Refereed Article

Andragogy and Its Discontents: An Analysis of Andragogy from Three Critical Perspectives

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Abstract

In this essay I first provide an overview of andragogy, an idea which has been a cornerstone of adult education for many decades. Next, I question the assumptions of andragogy and focus attention on critiques emerging from critical, feminist, and Africentric perspectives. Finally, I raise questions about the future of andragogy in adult education.

The concept of andragogy has had "an enormous and far-reaching influence on the field of adult education practice" (Brookfield, 1989, p. 201) and has created a portrait of adult learning and adult learners that has been the lynchpin of adult education for several decades (Davenport & Davenport, 1985a, 1985b; Pratt, 1993; St. Clair, 2002; Welton, 1995). Based in the educational philosophy of liberal humanism, which has been the "predominant paradigm of practice within the literature of North American adult and continuing education" (Brookfield, 1989, p. 203; Elias & Merriam, 1995), andragogy is a method, or a way, of teaching adults—"the art and science of helping adults learn" (Davenport & Davenport, 1985a, 1985b; Knowles, 1984, 1990); a philosophy about adults as learners (Podeschi, 1987); and an ideology "based on beliefs regarding individual freedom, the relationship between individual and society, and the aims of adult education" (Pratt, 1993, p. 15).

As a method, andragogy emphasizes the role of the adult educator as a facilitator who is responsible for creating a comfortable physical climate as well as a psychological climate of mutual trust and respect,

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collaborativeness, supportiveness, openness and authenticity, and pleasure (Knowles, 1984). As a philosophy, andragogy creates an image of adult learners based on the following assumptions: (a) as adults mature their self-concepts move from dependence towards self-directedness, (b) adults enter educational activities with life experience which is a resource for learning, (c) adults are "ready to learn" when they experience a need to know something or to change a life situation, (d) learning must be immediately relevant to adult learners, and (e) adults are internally motivated to learn (Knowles, 1984; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). Finally, as an ideology, andragogy promotes individualism as a virtue and individual growth as the purpose of education and emphasizes self-fulfillment and private interests over public ends (Pratt, 1993).

In sum, Pratt (1993) states that andragogy is characterized by five fundamental values or beliefs that, taken together, "constitute a particular worldview that legitimates certain forms of learning, approaches to instruction, and judgments about priorities in adult education" (p. 21):

> a) a moral axiom that places the individual at the center of education and relegates the collective to the periphery, b) a belief in the goodness of each individual and the need to release and trust the goodness, c) a belief that learning should result in growth toward the realization of one's potential, d) a belief that autonomy and self-direction are the signposts of adulthood within a democratic society, and e) a belief in the potency of the individual in the face of social, political, cultural, and historical forces to achieve self-direction. (p. 21)

Critiquing Andragogy

While there have been debates about andragogy since Knowles popularized the idea in adult education, most of the early debates focused on whether adults and children really learned differently or should be taught differently and on what, exactly, andragogy was (Davenport & Davenport, 1985a). A different sort of critique emerged from adult educators, like Griffin (1991), who subscribed to a more sociological view of adult learning. Griffin (1991) argued that andragogy lacks a "sense of historical, economic, and cultural forces that shape the possibilities for and the meaning of individual growth and transformation" (p. 268).

More recent critiques of andragogy echo these sociologically-based critiques and come from researchers who operate out of different theoretical orientations, including critical, feminist, and Africentric. While educators in each of these paradigms take the critique of andragogy in particular directions depending on their main area of interest and emphasize different kinds of classroom practices as a result, in general these critiques address some similar issues. An informal, qualitative content analysis I conducted of critically-focused journal articles critiquing andragogy from different critical perspectives revealed five main, interrelated issues that cut across most critical paradigms:

1. Andragogy assumes wrongly that education is value neutral and apolitical.
2. Andragogy promotes a generic adult learner as universal with White middle-class values.
3. Andragogy ignores other ways of knowing and silences other voices.
4. Andragogy ignores the relationship between self and society.
5. Andragogy is reproductive of inequalities; it supports the status quo.

I will first describe briefly each of these general critiques and, then, will explicate more fully the *main* areas of critique in the critical, feminist, and Africentric perspectives on adult education. I am choosing to focus on these three perspectives because they are viewpoints receiving increased attention within adult education and they are the viewpoints in my literature review that critiqued andragogy most frequently from a sociological perspective.

My content analysis revealed five major critiques of andragogy that cut across these different critical perspectives. First, andragogy is critiqued for its failure to consider that education is political (Tisdell, 1998). Through focusing on technical knowledge and practical teaching techniques, andragogy positions itself as politically neutral and fails to acknowledge that knowledge is inherently value laden and serves to socialize and shape behavior (Collins, 1995; Welton, 1995).

Second, andragogy is critiqued for promoting the illusion of a generic adult learner with White middle-class (and also male and Western, as pointed out by feminists and Africentrists) values as universal. Andragogy upholds ideals of individualism, self-fulfillment, self-reliance, and self-

directedness and, more importantly, assumes tacitly that these ideals are valued universally by all peoples and all cultures (Collins, 1995; Flannery, 1994; Guy, 1996; Pratt, 1993). This universalizing aspect of andragogy is critiqued for normalizing one way of being and, thus, acting to promote everyday sexism and racism in adult education settings.

Closely linked to this critique is the idea that andragogy ignores "other" (non-White, Western, middle-class, male) ways of knowing and being and, in the process, silences other voices (Flannery, 1995; Welton, 1995). In andragogy only one worldview is valued or acknowledged; thus, andragogy ignores other value systems and worldviews and does not allow for differences in learning preferences. Fourth, andragogy ignores the relationship between self and society by decontextualizing the learning process and describing the individual in psychological terms separate from social, political, economic, and historical contexts. Consequently, andragogy does not take into account structural systems of privilege and oppression, based on race, gender, and class, that influence learning and does not consider how culture impacts a person's development and ways of learning (Heaney, 1996; Tisdell, 1995). Finally, because andragogy promotes itself as neutral while upholding mainstream values, it omits a critical analysis of "common-sense" assumptions about cultural, sociopolitical, and institutional constraints on learning; thus, it is critiqued for reproducing inequalities, for sustaining hegemonic social arrangements, and for supporting exploitative structures and conservative agendas (Colin & Preciphs, 1991; Flannery, 1994; 1995; Heaney, 1996).

Critical Perspectives

Hart (1990) states that "critique" refers to "the process of investigating and denouncing social and individual damages caused by power" (p. 128). To some extent, then, critical, feminist, and Africentric perspectives are all "critical"—each challenges the normative assumptions of andragogy, is concerned with inequity and under- or mis-representation, and seeks to link critique to action (praxis) through pursuing social change as a major goal of education. For the purposes of this essay, however, I will separate out critical perspectives on teaching adults from feminist and Africentric perspectives in order to try to distinguish their salient features, although I feel that this separation is somewhat artificial and arbitrary.

There are different strands of critical perspectives or pedagogies in adult education, some of which draw from the critical theory of Habermas (Cervero & Wilson, 1994; Collins, 1995; Hart, 1990, 1995; Welton, 1993, 1995); some which rely more on Freire's (1985, 1993) consciousness-raising education (Lankshear, 1993; Shor, 1992; Shor & Freire, 1987); and others which move into the critical, postmodern realm (Flannery, 1994, 1995; Giroux, 1997; Pietrykowski, 1996). Again, these positions overlap; therefore, separation into distinct categories is also artificial.

In general, however, educators who subscribe to a critical perspective on adult education and on teaching adults place "the issue of power or dominance relations at the center" of what they do (Hart, 1990, p. 126) and seek to move "beyond the technical rationality of current adult education practice" (Cunningham, 1992, p. 181). Consequently, critical educators are interested in power relations and societal inequalities and have a "concern for forms of education which are liberating rather than merely adjusting, and which point to new possibilities for thought and action rather than fixate the learner to the status quo" (Hart, 1990, p. 125). Here the purpose of education is change, of "not merely individual attitudes and understandings, but [of] social conditions as well" (Heaney, 1996, p. 29).

Because of the concerns and goals of critical educators, their critiques of andragogy focus mainly on how andragogy fails to challenge structural inequalities in society and how it works to reproduce the status quo. According to the critical view, andragogy helps to reproduce inequalities through holding certain normative assumptions, such as individualism, as universal (Flannery, 1994, 1995) and excluding such "repressed voices" as "women, minorities, [and] alter identities" (Welton, 1995, p. 128), thus privileging dominant groups and obscuring alternative ways of conceptualizing reality; through decontextualizing learners and the learning situation (Collins, 1995; Flannery, 1994, 1995; Heaney, 1996; Pratt, 1993; Welton, 1995); and through focusing on technical aspects of education and, thereby, commodifying the educational experience (Collins, 1995; Heaney, 1996; Welton, 1995).

Within andragogy "individualism, linear thinking, and Anglo European values of self-sufficiency have been generalized to all adults as 'universal'" (Flannery, 1994, p. 17). To Flannery (1994) this kind of universalism commits four errors of reasoning—faulty generalizations, circular reasoning, mystified concepts, and partial knowledge—that

result, ultimately, in a situation in which only one group is seen as the norm against which other groups are judged. McLaren (1997) calls this process "colonizing the definition of what is normal" (p. 263).

McLaren (1997) maintains that American society is undergirded by a foundation of racism, and Flannery (1994) and Colin and Preciphs (1991) argue that the universalizing tendency of andragogy perpetuates that racism (and sexism). Flannery (1994), for instance, critiques adult learning theories such as andragogy for promoting as "universal" values that actually are rooted firmly in a particular worldview. She explains (after Clark & Wilson, 1991) that "learning theories based on individualism and autonomy [such as andragogy] reflect values and attributes that are primarily Western, white, middle-class, and male" (p. 22). She goes on to assert that "to continue to promote learning theories that have individual achievement as a universal goal is to continue everyday racism in adult education" (p. 22).

Heaney (1996), too, faults mainstream adult education because it legitimates dominant values as normative and, thus, perpetuates the status quo. He states that "an absence of impetus for social change goals within adult education as a field of practice finds legitimation within the race, gender, and class bias of the knowledge base on which that practice is now defined" (p. 14). Pratt (1993) agrees that, because andragogy emphasizes an "ideology of middle-class America," it "has never offered a challenge to hierarchical or exploitative structures in society" (p. 20).

A closely related critique is that andragogy helps reproduce societal inequalities through focusing on the individual and divorcing the individual from a contextualized society. Heaney (1996) argues that decontextualizing learning has deleterious consequences:

> By emphasizing individual over social interests, individuals are effectively divided from their sole source of power to transform social institutions—namely, the power of numbers. The structural determinants of the individual and the individual's perceived "needs" for learning are obscured; [sic] and a conservative political agenda is disguised, maintaining the status quo and creating an illusion of neutrality by merely responding to putative individual needs. With such an emphasis, the social order, which is legitimized and strengthened through the development of individuals, is neither an intended goal nor is it, apparently, even an object of attention except insofar as it dictates the agenda for adult learning. (p. 18)

Pratt (1993), too, argues that andragogy views the learner as "operating as if he or she has risen above the web of social structures" and, thus, "does not acknowledge the vast influence of these structures on the formation of the person's identity and ways of interpreting the world" (p. 18).

Finally, both Collins (1995) and Welton (1995) critique andragogy for its inflated concern with "effective teaching practice" (Welton, 1995, p. 128), for its connection with the move for professionalization within adult education, and for its contribution to the commodification of education. Welton (1995) states that, through creating a "science" of teaching adults based on the idea that adults are fundamentally different from children, andragogy helped push adult education towards professionalization and, in the process, abandoned social change as a goal. Welton explains further that, "thus, the boundary of the Discipline was drawn very narrowly around a set of professionalized practices and another 'expert culture' was constituted in an historical period of an expansive welfare-state capitalism to take its place alongside so many other expert cultures" (p. 129). Welton (1995) also explains that, during the twentieth century, the field of adult education has

> been internally driven to develop a body of knowledge ("common concerns") to be used for professional practice in order to gain a share of an educational service economy. In the twentieth century the only way to achieve this dubious goal was to rely on empirical-analytical knowledge to define and organize the field—the impulse to monopolize competence to control a piece of the increasingly differentiated social world. Adult educators emerged as part of the professional middle classes who, in the post-war era, had to "manage the learning processes" of the subaltern sectors. (p. 131)

Thus, within andragogy "the individual learner as client becomes the object of an emerging field of professionalized practice," and education is commodified and becomes part of the "colonization of the lifeworld" (Collins, 1995, p. 77).

Feminist Perspectives

While there are many different types of feminist pedagogies—including psychological, structural, and post-structural models (Tisdell, 1998)—each of which focuses on different concerns, all strands of

feminisms "are concerned with gender relations and women's emancipation, and emphasize the importance of connection, relationship, and the role of affectivity in learning" (Tisdell, 1998, p. 140). Lather (1994) suggests that "through the questions it poses and the absences it locates, feminism argues the centrality of gender in the shaping of our consciousness, skills, and institutions as well as the distribution of power and privilege" (p. 242). She argues further that the "central premise of feminism is that gender is a basic organizing principle of all known societies and that, along with race, class, and the sheer specificity of historical circumstance, it profoundly shapes/mediates the concrete conditions of our lives" (p. 242). Feminist pedagogy, in general, "foregrounds issues of gender, focusing more on women's learning, although many writers also account for race, class, and sexual orientation differences among women" (Tisdell, 1998, p. 141).

Different types of feminisms also deal to some degree with (a) how knowledge is constructed, (b) voice, (c) authority, and (d) positionality or "how to deal with difference" (Tisdell, 1998, p. 140). Feminist critiques of andragogy, then, while varied, are all concerned with the way andragogy has normalized and universalized the White, European, middle class male "adult learner" who possesses values such as individualism, self-directedness, and self-fulfillment. From a feminist perspective andragogy has ignored other ways of knowing. Flannery (1995) states that "among the missing voices in the adult education learning literature are women, who learn to keep silent as their meanings differ from those of men" (p. 154). A major concern of feminist pedagogy, then, is how women have been marginalized in mainstream adult education.

Building on critical perspectives, certain strands of feminism, including structural and post-structural, also criticize andragogy for assuming political neutrality and for not dealing with the "structural factors of privilege and oppression that affect power relations in the learning environment" (Tisdell, 1998, p. 140). These more critical strands of feminism strive towards combating inequalities based on gender (as well as race and class) and, thus, fault andragogy for its focus on individual achievement over societal change. While stating that "it is difficult to be against the idea that learners should have a say in their own learning," Tisdell (1995) argues that "the approach of Knowles and others who emphasize either andragogy and/or the self-directedness of adult learning tends to focus on the fulfillment of individual goals" (p. 40). She also critiques andragogy because it does

not focus on social change or "the empowerment of oppressed groups," nor does it "take into account the structural systems of privilege and oppression based on race, gender, and class that inform learning" (Tisdell, 1995, p. 40).

Africentric Perspectives

Like andragogy, Africentrism is a philosophy or a worldview that has implications for the learning environment. Africentrism is defined by Guy (1996) as

> a sociocultural and philosophical perspective that reflects the intellectual traditions of both an African/African American people and a continent. Africentrism is grounded in the philosophical system of traditional African societies that are exemplified in the seven basic values embodied in the Ki-Swahili *Nguzo Saba* (these include Umoja [unity], Kujichagulia [self-determination], Ujima [collective work and responsibility], Ujamaa [cooperative economics], Nia [purpose], Kuumba [creativity], and Imani [faith] [Hayes & Colin, 1994, p. 3]). . . . With respect to adult education, it asserts that policies, practices, experiences, philosophies, ethical issues, theories, and concepts must be considered and evaluated on the basis of the perspective and experience of African Americans. (p. 13)

Adult educators subscribing to the Africentric paradigm focus their critique of andragogy on its failure to consider other worldviews and on its exclusion of non-White and Western voices, specifically the African worldview. Coupled with this critique is the idea that because andragogy universalizes the Western worldview, it helps to reproduce the dominant cultural hegemony of racism in America (Colin, 1994; Colin & Preciphs, 1991; Guy, 1996). Guy (1996) states that "our concept of how adults learn, principles of teaching adults, the methods, goals, and purposes of adult education are based on primarily Eurocentric values" (p. 14). Consequently, the Africentric paradigm seeks to politicize education and counter this Eurocentric worldview by opening up discourse to include other voices, worldviews, and values, specifically those associated with Africentrism. Harris (1992) states that "education is not an objective, neutral process. It reflects the cultural, social, political, economic, and philosophical imperative of the society" (p. 313). Guy (1996) explains that the "assumptions of individualism and humanism

must be delimited given the sociocultural frame of reference of Africentrism" (p. 14).

Following this line of argument, Smith (1994) states that adult educators need to address the "twin issues of excluded histories and power relationships"—issues that are "based in the culture of American education" (p. 17). Because of andragogy's neglect of other worldviews, histories, and voices, Smith goes on to argue that "without a more complete and diverse understanding of the historical and political factors impacting on the learners, adult education cannot meet the need to enrich the quality of life for all learners" (p. 17) and suggests that both practitioners and students need to understand a variety of worldviews. To facilitate this perspective, he proposes a course that presents an African-American-inclusive history of adult education.

Dozier-Henry (1994) argues that Africentricity is a "paradigm emanating from a particular world view" (p. 1) and contrasts the Eurocentric worldview that underlies adult education with the Africentric worldview that is "oppositional to the dominant Eurocentric one" (p. 1). She posits further that the Eurocentric paradigm has denied other systems of thought and, thus, should be exposed and challenged by the African worldview which is concerned with a "Man-to-Person orientation, harmony with nature, communalism, [and] felt time and being" (p. 5).

Alternative Practices of Adult Education

In this section I will explicate how the three alternative perspectives addressed above move beyond critique to help remedy some of the problems with an adult education based on andragogy and to facilitate the creation of a different kind of practice of adult education. Critical educators advocate for an emancipatory education based on Habermas's theories of knowledge-constitutive interests and communicative action or on Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed. Welton (1993) states that "a philosophy of adult learning influenced by Habermas starts with the affirmation that human beings are material and historical beings who have the potential to learn about nature, others, and the self" but adds that human learning can also "be blocked and distorted" (p. 83) by systemic institutions. To critical educators, such as Hart (1990) and Welton (1995), emancipatory education is a form of communicative action that seeks to counter distortions in three levels of communication: the social-cultural, the interpersonal, and the intrapersonal. Adding feminist

concerns to Habermas's theories, Hart (1990) explains further that educators must "fully understand the social nature and origins of the distortions" that interfere with learning and that emancipatory education "must not only question the immorality of power, but also nurture a new morality of non-oppressive, caring relationships among all the participants in an educational situation" (p. 126).

Freire's (1993) critical pedagogy, which is participatory, situated, critical, democratic, dialogic, desocializing, multicultural, research-oriented, activist, and affective (Shor, 1993), starts with the fundamental tenet that education is not neutral; rather, education "either serves as an instrument to domesticate human beings or is made into an instrument of human liberation (from oppression)" (Lankshear, 1993, p. 95). In Freire's "problem-posing education," which relies on dialogue rather than "banking education," students are invited "to think critically about subject matter, doctrines, the learning process itself, and their society" (Shor, 1993, p. 25). Critical pedagogy, then, critiques domination in society, rejects "banking education," and includes the goal of "critical consciousness" that has four qualities: power awareness, critical literacy, desocialization, and self-organization/self-education (Shor, 1993).

Based on feminist criticisms of andragogy and traditional adult education curriculum, teaching methods, and goals of education, feminist pedagogues seek to redefine educational research, theory, and practice to be more women-centered. For psychological feminist pedagogues whose work is based largely on Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule's (1986) *Women's Ways of Knowing*, this approach means reconceptualizing traditionally male-based adult development theory to reflect women's (mostly White, middle class women's) patterns of development (Taylor & Marienau, 1995) and changing classroom practices to be more communal and better equipped to help "a woman learner shape the narrative of her evolving self in her multiple life contexts" and to be "more supportive of . . . women in their ongoing development" (Taylor & Marienau, 1995, p. 1).

More politically-oriented structural and poststructural feminist pedagogies confront and challenge "structured power relations and systems of oppression and privilege based on gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and so on" (Tisdell, 1998, p. 142) and seek to problematize how knowledge is constructed and whose knowledge is considered legitimate. Poststructural feminist pedagogies also direct attention to the positionality of both learners and teacher, with particular attention to "the connections between one's individual (constantly shifting) identity

and social structures" (Tisdell, 1998, p. 146). Both structural and post-structural feminist pedagogies have overt political agendas, and teachers in this framework see themselves as "radical educators" or "engaged pedagogues" (hooks, 1994) "who challenge the status quo, as opposed to facilitators (such as Knowles) who might allow learners to center on only what they want to learn, which may inadvertently maintain the status quo" (Tisdell, 1998, p. 151).

Guy (1996) argues that the Eurocentric orientation of adult education should be countered with the Africentric paradigm. He states that the Africentric tradition has two aims: (a) to "uncover the contradictions and internal workings of cultural hegemony centered in Eurocentric cultural processes" and (b) to uncover "the particular cultural developments of people of African descent" (p. 3). He explains further that "the aim of Africentric discourse is to shift, critique, and challenge Eurocentric knowledge with knowledge centered in African American cultural context" (p. 6). The main challenge for adult educators, then, is to critique existing principles and practices of adult education that "suffer from a mono-cultural perspective on learning and teaching" (Guy, 1996, p. 14). Guy (1996) argues that, in order to challenge, educators must "first acknowledge the fundamental point of multiple knowledges and ways of being" (p. 14). When this critique is accomplished, the goals of education can be carried out, namely, to:

> help learners to develop a positive sense of identity and community[;] . . . foster a sense of responsibility to help other learners in collaborative learning experiences[,] thereby modeling responsibility to community . . . required for success and survival in the larger society[;] . . . enable learners to maintain a sense of bi-culturality (Darder, 1991) in which learners maintain cultural patterns of believing, acting, and knowing but also are able to function competently in inter-racial situations [; and] develop a critical stance toward the dominant culture[,] including the coercive effects of American mass culture as well as mainstream cultural values such as integration, assimilation, and mono-culturalism. (p. 14)

For Sheared (1994, 1996), who subscribes to the Womanist (or Africentric feminist) paradigm, which "acknowledges the distinguishing effects of race, class, gender, and other 'isms'" (1996, p. 4) on individual development and learning, andragogy has failed to acknowledge the lived experiences of learners and, thus, has silenced the voices of "those

who lack power and control over the discourse" (1996, p. 8). Sheared uses the metaphor of polyrhythms, which are "characteristic of the aesthetic sense as reflected in African American art, music, and dance, as well as language," to capture the idea that "individuals experience intersecting realities simultaneously" (Sheared, 1994, p. 28); she explains further that "this concept represents a radical departure from Western, linear notions of the world and reality" (Sheared, 1994, p. 28). Working against the silencing of students, Sheared (1996) stresses the idea of "giving voice," an approach that requires that "the teacher understand his or her polyrhythmic realities and provide the students with opportunities to explore their own realities" (p. 6). Sheared (1996) states that adult educators must "acknowledge that knowledge is inherently politicized" and must reassess the norms of adult education that "often negate the voices of those who lack power and control over the discourse" by acknowledging their "domination over the students and the knowledge that is introduced to the learner" (p. 8). Giving voice is a way of allowing learners and teachers to "communicate their oppositional worldviews" (p. 8).

Conclusion

Lankshear (1993) argues that teaching is either a

> *domesticating* act, which helps accommodate oppressed people to the ongoing denial of their ontological vocation, and maintains them in material, emotional, and intellectual poverty; [sic] or it is made into an *instrument of liberation* by which marginal people are invited into, and sustained within, a revolutionary praxis to (re)make history in accordance with the right of all to live their humanity as fully as possible. (p. 99, emphasis added)

Understanding adult education by using these lenses entails placing what we do within a larger social and political context. Creating a liberatory adult education requires politicizing education and asking questions about what and how knowledge is taught, what ideologies and practices are promoted as "good" and "natural," and what messages are implicit in the day-to-day regularities of classroom life. When adult education is viewed through these alternative lenses, a fundamental issue for adult educators becomes: "Whose interests does adult education ultimately serve?"

These challenges to an andragogically-based adult education have become louder and more plentiful over the last decade. Each of the alternative perspectives discussed above confronts fundamental assumptions of andragogy and contains insights that help adult educators who are interested in democracy and social justice to see how adult education might be "domesticating" or "emancipating." For instance, all three perspectives see social change and the challenging of norms and inequalities as a main purpose of education, they all are concerned with power and how it shapes how knowledge and curriculum are constructed and whose knowledge is legitimated and whose is neglected, they all seek to politicize education, and they all strive to make classrooms more inclusive and dialogic and to create educational situations that address the connections between individuals and society. In sum, all three perspectives view what occurs in classrooms as connected to inequality and oppression in society and examine classroom practices in light of this concern.

In addition, each perspective contributes unique ways of looking at adult education and voices specific concerns. The feminist perspective places import on the ways that women have been marginalized in education, and the more critical feminist perspectives connect the politics of oppression in the classroom with forces of oppression in society. The Africentric perspective highlights the ways in which African Americans have been silenced or devalued in both curriculum content and in implicit classroom norms and seeks to expose the everyday racism that occurs in classrooms. The critical perspective, in both its Habermasian and Freireian manifestations, highlights power dynamics, questions the technical rationality of educational practice, and sees social change as the goal of education. Critical educators show how mainstream, andragogy-based adult education helps to reproduce inequalities through universalizing certain assumptions, decontextualizing learning, and focusing on technical knowledge.

While many of us still teach andragogy in our foundations and adult learning courses, hopefully we also include some of these alternative perspectives alongside more traditional ones. An andragogically-based adult education is clearly not sufficient to meet the needs of a diverse and critically aware field any longer. A continuing challenge for adult educators is to find ways to practice actively alternative adult educations and not to just pay "lip service" to these alternative views. With this essay I am hoping to keep the conversation

open and to encourage others to continue thinking about how to enact alternative forms of adult education.

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