter ends with a curated dialogue among the four authors of this chapter, all of whom share how they have come to

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situate themselves in the intersection of philosophy of education and contemplative inquiry and how they see the nature of contribution that the latter makes to the former.

## Philosophers (of Education) Wanted

Since time immemorial, it has been philosophy's job to propose alternative worldviews and values. That is how, for instance, the Age of Enlightenment (sometimes known as the Age of Reason), which championed reason as the source of authority, came about. The same goes for modernism and postmodernism, and whatever else comes next. Of course, proposing alternative worldviews and values that go contrary to what is conventional and normal is a risky business, and many of our preeminent philosophers perished for the cause. One only has to recall Socrates drinking hemlock. Such aside, many of us in philosophy of education, too, may rightly see our job along similar lines: proposing alternative worldviews and values concerning education. We as educators are, however, not just concerned with *proposing* alternative views and values but with showing and helping people how to *enact and live* them. To that end, we initiate those who come to work with us in the cultivation of personhood and practices that support the cultivation. We will come back to this important point about cultivation, but first, let's probe a little more into philosophers' job description.

What is it about philosophers that they should end up with a job description that says that they are to challenge normal or conventional worldviews and values? It is easy enough to guess. Philosophers are inclined, as well as trained, to have an acute understanding that there is no such thing as *reality independent of* human conception and perception (Bai 2013). What this means is that by changing our conceptual frameworks and apparatus, via using new or repurposed language and creating new concepts (Deleuze and Guattari 1996), we can and do change our reality. While mainstream culture is busy implanting in human minds societal norms (*how it is*), philosophers work by showing different possibilities of seeing and relating to reality (*how else it can be*). In this respect, Karl Marx was wrong in saying: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it" (Marx 1976). Interpretations can and do change the world. However, we concede that Karl Marx may be halfway right. The philosophers who think up transformative interpretations may not be the ones who actually enact the changes. Making changes in the world requires people who can embody and enact the changes. And this is where philosophy of education comes in, to which we will return later.

For now, we wish to get back to the point about philosophers changing the world by changing conceptual frameworks. But, specifically, what changes are we proposing? What changes do we think the world needs today? Of course, the answers or responses are up for debate and dialogue: it is not as though all philosophers would agree upon one specific kind of change we need. Diversity is a sure sign of health for a living system, and philosophy is a living system, too. Healthy philosophy entertains diverse suggestions for change. The authors of this paper, as a group of educational philosophers, are putting forth one such change proposal, below, with some justifications.

## What Went Wrong with "Progress"?

There is no debate that historically, philosophy has been considered to be a supremely rational activity. This is particularly true of modern philosophy since the Age of Enlightenment. The guiding ethos behind rationalism is faith in humans' ability to think and act for themselves. We humans are not helpless in the face of life's vicissitudes, and we don't need to run like a child for protection and help to external sources of power, traditionally conceived of as supernatural, such as God or gods, or whatever the equivalents are to modern minds. Of course, it's developmentally appropriate for a child to run to his or her parents for protection and help and for parents to provide these to support the child to feel secure and empowered, as well as to give wise counsel so the child may learn ways to handle life's complex challenges. However, if we see adults unable to think for themselves and act wisely, we rightly suspect that the human development or maturing we speak of here has not taken place in an optimal way. The thrust behind Western Enlightenment thought is that we humans are endowed with rational faculties that can be developed and put to work in meeting life's complex challenges and the suffering that results from them. In short, we humans can affect solutions to our own problems through our power of intellect: we can help ourselves. The Age of Enlightenment, championed by philosophers such as Diderot, Hume, Kant, Rousseau, and Voltaire, thus celebrated humanity's self-power and self-determination. All this is a most laudable accomplishment for humanity on the path of maturity.

Sociologically speaking, the Age of Enlightenment gave birth to, or aligned with, the period known to us as *modernity* that showed deep faith in and insisted on self-powered "progress" in all spheres of human affairs, especially in economic institutions (Giddens 1998). Progress became the key word that inspired and motivated modern humanity. Reason and logic, combined with the power of science and technology, would usher in a new age of optimism that would secure material advancement through humans' ability to dominate and control the natural environment and its myriad of beings, as well as predict the future (Borgmann 1993). However, all has not been well with the state of humanity.

What went wrong? Postmodernism, which followed modernism, revealed that humans' triple ability to dominate, to control, and to predict did not just result in unalloyed progress but unleashed tremendously destructive powers in both the

human and more-than-human spheres (Nature). Today, amidst the glory of material advancement, we are witnessing an unprecedented level of gory destruction all around us. The biggest destruction has been inflicted on our physical environment, the biosphere. Consider the catastrophic rate of species extinction (The Extinction Crisis 2018). Consider the disastrous level of biomass lost due to deforestation in the Amazon Basin (Exbrayat et al. 2017). The list is long and endless. In sum, we are poisoning our air and soil, fouling the ocean, and destroying the forests – the lungs of the earth. In short, we are, with our power to transform our material spheres, destroying the only home we have: the earth. Is this progress or not? Postmodernism had signaled deep disillusionment with modernity's progress discourse, and now we are supposed to have entered a new era of post-postmodernism. (There has been a loud and persistent death knell for postmodernism (PoMo) beginning in the late 1980s. What comes after postmodernism? Many possibilities have been put forward: post-postmodernism, new materialism, metamodernism, transnationality, and so on. The list is long and the outcome inconclusive. To the authors of this chapter, it is not even entirely certain that postmodernism is dead.) What comes after postmodernism? After the disillusionment and despair, where do we go?

Driven by despair, many may feel the impulse to be self-destructive: "Down with progress! Let's just blow it all up. There's no future for humanity, anyways." Such suicidal impulses are understandable but not advisable. The material advancement gained through science and rationality is precious to humanity and needs to be safeguarded. However, what seems to be vitally missing from the progress agenda that we inherited from modernity is a philosophy of mutuality and participation (Skolimowski 1995). Humans' respectful participation in and collaboration with otherness, especially with the more-than-human other, is not part of the master narrative of progress engineered by Reason and Science. On the contrary, the master narrative proclaimed humans' privileged position and birthright to dominate, control, dictate, coerce, exploit, and, if necessary, destroy whoever or whatever is circumstantially and contextually considered the "other" and is in the way. Reason, science, and technology have all become the tools and vehicles of domination and control, and by and large the consequences have been devastating, as aforementioned. The lofty dream of progress has turned into a veritable nightmare.

## The Contemplative Turn in Philosophy of Education

We the authors of this paper propose a worldview that is an alternative to the master "progress" narrative of human domination and control. Such narratives are necessarily based on a whole slew of binaries and their internal logic of oppression in which one side of the binary is privileged over the other: the self-other duality, perceiver-perceived duality, mind-matter duality, intellect-affect duality, fact-value duality, and so on. If we were to dissolve the duality and oppression inherent in the binaries, how different would the world be? Of course, our proposal for change is not original at all. On the contrary, much has been written and spoken about such a change throughout human history. For example, many wisdom traditions around the

world contain similar proposals. Buddhism and Daoism have proposed non-duality, non-linearity, simultaneity, mutuality, interdependence, and so on. The same goes for contemporary disciplines imbued with ecological understanding as well as new sciences, such as quantum physics, complexity theory, and chaos theory. What these traditions all point to is interdependence through and through, governing the phenomenal world. The Buddhist philosophy of *dependent co-origination* (*Pratityasamutpada*) is a good example; all that existentially constitutes the world is so thoroughly interdependent and interpenetrating to the point that nothing arises singularly, independently: everything co-constitutes and co-arises (Macy 1991). This understanding further generates the radical idea of "no-self" (*anatta*): that is, no pre-given and fixed or unchanging self exists but only the contingent self that is perpetually made and remade. The worldview that is supported by mutual causality and "no-self" is contrary to the conventional dualities of self-other, human-nonhuman, and linear causality: in short, all that has been sponsoring the master narrative of human progress through domination and control, leading to exploitation.

As educators, we know that it is one thing to shout out what should or needs to be done and another to actually grow our capacity to be, see, and do these things differently. That is, telling people to have a better interpretation of the world does not accomplish the change. But educating people so that they will see and relate to the world differently, feel differently about themselves, and act differently will change the world. To realize a different world, we need human beings who can interpret the world differently. In our case, the "different" is along the line of self-other continuity or non-duality, mutuality, participation, collaboration, and the like that we have outlined above. It turns out this quest for a different perception of the world coincides with that of Goethean science that asks the leading question: How do we grow "new organs of perception" (Robbins 2005, p. 113) with which to see and feel the world that way? This is where contemplative inquiry and practice come in.

Recall the previously mentioned dominance of reason and logic in philosophy and philosophy of education. The contemplative turn in education (Gunnlaugson et al. 2014) presents a challenge to the dominant discourse of self-other dualism (wherein self is privileged over other), of mind-body dualism, and of reason-passion or intellect-affect dualism. However, this challenge is not a hostile attempt to overthrow the dominant and privileged part of reason or intellect. Rather, it is in the nature of the contemplative consciousness to seek wholeness and balance, and thus educating our selves to inhabit this contemplative mode of being would result in integrating the functions in human capacity that have been differentiated in dynamically opposite ways: for instance, the rational *and* the affective, the mental *and* the somatic, self *and* other, and so on. Through such integration, balance and harmony are restored to human personhood, and human-nonhuman connectivity and humanity-nature continuity are recovered. Hence, the inclusion of contemplative inquiry and practice in philosophy of education is about educating human beings to manifest holistic and balanced self-states and ways of being.

The philosophy of dynamic holism and harmony has been around for millennia. Consider the Daoist philosophy of yin-yang (Cooper 1981) that has had an enormous influence and penetrated every aspect of Far Eastern culture. For example, traditional

Chinese medicine is founded upon this idea of dynamically balancing polar opposite yin-yang functions that make up human physiology and psychology. Modern neurophysiology, brain science, and neurobiology all render much support for a similar kind of understanding: for instance, that we have two separate and functionally different brain hemispheres (McGilchrist 2012), two functionally distinct branches of the vagus, the tenth cranial nerve (Porges 2011), and so on. The point of making a reference to the brain and nervous system is not to map contemplative experience onto human physiology. This kind of research is flourishing today, and we support the researchers who are at the forefront of knowledge building in this field. Rather, our intention is to show that the contemplative turn in philosophy of education that authors of this paper are pursuing is part of the perennial human quest for wholeness and balance in the way we live and work, since the dawn of human civilization. This quest has been taking humanity to all different directions of research, from traditional Chinese medicine to neurobiology. Moreover, we wish to note that this quest for wholeness and balance seems to be particularly urgent today when so much about the world is increasingly out of ecological balance, and as humanity is experiencing increasing physical and psychological dislocation (Alexander 2008), with damaging consequences showing up in both the natural and human world.

## Contemplative Pedagogy as an Embodied Philosophy

There is nothing abstract about ideas, notions, and theories in the way they live in and through us. The first place to look for their embodiment is in our nervous system that regulates our breathing, heartbeat, metabolism, and so on, all of which manifest in the way we sense and feel, perceive, and act. From personal experience, observations, and statistics, we may confirm that most of us inhabiting densely populated urban areas today seem to be experiencing increased agitation, restlessness, franticness, aggressively pushy energy, and anxiety and fear associated with survival stress, with hunger and greed running our lives. "More, faster, bigger" has become our daily mantra. "Not enough" is another one. Our psychological reality "in here" is mirrored in the empirical world "out there." Witness the commodification of the world and human (and more-than-human) lives. Witness the voracious appetite for consumer goods. The machinery of production must be continually fed. Our worth is measured by the degree of productivity and the dollar figures that follow and how much we can consume and waste. In the face of all of this, the crucial question for us is: *What can we do?*

The contemplative turn in philosophy of education is a response to that question. The call for the contemplative turn is an invitation to ourselves and to each other to step out of this diabolic, and yet normalized, situation in which we find ourselves and, moreover, to step into a consciousness that does not run on the same psychological metabolism as that of commodification and consumerism fueled by insatiableness. If we were to step into contemplative consciousness (Bai and Scott 2011), what can we learn about ourselves and the world we have created? Moreover, how would we go about parenting, teaching, leading, learning, training, and so on,

*differently*, if we were to integrate the contemplative in education? Will that redress the mindset of "more, bigger, and faster is better" that is pushing our current civilization to the brink of suicide and also destroying much of life on this planet?

For the rest of this chapter, we propose to curate a written dialogue among the four authors on how they view their contemplative inquiry and practice and how they see these contributing to the field of philosophy of education. The lead author is a professor in Philosophy of Education whose work in the last 20 years has been focused on the critique of instrumentalism and its dehumanizing effect on every aspect of life, including education, and on urging the contemplative turn. The other three co-authors are new doctoral students (since September 2017) in the Philosophy of Education program at Simon Fraser University, researching contemplative inquiry under Professor Bai's supervision. (Among current graduate students whom Bai supervises, close to ten students, mostly doctoral, are researching and writing theses that involve topics and themes of contemplative education.)

**Muga**: First, I would like to thank Dr. Heesoon Bai for inviting me to participate in this collaboration. This is a wonderful opportunity to discuss our respective interests and relevant personal histories that have led us to philosophy (in general) and philosophy in education (specifically). Perhaps we could begin with Dr. Bai and her conceptualization of philosophy in education and the role that contemplation plays in realizing different possibilities for the future.

Dr. Bai, I understand that you were originally trained in analytical philosophy. Could you describe your experience with philosophy as well as your motivation to pivot to philosophy of education? I am curious to know how you came to work in philosophy of education. And moreover, how did your interest in contemplative inquiry develop and integrate into your work in philosophy of education?

**Heesoon**: Thank you, Muga, for your comments and questions. Yes, my original philosophy training was in Anglo-American analytic philosophy, which may surprise some folks. Had I stayed on in Philosophy, it's possible that my research trajectory could have gone elsewhere, in closer alignment with analytic philosophy. But instead, I happened to discover Philosophy of Education as a discipline when I began my doctoral studies. I began my academic career as an educational philosopher in 1995, and since then, people rightly associate me with Zen aesthetics and Asian philosophies, on which I wrote quite a bit. More recently, for the last 7 years or so, I've been seen as a prominent Canadian contributor to the field of contemplative education.

Coming into Education to do my doctorate in Philosophy of Education and then to start teaching in Education as an educational philosopher has had a major trajectory-altering influence on me. Basically, I saw the fundamental difference between teaching the subject matter, which is instruction, and educating human beings, which is *Bildung*: the cultivation and formation of human beings. (In Buddhism, we call this *Bhāvanā*, and in Confucianism, we call it *xiu-xin yang-xing*.) While there are always instructional aspects to the project of *Bildung*, education as the cultivation of whole human beings *must not* be equated with, or subsumed under, instruction. My clearly seeing this difference and moreover resolving to dedicate my work in philosophy of education to the project of *Bildung* opened up a huge terrain of exploration and inquiry, which is ongoing.

If we are to concern ourselves with cultivation of the whole human being, then we need to look into the integrity of mind-body-heart-soul-spirit/energetics; however we may language the parts or aspects that make up the whole person. What this also meant for me is that I had to critically review Western canonical thought throughout the millennia, from the viewpoint of this whole-person and person-environment integrity, and the result of my critical review was the realization that so much of our thought traditions that guided all aspects of human lives were just fraught with disintegrative ideas about human beings that systematically disconnected the human being from itself, internally, and from each other and from Nature, externally (Bai et al. 2013). At the risk of generalization and universalization, I would say that disconnection and fragmentation, or dislocation (Alexander 2008), were at the root of human ills. These are what drive human beings to existential crisis.

Existential crisis is not something that affects only certain unfortunate people. I came to see that humanity at large has been in existential crisis ever since we started to form such notions as mind-body separation and individual-environment separation. Mainstream philosophy itself has been a big part of this problem by explicitly dualizing mind and body and prioritizing the former over the latter. Identifying philosophy with humans' rational faculty is, again from the perspective of *Bildung* and holistic educational philosophy, not only narrowing the purview of philosophy of education but also perpetuating the civilizational problems of disconnect and fragmentation. I searched for philosophies and philosophers who went against the grain and proffered different visions and understandings of philosophy.

Not surprisingly, ancient philosophies in the East and the West, as well as world philosophies and indigenous philosophies in general, were into holism of one form or another. Moreover, they saw the lack of holism to be the source of human suffering due to disconnect and imbalance and saw holistic philosophy to be therefore healing. The theme of healing in philosophy (Nussbaum 1996) had an immediate and immense resonance with me. By the time I was probing all this, I had significant experiences of suffering in my own life, and the idea that philosophy is for healing was most welcome. Adding to this healing, loving as a philosophic aim and activity, as put forward by Raimon Panikkar (1992), as part of revisioning philosophy (Ogilvy 1992), and also as shown by Martha Nussbaum (1992) in illustrating literature's contribution to philosophy, was an eye-opening and heart-warming prospect for me. I knew that I could give my heart and soul to this way of philosophy.

I had many different traditions of philosophy to draw from for the triad theme of knowing, loving, and healing (Panikkar 1992). I discovered many contemporary philosophers and thinkers who advocated for and pursued philosophy as therapeutics and self-cultivation: Ludwig Wittgenstein, Michel Foucault, Pierre Hadot, Raimon Panikkar, Robert Carter, Martha Nussbaum, Richard Shusterman, and so on. And then there are Buddhist studies, in particular Zen, and Daoist philosophy and practices, all of which informed and guided my personal life as well as academic research. The idea that philosophy is not just thinking activity, however critical and sophisticated, but is the practice of becoming integrated, within and without, including in the dimension of bodily culture and discipline, has had a profound influence on how I have taught philosophy of education.

I feel strongly that we need to change the character and the tone of our education, from that of the acquisitive and consumptive ways we currently pursue to the contemplative ways under the purview of holistic philosophy (Bai et al. 2018). This is why I have been researching, writing about, and promoting the contemplative ways of education for the past several years. My efforts here culminated in establishing, with the help and support of colleagues, a Master's in Education program in Contemplative Inquiry at Simon Fraser University.

Muga, I know that you have written a whole master's thesis on contemplative philosophy and education, focusing on mindfulness practices, before you came into our Philosophy of Education doctoral program. Please share with us how you see your research in contemplative inquiry being supported by and contributing to the field of philosophy of education.

**Muga**: My own doctoral research lies at the intersection of an array of theoretical, conceptual, and methodological frameworks. Specifically, I am interested in the application of mindfulness programs in education. In pursuing my research, several disparate and related fields become relevant in my analysis, which include cultural/social critique, social justice, philosophy, economics, anthropology, history, sociology, psychology, and more. What I have been finding so far in my doctoral studies is that philosophy of education provides a very hospitable interdisciplinary (maybe even transdisciplinary) space and forum to engage in inquiries into curriculum and pedagogy, such as the use of mindfulness in education, in myriad ways by applying abstract and theoretical analyses of education. This is in addition to engaging with ethics and morality as a preliminary exercise to investigate the validity and robustness of any curricular and/or pedagogical practice.

In the way I see it, philosophy of education and contemplative inquiry is compatible in that they are open and non-prescriptive (in principle) avenues for engaging with deep questions concerning meaning, values, pedagogy, and ethics. It is precisely the *space* and *openness* that both philosophy of education and contemplative inquiry provide that support holistic and "slow" methods of analysis in order to probe complex and loaded concepts. This is critical in pressurized academic and professional settings where a myopic focus on "results" and "progress" increasingly reigns supreme, demonstrated by the commodification of "knowledge" and education resulting from the neoliberal capitalist encroachment on public education. The necessity to preserve and protect *space* and *time* for truly open forms of inquiry is vital. That is to say, while the fruits of philosophical and contemplative inquiries in education may not bear immediate and actionable results – ready to be marketed and sold as educational prescriptions or trumpeted as the "new" pedagogical movement du jour – it is beneficial and necessary to value these slower, less instrumental methods of inquiry in order to explore holistic and diverse interpretations of what education is and the goals that it should pursue. To *mindlessly* pursue progress and development without a critically informed understanding of what progress and development actually *mean* or what their implications could be is a dangerous step toward perpetuating dominant hegemonic norms.

The questions that arise from my inquiry include both micro- and macro- levels of consideration. Examples of questions include: "What is mindfulness?" "Why is

mindfulness being applied in mainstream, secular, Western education?" "Is the practice of mindfulness in the West an example of cultural appropriation?" "Are commodified, commercialized, and instrumental forms of Eastern spirituality in the West ethically problematic?" "Who gets to decide what is authentic?" "Are contemporary forms of mindfulness (less stress = more productivity) merely perpetuating neoliberal capitalist aims?" And so on. With regard to these and other questions, philosophy of education is akin to radar that surveys the philosophical landscape and "pings" back the presence of concepts and theories involved in an inquiry; this reveals their respective locations, both in relation to each other and to me. Once identified, relationships and connections between the points can be made explicit and explored further. The analysis of these concepts, from their banal, everyday aspects to their deep, conceptually complex aspects, and everything in between is part of the process of inquiry. In this way, philosophy of education reserves *space* for seemingly disparate concepts to be investigated together.

Similarly, contemplative inquiry is akin to a deep-diving submarine – submerging to the depths of the hidden, unconscious, subconscious, creative, emergent, underlying "being-ness" of existence. As the exploration of the inner intersubjective realm of being is cultivated as an intentional method to become aware and connected to understanding ourselves and the world around us, the aim is to develop a contemplative disposition to inquiry, that is, to hold space, suspend judgment, and become sensitive to the inner workings of "knowing and being." To return to the aquatic metaphor, it is akin to diving deep into the intersubjective experience of being, away from the noise and turbulence of the waves on the surface to a deeper stillness which may reveal the embodied, holistic, and relational ways of being that identifies radical interconnectedness as a fundamental and constituent quality of existence. To be clear, it is not stillness or calm that is pursued singularly or instrumentally, as tension, agitation, and stress are fundamentally part of existence as well – to negate them or to essentialize them as negative would be too simplistic. Rather, it is the contemplative quality of "sitting" with what is there, without trying to change anything that is elemental to contemplative inquiry. In that sense, cultivating a contemplative practice that facilitates the discovery of what is "there" already is part of the motivation for seeking stillness, stability, and clarity.

In summary, philosophy of education and contemplative inquiry work in tandem to protect the *space* and *time* to engage in important questions regarding education and educational practice, often in non-linear, non-instrumental ways. I am grateful for the opportunity to work in philosophy of education and contemplative inquiry and am indebted to the hard work done by people like you and your colleagues who have paved the way to elevate the credibility, validity, and acceptance of these fields.

Now, Timothy, I understand that your interest in contemplative inquiry and philosophy of education is influenced by your work in leadership training in the business world and is bolstered by your study of transformative learning. Could you speak about your influences and your journey thus far?

**Timothy**: Thank you, Muga, for this opportunity to reflect on why I'm in Philosophy of Education, rather than, for example, Leadership Education, or even Management Science or Organizational Behaviour, as my professional background

is in Business. My research interest is developing a new leadership paradigm, and specifically, I'm interested in stimulating a shift from our currently hegemonic command-and-control, fear based, alpha-male dominant business leadership paradigm (Trimble 2015) to a more humane, holistic and balanced, more caring and compassionate leadership paradigm. I believe that key to this shift is introducing the archetypal feminine principle to complement and balance the currently dominant masculine principle in leadership philosophy.

I came into Philosophy of Education with the understanding that philosophy is by nature a revolutionary discipline that supports deconstruction of entrenched views and notions, and construction of new ones that can stimulate paradigm shifts. As well, what I'm finding in my current Philosophy of Education program is, as Muga expressed, this hospitable space that supports multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to conceptual analysis and research methodologies. For instance, in my case, I will be conducting phenomenological research that combines experientially based heuristic methodology and autobiographical writing to study my contemplative practices, and the research objective here is to apply my findings to creating a leadership paradigm that honors the feminine principle in the way we approach business and leadership.

In reflecting on my own life experiences, I can discern the "revolutionary," that is, "turning-point," moments that prepared me to be receptive to studying philosophy of education. Here is an example of such a moment. I was in the second year of university, enrolled in an Engineering program in Turkey. One day, I was writing an exam in an advanced mathematics course. I was solving pages and pages of equations, as we were optimizing an airport problem on resources: how many docks, how many shuttle buses, how many conveyors, and how many staff did the airport need to run the operations smoothly. In the middle of the exam, there flashed a singular moment of awareness, now permanently etched in my memory. My hand stopped writing. I became focused on the connector words on my pages: the "and" and the "or" started to stare back at me. Insistent questions came to me: *"Nobody is thinking about the people who are these workers at the airport! Are they happy? Are they motivated? Can they feel themselves? Have they been educated to become their best selves? Who are their leaders? How are they treated?"* As these questions were running through my mind, at that moment I knew I was *not* going to be an engineer. And I never became one. Instead, I became a mystic-philosopher, deeply immersed in meditation practices like raja yoga, reiki, and Sufi practices, and on the quest for self-knowledge and self-awareness: a Socratic mission.

I wish to help and support organizational leaders to shift into the transformational learning modality, enact the changes they want to see in the world, and become the change agents. I wish to help them to become nimble dancers in being able to shift their frames of reference, points of view, and habits of mind, using difficult experiences they encounter in their professional and personal lives as opportunities for critical turning points. This kind of transformational learning does not happen automatically. It happens when we go through a process of critical reflection and open-hearted, vulnerable dialogue, both of which are important pursuits of learning in philosophy. This reflective, relational, and intersubjective process helps us move

into a dynamic space of becoming. What I want to bring to this process are deeper ways of reflecting via contemplative practices, which can help us go further in our transformational learning process. I propose that, unless we bring a pedagogy that enlarges one's understanding of self, not just conceptually but experientially, we cannot overcome the prevailing dehumanized leadership paradigms.

Over the past few decades, I worked in various consulting companies that specialize in organizational culture, organizational efficiency, and organizational development. My decades of work experience have yielded an observation that, in almost all instances of problems affecting organizational culture and development, their root causes have to do with intersubjectivity issues: more specifically, people dynamics as simple (but profoundly difficult) as listening and speaking with each other. Leaders who are not connected and attuned to themselves, and thus don't know to listen to their bodies, their passions, their strengths, their pain, and their own vulnerabilities, are liable to create an organizational environment filled with conflict, resentment, back-stabbing, hiding-out, and aggression: the so-called "toxic" workplace environment. Corruption is, I would observe, just a natural outcome of a toxic environment that harbors people who are unable to be attuned and intersubjective. Their lack of empathic attunement is intimately connected to their inability to truly listen to other human beings: their colleagues, superiors, and clients. Unless leaders understand that in order to be good leaders they have to understand relationality and intersubjectivity as a core value and practice, they will not be able to function as good leaders and live up to the ideal of "collaborative" and "caring" organization and "good" workplace they espouse and advertise.

Betty Ann Block (2014) calls leadership a super complex phenomenon. Being human is a super complex phenomenon. Leadership takes responsibility and has an impact on many other super complex phenomenological beings under usually rigid roofs of organizations. I claim that the complexity of leadership dynamics cannot be resolved with more complicated solutions but with very basic (yet advanced) human abilities:

> If many of our problems fundamentally have to do with our lack of empathic understanding, kindness and compassion, and acceptance of and respect for the other, then we must teach, alongside critical thinking and problem solving, how to foster and increase our capacity and ability to connect, attune and resonate. (Cohen et al. 2014, p. 41)

Now, it's my turn to invite Meena to reflect and share with us. Meena, how did it come about that you found or placed yourself in the intersection of philosophy of education and contemplative inquiry?

**Meena**: Thank you Timothy, Muga, and Heesoon for your thoughtful insights. My own doctoral inquiry correlates with the notion that when contemplative studies and the philosophy of education are in relationship, a space emerges to engage with knowings in a "slow" way, as Muga suggests in his dialogue. I believe that when a philosopher attunes her contemplative gaze, she is able to inquire into, confront and provoke the *master "progress" narrative* (as Heesoon explores above) into possible transformation. The word "narrative" is of deep pertinence to my inquiry,

for I believe that it is through a contemplative-narrative approach that *we* can engage in conversation to decolonize our processes of learning and knowing. I am keenly interested in exploring how through a narrative processing (witnessing, engaging with, and rewriting the meta-stories that govern our world and states of being), we can tend to our understanding of the contemplative philosophy of education as a medium for *healing*.

More specifically, it is through this inter-relational reimagining of philosophy as praxis that I intend to explore how education has been and in many ways continues to be a colonial project, with the aim to induce a dominant way of knowing and being of/in the world that has supported the economic, and social and emotional successes of the dominant group. Through an anti-colonial critique of past and current educational structures, I find value in tracking the educational implications of the meta-narratives that have shaped schooling. In parallel, I aim to track my own personal narrative(s) as an educatee and educator, currently learning and working within educational structures.

One of my emerging questions then becomes, what stories must *I – we –* acknowledge, for we are philosophizing, learning, and educating still, on a colonial soil. We are growing and decaying in this soil. The area of this soil that is fertile is for the *select few*. I struggle with the knowing that as a South Asian female educator and of the diaspora in Canada, I too am learning, growing and decaying in this soil. I know that as educators, we have learned how and what to teach from largely *untended* and *unconscious* stories. I know that a deep reconciliation between ourselves and the stories we were told, alongside the stories we have not yet heard, is required for a conscious, contemplative positioning away from the colonial meta-narrative of our education system. I know these knowings have come *in spite of* the educations we endured. I know as educators and educatees, we can work together to enrich the soil of the sidelined and streamlined through an equitable sharing of the sun, the water, and the fertilizer.

Through a contemplative, philosophical inquiry, I have uncovered that to be aware of the schooling system is vital. To be aware of the educator's experience and pedagogy is vital. To be aware of the educatee's schooling experience is vital for uncovering and recovering (decolonizing) learning and teaching. Thus, I believe that the act of witnessing and embodying personal narratives, as well as meta-narratives, can allow for a *narrative healing* – a transmutation of stories that no longer serve the Self (inner world) or system (outer world) – essentially, a decolonizing of the student as Self and student as Learner (schooling system). Ultimately, what is being called for is a dialogue about what schooling and education is, inclusive of the mind, body, and spirit.

However, in order to vulnerably access places of differences, as well as cultivate a space for self-reflexivity, the *writer Self* must engage in a contemplative processing – one that is important for a sustainable narrative decolonization of Self and system. Accordingly, contemplative practices to infuse into the philosophy of education can include stillness (meditation, quieting the mind, centering, silence), generative (visualization, beholding, loving-kindness meditation, *lectio divina*), creative (music/singing, improvisation, contemplative arts), activist (pilgrimage to areas

where social justice issues are highlighted, work and volunteering, vigils and marches, bearing witness), relational (council circle, dialogue, deep listening, story-telling), movement (walking meditation, yoga, dance, aikido), and ritual/cyclical practices (establish a sacred/personal space, retreats, ceremonies and rituals based in spiritual or cultural traditions) (Barbezat and Bush 2014).

**Heesoon**: Thank you, Meena! Your mention of all these contemplative practices to infuse into philosophy of education reminds me again of Karl Marx (n.d.) who said:

> The less you eat, drink and read books; the less you go to the theatre, the dance hall, the public house; the less you think, love, theorize, sing, paint, fence, etc., the more you save-the greater becomes your treasure which neither moths nor dust will devour-your capital. The less you are, the more you have; the less you express your own life, the greater is your alienated life-the greater is the store of your estranged being.

(I don't usually talk about Marx, but strangely, his words keep coming to me in this paper.) Colleagues! We sure delved into our topic, with some depth and breadth, although, necessarily it had to be in broad brushstrokes, given the complexity and nuances to the matter. I am particularly grateful for this opportunity for us to think aloud together to make sense of the work the four of us, plus other colleagues and students, in contemplative inquiry are doing in our Philosophy of Education program. (The doctoral Philosophy of Education program is housed under Educational Theory and Practice program (eTAP) in Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University. The other doctoral program that is housed under eTAP is Curriculum and Pedagogy.)

## Cross-References

▶ Cultural Studies and Education
▶ Social Movement Knowledge Production

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Susan Jagger

**Abstract**

We tend not to question the implications of the terms we use in environmental education and its ever-changing names, purposes, and goals. Digging deeper into well-worn and accepted meanings from the early nineteenth-century movements integrating place-based nature study since John Dewey through conservation and outdoor education, the tensions in the historical realization of the field are traced. A critique of the social manifestations, political purposes, and philosophical grounding of environmental education is developed in relation to (1) shifts in the definition of its terms; (2) conceptual transformations of the discipline; (3) ecological issues; and (4) pedagogical imperatives. The resulting historicity takes into account initiatives from UNESCO to Agenda 21 and NAAEE to provide an ecology of environmental education.

**Keywords**

Environmental education · History · Goals of environmental education · Ecology · Ecological literacy

I remember a meeting that I had with my supervisor just after I started my Master's program. I had been reading several articles about informal learning and educational experiences outside of the classroom for a work study job and was complaining about how much of what I was reading was simply the definition of terms used. I remember

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thinking, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, I know what informal learning is, just get on with the paper and tell me what your study showed." David, my supervisor, questioned my frustration and asked, "Well, isn't this an important part of the article? Don't we need to be clear on meanings?" Yes, of course, we do and so often our terms are liberally applied and seldom unpacked. We tend not to question the implications and dig deeply into the meanings of those terms that we use. This is very much the case in environmental education and in its ever-changing names, purposes, and related goals. This chapter is situated at a place of tension as it traces and critiques the historical realizations and political and philosophical purposes and goals of environmental education.

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|---|---|
| **Educate** | Bring up, provide schooling or tuition for, formed on past participle stem of Latin *educare*, related to *educere* (see *educe*) |
| **Educe** | Lead or draw forth; bring out, develop from a latent condition; from Latin *educere*, formed on *e-* + *ducere* lead |
| **Environment** | *Environ* + *-ment* |
| **Environ** | Surround, encompass; from Old French *environer,* formed on *environ* surroundings, around, formed on *en-* in + *viron* circuit, formed on *virer* turn |
| **Nature** | Essential qualities or innate character of; vital powers of; inherent power dominating one's action; creative and regulative power in the world; material world; from Latin *natura*, formed on past participle stem of *nasci* (see *natal*) |
| **Natal** | Pertaining to birth or nativity; from Latin *natalis*, formed on *nat-*, past participle stem of *nasci* to be born |

In the early nineteenth century, what we now identify as *environmental education* was included within *nature study*. Wilbur Jackman's 1981 *Nature Study for Common Schools* encouraged taking school children outside to learn across disciplines through firsthand explorations of the natural world. Key in nature study was bringing the learner into intimate and emotional contact with nature; it was an integrated and place-based educational movement. Nature study's philosophies recall the theorizing of Jean-Jacques Rousseau who asserted the importance of children's everyday experiences and interactions with their environments in their learning and moral and character development: "we begin to instruct ourselves when we begin to live" (1911/1966, p. 42). Nature study also aligns with the work of John Dewey, whose active work spanned the same period as the height of the nature study movement. Dewey, like Rousseau, espoused the centrality of experience in learning and the importance of recognizing those experiences within the curriculum. He poignantly noted "that the child and the curriculum are simply two limits which define a single process. Just as two points define a straight line, so the present standpoint of the child and the facts and truths of studies define instruction" (Dewey 1902/1966, p. 11). Furthermore, in nature study, the influence of environmental writers of the nineteenth century, including Henry David Thoreau (1854/1995) and John Muir (1901, 1911), can be easily traced. Nature study was prevalent in early childhood education well into the 1920s until being completely overshadowed by the rise and rigor of science education in the 1940s and 1950s. Other reasons for the halting of the

nature study movement include a lack of understanding of its underlying philosophy by followers and that the practice of nature study does not fit within the rigid structure of school organization (Disinger 1983/2001).

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| **Conserve** | Preserve safely; from Latin *conservare* (see *con* – with, together + *serve*) |
| **Serve** | Be a servant to; from Latin *servus* slave |
| **Progress** | Forward movement; from Latin *pro* – for, instead of, in place of + *gradus* step, walk, go |
| **Resource** | Means of supplying a want; from Latin *resurgere* rising again |
| **Manage** | Train, handle, wield, conduct, control; from *manus* hand |

The *conservation education* movement of the early 1900s focused on the conservation of natural resources for human use: forests, soils, water, fish, game, minerals, and oils. It was intended to maintain those resources for the common good, to be used by humans in a way that would allow them to continue being used by future generations. Natural resources, and the natural world, were to be managed and used wisely. The conservation movement originated largely from government interests and resulted in legislation, enforcement, and finally science-focused education. Overall, conservation education focused on resources rather than education more broadly (Disinger 1983/2001).

*Outdoor education* involves using resources outside of the classroom for curriculum and instruction. Its roots reach back to the 1920s and are aligned with the philosophies of Dewey, namely, learning by doing. Noted by Sharp (as cited in Disinger 1983/2001), one should "teach outdoors what is best taught outdoors and teach indoors what is most appropriate there" (p. 19). Like nature study, outdoor education has the potential to bring together all areas of the curriculum in its teaching: art, language, literacy, music, science, social studies, and physical education. Cost has been an ongoing barrier to outdoor education with many schools simply not able to afford to include outdoor learning opportunities, for example, camping and field school experiences, in their limited and already stretched budgets (Disinger 1983/2001).

Other educational movements also informed the developing discipline of environmental education. *Progressive education* was a pedagogical movement that was guided closely by the needs of the child, and its curriculum and instruction were shaped accordingly. Grounded in the work of Dewey, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel, progressive education followed a more holistic approach to teaching and learning. *Resource-use education*, the social studies partner of conservation education, centered on geography and economics where conservation education focused on natural history. *Resource management education* presented a professional relationship between humans and the environment through the teaching of topics including soil conservation, water management, urban and regional planning, and landscape design. *Population education* brought together environmental impact with population issues and was in response to changing lifestyles of aging populations. *General education* distanced itself from the compartmentalization of knowledge and instead crossed perceived boundaries through its integration of knowledge.

Beginning in the 1950s and gaining momentum in the mid to late 1960s, with shifting social and political climates and an increasing awareness of environmental issues (e.g., pesticide use, water and air pollution), there was a significant renewal of interest in bringing well-being and justice to the forefront of environmental and educational discourses. For example, environmental writers including Rachel Carson (1962, 1956/1998) and Aldo Leopold (1966) used their poetry and prose to highlight the critical importance of living with the Earth in mind and as a call for action to citizens and governments. This interest catalyzed conversations on the place of environmental teaching and learning and in the situation of environmental education as a separate discipline. Changing demographics and a growing urban population made earlier movements, namely, nature study, conservation education, and outdoor education, less appealing and further fueled the movement toward a separate environmental education (Disinger 1983/2001).

And so, environment and education finally came together. In 1965 and in the United Kingdom, the term *environmental education* was debatably first recorded in use at a conference investigating the conservation of the countryside and its implications. The conference was significant in the United Kingdom as it was the first time that conservationists and educators came together in a collaborative effort (Palmer 1998).

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| **Responsible** | Answerable to another for something, reliable (see *respond*) |
| **Respond** | From Latin *respondere* answer to an engagement, formed on *re* – again, in return, in repetition or reiteration + *spondere* make a solemn engagement |
| **Citizen** | Inhabitant of a city, member of a state; from Roman *civitatanus* formed on civitas *city* |

Four years later, and in the United States, Stapp's 1969 definition of environmental education attempted to extend previous thinking about environmental education into future directions. He identified environmental education as being "aimed at producing a citizenry that is knowledgeable concerning the biophysical environment and its associated problems, aware of how to help solve these problems, and motivated to work toward their solution" (Stapp 1969/2001, p. 34). Objectives within this iteration of environmental education included an "understanding that man (sic) is an inseparable part of a system, consisting of man, culture, and the biophysical environment, and that man has the ability to alter [those] interrelationships" (Stapp 1969/2001, p. 34), an appreciation of the natural and human-made biophysical environment and its place in society, an understanding of biophysical environmental problems "confronting man" and how those problems could be solved by responsible citizens and governments, and a concern for environmental quality that motivates citizens to participate in environmental problem-solving (Stapp 1969/2001). Hungerford and Volk's (1990) goal of *responsible environmental citizenship* takes up elements of this early description in their much-cited and widely adopted definition of one who (1) is aware and sensitive to the total environment and its problems; (2) has a basic understanding of the environment and its problems; (3) feels concern for the environment and is

motivated to participate in its improvement and protection; (4) has the skills to recognize and solve environmental problems; and (5) is involved at all levels to resolve environmental problems.

When we speak of someone as being responsible, we tend to understand that there is an obligation or requirement involved. For example, you are responsible for ensuring that your mortgage or rent is paid each month. Or, you are responsible for your children's well-being. These imply a duty to do something. When we speak of being responsible environmental citizens, there is the understanding that we are obliged to act in a certain way for the environment. This is in contradiction to Naess' suggestion that we do not act out of obligation but rather out of positive inclination. He says we should take joy and pleasure in performing such "beautiful acts" (Naess 2008, 93).

Looking even closer, we see that the root word respond suggests that responsible actions are made as an answer, reply, or reaction to an action. Reactionary responses to the environment are certainly not what most environmental educators would want of their students. Rather than simple knee-jerk reactions to issues, environmental education should foster in its students an embracing of the ongoing and inherent relationships that they have with and in the environment.

Even more problematic is the term environment. Environment is commonly used to refer to ecosystems and the plants and animals living in those ecosystems. Quite often, we do not acknowledge that we humans also live within the environment. With the root environ in mind, one's environment would include all that is around or surrounds. The breadth of environment is infinite: it can, and does, include built settings such as one's work environment, it can refer to a social situation, it can be the culture that one lives with and in. All of these are included within environment yet they are not typically implied when one refers to responsible environmental citizenship. Instead we tend to think of environment in biophysical terms as an entity or place that is out there and separate from us. This thinking presents us with a double bind as we seek to be responsible for the environment rather than within it where we are truly situated. This accepted definition of environment also secures us in a dominant role and reinforces our Western anthropocentric worldview.

Citizenship further breaks down Hungerford and Volk's well-meaning goal of environmental education. Most often, citizenship is thought of in close relation to patriotism, community service, and living in a way that supports other humans in the community. Here again, citizenship is limited by our common definition of community: the people and services where we live. This perception of community does not factor in nonhuman living and nonliving things. A broader, more inclusive, and perhaps more accurate view of one's community was described by Aldo Leopold (1966) as his land ethic "enlarged the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, collectively referred to as the land" (p. 219). It moved humans from "conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it" (p 220).

Within Hungerford and Volk's definition itself, anthropocentrism is evident in its defining features. They note that a responsible environmental citizen is motivated to protect the environment. This implies a managerial role for humans, having to step in to protect the environment, rather than to live mindfully and respectfully with and in it. Having the skills to solve environmental problems fails to get at the root of those environmental problems – our unbalanced relationship within the natural world and our failure to acknowledge that we are inherently and inextricably connected to all other beings, human and more than human, living and nonliving. It also suggests that there is a solution to be discovered that will heal all of the environmental ailments that we have caused. People have used science and technology to side step around the obvious notion that we need to change our interactions and re-define our position within the natural world. Possibly when we reach this point, this will be our re-solution.

Related to responsible environmental citizenship, *environmental management education* (Roth 1970) highlights biophysical and sociocultural environments as it seeks to develop citizens who will successfully manage these environments. Specifically, it aims to create citizens who are (1) knowledgeable of the interrelated biophysical and sociocultural environments of which man (sic) is a part; (2) aware of the associated environmental problems and management alternatives of use in solving these problems; and (3) motivated to work toward the maintenance and further development of diverse environments that are optimal for living (Roth 1970). McInnis (1972) outlined features of effective environmental education that later formed the foundation of *environmentalized education*. He highlighted the importance of the learner's direct experience of the environment being studies and the educational value of those environments "which maximize the learner's potential capacities to function successfully as an intelligently integrating multi-sensory organism" (p. 53).

**Literacy**    From *literate*
**Literate**    Educated, learned, from Latin *literatus*, from Latin *litera* letter

April 22, 1970, marked the first Earth Day, and following this and through the 1970s, environmental education was a topic of discussion at national and international levels. The US Office of Education asserted in 1970 that environmental education was:

> Intended to promote among citizens the awareness and understanding of the environment, our relationship to it, and the concern and responsible action necessary to assure our survival and improve the quality of life... Environmental education provides alternate ways of thinking – a synthesis – which colours and affects the humanities, languages, social sciences, history, economics, and religion as dramatically as it does the natural sciences. It will give an ecological perspective for every aspect of learning. (as cited in Disinger 1983/2001, p. 24)

In the same year, US President Richard Nixon emphasized the need for environmental literacy in his 1970 Environmental Address to Congress: "It is... vital that our entire society develop a new understanding and a new awareness of man's (sic) relation to his environment – what might be called 'environmental literacy'. This will require the development and teaching of environmental concepts at every point in the educational process" (as cited in Disinger 1983/2001, p. 11).

Several key international institutions pushed for environmental education, asserting that the increasing global interest in environmental issues and awareness justified this movement. In 1972, the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden, declared that "education in environmental matters for the younger generation as well as adults [noting that] giving due consideration for the underprivileged is essential in order to broaden the basis for an enlightened opinion and responsible conduct by individuals, enterprises, and communities in protecting and improving the environment in its full human dimension" (United Nations 1972, p. 72). The Stockholm meeting led to the creation of 1975s UN Environment Programme, and along with UNESCO, the UNESCO/

UNEP International Education Programme was founded later that year. Also in 1975, and in response to the need for "nothing short of a new global ethic – an ethic which espouses attitudes and behaviour for individuals and societies which are consonant with humanity's place within the biosphere; which recognizes and sensitively responds to the complex and ever-changing relationships between man and nature and between man and man" (UNESCO/UNEP 1975, p. 1), the Belgrade Charter was drafted. It outlined goals for both the environment and environmental education and listed objectives and guiding principles for environmental education (UNESCO/UNEP 1975). Belgrade was pivotal in the environmental education movement because, like the earlier UK conservation and education conference, it included educators in attendance and the follow-up meeting, Tbilisi in 1977, intended for the active involvement of politicians.

The UNESCO First Inter-governmental Conference on Environmental Education was held in Tbilisi, Georgia, USSR, in October 1977. The meeting, attended by government delegates from UNESCO member states and NGO representatives, produced a list of recommendations for environmental education in both formal and informal education, and its declaration established a framework that would serve as the foundational document for environmental education initiatives worldwide. As outlined in the Tbilisi Report, environmental education's goals – "(a) to foster a clear awareness of, and concern about, economic, social, political, and ecological interdependence in urban and rural areas; (b) to provide every person with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes, commitment, and skills needed to protect and improve the environment; (c) to create new patterns of behaviour of individuals, groups, and society as a whole towards the environment" (UNESCO/UNEP 1977, p. 26) – mirror those set 2 years earlier in Belgrade. Tbilisi's goals were guided by the following principles:

Environmental education should:

- Consider the environment in its entirety of natural, built, technological, and social elements
- Be a lifelong process
- Follow an interdisciplinary approach
- Consider environmental issues at local, national, regional, and international levels
- Focus on present and potential issues while considering historical perspectives
- Promote the importance and necessity of cooperation at all levels – local, national, and international – to prevent and solve environmental issues
- Keep environmental considerations in mind in development and growth planning
- Empower learners with an active role in their learning experiences and decision-making
- Relate environmental knowledge, skills, and values to all ages, levels, and understandings of learners
- Facilitate the understanding of symptoms and causes of environmental issues
- Highlight the complexity of environmental issues and in turn the importance of critical thinking and problem-solving skills to work through them

- Include a range of pedagogical spaces and approaches with a focus on practical, firsthand experience (UNESCO/UNEP 1977)

The North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) (2004) called for the development of an environmentally literate citizenry, individuals who would understand the environment in terms of systems that are bound together. They would have a set of skills enabling them to solve environmental problems and determine suitable actions. Environmentally literate citizens, according to the NAAEE, would use and improve their critical and creative thinking skills in such problem solving (North American Association for Environmental Education 2004). McClaren (1995) described environmental literacy through ten dimensions: 1) being able to think about systems; 2) being able to think in time; 3) being able to think critically about value issues; 4) being able to differentiate between number, quantity, quality, and value; 5) being able to distinguish between map and territory; 6) being able to move from awareness to knowledge to action; 7) being able to work cooperatively with other people; 8) developing an aesthetic response to the environment; 9) knowing basic concepts and being able to learn new ones and unlearn old ones; and 10) being able to use eight process skills (knowing, enquiring, acting, judging, opening, imagining, connecting, and valuing). Marcinkowski (as cited in Stables and Bishop 2001) defined environmental literacy with the possession of environmental knowledge, understanding, attitudes, and actions. Disinger and Roth (as cited in Stables and Bishop 2001) characterized environmental literacy as nominal, functional, and operational. Further, Brennan (1994) presented the ideal of the environmentally literate citizen as one who has "a blend of ecological sensitivity, moral maturity, and informed awareness of natural processes that would make her or him unlikely to contribute to further degradation of natural processes at either individual or corporate levels" (p. 5). Clearly there is a lack of agreement on what exactly we mean when we use the term environmental literacy in the first place.

As already discussed, problems in meaning arise simply from the use of environment or environmental. The same is true for literacy. Most commonly and simply put, literacy is understood to mean the ability to read and write, decoding and encoding print. Norris and Phillips (2003) have described this sense of literacy, being able to read and write, as fundamental literacy. Within this definition, there are varying degrees of literacy: a six year old considered literate when engaging with picture books and first grade writing tasks would likely not be seen as literate and able to read and write in graduate level English courses. A number of discipline-specific literacies have also emerged, for example, scientific literacy, computer literacy, mathematical literacy, and media literacy. Kress (1997 as cited in Stables and Bishop 2001) has stated that in fact these liberal applications of literacy have degraded the term itself.

Not only does literacy deal with being able to read and write, it can also take a much broader meaning when we consider language to be a series of signs in our environments and reading and writing of language to be an engagement with those signs We can understand reading as being able to read not only written text but also reacting to signs and patterns. Likewise, writing involves not just writing text but also acting in response to signs and patterns (Stables and Bishop 2001). In this broadened view of literacy, everything can be recognized as text.

Given the holistic and meta-disciplinary nature of environmental education, recognizing environmental literacy as reacting to and acting from signs and patterns in the natural world seems most appropriate. However, I think that the understood meaning of environmental literacy does not always reflect this deep and ongoing communication and co-evolution between the self and the larger Self (Fox 1995; Naess 2008). Instead, I feel that environmental literacy is often perceived as another disciplinary literacy, among the many others, for students to attain. Sufficient time is rarely allotted to foster students' communication with the environment and environmental education, if present at all, becomes a checklist of crises and recycling symbols to memorize and "green" products to purchase. Combined with our

narrow, separate view of the environment, environmental literacy may no longer be the meaningful goal that it was originally intended to be.

During this period of multiple meetings, conferences, policies, and publications, environmental education in practice was realized through approaches including *environmental studies*, *outdoor and adventure education*, and *urban studies*. Environmental studies focused on participatory and problem-solving approaches drawing heavily on scientific methods and with the end product of empirical data and measures. Outdoor and adventure education took learning outside and immersed learners in activities such as canoeing, hiking, and orienteering; these programs are typically held at rural field centers rather than at schools. While outdoor and adventure education is usually set away from city limits, urban studies embedded environmental learning within the natural and built environments in the city. In it, history, politics, architecture and design, culture, and ecology came together as learners explored the interrelationships of social, physical, and natural systems in the urban environment (Palmer 1998).

| | |
|---|---|
| **Development** | *Develop* + *-ment* |
| **Develop** | Unfold, lay open (more fully); from Old French *desveloper*, formed on Latin *dis-* privative, negative, reversive force + *volup-*, *velup-* bundle, truss, wrap up, from *faluppa* wisp of straw, chip |
| **Sustainable** | From *sustain* |
| **Sustain** | Support, uphold the course of, keep in being; from Latin *sustinere*, formed on *sus-* below, up, away + *tenere* hold, keep |

Through the 1980s, international documents continued to be prepared, and new vocabulary was introduced into discourses on environmental education. Ten years after Tbilisi, UNESCO and UNEP held Tbilisi Plus Ten, a meeting whose deliberations confirmed the importance of environmental education:

> Nothing significant will happen to reduce ... threats to the environment unless widespread public awareness is aroused concerning the essential links between environmental quality and the continued satisfaction of human needs. Human action depends upon motivation, which depends upon widespread understanding. This is why we feel it is so important that everyone becomes environmentally conscious through proper environmental education. (UNESCO 1987, as cited in Palmer 1998, p. 15)

Also in 1987, *Our Common Future*, often referred to as the Brundtland Report, was published and presented a global agenda that brought together the environment with development, confirming an agreed upon need for sustainable development, "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (United Nations 1987, Chap. 2, para. 1).

The push for sustainable development and environmental education supporting it continued into the 1990s. Twenty years following the Stockholm meeting, delegates in numbers close to 10,000 and representing over 150 countries met at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro. Not only did the Earth Summit bring together delegates from around the

world, but it also drew 15,000 citizens, members of NGOs, and activists to the related Parallel Forum. The meetings established a global base to ground the movement to a more sustainable and secure future. Noted by the Secretary-General, Maurice Strong, to UNCED, it was "of particular importance ... to integrate the ecological dimension into education and culture as well as economics" (Quarrie 1992, as cited in Palmer 1998, p. 69).

Stemming from the Earth Summit were UNCED's five major documents, and of particular relevance to environmental education's evolving goals were the Rio Declaration of Environment and Development and Agenda 21. The Rio Declaration defined and outlined 27 principles of the rights and responsibilities of nations working toward human development and well-being. The declaration confirmed and sought to build upon the Stockholm Declaration from two decades earlier. Briefly, it encouraged increased partnership and collaboration between nations, societies, and people, international agreements that supported and protected the health of global environmental systems, and recognized the interdependence and interconnectedness of the Earth's natural systems (Palmer 1998).

Agenda 21 sets out 40 chapters that address that pressing environmental issues (e.g., loss of biological diversity; population growth, poverty, and inequality; climate change) that we face and the critical importance of looking ahead and preparing for future environmental changes. Noting the responsibility of governments in supporting the movement toward sustainable development, Agenda 21 called for the implementation of related national plans and policies. Not only did that document look to action at the national level, it also placed importance on localism and listening to the voices of those stakeholders previously silenced – women, children and youth, indigenous peoples, farmers, and local authorities. Chapter 36 of Agenda 21, Education, Training, and Public Awareness, carries forward Brundtland's earlier assertion that education can enable students with the environmental and ethical knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and behaviors to support sustainable development. Specifically, the chapter outlined national responsibilities leading to the improvement of environment and development education. It called for environmental and development education to be available to learners of all ages and for environment and development concepts to be infused within all educational programs. Further, it proposed the inclusion of school children in studies of local and regional environmental health and resource use (Palmer 1998).

Since the 1980s, strands of environmental education in practice have echoed the themes common across the past decades' environmental policy documents. *Development education*, *peace education*, and *human rights education* have sought to give voice and access to those historically silenced and marginalized and eliminate social and environmental injustices. These three strands, complementary and interdependent, fall under the umbrella of *global education*. *Earth education* attempts to support living harmoniously with and within the Earth's ecosystems by developing in learners both a rich understanding of how natural systems work and an attitude of care toward Earth. Related, *humane education* broadly embraces the need for compassionate, respectful, and responsible citizenship that nurtures all life. Looking forward, future's education brings together environmental education with future studies as it considers what we

hope for the future and how our present actions will influence our environments to come. Finally, *education for sustainable development* seeks to foster in learners an understanding of the interconnections and interdependence of Earth's systems, our use of resources, and the ability of systems to support development (Palmer 1998).

**Ecology**   Study of the relations of plants and animals with their habitat; from Greek *okologie*, formed on Greek oikos *house* + −*logia*, which is partly formed on *logos* discourse, speech, partly formed on *log*-, variation of *leg*-, *legein* speak

Like environment, *ecology* is broad and has varied meanings. It can refer to the study of the diversity of life. Ecological study can involve examination of the distribution and wealth of life. It can also be the study of the relationships and interactions within the natural world. Ecology and environment have often been used interchangeably. *Ecological literacy* draws upon a deep understanding of the systems in the natural world.

David Orr (1992) described ecological literacy as including the ability to read and use numbers but also expanded it beyond "indoor skills" (p. 86). He asserted that *ecological literacy* was more demanding; it required being able to "observe nature with insight" (p. 86). It includes and goes beyond a fundamental understanding of ecology, sustainability, and problem-solving to the recognition of natural systems – Bateson's "patterns that connect" – and our place within them (Orr 2005). Ecological literacy is motivated by one's sense of wonder, "the sheer delight in being alive in a beautiful, mysterious, bountiful world" (Orr 1992, p. 86).

Orr (1992) outlines six foundations upon which *ecological literacy* rests:

> 1) all education is environmental education; 2) environmental issues are complex and cannot be understood through a single discipline; 3) education occurs in part as a dialogue with a place and has the characteristics of good conversation; 4) the way education occurs is as important as its content; 5) experience in the natural world is both an essential part of understanding the environment and conducive to good thinking; and 6) education relevant to the challenge of building a sustainable society will enhance the learner's competence with natural systems. (p. 90–92)

> Ecological literacy is a theoretical ideal but the challenge in working toward it is clear when we consider a typical classroom. I fear that many teachers would agree, after consideration, that all education is environmental education but our accepted and perpetuated education system does not reflect that. Instead, we separate teaching and learning into distinct disciplines with little cross-disciplinary opportunities, particularly in secondary schools. All too often environmental education comes in the form of a few outcomes in the prescribed science and social studies curricula and does not reflect the complexity of environments. The prescribed curriculum is large and teachers often feel pressed to get through all of its outcomes in the school year; do teachers recognize that there can be time to allow for conversations with place, for whiling (Jardine 2008)? Likewise, many teachers feel unprepared and anxious to take their students out of the classroom and into the natural world to learn and therefore choose not to (Ham and Sewing 1988; Kim and Fortner 2006; Ko and Lee 2003). In theory, I agree with, and applaud, Orr's foundations of ecological literacy but in practice I think teachers themselves must fully realize and embrace the

meta-disciplinary, systemic, and experiential nature of environmental education in their planned and lived curricula. this however is not always the case.

**Consciousness**    Privy to a thing with another or oneself; aware of; known to oneself; from Latin *conscius*, formed on *con-* get to know, learn + *sci-* base of *scire* know

A final suggested goal of environmental education is the development of an *ecological consciousness* in its students. Ecological consciousness is inextricably linked to deep ecology; it is one's self-realization (Naess 2008). It is an invitation to extend the self to beyond and recognize the transpersonal nature of the self – the self. Through this recognition and acceptance, "we will naturally respect, love, honour, and protect that which is of the self" (Fox 1995, 226).

The strength in *ecological consciousness* as a goal for environmental education lies in *consciousness* itself. Our consciousness allows us to exist and is what connects us to nature and to the Earth (Morris 2002). It emerges through our interactions with the world and in response to our surroundings; it is this interaction which brings forth the world (Maturana and Varela 1987). It could even be questioned whether consciousness needs to be identified as ecological – given that consciousness is innately connected and coevolving with the environment, would it not always be ecological?

An ecological consciousness goes beyond ecological literacy as it is not limited by narrow understandings of language. Its own definition recognizes the interplay of the self and the environment. It is "an awareness of identification and interpenetration of self with ecosystem and biosphere" (Sessions, as cited in Fox 2005, p. 234). Ecological consciousness is meta-disciplinary and naturally involves experiential learning.

> As with ecological literacy, fostering ecological consciousness in students is ideal but how would this goal be understood by teachers? I feel as though I am barely scratching the surface of an understanding of deep ecology and cognitive science – how would teachers who have not had an introduction to works by Naess, Devall and Sessions, Fox, Maturana, and Varela identify with ecological consciousness? Will they hold a shallow concept of ecology and consciousness that nestles only as deeply as memorization of sample food chains and what products can be recycled? Also, how might teachers invite their students to enlightened ecological consciousness without directing them?

So... how might we name and what goals should we state for environmental education? This really depends on how teachers understand and realize each of its terms. Citizenship must be recognized to be a characteristic of members of the entire community – human beings, more than human beings, living things, and nonliving things. The environment must be understood to be a process as well as a place and one within which we dwell. Ecology should be recognized as the relationships of self within self. Literacy is much more than reading and writing of words; it is conversing with those signs in our environment, the "patterns that connect." Consciousness comes into existence and coevolves through our lived experience in the world.

When thinking about environmental education, I cannot help but come back to David Orr's (1992) declaration that "all education is environmental education" (p. 90). Rather than dwelling on what we need to clarify as a goal for environmental education and recognizing it as a distinct discipline (which it is not), maybe it is more worthwhile to consider what our goals are for education in general. What do we want our students to achieve in education? Perhaps we ought to be embedding and embodying the ideals of responsible environmental citizenship, environmental literacy, ecological literacy, and ecological consciousness in our lived and written core curricula.

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# Citizen Science

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## A Path to Democratic and Sociopolitically Conscious Science

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**Abstract**

In this chapter we explore the idea of citizen science in science education and its value in broadening student science participation, building greater science engagement, and expanding the usefulness of science in broader life events and actions. The focus of the chapter is to explore how citizen science provides a space and context for teachers and students to engage in science content and activities that bring greater personal and community meanings in learning and doing science. The chapter seeks to explore the following questions framed by critical pedagogy and critical theories: What is citizen science and how does it raise critical consciousness in students from underrepresented groups? How is citizen science a space for equitable science teaching and learning space for all students? In what ways does citizen help students make sense of science learning and provides a context to challenge the dominant view of learning and doing science? How does citizen science make doing science a democratic practice for sociopolitical consciousness? As we answer these questions, we draw from critical theories and pedagogies where sociocultural contexts take a central space in understanding affordances of citizen science as a sociopolitical consciousness raising framework for teaching and learning.

## Introduction

Citizen science (CS) has been recognized as a distinct scientific method for data collection and analysis by the professional field (Silvertown 2009). CS is founded in the relationship between the public (volunteers, students, or activists) who collect data in partnership with professional researchers from universities, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), government entities, and nonprofits (Silvertown 2009; Ruiz-Mallén et al. 2016). Wiggins and Crowston (2015) liken the difference between scientist and citizen as that between expert and non-expert, with formal training and credentials distinguishing the scientist. CS facilitates communication between scientists and the public, providing an educational opportunity for both parties involved and a method for collecting large-scale data that may not be possible with other techniques. CS projects allow for intensive surveys across larger areas, such as continents, and in longer temporal windows, which would be costly and time consuming if carried out solely by professional scientists. CS also allows localized data to be collected at higher resolutions where more direct action can take place (Hochachka et al. 2012; Bonney et al. 2014; Theobald et al. 2015). Yet, most research in CS has not focused on in what ways CS could help the public – including students, teachers, caregivers, activists, and those from underrepresented groups – understand and value the power of science for

sociopolitical and sociocultural action. We are specifically questioning the value and voice given to local knowledge given that CS relies on expertise situated in, and originating from, knowledge that local communities openly share. Additionally, we question the value and voice given to the local community's ways of knowing because CS requires non-science participants to collect data based on the values of Western Modern Science (WMS). We further question how the local knowledge created by using centuries of observational and experiential data gets co-opted by scientists and institutions for their benefit and the promotion of WMS as the only legitimate and reliable way of generating knowledge. These issues, for us, raise much deeper moral questions about the purposes and goals of CS in making science accessible and meaningful for individuals and communities from underrepresented and indigenous groups. Finally, we wonder if participation in CS encourages and supports sociopolitical consciousness-oriented actions and discourses. In other words, does CS allow local communities and their members to critically examine both the epistemology and value of CS for sociopolitical consciousness-oriented discussions and actions?

The importance of the public's understanding of science is becoming necessary with increasing changes in our natural environments due to human activities and natural disasters. In the past decade, efforts to reform science education have been made, with movements toward informal science education inside and outside of the classroom. Informal environments such as museums became important spaces to attract the public to engage in science for the purposes of both educating them about science and its developments and critically examining human interactions with science. In this space, the types of science knowledge and the ways of understanding science were decided mostly by majority privileged White individuals. This inadvertently excluded most of the groups from underrepresented communities such as Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Hmong (people from Southeast Asia) in both the nature of museums and its contents. Therefore, CS became a logical space to broaden participation specifically from underrepresented groups. CS is often viewed as a form of informal science education (Brossard et al. 2005; Burgess et al. 2017; Bonney et al. 2016), but can be further viewed as a way of connecting science education to local place (Silvertown 2009; Riesch and Potter 2014; Wiggins and Crowston 2011; Mueller and Tippins 2012; Adams et al. 2012). Thus, citizen science creates a space for science engagement and learning to be more place-based rather than traditional secluded lab-based environments. There exists a tension between science, place, and one's acquired knowledge (Lim et al. 2013). Science education has historically ignored its connection with place and local communities. Kissling and Calabrese Barton (2013) and Upadhyay et al. (2017, 2019) argue that marginalizing place-based science knowledge in science education ignores cultural and historical realms, minimizing youth's unique sociocultural, political, and geographic backgrounds that shape the way they learn, engage, and give value to education. Place-based inquiry through CS can successfully motivate students to become active members of the community and investigate the ecology (Switzer 2014).

CS can be seen as an abstract concept to many, as there is a wide range of projects with varying objectives. CS projects typically are not withheld to the same hypothesis testing model as other academic research in the field; therefore, research in this

area has been underrepresented in peer-reviewed science and science education literature. Furthermore, the limited number of studies on CS within science education has focused mostly on the engagement and outreach aspect of it, with less emphasis on the sociopolitical and sociocultural influence of CS on individuals and communities from underrepresented groups. In this chapter we first explore the current status of CS and its typologies based on Wiggins and Crowston (2011) and Bonney et al. (2009). Typologies allow us to explore how and why CS projects are conceptualized, goals are set, outcomes are communicated, and community and public are involved. Second, we explore the value of CS projects in engaging underrepresented groups through a critical framework by questioning social, cultural, and institutional powers that are embedded in CS projects and then linking the potential value of CS in making science engagement and learning as a sociopolitical act. Finally, we present our CS project on attempting to create citizen science curriculum for personal and community wellness and engagement in science among underrepresented groups.

## What Is in a Name: Citizen Science and Its Meaning

Citizen science (CS) projects are most common in the fields of ecological and environmental sciences but are also implemented in other disciplines. The earliest examples of CS projects are from the early 1900s, such as the Christmas Bird Count, run by the National Audubon Society (2018). The UK began one of the longest running CS projects in 1932 through the UK National Biodiversity Network (NBN), which keeps records of observed plant and animal species. The NBN's project has collected over 38 million observations to this day and recorded over 71,980 different species (NBN 2018). The success in collecting so many data on so many avian species is possible only because ordinary people engaged in the process who valued the knowledge that could come out of their small but valuable contributions. However, the critical examination of questions such as what citizen science is, who counts as a "citizen," and what is science is needed to ensure that this kind of "science is for all" and everyone has equal voice in the knowledge CS will create. From critical theory's point of view, we believe, the benefits of CS cannot be just for elite groups of people and institutions. CS has to benefit all who participated in its success.

According to Oxford English Dictionary (2018), "Citizen Science is scientific work undertaken by members of the general public, often in collaboration with or under the direction of professional scientists and scientific institutions" (n.p.). On the other hand, Cambridge University Dictionary (2018) defines citizen science as "science done by ordinary people, often for or with the help of scientists" (n.p.). These two definitions beg several questions, including: Who is a "citizen"? Who decides who is not a citizen or belongs to "citizen science"? How is "citizen" and "general public" different? Which activities and actions count as citizen science and who decides the legitimacy of such activities? Who decides who is a "professional scientist and scientific institution"? What role or voice do ordinary people have in

making the decisions of what science to be done under CS? Who decides and controls the processes of collaboration and the outcomes of it? How, if at all, does science done by indigenous and other nonscientist groups during CS become valued and attributed as *science* knowledge contributions of those communities? What are the public responsibilities of scientific institutions in research and who benefits from that research?

These questions about CS make us wonder if a unitary definition of CS is possible (Eitzel et al. 2017). On the other hand, if we believe that the meaning of CS is shaped by individual sociopolitical, sociocultural, and local experiences and local worldviews, then how should CS community work with a community of ordinary people? From the action point of view, CS community members seem to use the idea of "ordinary people" and "public" as a way to collect large swaths of data through participation. However, these words only go so far to capture the idea of CS as a participatory science because the participants are without much agency and direct voice in the overall processes of CS. Many scientific institutions tend to use CS to improve community engagement and hope to increase numerical equity in STEM disciplines (e.g., Annie E. Casey Foundation 2014; Maruyama et al. 2014; Upadhyay et al. 2017). Our understanding of equity also involves the value of racial equity in science education. From these perspectives, CS is more than just data gathering, temporal and geographical coverage, scientific knowledge, and opportunities for participation by "ordinary people." We assert that CS has to be viewed and practiced as a sociopolitical and sociohistorical issue in science education to achieve equity, agency, and participation.

## Defining Citizen Science and Public Participation

Citizen science (CS) was first labeled as a term in the mid-1990s by Rick Bonney (1996) in the USA and Alan Irwin (1995) in the UK. Both researchers have different definitions of CS, which leads to the first major divide in CS projects. Bonney (1996) defines citizen science as the successful combination of public engagement in professional scientific projects that include both outreach and research objectives. He saw the movement as scientific projects in which nonscientists (amateurs) provide observational data for scientists and ultimately gain scientific skills through their participation (Bonney 1996). Through this, the democratization of science and scientific research allowed a "give-and-take," bidirectional nature of learning within CS. Bonney advocated CS as a method to collect large quantities of data to be submitted and analyzed by professional scientists and their respective institutions. This perspective is distinct from how CS was envisioned in the UK context. Alan Irwin saw CS a method to engage citizens in a form of scientific democracy, where participants are involved in all steps of the inquiry process, from question development to policy-level action. According to Irwin (1995), "'Citizen Science' … conveys both senses of the relationship between science and citizens" (p. xi). For him, both senses meant science by and for the people, making science more "democratic" while addressing people's "concerns" and helping them better

"understand" science (pp. 69–80). Irwin's goal for CS is to bring the public and science closer together through deeper dialogue and decision-making processes (Bonney et al. 2016; Riesch and Potter 2014). Based on the level of participation and voice a public citizen holds in a given project, CS could be categorized in three ways – "contributory," "collaborative," and "co-created" (Bonney et al. 2009, p. 5).

The above typology shows promise to improve diversity in CS projects where participants are engaged in collecting observational data (Wiggins and Crowston 2015). Additionally, the typology holds strong potential for broader participation in CS when projects are more collaborative and co-designed. Yet, there are many CS projects in which nonscientist citizens are passive participants (Jordan et al. 2011), meaning that much of the project is tightly controlled and initiated by scientists and institutions rather than citizens who may be amateurs.

In the past two decades, CS projects have multiplied and are being used in a variety of settings. CS projects have become more widespread due to development of the Internet and other mass technologies. Increased functionality of the technologies such as the Internet allows data to be gathered and disseminated more easily and efficiently, facilitating data sharing across interested communities of amateurs and scientists. CS projects are also more visible and accessible online, which has led to a greater awareness of the CS potential and uses in science, government, and education communities. CS projects are now easily searchable by citizens and agencies who may have an interest in specific scientific topics. Information technologies are used in greater extents to create functional interfaces to increase participant diversities so those who may not have numerical or literacy skills can still participate (Bonney et al. 2015). Some CS projects can be completed solely online, where participants are required to classify or interpret files, videos, pictures, and sounds, such as in Galaxy Zoo (Zooniverse 2018). Increased Internet and smartphone use supports CS projects that emphasize data collection over educational aims. CS projects that are mediated by information and communication technologies have been seen as a form of crowdsourcing: a participation model that makes an open call for contributions from large unidentified networks (Wiggins and Crowston 2015).

Many CS projects share data but do not make all processes publicly available online. This can limit the transparency of the projects and strain the relationship between scientist and partners, creating a dichotomy in leadership (Wiggins and Crowston 2015). Although computational resources have helped the growth of CS projects, there are still subsets of the population who do not have access to technologies, perpetuating disparities in science participation and literacy. Another limitation of computer-based CS projects is the constant development of technology, makes it difficult for the management of CS projects to keep up with rapid changes. Additionally, the need for cyber infrastructure and security can become costly (Silvertown 2009) for both the participants and the institutions that depend on them. Therefore, we view CS projects increasingly needing ways to promote ethics and rigor in scientific projects. Finally, some of the most pressing and challenging questions in front of CS works include the myriad ways in which citizens participate in projects, who has the power to decide the nature and scope of projects, and what

metrics are used to assess the effectiveness of projects, particularly with respect to meeting educational, emancipatory, and social goals.

## Citizen Science Typologies and Nature of Public Participation

The public deficit in science knowledge is becoming more apparent, begging the question: If an individual understands how scientific investigations are carried out – from observation to analysis – would they better understand and evaluate scientific claims in their daily life? If so, could CS serve as a method to empower communities and improve their well-being? What differentiates CS from other forms of public participation in science is active engagement in scientific work, though this engagement may be superficial (i.e., simply data collection) or intensive (i.e., co-creating scientific research) (Wiggins and Crowston 2011). Many researchers (e.g., Howe 2006; Irwin 1995; Muller and Tippins 2012) have written on and conducted CS research in broad areas of interests, which in turn requires different levels of public participation. In this chapter, we critically explore the typologies of CS as proposed by Wiggins and Crowston (2011) and Bonney et al. (2016) to explore the need for situating CS projects in a sociocultural theoretical lens. Additionally, examine how CS projects suppress or enhance issues of equity, social justice, race, gender, power, sociocultural, and sociopolitical issues and interrogate the ways that recent CS projects have marginalized or supported the participation of people from underrepresented groups. We draw on critical theories to explore CS and the nature of underrepresented group participation in each case.

## Wiggins and Crowston's (2011) Citizen Science Typologies and Nature of Participation

Drawing from a sample of 30 citizen science projects pursued in North American, Wiggins and Crowston (2011) constructed five typologies. They defined the typologies based on the nature of public involvement in various stages of scientific inquiry, project goals, and use of technology. The typology was developed by evaluating the 30 projects across 80 different facets, using a clustering method to narrow to 5 mutually exclusive groups or typologies. When clustering the CS projects, Wiggins and Crowston based the clustering on self-defined goals of those who initiated each of the projects. The five typologies Wiggins and Crowston came up with are action, conservation, investigation, virtual, and education.

### Action Citizen Science

Action CS projects (e.g., urban pollination project at University of Washington at Seattle, "Globe at Night" at National Geographic, etc.) have local concerns at the forefront, with scientific research used as a tool to enhance engagement. These

projects usually have citizens serving as project initiators, with professional researchers serving more as consultants, a bottom-up approach to research. Activities are usually linked to the physical world and provide long-term environmental monitoring in the community. The data collected are typically used to show reasons for intervention on environmental issues, not with the goal of publication. Action projects are not dependent on the use of technology, because often it is hard to find volunteers who understand information technology and maintain infrastructure.

Action CS is one of the key ways in which K-12 schools, universities, and nonprofit organizations, such as National Geographic, engage ordinary public in science and scientific research. Action citizen science projects have potential to take up sociopolitical and sociocultural issues of interest to a community while receiving guidance from scientific research. Based on research done in the areas of sociopolitical consciousness across many disciplines, including science (e.g., Seider et al. 2017; Sleeter 2012; Szostkowski and Upadhyay 2019; Upadhyay et al. 2017), public engagement, broad participation, and strong personal connections to local issues are key factors in the successes of any action-oriented activities to a community. Therefore, we argue that for CS to be more action-oriented and have meaningful impact on people's lives, action CS has to appeal to the broad groups of individuals and bring them in its fold through localized, issue-focused CS activities.

## Conservation Citizen Science

Conservation CS projects have natural resource and stewardship as primary goals. As such, conservation CS can be a potent and powerful tool for confronting numerous challenges facing local and global conservation, including in the areas of conservation biology. For example, a 2-year CS study exploring the impact of cattle grazing on frequency and types of wild mammals and birds visiting fruiting trees in Brazilian Pantanal showed that citizen participation enhanced Pantanal conservation and land management for cattle farmers (Eaton et al. 2017). Conservation CS projects are rooted in local environmental conservation matters. These projects generally emphasize data collection and contain a stronger affiliation with local governments and government agencies that CS initiatives from the other four typologies. In most cases conservation projects tend to be initiated by academics and require volunteers with more specific capabilities, a top-down approach to scientific research. The data generated by these CS projects are publicly available but often in inaccessible formats or with different sets of data collection criteria. Additionally, there is a greater demand for access to data from these projects. Therefore, the need for appropriate and – at times – sophisticated technologies to access complicated data tends to put extra burden on technology resources (Wiggins and Crowston 2011).

Since the research related to conservation CS project are mostly on local conservation issues, the ideas of place-based education could help researchers and public better engage and add value to conservation CS projects for better and deeper understanding of conservation science and its links to local cultural practices.

Additionally, place-based ideas associated with conservation CS further engages the public as democratic and engaged citizens who cherish better environment, social quality, and cultural preservation in their communities (Gruenewald and Smith 2008; Smith and Sobel 2010). Extending conservation CS with place-based ideas into K-12 teaching and learning would encourage students to invest in participating in science and scientific research as professional scientists and citizens. Conservation CS projects in the classrooms could draw from critical pedagogy aspects of place-based paradigm to explore ways to have greater and varied voices of the local people in these citizen science projects. Place-based ideas could enhance dominant conservation CS norms and values by preserving and sustaining sociocultural values and knowledge of the local community while also ensuring sound scientific outcomes through distributed powers in a democratic scientific engagement.

## Investigation Citizen Science

Investigation CS projects emerged as projects requiring data collection from the physical environment, with an emphasis on providing valid scientific results and generating formal science knowledge. Investigation CS project is carefully designed with research goals as a priority over education. These projects are usually led by academics or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), thus following a top-down approach to scientific research. For example, the river otter demographic study initiated by Wildlife faculty at Humboldt State University, CA, recruited public from the Humboldt Bay area to collect observational data on the number of otters and scat samples to better understand how to save river otter populations using DNA information (Brzeski et al. 2013). The goal for public participation was to benefit investigators rather than the public, though arguably the results could benefit river otters. The researchers and public used a specialized data collection method called the Program Mark for this study. Program Mark, also known as include capture-recapture, capture-mark-recapture, and mark-recapture, is a method commonly used in ecology to estimate population size of an animal group (e.g., Lukacs and Burnham 2005; Pradel 1996; Paetkau 2005). In this method a portion of an animal population is captured, marked, and released in its habitat. At a later time, depending on the nature of the exploration, a sample of the animal is captured from the same group and habitat, and the number of marked animals is counted. The ratio of total number of marked animals to the total number of marked animals captured in the second sample gives an estimate of the total population size of the animal under study. This method allows for estimating an animal's population size when counting each individual in a population is impossible or costly. Through this example we see how investigation CS projects encourage the public to use a wide range of technology tools to collect data of benefit to researchers. One of the major constraints of investigation CS seems to be restrictive data access policies pertaining to the larger public from different walks of lives (Wiggins and Crowston 2011).

From critical theory perspectives (e.g., hooks 1994; Friere 1970; Giroux 1992; Gramsci 1971; Ladson-Billings 1994), public participation in education must focus

on how power, privilege, and voice are controlled so only certain kinds of knowledge are legitimized. Through this lens, the nature and focus of investigation citizen science projects would present great concern with respect to how the public is allowed to participate in scientific research and access (or not) privileged information (i.e., data). If the power of what gets investigated resides solely among researchers and institutions, the potential for finding meaning in public's participation is greatly diminished. Therefore, we believe that for investigation citizen science to make meaningful contribution to the public, it has to find ways to involve the public in more intimately with the research design and interpretation.

## Virtual Citizen Science

Virtual CS projects are generally information- and communication-technology based. These projects are designed to produce valuable contributions to science while maintaining volunteer interest. Virtual CS projects tend to follow the top-down approach of conservation and investigation projects, with the original development made by academics or other organizations with the capability to build complex web platforms (Wiggins and Crowston 2011). The requirement of technology for virtual CS projects create a digital divide that plagues much of science causing those without access to certain technologies to be continuously disenfranchised (Mueller and Tippins 2012). Yet, with the greater public connected to technology through mobile and other devices, a deluge of data could be collected through virtual CS projects. For example, *Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI)@home* was the first virtual CS project that used Internet-connected personal computers to process data generated by radio telescope looking for extraterrestrial intelligence (Anderson 2004). Now, with greater access to mobile technology, there is more opportunity to bring in diverse groups of the public from far-flung areas and those historically left out from participating in meaningful scientific research. For example, in a virtual citizen science project called "Foldit" (http://www.bakerlab.org/index/), researchers recruited online game players to use problem-solving skills in the search for unknown three-dimensional protein structures (Cooper 2011). The value of this virtual CS project is that scientists included game players (i.e., the public) as co-authors in their publications, thereby formally recognizing the public's efforts and skills (Eiben et al. 2012). However, the challenge of this particular project was that scientists could only recruit individuals who were very fluent in complex problem-solving skills in virtual gaming contexts. On the other hand, virtual CS project Zooniverse required less technologically skilled citizens than Foldit. In the case of Zooniverse, the public became "Planet Hunters" without needing highly complex skills, but they still had opportunities to engage in scientific research and could help locate new planets and other undiscovered astronomical objects (Raddick et al. 2010). Furthermore, virtual CS projects mostly include individuals from upper- and middle-class families (Raddick et al. 2010; Riesch and Potter 2013). Research shows that citizens from these groups are more willing to participate in virtual and other CS

projects across the board because they have both access and skills to participate in virtual CS projects (Riesch and Potter 2013).

From critical theory and critical consciousness perspectives (e.g., Giroux 1992; Ladson-Billings 1995a, b, 2006, 2014), virtual CS projects need to focus on equity issues and inclusion of participants from underrepresented groups. Technological developments have created greater opportunities to participate in scientific research and discourses, but the distribution of the technology required for participation is skewed toward more affluent communities (Riesch and Potter 2013). Additionally, gender participation in most virtual CS projects is similarly tilted in favor of men. For example, in virtual CS projects such as SETI @home (93% male) (SETI@home team 2006), World Community Grid (90% male) (World Community Grid member study 2013), Zooniverse (67% male) (Reed et al. 2013), and Galaxy Zoo (82% male) (Raddick et al. 2013) show clear underrepresentation of women. Virtual CS projects and the researchers and institutions promoting them should work toward broadening the participation of women and non-science degree holders to ensure that citizen science lives up to its promise of equity and inclusion. Virtual CS projects have to look into "threshold fear" (Gurian 2005, p. 203). "Threshold fear" is when people perceive constraints to participation in activities that are actually intended for them (Gurian 2005; Simon 2012). In the case of virtual CS projects, individuals and communities from underrepresented groups are reluctant to participate because of their sociocultural, historical, gender, racial, and personal historical experiences with institutions and locations (Dawson and Jensen 2011). Therefore, virtual CS projects should look into how to make public participation more inclusive and attainable, specifically with respect to underrepresented groups. The meaningful engagement in virtual CS projects should look into making them sociopolitically relevant to the communities and participants for greater participation and motivating factor for growth.

## Education Citizen Science

Of all five typologies, only Education CS has as its central goals outreach and engagement. Education CS projects are designed to promote, among school-going public, cumulative learning experiences and inquiry skills focused on scientific research question development and data analysis. These projects are considered CS because of the involvement of professional researchers in a classroom setting whose analysis and engagement contribute to larger research efforts. The cost of doing education CS projects is generally higher because professional development in scientific research skills is required for teachers to directly participate in the research endeavor, a key goal of education CS (Wiggins and Crowston 2011).

An example of a project that fits in Wiggins and Crowston's education CS typology is described in a study conducted by Ruiz-Mallén et al. (2016) in a classroom setting in the Catalan region of Spain. The study focuses on a project developed by researchers through questions formulated by secondary students on the effects of wall colors on educational performance. The authors were interested in the

potential of CS to empower and increase students' capacity to think as independent learners. Students expressed an increase in scientific learning beyond what is normally expected in K-12 school settings. Students learned through interactions with professional scientists on subject matters not otherwise taught, such as research methodologies, processes of data analysis, and other scientific skills. One of Ruiz-Mallén and colleagues' most noteworthy findings was that – through meeting the actual scientists and collaborating with them – students became more motivated to go into science careers and viewed scientists as kind and friendly people. This study emphasized the power of education CS projects on students' connection with the scientific community and the potential of CS to benefit students and researchers alike. Another key practice for education CS projects to maintain and teach to students is transparency among various stakeholders (Ruiz-Mallén et al. 2016).

Education CS projects are powerful ways to provide students with opportunities to engage with science content and scientific research of relevance to their lives and communities. Furthermore, education CS also could encourage historically marginalized students and communities to carve out spaces to bring locally generated knowledge and skills into scientific research. This aids in mitigating barriers between underrepresented groups and the science community with respect to science knowledge. Critical consciousness could be raised through education CS more efficiently and effectively as students and schools are engaged in co-creating and co-researching school-based and local problems in collaboration with the scientists. Therefore, showing greater promise for more empowering and transformative experiences for people from the underrepresented groups (e.g., Ottinger 2010; Ryan and Deci 2009; Upadhyay et al. 2017, 2019).

The typologies of Wiggins and Crowston (2011) provide us with a framework to explore ways in which issues of equity, discrimination, race, marginalization, power, and institutional disparities in science and scientific research could be interrogated. Wiggins and Crowston's typologies mostly focus on researchers rather than the public. Bonney et al.'s (2016) citizen science typologies (which they call "nature of activities," p. 4) answer the questions on how the public participates in citizen science projects, i.e., the role of public in CS projects, and how the community participation and participants engage in CS projects. Additionally, Bonney et al.'s typologies consider school-researcher connections more directly than Wiggins and Crowston's typologies, thus broadening public understanding of science. We now discuss the Bonney et al. typologies of CS and how they intersect with sociopolitical, sociohistorical, and cultural diversities to promote greater participation and voice from public participants.

## Bonney et al.'s (2016) Citizen Science Typologies and Nature of Participation

In 2016, Bonney and colleagues proposed four categories of CS projects that reflect aspects of Wiggins and Crowston's (2011) typologies but focus more on types of activities the public would be involved in a particular CS project. Since their focus

was on the nature of public activities within CS projects, they defined four categories in which all CS projects would fall based on their potential impact on the public's understanding of science. One of the key questions for us in this chapter is to critically examine if CS projects are successful in empowering the public through meaningful scientific inquiry leading to improvement in community well-being. Additionally, we also critically examine if sociocultural and sociohistorical theories would further help enhance our understanding of citizen science's impact on PUS and participation of the public from underrepresented groups. We examine each of the four categories of CS as proposed by Bonney et al. below: data collection CS, data processing CS, curriculum-based CS, and community science CS (p. 4).

## Data Collection Citizen Science

Data collection is an integral part of any scientific endeavor, and science has specific practices that govern data collection as well as what would count as data to answer specific research questions. This means that the scientific knowledge generated very much depends on the data collected. Therefore, data collection is central to any CS project. All CS projects use public, who may or may not have formal training in scientific data collection, as volunteers to collect data for use in organized scientific research (Bonney et al. 2016). Most data collection projects are often hypothesis-driven and generally focus on environmental monitoring. The projects categorized as data collection CS are mostly based on top-down approaches to public participation where scientists control all aspects of research including which and how the data should be collected. Data collection CS projects are similar to those of Wiggins and Crowston's (2011) investigation and conservation typologies that take a top-down approach.

Many CS projects falling under "data collection" tend to be large in scale, cover broad geographic regions, and be long term (several decades) (Shirk and Bonney 2015). Data collection projects also tend to produce a higher number of publications that are purely for scientific knowledge development purposes; thus, they tend to make less of an impact on the general public's understanding of science (Bonney et al. 2009). This may be due to the fact that there has been less research done on the social impacts of data collection, and also the projects tend to exclude measurements of educational outcomes (Mueller and Tippins 2012). Data collection projects often include direct participation from the public, but do not actually involve interactions with scientist and citizen, or incorporate citizen-generated questions into the research design (Mueller and Tippins 2012). Therefore if CS projects seek to pursue long-term success as their primary goal, then these projects need to develop simple to follow data collection protocols and show clear benefits of the projects to the participating public (Hochachka et al. 2012)

Most CS projects in the field of ecology are data collection CS projects. These projects are conducted at scales that are relevant to range shifts, migration patterns, disease spread, national policy changes, and climate change (Tulloch et al. 2013). One of the longest running data collection CS projects is the eBird project (http://ebird.org)

conducted by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, which has collected over five million observation data from across the globe and various public groups (Theobald et al. 2015).

With the widespread use of smartphones and other personal technology devices, data collection CS projects have become more common as well. A study done by Snik et al. (2014) was initiated because current measurements of ground-level aerosols in the UK were not sufficient to permit mitigation efforts. A lack of temporal monitoring and low-resolution data from satellites prompted Snik and colleagues to develop a low-cost smartphone add-on – called the ISPEX – that allowed citizens to use phone as a spectropolarimetric instrument, enabling the direct and effective collection of atmospheric data. The ISPEX allows for crowdsourced measurements that reduces polarimetric error by averaging thousands of entries (Snik et al. 2014). The data can then be used to better understand ground-level air pollution, lobby for change, and create air quality awareness. Bonney et al. (2009), Haklay (2013), and Shirk and Bonney (2015) have all argued that data collection CS projects could be made more engaging by improving collaborative and co-creation of design with the public's input and interests. Yet the current system of data collection CS projects is more interested in getting new discoveries of unexpected ecological events and patterns, but less on creating strong bonds within communities through many shared activities, such as bird watching or water quality monitoring (Tulloch et al. 2013). The challenges to bring more collaborative approach to data collection CS projects reside in institutional and corporate structures of how science research is carried and who benefits from these outcomes. If we were to interrogate power structures and systems of scientific enterprise, we find a system that views science and its practices from an "end supports the means" perspective. We believe this kind of results-oriented attitude encourages a kind of science that is exclusive and controlling rather than a science that is focused on generating new knowledge for the public good. Furthermore, we also don't believe that citizen science could provide solutions to every social problem because in most data collection CS projects, the goal of CS is for the researchers rather than for the community and community goals (Shirk et al. 2012).

The goals of data collection CS projects tend to focus on new scientific understanding for policy changes and actions (Pocock et al. 2014) which tend to give overwhelming power to scientists and institutions rather than the public participants. According to Bonney and colleagues (2009b), citizen science could be a path for scientific literacy among a large swath of public that is less inclined to be interested in science. However, the question remains as to how CS shift its contribution from literacy to sociopolitical consciousness actions and local empowerment to influence policy for the larger community good. Many scholars in education (e.g., Apple 1993; Freire 1990; Giroux 1992; Ladson-Billings 2014; McLaren 2005) and science education (e.g., Pierotti 2011; Upadhyay and Albrecht 2011; Weinstein 2016) have suggested that the field of education and science education as well has to be explored and challenged through critical lens so that communities and people who are historically put in the margins get voice and opportunities just like the ones in power. Therefore, data collection CS projects have to be viewed, challenged, and questioned so that public at the margins get greater voice and input to benefit the communities in need of scientific solutions which respects local sociocultural values.

## Data Processing CS Projects

Bonney et al. (2016) define data processing projects as another typology for CS. These CS projects are made possible by the Internet and sometimes referred to as crowdsourcing projects. Activities include data transcription, categorization, management, and interpretation. Participants do not physically collect data but examine and analyze it, much like the virtual CS projects categorized by Wiggins and Crowston (2011). Similar to CS data collection projects, data processing projects have education as a side objective that occurs through the research process. Shirk and Bonney (2015) suggest that data processing CS projects involve the public to "manage, transcribe, or interpret large quantities of data, for example, photographs of animals and their behaviors taken by cams around the world" (p. 2). There is an extensive demand on the public who participate in data processing CS to do more than just process data. Therefore, only 10% of the public make majority of the contributions (80%) in data processing CS projects (Bonney et al. 2016). Hence data processing projects have limited impact on the public's understanding of science. Yet, these projects could help improve public's awareness of new scientific research that are taking place at various scientific institutions and may also encourage the public to take up hobbies that are more closely connected to science (Bonney et al. 2016).

The data processing CS seems to focus more on the skills that are specific to certain kinds of science – analyzing photographs rather than numerical data. The narrowness of the skills results in fewer people from the public to engage with the questions a CS project is exploring. On the other hand, these members of the public are highly motivated and committed to engaging with a CS project. The concentration of narrow band of the public in a CS project could leave out many from underrepresented groups because many from these groups generally tend not to drop out of science courses lacking many scientific skills (Plunk et al. 2014). Plunk et al.'s (2014) study shows that the dropout rate in high school increased by 11.4% when students were required to take more mathematics and science courses; but when students were required to take fewer than six mathematics and science courses, the dropout rate was closer to 8.6%. A more concerning finding of the study was when ethnicity, gender, and race were accounted, the dropout rate for among women and many racial and ethnic minority groups increased by almost 5%. Thus, the power and privilege to participate in data processing CS projects were mostly among the White men. The current education system doesn't provide access and power to the public from underrepresented groups to participate and influence CS projects.

## Curriculum-Based Citizen Science

The third category that Bonney et al. (2016) propose for the CS typology is curriculum-based CS projects. These CS projects typically take place in K-12 classrooms or as after-school programs. These CS projects involve supervised youths who are taught by school teachers or larger parent organizations such as

the Parent-Teacher Association of a school to collect data and analyze data. Some curriculum-based CS projects are targeted at specific scientific research questions, and students collect scientific data; but the key distinguishing factor in this kind of CS is that it is designed to achieve specific educational goals. Curriculum-based projects demand significant number of hours and resources to educate and support K-12 teachers, causing them to be reluctant in adopting CS projects especially if they do not align with State Standards. Trautmann et al. (2013) found that the success of many curriculum-based projects lay in shared data visualization platforms that allow participants to explore and manipulate data, allowing further inquisition in the context and validity of data collected by others.

Curriculum-based CS projects have been found to increase science understanding and evoke interest in students, who previously were skeptical of the science field, to pursue science (Bonney et al. 2016). However, some science educators (Calabrese Barton 2012; Mueller et al. 2012; Weinstein 2012) have questioned how much contribution would CS add to school curriculum and student learning who are historically at the margins of science. Furthermore, citizen science curriculum needs to be place-based for some possibility of including underrepresented groups both in design and implementation (Calabrese Barton 2012; Mueller et al. 2012). Similarly, Michael Apple (1995, 2006) argues that all curriculum where the people in power have the control to justify and require what students need to learn should be viewed more critically. He encourages us to ask not only what students learned but more importantly whose knowledge the curriculum is covering. How did this knowledge become official? What is the relationship between this knowledge and the ways in which it is taught/evaluated? Therefore curriculum-based CS has to be looked at from the perspectives of educational and social inequalities for a better future.

## Community Citizen Science

Community CS projects are those projects that are often developed by community members first, and afterward scientists are solicited for help (Bonney et al. 2009). Community CS is much more like the bottom-up action CS projects as suggested by Wiggins and Crowston (2011). In addition to data collection, community-based projects are distinguished by active participation in the formulation of research questions and design of the project. The goal of data collection, in community projects, is more oriented toward policy change and decision-making surrounding public health and environmental concerns. Community projects can also engage a wider range of volunteers because of the flexibility of the design to meet citizens geographically and have multiple entry levels equipped to accommodate varying degrees of interest and availability (Bonney et al. 2016). Issues arise in community-oriented CS projects when the professional scientist and citizens have varying research agendas. In this kind of research project, the power dynamics between the professional scientists and the community citizens are very skewed or misunderstood. This could create conflicts and disagreements on the goals and the purposes of

the community CS projects between the two groups. Sometimes the expectations of the scientists and the public on time commitment for the project could be unrealistic, and this could generate tensions between these groups. Therefore, scientists should lower their expectation on community participants to show up regularly and stay with the project long term (Mueller et al. 2012; Riesch and Potter 2014). If scientists and institutions design community CS projects, they should know why and how members of the community want to be involved (Adams 2012; Bonney et al. 2014; Mueller et al. 2012).

An example of community-initiated CS project is related to growing asthma cases in socially and economically disadvantaged communities (Eiffert et al. 2016). Citizens from two neighborhoods in the City of Atlanta, Georgia, USA, experienced higher than average asthma rates, prompting the communities to collect accurate data on housing conditions (environment and economy) and asthma (Eiffert et al. 2016). The community hoped to share the results with community-based organizations, universities, and government agencies to influence health and related policies. A team of scientists (Eiffert and his team) conducted a neighborhood wide study that documented prevalence of asthma and environmental conditions of homes that might have influenced the high rate of asthma. Eiffert and his team found high rate of the presence of mold in the homes of the neighborhoods than the national average. The documentation of environmental hazards and assessment of asthma severity was presented to residents and local officials. Subsequently community-based organizations took actions in response. Eiffert et al.'s (2016) study can be used as a successful model for other community-oriented CS projects. Another successful model of community CS project that positively shaped policy and resource management in a local community was about air quality study in West Oakland, California, USA (Fisher et al. 2006). This community CS study on air pollution in West Oakland community led to policy change related to heavy diesel trucking in low income and minority neighborhoods. The project was initiated due to health concerns raised by community members and the need to demonstrate correlation between emissions and racial and immigrant community demographics. The results of the project provided scientific clarity to environmental justice issue the EPA had not shown interest in exploring (Fisher et al. 2006). This project shows the power of community CS project that explored local-level concerns that were not evident in large-scale monitoring projects. This brought policy change in trucking routes in this community. Both of these community-based CS projects were mostly locally initiated. Sometimes the community-based CS could be top-down but with more community support.

In the case of Bangladesh, a top-down community-based co-management of fisheries is an example of community-based CS that brought economic, social, and environmental successes in the Bengali fisheries community (Sultana and Abeyasekera 2008). In this case the top-down community-based CS brought better results for poorer community compared to other top-down CS projects. However, we need to be cautious that many top-down community-based CS projects give greater benefits and voice to richer and more powerful community people than the ones that are bottom-up community CS projects.

Community-based CS projects seemed to show great promise for the good of the local communities and communities and people from underrepresented groups. Yet there are many cautionary steps that need attention in these kinds of CS projects. Conard and Hilchey (2011) list several ways community-based CS projects could marginalize the local people or run into problems. Some of those missteps could be organizational turf battles, improper data collection and data use, focus on scientific knowledge rather than solving community issues, greater control and voice to people from dominant groups and marginalized and poor people being left out, poor communication of the findings so a lay person from the community doesn't understand, and policymakers ignoring the findings from the CS projects. Similar concerns are brought up by many critical researchers in education and science education in particular because when underrepresented communities and individuals are involved in scientific research for the good of these communities, they tend to lose their voice and influence over the more powerful outsider scientists and institutions (e.g., Calabrese Barton 2012; Freire 1990; Giroux 1992; Maruyama et al. 2014; Upadhyay et al. 2019).

Bonney et al. (2016) argue that citizen science has become as large of a field as science itself with greater participation of the public across geographical and community groups throughout the world. The breadth of CS projects also demands clear need for differentiated goals, research methodologies and methods, data collection and analysis, outreach strategies, inclusion of diverse communities, and supporting local needs to solve problems that matters to a community. Therefore making the use of typologies allows for better citizen science projects.

With so much potential for good and also for exploitation of the public, specifically from underrepresented groups, the researchers and other stakeholders have to protect and give power to people who come from underrepresented groups. A much more equity and social justice-oriented frameworks are necessary within the citizen science projects, so the marginalized communities get promised benefits from their involvement in CS projects including, but not limited to, access to the scientists and increased scientific literacy. Below we critically examine for who and for what purposes does citizen science exist and how CS could be further enhanced to be socially just space for underrepresented groups.

## Democratizing Citizen Science with and for Underrepresented Communities

In our attempt to understand and explore different typologies of citizen science projects and their goals and purposes, several important aspects and actors (scientists, community, citizen, etc.) become very salient to us in connection to CS. Additionally when we seek to find relationships between citizen science projects and communities, we discover challenges for communities to gain equal voice and power to influence the processes, solutions, and the nature of understanding expected out of CS projects. Democratization of science and democratic participation of the public in exploring are one the major advocacy slogans of citizen science.

However, most scholars of CS projects haven't critically examined the idea of democracy or democratic public participation in science or in their own projects. Furthermore many of these projects have labeled "democratization of science" in a very simplistic and narrow manner. We also believe that the majority of CS projects anemically lack in framing citizen science as democratic. Therefore we find value in briefly discussing about the ideas of democracy that are prevalent in social and political sciences and why CS projects need to rethink the complexities of democracy and why democratizing of science needs to be more than just participation in collecting data for the benefit of science and scientists. We now briefly discuss what democracy is based on different theorists and how CS projects need to rethink democratic participation more critically if the purposes of CS projects are to help communities find answers to their persisting problems and engage them in science in general.

Democracy for us is not only about participation of diverse groups of people for a common cause but also about whose values and goals are promoted through these participation. Therefore we believe that if the ideas of democracy are practiced in citizen science, then equity and voice and agency of minorities have to be central and protected. Social and political sciences have proposed multiple theories of democracy such as liberal democracy, deliberative democracy, participatory democracy, minority democracy, etc., each having its own meanings and goals. However, there are several crosscutting foundational practices of democracies that each of the theories broadly agree upon, and they are public participation in a shared decision-making; upholding equality and liberty; respect and value for each other's diverse ideas; upholding mutual respect; economic growth for all; open communication; decentralizing political, cultural, and educational power centers; and respectful deliberation of and cooperation for the good of the larger public (e.g., Benhabib 1996; Cohen 1997; Dewey 1927; Habermas 1996; Keane 2009; Lippmann 1993; Pateman 1970; Putnam 1993; Schumpeter 1962). However, in many cases, "in a democracy the cultural standards of the majority [tend to] be the dominant ones and that these standards [are mostly] be culturally debased" (Cunningham 2002, p. 25). In other cases, organizations and groups band together to promote for a common cause or purpose that multiple groups hold as valuable. Thus democracy in this case promoted common interests and multiple groups have to band together to be successful (Dahl 1959). This idea of group interest is countered by neoliberal idea of democracy where efficiency is the root cause of success and that's what democracy is about (Buchanan and Tullock 1965; Hursh 2007), but neoliberal idea of democracy displaces common good and social justice as inefficient goals of democracy (Apple 2009) because large organizations like governments are less efficient than open markets giving choice to the public to make the best decisions. Varying ideas and theories about democracy make us ask why citizen science projects and scientists need to conceptualize democratic participation in citizen science contexts.

In a study of elementary students in a science class, Upadhyay and Albrecht (2011) argue that democratization of science is more sustainable and productive in encouraging students from underrepresented groups to like science and science becomes more inclusive. In another study of after-school program, Fleming et al.

(2015) show that democratizing science values local sociocultural knowledge. In both the studies, agency that students gained to shape the direction of science they wanted to learn was key to democratic nature of the class. Even though these studies are not CS projects, they show how democratized science could benefit underrepresented groups.

In our currently on going CS project, which is a part of a larger National Science Foundation funded project, we are developing a CS curriculum that intends to improve middle and high school students' understanding of the linkages between wellness and environmental factors and their understanding of related science contents. We have envisioned this curriculum to provide tools and experiences to K-12 teachers and students that would allow them to make decisions about what they wanted to explore about their environment that helped them understand and consider potential actions to improve familial and community wellness. In our teacher professional development workshop last summer a teacher noted:

> This CS curriculum is so closely connected to local issues on health, infrastructure, environment, and access to things like food and health [hospitals, air pollution, etc.] that I feel very powerful to students. There are so many opportunities for students and also for us [teachers] to come together to decide what is important for us and explore those ideas and issues... My students in the Northside will be able to decide what and how they want to learn in [conjunction] with [university educators] and us [teachers] in this curriculum. The great thing is that they can use ArcGIS to explore different local problems for their benefit which they [students] decided, not me [teacher] or the [university] experts...The university experts gave the framework but the actual actions were decided by students in each class and most importantly [minority and immigrant] students could explore their own experiences.

In this CS curriculum the agency and the power to make choices in the types of issues to be explored and learned rested mostly on the students and teachers rather than the university experts. The control over the nature and scope of the CS curriculum was on a continuum where the university experts had the least voice and power but the students and teachers had the greatest power and voice. During our teacher PD another CS project teacher participant mentioned:

> This CS curriculum seems to put more value on the local issues rather than global issues. To me it seems that students from diverse communities and specifically the ones from poorer communities, where mostly racial and immigrant minorities live, will find their ideas represented and their problems explored like [food deserts], asthma, air quality, roads, and community gardens...This becomes their [science and their solution].

The CS curriculum is being seen as the place for the teachers to bring students' local knowledge into play and determining what happens through the CS curriculum. When we consider the major tenants of the theories of democracy, we view this CS curriculum on wellness and environment to be based on the democratic values of deliberation among different stakeholders, importance of minority experiences, and the willingness to compromise on an issue, consensus building among the stakeholders, and recognizing the dignity of all the people involved. If CS projects advocate for democratization of science, then they should also strongly focus on

how the democratic values of participation and partnering align with individual and community agency and power to influence what gets explored and for what purposes. Just focusing on neoliberal democratic ideas of efficiency and efficacy for economic and knowledge growth in CS projects may only help put power in a few already powerful people and institutions and may end up alienate the rest of the public. The democratization of science through CS projects raises the question: For who is the science for and to who it belongs?

In most CS projects that we have looked at through Wiggins and Crowston (2011) and Bonney et al. (2009) typologies, we found that they mostly ignore place-based needs, culture, and values of the concerned communities. These concerns become afterthoughts rather than parts of the CS projects. These typologies have also shown that the projects have given greater importance to getting the "science right" and "getting increasingly large amount of data" through all modes of technologies and from diverse groups of the public. These projects also seem to ignore the fact that science is filled with errors and most scientific discoveries came out of errors and failures. Therefore demanding "correctness" and "accuracy" from the public clearly indicates that CS projects don't seem to value the fundamental aspects of engaging in science. How would CS projects be successful in democratization of science if the premium is placed on "getting the answer right" rather than exposing and encouraging the public to engage with science despite "not getting the answer" for a CS project. During our engagement with the teachers in CS curriculum professional development, we were encouraged to learn that they valued the "messiness and uncertainty" that were allowed in the CS curriculum and also "not getting the right answer" was "acceptable" and as "scientific [as] getting the right answer." How do we then consider citizen science for sociopolitically conscious actions if the focus is on the right science? How do we find place for underrepresented groups in CS projects that is for them?

## Sociopolitical Consciousness in Citizen Science

Citizen science has the purpose of brining diverse communities and individuals to participate in science, but the activities in which the public participates in seem less directed toward their community. The social, political, and cultural complexities of a community are mostly left out from the CS projects except in few that intersected with the scientists. We believe sociopolitical conscious actions through CS projects are very organically connected. When a community decides to propose and engage with a CS projects, the community is looking for actionable outcomes that then they can use to enlighten the larger public and policies for change. What troubles us about citizen science is when does a citizen gets to decide which science they want to pursue. We take note of Calabrese Barton (2012) and Weinstein's (2012) idea that citizen science leaves out "citizen's science" and marginalizes what citizens of a place want to explore and learn for the local purposes. In this sense we find citizen science in the current framing can't promote the ideas of equity, social justice, and

sociopolitical consciousness particularly in the citizens from the margins of the society.

We believe equity, social justice, and sociopolitical consciousness go hand-in-hand in citizen science if the goals of CS are to both promote participation from the public in science and focus on place-based problem-solving (Smith 2002; Powers 2004) that is meaningful to a concerned community. Drawing from the equity ideas in education (e.g., Banks 2008; Friere 1970; McLaren 1995, 2005), social justice ideas (e.g., Young 1990; Greene 1986), and sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings 2012), we argue that CS has to be both the context for a CS project and also science contents that are for the community. Furthermore equity, social justice, and sociopolitical consciousness ideas are based on critical theories; therefore CS advocates have to figure out how power, agency, and equal participation with equal voices from the public are respected and valued in CS.

Implementing citizen science in school contexts are worthy efforts as it allows families and students part of science. In our mind CS curriculum that we are working with K-12 teachers allows students and their families to be citizens of citizen science. Students make help our CS curriculum citizens' science where the science comes out of student and their experiences in their local communities. As we further look into national science initiatives advocated by American Association for the Advancement of Science (1989) and The National Academy of Sciences (2010), Lieberman and Hoody (1998) we continuously find the push for broader participation in science and increasing scientific literacy. In these and other works in science education, including our CS curriculum project, we take the stance that making science relevant and meaningful to students are the key factors that could make CS successful in schools.

We are optimistic that citizen science through CS curriculum, with support from K-12 teachers, could be successful in making citizen science a part of regular science and other disciplines where local community problems could be explored. We also feel optimistic in the success of CS if CS projects could be designed to gather data through community participation. We also envision that students could be encouraged to expand CS curriculum to global problems. For example, our CS curriculum could expand into eBird and the Audubon's Christmas Bird Count involving people from all walks of life or anyone who is interested in the local birds and the local environment, therefore encouraging the students and their families (public) and the scientists to explore varieties of questions about connections between a local bird population and local environments.

On the other hand, CS projects like Zooniverse and Foldit, which are more exclusionary to the public through high skills demands, are less open to the public. Therefore we wonder if such CS projects are helping to democratize science through greater public participation. For example, the Zooniverse project (2019) on its web description (https://www.zooniverse.org/about) clearly puts value on volunteers (public) as "assisting professional researchers" so that the results gained from volunteers' labor benefits "the wider research community, and [produces] *many publications*" (n.p.). In this CS project, we believe that the public is taken as free labor on whose backs the "professional scientists" deliver products for their benefits rather than for the lager public. We struggle to find democratizing effects of science

in this kind of CS project where the goal is more on the production of science related "things and knowledge" that benefit the people in power and makes science less accessible to the public. Historically science has acted as a place for those who are in power – mostly White men – and this trend is still true in science (e.g., Ceci et al. 2014). So, the question is how CS becomes more democratic and supports democratic values within science disciplines. We are not advocating for democratic science where anything goes, but we are advocating for science that values voice and agency of the larger public like our students and their families who have always been outside of science.

Finally, we believe that citizen science has tremendous potential in benefitting the students, families, and communities that are at the margins. We ought to consider citizen science as a part of the K-12 curriculum where teachers could bring plethora of opportunities to make meaningful difference in their students' lives and their interest in science. In citizen science our citizens are students and their families where the science that happens comes from students and their needs. Therefore, for CS projects to be inclusive, socially, politically, and culturally impactful, CS projects have to let student citizens to take control of the science and problems they want to understand, explore, and find solutions to. We continuously wonder when and how we can make citizen science for the student citizens and their families. A democratic citizen science is one that which works to protect minority values, ideas, and power, along with, placing greater value to science that is generated from the local community participation rather than just the scientists in power.

Finally, looking forward, we encourage CS scholars to explore several valuable questions about CS projects and the participants. We propose some important research areas that scholars and policymakers could explore through qualitative and quantitative methodologies:

1. How does citizen science promote advocacy and participation in community issues among the public? Specifically who participated and why? In this we push CS scholars to carry out ethnographic studies to understand the processes of participation by the public in different contexts or locales and also of the CS projects and scientists.
2. What are ways through which CS projects could disseminate science knowledge generated for the public based on community needs and how communication of science knowledge build better citizen scientists? In this we are pushing the CS project leaders to find communication means to share knowledge that could be used by a community in useful ways. We want to encourage CS scholars and scientists in particular to explore ways to make new knowledge available to the public for free.
3. How does CS help build a more scientifically literate and scientifically engaged citizens across the globe? In this we seek to push CS scholars to critically examine the questions what does participating in CS project mean to a non-scientist public? How does science literacy mean in the context of CS project?
4. How does CS project support doing science and participating in science more socially just and inclusive? In this we seek to challenge CS scholars to question their

own personal and institutional practices that may be promoting science as an objective and meritocratic discipline rather than a socially and politically mediated space. Also how CS could narrow the gap in gender participation in science?

5. How does race and racism influence CS projects both in the kind of community issues taken up for exploration and the nature of participation from marginalized groups? In this we seek the CS scholars to ask uncomfortable questions around race and racism and its effects on who participates in science and CS projects.

6. What factors and initiatives could make CS projects more collaborative between the public and the scientists? Specifically what barriers exist to make CS projects more collaborative in (a) problems to be explored, (b) data to be collected, (c) analysis and meaning making, and (d) authorship in publications?

7. Native communities across globe have vast amounts of experiences with the environment and have accumulated large amounts of knowledge based on these experiences. How should CS projects be more respectful, inclusive, and recognizing of these knowledge as legitimate science knowledge?

8. How should policy and funding around CS projects be designed and applied so local communities and the participating public also have greater stake in the success of these projects? In this our aim is to research policy and funding documents and their impact on CS projects and the outcomes of these projects on local community and people.

9. In what ways place-based and community-led CS projects could promote greater participation between scientists and community? How do these CS projects promote agency and empowerment in communities and nonscientist participants?

10. How does democratic citizen science look like? A qualitative study would shed light on the nature of democratic science and what the public and the scientists value about democratic science.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, citizen science (CS) has much to offer to both broadening participation of groups and individuals who have believed that science is not for them. A similar sentiment exists in many students in school and higher education settings that they are not intelligent enough or good enough to do science or participate in science. These myths exist in science because science has traditionally been promoted as an area of study for those who are academically and intellectually good. Yet, we have known the contributions of native communities to scientific fields in much to the surprise of many scientists who received their training in science in academic institutions. The knowledge about nature and its inhabitants are very well documented and understood by many native communities around the world; but the dominant science education system that delegitimizes other ways of knowing has held these knowledge as "untrustworthy." Most native knowledge is based on observations and activities done over decades and centuries with many tweaks and adjustments along the way. Therefore, their knowledge is more comprehensive and

durable unlike knowledge produced by many practitioners of modern science in their labs. Yet, indigenous knowledge gets relegated to less rigorous and less legitimate. Similarly, local communities and individuals know a lot about their local environments and could aid science to learn more from their knowledge too. CS has been working to attract more and more communities and scientists to participate in doing science as close synergistic partners to learn about the nature. These partnerships are essential if the goal is to both build support for science in an era of climate change and skepticism and broaden participation in science. The appeal of CS is its potential to influence ordinary citizens to see science as a part of their everyday lives. However, CS has to also critically examine social, economic, and political issues of the time. Researchers involved in CS have to also work against the political and social forces that use science as a legitimizing tool for discrimination and oppressions for the benefit of the dominant class. CS can play a central part in disrupting the narrative of oppression and injustices whereby privileging all ways of knowing and making science more accessible to all groups. Since CS is dependent on local participation, CS can help disrupt systematic discrimination by allowing people to gain agency to influence a kind of science that gets done. For example, if the CS is only focused on ideas and issues of the affluent nations and societies, then CS is no different from other sciences that were done on the poor or the less fortunate such as the Tuskegee syphilis study on African Americans or sexually transmitted disease study in Guatemala and many others around the world. Therefore, we advocate for CS to continuously focus on building capacities that allow everyday people to critically examine science and through that their own social and personal change and transformation issues. We strongly believe that CS has the potential to help people to be sociopolitically aware through science because the science everyday people participate in through CS is about their local place and connected to their local issues. There can be a strong buy-in by these communities in the science that gets produced by engaging in CS because it is based on events that happen in their own communities. Thus, we find great value in leveraging CS as a participatory science where community members have voice and power to dictate and play a positive part. CS has to consider social justice and equity issues so that it can be a partner in making the society more just and equitable for many marginalized groups.

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# Growing Children's Ecological Relationships Indoors

# 48

Leah Shoemaker

## Contents

### Abstract

Nature is increasingly situated as important in early childhood education, but the various definitions and societal constructs of the term nature impact our understanding of how children relate to the more-than-human world. Navigating nature through varying perspectives, this chapter considers the concept of simulation, privilege, and control in relation to children and the outdoor world. This chapter questions the anthropocentric value that is engrained within these relationships and looks toward the indoor classroom as a tool for educators within urban centers. Provided is argument that blurring the line between the outdoors and the indoor classroom may support children's ecological understanding of the interrelated systems that run between the categories of human and nature. Personal narrative is woven throughout to queer the line between identity and theory and encourage reflection inward when interacting with the topic.

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## Introduction

Several months ago my job description entailed gathering up a group of rural British Columbian preschoolers and taking them directly outside the fenced lining of our learning center playground. I was mandated to carry bear spray, and we frequently went over safety precautions as a class. Our regular walk would include a trip to the giant dirt piles a few meters tall and several hundred meters long. The group would jump and slither down the smooth silt of the piles or run across the mounds as the Rocky Mountains looked over them. Next we would roam over to view the eagle nest where we watched three baby bald eagles grow up over the season. After this we would walk for 15 min through an alfalfa-covered field, munching the flowers as we went and finding elk droppings and flattened grass where these large ungulates would have rested during the foggy mornings. Finally we would reach a forest lining the edge of the field where we would spend hours playing, solving, and creating before making our way back to the center.

The benefit of spending time outdoors in nature is one of the least controversial topics in early childhood studies. The research showing that outdoor nature play has predominantly positive effects on students continues to grow (Chawla 2015). As an early childhood educator, specifically in urban centers, providing these experiences may be limited by access. This chapter explores the various definitions and categories of nature and how society's constructs of this space in turn affect how we relate to it. Centering children in cities, this chapter aims to provide argument that blurring the line between outdoor and indoor may support children's ecological understanding of the systems that run between the categories of human and nature. In Canada just over 80% of the population lives in urban centers (Government of Canada 2014), and second to their home, children in schools spend more time in their classrooms than any other indoor environment (Mendell and Heath 2005). With children spending less time outdoors, the value that nature can play within these classrooms is more important to explore than ever before.

## Nature as a Simulation

The definition of nature is not singular though there is a general theme that the less human-touched an area is the more natural it is (Vidon et al. 2018). With this definition comes the idealized and pristine wilderness unharmed by humanity. This definition is problematic however as it separates humans from nature and creates the existence of something that cannot be experienced by people. Vidon et al. (2018) write that nature is pursued as a simulacrum or a simulation. Baudrillard (1988) explains the theory of a simulacrum creates a copy of an original or a copy with no

true original at all. This simulation is not used to hide the truth but instead to identify the lack of truth (Baudrillard 1988). Nature as wilderness, an area that is untouched by humans and therefore could not be known by humans, is replicated by society with the original in mind yet unattainable. Within this copy of wilderness, the simulacrum is formed, and this brings more truth to the understanding that the original does not exist.

Anthropocentrism pulls humans into their own category and away from being considered a part of nature, leaving the simulacrum unstable. *In the depth of the back roads of interior B.C., we have driven an hour down a dirt road and then hiked 3 h to this peak. We can see the logging roads sketched across each tree line in every direction of the horizon. There is nothing we have not touched.* Is nature still nature if a small path is running through it? Does this change if the path is a road or a highway? What point of human interaction redefines the simulation as no longer nature? Children as an ever-present part of society are entangled into these constructs formed from adult perceptions. In a similar way to wilderness, the concept of childhood has been romanticized as well.

Historically childhood has been idealized as a time of innocence, untouched by the adult problems, pristine and pure as the great wilderness unexplored. Consistently opportunities to experience nature are shown to be beneficial for children (Vidon et al. 2018). However, the elusive concept of nature is culturally enriched and impacts the value placed on these experiences. When the model of children playing in the untouched wilderness is romanticized, urban children are left unable to obtain this picture-perfect version of the nature experience. The urban child is seen as lacking compared to the rural child who is more closely tied to the original version of the simulacrum, the nonexistent nature. Shillington and Murnaghan (2016) write that this concept creates the rural child's experience with nature as normative where the urban child's experience is nonnormative and creates a deficit.

These socially constructed concepts are embodied and materialize in the way that children's spaces are created (Shillington and Murnaghan 2016). *This is my backyard I would proudly say as I showed pictures of the mountain ranges that framed my valley town. This friend had never seen the mountains, but they spoke of flowers that their father planted each year in their little plot of dirt, how they would tend them and explore the space of her own yard. Her pride matched my own.* The danger in these conceptions is that society decides where the line between urban and rural is and therefore which child is deficit. It is a model that is used to marginalize people through other socially constructed categories such as race, gender, ability, and now nature. To break this deficit model that society has created for the urban child, Shillington and Murnaghan (2016) propose that the categories of human/nonhuman need to be queered.

## Reconceptualizing Nature

Queer theory has traditionally been used to question the binaries of gender and sexuality; however it can be used to consider the fluidity of nature and culture as well as continually question how each relates to the categories of normative and

nonnormative (Shillington and Murnaghan 2016). *When caught by the boys during a game of chase in kindergarten, they would take you behind the hedges that grew beside the classroom. There was enough room for our 5-year-old bodies to walk behind these bushes as our backs pushed against the brick wall. The thick leaves would hide everything except our feet which navigated the root-lined ground. I knew about kissing by then, but there was something more I wanted to do behind those bushes with those boys. I didn't know what it could be, but I knew our bodies and those hedges had untapped potential.* Queering can question the relationship between what is expected between nature/child and break down the concept of childhood innocence. Shillington and Murnaghan (2016) question how children are represented in urban political ecology when their relationships with spaces are deemed less worthy.

Movements that aim to reconnect children back to nature continue to promote the vision of the innocent child in wilderness (Shillington and Murnaghan 2016). A modern playground design may be modeled through the research of rural children's experiences in a forest. This design is then provided for children within the city without any consideration on these children's relationship with nature and how they experience it. When considering the value of place-based education, a form of education that centers around children's local experiences (Smith 2002), this replica playground does not help connect students to the growing environmental issues in their own communities. Nature-based experiences are important to children's relationship with the environment (Duhn 2012); however if only some of these experiences are valued within society, it may affect children's social conceptions of ecological behavior. Equal attention has not been given to the way that urban children experience the flower growing between the cracks in their sidewalk or the spider that has been building a web in the window sill.

This concept is highlighted by von Benzon (2018) who identifies society's value of the child/nature relationship to be based on an able-bodied child, limiting the representation of children who are not typically developed. In their research von Benzon (2018) found that a group of children aged 11–16 who have learning disabilities disconnected themselves from being a part of nature. *Broken bones were going to be a regular occurrence in this 3-year-old's life – this was clear already. His arm is in a sling to keep it stable. I take the class outside and walk the playground with him as he cannot go on the slide, the swings, or the monkey bars until his body has healed further.* One child in the study explained that they did not consider potted plants to be a part of nature because it was people who put the plants in the pots (von Benzon 2018). This separation between nature and person is worrisome as it may lead to decreased stewardship toward protecting environmental areas that don't match the idealized wilderness (von Benzon 2018). Disconnecting humans from nature creates an attitude that the tree in the city is less valuable than the tree in the forest. This is a dangerous vision for a world that is situated predominantly in cities.

## Children and Nature

The concept of biophilia developed by E.O. Wilson promotes the theory that humans are born with an innate desire to connect with "life and lifelike processes" (Rice and Torquati 2013, p. 79). In time this theory has developed a more constructivist position, and further research positions human biophilia to be nurtured through experiences with nature (Rice and Torquati 2013). Rice and Torquati (2013) investigated children's affection toward nature in correlation with their school playgrounds to understand this theory more. Their study showed that children with more natural playgrounds did not score higher in biophilia meaning the children who had opportunity to experience more naturally designed playgrounds did not show more affection to nature. Children within this study all showed high biophilia scores which support a stronger argument for children having an innate sense of connection to nature which is then shaped by culture throughout their lives (Rice and Torquati 2013).

Linzmayer and Halpenny (2014) found that the ways children identify with nature depend on personal experiences as well as social and cultural values. *I slowly slid my hand across the flower petals of a front yard garden as I walked to school with my mother. As I stopped my motive must have been clear because she told me not to pick the flowers. If you pick them, my mother told me, no one else would be able to enjoy them.* Within Linzmayer and Halpenny's (2014) study, children's relationships with nature could be categorized into two wide themes "attracted to" and "repelled by" (p. 418). Using Vygotsky's sociocultural development theory and Gibson's theory of affordances, the research uses the concept of gatekeepers to consider children's opportunity to relate to nature. The authors urge society to place value on the macro-level of relationships with the environment as the understanding of nature is influenced by what actions children believe are possible. In an early childhood environment, the educator has agency over the materials in the classroom. Classrooms that build a divide between the outdoors and the indoors are creating an environment that supports the concept that nature and humans are separate, despite their interconnectedness.

Kalvaitis and Monhardt (2012) explored children's relationship to nature and the variance of this relationship depending on age. Through drawings and personal narratives, children across the ages associated nature as being a place to play showing the value children put on the lack of structure of their activities in nature. Within this study the children described their relationship to nature as a friendship and even described nature as a part of their home (Kalvaitis and Monhardt 2012). *The front yard of our home had a tree with a thick branch near the bottom of the trunk. It was low enough that my 4-year-old body could climb on top and ride it without my feet touching the ground. The knots in the bark stuck out like reptile eyes, and I called this my alligator tree. My alligator and I went on many adventures together in the year I spent at that home while my parents had separated temporarily. Years later we drove by the house which was no longer ours to find that the new owners had cut the alligator branch off. I cried in the backseat of the car and*

*mourned the loss of one of my fondest friendship*. Kalvaitis and Monhardt (2012) show that children illustrate significant difference in how they experience nature based on their age. Younger children were more likely to involve friends and family in their experiences, whereas older children focused on solitary activities (Kalvaitis and Monhardt 2012). This research shows that throughout childhood, children experience nature differently but in a positive way.

Phenomenological research following immigrant children partaking in a garden camp in Montreal found many cases where children referred to nature as if it were a friend. One 8-year-old participant was asked if nature speaks to her in which she replied, "you can imagine in your head that you are in the sky and nature speaks, the wind blows and the grass speaks" (Hordyk et al. 2015, p. 574). The research found that nature took on a nurturing role in these immigrant student's experiences, and for this relationship to form, children need access to nature and a willingness to be emotionally open to the many senses within nature (Hordyk et al. 2015). Friendship and play are reoccurring themes in research on children's relationship with nature.

In a climate of environmental doom and destruction, environmental consciousness is a leading factor in understanding the importance of children and nature. Rice and Torquati (2013) review several studies showing a connection between the early experiences in nature and adult conservation attitudes. Wells and Lekies (2006) also explore this connection and found that positive environmental attitudes toward nature in adults were connected to childhood experiences in both wild and domestic nature settings. However, positive environmental behavior was influenced more by experiences in wild nature. *I felt the ground moving, I looked up, and I could see the trees shaking and heard booming behind us. I had time to ask my then boyfriend what was happening and turn to see giant boulders crashing down the mountainside in the distance. We took a note of the time so we wouldn't forget to look up if anyone else felt the earthquake when we were back in Internet service. It would be hours before we came into contact with other people, and even more time after that before the news of the destruction that had taken place across Nepal reached us*. In Wells and Lekies' (2006) research, wild nature was linked to experiences that included hiking, fishing, and camping, whereas domestic nature was considered picking from a garden, planting seeds, or caring for plants. Looking at these two categories from an early childhood education perspective, these two variables connect wild nature to play and domestic nature with care. This is not considered within the study and is a common issue in understanding the true benefits of nature. Free play and nature environments often go together which makes it difficult to understand if it is the actions or the environment affecting children. In this study the cultural value placed on such experiences is not considered.

Various studies support findings that positive or negative views toward nature affect conservation attitudes (Soga et al. 2016). Soga et al. (2016) found that both children's vicarious and direct experiences with nature impact children's affective attitudes toward nature. However, this study does not determine the impact of each of these variables separately. The focus on children's vicarious and direct experiences in nature is unexplored, and the authors agree that more work is needed to fully understand the results of study. However, it was shown that increased frequency

of experiences in both categories positively affected attitudes toward nature which in turn correlated with willingness to conserve (Soga et al. 2016). Continually research shows that the relationship between experience in nature and attitudes toward nature is positively affected. However, these findings are all laden by the term *nature* and the lack of a definition that extends beyond the research terms. Research does not consider the earth below the paved sidewalks or the breeze flowing between skyscrapers as nature because of the contamination of human impact. In every scenario there is a system of interaction between the human and nonhuman world, yet this interconnectedness is not considered as much as the separate entities. The simulacrum looms over the constructed space and pushes urban children further from being able to obtain the positive results that research claims come from nature.

## Nature as a Privilege

The construction of what nature is has been domineered by adults, leaving children little agency over how their own environments are defined. Although research continues to support the many benefits that nature has on children, access to these spaces is limited for some children. Adams and Savahl (2017) explain that institutionalized racism, war, and poverty continue to affect the natural spaces that children can experience. Context of experiences has an impact on the relationship that children have with nature, and the authors encourage the understanding of intersectionality when discussing the term childhood and how people experience this period of life (Adams and Savahl 2017). Despite this need for plurality of childhood, in a review of 83 studies focusing on children and nature, Adams and Savahl (2017) found a significant gap in empirical research which specifically focused on children in low socioeconomic status (SES) communities or Indigenous communities. *Her family was fairly poor, she explained to me. When she was a child, she didn't have many toys so she would paint ants with different colors and keep track of them for days. I imagined tiny rainbow footprints scattering the pavement where she played*. This gap in research has left a shortage in understanding how children in marginalized communities relate and construct their idea of nature. In the studies analyzed, very few directly asked children what nature means to them. The difference in how a child in a low SES neighborhood has constructed their meaning of nature has not been thoroughly explored in comparison to a child from a high-SES neighborhood.

Rice and Torquati (2013) found that children from higher-income and higher-educated families were enrolled in schools which had more naturally enriched playgrounds. Although their research showed that these playgrounds did not significantly increase children's attitudes toward nature, the benefits regarding physical and mental health are connected to such environments (Rice and Torquati 2013). In a study done in Cape Town, South African children's identification of their own natural spaces was highly related to their socioeconomic status. In the study that used photovoice to allow children aged 12–14 to share their perceptions of natural spaces, children from high-SES families identified a higher number. The children from

lower-SES instead had more descriptions of natural spaces that were not safe to go to (Adams et al. 2017). As cities become denser, the distance to travel to spaces which are less touched by humans increases. In its scarcity, nature as the simulation of the untouched wilderness has become a valuable economic driver in children's education.

The market for outdoor education has started to gain traction in Canada. The concept of forest schools originated in Europe, but there are now several schools within Canada that are experimenting with the forest school mandate (Hordyk et al. 2015). These schools place importance on spending regular, prolonged play in a forested area. Similarly to the findings in Rice and Torquati (2013), many of the students attending 12 different forest schools in Germany were from high socioeconomic backgrounds or had highly educated parents (Schäffer and Kistemann 2012). *Every summer my mother would load her four children into the red station wagon and spend 5 days driving from the outskirts of Los Angeles, California, to our grandparents' farm in rural British Columbia. It was hot, we would fight, our vehicle would break down. I didn't realize at the time the gravity of the gift my mother was giving us. What I remember now is the first time I saw sunlight on the horizon after 10 pm and the taste of raspberries picked right from the bush. I remember the giant pit on my grandparents' acreage where we could find animal bones and the graveyard we created for birds that had hit the window. I remember taking winter sleds and riding them down a grassy hill only to be covered by ants when we reached the bottom.* For city families, forest schools and other education similar are often a privilege reserved for those who are knowledgeable about the benefits of outdoor play, have the time to take children to schools outside of urban centers, and can pay the tuition.

The benefits of these schools show physical, cognitive, and social improvements, but O'Brien and Murray (2007) warn that the variables within this research are incredibly vast. The authors explain that with contact to nature come "many physical, emotional, and intellectual opportunities such as exploring special places, climbing trees, and discovering hidden places" (O'Brien and Murray 2007, p. 263). The benefits of forest school are likely tied to the freedom of children's ability to discover and construct their own learning. The results of the studies may be quite different if children were taken into forested nature and given strict guidelines on how they could behave. Children in forest schools show confidence in their school forest, playing in different weather conditions and assessing their risky behavior (Smith et al. 2018). Children also show pride in their knowledge and take ownership over the forest classroom that they spend regular time at; however Smith et al. (2018) note that there is little research showing the long-term effects on pro-environmental behavior.

The concept of forest schools fits perfectly into the image of an innocent child playing freely in the wilderness. However, it is unclear how children who attend these schools outside of their urban home connect their experiences to the nature they find on their city block. The reality on the developmental benefits that are linked to forest schools is that these experiences are not available for many urban children. *It was just me and eight 3- to 4-year-olds. The theatrics I embodied while trying to*

*get them excited to put on their snow pants, snow boots, toques, jackets, and mittens were Broadway worthy. We sing, we dance, and I try every trick to make this transition into the snow slightly less chaotic. Half of the students are ready, two are missing mittens, one is in the bathroom still, and another put their boots on before snow pants and must start all over. Somehow, 25 min later we make it outside. I open the gate to the playground, and they burst into the cold. Ten minutes into playing, a young girl comes over to me to tell me she has pooped her pants. I am the only staff so I cannot leave the children alone when I help her change. I gather all my students and bring them back inside with me so I can clean up the accident.* For many early childhood educators, the closest to nature they are going to get daily is in the playground. The regulations around early learning are moving toward a stricter and more professional sector but are coming at a cost for educators who are not seeing a change in the value of their work. Regulations from province to province vary in Canada, but some provinces require parents to obtain vulnerable sector checks before joining field trips or helping in class. This means walking trips and extra time-consuming projects are more difficult to provide for educators who do not have the resources. Some provinces state that natural materials such as sticks must be sanitized with bleach before entering the classroom. Puddles on the playground are subjected to size regulations that can be penalized if the center does not clean up the water if it reaches more than a few inches high. What can be realistically expected of early childhood education under regulations like this within the city? Looking at the value of nature within a classroom gives control back to educators who may have limited resources that do not allow a schoolyard garden, trips to the forest, or large amounts of outdoor play.

## Nature in the Classroom

Early childhood education has put a large focus on outdoor play in nature with many post-secondary schools requiring a course which speaks to this issue. However, nature within the classroom has been less explored. Queering the classroom to look at the nonhuman world with a new perspective also brings up settler divides. This tension is explored by Pacini-Ketchabaw and Nxumalo (2015) who look at a case where raccoons step over the human divide and make their home at a childcare center. *Our preschool class was set up for lunch outside when a mouse scurried across the pavement. Zip up your lunch kits, the other educator told the students. The mouse scurried near her feet, and she kicked a toy at it to shoo it away. This sent the mouse flying to my feet which then sent me flying out of my seat screaming while running away, raising my heels as I went. The children were endlessly amused at my terror.* As urban centers grow larger, animals are pushed to the outskirts of city limits. Raccoons however have adapted to city life, and Pacini-Ketchabaw and Nxumalo (2015) show the result when these animals steal lunches, arrange playground toys, come in through open doors, and nest in storage sheds within a childcare center. The barriers crossed by these creatures are exciting for both students and educators but also worrisome specifically due to the possibility of

infection. Discourse on sanitation can be traced back to Europe in the nineteenth century and is continued in early learning settings today (Pacini-Ketchabaw and Nxumalo 2015). The raccoons represent infection and support the pedagogy of cleanliness (Pacini-Ketchabaw and Nxumalo 2015). It is reminder of the narratives that run deep through North American education philosophies and the invisibility of settler values within the nature/culture divide. The values are seen in health regulations that mandate childcare centers to bleach and sanitize pinecones, sticks, and other natural materials before bringing them into the classroom.

Classroom pets are a way that the outside world can collide inside; however, within these relationships are also boundaries. Uses of cages and domestication create the barrier of us and other within the classroom. These relationships foster the concept that these animals cannot exist without human interference. Educators in the Daly and Suggs (2010) study believed that classroom pets positively affect children's empathy, but the results are centered within a human/nonhuman dichotomy. Classroom pets are navigated through a lens that shows children how animals fit into *our* world. When binaries are crossed and the natural world entrenches on the human world, there is often a discomfort as seen in the research on raccoons (Pacini-Ketchabaw and Nxumalo 2015). This discomfort or troubling is an important part of questioning societal categories.

Nxumalo and Pacini-Ketchabaw (2017) write that staying within this feeling of trouble is central to understanding human relationships with different species. This was demonstrated by the problems that arose when educators brought walking stick bugs into an early learning classroom. During this project the insects started overpopulating their terrarium and eating each other's legs leaving the educators to consider how to remedy this (Nxumalo and Pacini-Ketchabaw 2017). Conversations developed with students on the dangers of releasing the creatures outside and how that could affect the biodiversity. Educators found themselves freezing and boiling eggs to try to manage the population, bringing up even more ethics in the understanding of death and detachment and their purpose for doing this without telling the students (Nxumalo and Pacini-Ketchabaw 2017). *Sometime in my early 20s, someone taught me the ethics of killing bugs, and I slowly but surely retrained my brain to find horror in insect deaths. Mosquitoes were one of the only exceptions to this rule, and I never felt guilt in massacring those creatures. However, as I moved into my new apartment in the city of Toronto, I found I was no longer patiently catching and removing bugs out the door. The front door was now three stories off the ground, and I was again squishing each insect I found with my finger.* The educators in this study were not provided easy answers, and the insects were eventually donated to a lab (Nxumalo and Pacini-Ketchabaw 2017).

The authors urge educators to sit with the complexities of these animal-child relationships and consider more than just the benefits children receive from nature (Nxumalo and Pacini-Ketchabaw 2017). The nature/human binary has an element of power within it that is not discussed with children due to beliefs on childhood innocence. The outside world troubles these binaries in many ways that are not examined. Sunlight shining in from a window might bother a student's eyes. Dirt,

rocks, and sand might make a mess on the entrance hall. The water running from the tap is too hot or too cold. A tiny ant is collecting spilled food on the ground. Troubling these categories and questioning the discomfort in our relationships not only breaks down the binary of nature/human but also rebuilds the image of a child as being capable.

Plants are another way of purposeful blurring the line between inside/outside classrooms, but research on the effects in early childhood education is very limited. The predominant studies which look at the effects of plants within classroom environments focus on adolescents and show the positive benefits classroom plants have on health, academic performance, and behavior (van den Berg et al. 2017). In a study looking to the effects of a green wall, a section of wall with plants growing out of it, van den Berg et al. (2017) found that children were more likely to describe their classroom positively and have greater concentration. However, there were no findings on the emotional or social well-being of the students. The research did not look at the relationship between the students and the plants or effects on environmentally conscious behaviors.

## Scaling Nature

Urban design has only started to consider the importance of children's spaces and that "direct experiences of nature during childhood are fundamental moments of sustainable enculturation, with long-lasting consequences for sustainable social-ecological systems" (Giusti et al. 2017, p. 2). Giusti et al. (2017) write that urban design considers human-nature-connection from the basis of work, transportation, and housing, but does not consider items such as livability. The study designed a framework to consider whether children are connecting to nature or not by breaking down and qualifying experiences. Children geographers have looked at these concepts from the perspectives of children's spaces in cities; however, these concepts have not been bridged to include nature experiences inside classrooms.

Day Biehler and Simon (2011) argue that ignoring the indoors during discourse does not give weight to the complexity of "nature and space" (p. 173). The authors explain how indoor environments are situated politically and represent a scaled version of society intact with culture, power, information, and values which flow freely (Day Biehler and Simon 2011). The scaled representation of nature within classrooms in early learning shows a distinct line between human and nature. When considering children's experiences with nature outdoors, there is one factor that is almost always present in children's responses, the element of play. Within the classroom this is not scaled or represented, and including indoor plants within children's play spaces has not been explored. More often plants within the classroom take on the passive role of being an item to care for through watering, learning about growth, and respectful touch. In the Wells and Lekies (2006) study, these domestic experiences with nature did not promote pro-environmental behavior in children as much as the play experiences in nature did.

# Conclusion

*There are children that have never climbed a tree before, he said as we sipped champagne, celebrating the near completion of my first semester of grad school. What were those children missing I thought to myself. Was it the climbing aspect or the tree itself that we were feeling sorry for these children about? Some children don't live near climbing trees and others might be physically restricted. Certainly I wasn't going to base my understanding of valuable life experiences on such a small category?* Nature is a culture laden term just as the concept of childhood is. The theory of a simulacrum describes our understanding of nature as a simulation of a space that does not exist. This creates an opportunity for society to determine the boundaries of what is nature and isn't and inserts a dimension of power into the definition. These boundaries, conceptions, definitions, and simulations which are entangled into the idea of nature produce a binary of nature/human without the consideration for how they relate. With a population that predominately resides in urban cities, these boundaries need to be bridged to build new understandings of the connections between different systems. Taking what is understood about children's relationship to nature and creating a simulacrum in the classroom may provide new opportunities to break down these binaries. Children, regardless of urban location, deserve the opportunity to build relationships with the nonhuman world and for these relationships to be valued by society.

# Cross-References

▶ An Ecology of Environmental Education
▶ Eco-queering US K-12 Environmental Curricula: An Epistemic Conceptual Investigation into Queer Pessimisms Serving as a Pragmatics to Navigate Current Environmental Castrations
▶ Forest School Pedagogy and Indigenous Educational Perspectives: Where They Meet, Where They Are Far Apart, and Where They May Come Together
▶ Politics of Identity and Difference in Cultural Studies: Decolonizing Strategies

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# Cultural Studies and the Development of Sustainable Relations for the Internationalization of Higher Education

# 49

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## Contents

**Abstract**

Globalization has brought many changes to people's lives and mind-sets, posing challenges to the concepts of language, culture, and identity, related to cultural hybridity and the impact of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) on education in general and on higher education in particular, especially in terms of the process of internationalization of higher education, with the implications of using, teaching, and learning certain languages in that process. The role of languages in the process of internationalization is at the core of discussions regarding this process. A critical view of language(s) guided by language policies, which reflect the intercultural relations of the global and the local context, is paramount for a sustainable and more horizontal internationalization process of higher education. The reflection on the interface between culture

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and identity in relation to language is important insomuch as one shapes the other. In a world of super-diversity (Vertovec, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 30:1024–1054, 2007) with an increase in the flows of information, people, goods, and languages, the development of competences to deal with such diversity is essential to establish sustainable academic relations. In this scenario of mutual exchanges, languages play a key role, since they express ideologies and beliefs that represent conflict between local and global values. The conflicts afforded by languages, in turn, affect the formation of identies in modern times, replacing old identities by new ones, thus fragmenting the modern individual (Hall, A identidade em questão. In: A identidade cultural na pós-modernidade. DP&A Editora, Rio de Janeiro, pp. 7–22, 2006) in a more hybrid and complex world (Mendes & Finardi, *Education and Linguistics Research* 4:45–64, 2018). This chapter aims to reflect on the connection between cultural studies and the internationalization of higher education institutions (HEIs) in general and the role of languages and language policies in that process in particular. So as to achieve this goal, a review and discussion of literature is offered, critically addressing the importance of cultural studies and intercultural competences for dealing with the complexity of modern times, in terms of the internationalization of higher education.

## Introduction

Globalization has promoted a rapid increase in the flows of information, people, goods, and languages, with a consequent increase in the contacts between people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This phenomenon caused a compression of time and space, blurring national borders and fixed identities, often with the aid of information and communication technologies (Mendes and Finardi 2018; Kumaravadivelu 2006, p. 131) and advances in transportation and flows of people and information.

In the last decades, transnational exchanges increased dramatically, propelled by the globalization of production systems, financial transfers, exchange of information, and migrations (Sousa Santos 2011, p. 25). These changes and exchanges promoted gains, such as the greater access to information and knowledge, but they also deepened social inequalities, creating a gap between those who do not have (and those who have) access to the benefits of globalization, increasing the conflict between global and local values.

The tension between global and local values expressed in the pressure to develop a global identity preserving a local one is evident in the process of internationalization of higher education. In this process, students seek opportunities to study abroad,

researchers seek international partners, and institutions struggle to promote themselves in the international scenario, in order to attract international students (and funding).

Though internationalization of higher education has become a key component in the changing landscape of higher education, few people question why and how institutions should make efforts to internationalize (Marmolejo 2010). Indeed, most internationalization agendas seem to be driven more by political reasons (Taquini, Finardi and Amorim 2017) and financial concerns rather than by academic motivations (Finardi and Ortiz 2015).

International interactions, intensified by the internationalization agenda afforded by information and communication technologies, may result in misunderstandings if institutions and people are not prepared for cross-cultural contacts. Thus, the development of intercultural competences for internationalization is a necessary step to deal with the diversity and hybridity (Mendes and Finardi 2018) observed in the contemporary world.

Given the need, on the one hand, to develop intercultural competence, and the lack of studies linking this realm of study to the concept of internationalization (on the other hand), this paper aims to reflect on the importance of cultural awareness for the development of sustainable and effective academic interactions in higher education. With that aim and through a review and discussion of the literature, this paper addresses topics such as the internationalization of higher education from the perspective of cultural studies as well as intercultural competence and its relation with languages and language policies for internationalization.

## Internationalization

Given the prominence of internationalization in contemporary discourses and agendas, it may seem as a rather recent phenomenon, though it is not. Universities around the world have always relied on international exchanges of knowledge given the "universal" aspect of higher education. What we have seen recently with the influence of globalization and the advances in information and communication technologies is that internationalization has become a response and perhaps an agent of globalization (Knight 2004). However, the current internationalization panorama seems to ignore the rationale questions set forth by Knight (2005, pp. 2–3): Why should one internationalize? Who will benefit from internationalization? What values are linked to the process? Is internationalization sustainable, and if so, how? What are the expected results? These are some conceptual but very important questions that seem to have been skipped by policymakers and stakeholders of the internationalization process that have provoked a cultural (and identity) crisis in the academia.

For over two decades, Jane Knight, a respected author in the area of internationalization, has provided us with insights in regard to the definition of internationalization. One of her main arguments is that an analysis of the context is paramount for an appropriate plan of internationalization. The question seems to be of

appropriation (exactly what Finardi and Guimarães 2017, claimed that is not done in Brazil, e.g., with the "imitation" of internationalization agendas of Northern universities) in terms of defining what internationalization means to a country, to a company, or to an institution.

Perhaps related to the aim of thinking about internationalization in more critical terms is the attempt, by some authors, to define what internationalization is and what it is not. In that sense, Knight (1994, 2003, 2004, 2005) has provided many definitions of the internationalization of higher education depicting an effort to show the complexity of the internationalization phenomenon and the many unfolding levels related to its analysis and definition. She defines internationalization as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education" (Knight 2003, p. 2). However, such "global" process is interpreted and implemented in very different and often "local" terms, so much so that there is no "one size fits all" model for the implementation of internationalization in local contexts. A more comprehensive definition of internationalization is provided by Hudzik (2011) which is:

> [...] a commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise. It is essential that it be embraced by institutional leadership, governance, faculty, students, and all academic service and support units. It is an institutional imperative, not just a desirable possibility. (Hudzik 2011, p. 6)

This multifaceted view (and plan) of internationalization became evident, for example, in the study carried out by Amorim and Finardi (2017) who set out to analyze the internationalization process in a Brazilian university in three levels, namely, the macro level (government actions, plans, programs, and agendas), the meso level (institutional actions, plans, and agreements), and the micro level (perceptions of the academic community). One of the results of the aforementioned study is that the internationalization process was interpreted and implemented very differently (and often divergently) in those three levels in the institution analyzed.

According to Marmolejo (2010), the main reasons for a university to seek internationalization would be to (a) improve education in general, (b) internationalize the curriculum, (c) promote the development of international identities, (d) strengthen/improve research and production of knowledge, and (e) diversify the academic and support staff in a given institution.

Concerning the possible benefits of internationalization, three aspects were mentioned in a study carried out by the International Association of Universities (IAU) (More information at: https://www.iau-aiu.net/) and reported by Marmolejo (2010): (a) increase students' international awareness, (b) strengthen research and knowledge creation, and (c) promote international cooperation and solidarity. In relation to the most important players of the internationalization process in a given higher education institution, the rectors (or similar positions) were placed first, followed by the international officers and then the professors.

Yet, not all agree that internationalization is positive. Vavrus and Pekol (2015), for example, used critical social theory to highlight inequalities underlying certain practices of internationalization of higher education institutions, particularly in US ones, analyzing internationalization in three dimensions: (1) the representational, (2) the political-economic, and (3) that of the symbolic capital considering issues of equity, ethics, and social justice. The authors suggest that internationalization can fuel ideological systems of exclusion in international education.

In their rush to internationalize, higher education institutions, funding agencies, and private organizations have reverberated discourses that belittle what has been consolidated in the literature as the reasons and implications of internationalizing. For instance, Knight (2011, p. 14) wrote about the five myths of internationalization of higher education:

Myth 1: Foreign students are internationalization agents: "more foreign students on campus will produce more internationalized institutional culture and curriculum."

Myth 2: International reputation is a proxy for quality: "the more international a university is (...) the better its reputation."

Myth 3: International institutional agreements are desired: "the greater number of international agreements or network memberships a university has the more prestigious and attractive it is."

Myth 4: International accreditation is a consequence of internationalization: "the more international accreditation stars an institution has, the more internationalized it is and ergo the better it is."

Myth 5: Global branding is another consequence of internationalization: "an international marketing scheme is the equivalent of an internationalization plan."

Similarly, de Wit (2011, p. 246) lists nine misconceptions about the internationalization of higher education:

1. Internationalization is similar to teaching in English (such as in English Medium Instruction – EMI Courses).
2. Internationalization is similar to studying abroad (international academic mobility).
3. Internationalization is similar to teaching an international subject.
4. Internationalization means having many international students.
5. Internationalization can be implemented successfully with only a few international students in the classroom.
6. Intercultural and international competencies do not necessarily have to be assessed as such.
7. The more agreements an institution has, the more international it is.
8. Higher education is international by its very nature.
9. Internationalization is an objective in itself.

By looking at the myths and misconceptions of internationalization highlighted by Knight (2011) and de Wit (2011), it is possible to summarize them as follows:

internationalization of higher education is not necessarily related to the number of international agreements, of international students, and of students who go abroad to study or the number of EMI courses or franchising university campuses a university has. Because of the complexities of the concept and the manifold levels it may present, policymakers and stakeholders need caution before "adopting" frameworks that "worked" elsewhere without taking into account the particularities of their localities.

Knight (2004) provides a framework for the analysis of the internationalization of higher education of a nation or institution through a variety of perspectives. She calls attention to the rationales and motivations for internationalizing and, most importantly, to whom the process will benefit. In developing countries like Brazil and Turkey, for example, studies have shown that most institutions "adopt" an internationalization process "copied" from institutions belonging to the Global North (Sousa Santos 2005) without reflecting critically about the consequences of this implementation and without articulating internationalization plans and policies with all levels and sectors of education, thus generating confusion and exclusion (or the sensation of it) for/of those who are not benefited by this process (Amorim and Finardi 2017; Finardi and Guimarães 2017; Taquini, Finardi and Amorim 2017).

In Europe, the internationalization of higher education has been at the core of discussions for decades. As of 1999 with the signature of the Bologna Process which aimed at standardizing educational policies across European Union countries, many higher education institutions attempted to harmonize their curricula so as to be part of the "Bologna" universities. The Bologna Resolution has facilitated the exchange of scholars and information in the European Community and acted as a strategy to face and compete with the increasing internationalization of US institutions. In Latin America, the Science without Borders (SWB) Program was launched in Brazil in 2011 whose aim was to send over 100 thousand Brazilian scholars (mainly undergraduate) to study abroad (mainly the United States). This was the largest mobility program in Brazilian history, but the program was overly criticized for its lack of accountability (see Finardi and Archanjo 2018) and was discontinued in 2015 due to Brazil's economic and political crisis. In 2017 the Capes PrInt Call was launched by the Brazilian Agency for Research and Higher Education Funding and Personnel Development, Capes, to increase mobility and internationalization of Brazilian institutions, mainly with international institutions located in the Global North (South Africa, Germany, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, South Korea, Denmark, Spain, United States, Finland, France, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Norway, New Zealand, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Russia, Sweden, and Switzerland) (Available at: http://www.capes.gov.br/images/stories/ download/editais/02022018-Edital-41-2017-Print-alteracao-anexo-1.pdf). The Capes PrInt aimed to correct "drawbacks" of the Science without Borders by focusing at graduate level, certain areas and institutions, yet, it failed to propose more sustainable and "local" models of internationalization focusing more on relations South-North than on South-South relations.

One of the thorny points in relation to this "appropriation" of internationalization is the one that regards the role of culture in it. Internationalization presupposes some

extent of intercultural exchange, and as such, it also involves languages. Earlier in this section, we suggested that internationalization has brought to the surface a cultural identity crisis when, in fact, this crisis, we believe, is a consequence of a bigger phenomenon, namely, globalization, with its advancements in information and communication technologies and the tensions created between adopting global and local values.

In this attempt to define ourselves, we must not forget that we are multifaceted beings living in hybrid spaces (Mendes and Finardi 2018), composed of various different localities, which sometimes have nothing or very little to do with physical boundaries. During a TED Talk in Rio de Janeiro in 2014, novelist Taiye Selasi questions the concept of the "sovereign state" to explain her idea that one must not define him/herself based on a concept, especially that of a sovereign state, which, according to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, came into fashion nearly 400 years ago and was consolidated after World War II in the twentieth century (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/sovereignty/).

Taiye Selasi lived her whole life fighting the agony felt when people tried to limit her identity within one or another physical boundary in order to define who she was, thus making her feel incomplete, untrue. It was only when she finally started to redefine or undefine herself beyond the logic of the state, taking into consideration that history and culture were real, but countries were invented entities, that she began to sketch out an identity that privileged culture over country. "All identity is experience," she proclaimed. She goes on to explain that we are multi-local beings that shape our identities with our experiences wherever we go, not necessarily from where we are physically and geographically.

"Our experience is where we are from," says Selasi. The question we should be asking ourselves is "where are you a local?" in the place of "where are you from?" To say, for instance, that one is from Brazil entails a set of *clichés* and stereotypes, related to samba, soccer, and carnival, that are very often not related to the way we feel and are. Likewise, too say one is from the city of Vitoria (in the state of Espirito Santo, Brazil) entails a set of different experiences related to traditional *Congo* bands, clay pots made to cook the regional dish called "moqueca" (fish stew), and among other "symbols" that do not apply to all *capixabas* (people born in the state of Espirito Santo).

The same goes for an internationalized university. What does it mean to say a university is internationalized? What sort of pieces compose this puzzle? What sort of experiences form the identity of this so-called international university? What sort of values does it carry? How much of the local culture is represented in the university internationalization policy? How much of the global culture is portrayed in the same policy? How (and how much) do these two interact? How is this relationship sustainable? How is this internationalization policy emancipating the academic community? And the community at large?

These questions seem to reverberate Knight's (2004) suggestion that prior to establishing an internationalization plan for a nation or higher education institution, an analysis of the context must be conducted. A "one size fits all" kind of policy has

proven to be unsuccessful. In Brazil, for example, as mentioned earlier in this section, we have seen the fall of the largest mobility program in Brazilian history, the Science without Borders. Perhaps the Brazilian government's attempt to adhere to internationalization plans and policies from other countries/contexts with no or little regard to its local context and culture increased problems associated with the Science without Borders Program and later with the Capes PrInt Call. Moreover, it might also have been an indication as to why the academic community investigated in Amorim and Finardi (2017) felt excluded from the internationalization process in that institution. Areas such as the Humanities and Arts were not included in scholarships in the Science without Borders Program, which, as we said, was discontinued in 2015 in the midst of the country's political and economic turmoil. Perhaps, there was little or no synchrony between local and global aspects. No analysis of the needs of the context was conducted, which takes us back to those questions Knight (2005) proposed when setting out an internationalization plan and also to the myths she listed (Knight 2011) and to the misconceptions that de Wit (2011) enumerated.

According to Brandenburg and de Wit (2011), this multidimensional phenomenon of internationalization moved from the fringe interests of the institutions in the 1970s to the core in the 1990s. Currently, we see internationalization and globalization in a relationship of "good" and "evil":

> Today, internationalization has become the white knight of higher education, the moral ground that needs to be defended, and the epitome of justice and equity. The higher education community still strongly believes that by definition internationalization leads to peace and mutual understanding, the driving forces behind programs like Fulbright in the 1950s. While gaining moral weight, its content seems to have deteriorated: the form lost its substance. Internationalization has become a synonym of "doing good," and people are less into questioning its effectiveness and essential nature: an instrument to improve the quality of education or research. (Brandenburg and de Wit 2011, p. 16)

Brandenburg and de Wit (2011) call attention to the importance of setting up clear directives for an internationalization plan as activities that are usually more related to the concept of globalization (e.g., higher education as tradeable commodity) are often times executed as internationalization activities (p. 17).

Thus, the driving forces of an institution's internationalization plan reflect its values and beliefs about the phenomenon. Therefore, the answers to the questions posed by Knight (2005) elsewhere in this section and the ones we outlined ourselves pertaining exclusively to culture and identity signal the type of relationship a given institution desires to sustain within its three basic pillars: research, education, and service.

Nations, governments, and higher education institutions should be looking into the convergence of local and global values and how these two forces help shape the identity of an emancipatory and sustainable internationalization plan. Perhaps, only then we will begin to see sustainable relations based on emancipatory internationalization policies. Emancipation and sustainability, in relation to internationalization of higher education, are built on culture and language, discussed in what follows.

## Cultural Studies

The idea of culture is very broad, and it can be understood as set of great works of a society or even the ways of living and thinking of a given social group, including national traditions (Mattelart and Neveu 2004, p.11). Such definition may not encompass all cultural aspects of all societies in the world, but it is a good starting point to discuss the connections between culture and language.

Schoeffel and Gariazzo-Dessiex (2012) use the metaphor of the iceberg, with its visible and invisible parts, in relation to culture, with its visible aspects, such as language and food, and invisible aspects, such as beliefs and norms. Frequently, the invisible aspects are the most relevant ones when trying to understand a culture or trying to avoid misunderstandings across cultures.

Cultural studies were initially established as an area of study in industrial England (nineteenth century), with debates around culture as an instrument to reorganize a society impacted by machines and factories. After the World War II, cultural studies emerged as a tool to deal with culture in a broad and anthropological sense, in order to discuss how the culture of a social group works as an answer to the established social order or as a confirmation of power relations (Mattelart and Neveu 2004, pp. 13–14).

After this initial stage, cultural studies started to deal with new ideologies and social changes, such as the pleasures of media consumption, neoliberal views, and the increase in the flow of cultural goods (including languages). Initially using methods from literary criticism, this field of study shifted its focus, from classic works to mass culture and popular cultural practices. It also used instruments of participant observation, part of cultural anthropology, used in ethnographic studies.

Departments of cultural studies started to encourage research on subjects that once belonged to other social sciences and humanities, such as fashion, identity, tourism, and literature. Thus, it became a field that refused disciplinary boundaries and that encouraged the production of a cross-curricular knowledge, in order to deal with the complexity of its research focus.

The study of identities has also been a central topic in cultural studies, because pressures such as consumerism, economic policies, and social inequalities created new lifestyles and conditions for choosing new identities, which must adapt to an ever-changing world. Due to these pressures, the modern individual (and his/her identity) became fragmented, because the old frameworks that supported individuals in the social world no longer exist, creating an identity crisis (Hall 2006, p. 7) and/or hybridity (Mendes and Finardi 2018).

The idea of national cultures was also criticized, because national identities are not something individuals get when they are born, that is, identities are a system of cultural representations – individuals feel that they are part of a nation when they adopt the idea of nation that is presented to them by the society where they live. Thus, national cultures are symbols and representations, a discourse, and a way to make meaning that organizes the actions of individuals and the ideas they have about themselves (Hall 2006, pp. 47–50).

Then, cultural studies started to analyze how culture works in times of globalization, considering aspects such as (a) globalization as a process of blurring of borders that shape national cultures and individual identities, (b) the construction of social identities whereby an individual is not restricted to a category [class, nationality, race, ethnicity, gender], (c) migration as a transforming power in the contemporary world, and (d) globalization as a process of homogenization and differentiation that impacts the national state, culture, and policy (Mattelart & Neveu 2004, p. 111).

One should notice that cultural studies had a great impact in the fields of language and education. For example, the works of Rampton (2006), which use ethnographic approaches to consider cultural aspects, showed an interesting interaction between language, schooling, and culture in late modernity, resulting in the construction of knowledge through methods which were not previously (extensively) used by linguists, allowing a new perspective in the relation between culture and language.

Erickson (1987) is another example of a researcher who considered cultural aspects and used ethnographic approaches. When trying to find explanations for low school achievement of minority students, he considered cultural differences between teachers and students and showed the need for a transformation in the routine of educational practices, with the use of a "culturally responsive pedagogy."

Garcez and Lopes (2017) also used similar (ethnographic) approaches and new technologies to present a "new communicative order" in the contemporary classroom, whereby students are engaged in learning in an environment where they challenge teachers to build knowledge. When trying to learn a new language (and to face a new culture), students perform nontraditional tasks, in order to achieve their learning goals.

As such, cultural studies as a mass of studies, approaches, conceptions, tools, and methodologies can be very useful to reflect about and research on culture, languages, and education in the contemporary diversified world. Because of the role of languages in culture and in intercultural competence, the next section is dedicated to the reflection on languages in general and on the role of foreign languages in the internationalization process in particular.

## Languages

Languages have played a key role in the exchanges among people from different cultural backgrounds, since they can represent people's ideologies and beliefs as well as those of social groups. They are also an important part in the constitution of identities and, according to Mendes and Finardi (2018), more so in the construction of hybrid identities.

Globalization with its social, cultural, political, and economic consequences have impacted late modernity, with a compression of time and space, facilitated by digital technologies, resulting in social and cultural changes, super-diversity (Vertovec 2007), and constant flows between physical and virtual borders. In this scenario languages play a key role in a world where relevant topics are built through discourse

(Moita Lopes 2013, pp. 18–19). In this scenario, people, identities, texts, and languages are constantly moving and blending (Mendes & Finardi 2018).

Since languages and ideologies walk side by side, one should notice that language ideologies are related to beliefs people have about their languages and how they are used in specific contexts. These ideologies include social, political, cultural, and economic aspects, creating debates around the role and value of certain languages in contemporary times.

One such example is the discussion of the dominance of English as an international language (e.g., Finardi 2014), as the academic lingua franca (Jenkins 2014), as a multilingua franca (Jenkins 2015), or, more recently in the context of internationalization of higher education, as the medium of instruction (e.g., Taquini, Finardi & Amorim 2017). According to Finardi and Csillagh (2016), no account of multilingualism can make do without considering the role of English today. This is so true that in Brazil, for example, a whole book (Finardi 2016) was dedicated to discuss the role of English in that country. Given the recent changes in education that in 2017 made the teaching of English as a foreign language mandatory in Brazil, Finardi (2017) discusses the teaching of other languages (such as French, Italian, and Spanish), with the use of the intercomprehension approach, to foster multilingualism in that country.

## Intercultural Competence and Super-Diversity

Competence can be understood as the ability to know what to do in a given situation (Schoeffel and Gariazzo-Dessiex 2012), and this concept can be applied to that of intercultural competence, which in turn can be defined as the ability to adapt one's communication style to that of his/her partner, striving to understand the messages from partners of different cultures. In the relationship between academic institutions, this type of competence can be a helpful skill, since programs, meetings, conflicts, and priorities usually do not happen in the same way across cultures.

Bennett (2014) refers to intercultural competence as a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills that support effective interaction in a variety of cultural contexts. Besides, Schoeffel and Gariazzo-Dessiex (2012, p. 3) also state that "knowing who you are" is essential, through (a) knowledge of oneself and one's cultural identity, (b) knowledge of the other and his/her culture, and (c) awareness of interaction in different levels (communication styles, nonverbal communication, and system of values). Thus, for meaningful intercultural interactions, one should consider the visible and invisible aspects of a given culture, since most cultural misunderstandings occur because people forget to consider values and beliefs (the invisible aspects) of their academic partners.

It is important to stress that the concept of intercultural competence is not universal since it is also cultural. Schoeffel and Gariazzo-Dessiex (2012) explain that different communities (in general) have different views about intercultural competence: (a) for Arabs, relationships among partners are relevant to

communication; (b) for Africans, communication with partners involves the consideration of his/her community and context; (c) for Andean communities, relations should be reciprocal; (d) in China, the competence of a leader is seen as the ability to establish harmonious interactions; and (e) in Vietnam, relations should be mutually beneficial and lasting.

Of course, we do not expect all Arabs, Africans, Andeans, Chinese, and Vietnamese to behave the same way in each of their local communities, and we think we should exercise caution when dealing with generalizations such as the ones listed above so as to avoid stereotypes that might be associated with prejudice and misconceptions, which in turn might harm the relationships between people from different cultural backgrounds.

In the context of intercultural competence, Selasi's (2014) idea of identity would help us break the stereotypes here to move beyond the physical boundaries of physical spaces. In her talk, she exemplifies her points by saying that in relation to rituals and relationships, for instance, two people geographically distant may have much more in common than those that live in the same neighborhood. "A Mexican gardener in Los Angeles and a Nepali housekeeper in Delhi have much more in common in terms of rituals and restrictions than nationality implies," she says. Learning to be open to other frames of mind and behaviors allows us to become more tolerant.

One of the most known tools to develop intercultural competence is the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) proposed by Dr. Milton Bennett, available at the website of the Intercultural Development Research Institute (IDRI) (More information at: http://www.idrinstitute.org/page.asp?menu1=15), revised in 2014. The table below presents a brief description of this model (Table 1).

In the ethnocentric stage, people would consider their own culture as the center and reference for interactions with partners. In the first three substages, people would avoid cultural differences and define simple categories in cultural interactions. Once they acquire intercultural competences, people would become more interested and aware of cultural differences, using their knowledge to improve cross-cultural interactions, moving to an ethnorelative stage. Bennett describes each substage, as summarized in Table 2.

The DMIS model can be an interesting tool when hiring personnel in higher education institutions to help (a) specify the level of competence they want to solicit from applicants, (b) know the level of competence for specific tasks, (c) use this model to identify the level of competence of applicants during the assignment process, and (d) indicate the competences to be tested before admission (Schoeffel and Gariazzo-Dessiex 2012). Moreover, DMIS can be a useful tool for

**Table 1** Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)

| Ethnocentric stage | | | Ethnorelative stage | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Denial | Defense | Minimization | Acceptance | Adaptation | Integration |

Source: Schoefell and Gariazzo-Dessiex (2012)

**Table 2** Description of DMIS stages

| Denial | Cultural difference is not considered at all. Models for perceiving one's own culture are more complex than the ones used for other cultures. People experience isolation from cultural differences. Individuals are dismissive or not interested in intercultural communication |
|---|---|
| Defense | Difference is perceived in a polarized manner. Cultures are categorized as "us, the superiors" and "them, the inferiors." People are threatened by cultural difference and tend to be critical of other cultures |
| Minimization | Elements of one's own culture are considered universal. People tend to think that their experiences are shared by all cultures or that their values go beyond cultural borders. This stage may hide cultural differences, with a false assumption that everyone has equal opportunities |
| Acceptance | People accept that their own culture is just one of the many possible cultures in the world. Acceptance is not agreement – cultural differences may still be seen in a negative way. People become curious and respectful about cultural differences, but they still do not adapt easily to different contexts |
| Adaptation | Development of appropriate behavior in different cultural contexts. It includes empathy toward the other culture. It creates feelings of appropriateness that result in adequate behavior. People can use intercultural sensitivity as a communicative competence |
| Integration | Ability to be in and out of different cultural views. People deal with issues related to "in-betweenness" of cultures. This can be used to create cultural connections and perform mediation, in a cross-cultural level |

Source: Authors', adapted from the IDRI website

education in general and for internationalization in particular, because it can guide academics to define and adapt curricula and teaching/learning methods, according to the competence of participants.

In a world of super-diversity (Vertovec 2007), a notion to describe the level of complexity of contemporary societies, one should consider various aspects in the contacts between individuals, in order to understand this complexity. Such aspects include (but are not limited to) countries of origin, languages, religions, migration channels, immigration statuses, gender, and age.

Thus, one could face challenges such as patterns of inequality and prejudice, patterns of segregation, and contact with and new forms of cosmopolitanism (Vertovec 2007, pp. 1045–1047), in order to establish a nexus between research and policymaking and to create an impact on public practices which try to overcome these issues.

Working with (and in!) cross-cultural environments is not an easy task, because each scenario requires a particular approach. Therefore, acquiring knowledge about cultural issues can make people more competent to develop sustainable academic and social relations and partnerships. Partners with empathy may be more successful when working together in the solution of issues that arise in the context of international academic cooperation, because they tend to welcome different views for solving complex challenges.

## Conclusion

Selasi gives us excellent insight on the role of locality and human experience as she concludes her talk in the Rio de Janeiro TED Talk Event in 2014:

> People: Finally, what we're talking about is human experience. This notoriously and gloriously, disorderly affair. In creative writing, locality bespeaks humanity. The more we know where our story is set, the more local color and texture, the more human the characters start to feel, the more relatable, not less. The myth of national identity and the vocabulary of coming from confuses us into placing ourselves into mutually exclusive categories. In fact, all of us are multi – multi-local, multi-layered. To begin our conversations with an acknowledgement of this complexity brings us closer together, I think, not further apart. (Selasi, TED Talk 2014)

Placing the human experience and the local experiences (without losing sight of the global aspects) at the center when developing and implementing internationalization policies may be the key for more sustainable relations in higher education, in short, enabling a global identity to develop without losing track of local and personal traits.

In a scenario of internationalization of higher education with its increasing contacts between people from different cultures and language backgrounds, one should try to seek alternative approaches, which might help people deal with potential conflicts created in these contacts. As previously suggested here, internationalization of higher education, depending on how it is implemented, can have several benefits, but also hurdles.

One of the negative impacts of internationalization of higher education is the strengthening of hegemonic powers, stereotypes, languages, and worldviews. The tension to become part of a global village while preserving a local identity, present in the process of globalization and internationalization of higher education, can be minimized with the implementation of emancipatory and sustainable internationalization policies which aim at developing intercultural competence and tolerance. In the case of language use, this can be achieved, for example, through the use of inclusive approaches such as the intercomprehension approach (Finardi 2017). Finally, in the case of internationalization of higher education, we suggest that models of intercultural competence development such as the one reviewed here are incorporated in higher education agendas, curricula, and development of personnel.

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