Feminist Pedagogies and Graduate Adult and Higher Education for Women Students: Matters of Connection and Possibility

Andre P. Grace

University of Alberta, Canada

Follow this and additional works at: http://newprairiepress.org/aerc

Part of the Adult and Continuing Education Administration Commons

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 License

Recommended Citation

Grace, Andre P. (2000). "Feminist Pedagogies and Graduate Adult and Higher Education for Women Students: Matters of Connection and Possibility," *Adult Education Research Conference.* http://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2000/papers/28

This is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences at New Prairie Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in Adult Education Research Conference by an authorized administrator of New Prairie Press. For more information, please contact cads@k-state.edu.

The Modern Practice of Canadian and US Academic Adult Education during the Brief American Century (1945-73): People, Politics, and Ideas Shaping an Emerging Field

André P. Grace
University of Alberta, Canada

Abstract: *This essay examines cultural and economic aspects of the emergence of the modern practice of academic adult education as a postwar change culture of crisis and challenge emerged in Canada and the United during the brief American century (1945-73).*

Introduction

I begin this essay with an analysis of the post-World War II project of academic adult education in Canada and the United States. Next I explore academic adult education's moves in the context of big-picture understandings of a postwar change culture of crisis and challenge. I conclude with the field of study's assessment of the field of practice near the end of the brief American century.

The Project of Academic Adult Education during the Brief American Century

As Jameson (1991) demarcates it, "the brief 'American century' (1945-73)" (p. xx) covers a remarkable period from the end of World War II in 1945 to 1973, the year in which he claims super crises including the world oil crisis and the end of the international gold standard signified its end. During this period people, politics, and ideas operating inside and outside of academic adult education can be understood to mediate the project of the field of study to enhance the space (a recognized and useful presence) and place (a respected and valued position) of the field of practice in the larger culture in both Canada and the United States. In this essay I explore aspects of these mediation efforts as a postwar change culture of crisis and challenge emerged in both countries. While this culture may have developed first in the United States, it also deeply affected postwar Canada, which became a target of American imperialism due to its rich resources that could feed America's Sovietphobic military need. Thompson & Randall (1994) contend that "during the 1950s, Canada became ... [an] integral part of the new American Empire" (p. 184). They go on to say that "defense production was a fundamental element of economic integration: as it became truly continental in scope, parts of the Canadian economy became northern extensions of what President Eisenhower would later call 'the military-industrial complex'" (p. 206).

Canadian and US academic adult education emerged amid the persistent and omnipresent cultural and economic change-force factors that created a postwar change culture of crisis and challenge in both countries (Grace, 2000). A link between these two forms of academic adult education, at least during the brief American century, was the fact that key academic adult educators working in Canada had been trained in the United States or had immigrated from there. For example, J. Roby Kidd, who worked at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in Toronto, earned his doctorate in adult education at Columbia University (Selman, 1995). Coolie Verner, who worked at the University of British Columbia, was born in Ohio. He also earned his doctorate at Columbia University (Boshier, 1995).

As academic adult education emerged in the United States and Canada after World War II, the field of study worked to configure the larger field as an enterprise with expertise useful to assist the techno-scientific and economic advancement of postwar culture and society in both countries. The term enterprise is used in this essay to describe the desired cultural space and place that academic adult education sought to attain for the larger field during the postwar decades. This term incorporates two ideas that encompass the efforts of academic adult education as it performed in the midst of thoroughgoing and omnipresent cultural and economic change forces. First, it includes the idea of adult education as a venture designed to attain cultural currency in techno-scientific and professional terms. This idea linked the emergence of a professionalized field of modern practice to the emer-

gence of a field of study where developments in theory, research, and method tended to align with the regulatory culture of techno-science as the source of productive knowledge (Grace, 1999). Locating techno-scientific knowledge as knowledge with most worth in adult education seemed to be the best way for academic adult education to increase the larger field's space and place in the larger culture. Blakely and Lappin (1969) concluded that the cultural process where *knowledge was power to control power* was a fait accompli. They deduced, "Action is coming to be guided by knowledge – [techno-scientific] knowledge purposively and systematically taught and learned" (p. 19).

Second, the term enterprise includes the idea of adult education as an adventure designed to help adult learners negotiate new and unfamiliar life, learning, and work terrains. This idea was hooked to a field history valuing an amateurish spirit that nurtured transformative social and cultural forms of adult learning. Despite a perceived primary emphasis on adult education as a venture in the postwar period, adult education as an adventure was still an important adult-learning terrain that attempted to respond to diverse demands for new forms of social and cultural education (Bergevin, 1967; Rosen, 1970). Its historical roots located adult education as an adventure is a kind of education that emphasized context, relationship, and learner disposition in community settings. This more integrated focus often seemed to put adult education as an adventure at odds with the emerging idea of adult education as a venture. The latter, newer idea was more about setting parameters to a professionalized modern practice. As such it was an expression of academic adult education's apparently more urgent concern to occupy prime cultural space and supposedly neutral educational space by submitting to the regulations of techno-science and the rigors of professionalism. The ongoing tensions between the two ideas vying to shape a postwar field of study and practice augmented faulting in a historically fragmented field caught in a perennial struggle over the values of instrumental, social, and cultural forms of adult education.

As professionalization of the field progressed, some academic adult educators, fearing the enterprise was shirking its social responsibility, raised the concern that mainstream adult education was engaged in a technical and precise endeavor primarily valued for its utility in contributing to the techno-scientific and economic advancement of the dominant culture (see, for example, Blakely & Lappin, 1969; Rosen, 1970). They challenged status-seeking academic adult educators whose myopic professional gaze focused on the kind of instrumentalized practice supported by universities and other institutions that gave increasing prominence to science and technology (see descriptions of this practice in Verner, 1978). They critiqued an emerging modern practice moving away from adult education's traditional social focus and pluralistic and voluntary nature. These educators investigated the *Ization Syndrome* – techno-scientization, individualization, professionalization, and institutionalization – shaping adult education's postwar development as an ordered and orderly enterprise complicit with the dominant postindustrial culture.

Painting a Big Picture: Understanding Academic Adult Education's Moves in a Post-World War II Change Culture of Crisis and Challenge

US academic adult education experienced tremendous growth during the quarter century following World War II (Kidd and Selman, 1978; Smith, Aker, & Kidd, 1970). This growth occurred in the midst of dramatic cultural and economic change forces that profoundly reconfigured culture and society. Indeed, persistent and disruptive change appeared to be the only constant as citizen learners and workers negotiated new life, learning, and work terrains. As phenomenal cultural and economic change forces contoured these terrains in new and unfamiliar ways, they, in effect, constituted the preconditions for a new functional system of capital that reconfigured the relationship between the cultural and the economic. Whether this new system constituted a break with the prewar system of capital or, alternatively, represented a new stage that recognized capitalism's new functionality in an emerging knowledge-and-service economy has been variously argued from different theoretical perspectives. Two contrasting perspectives –Bell's (1960) view, which suggests a rupture with the prewar system, and Jameson's (1991) view, which suggests a transition to a new stage of capitalism – are briefly discussed here.

In his classic explanation of the impact of unparalleled postwar cultural and economic change forces, eminent sociologist Daniel Bell (1960) described the unprecedented expansion of capitalism

into postwar US culture as the precondition for the emergence of what he called postindustrial society. His explanation, recorded in *The End of Ideology,* suggested a rupture or break with the prewar system of capital. Bell (1967) listed the years 1945 to 1950 as "the birth-years, symbolically, of the post-industrial society" (p. 159). He distinguished this society by "the rise of the new elite whose status is based on skill. [Their ascendancy] derives from the simple fact that knowledge and planning ... have become the basic requisites for all organized action" (p. 165). Bell's distinction suggested that the age of a new techno-scientized kind of profession-alism had arrived. The new professionals were technical intellectuals whom Bell believed were capable of displacing class conflict by subjecting it to technical and organizational problem-solving processes (Aronowitz and DiFazio, 1994). Aronowitz and DiFazio (1994) describe this belief in the end of ideology as a belief in the ethos and expertise of technical intellectuals as well as a belief in the power of their knowledge as a productive force. They argue that this belief is decontextualized and hence problematic. They assert that Bell's postin-dustrial ideology forgets the effects of history and work culture, and locates the end of ideology as a progression of capitalism into a postindustrial soci-ety where technical reason supposedly has the power and independence to be a force able to re-place class conflict. Drawing on the work of C. Wright Mills, they further assert that Bell's postin-dustrial ideology does not consider how technical intellectuals constituted a constrained new middle class that was potentially significant yet disas-trously dependent on its procreators, science and government.

Despite this dependency, and perhaps because of it, technical intellectuals became avant-garde in the emerging knowledge-and-service economy. This economy expanded in the post-World War II era because science was politicized in the service of government to produce the institutionally dependent technical intellectuals needed for the expansion (Aronowitz & DiFazio, 1994). These elite new pro-fessionals worked within the bounds of the new economic realm ruled by government with science as its handmaiden. Their prime cultural worth was a measure of their techno-scientific expertise (Said, 1994). Bell (1960) believed that this expertise served a dual purpose. First, it advanced postindus-trial society, which he described as "above all, the machine civilization" (p. 224). This society ex-panded in the 1950s and 1960s in the face of Cold War fears in the United States and Canada, its re-source-rich neighbor to the North, and it built what President Dwight D. Eisenhower called a military-industrial complex as its pervasive architecture (Thompson & Randall, 1994). Second, and con-comitantly, this expertise provided the human and material resources needed to deal with the effects of postindustrial change forces, which Bell (1960) de-scribed as "turbulence born ... [of] prosperity [that] brings in its wake new anxieties, new strains, new urgencies" (p. 94).

Fredric Jameson (1991) offers a contrasting theoretical explanation of the emergence of postwar society in *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.* He takes issue with Bell's notion of postindustrial society and its suggestion of a break with the prewar system of capital. While agreeing with Bell that a new functional system of capital was pervasive after World War II, Jameson takes the position that this new system represents not a rupture but a transition to a new stage of capitalism. He asserts that this new stage had attrib-utes and functionality aligned to the time and tides of postwar change culture. He maintains that this new stage, which the economist Ernest Mandel named late capitalism, emerged as technology transformed capitalism. He contends that the basic technology necessary to sustain it existed by 1945. During the brief American century, Jameson argues that unprecedented techno-scientific advances radi-cally changed the system of capital. He locates the economic precondition for establishing the new system in the 1950s when escalating consumerism and expanding new-product production were the predominant features of the changing US economy. He situates the cultural precondition for continuing the development of this new functional system in the 1960s when social upheaval and generational rupture radically altered US culture and society. However, while he believes that this demarcation represents the more proper location of each precon-dition, Jameson does not mean to suggest that eco-nomic and cultural impacts occurred separately. In fact, he argues that diverse economic and cultural change forces at work during the brief American century were not separate. They were just not par-ticularly synchronized.

Whether one associates profound postwar eco-nomic and cultural change forces with a rupture or a

transformation of capitalism, both arguments come together at least at a juncture recognizing the emergence of a postwar change culture of crisis and challenge. In this rapid-change culture, where the larger field of adult education gained new impetus as a vehicle assisting cultural adjustment and advancement (Kempfer, 1955; Knowles & Dubois, 1970), many academic adult educators sought to fulfill two longstanding goals. First, they wanted adult education to be recognized, respected, and valued as a profession. Indeed, professionalization had been a concern throughout modern practice, and distinct moves toward it can be traced back at least to the 1930s in the United States (Cotton, 1968). Second, they wanted academic adult education (as a field of study) to achieve a more valued presence in what many of them hoped would be an increasingly professionalized larger field of modern practice. They felt that achieving these complementary goals was an integral part of achieving a valued cultural identity. They believed that building an academic field of study shaped by theory building and research would support and enhance the development of a more professionalized modern practice. The "discipline" would serve to shape and enhance this practice as a techno-scientized and more precise practice with worth in the emerging knowledge-and-service economy (Verner, 1963; 1978). It was hoped that achieving these goals would lift adult education to a desired cultural location as an enterprise with value as a venture and an adventure.

Setting Larger Field Directions in a Change Culture of Crisis and Challenge

As adult education worked to increase its space and place in a postwar change culture of crisis and challenge it appeared to engage, at least in its mainstream forms, in education as reaction. Hallenbeck (1960) offered this explanation of the cultural politics that produces this kind of education. He claimed, "A culture always determines the form, the content, and the scope of its organized education" (p. 29). Believing that the history of education was inextricably linked to the history of sociocultural change, he purported that change determines cultural needs, which in turn determines the form and function of education and the clientele served.

In a postwar change culture of crisis and challenge, which promoted techno-science as a cultural and economic panacea, the modern practice of adult education had to be organized as a more precise, techno-scientific practice. London, Wenkert, and Hagstrom (1963) described such a field of study and practice: "There is a need to be more precise in identifying what is included or excluded in the field so that adult education can be studied objectively and scientifically" (p. 140). Speaking to the state of adult education research, they surveyed that it tended to be disconnected from research in formal education and other disciplines. This gave the enterprise the appearance of not reflecting trends in the larger culture and society. They related perennial research difficulties including the problem of evaluating a field without defined parameters and the problem of securing funding for a marginal and relatively invisible enterprise.

Looking back in the 1970 US handbook of adult education, Schroeder (1970), offered a similar synopsis, "Since 1930 there has been an erratic though discernible trend toward greater precision in defining adult education" (p. 27). There was still no clear and comprehensive understanding "of the vast area included in the idea called adult education" (Bergevin, 1967, p. 52) near the end of the brief American century. The field remained flexible – a jumble. Its parameters shifted in response to social, economic, political, and other forces in culture and society. They also shifted in reaction to internal field forces including techno-scientization, institutionalization, professionalization, and individualization (Grace, 1999).

To counter this reactive, episodic, and fragmented identity-difference, academic adult educators Jensen, Liveright, and Hallenbeck (1964) proposed a set of field directions designed to further determine and strengthen adult education's social and cultural space and place. Their suggestions specifically aimed to enhance perennial efforts to promote enterprise cohesion and the coordination of activities. First, adult education had to be affirmed as a national necessity not an optional activity. Second, learning had to be conceived as a lifelong process connecting education for children, youth, and adults. Third, adult education agencies needed to delineate their roles and network with one another to make the best match of resources in meeting individual, institutional, and community needs. Fourth, substantial effort was needed to design and develop an organized and coherent curriculum that would help adults learn to live in changing times. Fifth, an effort had to go into the recruitment,

training, and development of adult educators. Sixth, universities had to accept responsibility for an expanded role in adult education research and advanced professional training. Seventh, community agencies of adult education had to raise standards of professional competence required by their personnel. Eighth, the public had to be educated about the value and necessity of lifelong learning so they would support and participate in it. Jensen, Liveright, and Hallenbeck's set of field directions represented a lengthy to-do list. It indicated that the enterprise still had a long way to go to answer the question "What is adult education?"

References

Aronowitz, S., & DiFazio, W. (1994). *The jobless future: Sci-tech and the dogma of work.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Bell, D. (1960). *The end of ideology.* Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.

Bell, D. (1967). The post-industrial society: A speculative view. In E. Hutchings & E. Hutchings (Eds.), *Scientific progress and human values* (pp. 154-170). New York: American Elsevier Publishing Company.

Bergevin, P. (1967). *A philosophy for adult education.* New York: The Seabury Press.

Blakely, R. J., & Lappin, I. M. (1969). *Knowledge is power to control power: Institutional arrangements and organizational patterns for continuing education.* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Publications in Continuing Education.

Boshier, R. (1995). Words from the edge: A postmodern reflection on Coolie Verner and the black book. *Proceedings of the 36th Annual Adult Education Research Conference, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB,* 19-26.

Cotton, W. E. (1968). *On behalf of adult education: A historical examination of the supporting literature.* Boston: Center for the Study of Liberal Education for Adults.

Grace, A. P. (1999). Building a knowledge base in US academic adult education (1945-70). *Studies in the Education of Adults, 31*(2), 220-236.

Grace, A. P. (2000). Academic adult education in Canada and the United States (1917-1970): A chronology of their emergence and a conspectus of their development. *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning, 9,* 65-78.

Hallenbeck, W. C. (1960). The function and place of adult education in American society. In M. S. Knowles (Ed.), *Handbook of adult education in the United States* (pp. 29-38). Washington, DC: Adult Education Association of the U.S.A.

Jameson, F. (1991). *Postmodernism, or, the cultural logic of late capitalism.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Jensen, G., Liveright, A. A., & Hallenbeck, W. (1964). Adult education. In G. Jensen, A. A. Liveright, & W. Hallenbeck (Eds.), *Adult education: Outlines of an emerging field of study* (pp. iv-xi). Washington, DC: Adult Education Association of the U.S.A.

Kempfer, H. (1955). *Adult education.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Kidd, J. R., & Selman, G. R. (1978). *Coming of age: Canadian adult education in the 1960s.* Toronto: Canadian Association for Adult Education.

Knowles, M. S., & DuBois, E. E. (1970). Prologue: The handbooks in perspective. In. R. M. Smith, G. F. Aker, & J. R. Kidd (Eds.), *Handbook of adult education* (pp. xvii-xxiii). New York: Macmillan.

London, J., Wenkert, R., & Hagstrom, W. O. (1963). *Adult education and social class.* Berkeley, CA: Survey Research Center, University of California.

Rosen, S. M. (1970). Better mousetraps: Reflections on economic development in the ghetto. In F. Riessman, S. M. Rosen, J. Featherstone, & A. Gartner (1970), *Essays on new careers: Social implications for adult educators* (pp. 69-82). Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Publications in Continuing Education.

Said, E. W. (1994). *Representations of the intellectual.* New York: Pantheon Books.

Schroeder, W. L. (1970). Adult education defined and described. In. R. M. Smith, G. F. Aker, & J. R. Kidd (Eds.), *Handbook of adult education* (pp. 25-43). New York: Macmillan.

Selman, G. (1995). *Adult education in Canada: Historical essays.* Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing.

Smith, R. M., Aker, G. F., & Kidd, J. R. (Eds.). (1970). *Handbook of adult education.* New York: Macmillan.

Thompson, J. H., & Randall, S. J. (1994). *Canada and the United States: Ambivalent allies.* Mont-

real & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press.

Verner, C. (1963). Basic concepts and limitations. In J. R. Kidd (Ed.), *Learning and society* (pp. 229-240). Toronto: Canadian Association for Adult Education. (Original worked published in 1961)

Verner, C. (1978). Organizing graduate professional education for adult education. In J. R. Kidd & G. R. Selman (Eds.), *Coming of age: Canadian adult education in the 1960s* (pp. 132-141). Toronto: Canadian Association for Adult Education. (Original work published in 1969)