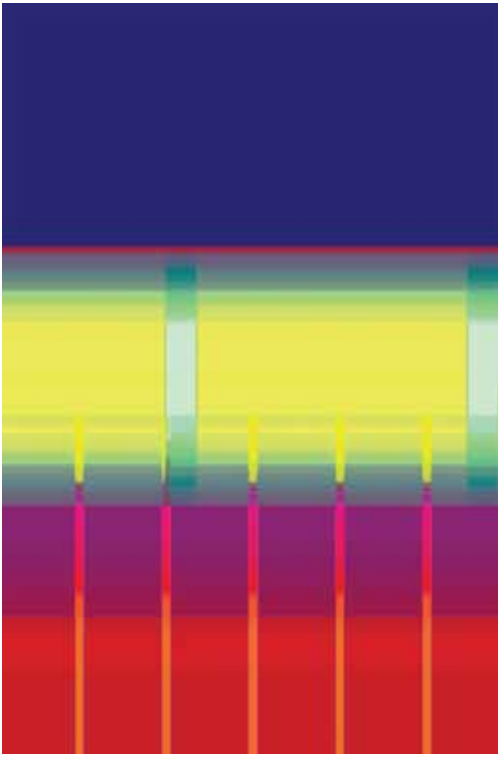
Explorations in Adult Higher Education

An Occasional Paper Series

Our Values, Our Goals



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SUNY Empire State College's occasional paper series brings together the ideas, voices and multiple perspectives of those engaged in thinking about adult higher education today. Our goal is to critically examine our theories and practices, to provoke dialogue, and to imagine new possibilities of teaching and learning.

Special thanks to those whose ideas and insights, whose work and whose commitment to this project have made this publication possible: Deborah Amory (Empire State College), John Hughes (Empire State College), Katherine Jelly (Empire State College), Casey Lumbra (Empire State College), Thomas Mackey (Empire State College), Catherine Marienau (School for New Learning, DePaul University), John McKenna (Empire State College), Debra Park (Empire State College), Amy Rose (Seattle University and Northern Illinois University), Steve Schapiro (Fielding Graduate University), Alan Tait (Open University, UK), Edward Taylor (Penn State University), Kathleen Taylor (St. Mary's College of California), Gina Torino (Empire State College), Tina Wagle (Empire State College) and Kay Watkins (Empire State College).

The recordings of the webinar series, upon which this publication is based, can be accessed at http://choose.esc.edu/webinars/revisioning-adult-higher-education/.

The ideas expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of SUNY Empire State College.

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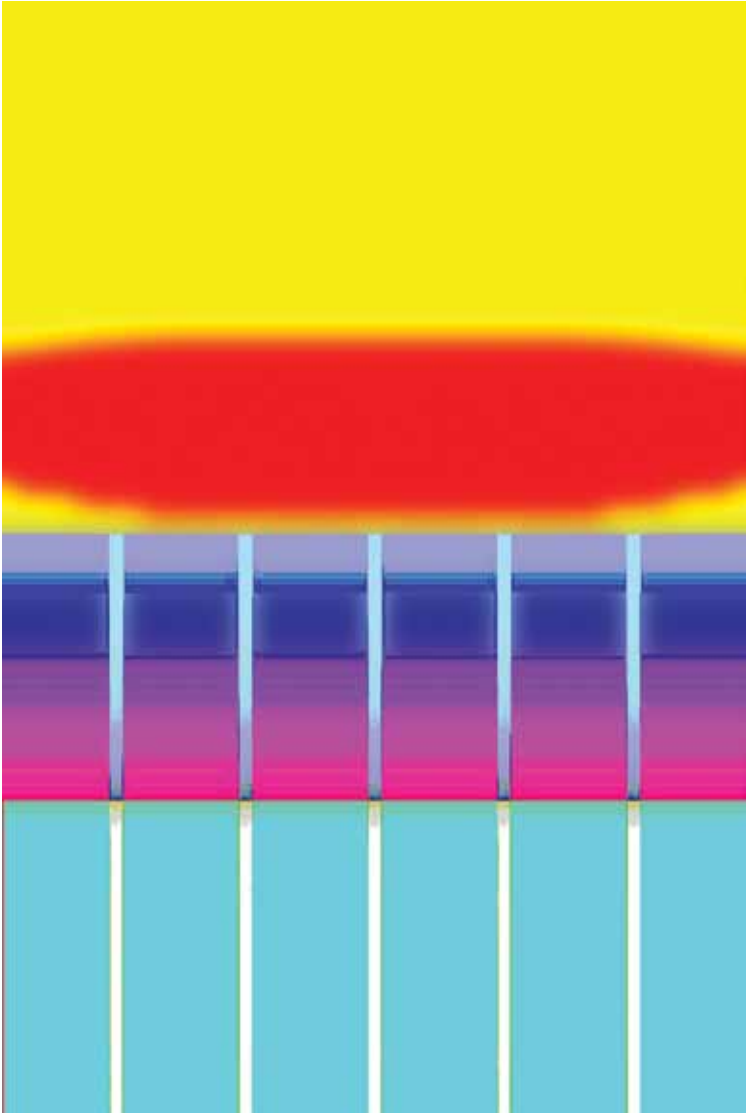

Richard Garet, *Glared Chamber 3*, 2007, C-print, 12 x 18 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Julian Navarro Projects, N.Y.

Why Do We Do What We Do?

Alan Mandell, Editor

College Professor of Adult Learning and Mentoring
SUNY Empire State College

Ch-ch-ch-ch-Changes
(Turn and face the strain)
David Bowie, "Changes" (1971)

To claim that higher education today is changing has become a cliché. Yes, there are those who bemoan the new terrain, who fear the thinning out, if not the death of the university. And yes, too, there are those who champion the cause of change, who see around us the chance to create institutions (or non-institutions) that provide learning opportunities never before available. But whatever one's point of view, it is nearly impossible to take a gaze and see a stable system of higher education around the world healthily protected from the rattlings at its gates. We are in for something big. As Judith Butler might inspire us to say, we are in some "learning trouble." It's hard not to feel it.

As those committed to the education of adults, right now, the ideas and critiques of those who, a half-century ago, imagined a very different educational world seem more relevant than ever. The echoes are everywhere. For example, what would Ivan Illich, Allen Tough and Ernest Boyer think about the formidable communicative/learning possibilities available today? Aren't Illich's "tools for conviviality" everywhere around us? Aren't MOOCs the contemporary manifestation of Tough's "learning projects" that he knew were barely taken seriously by any academic at the time? Aren't all of those open educational resources exactly what will bring down, forever, the "bureaucratic mandates" that Boyer knew were stifling every form of education? From this point of view, as anxiety-producing as the changes are (and who would claim there is no confusion today?), the "something big" might be the realization of any adult educator's dreams.

But in our excitement, questions loom. There is unheard of, fantastic, access; there are resources that no single institution (as prestigious as it claims to be) could ever hold, let alone create; there are opportunities for learning popping up all over the place, so that desperate universities wonder if their sacred credentials will fade fast; and who, right now, can rationally claim that adults are some tiny, invisible fraction of those in and seeking higher education?

It's exactly in this context that questions regarding our purposes are vital. To what end are we adopting (or adapting to) change? What really animates our work? What do we care about? What are the assumptions that inform our analyses and our actions? How can we not get lost in the wild babble of change, buffeted from one strategy to the next, trying (usually unsuccessfully) to keep up with the newest trend (and, of course, there are more to come)? Why do we do what we do? Can't we more carefully articulate and remind ourselves of our values and our goals? It is incumbent upon us, at least, to try.

In early 2012, a small group of SUNY Empire State College colleagues organized a three-part webinar series that we hoped would begin to take up some of these questions. We invited Stephen Brookfield (University of St. Thomas, Minnesota), Bakary Diallo (African Virtual University, Nairobi, Kenya) and Margo Okazawa-Rey (Fielding Graduate University, California) to help us think about the values and hopes embedded in our work. Those webinars became the basis of this publication.

As you will see in the essays that follow, Brookfield pushed us to ask ourselves what we actually mean by "critical thinking" and to become more attentive to the tacit judgments (and entire philosophical traditions) that inform our often throw-away use of the term. Diallo encouraged us to think about "access" within the complex context of economic development and powerful "technological, language and cultural barriers. … " And Okazawa-Rey helped us to think about how identities get constructed in a globalized world and about how our institutions encourage or pay only lip service to "people's capacities to act on their own behalf." In distinctive ways, each contributor invited us to tangle with what is really at stake in this new context of higher education.

We were gratified that six colleagues from within and outside Empire State College agreed to respond to the three main essays. We thank Ronald Cervero, Gina Torino, Patrick McAndrew, Thomas Mackey, Isidore Udoh and Tina Wagle for their efforts to extend and deepen the conversation, and to open it up to new questions and concerns.

Our "learning trouble" will not go away. Indeed, and this is the key, the cacophony of fears and celebrations should not deflect us from hanging in there and finding the space and mustering the energy to think about why we do what we do. If we do not, someone else will make the decisions, and all of us in institutions of higher education will not honestly and imaginatively have faced the strain.

What Does It Mean to Act Critically?

Stephen Brookfield

Critical Thinking

My theme is the question: "What does it mean to act critically?" I think critical thinking, as a term, is something that is thrown around a great deal. It is what philosophers call a "premature ultimate" – a term that once you've invoked it, you tend to stop any further critical analysis or questioning. So, if you say, "I'm teaching critical thinking," or if you say, "I'm working democratically," people nod assent, and that puts an end to any further debate. So, the term can be found in a great number of college mission statements. I think most people say its main focus is on identifying and checking assumptions. But its specific manifestation, I think, depends very much on the tradition within which you're working.

Critical Traditions

As I'm looking at critical thinking, particularly the discourse in the United States, I see four traditions – some of which overlap, some of which, at times, are antithetical – that inform how we think about this word "critical." The first, probably the most common, is the analytic philosophy tradition, which says that a critical adult or a critical teacher is someone who is skilled in argument analysis, in understanding the ways arguments are constructed and deconstructed, in different forms of reasoning (inductive, deductive, analogical and so on) and in detecting logical fallacies.

Second, the natural sciences also are fairly prominent as a tradition of criticality, where being critical is seen as engaging in a systematic process of hypothesis formulation, testing and then refutation or confirmation. The notion of falsifiability is interesting here. Something can only be considered scientific if it's open to refutation, to being disproved.

Third, the critical theory tradition, which is the one I am going to focus on, is, I think, less prominent in the discourse, but that theory focuses on criticality as being the ability to uncover power dynamics and challenge ideological manipulation. Someone is judged to be critical if they are able to recognize

when power is being abused or when it is being used responsibly, and if they are able to discern the presence of dominant ideologies (capitalism, militarism, white supremacy, patriarchy, heterosexism) embedded in everyday language and practice.

And then the fourth tradition, which I think is very apropos for us as adult educators, is the tradition of American pragmatism, which says that the critical practitioner is someone who is engaged in the experimental pursuit of beautiful consequences, in this case, democracy – someone who is open to changing practices, to rethinking formats, methods and approaches, to altering constantly the way we understand and do our work depending on what our experience tells us.

Core Assumptions of Critical Theory

The critical theory tradition is clearly a very broad, deep and long-articulated tradition that rests on three core assumptions. Firstly, a core assumption of critical theory is that society is organized to make permanent inequity – permanent structured inequality – look as though this is a normal and natural state of being. So, people see this inequity as being as unchangeable as the weather.

The second core assumption is that the way this perception of inequity is normal, the way that perception is transmitted and maintained, is through the dissemination of the dominant ideology, and by that I mean a set of practices, ways of thinking and instinctual behaviors that are so much a part of who we are – so embedded within us – that we don't even realize that they're constructed because to us, they just seem the "natural" way of understanding our world and taking action within it.

The third assumption of critical theory, which is where the "acting critically" element comes from, is that the only reason you study theory is so that it can illuminate this state of affairs and guide you in the action that you take to change what is taken for granted.

These are the core assumptions that I'll be working from as I try to understand the project of acting critically.

What Does it Mean to Be Critical? Five Tasks Pursued Experimentally

So, what does it mean to be critical and to act critically? Drawing on the critical theory tradition, I am going to pose five particular tasks that are pursued in a

pragmatic tradition; that is, pragmatic in the best sense of the word, meaning purposeful experimentation. These are five learning tasks – five adult educational projects – that together, constitute being critical.

First of all, someone who is critical is constantly trying to understand how power operates. This person is looking for the power dynamics within institutions, organizations, classrooms and communities and trying to understand when it is being used ethically, when it is being abused, how power flows around the room and when coercion is ethical.

Second, I think this tradition poses a task of detecting ideological manipulation. That is, someone who is critical has the ability, at some level, to understand how certain ideas and certain practices have been implanted in them so as to seem instinctual and is then able to look back upon those and challenge them and envision other ways of thinking and acting.

Thirdly, I think someone who is critical can recognize and challenge hegemony. By that I mean that you can realize when you are embracing ideas and actions that you think are in your own best interests, but that actually are working against you and serving the interests of others.

Fourth, I think someone who is critical is alert to the way that, what Marcuse calls "repressive tolerance," operates to neutralize challenges to a system; in other words, the way that the system allows just enough opposition to be voiced so that people feel a genuine challenge has been mounted, when, in fact, nothing structurally is changing.

And finally, I think being critical is connected to the great American project, to trying to practice a participatory democracy. I will take these in turn and say a little about each of them.

Understanding Power

First of all, the project of understanding power: One of the things I bumped up against experientially very early on was the reality of teacher power. I had been schooled in the 1970s in a student-centered paradigm, and so I felt that when I moved into institutional adult education, somehow power would disappear in the room – we would all be friends together on an equal footing. Very quickly I realized that was a huge misconception, and that although I could work respectfully and collegially with students, I could not escape the fact that I had

power and authority. I also realized that power was not all in my hands: that the institution had power; the organizing circumstances within which I worked exerted power; students sometimes could exert power against me, could effectively sabotage me. For example, if I'm using a discussion-based approach and I ask a question and nobody responds, my practice has been very effectively sabotaged.

So, over the years, I have used various methods to surface power such as the "critical incident questionnaire." This is an anonymous classroom response form that is made up of five questions, is used once a week with students and that asks them to write down what was the most engaged moment in class this week, the most distanced moment, the most helpful action anyone took, the most puzzling action anyone took and what surprised them the most about the class. I review all of the students' responses – I don't know who has written what – and then I prepare a summary of that week's responses. The next time I meet with the group, I report out what their comments broadly said, and that is when we negotiate what is going to happen in the classroom.

One of the interesting functions of this particular instrument, I think, has been to democratize the classroom: to provide an opportunity for students to challenge my power and authority in a way that feels safe to them, rather than them having to speak up in an environment where they don't know how their criticism will be received by me, and they don't necessarily trust me to behave in an open and non-defensive way. I've found it a useful way to foreground power dynamics and make them the object of particular conversation in the class.

Ideological Manipulation

The second task I am interested in is how we recognize the ways in which ideological beliefs are embedded within our world views – how they are a part of how we filter our experiences in the world without us realizing just how powerful they are. Examples I've looked at personally and in a broader political sense, include my own depression. One of the reasons I know I didn't get any professional help for this for many years was because I was caught in the patriarchal belief that as a man, I am able to reason and think my way through problems; in contrast (as patriarchy says) to women, who are more emotionally grounded. Because I was a male, I assumed that I didn't need any kind of professional help or any kind of medication and that I could successfully tell myself to "snap out of it."

Now, if you'd asked me, "Was I captured by patriarchy?" I would have said "Absolutely not." But that's the nature of ideology – it gets its hooks into you before you realize it. I think ideology is behind a lot of microaggressions – racial microaggressions and gender microaggressions – the small, daily injuries that we commit. The ideology that serves the dominant structure well is the ideology that says, "Don't bother to participate politically because all politicians are the same"; "Everything's fixed, it's fixed in the system"; and "If things go wrong, then just don't grumble, go on with your life." Those are ideological beliefs that prevent any purposeful, revolutionary change.

Of all the ideologies we absorb in the USA, capitalism, of course, is one of the strongest. It is grounded in the idea that competition is a natural mode of human being and that those, therefore, who rise to positions of power and influence are the "fittest"; they are there because of their particular talents and energies. We see capitalist ideological elements in adult education; for example, the way you create an efficient division of labor in an adult education institution is by dividing up the labor, cutting up curriculum into chunks, separating teachers from each other and having us all working solo. The logic of privatization – which I think plays into the notion that teaching should happen in a solo manner – says, essentially: Your task is to take care of your own; the needs of the collective are way, way behind.

Hegemony

Understanding and contesting hegemony is a third thing that we need to be alert to if we are going to say we are acting critically. Again, just to recap, hegemony is the process by which you enthusiastically embrace a set of actions and beliefs that actually are harming us – "Killing me softly," to use The Fugees' song (or to go back a few years before that for those of the older generation amongst us, Roberta Flack). Hegemony kills us softly because it works against our best interests while we feel it is actually serving us. In a book called, *The Power of Critical Theory* (2005), I included a long discussion around the notion that I think many adult educators like myself embrace, which is that adult education is a vocation of being in service to students.

Unfortunately, what happens is that this admirable idea becomes perverted by institutional dynamics to mean that we think any day in which we arrive home in anything other than a state of being completely burned out, hasn't been a day where we've really given our all to students. I think what often happens is that

vocation becomes internalized, meaning you need to burn yourself out, to fry yourself, in the interest of students. So, when you get home completely exhausted, with no energy left for family, friends, recreation, political activities, community involvements and all you want to do is collapse into bed and watch a rerun of some idiotic sitcom – in that state, you pat yourself on the back and say, "Good job, well done, I've really exemplified my vocation of an adult educator today because I have nothing left within me." To me, that's a hegemonic assumption of what good adult education is – one that serves the interests of institutions that want to get the work of three people out of one employee. I think becoming aware of hegemony is a strong part of acting critically.

Repressive Tolerance

This idea, that the way systems head off challenges to it by allowing just enough opposition to convince people that something substantive is happening, is an idea developed by Herbert Marcuse (1965) that I've found very helpful. Marcuse says that, in higher education generally, when you see curricula diversified to include multiple racial, cultural and intellectual traditions, people think that substantive change is happening. But from his viewpoint, actually, the way that this occurs only underscores the centrality of the mainstream. So, let's say we open up a course to include an Afro-centric paradigm, or a Latino/Latina paradigm or the Asian-Diaspora, etc. Marcuse says as long as the Euro-centric mainstream is still in the curriculum, that will always be the center – the norm – against which these other traditions are compared.

So, while it looks like we have an array of equal possibilities, Marcuse says our previous ideological conditioning will always ensure that we as teachers, and our own students, see those other traditions as exotic alternatives, thereby underscoring the centrality of the Euro-centric perspective. And, something that really intrigues me: Marcuse says that when the notion of "democratic tolerance" is applied to discussion-based approaches to teaching, we are left with this idea that everybody's experience in the room is equally valid because we are all experts in our own experiences and we can never deny the validity of any other person's experiences. What Marcuse says is that this means that bigotry and stupidity are given as much validity as a thoughtful and more informed analysis. And so, he says democracy becomes warped to mean that "anything goes" in the classroom, no matter how hateful, racist, ageist, sexist, classist or homophobic a comment is.

Practicing Democracy

The final critical task, of course, is to practice democracy, something which often is seen as unproblematic because democracy means that we find out what the majority wants and then we do our best to do that. From a critical theory viewpoint, that's a severely flawed notion of democracy because the majority – so critical theory would say – has been ideologically manipulated to support the current system, has been indoctrinated into capitalist and white supremacist notions of normality. For me, as an adult educator, when I'm trying to act democratically, I'm trying to work to create situations where decisions are made only after a properly inclusive conversation.

For me, a democratic principle is that any democratic decision-making process gives a greater proportionate emphasis to the interests of those who are most affected by the decision. Thus, a democratic decision is not a majority vote; instead, those who are most affected by the decision have a more proportionate influence in saying what that final decision is. I think democracy also is where resources are stewarded and used for the widest number of people, for the common good. In *Radicalizing Learning* (2011), John Holst and I argued that democracy, therefore, has to be an economic arrangement as much as political arrangement. And for us, democracy is democratic socialism. And finally, when we're choosing between collective interests and private interests, we usually privilege the interests of the collective. However, I do recognize that realizing democracy is, as Eduard Lindeman often argued, a partially functioning ideal (Brookfield, 1988). We never fully realize democracy. It's often a contradictory process.

Conclusion

In these remarks, I've taken one critical tradition – critical theory – and used it to elaborate what being critical could look like if viewed from that tradition. Had I taken the tradition of analytic philosophy, for example, I would have come to a very different set of arguments. So, when we talk with adult educational colleagues about teaching critical thinking, it's crucial that we sort out first precisely which intellectual traditions we are working from. For me, the best of adult education marries the intellectual perspective critical theory to the pragmatist stance of constantly experimenting with the widest variety of approaches and methods to achieve your objectives. Viewed this way, being critical means engaging in the experimental pursuit of political and economic democracy.

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Stephen Brookfield. Since beginning his college teaching career in 1970, Stephen Brookfield has worked in England, Canada, Australia and the United States. He has written 14 books on adult learning, teaching, critical thinking, discussion methods and critical theory. In 2008, he was awarded the Morris T. Keeton Award of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning for "significant contributions to the field of adult and experiential learning." He currently serves on the editorial boards of journals in Britain, Canada, Australia and the United States. After 10 years as a professor of higher and adult education at Columbia University, he now holds the title of distinguished university professor at the University of St. Thomas in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota where he recently won the university's Diversity Leadership Teaching & Research Award and the John Ireland Presidential Award for Outstanding Achievement as a Teacher/Scholar. In 2009, he was inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame and, in 2010, he received an honorary Doctor of Letters degree from Muhlenberg College.

Critical Thinking for What?

Ronald M. Cervero

In 2005, Stephen Brookfield published a landmark book that provides the undergirding for his presentation. In *The Power of Critical Theory,* Brookfield succeeded in putting "the *critical* back into *critical thinking* by emphasizing how thinking critically is an inherently political process" (p. vii). Although there were glimpses of this effort in all of Brookfield's other useful and important books, starting with *Understanding and Facilitating Adult Learning* (1986) through *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* (1996), he made a clean break from the dominant definition of critical thinking that is informed by analytic philosophy. That break was no small accomplishment, which continues to have practical implications for adult education, as seen in Brookfield's Empire State College webinar and in the follow-up production of this monograph.

The differences between critical thinking and critical theory, both of which are alive and well, are profound and suggest dramatically different approaches to teaching adults. The critical thinking tradition suggests that: "To think critically is mostly defined as the process of unearthing, and then researching, the assumptions one is operating under, primarily by taking different perspectives on the familiar, taken-for-granted beliefs and behaviors" (Brookfield, 2005, p. viii). From a critical *theory* perspective, the problem with this approach and its intellectual sister, transformative learning, is that it allows cognitive and learning processes for *any* purpose or interest. For example, although antiracist educators may be critical thinkers, members of the Ku Klux Klan also claim to have engaged in critical thinking about dominant ideologies of "liberal" society that are disseminated through the so-called "liberal" media. Thus, Klan leaders challenge those "taken-for-granted beliefs" so that they have a reasoned basis for a white society.

This is a problem that needs to be corrected, and Brookfield did so unambiguously in his presentation. He explicitly rejects the analytic philosophy approach and chooses to focus on the critical theory tradition, as well as the tradition of American pragmatism, which provides the vital stance of experimentation for using in practice the insights from critical theory. In a very real sense, the critical theory tradition forces us to answer the question, "Critical thinking for what?"

In his book, Brookfield (2005) defined "thinking critically as being able to identify, and then challenge and change, the process by which a grossly inequitable society uses dominant ideology to convince people this is a normal state of affairs" (p. viii). Because the core assumptions of critical theory are that "Western democracies are highly unequal societies in which economic inequity, racism, and class discrimination are empirical realities" and that critical theory "attempts to understand this state of affairs as a necessary prelude to changing it" (p. viii), members of the Klan could not claim to be engaged in critical thinking as defined by critical theory.

At the end of his presentation, Brookfield urges us to "sort out first precisely which intellectual traditions we are working from" when we talk with our adult education colleagues about critical thinking. This is especially important in higher education institutions that have a very long history of cherishing the analytical philosophy approach to critical thinking. Brookfield is clear that his focus and practice is based on the marriage of critical theory and pragmatism, and thus, "being critical means engaging in the experimental pursuit of political and economic democracy." In the end, however, we should be realistic about the ability of *any* theory to make a difference in practice; for if social inequality is the problem we need to solve, the redistribution of wealth and power, not critical theory, is the answer. As Forester (1989) reminded us, "Theories do not solve problems in the world, people do. Nevertheless, good theory … can help alert us to problems, remind us of what we care about, or prompt our practical insights into the cases we confront (p. 12). So, for those people who want a social analysis that provides the intellectual and practical tools to work toward a redistribution of wealth and social power, critical theory offers hope and possibility. For making this theory accessible to all of us, adult educators should thank Stephen Brookfield for lending his talent to this mission.

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Microaggressions as Manipulation

Gina C. Torino

In his seminal piece, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate,* Ernest Boyer (1990) stated that the scholarship of teaching must be more than a mere transmission of knowledge: it must transform the lives of students. He augmented the traditional role of the scholar to include a range of functions: discovery of new knowledge through research, integration of the knowledge across disciplines, the study of teaching to improve learning, the application of knowledge to the better of not only the professions but the broader society. In higher education today, the function of applying knowledge to improve society is too little emphasized. It seems that all the discovery and integration of knowledge and all the learning in the world will ultimately undermine education's great promise as long as exigent social problems and institutions of injustice are left fundamentally intact by scholarship.

In his presentation, "What Does It Mean to Act Critically?" Stephen Brookfield asks educators to draw upon the critical theory tradition in the United States, particularly the one that uncovers power dynamics and challenges ideological manipulation, and to apply this tradition to our learning encounters in higher education. The hope for Brookfield is for educators to translate theory into practice by taking action toward challenging inequities and changing society for the better.

According to Brookfield, there are many ways that we can be manipulated. Critical theory can help us see how we are manipulated into accepting inequity. We can be manipulated from without, by, for example, our society's mass media; and we can be manipulated from within, by our own unquestioned assumptions and values. When the manipulation comes in the form of ideology, we may not even notice it and, when confronted, we will deny it, as Brookfield's example of patriarchy shows. When the manipulation comes in the form of hegemony, not only do we acknowledge, but we go so far as to valorize a worldview, belief or practice that contributes to our own oppression, as his example of burnout helps us see. All of these forms of manipulation operate together to keep us "under control."

In this regard, Brookfield adduces one of the most damaging techniques of ideological control: microaggressions. Microaggressions are "brief and

commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 271). Indeed, the concept of microaggressions has been useful in elucidating the injustices committed against other oppressed groups, such as women, e.g., gender microaggressions. And, as Brookfield points out, class microaggressions are particularly important to those of us who would like to use critical theory to remove the wool from the wolf. The important fact to keep in mind about microaggressions is that they slip under the critical radar of most of us, including both those who perpetrate them as well as the targets. Nonetheless, these little indignities, whether race-based, class-based, gender-based or otherwise, can play a major role in our everyday lives.

How might one connect such subtle oppression to the major ideological problems of our modern society, which, as Brookfield points out, is "capitalist" in nature? The corporation is, after all, the dominant institution of our epoch (Bakan, 2003). How is the personal linked to the political? Brookfield provides examples of how we might subtly undermine our own and others' engagement in affecting political change in electoral politics. This also is the case for contentious social movement actions, such as demonstrations, civil disobedience, general strikes and the like. Through everyday microaggressions, we divide ourselves, and are then unable to freely associate to share the analysis, vision and strategy necessary to implement even small-scale actions needed to initiate change, let alone mass movements. What is more, the energies of those who are the victims of microaggressions become depleted. These energies could have been available for coordinating with others to undertake a difficult but necessary project, such as one aimed at restructuring society.

Brookfield also describes Marcuse's concept of repressive tolerance, which is a tricky concept that can cover a number of difficult-to-detect injustices. The concept is used to criticize an "anything goes" approach, a sort of moral relativism where, by tolerating all points of views (e.g., even Nazism) as equal, we are condoning repression. The concept also may point to the masking of a clearly dominant "important" element amidst a series of token gestures, in which, again, all elements are presented as being equal. For example, how do we feel when we hear from our CEO or supervisor at our workplace that "there's no hierarchy here: we're all one big happy family"? This also is repressive tolerance. It's in this context

that Brookfield's example of Euro-centric topics being the real, serious curriculum, with a disingenuous nod to the importance of a "diversity curriculum" is extremely important for us to think about.

But Brookfield's point is that even if a particular higher education administration proclaims its dedication to equality, everyone knows that in any situation of hierarchical power there exists a center and a periphery. The diverse curriculum is tolerated in a tongue-in-cheek pantomime of liberal open-mindedness that, just as effectively as before, allows repressive practices to continue. As we should know from the history of racism in the U.S., "separate but equal" is not a morally defensible policy. There is a need for more thorough and for far more earnest integration of authors, perspectives, theories, concepts, principles, facts and practices in every arena of scholarship.

At some point, even if it is uncomfortable, the professoriate, being seekers of truth, must own up to the hard facts, especially those that call on all of us to take a stand against injustice. And, whether with ourselves or others, we will have to be circumspect, candid, direct and articulate to know when we should be taking that stand. As Brookfield points out, injustice – in the form of microaggressions – can insidiously poison our everyday experiences, or overtly express itself in the form of anti-immigrant bigotry, racism, misogyny, homophobia, class warfare and the entire battery of persecution. Yes, we all still need to be tolerant of views that are different from our own, but not if this so-called tolerance leads to repression.

Brookfield advocates inclusive and communicative democracy, in which people are "experimenting widely" in forms of collective participation, an orientation in the spirit of John Dewey's social philosophy of the pragmatist tradition. Since the majority is ideologically manipulated to support the current system, Brookfield advises that before decisions are made democratically, there needs to first be a "properly inclusive conversation." In such conversations, it may be beneficial to have opportunities for participants to experience what Mezirow (2000) would call "disorienting dilemmas" in order to bring about the transformation in "meaning frames" that is needed.

Brookfield also advocates for the idea that those who will be most influenced by a decision ought to retain the most say in the decision. This is similar to a concept of subsidiarity, which is mentioned in Michael Albert's (2003) vision for an alternative participatory economy, but the concept goes back much further.

These principles need not be put into practice exclusively at the municipal, state or national level during elections. The principles also are needed in the economic sphere, for there can be no political democracy without economic democracy, as Dewey and others have observed. In fact, every sphere of life can be democratized. As Brookfield tells us, we can democratize our classrooms. He describes the ways in which he uses the "critical incident questionnaire" to change the power dynamics of his classes. We are all in need of such practical tools to instigate change in our everyday lives.

The topic of Stephen Brookfield's presentation raises many questions. How does one free oneself from such an imprisoning mental framework? Do we need others to free us (as in the allegory of Plato's cave)? Do the others need to be fully enlightened? How can we trust such others? If they are so advanced in their abilities, how do we know they are not simply painting for us a new false picture of the world that somehow benefits them? Or, is it enough for the other to be enlightened only in the respect that we are benighted? Is it preferable to attempt self-emancipation? Is this possible? How? What are the most promising techniques (e.g., seeking out viewpoints contrary to one's own, unflinchingly investigating suffering in the world as well as examining how our behavior is connected to it, etc.)? Will we ever be fully free of deception? How would we ever know?

In this brief, but powerful, presentation, Brookfield provides a politico-economically savvy answer to the question: "What does it mean to act critically?" The contribution is worthy of Boyer's vision of a scholar's role in applying knowledge to address social problems. Brookfield shows us how we can start the process of building awareness within ourselves, as well as with the students in our own studies. In the best case, this building of awareness gradually ripples outward from the classroom into public society at large through political conversations – about what is wrong with things, but also perhaps about what society would be like if it were set right – and through strategic action taken toward large-scale economic democracy. It all starts with the individual. As educators, by asking questions of ourselves, of our students and of each other, all in the spirit of pragmatic, critical theory, we are eminently situated to initiate this process. We can throw the stone that starts the ripple. This, Brookfield suggests, just might be the proper role of scholars who wish to take part in bringing into being a better world for all.

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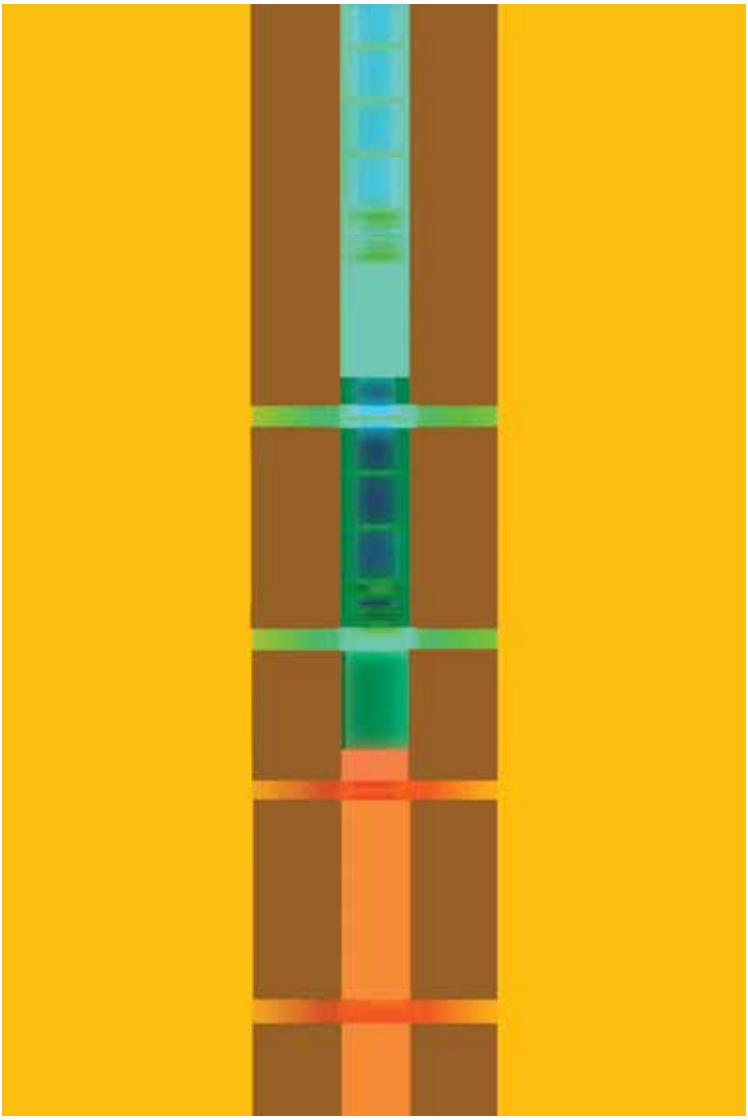
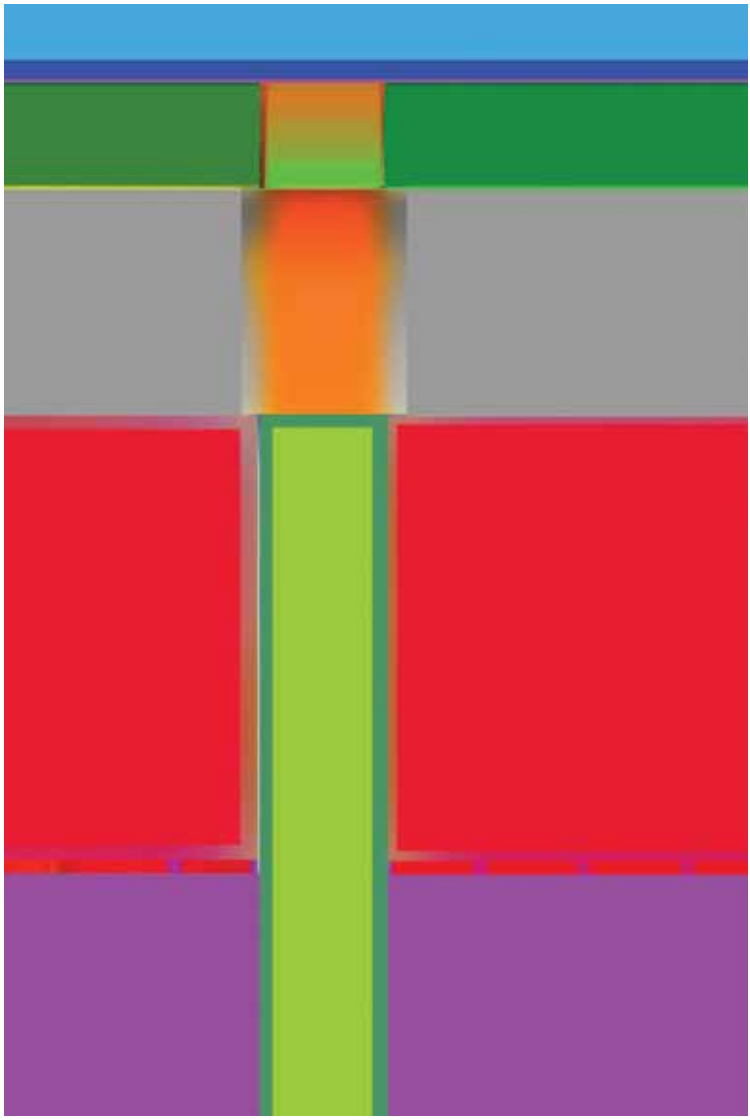


Richard Garet, *Glared Chamber 4*, 2007, C-print, 12 x 18 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Julian Navarro Projects, N.Y.



Richard Garet, *Glared Chamber 5*, 2007, C-print, 12 x 18 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Julian Navarro Projects, N.Y.

Producing and Delivering Consortium Programs with 10 African Countries

Bakary Diallo

Introduction to the African Virtual University (AVU)

The African Virtual University is a Pan African Intergovernmental Organization. This means that the charter of AVU has been signed by several of the 54 African countries. The continent is divided into several different regions. In North Africa, there are mostly Arab countries; the part of Africa below these countries is called sub-Saharan Africa. At this time, the AVU is operating mostly in south sub-Saharan Africa. Our mandate is to contribute significantly to increasing access to quality higher education and training through the innovative use of information and communication technologies. AVU adopted open distance and eLearning in 2003. It was established in 1997 in Washington, D.C. as a World Bank project and was transferred to Nairobi, Kenya in 2002. Right now the AVU has acquired the largest eLearning network in Africa, with 53 partner institutions that are mostly universities situated in 27 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Our headquarters remain in Nairobi; we also have a regional office in Dakar, Senegal. In the last 15 years, the AVU has contributed to the training of about 43,000 students and academics. People ask whether distance learning is possible in Africa. Through the AVU, it has been tested, students have been trained and we have graduates who are doing very well in their everyday work lives.

As the African Virtual University, our biggest asset is the ability of the organization to work beyond technological, language and cultural barriers in Francophone, Anglophone and Lusophone Africa. We have a very complex organization because we are trying to respond to the needs of and work with students using materials in French, English and Portuguese.

Access to Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

This is where it is really interesting: We know that there is a clear link between economic development and access to higher education in terms of number of graduates of higher education. Access to higher education – not graduation rates, but access – is at six percent in sub-Saharan Africa. Some countries are a bit below six percent, but most countries are *significantly* below that number. In addition to the issue of access, one other point is especially relevant: sub-Saharan Africa is made up of a young population; indeed, the majority is under 20 years of age. Over the last decade, there have been some changes. But the bottom line is that our universities cannot accommodate those who now graduate from high school, even at a time when we know that we need more high school graduates. Is there a solution? Can we just expand existing universities? This is *not* an option. Africa does not have the resources to build new universities. The real issue here is resources and time. That is why we believe that open distance and eLearning (ODeL) is an effective alternative. We have proven that thousands have been successfully trained using distance and eLearning sources. This is a rich option that we need to continue to explore.

External barriers to distance and eLearning

It is very important to recognize that there are barriers in the external environment to accessing higher education via eLearning in Africa today. At the national level, there are many policies for infrastructure development and even policies for eLearning, but still what exists is not effectively organized. There also are problems related to infrastructure like deficiencies in Internet provision, the high cost of Internet connectivity, the cost of information technology equipment and the ongoing problem of unreliable power. Without doubt, over the last decade, there has been improvement in access to the Internet across the continent, but it is far behind what one takes for granted in most areas of New York state or in Canada. We are not there yet. And the power question has not disappeared. If you travel to Africa, to most of our sub-Saharan African countries, one would see that we have "power cuts," meaning that often there is no electricity. In most instances, one does not have a power generator/back-up system. One has to sit and wait until the electricity returns. And none of this is regulated: a person or an institution does not know when the power cut is going to take place. These external barriers persist.

Internal barriers to distance and eLearning

In terms of barriers within universities, we often find that institutions don't have plans and strategies, leadership is a problem, computers for staff and students are limited and maintenance of materials is another critical issue that is often not addressed. Regarding teachers at every educational level, limited awareness and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) of all kinds also limits efforts to make educational resources available to more students. We lack qualified human resources in many different fields. And, as is the case not only in African universities but in universities around the globe, we need imaginative strategies to overcome resistance and motivate faculty to use new eLearning tools.

Collaborative Approaches to Producing and Using Math and Science Content

One of the responses of the AVU (between 2005 and 2011) to the realities we face in Africa is what we called the AVU Multinational Project. It is multinational because the project includes 10 countries and five universities.

The cost of this project was just about $10 million. Funding came from the African Development Bank Group ($7 million), about $3 million from AVU and partner institutions and the United Nations Development Program contributed about $500,000.

The first activity of this project was the establishment of open distance and eLearning centers with Internet connectivity. Given the barriers described earlier, having centers with regular Internet access (and a power back-up) was, in itself, a significant infrastructural accomplishment. With this, distance learning and eLearning could take place on a seven-day-per-week, 24-hour-per-day basis without interruption. As part of this project, we included the AVU Capacity Enhancement Program (ACEP) and an integrated teacher education program in math and science. ACEP provided skills in eLearning to academics, professors, technicians and administrators. And, just as I found in Canada when I was at the University of Ottawa, we had many fewer females than males in these math and science areas, so we included a scholarship program to encourage women to study with us.

Developing and using open educational resources (OER)

The use of open educational resources is crucial to our overall work. For example, the focus on math and science is very important for a continent like Africa. We need engineers and we need scientists. This is strategic for AVU, for the countries of Africa and for our donors. We set out to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the schools through the use of ICTs; increase the number of mathematics, science and ICT basic skills teachers; develop and promote research in teacher education to inform future curriculum reform; and establish and strengthen relevant partnerships with other teacher education initiatives in Africa.

How did we set out to do that? It was very complex. It is difficult to pull together five or six academics from any single institution; image that we encouraged the collaboration of faculty members from different universities, across 10 countries, with different policies, and, significantly, from different cultures. What we did was to create an advisory committee from each of the participating countries. Each committee's responsibility was to make sure that every country agreed and every country's needs were recognized and followed up. We organized policies and conceptualized curricula, and then developed content together. Some of the courses were tested in Kenya, Somalia and Senegal. We then launched the program in the 10 countries and published the outcomes as open educational resources.

Impact of the AVU Multinational Project I

Here is a summary of our *overall impact:*

- Establishment of 10 open distance and eLearning (ODeL) centers, one in each of the 10 beneficiary countries.
- Training of 459 university academics in various programs including: materials development for ODeL programs, delivery and technology in ODeL programs; governance, management and financing of ODeL programs; rewriting existing programs to ODeL formats; and ODeL center equipment maintenance, upgrading and use of the learning management systems.
- Development of 86 modules: 13 modules of AVU Capacity Enhancement Program; and 73 modules of ICT-Integrated Teacher Education Program (these modules consist of: ICT basic skills – 4 modules; biology – 8 modules; chemistry – 13 modules; mathematics – 13 modules; physics – 16 modules;

and education professional courses – 19 modules). The teacher education materials are available in English, French and Portuguese, making it a total of 219 modules. The teacher education modules have two unique aspects:

  - they were developed as gender-responsive materials in order to promote the participation of female students in mathematics and science-based programs; and
  - they are open education resources and can be accessed worldwide.

- Development of the AVU open education resources repository available at oer.avu.org and hosting of the 219 modules. The OER online and interactive repository enables institutions to access the science, mathematics and teacher education modules produced in the project. This portal facilitates the use and reuse, as well as the updating, of the content.
- Enrollment of more than 4,000 students in the teacher education program.
- Awarding of 630 scholarships to female students and disadvantaged groups; specifically, 372 of the recipients are females.

Science and technological impact

The project has contributed to reducing the digital divide within Africa, and between Africa and the rest of the world, through the establishment and provision of high-speed Internet connectivity to the 10 ODeL centers.

Social impact

With education being a collaborative process, this project has enabled collaboration between Lusophone, Francophone and Anglophone academics by engaging them in the development and implementation of project activities.

Regional integration impact

The collaborative methodology adopted with the establishment of the centers, the development of mathematics and science modules and related capacity enhancement training has led to an increased collaboration between participating universities and countries.

Impact on teaching and learning mathematics and sciences

A pilot conducted at the University of Nairobi (Kenya), Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar, (Senegal), East Africa University and Amoud University has

shown clearly that the AVU Teacher Education Program has capacity to help more learners perform better in mathematics and sciences and eliminate the gender gap in performance in science. It also has demonstrated the innovative use of information and communication technologies in designing and developing the program, as well as the flexible mode of delivery adopted; that is:

- online learning;
- mixed-mode learning (online with compulsory face-to-face); and
- face-to-face learning (in the classroom), allowing more learners to access and benefit from the program.

We used flexible formats, created print versions of the resources, and also made the materials accessible via CDs and DVDs. We also developed Moodle virtual classrooms to make sure our students feel comfortable and that our systems are as personalized as possible. These OERs have now been accessed in 187 countries: a huge triumph of access. We were very surprised to see that the first country using the materials was Brazil. The second was the United States, the third was India and the fourth was the Philippines. What we discovered was one indication of the use of these resources. We never imagined that our program would be accessed by people outside of Africa. It was an eye opener. In August 2011, AVU won a prize for these open education resources from the United States-based "Education-Portal.com" for "Best Open Courseware (OCW) Emerging Initiative." We now have both exposure and global recognition.

Lessons Learned

Throughout this process, we were aware of the value of collaboration. Yes, it was extremely demanding, but when we saw the results, we knew that whatever we all went through was worth doing. Working across three language divides is difficult; working across the different educational systems and social-political environments requires additional time and resources and calls for significant flexibility. We also work in a part of the world where there are major political conflicts that need to be considered. One cannot plan for these, but you must do everything possible to make sure your project becomes a reality. Too many people depend on these projects for them to fail.

We learned other things: It was possible to achieve a certain degree of regional integration through this program; the translation of modules regularly caused delay; convincing institutions and authors was not easy; as a motivator, we had

to have an incentive for the writers – we had to pay them to build the content and search for qualified human resources – all in the hopes of building a world-class program.

Looking Into the Future

Where do we go from here? Nothing is static. Even today, I met with the head of the African Development Bank in Kenya and was told that the AVU would receive a grant of $15.6 million from that bank. With this new source of funding, we will be able to launch Multinational Project II in 21 countries, building on the success of the first phase and adding new activities such as computer science, research and development and setting up a laboratory on mobile learning here in Nairobi. AVU also will be able to provide technical advice to countries in distance and eLearning policies and strategies. In addition, we are pursuing the goal of accrediting AVU as a full-fledged university. We want to continue to think about improving the OER portal to support self-learning, and contribute to global knowledge through OER that we can make more and more accessible to more people throughout Africa.

Bakary Diallo, a native of Senegal, has been working in the education sector for the last 23 years as a secondary school teacher, an academic, a consultant, a project administrator and a researcher. In 2005, he joined the African Virtual University, an intergovernmental organization based in Nairobi, Kenya, which specializes in open distance and electronic learning. He held several senior positions within the organization before his appointment as the CEO/rector of the AVU in August 2007. Prior to joining the AVU, he worked at the University of Ottawa (where he earned his Ph.D. in educational administration) as a part-time lecturer in the faculty of education (July 2001 to July 2005), and as a consultant on the integration of information and communications technology (ICT) in education at the Center for University Teaching. He taught at the secondary level in Senegal from 1988 to 1997 before joining the University of Ottawa. His latest research activities focus on the use of ICT in higher educational institutions.

Opening Up for the World

Patrick McAndrew

In his presentation, "Producing and Delivering Consortium Programs with 10 African Countries," Bakary Diallo sets out how the African Virtual University (AVU) was established with the aim to increase access to quality higher education in Africa. AVU took the innovative and forward-looking approach of using distance learning, and then eLearning, centered on a distributed model of collaboration across different regions and nations. At the core of AVU's existence, and reflected in the presentation, is the position that establishing more brick and mortar universities cannot be the answer to scaling higher education. As Diallo argues, "the bottom line is that our universities cannot accommodate those who now graduate from high school," even less to expand to meet demand. That echoes the estimate by Sir John Daniel (2012a), president of the Commonwealth of Learning, that meeting the underlying needs for higher education with conventional approaches "would require the opening of three large (30,000 students) campuses every week for the next 13 years" (Abstract section, para. 1). The only answer that seems feasible is to expand online and distance education provision. Diallo makes the further point that expanding access is a way to use education as a forerunner to other benefits such as improved governance and economic advancement. The distinction he makes between access to higher education and success measured in number of graduates is an interesting one that also can be seen in global moves to consider a process of lifelong learning rather than distinct periods as a formal learner that focus on attaining a qualification (Schuller & Watson, 2009).

One element in the renewed success of AVU has been the use of an open approach to encourage collaboration between partners, themselves located at a distance. The impact of openness is one that is increasing (McAndrew, 2010), and The Open University has experienced the value of open collaboration, for example, in its award-winning Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) project (Wolfenden, 2008). TESSA involves many partners in Africa, including working with AVU. Crucially, TESSA adopted open licenses that eliminated the need for complex agreements between partners by utilizing an approach to sharing that is similar to placing everything in the middle and allowing anyone to take out what is needed. The open educational resources (OER) that result are labeled with

Creative Commons licenses (2012) to make it clear that reuse and reworking is permitted and indeed encouraged. The value of OER to the situation in Africa also is identified in AVU's work demonstrating how openness supports development of an educator community and allows material to cross over between languages and cultures.

Openness itself is a powerful and changing concept. The practical examples evident in TESSA and AVU go beyond typical practice in more established universities. Indeed, the current rise of free online education – such as the massive open online courses (MOOC) (Daniel, 2012b) – may well be missing out on the opportunities for truly open collaboration that we can see being applied in Africa. Participant universities are making free content available, therefore extending access beyond their established boundaries, but are not being consistent in their use of open licenses. If content cannot be adjusted and changed to new contexts, there is a risk that the approach will reinforce simplistic models of fixed courses from identified providers. If the same approach had been taken for the work in Africa, the diversity of contribution and mix of cultures and languages that is flagged as a benefit would be much less likely to arise. In an earlier review of the difficulties that have been faced by AVU and other providers of higher education in Africa (Muhirwa, 2009) the limits of applying existing models into an area restricted by available reliable technology is highlighted. The challenges of "multiple obstacles to quality interaction" (Muhirwa, 2009), such as infrastructure problems but also lack of student experience with technology and with approaches to learning, should not be underestimated. The revised approach is more open and offers potential to address these problems; however, unless it is integrated into a wider process of support and recognition, it risks being only a partial solution (Wright & Reju, 2012).

Diallo's analysis of the benefits of OER for the work of AVU brings out the impact on learning and teaching and increasing the capacity for students, but also accents the impact on regional integration and society through cooperation across language and cultural boundaries. The presentation also reports on the way that the content has been used and recognized outside of Africa – evidence that open availability can help local production and avoid dominance by content released from outside the region. The possible future that could come from allowing free (at the point of use) access to open content produced or customized locally is an exciting one; the combination of the free MOOCs with the open sharing and

thirst for collaboration of the AVU's OER initiative could be world-changing. Diallo ends on a message of great hope that AVU can operate as a fully-fledged university. My own version of that hope perhaps goes even further to see the work of AVU, and others using OER, as the catalyst for access to educational opportunities at a scale that can bring benefits within and well beyond Africa.

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Patrick McAndrew is professor of open education at the Institute of Educational Technology in The Open University (UK) where he takes a leading part in the research and development of approaches to open and free learning. Recent projects in this area include OpenLearn, OLnet, Bridge to Success and the OER Research Hub. He has taken an active role in more than 40 funded projects across technology-enhanced learning, including major European initiatives such as MobiLEARN, investigating mobile support for learning and EU4ALL, a toolset to improve support for people with disabilities learning online. McAndrew has a degree in mathematics from University of Oxford and a Ph.D. in computer vision from Heriot-Watt University.

Diallo's "Triumph of Access"

Thomas P. Mackey

My first conversation with Bakary Diallo took place in New York City when SUNY Empire State College hosted the 2011 International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) Standing Conference of Presidents (SCOP).[1] Alan Davis and Meg Benke (then president and provost of Empire State College) welcomed world leaders in open and distance education to the SUNY Global Center for an inspired event that examined "Open Learning in a New Economy." For me, this brief exchange with Diallo sparked great interest in the African Virtual University (AVU) and in connecting our institutions in some way. Later that year, we did reconnect through expanded conversations via video conferencing and the webinar, the contents of which we focus on here. That same year, my research into AVU provided an important reference point for an article I was writing for *First Monday* about open learning and transparent design (Mackey, 2011). As I argued, the OER@AVU website illustrates effective *interactivity,* one of the essential characteristics when designing for transparency. In 2012, we invited Diallo to be our plenary speaker for the annual CDL (Center for Distance Learning) Conference that focused on the overarching theme "An Open Community for Learning, Teaching and Mentoring." Interestingly, the phrase "open community of learning" (State University of New York, 1971, p. 4) was first mentioned in one of the founding documents that established Empire State College in 1971, and exemplifies the open global community for learning that Diallo has been building in support of AVU and learners worldwide.

As Diallo states in his presentation, AVU's mandate "is to contribute significantly to increasing access to quality higher education and training through the innovative use of information and communication technologies." The challenges to meeting this mandate are significant when "access to higher education – not graduation rates, but access – is at six percent in sub-Saharan Africa." He points out that the access issues are further complicated because the existing universities in Africa are unable to meet the demand of a younger population of high school graduates. Given the lack of both "resources and time" to meet the educational needs on such a significant scale, "open, distance and eLearning is an effective alternative" to traditional brick and mortar solutions. As Diallo describes, however, open and distance education requires overcoming *external barriers* related to

eLearning policy at the national level, limited technology infrastructure and lack of reliable electricity in some African countries. Diallo also discusses the *internal barriers* found within universities related to the absence of strategic leadership for distance and eLearning, limited computer access and maintenance, lack of teacher training and even resistance to embracing new technologies. Diallo notes that these challenges are not unique to African universities and are very much a global concern. As he argues, in order to overcome the human resource barriers, for instance, "we need imaginative strategies to overcome resistance and motivate faculty to use new eLearning tools." This is often a challenge at many colleges and universities when faculty time is already committed to discipline-specific teaching and research, or when the reward systems at some research universities promote scholarship over technology development, teaching partnerships or pedagogical experimentation. This concern illustrates the need for comprehensive institutional support that encourages collaborative instructional design and open content development in multiple formats.

Many of the internal and external barriers identified by Diallo also describe the digital divide we have been trying to address in the United States and internationally since the emergence of personal computing and the Internet in the 20th century. This is not to suggest that all digital divides are the same or that the scale is comparable in different parts of the world, but the access issue continues to be a shared concern. Responding to this reality requires an international vision to address inequities based on gender, age, race, class, ethnicity and disability that impact access to electricity, technology infrastructure, software and devices, training and user support.

Diallo's response to the access challenges emphasizes collaboration and community building within his university and through inter-institutional partnerships. The AVU has created an impressive network of support for learners, which has led "to the training of about 43,000 students and academics" throughout the continent. As he describes, one of the central components to this distributed model is the development of open distance and eLearning (ODeL) centers across the continent that make available the necessary technology infrastructure for reliable Internet connectivity. This provides an interconnected, blended approach to eLearning that offers onsite access to virtual resources, similar to the regional model at Empire State College, with more than 35 locations available to learners throughout New York state. Importantly, AVU has extended learning beyond any

particular location with the creative development and use of OER in such areas as math and science.

According to Diallo, "these OERs have now been accessed in 187 countries: a huge triumph of access." The most compelling aspect of Diallo's narrative is that the immediate global access to these open materials was completely unexpected. He describes the surprise of discovering that the first audience for the AVU OER extended beyond African countries to include Brazil, the United States, India and the Philippines. As Diallo states, "We never imagined that our program would be used by people outside of Africa. It was an eye opener." While the international impact of locally-produced OER may have been unanticipated, the AVU experience demonstrates that innovative models can provide access across borders and the potential for virtual collaboration and learning around open academic materials.

As I see it, the AVU embodies the spirit of the *2012 Paris OER Declaration* developed by the World OER Congress (2012) at UNESCO that recommends, in part, to "promote and use OER to widen access to education at all levels, both formal and non-formal, in a perspective of lifelong learning, thus contributing to social inclusion, gender equity and special needs education" (p. 2). Diallo improved access considerably through wired open distance and eLearning centers and has promoted gender equity with a scholarship program that has encouraged women to study math and science. Such an approach supports another key recommendation from the *Paris Declaration:* to "bridge the digital divide by developing adequate infrastructure, in particular, affordable broadband connectivity, widespread mobile technology and reliable electrical power supply" (p. 2). AVU's infrastructure and support now includes the open eLearning centers, open resources for training, a growing OER repository that is accessible worldwide, and several significant funding opportunities and multinational partnerships. The AVU experience aligns well with the ambitious yet attainable recommendations from the World OER Congress because Diallo and colleagues have provided the leadership to promote open learning by overcoming a number of access challenges. Diallo's narrative is a "triumph of access," illustrating "imaginative strategies" to inspire open learning among local, regional and global networks.

In the spirit of AVU's success, imagine a common strategic vision to promote global networked learning, OER and emergent open formats such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), mobile learning and shared online courses.

We all benefit from the strides made at AVU to bridge significant gaps in access with open approaches to technology, educational resources, faculty development and pedagogy. Openness presents us with an opportunity to do more than explore yet another modality. As the AVU model has shown us, the stakes for open learning are much higher as we imagine and put in place a collaborative process to ultimately triumph over the digital divide that hurts us all.

Note

[1] More information about this conference is available at http://choose.esc.edu/scop2011/.

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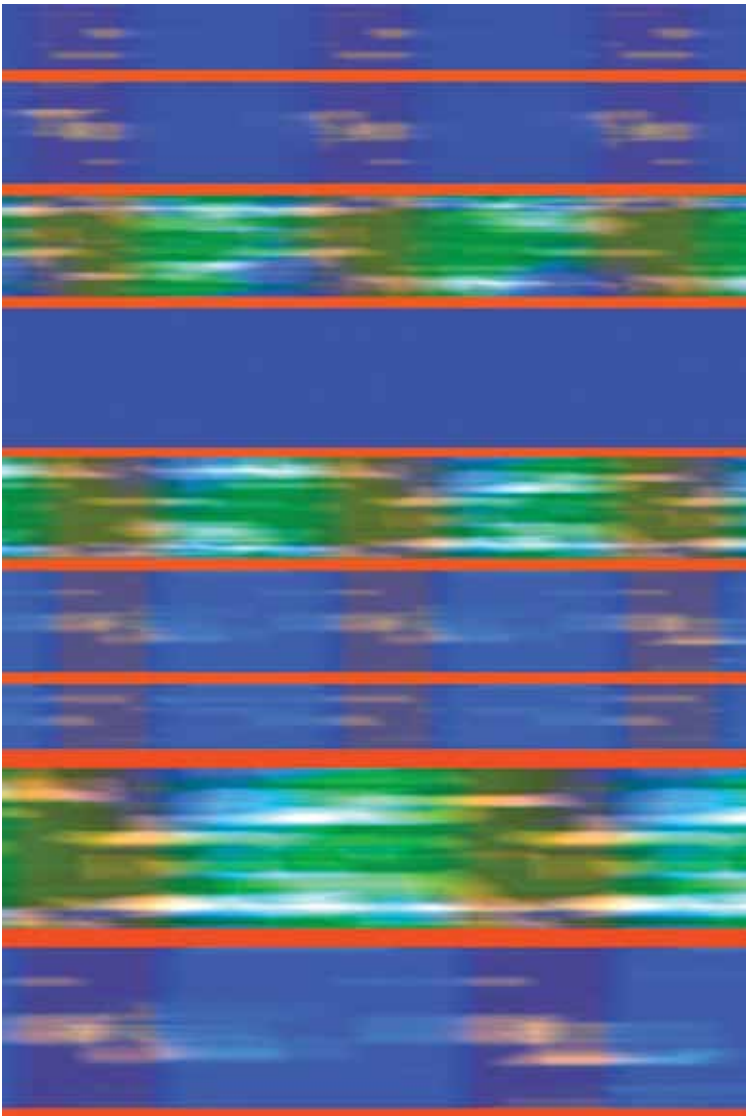

Richard Garet, *Glared Chamber 6*, 2007, C-print, 12 x 18 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Julian Navarro Projects, N.Y.

Teaching and Learning with Adults in the Globalized World: Identity, Agency and Justice

Margo Okazawa-Rey

Introduction

The purpose of my presentation is to discuss ways in which globalization and its related features shape the interrelated processes of teaching and learning with adult learners in higher education. Indeed, these processes have influenced the mission, purpose and very nature of higher educational institutions today. Recent changes include more direct corporate involvement in research agendas and funding; hiring of more adjunct faculty; increasing numbers of students studying abroad; establishment of satellite campuses of U.S. universities in other countries; increasing enrollments of students who obtained their secondary education outside the U.S; and divestment from humanities and social sciences in favor of economic, technological and scientific disciplines. The World Trade Organization has entered the business of considering the regulation of importing and exporting of higher education, and numerous for-profit higher educational institutions are dotting the U.S. education landscape (Rhoads, 2003). The changes are profound.

The ideas presented in the first half of this presentation have been framed and informed by various conflict theories (including critical, post-Colonial and feminist), decades-long experience as an educator and by my personal commitment to social activism. From this vantage point, globalization and globalizing processes are fundamentally about commerce and capital accumulation, accompanied by militarism and armed conflicts – not only by ideological tools. Globalization, as I understand it, is often represented through a kind of homogenization of cultures, and commodified and commercialized desires and aspirations. The latter includes the particular shaping of adult learners' yearnings about the very purposes of higher education.

A "Globalized World" – Nothing New

A globalizing world is not a new phenomenon. Both Western and Eastern explorers, traders and others have crisscrossed various parts of the world (for commerce) since the first millennium. The Westerners are more commonly known, but travels of Easterners have also been amply documented, though less known to us in the West. For example, it has been documented that Zeng He, a Chinese explorer, diplomat and mariner sailed from China to other parts of Asia and to the eastern coast of Africa in the early 15th century (Snow, 1989). The various routes, from Europe to North Africa, to the edge of China, foretold the European colonization.

Globalization has established certain systems of global inequalities (Wallerstein, 2004). This system of stratification operates in complex, entangled and sometimes contradictory ways on a global scale based on class, race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, linguistics, aesthetics, geography and epistemology (Giroux, 2005; Peterson & Sisson Runyan, 2009). I think particularly important to our understanding as educators are pedagogy/andragogy, epistemology and linguistics as they relate directly to educating students in a globalized university.

The key is for us to recognize and continually remind ourselves that educational institutions mirror inequalities in the wider society and the world. These asymmetrical relations manifest themselves in status rankings and resource allocations among schools, such as private versus public institutions; two-year versus four-year schools; research versus teaching colleges and universities; and the specific demographics of both faculty and the student body. Many of us in this conversation today are familiar with the impacts of a system rooted in and generating multiple inequalities. Given this context of globalization and its systems of inequalities, I shift attention to the educational aspects of our common work and, as the title suggests, focus on identity, agency and justice.

Organizing Concepts for Educating Adults

Many ideas presented here are drawn from years of teaching experience in both traditional universities, such as San Francisco State and UC Berkeley, as well as in nontraditional settings like Fielding Graduate University, where I work now, and others like The Union Institute and University.

From my perspective, identity is a foundational organizing concept from which two questions follow:

- Who am I?
- Who, where and what is my "home"?

The question of "home" becomes particularly salient for immigrant and refugee students who have left home and found themselves literally and figuratively in a foreign land, with unfamiliar worldviews and analytical frameworks. For example, in a racially-stratified society such as ours, where the way one is categorized through official reporting forms (such as university applications), and how one "identifies" are frequently incongruent, as in the case of people who identify nationally rather than racially such as Colombian rather than Latino.

First, it is important to note that identity is socially constructed; that is, the categories and nomenclatures are, themselves, not a "given." Rather, they are shaped by history, culture, geography and sociopolitical factors. For example, in the 1790 United States census form, there were three race categories (free whites, "all other free persons" and slaves) (U.S. Census Bureau, 1791), while in the 2010 census, there were 15 racial categories (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). The second important aspect of social construction is that the personal relationships, that is, the individual's relationships to those categories, are shaped by life circumstances, i.e., how one identifies himself or herself is very much dependent on that person's personal experiences with his or her family, community and so forth. Finally, identities are not static. As Stuart Hall (1992) cogently argued, people are "conceptualized as having no fixed, essential or permanent identity. Identify becomes a 'moveable feast': formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us" (p. 277). Still, regardless of how one personally identifies, identities are very much related to the particular structures of power that operate in the society in which one exists.

I also emphasize an "intersectional approach" to identities: pointing to the ways in which our specific embodiments of race, class, ethnicity and gender are influenced by context. While all exist simultaneously, the critical point is that in one context, one aspect of one's identity may be more salient, and in a different context, it may be something else. As it has become more recently popularized in academic spaces, "intersectionality" has come to mean recognizing and understanding

peoples' multiple identities, with the effect of making invisible the structures of power, privilege and inequality to which identities are attached. Finally, the construction and expression of identity becomes especially pertinent for people on the margins of our society, our communities and our institutional settings because identities and other classifications typically shape these peoples' location in a given social setting and, depending on a particular configuration and context, often disempower.

The next concept is agency. One contested question regarding agency is: What is the relationship between societal structures, ideology, norms and expectations and students' own subjectivities, including their aspirations, desires and capacity-building needs?

In popular culture and professional circles in the United States, there is a tendency to think about agency in individualistic terms. Hence, it is common to hear psychologically-based terms like "self-efficacy" and even the more pejorative way of thinking about agency as "pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps." My understanding is much more complex. Yes, agency *does* have to do with self-efficacy, and yes, it *does* have to do with peoples' capacities to determine their own fate. But I also understand agency to mean that the individual is very much connected to other individuals and, in fact, to other groups of people. When I think about my own agency, for example, I don't think simply that, "I have the capacity" or "I have various resources" to make things happen. Rather, in fact, I recognize fully that none of the ways in which I operate would actually be possible without being in relationship to and getting support from other people. Without doubt, agency is inextricably linked both to our own capacities and to our relations with others.

The second important point regarding agency pertains to the complicated and often contradictory relationship between and influence of societal structures on peoples' capacities to act on their own behalf. The most extreme example, of course, is people in total institutions, such as prisons, who structurally have less power for very obvious reasons. Even within that context, there are ways in which incarcerated men, women and transgendered people have organized for better conditions, for their constitutional rights, and so on. Certainly, it would be much harder for them to organize as individuals, but when acting in concert with other prisoners, advocates and families outside, there is a better chance of making change.

From the perspective I want to introduce here, I see one of the goals of adult education as opening and encouraging horizons and visions that many times mainstream and conventionally-organized universities and schools, the media, and so on (whose business is to buttress hegemonic discourses and practices), just curtail. I am drawing attention to this point because many times and in many ways, the concept of "choice" is promoted unthinkingly and automatically. How often do we hear: "People choose to do this or that," or "Our students are choosing to do this or that," or "Our students are choosing not to perform according to their capacity"? In my view, the much-overused notion of choice, in the U.S. context especially, is an ideological concept with certain embedded assumptions. These include certain aspects of agency such as autonomy and the existence of real and viable options. Thus, I want to encourage us to interrogate our assumptions about choice. We need to encourage our students (and ourselves) to envision possibilities other than the "choices" we have been offered, whether they are in a curricular context or wider sociopolitical terms.

The last concept to discuss is justice. Justice is a perspective that only rarely has been embraced institutionally, if at all. I know that within our educational institutions, there are pockets of people and programs that focus on justice as part of their mission or vision, but unless there is some kind of a foundational institutional commitment, it is actually very difficult to make justice a real and meaningful part of our institutional practices. It is a question of commitment – a commitment to a certain set of principles and perspectives that can ensure access to and equity within our institutions of higher learning, and that will address community and societal processes and structures, namely oppression and inequalities that undermine and prevent access and equity. Justice also suggests envisioning a future, not only remedying past injustices and changing the present.

Fielding Graduate University Promise: Transformative Learning for Social Justice Concentration

In the following examples, both connected to my work at Fielding Graduate University, I will provide two instances in which our institution, however humbly, is attempting to include justice as part of the core of educational programming.

One is the university-wide statement on social justice:

> At Fielding Graduate University, social justice is the commitment to understanding, analyzing, and acting to reduce inequity, oppression,

> and social stratification, *recognizing the linkages between economic, social and ecological justice.*" (Fielding Graduate University Social/Ecological Justice and Diversity Commission, 2010, emphasis in original)

This statement reflects attention to and understanding of the impacts of globalization mentioned earlier, and a commitment to do something about them.

The second example concerns a concentration in our school called "Transformative Learning for Social Justice" (TLSJ):

> Our Mission: Our hope is to engage the heads, hands, and hearts of TLSJ members and all with whom we work, and to inspire one another to continue our development as dedicated, inclusive scholar practitioners and as social justice change agents.
>
> Our Guiding Question: What kinds of praxis – scholarship and activism combined with reflection – can help us best become effective and creative leader-participants in local and global efforts aimed at creating a just, genuinely secure, and environmentally sustainable world? This overarching question guides the work of [the] TLSJ Concentration. (unpublished concentration; Fielding Graduate University, n.d., paras. 1-2)

Because ours is a scholar-practitioner Ph.D. program very much concerned with scholarly and practitioner aspects of our students' development, we also have included the term "praxis" in our mission statements. Several principles guide our curriculum. One is about "creating new knowledge and build[ing] existing knowledges and ways of knowing"; another is "designing teaching and learning content and methods rooted in Freirean, critical and feminist pedagogies"; third is "conducting research on relevant topics and using methodologies that empower both researchers and participants"; and finally, we emphasize the importance of "working in partnership with others and in settings outside the Fielding community" (Fielding Graduate University, n.d., Our Purposes section, para 1). Adopting the approach and language was a real landmark for Fielding when the concentration was developed about 10 years ago, then re-crafted in 2010.

Implications for Adult Educators

What are the implications of these concepts for us as educators? I begin with a central question: If identity, agency and justice were foundational values, how would they shape the mission and purpose of adult higher education?

The comments below were expressed by Fielding graduate students regarding their hopes for engagement in the Critical Perspectives in Human Development seminar I recently taught with two colleagues. Students were asked to identify their expectations for what they wanted to learn in the seminar:

- "To [learn] how women become acculturated into patriarchal work systems; how [they] perpetuate patriarchy, racism, and classism; how to engage women to identify and reflect on this patriarchy; and how women can become activists within these hierarchal and patriarchal systems."
- "Study how social construction of identity specifically influences one's leadership style."
- "I have had a long career in health care, and I am seeking to broaden my focus and integrate my belief in an ecological worldview into a model of human and organizational development."

Evident in all three quotes are students' interests in learning about the lives of people often left on the margins (outside conventional perspectives on human development) and their desire to gain insight into how those experiences can inform their professional practice. These are yearnings that often go unnoticed or not responded to, but to which programs for adult learners and, indeed, whole institutions need to be more sensitive, attentive and energetically committed. Especially in this world of accelerating globalization where identities are complex, agency is compromised and justice is denied to too many, our models and practices of teaching and learning must never leave out the core values upon which our work depends.

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Margo Okazawa-Rey's scholarship is informed by a lifetime of activism. In the 1970s, she was a member of the Combahee River Collective, a black feminist group that developed the theory of intersectionality as a basis for feminist praxis. She is one of the co-founders of the International Network of Women Against Militarism, a transnational project that generates feminist analyses and resistance to U.S. military bases and all forms of militarism and militarization. She also is active in PeaceWomen Across the Globe, an international organization, which nominated 1,000 women collectively for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005. She is on the editorial boards of *Social Justice* and *Feminist Africa,* and has published articles and books. Her current work examines the connections between militarism, economic globalization, religious fundamentalism and their impacts on women. Since 2005, she has been feminist research consultant at the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling in Palestine. Okazawa-Rey, Ed.D., is a professor in the School of Human and Organization Development at the Fielding Graduate University, and professor emerita at San Francisco State University.

Globalization and Its Discontents

Isidore A. Udoh

In her presentation, "Teaching and Learning with Adults in a Globalized World: Identity, Agency and Justice," Margo Okazawa-Rey poignantly examines the challenges presented to the "mission, purpose and very nature of higher education" by globalization and globalizing processes, which she operationalizes as "commerce and capital accumulation, accompanied by militarism and armed conflict." In this brief response, I analyze how the issues raised in Okazawa-Rey's presentation relate to contemporary applications and manifestations of globalizing processes, particularly in developing countries where the unbridled sourcing for natural resources, markets and profit by multinational corporations often pose threats to the human and environmental rights of vulnerable groups.

Okazawa-Rey compellingly argues that globalization fosters and nurtures systems of inequality and seeds conflict around the world. Horizontal inequalities between groups, including economic, social, and political exclusion and marginalization, have been identified as the nexus of disadvantage, grievance, mobilization and conflict (Urdal, 2011; Brown & Stewart, 2006). This is particularly the case in developing countries where multinational corporations directly or indirectly instigate or sustain environmental stress and conflict while sourcing for natural resources such as petroleum oil, diamonds, gold and other raw materials or opportunities for global market expansion and hegemony. In such contexts, Hechter, Friedman and Appelbaum (1982) argued, "the labor market often works to exacerbate ethnic stratification by fostering group, regional and international inequalities" (p. 414). The manipulative strategies deployed by multinational companies, sometimes colluding with host governments, often limit access to quality education, essential labor skills, and resources for livelihood by impoverished and powerless groups in developing countries, including women, youth and rural farmers; thus, keeping them in the margins of the global labor market. The power dynamics that result from and support such exploitative and disruptive globalizing processes, Okazawa-Rey insightfully remarks, raise issues of identity, agency and justice.

Identity

In many developing countries, citizenship is one of the most problematic types of identity. In Nigeria and many sub-Saharan African societies, for example, colonial and postcolonial political systems complicate the definition of identity and citizenship. Although, in the spirit of Rousseau, many postcolonial constitutions define citizenship as a social contract, administrative traditions in these societies continue to utilize the colonial principles of indigeneity and ethnicity as the bases for distributing national and local benefits such as political power, educational and economic opportunity, thereby sustaining two competing categories of citizenship and identity – constitutional and ethnic (Ekeh, 1975; Mamdani, 1996; Dibua, 2005). The ensuing tension between the two categories creates identity fragmentation and provides an insight to understanding corruption, illiteracy, poverty, labor market politics and HIV epidemiology in countries such as South Africa and Nigeria (Bor, 2012; Udoh, Mantell, Sandfort, & Eighmy, 2009; Whiteside, 2002). This tension also provides the basis for understanding the constriction of minority rights, regional grievances, intra- and inter-ethnic violence, and natural resource-based conflicts in Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Angola.

Agency and Justice

In Western capitalist conceptualization, human agency is a "generative capability" – an individual's self-efficacy for organized courses of action resulting from the acquisition of cognitive, social and behavioral skills (Bandura, 1982). Ozakawa-Rey rightly observes that in more collectivist societies, including many developing countries of Africa where multinational corporations operate, however, agency relates to a shared *esprit de corps* that enables groups to mobilize and perform constructive civic engagements that promote justice and the human and environmental rights of communities. Indeed, as John Mbiti (1969) succinctly articulated about Africa,

> only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and towards other people. … Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say 'I am, because we are; and since we are therefore I am.' (p. 106)

Globalization is, thus, viewed in many developing countries as a common threat that must be collectively confronted. Hence, local peoples and minorities have mobilized to protest against environmental and human rights abuses by multinational oil companies in Ecuador and Nigeria (Steyn, 2003), the excesses of sugar-cane producers in Brazil (Nunberg, 1986) and even the perceived threat to local values by the Miss World Pageant in India (Oza, 2001).

Global protests against multinational corporations represent growing popular discontents with pressures from globalization and globalizing processes. Such discontents provide opportunities for adult educators to develop and implement transformative and emancipatory educational programs that support local struggles for environmental justice and human dignity by groups around the world.

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Supporting Sufficient, Not Deficient "Homes"

Tina Wagle

In her presentation, Margaret Okazawa-Rey discusses the importance of identity, agency and justice in preparing adult students to be conduits to a more humane future.

Serendipitously, I happened to notice a recently published book by former Empire State College mentor, Catana Tully (2012), titled, *Split at the Root: A Memoir of Love and Lost Identity.* As I read the description of Tully's book, I was reminded that identity is everywhere and deeply ingrained, not only in who we are but in what we do, and perhaps more importantly, in how we cope and survive. Unlike some of the students with whom Okazawa-Rey works, Tully's memoir tells of a woman who led a relatively privileged life but always felt insecure and unsure due to lingering tensions related to identity. And here I am thinking of Okazawa-Rey's comments on "home." She writes about the evolution of "home" as it relates to the identity of immigrants and refugees – how they "find themselves literally and figuratively in a foreign land, with unfamiliar frameworks." Indeed, I think that as people learn and are exposed to new settings and new ideas, they are, in effect, constructing new homes. Yes, much of it will be socially constructed for them due to the situational contexts in which they find themselves, but much of it also comes from the lives people have lived until this point. A question we need to continue to ask ourselves, especially when working with adult students is: How do we help students turn their past experiences into opportunities for "agency" for both themselves and toward some greater social good? How do we bring value to that past experience? As Okazawa-Rey correctly states, "agency is inextricably linked both to our own capacities and to our relations with others." She reminds us that agency is often thought of in individualistic terms, but that we cannot disregard the impact others have had on us that makes both identity and agency complex and, importantly, uneven. Many of us who have struggled with issues of identity (and here I am imagining Tully's protagonist) need to take the time to negotiate this space so that we can work to make sense of ourselves in our surroundings. To me, what we then do with that discovery is our agency.

Without doubt, agency is compromised when voices are not heard – that is, when people are silenced – but an important point about agency is that it does not have to be loud; it just needs to be present to help one find the courage to give voice, even internally to oneself.

As Okazawa-Rey describes it, the Fielding Graduate University program is working to give students a space to find their voices, and thus, to develop their agency. I admire and appreciate the program's mission and guiding questions. However, I cannot help but try to place the program and its mission, "to engage the heads, hands, and hearts of TLSJ [Transformative Learning for Social Justice] members and all of whom we work," in context. We need to remember that this is a doctoral program with an admissions process where, assumedly, most students are already sufficiently adept at negotiating their agency and finding their niche. I would like to ask those involved in this program how they work with those in the community, perhaps those not at the same level of courage or voice as those who become students in the program, without invoking deficit model thinking, that Gorski (2005) described:

> The 'deficit perspective' is an approach through which scholars explain varying levels of access and opportunity (educationally, professionally, and in other spheres) among groups of people by identifying deficits in the cultures and behaviors of the underprivileged group. (p. 8)

This theory has its roots in the discussion of the "educability" of students with disabilities and other special needs. It has expanded to include those from other historically marginalized populations, including those with cultural, religious, sexual, ethnic and class differences from the mainstream or hegemonic viewpoint.

Here's another way to think about it: "The Fielding Graduate University Promise: Transformative Learning for Social Justice" concentration should be valued because it seeks to raise the awareness of social justice and support learners in conducting such praxis. However, does the title "transformative" not assume that someone or something needs to change? When thinking of one's home and one's identity and their relationship to social justice, might it be that what we need to encourage is not change (particularly our own vision of change) but a strengthening of identity? I am not implying that this call for change and an underlying assumption of student deficits is at the heart of the program. I agree that change in the global world is necessary (the inadequacies, the inequities and

the injustices are huge), but I do not want people, especially those who are already marginalized, to feel as though they need to change, that something is wrong with them, that they are deficient in who they are, and that an educational program exists animated by the assumption that they have to be transformed. This is my hope for the Fielding Promise – that it promises to support people's identities through whatever change they might be experiencing. I also hope it encourages these doctoral candidates to recognize the value of one's identifying characteristics, and to understand that it is through these characteristics that agency evolves.

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Richard Garet, *Glared Chamber 8*, 2007, C-print, 12 x 18 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Julian Navarro Projects, N.Y.

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