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# HOW EMANCIPATORY ARE CANADIAN RADICAL HUMANITIES PROGRAMS? ANALYZING THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN INSTITUTIONAL AND STUDENT PERSPECTIVES<sup>1</sup>

James Mathew Czank

## Abstract

*Radical humanities programs in Canada offer non-traditional adult students an entry-level university educational experience. The programs purport to better the lives of the students through university-level education. This report was spurred on by the claim that such programs are emancipatory and offer radical societal change. Working from an earlier study to understand how the experiences of people participating in such programs resonated with the fundamental concepts informing the programs, this report is a systematic dialectic organized around emancipatory education. It begins with introductory sections on emancipatory pedagogy and Canadian radical humanities programs before turning to a description of methodology and data, followed by analysis. It concludes that emancipatory pedagogy must be a space and activity that enables students to become subjects consciously aware of their context and their condition as human beings, rather than an extension of formal education that objectifies students and maintains asymmetrical power relations.*

## Résumé

*Au Canada, les programmes en sciences humaines « radicaux » offrent aux étudiantes et étudiants adultes aux parcours non traditionnels une expérience éducative universitaire de premier cycle. Ces programmes prétendent améliorer la vie de ces personnes grâce à une formation de niveau universitaire. La création du présent rapport fut motivée par l'affirmation selon laquelle ces programmes seraient émancipateurs et créeraient des transformations sociales radicales. En faisant appel à une étude antérieure pour comprendre en quoi les expériences de personnes y ayant participé font écho aux principaux concepts sur lesquels ces programmes sont fondés, le présent rapport constitue une dialectique systématique organisée autour d'une formation émancipatrice. Le rapport se penche d'abord sur la pédagogie*

1 This study was part of a larger project (Czank, 2018) that was supported by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

*émancipatrice et les programmes canadiens en sciences humaines « radicaux » avant de passer à la description de la méthodologie et des données, puis à l'analyse. Il conclut que la pédagogie émancipatrice doit constituer un espace et une activité qui permettent aux personnes apprenantes de devenir des sujets conscients de leur contexte et de leur condition comme êtres humains, au lieu du simple prolongement d'une éducation formelle qui comprend les personnes apprenantes comme des objets et qui maintient les relations asymétriques de pouvoir.*

"Radical humanities" programs in Canada offer non-traditional adults an entry-level university educational experience. The term *non-traditional*, to use the nomenclature of the field, alludes to them being socially or educationally disadvantaged and marginalized, with characteristics that are expected to include one or more of the following: an experience with homelessness, poverty, social isolation, long-term physical or mental illness, and past negative experiences with the formal learning environment (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2007, 2010b). The programs purport to better the lives of these students by focusing on the emancipatory potential of education. This study was done to understand the emancipatory potential of such programs through the experiences of people participating in two of them. This paper is a systematic dialectic organized around emancipatory pedagogy. It begins with an introductory section on emancipatory pedagogy and Canadian radical humanities programs before turning to a description of methodology, findings, and analysis. It concludes that emancipatory pedagogy must be a space and activity that enables students to become subjects consciously aware of their context and their condition as human beings, rather than an extension of formal education that objectifies students and maintains asymmetrical power relations.

### **Emancipatory Pedagogy**

Emancipatory pedagogy is deeply rooted in the notion that education should play a role in creating a just and democratic society. This approach to education involves a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationships in classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society, and nation state (Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014, p. 78).

Emancipatory pedagogy is not concerned with strategies for personal self-improvement, nor does it place an undue emphasis on academic qualifications and individual economic or professional opportunities. Nouri and Sajjadi (2014) described emancipatory pedagogy as a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the production of knowledge and institutional structures and the social and material relations of our communities, society, and nation-states. It is about developing a critical understanding of our relationship with the world and making students and teachers aware of their condition as human beings. Indeed, the purpose of emancipatory education is to develop critical understanding and knowledge of the systemic causes of unsatisfactory circumstances and the role of education in reconstructing society (Thompson, n.d.). It is "a practical activity where we write ourselves as subjective forces [in history]" (McLaren & Jaramillo, 2010, p. 10) that helps to "create the conditions of pedagogical possibility that enable students to see [the exercise of power]" (McLaren, 2015, p. 10). According to Giroux (2007), such a pedagogy

may lead to the possibility for a better world. It is the “radicalness” to conquer and counter marginalizing social forces of Groen and Hyland-Russell (2010a, 2010b).

### Canadian Radical Humanities Programs

Canadian radical humanities programs are designed to offer non-traditional adult learners an emancipatory educational experience through entry-level university studies. Often called Humanities 101, they offer non-traditional adult learners access to professors, ideas, and the opportunity to participate in classroom dialogue. This study was conducted with participants in two radical humanities programs at two campuses of a Canadian university. They are among many currently operating programs across Canada, the United States, Australia, and Mexico. In the United States, these programs are typically associated with Earl Shorris and his Clemente Course in the Humanities (Shorris, 2000). At the time of writing, there were 12 programs in Canada. All purport to advance notions of success tied to social reform, with Groen and Hyland-Russell (2009) explaining that these programs strive to strengthen local communities and contribute to social justice.

The specific Canadian radical humanities programs studied were offered at each of the two university campuses for three hours one night a week over a 12-week semester. Both were non-credit and free of charge.

Each week was facilitated by a different volunteer professor who gave a lecture or facilitated activities on a specific topic. As in other Canadian programs, the professors were from not just the humanities, but also the social sciences and occasionally the sciences, recognizing the value of incorporating a broad range of perspectives and disciplines into the curriculum. Both programs had a director who was aided by part-time staff and volunteers, and who organized and put supports in place to help learners overcome some of the hurdles they faced in attending. For example, both programs provided free transit fare, child care, and course materials. As well, classes typically started off with a meal to encourage participation.

Meredith (2011) described Canadian radical humanities programs as nourishing learning environments that are uniquely positioned to “counter neo-liberalism and lend... experiential knowledge to a struggling public education sphere that is being overwhelmed by the forces of capitalism” (p. 58). She argued that these programs are meant to engage voices of indignation, provide a social critique of the situations that people find themselves in, and act as social reform. They also are described as a venue for liberation (Groen & Kawalilak, 2014; Meredith, 2011), an opportunity for citizenship (Meredith, 2011), and an ongoing event in transformative learning (Groen & Kawalilak, 2014; Hyland-Russell & Groen, 2008).

Canadian radical humanities move beyond narrowly conceived conceptions of adult learning that link it with vocational training. Instead, it is hoped that individual people’s lives can be changed by enabling them to be more actively engaged and participate more fully in society. As Groen and Hyland-Russell (2009) put it:

[Radical] humanities programs for the marginalized [operate according to] an entirely different philosophy and praxis than found in instrumental or vocational learning. These programs do not promise an end to material poverty; they do, however, promise an end to internal poverty. Through radical transformative learning, students can become more engaged and

can move away from the margins into a more active citizenship and, in a paradoxical fashion, may ultimately evaluate their success in quantifiable external measure. (p. 106)

According to Groen and Hyland-Russell (2010a), the programs offer the potential for radical social change, with "radicalness" being understood as conquering and "counter[ing] marginalizing social forces through...access [to] postsecondary institutions and content typically denied [non-traditional students]" (p. 224).

I have been involved with a Canadian radical humanities program for several years now as a volunteer, an instructor, and an administrator, and during this time I have witnessed a disjuncture between the rhetoric and implementation of these programs and the everyday organization of students' lives. I have heard some students state that the program was not engaging in a meaningful examination of their reality and thus was not meeting their needs. At times they openly vented their frustration, and at other times they sat quietly disengaged. The first time I heard this was when a student shared that the topic of a particular class was not all relevant to him. He faced hurdles and suffered in his everyday life, and he was adamant that the class was not addressing that, nor did it align with his reasons for being in the program. He, like other disengaged students, seemingly did not grasp the emancipatory promise of the program. Was the problem really the students not "getting it," I asked myself, or were there deeper issues with the program? My questioning led to this study.

### **Methodology, Methods, and Data from the Original Study**

I used institutional ethnography as my methodology, which offers a lens for the systemic study of interactions within institutions (Smith, 2006). Not to be confused with an ethnography of specific institutions or organizations, institutional ethnography focuses on the relations that structure people's lives. It delves into the ways that they interact with one another and how their interactions are confirmed institutionally (Smith, 2006). An institutional ethnography makes ordinary daily activity the site of investigation, allowing for an "emergent mode of inquiry" (DeVault & McCoy, 2006, p. 16) rather than the testing of a hypothesis. In the study, I wanted to avoid imposing my own interpretations on the participants' experiences. Instead, I sought to elaborate on what they said as a mode of discovery.

Institutional ethnographies provide data on the social organization of knowledge (Smith, 2006). In my study, then, knowledge was treated as ideology and unpacked as a distinctive epistemological perspective on the participants' experiences. As such, the study was erected upon a Foucauldian notion of discourse and power. For Foucault (1972), discourse is hierarchical in the sense that it arranges and reinforces certain identities or subjectivities, including things like gender, status, and class, and "gives rise to a certain organization of concepts, certain regroupings of objects, [and] certain types of enunciation" (p. 64). Foucauldian discourse is a collective of statements and ideas that produce networks of discursive meaning. It provides a conceptual framework and classificatory model for understanding the world around us, how it shapes how we think and how we produce knowledge, and how it structures possibilities for thinking, talking, and acting.

Foucault (1983) treated power as a "materiality" or "technique" that operates on the subjects involved. It is "less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one

to the other than a question of governance” (p. 219) and how certain actions modify others. While not always explicit, power is always present within discourse, operating most of the time as a matter of perspective. Foucault’s notion of power is not something that one simply has or does not have—and in this sense, it exceeds the Marxian sense of power as that which can be seized, or that from which one can be alienated. Foucault viewed power as productive and dynamic in the sense that it structures, rather than something that one holds onto, or conversely allows to slip away. In this study, therefore, power was treated as a thing co-constituted by the people who supported it.

Two programs were chosen as representative sites for the institutional ethnography of Canadian radical humanities programs. The two programs operated in separate cities and were run by different directors. There were two groups of participants at each site: nine adult learners volunteered as study participants and seven people providing the programs volunteered as institutional participants. The methods used were analysis of program documents, interviews with students and institutional participants (i.e., instructors and a program director), and my own reflections. The focus of the study was not that of a typical qualitative project in which I might analyze and compare various perspectives but was instead on the complexes of relations organized around these two Canadian radical humanities programs. I was interested in the way the tenets of the programs organized, defined, and regulated the experiences and interactions of the people involved. The use of an institutional ethnography allowed me to explore how ruling relations created forms of thought and structured how members viewed both themselves and the program with which they were involved (Howard, Risman, & Sprague, 2005). Any generalizations thus pertain to the institutional idea of Canadian radical humanities programs.

An institutional ethnography ties people and events together in ways that make sense of “abstractions” (Taber, 2010). The abstractions illuminate the working of institutions and how the experiences of people are structured and affected by the institution, as evidenced in specific comments, observations, and incidents. Three such abstractions are detailed in this paper: student identity in the programs (including perceptions about the students’ educational experiences), opportunity, and enablement. I share brief excerpts of data to portray a representative, and often poignant, picture.

### ***Student Identity***

As noted above, students in radical humanities programs across Canada are typified as non-traditional and typically reside on the margins of society in one way or another (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2007). On the websites, and in the mission and value statements of the two Canadian programs, the students are somewhat innocuously portrayed as “community members with a love of learning.” The institutional participants interviewed, however, thought of the students much like typical characterizations in the literature. They saw students as people hampered by the barriers of “not feeling good enough,” “not feeling smart enough,” and “not feeling worthy enough.” They referred to the students as a different set of people from themselves and others with privilege(s). The “one common denominator” attributed to all the students was having great potential that had never been realized. The students were seen to be people caught in the system, as people who grew up in areas that did not have a lot of opportunity, as people suffering from financial burdens or illness. It followed that the students were people in need of rescuing.

Characterizations like these were a discourse structured by the general field of Canadian radical humanities programs and were used and supported in large part by the people who represented the vehicle—that is, the university establishment—by which the programs were realized. These characterizations stood in stark contrast to the discourse used by the students themselves.

A great example of the contrast is the lack of reference to poverty by the students. Only one mentioned poverty when discussing themselves. This is despite the institutional discourse describing them as non-traditional students with “low socio-economic status” who face financial burdens. Like poverty, race and culture are also used in the research literature to characterize radical humanities students (e.g., Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2007, 2010a, 2010b), but only two of the students described themselves in those terms. While some of the students of Canadian radical humanities programs might be poor or identify with a particular racial group, it was not something they shared as a defining element of themselves.

Another example where there was disconnect between the prevailing discourse was related to students being unsuccessful in elementary and/or secondary school. They were expected to be drop-outs from regular school systems (for a variety of reasons) or people suffering from “past negative experiences with the formal learning environment” (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2007, p. 1). Their past school “failure” was treated as a barrier to post-secondary education, but the reality for the students was far more complicated than the discourse implied. Some students did indeed have varied and problematic experiences with formal educational systems, but they also experienced successes, which the institutional discourse did not acknowledge. Characterizing the students as people with past negative experiences with the formal learning environment places the onus on the students themselves rather than the educational systems. The students were then subject to all the subtext that came with that discourse.

### *Opportunity*

The prevailing discourse on Canadian radical humanities programs describes an institution dedicated to a notion of opportunity. In the original program, Shorris’s Clemente Course, “opportunity” was defined as the development of life skills that enhance participants’ interactions in the larger community (Shorris, 2000). Underlying this line of reasoning is the appeal of a university education. Two examples of such discourse in the radical humanities literature are as follows: “[The university is a] setting that is rich with symbolic power associated with the elite in our society” (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2007, p. 261), and radical humanities programs offer “learning for the elite that [the students] feel is barred to them” (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2010b, p. 40). Such discourse was also present in the two programs in this study, with program documents describing the programs as an opportunity for students to explore university-level education, suggesting the benefits of doing so.

The institutional participants used the same discourse, following the same line of reasoning as published on the program websites. They often referred to how these programs provided the students with more options. For example, one suggested that the program allowed students to realize that “they have the ability to be successful, that they are capable, that they are worthy of being at any university or college or [site of] post-secondary education.” Others discussed how the program could empower the students through

cultivating critical thinking about the systemic barriers they face, and ways to knock these down to change their lives. It was also suggested that the programs were an opportunity for the students to “think about the world in a university sort of way...and to assert their academic voices.” The ideal of opportunity that the institutional participants deployed, then, did not really offer a counterbalance to the subordination of learning as a vocational pursuit, but instead complemented and reinforced that approach given the appeal to the value of a university education. Opportunity meant the opportunity to allow the students to be successful in an institutional setting such as a university, not aiding students in appreciating what was working well in their lives.

Again, such discourse was at odds with the opportunities the student participants reported that they valued. None of the students in this study expressed a specific interest in re-entering an educational institution. Rather, they saw the programs as an opportunity for many other things, such as for voicing their own opinion, for self-discovery and enhancing self-awareness, and for meeting new people with whom to share new ideas. For example, one student was excited about participating in educational exchanges, seeing it as an opportunity to be heard and valued. He was particularly adamant about not being afraid to voice his own opinion in an open forum, and not getting pushed down for doing so. Another student saw the program as an opportunity to explore her own interests through “conversing and picking [her] brain and moving into things” and engaging with her classmates and their “very valuable” opinions. Similarly, another student viewed radical humanities as an opportunity to “learn and meet new people, and to gain a new understanding about [him] self and others.”

One student participant was quite aware of and explicitly discussed the difference between his views and those of the institution. He understood that the programs sought to offer access to a university-level educational experience, but he was not sure how far he wanted to “stick my toe into the water.” He observed how the program placed a lot of emphasis on students availing themselves of the benefits and privileges of being university students, which made him feel uncomfortable, as he could not entirely escape the feeling that something must be wrong with him if he did not take advantage of the opportunity.

### ***Enablement***

An opportunity is a favourable circumstance that provides an opening. At the core of opportunity lies a motivation to “enable” something or someone. The story of Canadian radical humanities programs is that they offer a chance to enable the students in some way; the prevailing discourse of Canadian radical humanities programs describes enablement as integration into society. Other related words that appeared in the data from institutional participants and document analysis were *helping*, *permitting*, *cultivating*, *empowering*, and *creating*. Here too, the students’ accounts were often in contrast to the official rhetoric and instructors’ accounts.

In the literature, Canadian radical humanities programs are said to enable “the possibility for student transformation from disengagement to engagement in learning and society” (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2010a, p. 239) and help students live better lives and enjoy life more through “presenting them with a more effective method for living in society” (Shorris, 2000, p. 127). This discourse is prevalent in public descriptions of various programs. For example, the University of British Columbia’s Humanities 101 Community



Programme is described as "training that empowers students to use critical thinking in everyday life and inspire a passion for lifelong learning" (University of British Columbia, n.d.), and Discovery University suggests that it "empowers students to think and engage more critically with their community" (Ottawa Mission, n.d.). Similarly, the program materials of the two radical humanities programs in this study emphasized development of knowledge, transferable skills, and self-empowerment, on both a personal and community level.

Not surprisingly, this theme of enablement was also repeated by the institutional participants. For example, the programs were described by some as helping students feel the confidence they required to open doors in their lives and get involved in the world. Others said the programs enabled the students to see the world in its complexity and as a place of opportunity. For example, one instructor said that the programs "enable [the students] to find their voices in relation to [their] community." Another said that Canadian radical humanities programs enable people to think differently and to imagine different possibilities for themselves. For the institutional participants, such enablement occurred through university lessons the students would otherwise not have access to, and the students were positioned as people who have not had the opportunity to think about the world "in a university sort of way." The line of reasoning seemed to be that these programs enabled people who were otherwise lacking in opportunity and/or ability to be successful, capable, and worthy.

This idea of enablement was not reflected in the students' accounts. For the students, the programs were not about being enabled to participate in societal institutions such as post-secondary education, but were a chance to understand themselves and their relationships and about the chance to be free, to rebuild, to reconnect, and to form relationships with others. Their goal was not necessarily to further integrate into a society that had failed them, but to find and use their voices despite their present circumstances. For example, one student stated that the program was a chance to "free my soul." Another student described her reason for getting involved as looking for a chance to rebuild confidence and understand herself a little better. She found that hearing the accounts and learning about the experiences of other students was a big part of that experience, as it helped her put her own life in perspective. Another student spoke about the program as an opportunity to reconnect with the person he used to be: a curious person engaged with the world, ready for any challenge, and unashamed of wanting to know more. The programs were also described as an opportunity to interact with a bunch of people with different backgrounds and to talk about all kinds of different subjects, to "go off base or off on other topics."

What the students wanted was a platform, then, not an introduction to university life or assistance with integrating more fully into social systems that had failed them. They were not asking to be enabled but were seeking to widen perspectives they already held and to explore what they found interesting. The programs were a way for them to keep moving forward on their terms rather than a means of getting going or moving into something different. These differences in perspective and discourse were not limited to the data reported in the interviews. I observed one of the radical humanities programs during my study. I noticed that institutional participants assumed that an entry-level post-secondary experience benefits low-income and otherwise marginalized learners, and given the literature and discussion with others running these programs, I feel comfortable asserting

that this paradigm is the norm for Canadian radical humanities programs, which is at odds with the students' perspectives.

### Discussion

Paying close attention to the dynamics of two Canadian radical humanities programs was eye-opening. I was fascinated by how a powerful, symbolically wealthy, and elite institution and its members related to people who are typified as socially and educationally disadvantaged and marginalized. While there were many examples of positive classroom experiences and much that the students appreciated, there also were examples of disconnection, like the disjuncture that motivated this study. The approach perpetuated a transmission approach to education rather than a critical or emancipatory pedagogy that met the students where they were in order to combat issues of social justice. What was obvious was how the institutional participants' relationship to the students was codified and justified by the complicated social mechanisms of higher education.

Taber (2010) argued that an "institutional ethnography traces the ways in which [data] stitches together smaller social groupings into larger institutional contexts" (p. 11). What has been stitched together in this study are small groupings that represent the discursive space and institutional context of Canadian radical humanities programs. On the surface, the disjuncture between the institutional and student participants' perspectives I identified might seem small and inconsequential, but it speaks to the complicated institutional mechanisms of Canadian radical humanities programs. There is an institutional discourse to Canadian radical humanities programs, and it clearly gives meaning to the programs studied, and has consequences.

Freire (1993) asserted that emancipatory pedagogy needs to meet the expectations and realities of the people it is purported to be for. As Freire made abundantly clear, there cannot be a disjuncture between the students and the pedagogical principles and curriculum, nor in the normative prescriptions and discourses that inform the pedagogical spaces. Traditional ideas of formal education work through a mendacious and sanitizing process of depositing information into, and training, students deemed to be empty vessels, whereas emancipatory pedagogy grapples with how and where students see and understand themselves in the present and the future. Canadian radical humanities programs are offered as programs for people who are deemed to lack the resources to achieve their fair share in society because they are suffering from low-income and other forms of marginalization. Students are characterized as disadvantaged from the outset due to the process of having to be referred by social service agencies. These characterizations, and the normative prescriptions and discourses that go along with them, while unintentional, proved to be a systematic, ongoing strike against the people the programs were created to serve.

The data revealed that Canadian radical humanities programs are codified and justified by the complicated social mechanism of higher education, which is structured and confirmed by the individual programs, such as the two involved in this study. Emancipation was anchored in what the adult learners did not have, rather than what they could bring to the programs, which is emblematic of a deficit approach. The data revealed a multitude of references to the programs seeking to cultivate the type of thinking that would empower the adult learners to change their lives, and to enable them to think differently about themselves. The programs were viewed and treated as "basic building blocks" for people caught in the

system. Underlying this was an appeal to the presumed value of university or academic education. The spell of the academy was *sui generis*. It had the power to change people and provide them with what they needed to get on with their lives, negating the contexts of the students and their condition as human beings. The very logic and discourse that informed and created the programs positioned the students as victims.

The programs were hijacked by a fixed and non-negotiable commitment to a particular "we"—that is, we the scholars and knowledge producers need to help poor and underprivileged people join an educational system that worked for us. We need to introduce them to worthwhile culture, experiences, and education. We need to meet their needs. We need to allow subaltern voices to assert themselves. Canadian radical humanities programs, in this sense, are little more than a continuation of privilege. We have the answers because we have the degrees and we represent the privileged space that is the university and the post-secondary world. In this context, emancipation must start in a system that has already failed the students, rather than embody a humanist pedagogy and praxis where the "non-traditional"—and formerly excluded—have their voices heard.

In this study, the programs came up against the students' own sense of self and the ideas and expectations they held. For example, none of the students referred to themselves as marginalized. They did not use the word *oppressed*, outside of when oppression was a topic in a given week. Further, the students did not hold the post-secondary world in the same reverence as the institutional participants did. Indeed, their views seldom aligned with the ideas informing Canadian radical humanities programs and the expectations of the people responsible for actualizing them in the classroom. This disjuncture reflected more than a difference in views or even priorities. It was rooted in a fundamental difference in how people treated and understood the world and themselves, and this difference was more than semantics.

To paraphrase Giroux (2010), within the supposed emancipatory spaces of Canadian radical humanities programs, there is little proof that pedagogy was treated as anything but status quo. Genuinely emancipatory pedagogy, as a deeply civic, political, and moral practice—that is, pedagogy as a practice for freedom—was not in evidence. The Canadian radical humanities programs are instead examples of education in the standard format of a transmission of knowledge from an individual to a group. The delivery and structure revealed formal dynamics of power as a constraining feature, implicit in language, framework, and perspective. The result of this for the students, to paraphrase Smith (2006), was that within the space of the classroom, their actuality became accountable to the programs.

### Conclusion

According to Nietzsche (1968), a look at any space is a look at what is active behind the ideas that inform it. Differences between epistemological scruples reveal quite definite perspectives of a given space. In theory, Canadian radical humanities programs operate under the guise of emancipatory pedagogy. In practice, they are a collection of individuals who enter them with different needs, understandings, and knowledge. While the programs purport to be an example of learning that liberates and transforms beliefs, values, and underlying assumptions, promising a dissolution of barriers and holding the promise for radical change, empowerment, and enablement, the reality was quite different. They were not more emancipatory than any other post-secondary classroom. The programs did not

engage with and build on the quite definite perspectives present in the classroom, but instead remained tied to just one, the promise of post-secondary institutions as a magical path to emancipation. Student accounts of using their voice, enhanced self-awareness, and the relationships they formed were often despite the programs rather than a direct result of them.

Freire (1993) argued that emancipation involves being an active participant in the world and one's situation. This idea invokes the notion that we are involved both in and with the world and each other, in a praxical type of relationship. Praxis is the dialectical interplay of reflection and action. It makes a demand to be mindful of the relationships between consciousness, actions, and the world (Glass, 2001). The basic idea is that we should exist in and with the world in a meaningful and authentic way and illuminates why Canadian radical humanities programs are not emancipatory.

Education can be a means of emancipation or a process of indoctrination, hence education is a terrain where power and politics are given fundamental expression. Giroux (1988) referred to education as a space "where the production of meaning, desire, language, and values engage and respond...[it is] a struggle for a particular future and form of social life" (p. 110). Both humanization and dehumanization are real possibilities in all education spaces, especially as it pertains to people, politics, and the dynamics of power that underlie both (Freire, 1993). The dynamics of power within Canadian radical humanities programs, and the unequal relationship between dominant and dominated poles, exist in antithetical contradiction within its spaces. Freire (1993) used the term *antithetical contradiction* to refer to dynamics between the oppressed (those whose voices are silenced) and those who "subsist on the oppressed and find their authentication in the vertical relationship between themselves and the latter" (p. 132). Stated a different way, an emancipatory education carried on by A for B or derived by A about B is contradictory and fundamentally antithetical.

An emancipatory discourse, by its very definition, cannot be the property of an educator, but must be part of the practice of education itself. hooks (1994) gave us something to consider when she suggested that education only emancipates when it is a field in which we all labour, educators and the educated alike. The situation that individuals find themselves in is what conditions their consciousness, and this in turn conditions their attitudes and their ways of knowing their world. When people are denied their right to voice their histories and experiences as Subject, their consciousness becomes dominated and alienated. One's history and experience, as Marx (1998) said, is what makes people who they are.

The personal experiences and consciousness of the world differed among the various people involved with the Canadian radical humanities programs. The study showed that, at times, institutional participants and students were in opposition. Despite the characterization of Canadian radical humanities programs as emancipatory pedagogy, the discourse and processes denied students' subjectivity so that they became dominated and alienated from their own history and their own experiences. Their history and experiences had little value in the classroom and tended to be problematized or ignored. The "naively conceived humanism" that Freire (1993, p. 93) said overlooks the concrete, existential, present situation of real people was embodied in the programs. These well-meaning and emancipatory programs were a site where knowledge became a gift bestowed by those considered to be knowledgeable upon those considered to know very little. The fact that students came from socially or educationally disadvantaged segments of the population,

and from poor and working-class backgrounds, thus negated their potential contribution to the programs; the students were reined in from challenging their norms. Further, the instructors were presented to the students as their opposites. Canonized knowledge justified the instructors' position at the head of the classroom, as people in charge of learning, and the program justified its existence by providing knowledge to people assumed to own no knowledge of their own. In the words of Freire (1993), "The students, alienated like the slave in the Hegelian dialectic, were expected to accept their ignorance as justifying the teacher's [and the program's] existence" (p. 72).

An emancipatory approach to education must expand beyond an act of transmission. Good intentions and ideological scruples of equality and equity are not enough given the constraining dynamics of power implicit in institutional language, framework, and perspective. If the criterion of the value of an education is the extent to which it facilitates growth, then what the students of the Canadian radical humanities programs experienced was of less than stellar value. They were subject to a bestowing or transference of knowledge. Their only role was to file away the communiqués. McLaren (2015) maintained that a "return to humanity requires that we posit a new world outside of the well-worn path of [educational] custodianship" (p. 320). The students of the Canadian radical humanities programs were not looking to adapt to a new milieu; they were looking for a platform to voice their truths and a springboard from which to leap into the future. That difference is important, because there is no such thing as a neutral educational process, as Freire (1993) reminded us:

Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (p. 34)

Thus far, Canadian radical humanities programs have misunderstood emancipatory pedagogy. That does not mean they are irretrievably incommensurable with emancipation, however, which is why I continue to be involved. There is always room for transformation. In the case of Canadian radical humanities programs, this involves a gnosiological approach; that is, a commitment to the unpacking of the knowledge students already have. Any attempt to manipulate people to a reality, to adapt them to it, means taking from them their right to transform it themselves, which is not emancipatory. It is my hope that the results of this critical analysis can be used to improve current radical humanities programs for non-traditional adult learners.

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