

## **Leadership for Social Justice and Equity: Weaving a Transformative Framework and Pedagogy**

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*Although many agree that theory, research, and practice should be intertwined to support the type of schooling (and society) that values rather than marginalizes, few scholars offer ground-breaking, pragmatic approaches to developing truly transformative leaders. From a critical theorist perspective, this article offers a practical, process-oriented model that is responsive to the challenges of preparing educational leaders committed to social justice and equity. By weaving a tripartite theoretical framework together in support of an alternative, transformative pedagogy, students learn “to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality.” The three theoretical perspectives of Adult Learning Theory, Transformative Learning Theory, and Critical Social Theory are interwoven with the three pedagogical strategies of critical reflection, rational discourse, and policy praxis to increase awareness, acknowledgment, and action within preparation programs.*

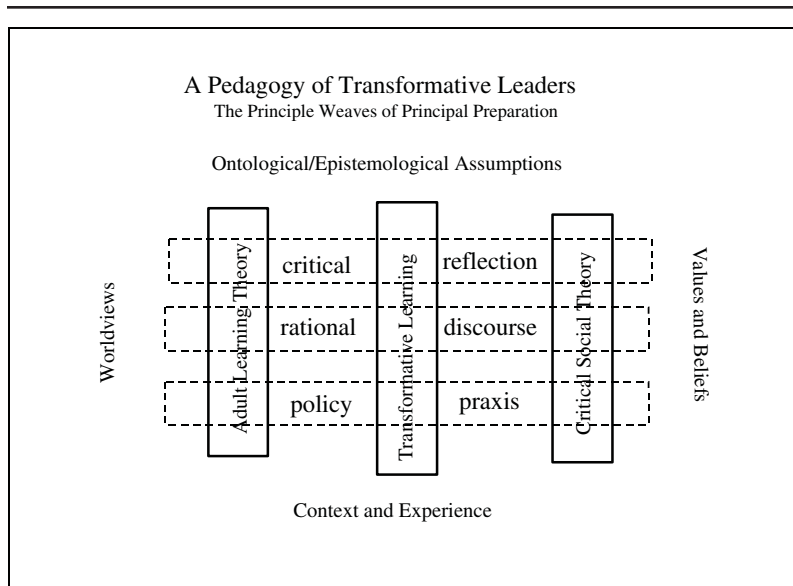
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**A**lthough many agree that theory, research, and practice should be intertwined to support the type of schooling (and society) that values rather than marginalizes, few scholars offer ground-breaking, pragmatic approaches to developing truly transformative leaders. From a critical theorist perspective, this article offers a practical, process-oriented model that is responsive to the challenges of preparing educational leaders committed to social justice and equity. By weaving a tripartite theoretical framework together in support of an alternative, transformative pedagogy, students learn “to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Freire, 1994, p. 17). The three theoretical perspectives

of Adult Learning Theory, Transformative Learning Theory, and Critical Social Theory are interwoven with the three pedagogical strategies of critical reflection, rational discourse, and policy praxis to increase awareness, acknowledgment, and action within preparation programs.

Critical theory is grounded in the day-to-day lives of people, structures, and cultures. It pays attention to the educational ideas, policies, and practices that serve the interests of the dominant class while simultaneously silencing and dehumanizing “others.” According to Beyer (2001), “It is precisely in understanding the normative dimensions of education and how they are intertwined with social, structural, and ideological processes and realities that critical theory plays a key role” (p. 154). A critical stance frames this discussion by outlining clearly the need for professors to retool their teaching and courses to address issues of power and privilege—to weave social justice into the fabric of educational leadership curriculum, pedagogy, programs, and policies. It recognizes and advocates for the social change role and responsibility of educational leaders. Because contemporary researchers (Argyris, 1990; Banks, 1994; Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, & Smith, 1994; Wheatley, 1992) have found that effective leaders take responsibility for their learning, share a vision for what can be, assess their own assumptions and beliefs, and understand the structural and organic nature of schools, preparation programs need to carefully craft authentic experiences aimed at developing such skills. Students need time to think, reflect, assess, decide, and possibly change. By exposing candidates to information and ideas that they may resist and by assisting them to stretch beyond their comfort zones, a critique and transformation of hegemonic structures and ideologies can occur. Whereas the strategies proposed here focus specifically on preservice preparation, their applicability to ongoing professional learning is an important and necessary complement. The model proposed (see Figure 1) promotes awareness through critical reflection, acknowledgment through rational discourse, and action through policy praxis.

Please note that a weaving metaphor is used throughout this article. Weaving has its roots in basketry; the essential difference lies in the mechanism of the loom to hold taut the lengthwise strands, called the warp, while the crosswise strands, the woof, are woven in. In responding to the urgent call for changes in the way educational leaders are prepared and socialized (Jackson, 2001; Young, Peterson, & Short, 2001), preparation programs are viewed as the contextual loom, the theoretical underpinnings of a transformative framework as the warp, and the pedagogical strategies as the woof. All three components are necessary in preparing leaders with the knowledge, skill, and desire to examine why and how school policies and practices “devalue the identities of some students while overvaluing others” (Nieto, 2000, p. 183).



**Figure 1. A Pedagogy of Transformative Leaders: The Principal Weaves of Principal Preparation**

### THE LOOM: PREPARATORY FRAME OF "LEADERS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE"

Despite conflicting views of social justice, of the sources of injustice in schools and society, and of educators' obligations to committed action, the evidence is clear and alarming that various segments of our public school population experience negative and inequitable treatment on a daily basis (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Scheurich & Laible, 1999; Valenzuela, 1999). When compared to their White middle-class counterparts, students of color and low socioeconomic status (SES) consistently experience significantly lower achievement test scores, teacher expectations, and allocation of resources (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olsen, 2001; Banks, 1997; Delpit, 1995; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Ortiz, 1997). The gaps are persistent, pervasive, and significantly disparate. As such, many scholars (see Cochran-Smith et al., 1999; Grogan, 2000; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1995; Shields & Oberg, 2000) advocate a critique of educational systems in terms of access, power, and privilege based on race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, language, background, ability, and/or socioeconomic position. In fact, according to Skrla,

Scheurich, Johnson, and Koschoreck (2001), "What is critically needed is real-life, context-specific, tactical, anti-racist work in our schools" (p. 239). Given this goal, the questions remain—Who? When? Where? How?

If current and future educational leaders are to foster successful, equitable, and socially responsible learning and accountability practices for all students, then substantive changes in educational leadership preparation and professional development programs are required. New understandings of leadership and redesigns of such programs have sparked much needed debate with regard to the knowledge base, course offerings, and foundational purpose of educational administration (see Donmoyer, 1999; English, 2000; Murphy, 1999). In fact, recent conversations and presentations at the annual conferences of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and the University Council of Educational Administration (UCEA) have identified social justice as a new anchor for the entire profession, servant leadership as a new metaphor, and equity for all as a new mantra.

In a paper for the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation, Jackson (2001) reviewed innovative and exceptional programs and mentioned the use of cohorts and problem-based learning (see Bridges & Hallinger, 1995) as two instructional strategies worth merit. She also reported, "Issues that did not appear as dominant in these programs as one would expect are those of social justice, equity, excellence, and equality. These are areas that warrant our serious attention especially in light of the changing demographics of our schools" (p. 18).

Research and shifts in the profession agree. One might think that issues of such great concern would be highly visible in the preparation of school leaders, but Henze, Katz, Norte, Sather, and Walker (2002) learned that "while diversity is given a certain degree of lip service in administrative credentialing programs, these leaders had not been prepared with tools to analyze racial or ethnic conflict, or with specific strategies for building positive interethnic communities" (p. 4). Results from Lyman and Villani's (2002) national survey indicate a similar void—only 14.3% of the respondents perceive social justice to be receiving the "most emphasis" in their preparation programs. The movement from a "community of sameness" to a "community of difference" (see Furman, 1998; Murtadha-Watts, 1999; Shields & Seltzer, 1997) underscores the urgent need to confront socially difficult topics with respect, dialogue, and a continuous expansion of awareness, acknowledgment, and action. Developing the vocabulary, skills, and knowledge necessary to engage in substantive discussions concerning the dynamics of difference is a

critical component to the preparation of leaders for social justice and equity (Shields, Larocque, & Oberg, 2002):

Wise educational leaders will learn to create psychological spaces for genuine exploration of difference; they will initiate conversations where problems and challenges may be identified and discussed; and they will create a climate in which staff and students feel safe in clarifying their assumptions to deal with cultural dissonance. (p. 130)

Whereas Andrews and Grogan (2001) call for aspiring principals to “understand their ethical and moral obligations to create schools that promote and deliver social justice” (p. 24), the question of how to accomplish this remains unanswered. If “leadership is the enactment of values” (Miron, 1996), then it makes sense for preparation programs to include approaches that enable participants to challenge their own assumptions, clarify and strengthen their own values, and work on aligning their own behaviors and practice with these beliefs, attitudes, and philosophies. One problem is that most college faculty who are attempting to teach for and about social justice, however, have not had professional development that specifically prepares them to do so (Bell, Washington, Weinstein, & Love, 1997). For example, when describing their experiences with teaching courses in diversity, four professors at the University of Dayton reported being both stunned and reassured by their students and themselves. “We’re convinced that these issues need center stage in our program . . . we wonder whether we as a faculty have committed ourselves to looking at our own attitudes and our own racism and sexism” (Ridenour, First, Lydon, & Partlow, 2001, p. 162).

If the field of educational administration is really serious about preparing leaders conscious of and committed to diminishing the inequities of American life, then the current models of preparation are not up to the task. Whereas the related literature supports the more recent and not-so-traditional delivery methods of clinical experiences, internships, cohort groups, case studies, and problem-based learning, the instructional approach presented here moves far beyond knowledge acquisition at the formal cognitive level. More alternative approaches focused on skill and attitude development, such as cultural autobiographies, life histories, prejudice reduction workshops, cross-cultural interviews, educational plunges, diversity panels, reflective analysis journals, and activist assignments at the micro, meso, and macro levels (see Appendix), help students and professors develop their capacity to reflect and act more effectively.

### **THE WARP: THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF THE “VERTICAL THREADS”**

As shown in Figure 1, this alternative pedagogy aimed at developing transformative leaders for social justice is framed within three interwoven theoretical perspectives: adult learning theory/development, transformative learning theory/process, and critical social theory.

#### **Adult Learning Theory/Development**

Adult learning is probably the most studied topic in adult education. The learner, the learning process, and the context of learning form the cornerstone of the field of adult education. Despite ongoing internal debates, misconceptions, and a lack of universal agreement, the following four major research areas make up an espoused theory of adult learning that informs our preparation of adult educational leaders: self-directed learning, critical reflection, experiential learning, and learning to learn (Brookfield, 1995).

Self-directed learning focuses on the process by which adults take control of their own learning, set their own goals, locate appropriate resources, decide on which methods to use, and evaluate their progress (see Candy, 1991; Field, 1991; Knowles, 1975). The notion of self-directed learning has evolved over time. It is described as a goal, a process, and a learner characteristic that changes with the nature of the learning (Jarvis, 1992). In clarifying the complexity of self-direction, Candy (1991) referred to four distinct (but related) phenomena:

“Self-direction” as a personal attribute (personal autonomy); “self-direction” as the willingness and capacity to conduct one’s own education (self-management); “self-direction” as a mode of organizing instruction in formal settings (learner-control); and “self-direction” as the individual noninstitutional pursuit of learning opportunities in the natural society setting (autodidaxy). (p. 23)

The second adult learning theory construct, thinking contextually and critically, is embedded within the realm of developmental psychology and the constructs of logic, dialectical thinking, working intelligence, reflective judgment, postformal reasoning, and epistemic cognition (Brookfield, 1991). The ideas of critical theory—particularly that of ideological critique—are central to critical reflection. To the contemporary educational critic Giroux (1983), “the ideological dimension that underlies all critical reflection is that it lays bare the historically and socially sedimented values at

work in the construction of knowledge, social relations, and material practices . . . it situates critique within a radical notion of interest and social transformation” (pp. 154-155). An important element in this tradition is the thought of Gramsci (1978), whose concept of hegemony explains the way in which people are convinced to embrace dominant ideologies as always being in their own best interests. According to Mezirow (1985), critical reflection is an “understanding of the historical, cultural, and biographical reasons for one’s needs, wants and interests . . . such self-knowledge is a prerequisite for autonomy in self-directed learning” (p. 27).

Central to the concept of andragogy is the third construct, experience and experiential learning (Jarvis, 1987; Kolb, 1984). As the founding parent of experiential learning, Dewey (1938) claimed that not only are experiences the key building blocks of learning, but action is an intrinsic part of the learning cycle; this implies learning by doing as well as a practical understanding of the world. Building on the work of Dewey (1916, 1938) and Piaget (1968), Kolb (1984) viewed experiential learning as basically a mechanism by which individuals structured reality. It encompassed four steps: (a) concrete experience, (b) reflective observation, (c) abstract conceptualization, and (d) active experimentation. Two underlying axes structured the four capacities or modes of adapting to the world, leading to Kolb’s four different sectors of knowledge and corresponding learning styles: (a) convergence, (b) divergence, (c) assimilation, and (d) accommodation.

The ability to become skilled at learning in a range of different situations and through a range of different styles is the fourth founding construct of adult learning theory. According to Kitchener and King (1990), learning to learn involves an epistemological awareness. It means that adults possess a self-conscious awareness of how it is they come to know what they know—an awareness of the reasoning, assumptions, evidence, and justifications that underlie our beliefs that something is true. Developmental theorists usually portray individuals as moving from a black-and-white (true versus false) perception of the world to a relativistic perception of it. At the earlier stages, reflective thinking or questioning of assumptions does not occur. At the other end of the continuum, the individual whose reflective judgment is developed perceives knowledge to be the product of inquiry and reflection. The process of inquiry is seen to be, in itself, fallible; justification is based on a rational evaluation of the evidence. The epistemic assumptions of Kitchener’s (1983) seven stages included the following:

- Beliefs need no justification; what is believed is true.
- Knowledge is absolutely certain but may not be immediately available.
- Knowledge is absolutely certain or temporarily uncertain.

- Knowledge is idiosyncratic; some information may be in error or lost, therefore one cannot know with certainty.
- Knowledge is contextual and subjective; it is available through interpretation.
- Knowledge is constructed by each person and is based on the evaluation of evidence and argument.
- Knowledge is the product of rational inquiry, which is fallible.

### **Transformative Learning Theory/Process**

Transformative learning changes the way people see themselves and their world. It attempts to explain how their expectations, framed within cultural assumptions and presuppositions, directly influence the meaning they derive from their experiences. Mezirow (1991), relying heavily on the work of Habermas (1984) and his communicative theory, proposed a theory of transformative learning “that can explain how adult learners make sense or meaning of their experiences, the nature of the structures that influence the way they construe experience, the dynamics involved in modifying meanings, and the way the structures of meanings themselves undergo changes when learners find them to be dysfunctional” (p. xii). Three common themes of Mezirow’s theory are the centrality of experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse (see also Boyd, 1991; Cranton, 1994; Kegan, 1994).

Perspective transformation explains how the meaning structures that adults acquire over a lifetime become transformed. These meaning structures, which are inclusive of meaning schemes and meaning perspectives, are frames of reference based on the totality of an individual’s cultural and contextual experiences. Meaning schemes, the smaller components, are “made up of specific knowledge, beliefs, value judgments, and feelings that constitute interpretations of experience” (Mezirow, 1991, pp. 5-6). For learners to change their “meaning schemes,” they must engage in critical reflection of their experiences, which in turns leads to a perspective transformation (p. 167).

The purposes of critical reflection are to externalize and investigate power relationships and to uncover hegemonic assumptions. Critical reflection, according to Brookfield (1995),

focuses on three interrelated processes; (1) the process by which adults question and then replace or reframe an assumption that up to that point has been uncritically accepted as representing commonsense wisdom, (2) the process through which adults take alternative perspectives on previously taken for granted ideas, actions, forms of reasoning and ideologies, and (3) the process by which adults come to recognize the hegemonic aspects of dominant cultural values. (p. 2)



Mezirow (1998) posited that adult learning occurs in four ways—elaborating existing frames of reference, learning frames of reference, transforming points of view, and transforming habits of mind—and named critical reflection as a component of all four. Frames of reference are transformed through critical reflection on assumptions supporting the content and/or the process of problem solving. Habits of mind are transformed by being critically reflective of the premises defining the problem. Objective reframing involves critical reflection on the assumptions of others, whereas subjective reframing involves critical reflection on one’s own assumptions. Mezirow argued that the overall purpose of adult development is to realize one’s agency through increasingly expanding awareness and critical reflection. He also argued that the educational tasks of critical reflection involve helping adults become aware of oppressive structures and practices, developing tactical awareness of how they might change these, and building the confidence and ability to work for collective change.

Mezirow (1991) viewed rational discourse as a means for testing the validity of one’s construction of meaning. It is the essential medium through which transformation is promoted and developed. Engaging in the critical self-reflection that may lead to changes in perspective is, in itself, a process that requires self-awareness, planning, skill, support, and discourse with others. Participation in rational discourse is also part of the process of learner empowerment. Mezirow (1996) outlined seven ideal conditions for rational discourse:

- Have accurate and complete information.
- Be free from coercion and distorting self-conception.
- Be able to weigh evidence and assess arguments objectively.
- Be open to alternative perspectives.
- Be able to reflect critically on presuppositions and their consequences.
- Have equal opportunity to participate (including the chance to challenge, question, refute, and reflect and to hear others do the same).
- Be able to accept an informed, objective, and rational consensus as a legitimate test of validity. (p. 78)

### **Critical Social Theory**

Freire’s (1994) work portrayed a practical and theoretical approach to emancipation through education. He wanted people to develop an “ontological vocation” (p. 12), a theory of existence that views people as subjects, not objects, who are constantly reflecting and acting on the transformation of their world so it can become a more equitable place for all to live. Unlike

Mezirow's personal transformation, Freire was much more concerned about a social transformation, a demythologizing of reality and an awakening of critical consciousness whereby people perceive the social, political, and economic contradictions of their time and take action against the oppressive elements. According to Taylor (1998),

Like Mezirow, Freire sees critical reflection as central to transformation in context to problem-posing and dialogue with other learners. However, in contrast, Freire sees its purpose based on a rediscovery of power such that the more critically aware learners become the more they are able to transform society and subsequently their own reality. (p. 17)

Building on these Freirean interpretations of praxis, reflection only becomes truly critical when it leads to some form of transformative social action. hooks (1994) commended Freire's commitment (1994) to counteract the "false consciousness" prevalent in members of marginalized groups and identified the real dilemma in education as one of striking a balance between empowering and equipping students for what makes for success in the world (see also Delpit, 1995). hooks's *Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994) echoed Freire's philosophy and highlighted the importance of an educational system that counteracts the propagation of ideological elements in a racist, sexist, and classist society by interrogating the political implications of externally imposed curriculum standards, banking pedagogical approaches, and hierarchical arrangements within educational settings.

Critical social theory calls educators to activism. Activists stand between the constituent base and the powerholders. Their role is to organize constituents, articulate their concerns, and negotiate/advocate on their behalf with powerholders and to develop a repertoire of action strategies with the long-term aim of shifting power (Tilley, 1993). Educational activists recognize the ethical dimensions of teaching other people's children, they work to provide them with the highest quality of education they would desire for their own children, and they learn to work as an ally with the community. Educational activists share power with marginalized groups, they seek out networks, and they teach others to act politically and to advocate individually and collectively for themselves and other marginalized groups. Activism requires a "critical consciousness" and an ability to organize "reflectively for action rather than for passivity" (Freire, 1985, p. 82). Banks (1981) concurred,

They must also develop a sense of political efficacy, and be given practice in social action strategies which teaches them how to get power without violence and further exclusion . . . Opportunities for social action, in which students have experience in obtaining and exercising power, should be emphasized

within a curriculum that is designed to help liberate excluded ethnic groups.  
(p. 149)

### **THE WOOF: PEDAGOGICAL TEXTURE OF THE “HORIZONTAL THREADS”**

Employing a critical, transformative pedagogy requires professors to be active facilitators and colearners who go beyond simply meeting the expressed needs of the learner. Through a wide array of roles, methods, and techniques, they need to take on the responsibility for growth by questioning the learner's expectations and beliefs. Transformative learning is a process of critical self-reflection that can be stimulated by people, events, or changes in context that challenge the learner's basic assumptions of the world. Cranton (1992) reported that through transformative learning, “values are not necessarily changed, but are examined—their source is identified, and they are accepted and justified or revised or possibly rejected” (p. 146). Transformative learning may occur as a result of a life crisis or may be precipitated by challenging interactions with others, by participation in carefully designed exercises and activities, and by stimulation through reading or other resources. By being actively engaged in a number of assignments requiring the examination of ontological and epistemological assumptions, values and beliefs, context and experience, and competing worldviews, adult learners are better equipped to work with and guide others in translating their perspectives, perceptions, and goals into agendas for social change. The exploration of new understandings, the synthesis of new information, and the integration of these insights throughout personal and professional spheres leads future educational leaders to a broader, more inclusive approach in addressing issues of student learning and equity.

As moral stewards, school leaders are much more heavily invested in “purpose-defining” activities (Harlow, 1962, p. 61) and in “reflective analysis and . . . active intervention” (Bates, 1984, p. 268) than simply managing existing arrangements (i.e., maintaining the status quo). In fact, Murphy (2001) has recently criticized traditional approaches as bankrupt and has recommended recasting preparation around the purposes of leadership. For this to happen, aspiring school leaders need to open their minds (see Rokeach, 1960) and explore their self-understandings that are systematically embedded in mindsets, worldviews, values, and experiences. According to Senge (1990), these can be seen as mental models and are “deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures and images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action” (p. 8). As such, they

resemble what Schon (1987) talked about as a professional's repertoire. Reminded by Delpit (1995) that we do not really see through our eyes or hear through our ears but through our beliefs, the internal courage to look within and honestly confront one's biases and shortcomings is necessary for the external work in the school community to be authentic and effective. Preparation programs foster such critical "capacity building" (see Fullan, 1993) through critical reflection, rational discourse, and policy praxis.

Developing leaders for social justice requires a deep-seeded commitment on the part of preparation programs. It also requires a fundamental rethinking of content, delivery, and assessment. Courses fashioned and infused with critically reflective curricula and methodologies that stimulate students to think beyond current behavioral and conceptual boundaries in order to study, research, and implement leadership practices fundamentally and holistically change schools in ways and in manners that are consistent with an equitable, inclusive vision. The implementation of such strategies is not relevant in all adult education settings, nor is it threat free. Transformative learning actually poses threats to psychological security as it challenges comfortably established beliefs and values, including those that may be central to self-concept. Transformative learning can also precipitate changes in long-established and cherished relationships (Mezirow, 1990). Because such issues are volatile and frightening, professional development needs to be carefully planned over a series of sessions, with adequate opportunities for debriefing, in a structured setting where people adhere to agreed-on guidelines for safety and confidentiality. Aware of the potential for surfacing conflict, professors are wise to remember, "Conflict, if respected, is positively associated with creative breakthroughs under complex, turbulent conditions" (Fullan, 1999, p. 22). Although many of us do not feel comfortable and/or capable of dealing with emotionally laden issues that may arise during these experiences, Harrison and Hopkins (1967) noted that "by sidestepping direct, feeling-level involvement with issues and persons, one fails to develop the 'emotional muscle' needed to handle effectively a high degree of emotional impact and stress" (p. 440). Given new roles, changing school demographics, and heightened expectations, principals need emotional muscle for interpersonal dynamics and preparation programs need to foster it!

For this type of work, an integration of social justice and equity issues throughout a range of courses is recommended. The trends in educational studies, as well as the social and academic goals of education, are investigated and viewed from a variety of angles in several different courses so that a deeper understanding may be achieved. Students are encouraged to ponder big picture, philosophical, legal, and ethical questions. What is the purpose of basic, K-12 schooling? Who is to be served by the educational system?

How are the themes of control and cultural domination played out throughout the history of education in the United States? Are the themes of institutional, cultural, and personal oppression still relevant today? What are the roles and issues facing educational leaders in our schools and in our society? Courses designed for individuals preparing for careers as transformative educational administrators require critical thought and systematic reflection with regard to ideas, values, and beliefs surrounding social life, cultural identity, educational reform, and historical practices. Adult learners are challenged to explore these constructs from numerous, diverse, changing perspectives. Personal biases and preconceived notions they hold about people who are different from themselves by race, ethnicity, culture, gender, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, and physical and mental abilities are identified and discussed.

It is important to bridge theory and practice, to make connections between course material and the broader social context, to explain to preservice administrators how they might take an active part in bringing about social change, and to validate and incorporate with course content adult learners' personal knowledge and experience. According to Daresh (2002), a leader's personal formation, her or his integration of personal and professional knowledge, can provide a moral compass for navigating the complex landscape of practice. As such, these courses require an active, sustained engagement in the subject matter and an openness of mind and heart. The three theoretical perspectives of Adult Learning Theory, Transformative Learning Theory, and Critical Social Theory can be interwoven with the three pedagogical strategies of critical reflection, rational discourse, and policy praxis to increase awareness, acknowledgment, and action.

### **Awareness Through Critical Reflection**

"Once a mind is expanded by a better idea it can never return to its original form" (Oliver Wendell Holmes). Developing as a critically reflective administrator encompasses the capacity for both critical inquiry and self-reflection (Larrivee, 2000; Schon, 1987). Critical inquiry involves the conscious consideration of the moral and ethical implications and consequences of schooling practices on students. Self-reflection adds the dimension of deep examination of personal assumptions, values, and beliefs. Critical reflection merges the two terms and involves the examination of personal and professional belief systems, as well as the deliberate consideration of the ethical implications and effect of practices. According to Mezirow (1991), "Reflection is the process of critically assessing the content, process or premise(s) of our efforts to interpret and give meaning to an experience" (p. 104). In this

section, four pedagogical strategies for raising consciousness (ELCC dimension of Awareness), stimulating transformative learning, and developing future leaders for social justice, equity, and action are presented. Adult learners who (a) complete cultural autobiographies, (b) engage in life history interviews, (c) participate in prejudice-reduction workshops, and (d) write in reflective analysis journals engage in self-directed, experiential learning. By learning how to learn, they improve their ability to identify ontological and epistemological assumptions, to understand multiple perspectives, and to expand their worldview (see Appendix for strategy descriptions).

*Cultural autobiography.* Self-awareness with regard to one's culture and background has been identified as a key prerequisite and a first step for learners in multicultural programs (Brown, Parham, & Yonker, 1996; York, 1994). Banks (1994) and others suggested that individuals do not become sensitive and open to different ethnic groups until and unless they develop a positive sense of self, including an awareness and acceptance of their own ethnic group. When adults learn about their heritage and contributions to society, they participate in a process of self-discovery and growth in social consciousness, what Freire (1994) called "critical consciousness" (see Critical Social Theory). By completing cultural autobiographies, candidates begin to identify and name particular vantage points through which all their experiences and perceptions have been filtered. What perhaps had previously been an "unexamined backdrop for everyday life" (Delpit, 1995, p. 92) becomes more explicit as adults research their home culture, their language, their socioeconomic status, their formal and informal education (including the hidden curriculum), and their demographic characteristics (i.e., age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, abilities, etc.) relative to the dominant culture. Because Coleman and Deutsch (1995) found that "issues unique to interethnic conflict emerge from cultural misunderstandings, ethnocentrism, long-held stereotypes, and the importance of ethnic identity to self identity" (p. 387), Delpit (1995) stated that future leaders for social justice and equity are encouraged to examine their own self-identities and remember that

the best solutions will arise from the acceptance that alternative worldviews exist—that there are valid alternative means to any end, as well as valid alternative ends in themselves. We all interpret behaviors, information, and situations through our own cultural lenses; these lenses operate involuntarily, below the level of conscious awareness, making it seem that our own view is simply "the way it is." Learning to interpret across cultures demands reflecting on our own experiences, analyzing our own culture, examining and comparing varying

perspectives. We must consciously and voluntarily make our cultural lenses apparent. (p. 151)

*Life histories.* We need to understand what currently exists before we can begin to understand what should exist (Giroux, 1992). Without history, people make decisions based on a truncated knowledge base. Without history, people fail to understand how current societal tensions have emerged from events and trends of the past. In 1938, Dewey noted,

The nature of the issues cannot be understood save as we know they came about. The institutions and customs that exist in the present and that gave rise to present social ills and dislocations did not arise overnight. They have a long history behind them. Attempts to deal with them simply on the basis of what is obvious in the present are bound to result in adoption of superficial measures which in the end will only render existing problems more acute and more difficult to solve. (p. 77)

In preparing leaders for social justice and equity, principal preparation programs teach an accurate history of schooling in this country, including the deeply rooted systematic nature of the inequities reproduced daily. By providing a retrospective, contemporary, and prospective examination of the social, cultural, political, economical, and philosophical contexts from which the current issues that affect schools and schooling have evolved, professors help adult learners understand how many of the educational policies and practices have tended to benefit members of the dominant culture. In other words (Vavrus, 2002), “By making conventional views of U.S. history and educational practices problematic, transformation resists White assimilationist conceptions of social change in favor of concern over social justice and equity” (p. 7). Life histories are a means of fostering consciousness-raising and transformative, experiential learning. Life histories seek to “examine and analyze the subjective experience of individuals and their constructions of the social world” (Jones, 1983, p. 147). By interviewing a person who is older than 65 and who attended school in the United States, adult learners enter vicariously into those same experiences and grow in their personal awareness of the historical context of contemporary education. By listening to another’s story, they garner practical knowledge in how language dehumanizes by objectifying, how entitlement is manifested by oppression, and how ignorance is preserved by “omissions, distortions and fallacious assumptions being taught in school” (Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 1999, p. 106).

*Prejudice reduction workshops.* “Great possibilities for understanding and change open up when the problem of racism is framed as a matter of

learning, unlearning, and relearning, rather than as a chronic, immutable fact of life” (Henze et al., 2002, p. 23). Leaders for social justice and equity are committed to lifelong learning and growth, to recognizing and eliminating prejudice and oppression, to increasing awareness, to facilitating change, and to building inclusive communities. Preparation programs in educational leadership foster such skills and empower adults to integrate new information into the knowledge they already have (see Sleeter, 1996) through participation in welcoming diversity workshops. One example is the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) formula that relies on a unique blend of emotional healing, personal experience, and skill training methodologies to identify and reduce various forms of oppression and resolve intergroup conflict. Through a series of incremental, participatory activities, adults learn that guilt is the glue that holds prejudice in place, that every issue counts, that stories change attitudes, and that skill training leads to empowerment. The NCBI workshops combine strategies from adult learning theory (i.e., self-directed learning, critical reflection, experiential learning, and learning to learn), transformative learning theory (i.e., centrality of experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse), and critical social theory (i.e., critical reflection and social action) in empowering individuals to become more effective leaders and allies on behalf of others. The objectives are as follows (<http://www.ncbi.org>):

- to celebrate similarities and differences,
- to recognize the misinformation that people have learned about various groups,
- to identify and heal from internalized oppression—the discrimination members of an oppressed group target at themselves and each other,
- to claim pride in group identity,
- to understand the personal effect of discrimination through the telling of stories, and
- to learn hands-on tools for dealing effectively with bigoted comments and behaviors.

*Reflective analysis journals.* According to Brookfield (1995), “Critical reflection is not just a process of hunting assumptions of power and hegemony by viewing what we do through different lenses” (p. 207). It is also an idea with an impressive intellectual pedigree, including elements of critical theory, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, and pragmatism. Journal writing has been incorporated throughout these disciplines as a means of self-expression. In preparation programs, self-reflection and transformative learning are enhanced through the use of a dialogue journal and the use of self-analysis (Cranton, 1994). In a dialogue journal, either the professor or adult cohort



members respond to the journal entries with comments and critical questions. Responses are challenging but not judgmental, provocative but not condescending. Learner self-analysis of the journal stimulates further self-reflection and self-directed learning. Students are then instructed to examine the journal for patterns and themes in content and for changes in opinions, thinking, or feelings over time (i.e., during the course of a semester).

### **Acknowledgment Through Rational Discourse**

Rational discourse involves a commitment to extended and repeated conversations that evolve over time into a culture of careful listening and cautious openness to new perspectives, not shared understanding in the sense of consensus but rather deeper and richer understandings of our own biases as well as where our colleagues are coming from on particular issues and how each of us differently constructs those issues. Educational psychologist Jerome Bruner (1988) suggested that people are able to process complex information much more easily when it comes in narrative form. Given this, participation in extended and repeated discourse about justice and equity can provide unique opportunities for learner growth, transformation, and empowerment (Shields et al., 2002):

As we struggle to understand how issues of race and ethnicity affect the educational experiences for all students, we must work to overcome our prejudices by listening carefully to those whose backgrounds, perspectives, and understandings differ from our own. We must examine popular assumptions as well as the politically correct stereotypes that educators often use to explain what is happening in today's multicultural society and its increasingly ethnically heterogeneous schools. Engaging in socially just leadership requires us to maintain an open conversation, to examine and reexamine our perceptions and those of others, constantly looking beneath the surface and seeking alternative explanations and ways of understanding. (p. 134)

Rational discourse validates meaning by assessing reasons. It involves weighing the supporting evidence, examining alternative perspectives, and critically assessing assumptions. Discourse is the forum in which "finding one's voice" becomes a prerequisite for full free participation. According to Senge (1990),

The discipline of mental models starts with turning the mirror inward; learning to unearth our internal pictures of the world, to bring them to the surface and hold them rigorously to scrutiny. It also includes the ability to carry on "learningful" conversations that balance inquiry and advocacy, where people

expose their own thinking effectively and make that thinking open to the influence of others. (p. 9)

Establishing a dialogic context, however, can be complicated, difficult, and frightening for students and professors alike. Unlike conversation in which genial cooperation prevails, dialogue actually aims at disequilibrium in which “each argument evokes a counterargument that pushes itself beyond the other and pushes the other beyond itself” (Lipman, 1991, p. 232). Dialogue focuses more on inquiry and increasing understanding and tends to be more exploratory and questioning than conversation. Acknowledgment is a necessary step in linking awareness to action. Through rational discourse, awareness is validated, refined, and focused and motives leading to social action are cultivated.

Rational discourse can be stimulated through an array of techniques, including class discussions, “provocative declaratives” (see Vavrus, 2002), critical incidents (see Flanagan, 1954; Tripp, 1993), controversial readings, and/or structured group activities. Believing that no curriculum is neutral, Freire’s pedagogy gives priority to the use of dialogue. The use of questions and a dialogic teaching approach gives the learners more control over their own experience; it allows them to become the teachers of their own experience and culture and to apply those insights to their own leadership practice. In this section, three pedagogical discourse procedures are described that help ensure openness, respect, and equal participation (ELCC dimension of Understanding): (e) engaging in cross-cultural interviews, (f) exploring educational plunges, and (g) sharing in diversity panels (see Appendix).

*Cross-cultural interviews.* Henze et al. (2002) noted that

it is a recipe for conflict to act in the world based on the assumption that we have an objective view of it. In contrast, to assume that we each have a valid view of the world and have something to learn from each other’s perspectives is the basis for mutual respect and appreciation. (p. 20)

Because we, as a species, are apparently wired to listen to, engage in, and remember stories much better than we do with nonnarrative discourses (Viadero, 1990), providing adults with a learning opportunity to interact with someone from another ethnic, socioeconomic, religious, or sexual-orientation background is a useful strategy in supporting cross-cultural development and respect. In fact, critical social theory calls for the legitimization of counternarratives that uncover various perspectives related to race, gender, and poverty. As such, this approach fosters positive relations and requires a

greater depth of knowledge, introspection, and sincere intent than may be found in status quo, or even politically correct, reactions.

*Educational plunge.*

The worldviews of many in our society exist in protected cocoons. These individuals have never had to make an adjustment from home life to public life, as their public lives and the institutions they have encountered merely reflect a 'reality' these individuals have been schooled in since birth. (Delpit, 1995, p. 74)

From the critical theorist's perspective that we are all cocooned in one way or another, the purpose of the educational plunge is to help adults emerge from their cocoons. The contrast between other ways of education and their way of schooling raises adult awareness that their way is not the only normal way and that their beliefs and assumptions are not universally shared. By encouraging adult learners to travel somewhat outside their usual milieu, they experience this realization more directly. Making the familiar strange makes adults reflect on their own social environment in a new way. The jolting experience of culture shock results in an increased appreciation of how their social environment shapes their most basic attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Educational plunges honor the constructs of transformative learning theory—the centrality of experience, the need for critical reflection, and the necessity of rational discourse throughout the learning process.

*Diversity panels.* Fraser (1997) argued that what is needed for more fully democratic social institutions is cultural revaluation and political/economic redistribution. To understand how historical distrust affects present-day interactions, leaders for social justice and equity need to learn about the origins of stereotypes and prejudices. Diversity panels challenge the presumption of entitlement and highlight the reality of institutionalized oppression. They bring to light the situations in which certain ways of being (i.e., having certain identities) are privileged in society whereas others are marginalized. By engaging in informed constructive discourse with people who are different from them, adult learners are forced to examine how power, privilege, and dominance are manifested and reinforced. Through such discourse, communities can provide the context in which future leaders recognize and experience the need to change, thereby relieving those identified as outsiders (i.e., the members of the excluded groups) from the responsibility of doing all the adapting. Diversity panels help adult learners grasp a thorough understanding of the dynamics of power relations, as well as the responsibilities that correspond with each position of power. Specifically, those in the subordinate

position have a responsibility to give voice to how decisions and actions affect them, and those in the dominant position have a responsibility to listen and respond (Norte, 2001). Delpit (1995) contended that both sides need to be able to listen and “that it is those with the most power, those in the majority, who must take the greater responsibility for initiating the process” (p. 46). Through participation in diversity panels, adult learners begin to differentiate between individual racism and institutional racism and come to the realization that everyone is an integral part of both the problem and the solution.

### **Action Through Policy Praxis**

Praxis is a Greek word that means moving back and forth in a critical way between reflecting and acting on the world. Because reflection alone does not produce change, Freire (1994) advocated for the necessity of action based on reflection. Policy praxis involves inductive and deductive forms of reasoning. It also involves dialogue as social process with the objective of “dismantling oppressive structures and mechanisms prevalent both in education and society” (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 383). Critical, transformative leaders enter and remain in education not to carry on business as usual but to work for social change and social justice (Ayers, Hunt, & Quinn, 1998; Cochran-Smith, 1998; Oakes & Lipton, 1999). Unfortunately, Rapp, Silent, and Silent (2001) found that 90% of educational leaders, both practitioners and professors, remained wedded to what Scott and Hart (1979) call technical drifting—a commitment to emphasize and act on the technical components of one’s work above the moral. Technical drifters fail to validate the cultural, intellectual, and emotional identities of people from underrepresented groups, they avoid situations where their values (e.g., sexist, racist, classist, homophobic), leadership styles, and professional goals are challenged and dismantled, and they use their positions of power to formally and informally reaffirm their own professional choices.

Given this disturbing reality, courageous, transformative leadership is needed. According to Mezirow (1990), “Every adult educator has the responsibility for fostering critical self-reflection and helping learners plan to take action” (p. 357). Educational activists need to be attuned to the complexities of changing demographics and must be willing “to engage in and facilitate critical and constructive inquiry” (Sirontnik & Kimball, 1996, p. 187). In an effort to develop the risk-taking, political, and human relations skills necessary to do this, leadership preparation programs expose future administrators to critical social theory and its influence on the purposes of schooling. This recommendation is consistent with Astin’s (1993) finding that on campuses

where faculty stated that a goal of their institution was to promote student social activism, more positive change was seen in student interest and valuing of activism.

Transformative learning theory leads to a new way of seeing. This in turn leads to some kind of action. Dunn (1987) suggested that there is an ontological link between personal beliefs and public behaviors, that the true test of connection between personal understandings and individual and/or collective public responsibility is the degree to which any of the talk we engage in about social justice prompts us to a different kind of activism. People seeking to shift the balance of power must understand their own distinctive role in ending oppression.

For entitled people (dominant group members), their role requires a moral choice to assume personal responsibility and to take personal initiative. For oppressed people (nondominant group members), their role is to recognize oppression and to commit themselves to self-determination. (Lindsey et al., 1999, p. 96)

If future educational leaders have engaged in self-directed learning, critical reflection, and rational discourse concerning their underlying assumptions about practice, the next logical step is to integrate these assumptions into an informed theory of practice (i.e., social action). Trueba (1999) explained,

The praxis that accompanies a pedagogy of hope is clearly a conscious detachment from “whiteness” and from a rigid, dogmatic, and monolithic defense of a Western or North American way of life, schooling codes, and interactional patterns. A simple change of technique and a paternalistic response to “these poor immigrant children” [or to other children of color ill served by public education] will definitely not do. Educators who are serious about their praxis and committed to a pedagogy of hope must be prepared to take a long and hazardous psychological trip into lands and minds unknown before . . . this praxis is incompatible with despair, negligence, disrespect, and racism. (p. 161)

Increasing adult learner awareness of how we are all agents of change as educators is a vital part of development. Helping adults see how this new awareness and acknowledgment can be focused and acted on in a meaningful way in real schools and in real communities is as critically important. Community-based learning or service learning is one such strategy that has the potential to deepen understanding, to strengthen skills, and to promote civic responsibility. In this section, the eighth pedagogical strategy for helping future leaders set and implement goals in terms of behaviors, boundaries, alternatives, and consequences is offered. In learning about themselves and

others, adults in principal preparation programs are invited to think independently, to observe, to experience, to reflect, to learn, and to dialogue. Challenging them to act (ELCC dimension of Capability) is the next step.

*Activist action plans.* “Action is an integral and indispensable component of transformative learning” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 209). A transformative pedagogy teaches future leaders to be proactive versus reactive, to embrace conflict rather than avoid it, and to engage in what Fine, Weiss, and Powell (1997) called opportunities for “creative analysis of difference, power and privilege” (p. 249). Reminded that there are always consequences to our ideas, words, and actions, Bogotch (2002) found that whenever educators act on their passionate beliefs, it can and does make a difference. The possibility for social change by educational activists is anchored in an acceptance that “the relations between knowledge, power, and social change continually need to be interrogated” (Popkewitz, 1999, p. 8). Through the social-action approach (see Banks, 1997), adult learners are encouraged to make decisions on important social issues and to take actions to help solve them. Activists’ action plans at the micro, meso, and macro levels help leaders for social justice move beyond guilt for failure toward responsibility for success. By assessing and examining current procedures and then reordering and restructuring their practice according to a new agenda of social action, adult learners engage in a developmental process of “deconstruction and reconstruction.”

As students consider possible actions and realistic approaches, they are encouraged to consider in depth the possible outcomes of the strategy, the risks and obstacles involved, the timeline for implementation, the supports needed, and where they might find them. One specific technique recommended for all future leaders and their schools and school districts is the use of educational equity profiles (see Skrla, Garcia, Scheurich, & Nolly, 2002). With historical roots connected to the civil rights movement, the curriculum auditing movement (see English, 1988), and the state accountability movement, educational equity profiles systematically examine the three dimensions of teacher quality equity, programmatic equity, and achievement equity. As a result, leaders for social justice become empowered with school and community members to envision, define, and work toward a more humane society that removes all forms of injustice.

## CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

In the forward of Capper’s *Educational Administration in a Pluralistic Society*, Sleeter (1993) draws on Giroux’s (1988) description of the type of

administrator she would like to see advocating for equality and social justice in schools: “These are transformative intellectuals who are both active, reflective scholars and practitioners,” who “engage in political interests that are emancipatory in nature” (p. ix). The strategies described herein can help future leaders for social justice and equity develop such skills. By being actively engaged in a number of assignments requiring the examination of ontological and epistemological assumptions, values and beliefs, context and experience, and competing worldviews, adult learners are better equipped to work with and guide others in translating their perspectives, perceptions, and goals into agendas for social change. The exploration of new understandings, the synthesis of new information, and the integration of these insights throughout personal and professional spheres leads future educational leaders to a broader, more inclusive approach in addressing equity issues. When discussing educators’ agency for transformation, Freire (1998) aptly explained, “It is true that education is not the ultimate lever for social transformation, but without it transformation cannot occur” (p. 37).

## APPENDIX

### Transformative Pedagogical Strategies

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#### (a) Cultural Autobiographies

Adult learners complete a cultural autobiography by naming the countries (if any), other than the United States, that they identify as a place of origin for themselves and their family. They identify their ethnic/cultural group membership and reflect on advice that has been handed down through their family by their ancestors (i.e., “family motto”). Adult learners make a list of at least five values that are important to their cultural/racial identity and rank order them from most important to least important. They also reflect on particular family members’ attitudes toward people who are culturally and ethnically different (e.g., White Americans, African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, Gays/Lesbians, Physically Challenged People, Religious People, Rich/Poor People, etc.). Adults share what they were encouraged to believe about people of other groups and identify what was and wasn’t discussed growing up and why. They complete a list of sentence starters (i.e., As a boy/girl, I must . . . ) and are encouraged to recall specific incidents in their life (5-year time blocks) that affected their thinking and/or feelings about people who are culturally or ethnically different from them. Students then share what discoveries about their families stand out most and why.

**(b) Life Histories**

Adult learners identify and interview a person who is older than 65 years of age and attended school in the United States. Students listen as the interviewees share their educational story, including where they attended school, what type of schools they attended, and the setting of these schools. Interviewees are asked to describe the climate and culture of their schools, the structure and format of their courses, and the expectations/requirements of the times. Adult learners are instructed to probe the interviewees' memories with regard to the major political, social, philosophical, and economic events during the interviewees' school years and how these happenings affected their education and career path. Students are then expected to synthesize and relate their experiential knowledge to the course material.

**(c) Prejudice Reduction Workshops**

The National Coalition Building Institute's (NCBI) *Prejudice Reduction Workshop* is made up of a series of incremental, participatory activities that empower individuals of all ages and backgrounds to take leadership in building inclusive communities in their workplaces, schools, and neighborhoods. Adult learners participate in a 1-day, interactive workshop that relies on a unique blend of emotional healing, personal experiences, and skill training methodologies to identify and reduce prejudice and oppression and resolve intergroup conflict. The NCBI workshops increase awareness and teach specific skills, which enable students to be more reflective and effective allies and advocates for others.

**(d) Reflective Analysis Journals**

Journaling makes the invisible thoughts visible. Adult learners are encouraged to complete reflective analysis journals throughout the semester as a means of identifying and clarifying thoughts, feelings, beliefs, perspectives, worldviews, challenges, hopes, and aspirations. The journal is a private place for issue review, honest critical reflection, and self-analysis. Through journaling, adult learners expand their awareness, make connections, and generate new thoughts. They identify principles and approaches learned, explain how this new information might be applied, and explore these discoveries in light of personal and professional growth and development. Students are encouraged to share their entries with the professor and other adults (via online chatrooms) who make comments and inquiries. The dialogue is rational and ongoing. Students are instructed to respond in a challenging but not judgmental manner, to be provocative but not condescending.



**(e) Cross-Cultural Interviews**

This assignment involves a one-on-one encounter with an individual who is different from the adult learner in ethnicity/race/religion/sexual orientation. The purpose is to help students develop a greater understanding of alternative worldviews, to increase their comfort in discussing differences and similarities, and to better appreciate the educational experiences of someone from a different background. Adult learners select an individual who is 18 years of age or older, who attended school in the United States, who is different from themselves in ethnicity/race/religion/sexual orientation, and who will push their comfort zone (sample questions provided by the instructor query interviewees' cultural values, importance of education, experiences of racism, etc.). The face-to-face interviews are conducted in a mutually agreed on, safe, private place. In an effort to build rapport, adult learners are instructed to engage in some self-disclosure so that the interview is not totally one-sided. For example, students might talk about what they have been learning about themselves in class, as well as any new understandings they have gained about oppression and discrimination. In their follow-up reflection paper, students describe the experience, give an overview of the interviewee (e.g., ethnicity/race, family background, salient attitudes/beliefs/experiences, cultural values, racial identity development, schooling details, etc.), and summarize the central issues concerning the interviewee's educational experience. Adult learners describe their emotional response to the cross-cultural interview, along with the insights/lessons gained.

**(f) Educational Plunges**

The purpose of this assignment is to provide adult learners with an educational experience of cultures different from their own. Based on their own self-assessment with regard to level of experience, comfort, awareness, and knowledge, students decide which activity would be most beneficial to them in terms of furthering their awareness. The goal is for adult learners to select an activity that will challenge them to move beyond their present level of comfort, knowledge, and awareness and yet not be so uncomfortable or threatening that they are unable to be open to the "minority experience." This direct contact plunge involves a cross-cultural encounter "up close and personal." Students are instructed to visit an educational setting unlike any they've experienced (e.g., private, Catholic, charter, magnet, single-sex schools, religious institutions, training centers, literacy councils, ESL programs, prisons or tutoring services, poor urban or wealthy academies, head start to college level, traditional, alternative, vocational or technical, etc.). Criteria for a plunge are as follows: (a) The majority of the people there are from the focal group, (b) adult learners are on the educational turf of the focal group, (c) a type of experience students have never had before, (d) the plunge takes place after the course begins (no credit for past experience), (e) the plunge lasts at least 1 hour, (f) the plunge pushes students' comfort zone, and (g) students have face-to-face interaction with people from the focal

group. In their follow-up reflection paper, adult learners describe the experience, their reasons for selecting the experience, their assumptions and biases about the focal community members and how they were challenged by this experience (if they were), their emotional response to the plunge (e.g., before, during, and after, such as fear, anxiety, surprise, shock, disturbed, comfort/discomfort, joy, elation), the value of the experience (e.g., lessons, understandings, changes), and the relationship of the experience to specific class readings and discussions, including implications for them as educational leaders for social justice and equity.

**(g) Diversity Panels**

Together with others in the class who have chosen the same nonmonolithic group to study in depth, adult learners conduct the class on a given day. Students are expected to assign and distribute additional readings so that they can present the history of that group's educational experience in the United States (including the circumstances that brought or made them inhabitants of the United States) and how they were treated. The main objective is to help class members understand how the group has been treated in this country and how the history lives on and affects the present (e.g., philosophically, economically, politically, socially, and culturally). Adult learners' presentations include (a) information concerning the values considered representative of the majority of people in that group, (b) a discussion of their schooling experiences, and (c) any other issues that they deem important (e.g., stereotypes, inequitable treatment, successful pedagogical strategies). As part of the class, students also have a 1-hour panel presentation from at least three people from that group. Students provide panel members with a list of suggested questions and topics to be addressed ahead of time. Panel members introduce themselves, engage in a sharing of their educational experiences, and participate in an informal question and answer session with all members of the class. Cultural values, lessons taught, schooling experiences, and misperceptions experienced are discussed. Panel members are asked for suggestions in working more effectively with students from all cultures.

**(h) Activist Action Plans (Micro, Meso, and Macro Levels)**

Adult learners discuss what they might do at the school level, district/community level, and state level to implement policies and practices that are truly just, equitable, and inclusive of all members of the school community. Recognizing that differences do matter, students are encouraged to keep in mind that all major documents, work systems, and processes should be based on equity, fairness, and justice. Through activist action plans, students first identify issues that can trigger conflicts (i.e., unequal distribution of material/social resources or differing values, beliefs, and cultural expressions), and then they develop practical, doable strategies for avoiding them and/or

resolving them. Adult learners also address the issue of action versus inaction. Through a deeper sense of awareness and acknowledgment, students are instructed to name possible acts of commission, as well as more subtle acts of omission. The ramifications of such decisions are examined, discussed, and thoroughly dissected in light of course content, new understandings, and personal growth.

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