

Social Movement Learning Research: International Comparative Perspectives on Challenges and the Current Status of the Field

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Abstract: Studies of social movements have a long and contradictory relationship with adult education research. In this symposium contributors address the question: What is the current status, themes and the potentials and limits of current social movement learning (SML) research internationally?

"All Means All": Social Movement Learning and the Inclusion Movement Budd and Richard Hall

*Change takes place on a level beyond the personal, but can't grow
without the individual*

- Richard Hall

Two weeks ago, our thoughts about social movement learning would have been expressed quite differently. A phone call from Budd's younger brother Rick changed the way that they both feel about social movements. What followed in the aftermath of that phone call has given both Richard and Budd a new understanding into how learning and social movements are related.

Rick, Budd's younger brother was born when Budd was 16 years old. As Budd remembers, "He was just a cute little guy who was a welcome gift to the family who served as they say to 'keep my parents young'". At nine years old Rick was diagnosed

with type I diabetes. His health was excellent however all during his younger years and his early adult years. He got degrees from two excellent universities and taught elementary school for 21 years. As he has grown older his health challenges related to his diabetes have increased significantly. He has significant kidney, heart and neurological damage which have resulted in his no longer being able to work. His health care costs have risen so that his medical prescriptions alone are over \$5,000. a month. To be unemployed means to be uninsured most often in the United States. Fortunately, the State of Arizona has been participating in a joint Federal-State Medicaid plan called AHCCCS, which extends health coverage to persons who have found themselves in this a situation such as Rick. AHCCCS has quite literally allowed Rick to live.

At the end of February 2011, Budd learned through a phone call that the administrators at the AHCCCS had just informed Rick that as of March 31, he would be cut off from his health insurance. The State of Arizona was cutting the budget and had decided that adults who no longer had children living at home would not be eligible. He was to be one of 230,000 persons being cut off. How did we feel? Rick was stunned, nearly frozen and logically depressed. Budd, his wife, their Sister and their 93-year-old Mother felt helpless and powerless.

In earlier writing that Budd has done on social movement learning, he has said that learning happens in the context of social movements in at least three ways: in intentional or organized ways by members of a movement; in informal ways because simply being part of a social movement causes one to learn so much; and because social movements create environments because of the actions that they take that stimulates learning by those who in fact are not part of the social movements at all (2006, 2009).

The Inclusion Movement

Amongst the movements arising from the 60s and 70s were a variety of related social movements that might be called movements of inclusion. Stimulated by people who had been labelled as "disabled" who began to push back the custodial services that society had put into place to 'warehouse' or isolate those who seemed 'different' from mainstream society. Stimulated by parents of variously challenged youngsters who wanted their children to learn in schools with other children, the idea of inclusion was born. And while it has grown out of the dis/ability movement, it also relates to all forms of exclusion. Budd has been an ally of the Inclusion Movement for 30 years mostly through his close friendship with Jack Pearpoint, his late wife Marsha Forest and his current wife Lynda Kahn who are collectively the heart and soul of [Inclusion Press](#) and the [Marsha Forest Centre](#) in Toronto. The phrase 'all means all' and 'children belong with children' he learned from them. Another leader of the inclusion movement is Al Etmanski who lives and works in Vancouver, British Columbia. His group [Plan](#) has been responsible for wide ranging policy changes and creative financial arrangements for families looking for long term support. As the late Shafik Asante says, "Providing and maintaining support systems are a civic responsibility, not a favour. We were all born 'in'. Society will immediately improve at the point we honour this truth!" (<http://www.inclusion.com>)

When Budd got the call from Rick, he sent notes to these friends. He knew that if anyone would know how to a) fight against the cuts and b) locate persons who were involved in alternative health care solutions, they would. Rick wrote up his story and posted it to everyone they could think of including politicians, academic activists, social

work advocates, and the media. The Inclusion movement kicked into gear and within days, Rick had both names of key folks working to stop the cuts as well as the names of lawyers and advocates. Both Rick and Budd *learned* at an extraordinary pace literally on the computer all working hours for a few days. One could argue that both Rick and Budd *joined* the Inclusion movement at that moment. Their learning was part of the informal but intense learning that arise in social movements that continues to grow and develop.

In Rick's words, "My initial thoughts came from an emotional level and then grew to be more intellectual. I have gone from feeling alone in the process to seeing the tremendous amount of work already being done. I am interested in how an individual moves from a one to one situation to the learning and exploration stage where they can become involved in making change. This is where inclusion takes hold. It means getting out of the feeling of hopelessness to where your experiences can be developed and sewn into the fabric of work everywhere. Change takes place on a level beyond the personal, but can't grow without the individual."

**Understanding Current Social Movement Learning
Perspectives on Intellectuals and Leadership:
Gramscian Insights into Anti-Racist Working-Class Organizing**

Chris Harris

Introduction

This study begins with the need to better understand and document the Freedom Cipher program: an anti-racism education project I implemented at the Black Action Defence Committee (BADC) to train working-class African-Canadian youth to become *Black working-class organic intellectuals* (communist activists) who do anti-racist, anti-capitalist, and Black Feminist organizing in African-Canadian civil society. BADC is a leading Black Left organization in the city of Toronto that emerged out of decades of militant anti-racist struggles against police brutality in the 1970s and '80s; in principle a suitable location for the this type of education. As a BADC youth leader and radical adult educator, I directed the Freedom Cipher from 2007-2009.

In January 2007, BADC's Freedom Cipher was funded \$450,000 by the City of Toronto's Youth Challenge Fund (YCF) over three years to hire a team of youth workers to organize and facilitate an employment training and mentorship program with street-involved Black youth in gangs in the Jane/Finch, Lawrence Heights, Jane/Weston, and Vaughan/Oakwood communities. Funded by the Canadian capitalist state, the Freedom Cipher was located in the Non-Profit Industrial Complex (NPIC): a term I use to describe the non-profit sector which has been an effective tool of the U.S. and Canadian ruling class in co-opting Left dissent and de-stabilizing social justice movements by incorporating them into the welfare state through non-profit funding. For social movement organizations operating within the NPIC, the focus changes from mobilizing for social justice and transformative change, to an emphasis on providing services to a constituency and thus resource mobilization, resulting in de-politicization. Although it received NPIC funding, the Freedom Cipher was a genuine attempt to replicate the type of organized political education and inter-generational learning relations responsible for the formation of first wave Black working-class organic intellectuals in North American communist parties in the 1920s-1930s, and the second wave in U.S. and Canadian Black Power movements in the 1960s-1970s.

The Contradictions of Educating Black Working-Class Organic Intellectuals in the Non-Profit Industrial Complex (NPIC)

In the Canadian context, Black working-class organic intellectuals are revolutionary-nationalist/communist activists who engage in praxis by organizing political campaigns, proletarian race and class alliances, socialist cultural production and mass education to erode the *old* hegemony of the Bourgeoisie in African-Canadian civil society, and eventually construct a new proletarian hegemony in its place. Are organic intellectuals formed through the spontaneous educational activities of social movements or vanguard revolutionary parties? Gramsci argued revolutionary parties were critical in the difficult task of educating working-class organic intellectuals to lead an anti-capitalist *war of position* in bourgeois civil society to construct an alternative *proletarian hegemony*. Since organic intellectuals are not born in social movements, but “formed through the educational activities of working-class parties” (Holst, 2002, pp.109-110). It is imperative that the form, content, and process of working-class organic intellectual formation be carried out by traditional intellectuals (i.e. revolutionary adult educators) who commit what Cabral referred to as class suicide, by forming an alliance with the oppressed classes to become an organic component of the revolutionary multinational working-class movement. Chovanec correctly observes that traditional intellectuals must be a part of the revolutionary movement in order to successfully contribute to the education of organic intellectuals (Chovanec, 2009, p. 114). As a traditional Black Communist Adult Educator at BADC, I performed this educational function in the Freedom Cipher.

In the absence of a revolutionary party, I agree with Chovanec (2009) who argues for the role of radical *social movement continuity structures* in the education of organic intellectuals. As the Freedom Cipher Coordinator, I organized the following political-education and social justice youth-engagement activities at BADC: implementing Set It Off young women’s empowerment groups in Westend high schools; organizing Hood2Hood peace and unity community events against Black internal violence; producing Freedom Cipher Radio, an inter-generational news segment on Saturday Morning Live (CKLN, 881.1 FM) with former Canadian Black Power elder Norman “Otis” Richmond; producing, recording, and circulating revolutionary Hip Hop within Black working-class communities; and participating in a monthly “Intellectual Discussion” group at the BADC office. However, the Freedom Cipher failed to produce organic intellectuals because the social movement continuity structures were located within the NPIC – not Communist Left organizations outside this capitalist form of political-economic organization in bourgeois civil society. As a communist adult educator, I failed to resolve the contradiction between the Bourgeois hegemonic form of the Freedom Cipher located in the NPIC, and its radical adult education content which included Marxism, Black Feminism, and Anti-Racism Education.

In response to the Boxing Day 2005 murder of 15 year-old Jane Creba in Toronto, the YCF was created by the province in February 2006 in partnership with the private sector to raise \$45 million towards funding local training and job programs to create “youth engagement opportunities” for “at-risk” criminalized Black youth. However, the YCF was not implemented to advance a “youth-engagement” agenda, but rather a “bureaucratized management of fear” of Black youth in White civil society who have been systematically displaced by capitalism. The YCF was implemented after one full-

year of anti-Black racist representations of Black youth in the bourgeois media following the 2005 Boxing Day murder of Jane Creba, a white 15 year-old innocent bystander of a gang shootout on Yonge St. BADC was funded \$450,000 temporarily over three years (2007-2009) to help resolve the problem of gang and gun violence in three of the westend's "priority" neighbourhoods. Despite the positive anti-racism education, employment training, and mentorship the Freedom Cipher engaged in, the YCF successfully de-politicized BADC youth by giving them the false impression they could be paid to do grassroots anti-racist organizing within civil society to change it.

Conclusion

The Freedom Cipher was not only developed by BADC to provide Black working-class youth with employable skills like similar public sector gang-exit initiatives, but also to educate them to become organic intellectuals who could in turn organize a revolutionary Black Liberation movement in African-Canadian civil society. In conclusion, if the Freedom Cipher is to succeed in the education of organic intellectuals in the future, it must be located in socialist/communist party-building organizations outside of the NPIC.

Changing Movements, Changing Research: New Challenges for Social Movement Learning Research

John D. Holst

For some time now research in adult education has been framed by the distinction made between old and new social movements. This dichotomy is intended, among other things, to capture what are perceived to be the distinctive political projects of the two types of movements: old social movements (OSMs) are considered to advance working-class-based, social democratic or socialist political projects, while new social movements (NSMs) are considered to advance non-class-based or cross-class-based political projects oriented toward identity formation or autonomy. This OSM/NSM framework was developed outside of the field of adult education scholarship but began to influence research in the field in the 1980s. Since then, this framework has informed a significant amount of social movement learning (SML) research while also being criticized from antiracist feminist and indigenous perspectives.

While the OSM/NSM framework has served as a reference point for the growing body of research on SML in adult education when addressing what I have referred to as "the politics of social movements," this paper argues that the OSM/NSM framework no longer reflects qualitative changes in the socio-political economic realities out of which new cutting edge social organizing is emerging; the dichotomy, therefore, is increasingly inadequate for framing the politics of social movements in SML research in adult education. New political projects, demands, and organizational structures of social subjects and movements emerging across the globe simply do not fit within the politics of social movements captured by the OSM/NSM framework. For considerations of space, I will present the argument in the form of some specific statements/propositions.

1. The OSM/NSM framework focused attention on political differences within social movement activism and scholarship.

- Some championed NSM because they believed they represented a new politics outside the socialist politics of OSMs, or because a scholarship championing the newness of NSMs was a part of the political project to overcome the socialist politics of OSMs.
- Some championed the continuing relevance of OSMs as a defence of the socialist politics of OSMs under attack from the right and from scholarly advocates of and activists within NSMs.

2. The OSM/NSM framework never fully captured accurately the full range of the politics of social movements.

- Some OSMs were actually new, and some NSMs were actually old.
- In the circles of social activists, many people move between OSMs and NSMs simultaneously or over the span of the lifetime of their social activism.
- On its own, the OSM/NSM framework does not capture well the politics of nationally oppressed peoples' or indigenous struggles; nevertheless, there are OSM and NSM activist/scholars who provide keen analysis of these struggles.

3. The idea and reality of the newness of NSMs captured the presence of a fundamental shift in the objective socio-political economic conditions within which social change takes place.

4. A defence of OSMs, within the context of a fundamental shift in the objective socio-political economic conditions within which social change takes place, delayed and curtailed the use of the analytical tools (Marxist political economy) associated with OSMs best capable to explain the significance and nature of the changing objective conditions.

5. SML research needs to consider the fundamental socio-political economic transformations that have sparked new organizational formations and demands of a new nature. The new social subjects emerging in the Americas and globally have demands that are often quite basic, yet objectively revolutionary given the qualitative socio-political economic transformations out of which they emerge. In other words, when the new social subjects demand access to the basics of life such as water or housing with no way to access them under the prevailing capital/labour relations, they raise demands that directly confront the existing order. The changing nature of social movements raises a number of challenges for current and future SML research.

- Can we develop a new framework for the politics of the new social subjects/movements that can be foundational to SML research?
- Given the revolutionary demands of these new movements, do we see a qualitatively different pedagogical praxis compared to OSMs and NSMs?
- How do we understand pedagogically the relationship between objectively revolutionary demands that are not always understood subjectively as revolutionary?

- Can SML research contribute to a pedagogical praxis that can propel the subjective understanding of the objectively revolutionary nature of demands emerging out of new movements?

**'Beyond knowledge wars': Social movement learning
in HIV and AIDS saturated times**

Shirley Walters

Introduction

This paper focuses on pedagogical questions which are animated by the transformational process of progressing from 'near death' to 'new life' that have challenged our understandings of feminist popular education and social movement learning. It does not rehearse the development of the HIV and AIDS social movement in South Africa, the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), which has been one of the most vital in the region in the last 15 years. (Robins 2008) But it forms part of the backdrop to a more detailed focus on issues of pedagogy that have challenged some of us to move beyond what have been described as 'knowledge wars' (Fenwick 2010).

This paper situates HIV and AIDS in South Africa. It then describes examples of pedagogical practice within HIV and AIDS environments in order to illustrate shifting understandings, conceptual tools and vocabularies emerging from our contexts of practice. In our practices we are finding different ways of relating to others and to self. Such learning involves both exposing and unlearning habituated, culturally- and psychically-shaped modes of being and relating, and re-fashioning new norms, identities and frames of understanding.

A related and often implicit theme – and tension – in feminist popular education is the relationship between self- and social transformation; between the personal and political, or the individual and collective. In our work we proffer the metaphor of the rippling concentric circle for conceiving the relationship between individual learner and effects on collective changes. Writing out of the South African context, that until recently underplayed the significance of personal transformation in effecting sustained political transformation; we defend the focus on individuals and their psychological and spiritual process as a necessary redress. There is a self-conscious intertwining of the pedagogical with the political, with the intent of maximizing transformative possibilities.

HIV and AIDS saturated times

In sub-Saharan Africa no-one is unaffected by HIV and AIDS. It weaves through our personal, political and pedagogical lives. HIV and AIDS highlight difficult social, economic, cultural and personal issues for educators and activists. While it infects and affects children and adults, it is the women who are most susceptible. As Susser (2009: 45) says, '... biology, culture, social organization, low incomes and lack of services conspire to render women extraordinarily susceptible to HIV infection'.

Literature captures the complex interplay between individual behavior, politics, culture, economics, gender relations, power and history in HIV- and AIDS environments. Steinberg (2008: 326) shows how the intimacy of home becomes contaminated and the morality of men is most acutely called into question. Others (Lees 2008) highlight the impact of colonialism and apartheid and argue for 'humanisation' to be at the heart of our

responses. Gevisser (2007), in his penetrating biography of former South African President Thabo Mbeki, analyses the complex interplay of the politics of race, sexuality and global inequality in the shadow of AIDS.

Eight hundred to a thousand people die of AIDS related diseases on an average day in South Africa. However, this is not a particularly African story, as illustrated in the discrimination against HIV positive people; in 2008, 67 countries still deny right of entry or residence to people simply because they are HIV positive; treating all HIV positive people as if they are intentionally going to infect others. This discriminatory practice drives the disease further underground. However, it is the impact of pervasive trauma and grief that is the focus here – and this can be likened to other environments where trauma and grief are caused by other diseases, substance abuse, poverty, discrimination, migration, and violence, which are often exacerbated in times of war, economic, political or climatic turbulence or uncertainty. Given the global uncertainties, it is fair to assume that trauma and grief are widespread and therefore cannot be ignored by activists and educators in social movements of various kinds.

“Beyond knowledge wars”

Fenwick (2010) highlights the conflicts in globalised space over what is the most important knowledge. Social movements are key sites for new knowledge production, and I argue that in the context of HIV and AIDS we can elaborate new understandings of social movement learning, by drawing from a range of discursive communities, including feminist popular education, and ‘transformative learning’, amongst others, which point to complex models of social transformation, that work to critically engage and destabilize various relations of power, including those that infuse knowledge production and identity claims; sidestepping more conventional and prescriptive modes of learning and models of political transformation.

Social Movement Theory and Adult Education: A challenging partnership

Peter H. Sawchuk

Introduction

Both Social Movement Theory (SMT) and Adult Education have long traditions. In this symposium contribution I explore how SMT has the potential to inform and be informed by adult education traditions. However, I argue that there are a number of identifiable biases that resist this potential resulting in a challenging partnership between the two traditions. Whether it is in terms of political process theory, political opportunity analysis or resource mobilization theory the root of these biases, I suggest, lie in limited approaches to human agency in social movement theory. While counter-intuitive, there is ample evidence that human agency, learning and human development remains poorly conceptualized in SMT today. I argue that a key factor to trace in this regard is the prevalence of notions of adaption over transformation in SMT analysis.

Moving Forward to Recognition, Analysis and Action

Nevertheless, using an adult education lens, we still see a number of key areas where these biases are being challenged. It continues to be beyond the purview of such research to arrive at the seemingly simple, but on closer inspection inherently radical, recognition

that people continuously adopt from the past but just as continuously make their own conditions of future learning.

With an understanding of this recognition in place I argue socio-cultural perspectives on social movement offer a particularly useful means to turn such conclusions into viable empirical programs that produce good research, and real social change.

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