

Perspectives

DEVELOPING CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS: A PERSONAL REFLECTION

Carol Collins

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

Abstract

This article provides a personal reflection on the development of the author's critical consciousness and is meant to trigger debate on the relevance critical consciousness has for adult educators. Freire's stages of consciousness are used to provide a framework for understanding its development. Links between critical consciousness and consciousness raising are examined, and the issue of resistance is explored; these connections are used to discuss praxis involving both thought and action. Examples of the author's actions are used to illustrate how the development of critical consciousness has changed her personal, academic, and professional life. These demonstrate that critical consciousness does not evolve on its own, but rather requires supports that are external to oneself.

Résumé

Cet article constitue une réflexion personnelle sur le développement de la conscience critique de son auteure et vise à amorcer le débat sur la pertinence de cette conscience pour les éducateurs d'adultes. Les étapes de la conscientisation de Freire fournissent un cadre pour comprendre ce développement. L'on y examine les liens entre la conscience critique et la conscientisation ainsi que la question de la résistance. Ces liens sont utilisés pour analyser la praxis qui implique la pensée et l'action. Des exemples parmi les actions de l'auteur sont utilisés afin d'illustrer comment le développement de la conscience critique a changé sa vie personnelle, académique et professionnelle. Cet exercice montre que la conscience critique n'évolue pas toute seule mais requiert un soutien de soi-même comme de l'extérieur.

The development of my own critical consciousness has great relevance to me as an adult learner and an educator. This article is a personal reflection that is intended to trigger debate on the relevance development of critical consciousness has for adult educators in general. I discuss factors in my personal history that led me to take such a journey of analysis in the first section. Freire's (1973) stages of consciousness provide a framework for understanding the development of my critical consciousness. Links between critical consciousness and consciousness raising are made. In the third section I examine how consciousness is reproduced and where I place myself in that process. Next, I explore the issue of resistance and discuss praxis involving both thought and action. Finally I use examples of action to illustrate how the development of critical consciousness has changed my personal, academic, and professional life.

Developing an Awareness of My Critical Consciousness

I became aware of the development of my own critical consciousness while taking a course on community education and development as part of my doctoral program. The catalyst was a course reading by Marjaleena Repo entitled "The Fallacy of Community Control" (1977). I had an *aha* moment where Repo describes mixed class neighborhoods. She says that working class people "will by necessity be more concerned with mere survival" (p. 51). I reacted strongly to this statement and identified personally with it. For much of my young adult life my main interest was survival. I had gone through two abusive marriages without the benefit of community support systems, which were not available then. I experienced existing professional and mental health services, some helpful, most not. On my own, I overcame an addiction to alcohol. I learned to budget and to live with financial constraints. I also encountered the difficulties and joys of re-establishing family ties, with renewed understanding on both sides.

My parents and teachers had encouraged me to take a commercial program in high school, believing it would provide me with the practical skills I needed to get a job. They did not see the need for a university education for women, and I received no encouragement otherwise. After high school, I worked in a secretarial and administrative capacity for 22 years. At the beginning I was interested in the work I did, but over the years I grew increasingly dissatisfied with a limited career choice. I changed jobs often and exhausted the challenges of each quickly. However, the realities of marriage, divorce, and personal financial responsibilities left few options.

Maguire (1987) points out that people are caught in a vicious cycle. They are unable to "critically understand and analyze the social structures and relations which shape their powerlessness" (p. 37) because they lack the information, skills, and experience to do so. Similarly, "their lack of information and preoccupation with daily survival interferes with their understanding of how power structures work and affect their lives" (p. 37). This cycle certainly illustrates what I had been experiencing. It was not until I met my present spouse, 15 years ago, that I finally realized a supportive environment. This provided me with the opportunity to consider alternatives for the first time. My spouse's belief in my abilities and in further education, regardless of age or gender, contributed greatly to my pursuit of a university education at age 40. My lack of science and mathematics directed my decision to begin a degree in social work in 1991. Subsequently, I obtained a master's degree in adult education in 1997 and am currently in a doctoral program.

Once I had connected the issue of survival to my own life, I was more able to identify with Freire's (1973) concept of critical consciousness—whereby people move from thinking that is fatalistic or naïve in nature to a critical consciousness—which Newman (1995) describes as "a state of mind in which they are aware of themselves within their social context and capable of acting on that context in order to change it" (p. 256). This led me to wonder about the development of my own critical consciousness and where I might find myself in the process as both an adult learner and an educator.

The Process of Developing Critical Consciousness

There is always a dialectic between thought and action. People are able to recognize that although the physical, social, and economic aspects of the world affect them, they in turn affect the world. However, sometimes people are unable to apprehend the problems that exist outside "their sphere of biological necessity" (Freire, 1973, p. 17). As a result, Freire developed a process of learning that began with people's physical, emotional, and intellectual location and then moved them toward a critical awareness of their oppressive situation, including an understanding of structures of domination or power, and what they could do to improve it.

The Stages of Critical Consciousness

Three stages of consciousness are identified by Freire (1973): semi-intransitive consciousness, transitive consciousness, and critically transitive

consciousness. In the first, the semi-intransitive stage, people's "interests center almost totally around survival, and they lack a sense of life on a more historic plane" (p. 17). This level of consciousness is characterized by people's preference to accept magical or external explanations for their circumstances, attributing them to a superior power or outside agents over which they have no control and therefore to which they must submit. This kind of thinking is fatalistic in nature and "fails to understand causality" (Youngman, 1986, p. 150).

The second, transitive stage of consciousness begins with an oversimplification of problems; it is referred to by Freire (1973) as naïve transitivity. In this stage people may be nostalgic for the past or express a lack of interest in investigating their circumstances fully. Whereas Freire identifies urban Brazilians who are undergoing economic change as being at the naïve transitivity stage of consciousness, Keefe (1980) suggests that "the middle-class Americans of the 1960s who began to reawaken to the social needs of this country" (p. 391) also fit this description. In both cases, although some social consciousness was developing, many people wished for simple solutions—that society could return to the way things had been 10 or 15 years earlier.

The third stage, critically transitive consciousness, is characterized, according to Freire (1973), by

depth in the interpretation of problems; by the substitution of causal principles for magical explanations; by the testing of one's "findings" and by openness to revision; by the attempt to avoid distortion when perceiving problems and to avoid preconceived notions when analyzing them; by refusing to transfer responsibility; by rejecting passive positions; by soundness of argumentation; by the practice of dialogue rather than polemics; by receptivity to the new for reasons beyond mere novelty and by the good sense not to reject the old just because it is old—by accepting what is valid in both old and new. (p. 18)

A central concept of Freire's model of conscientization is praxis, a cycle of action–reflection–action. It is from this process, he postulates, that people come to understand the systems of oppression within which they live and ways in which they can challenge and change those systems both individually and collectively. The move from semi-transitive consciousness to transitive consciousness to critically transitive consciousness does not occur automatically, however. Freire saw it as an educational process, one

that is grounded in the experiences and daily lives of the participants, but which requires clearly identified teachers/coordinators to initiate the process. Teachers have to be concerned with social and political responsibility, and with the development of the learners to critically understand both society and their capacity to change it. Teachers and students then act as co-investigators, engaged through dialogue in the process of understanding their lives in relationship to the world. Only then can an action plan be developed to address the problems. Freire's approach to developing critical consciousness is used in a variety of settings—including universities, health clinics, and women's rape crisis centres—although the process may be modified depending on "its relevance and practical utility for participants" (Minkler & Cox, 1980, p. 312).

Critical thinking, like critical consciousness, usually requires external circumstances or stimuli in order for individuals to become more critically reflective about their lives (Brookfield, 1987). Such stimuli may include teachers who encourage students to explore their personal situations and help them place their experiences in a broader social context. As critical thinkers, students are then better able to determine their own lives and to identify the type of action needed to bring about the social conditions necessary to realize that life, keeping in mind the structural limitations that they still have to face. The process of critical thinking includes affective, cognitive, and behavioral components and, like critical consciousness, emphasizes many of the same characteristics, particularly welcoming divergent views and encouraging critical dialogue. If teachers are to become more critically reflective of their practice, Brookfield (1995) advocates, they should view what they do and think through different lenses—such as through their own autobiographies as teachers and learners, their students' eyes, and their colleagues' perceptions.

Consciousness raising, like Freire's model of conscientization, was derived from the experience of oppression. As an element of feminist theory, it shares common principles with critical consciousness. For example, consciousness raising stresses reflection in order to understand a woman's personal experiences in relation to that of society, and it stresses action in order to change societal conditions (Longres & Mcleod, 1980). Additionally, although it is possible for women to gain an understanding of their oppression individually, some feminist thinkers believe "that this can best be done through the process of women coming together" (Stanley & Wise, 1983, p. 64). In this way, women are able to share their personal feelings and

experiences and to hear those of others. The element of feelings allows women to make a stronger and more meaningful connection with the issues being discussed. It is from this group sharing that women come to realize that their personal situations have both a base and solutions that are social and political.

One aspect of consciousness raising that is different from Freire's model is that women are at the centre of the process. This is important because, in many other forums, women may be kept from participating or from having their voices and views heard because their interests may be considered illegitimate (Hart, 1990). The exclusion of men from consciousness raising groups was/is purposeful, because the struggle was/is against sexism. Nevertheless, as Butterwick (1987) notes, "feminists recognize that gaining awareness of sexism in society will not alone change such practices. Sarachild (1968, 1973) spoke of the importance of not only "seeking the root of the problem but also of pulling it up" (p. 71). Although it is important to acknowledge entrenched power and social structures on an individual level, it is only by becoming aware of oneself as part of a collective that is committed to work for social change that social change will happen.

Factors That Triggered My Critical Consciousness

I first experienced consciousness raising while attending a 3-day symposium entitled "Women with Disabilities and Mothering: Sharing our Stories, Exploring our Options." Approximately 60 delegates, women with all types of disabilities and diverse backgrounds, attended the symposium. I attended thinking I would have nothing in common with women with disabilities. I was there as a volunteer, and as part of a social work practicum. My job was to help women get from their rooms to the dining hall, to assist with meal service, and to help them get to the workshops. I was also able to sit in on some of the workshops. During one session a woman shared her feelings of anger toward the medical profession. She said that during adolescence it was not uncommon to be told by a doctor to strip to her underwear and walk before a group of doctors and interns for examination. She resented being a guinea pig and having her dignity taken away by them. Other women told similar stories. Their experience is so widespread that it has been given the name "public stripping" (Gill, 1996) and is acknowledged as a form of abuse.

These shared experiences had an enormous impact on me because I related to them personally. My sister, my three brothers, and I were all born with eczema, a hereditary skin disease. When I was a young teenager we all had to go to the hospital to see a doctor, who was interested in studying the whole family because of our skin problem. He especially wanted to examine my sister and me, because we were twins, but right there, with all of us in the same room and with other doctors coming in to look. I found this experience very upsetting and felt the anger and loss of dignity that the women from the workshop had expressed. Until that moment, though, I had not identified my personal experience as a form of abuse. It was very liberating to share my feelings with others and to see my experience from a new perspective. These feelings played a powerful role in helping me see the connection between theory and lived experience.

Reproducing Consciousness

While reading *Schooling in Capitalist America* (Bowles & Gintis, 1976), another of the course readings, I realized more fully the degree to which the educational system contributes to the development of consciousness and defines people's relationship to work. Bowles and Gintis note that consciousness, which includes one's beliefs, values, self-concepts, and modes of personal behavior, is developed through a person's "direct perception of and participation in social life" (p. 128). The economic sphere, family structure, and educational system are all part of that social life and, therefore, all contribute to the development of consciousness. A major role of the educational system is to reproduce consciousness so as to "maintain and extend the dominant patterns of power and privilege" (p. 126) which exist in a hierarchical society. The educational system also replicates these dominant patterns within its own organization and these are further reinforced through the social relationship of the family.

Thinking back, when my family and teachers encouraged me to take a commercial course in high school, I was being integrated into the workforce, one that, unbeknown to me, included an unequal division of power, a sexual division of labor, and gender inequality. At the time, I accepted their direction without much question or consideration because becoming a secretary appealed to me more than becoming a teacher or nurse, the other two options then available to women. Nor did I feel any outrage by my older brother's differential treatment when he was encouraged to go to university. It was simply the way things were. Once in the workforce I found it very

difficult to move beyond the designation of secretary and into a higher-status job. As a secretary employers rarely encouraged continued education or paid for educational leave.

When I read Youngman's (1986) work on adult education and socialist pedagogy, I also realized that when the school system restricted my course work to specialized subjects such as typing, shorthand, bookkeeping, and office practice I had been "intellectually impoverished" (p. 200) and had not been given the opportunity to fully develop my potential. The educational system still shares much responsibility for the formation of the values, knowledge base, and consciousness that serves the dominant ideology; in contrast, the university education I have received is responsible for helping me develop a critical consciousness. I started my university education at a time when issues regarding gender, class, race/ethnicity, and disability (among others) were being addressed in the curriculum by some professors in some programs. This made me challenge my own values and question the dominant ideologies I lived with. For example, the issue of abuse was discussed in a course I took on crisis intervention. I decided to research the issue further and wrote a paper on it. As a result, I was able to see my personal experience as a woman in the wider context of oppression, having been physically assaulted and emotionally, verbally, and psychologically abused in past relationships.

At the time that I experienced my abuse the issue was never talked about in public. There were no support groups advertised, there were no television commercials addressing the problem, and there were no movies portraying the abused lives of other women. I thought I was unique in my situation and felt totally alone. I was too ashamed and too afraid to discuss it *with anyone*. I remember one incident when I was hurt badly enough to require medical treatment. My husband warned me, however, that I was to tell the doctor I had hurt myself accidentally or he would kill me. I also believed to a great extent that the abuse was my fault. After all, I had provoked the arguments over money, drinking, and relationship problems that led to the physical beatings, hadn't I? While writing the paper on abuse I learned that, in Canada, at least one in every ten women is abused by her married or live-in male partner. I have also become more aware of the power dynamics of sexism, among others, and how it operates in everyday life.

I attribute the development of my critical consciousness to other elements of university education as well. I was very fortunate to have some

professors who valued and validated personal experience and affirmed my position as a woman. I was treated with respect and as an equal with other students in the programs, including male students. Some techniques were particularly helpful—such as smaller class sizes, which permit more professor/student and student/student interactions, and having a number of professors who encouraged dialoguing and participation through processes such as a learning lab, learning partners, and small group work. These experiences were opposite to the banking method of education that I had grown up with and that Freire (1970) is critical of, whereby someone presumed to have knowledge fills the mind of someone presumed to be without. As well, some professors resisted what Tisdell (1993) calls the "structured power relation of the teacher–student relationship" (p. 210) by setting up classrooms to accommodate discussion and by putting less emphasis on the role of teacher as authority figure. One professor, in particular, introduced students to aspects of aboriginal teaching and learning. We used a learning circle and, in so doing, developed a new respect for listening to and hearing others, including students as well as professors making worthwhile contributions. In one circle where we shared experiences of acceptance, a student chose to disclose her homosexuality and another talked about growing up black in a white community. Such revelations provide a greater depth to education and bring a sense of personal reality to concepts.

University provided me with many opportunities for debate, to hear different opinions, and to voice my own. Through these my own thinking was continually challenged, but in a warm, welcoming, and non-threatening way. This may have been because the majority of my peers and a number of my professors in my chosen programs are and have been women. This is opposite to the work environment I came from where most of the time I worked for white middle-class men in male-dominated, hierarchical organizations where my opinions were rarely heard.

Another thing that has contributed greatly to the development of my critical consciousness is being in a stable, supportive, and loving relationship. With this new sense of security I have been able to move from the semi-intransitive stage of consciousness where my focus had been meeting my physiological and safety needs, to the transitive stage where I saw "causality as a static, established fact," (Youngman, 1986, p. 175) and then on to the critically transitive stages of consciousness, where I am able to

submit "causality to analysis" and look for the "underlying relationship between things."

My Resistance to Developing Critical Consciousness

The move from transitive consciousness to critically transitive consciousness was not without personal struggle, however, and is still by no means complete. For example, when I was first introduced to Marxist theory while taking an undergraduate sociology course I refused to accept what the professor was saying about capitalism and how the rich got richer at the expense of the poor and powerless. After all, I had been raised to believe that as people we are responsible for our own successes purely as a result of hard work and effort. I did not realize that, as Youngman (1986) notes, I had internalized many aspects of the dominant ideology and this was being displayed in my ideas, values, and actions. I have since learned that it is not uncommon for students to "resist curriculum that challenges the status quo" (Ng, 1993, p. 197). Similarly, "resistance, resentment, and confusion are evident at various stages in the critical thinking process" (Brookfield, 1987, p. 7). However, over time, as a result of additional courses, I have read more about Marxist theory, started to ask more questions, and have actively listened whenever Marxist theory and perspectives are being presented. As a result, I am evaluating my own thinking and reasoning abilities regarding capitalism and examining my personal biases.

My resistance to the development of a critical consciousness regarding feminist theory was also particularly strong. When I started university I was very naïve about the women's movement, among other things. It was something I associated with the 1960s and the "burning of the bra," which seemed like a publicity stunt, but little else. When I was growing up, I believed (or was led to believe) simply and literally that women who were feminists were women who could not get a man. I thought feminists were women who did not shave their legs or wear make-up and were, therefore, unfeminine. Later, I was not sure I wanted to disrupt the equilibrium that I had struggled so hard to achieve in my personal life and thought it might be threatened if I were to develop a feminist perspective. As well, I thought that my current man was, as Peslikis (1970) explains, "the exception and, therefore, [I was] the exception among women" (p. 233). I felt respected in our relationship and did not believe that I needed to be liberated. I also resisted the idea of sharing my personal problems in a group with other women because I had been raised to keep personal problems private. It was

therefore difficult for me to think in terms of solidarity. Such thinking contributed to resistance of my feminist consciousness and illustrates many of the reasons why other women may resist also.

It was not until the fourth year of my undergraduate degree that I began to address my ignorance and fear of feminism and started to examine its fundamental themes and beliefs. This was due to a number of things. Most importantly, I was doing a practicum with the DisAbled Women's Network (DAWN), a feminist organization of women with disabilities working for women with disabilities. While there I developed friendships with the women and learned first-hand about feminism and about disability. For example, I learned that a larger percentage of women than men with disabilities are unemployed or underemployed and live in poverty and isolation. Furthermore, although women with disabilities may have benefited from the independent living movement, issues specific to women were ignored by the disability rights movement. As a result, women with disabilities had to fight for increased representation in leadership positions in such organizations as the Council of Canadians with Disabilities and organize their own groups such as DAWN. The women's rights movement has also been criticized for excluding the interests of women with disabilities. For instance, although violence against women is on the feminist agenda, resistance is met when it is extended to include women with disabilities because it is often assumed that women with disabilities are not the focus of violent acts. Similarly, the feminist position regarding sexuality excludes the interests of women with disabilities because society in general does not see them as sexual beings. In fact, it is only recently that Canada's largest feminist organization, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), has made its meeting locations and offices accessible to women with disabilities.

I was also in a course that presented feminist material at a time when I was more open to it. For example, from Gilroy (1990) I discovered that I was not alone in feeling threatened "by feminism and the broader women's movement" (p. 53). Additionally, the atmosphere that was created by the professor and students encouraged dialogue. As a result, I felt a degree of safety and comfort, which allowed me to take risks, such as discussing my confusion regarding feminist theory, particularly the distinctions between liberal feminism, socialist feminism, and radical feminism.

Nevertheless, it was very difficult for me to address the issue of oppression. In fact, I put aside a paper by McIntosh (1988) entitled "White Privilege and Male Privilege" the first time it was introduced because the content made me too uncomfortable, for acknowledging white privilege meant "seeing myself as an oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person" (p. 4). I have since learned however, that, as Ng (1993) notes, "understanding oppression and doing antiracist work is by definition unsafe and uncomfortable, because both involve a serious (and frequently threatening) effort to interrogate our privilege as well as our powerlessness" (p. 201). I did return to the article when it was introduced in a later course. By that time I had taken additional courses that analyzed gender and race relations and the distributions of power; as a result, I felt better prepared to examine white privilege in my own life.

The continual development of my own critical consciousness on oppression has enabled me to make the distinction between private troubles and public issues. Similarly, Dorothy Smith (cited in Mackie, 1991) explains that this discovery of what oppression means

is the discovery that many aspects of my life which I had seen privately—perhaps better, experienced privately as guilt, or as pathology, or that I'd learned to view as aspects of my biological inferiority—that all these things could be seen as aspects of an objective organization of a society—as fixtures that were external to me, as they were external to other women. (p. 197)

Overall, I think I was most resistant to the development of a critical consciousness because I recognized it would mean personal change and growth, and this process can be emotionally painful. This is true when people are *in the process* of understanding their own oppression, but it is especially true when they begin the process of becoming an ally and understanding their position as oppressor (see Bishop, 1994). I feared such change because it could alienate me from my spouse, family, and friends—depending on the depth and breadth of my growth. Additionally, I thought I had already gone through enough personal change including dealing with physical and mental abuse and alcoholism. I was not sure I wanted to undertake more. Such thinking is naïve, however, because change is constant and inevitable. But so is emotional reaction to change. I now realize that no matter how much change I have achieved in my life there will always be more required. Finally, I resisted because critical consciousness requires a commitment to

work for social change as well as personal change and I was not sure whether I wanted to make such a commitment. Nevertheless, I have taken action and have changed.

Action: Examples That Illustrate My Acting Differently

Here I provide examples of ways in which I have thought and acted differently at both the collective and individual level throughout the development of my own critical consciousness. After I completed my social work practicum with the DisAbled Women's Network I decided to stay on and work for the organization in a voluntary capacity. I had enjoyed my time with DAWN and did not want my newly developed friendships with the women there to end, as they so often do when people leave a workplace. As well, I could see that DAWN was doing important work toward changing the social structure for women with disabilities regarding such issues as health care, employment, housing, and education, and I wanted to be part of that effort. I continued to be involved with DAWN as a volunteer until the office relocated to Sudbury in 1996 and as a member until the organization lost its funding in 1999.

My experience with DAWN helped direct my course of study and was the catalyst for my thesis research at both the master's and doctorate level. In particular, the symposium on mothering for women with disabilities caused me to reflect on my own attitudes regarding the reproductive rights of women with physical disabilities. Such consideration convinced me that it would be valuable to explore the extent to which others in society—and particularly in the social work profession—might possess effective information and attitudes to assist women with physical disabilities.

From a teaching and learning perspective, I now advocate continuing education on the part of social agencies and the social work profession to improve and update the knowledge and skills of practicing social workers so that they may respond positively and professionally to women with physical disabilities. Social agencies could also help the social work educator in preparing practitioners to better work with women with physical disabilities in the attainment of their human and social rights. This could involve re-examining and changing curriculum where necessary, to ensure that students understand disability as a social, political, and cultural phenomenon. Understanding the experience of disability should not be limited to disability courses alone. Ideally, it needs to be integrated into all social work curricula.

Therefore, I am continuing research into the need for social workers' continuing education and intend to bring my findings, once complete, to the attention of various schools of social work. Similarly, I recently wrote an article (Collins, 1999) on reproductive technologies for women with physical disabilities which showed that, on the one hand, women with physical disabilities are being denied equal access to reproductive technologies while, on the other hand, the lives of people with disabilities are being both defined and threatened by these technologies.

A major contributing factor to the development of my critical consciousness was the book *We Make the Road by Walking* by Horton and Freire (1990). I was profoundly changed by their comments regarding neutrality. Horton points out, "Neutrality is just following the crowd. Neutrality is just being what the system asks us to be" (p. 102). Freire adds "Neutrality is the best way for one to hide his or her choice, you see. If you are not interested in proclaiming your choices, then you have to say that you are neutral" (p. 103). And I did see! I needed to acknowledge and declare my choices if I hoped to move forward with the development of my critical consciousness.

This new awareness encouraged me to re-examine my personal and professional practices so that they will include actions for social change. Some of my actions have already developed. But, as I prepare for a possible career in adult education, I now more fully understand my obligation to put everything I will teach into a social context and continually to do as Mills (1959) advocates, "translate personal troubles into public issues, and public issues into the terms of their human meaning for a variety of individuals" (p. 187). This means that I will go beyond just naming the oppression by including a discussion that is self-affirming and presents potentials for the future. As a precondition of critical reflection and discussion, Brookfield (1995) suggests that disclosure of one's "private dilemmas, uncertainties, and frustrations" (p. 250) is necessary. By disclosing my own resistance to feminism and other forms of radical thought it may help create an environment that is trustful and encourages others to examine and disclose similar concerns. My orientation toward collective action is to help individuals to understand the value of it, to offer information about issues that need to be addressed, and to provide a safe forum for such discussions. I also see it as my responsibility to try to teach in ways that resist the structured power relation of the teacher-student relationship as well as that

of society. Ultimately, I hope to provide a learning environment and supports that will allow others to experience their own *aha* moments—in other words, to make a personal affective connection to the theoretical issues being discussed. On a personal level, I need to be willing to learn, always, and to continually develop the characteristics that have been identified here and are required for critical consciousness. It is an ongoing journey.

Conclusion

This reflection on the development of my own critical consciousness is relevant not only to me as an adult learner and educator but also deepens the concept of critical consciousness, especially the theories regarding its development, reproduction, and resistance. My experience demonstrates that critical consciousness does not evolve on its own, but rather requires supports that are external to oneself. Freire (1970) claims, "I cannot think for others or without others, nor can others think for me" (p. 100). I believe Freire was right.

References

- Bishop, A. (1994). *Becoming an ally: Breaking the cycle of oppression*. Halifax, NS: Fernwood.
- Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (1976). *Schooling and capitalist America*. New York: Basic Books.
- Brookfield, S. D. (1987). *Developing critical thinkers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brookfield, S. D. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Butterwick, S. J. (1987). *Learning liberation: A comparative analysis of feminist consciousness raising and Freire's conscientization method*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of British Columbia, Vancouver.
- Collins, C. (1999) Reproductive technologies for women with physical disabilities. In *Sexuality and disability*, 17(4), p. 299-307.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Seabury.
- Freire, P. (1973). *Education for critical consciousness*. New York: Continuum.
- Gill, C. J. (1996). Becoming visible: Personal health experiences of women with disabilities. In D. M. Krotoski, M. A. Nosek, & M. A. Turk (Eds.), *Women with physical disabilities: Achieving and maintaining health and well-being*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
- Gilroy, J. (1990). Social work and the women's movement. In B. Wharf (Ed.), *Social work and social change in Canada*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.

- Hart, M. U. (1990). Liberation through consciousness raising. In J. Mezirow & Associates, *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Horton, M., & Freire, P. (1990). *We make the road by walking*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Keefe, T. (1980). Empathy skill and critical consciousness. *Social Casework*, 387-393.
- Longres, J., & Mcleod, E. (1980) Consciousness raising and social work practice. *Social Casework*, 267-276.
- Mackie, M. (1991). *Gender relations in Canada: Further explorations*. Toronto: Butterworths.
- Maguire, P. (1987). *Doing participatory research: A feminist approach*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts, Centre for International Education.
- Mcintosh, P. (1988) *White privilege and male privilege: A personal account of coming to see correspondences through work in women's studies*. Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College, Centre for Research on Women.
- Mills, C. W. (1959). *The sociological imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Minkler, M., & Cox, K. (1980). Creating critical consciousness in health: Applications of Freire's philosophy and methods to the health care setting. *International Journal of Health Services*, 10(2), 311-322.
- Newman, M. (1995). Adult education and social action. In G. Foley (Ed.), *Understanding adult education and training*. St. Leonards, Australia: Allen & Unwin.
- Ng, R. (1993). A woman out of control: Deconstructing sexism and racism in the university. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 18(3), 189-205.
- Peslikis, I. (1970). Resistances to consciousness. In L. B. Tanner (Ed.), *Voices from women's liberation*. New York: New American Library.
- Repo, M. (1977). The fallacy of community control. In J Cowley (Ed.), *Community or class struggle?* London: Stage 1.
- Stanley, L. & Wise, S. (1983). *Breaking out: Feminist consciousness and feminist research*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Tisdell, E. J. (1993). Interlocking systems of power, privilege, and oppression in adult higher education classes. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 43(4), 203-226.
- Youngman, F. (1986). *Adult education and socialist pedagogy*. London; Dover, NH: Croom Helm.