

Feature Article

Feminist Philosophy: A Beginning Point for Adult Educators Promoting Women's Wellness Education

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Abstract

This conceptual paper will begin with a general discussion of feminist theory, followed by the explication of feminist humanist and feminist emancipatory philosophies. The various facets of the feminist humanist and feminist emancipatory philosophies will lead to a dialogue of their strengths and needs followed by a compare and contrast commentary. Next, an extensive look at women's development of self and identity from a feminist poststructuralist perspective will be conducted, followed by a discussion of how these philosophies may assist the adult educator in designing and facilitating programs of women's health and well-being.

Introduction

According to bell hooks (2000), feminism is difficult to define. She proposes that the majority of attempts to define feminism mirror the socio-economic, class-laden nature of the feminist movement. Nussbaum (1999) expresses a distinctive conception of feminism by stating, "Feminism is internationalist, humanist, liberal, concerned with the social shaping of preferences and desire, and finally, concerned with sympathetic understanding of women" (p. 6). Nussbaum (1999) interprets feminism as challenging the social and political inequalities of women within a larger global sense of justice for all persons. Alcoff (2000) describes feminism as the sole power giving rise to feminist ethics, feminist epistemology, and feminist political philosophy, utilizing women's lives as the model to expose weaknesses in existing principal theories and forcing the issue of reconstruction. Elaborating on Alcoff's (2000) position,

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Mojab and Gorman (2001) state, “The stunning diversity of feminism is superficial, because underlying all varieties of feminism is the question of patriarchy and how to get rid of it” (p. 287). Furthermore, Kourany, Sterba, and Tong (1999) offer the notion that there is no single profile of a typical feminist; however feminists do have a few tenets in common. These tenets include the following: 1) gender equality is at the forefront of their cause; 2) an unyielding realization that this reality is far from being recognized; and 3) a relentless desire to push ahead until greater equality for women is a reality. Consequently, no matter which feminist philosophical lens is offered, it points out that there is a very elaborate relationship between the voice and consciousness among and between women (Hayes & Flannery, 2000).

With the above observations in mind, this essay now turns to two feminist philosophies offered by Tisdell and Taylor (1998) as complements to the current foundations of adult education. The basic doctrines of feminist humanist and feminist emancipatory philosophies will be described along with their respective strengths and needs. Next, these feminist philosophies will be compared and contrasted in regards to major similarities and differences. Finally, the essay will conclude with a discussion as to how contributions from feminist humanist and feminist emancipatory philosophies may be utilized for the promotion of women’s wellness education.

Feminist Humanist Philosophy

Humanist philosophy is derived from the concepts of humanistic psychology, which is based on the premises that individuals have control of their own destiny; individuals are inherently good and strive for a better universe; individuals are free to act; behavior is the outcome of personal choice; and individuals possess an unconstrained potential for growth and development (Maslow, 1970; Rogers, 1995). It rejects the notion that behavior is predestined by the environment and/or one’s subconscious and is preoccupied with the significance of autonomy reflecting the elevation of the individual. Humanist philosophy values and emphasizes an individual’s affirmed perceptions about their experiences and their ability to act on those perceptions (Merriam & Simpson, 2002). In relation to adult learning theory, the humanistic assumptions of motivation, choice, and personal responsibility of the learner are widely accepted in practice (Merriam & Simpson, 2002). Furthermore, the manifestation of humanistic philosophy within adult learning is andragogy

and self-directed learning for which Malcolm Knowles is most widely known (Tisdell & Taylor, 1998).

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldenberger, and Tarule (1986) brought forth an understanding of feminist humanist philosophy. Within their seminal study, they found that women developed authentic voices and emphasized that the understanding of voice is processed via connections and relationships with others. By and large, feminist humanist philosophy places women's individual development at the forefront. Within this tradition, the voice of women is exalted as being the primary motivator and avenue of knowledge construction within a woman's being. Individual learning within this perspective is viewed as incorporating and/or facilitating other ways of knowing one's personal experiences (Tisdell & Taylor, 1998).

Strengths and Needs of Feminist Humanist Philosophy

A notable strength of this philosophy is that it emphasizes a woman's ability to be, do, and become whoever she wants to become. This philosophy encourages women to highly regard intersubjectivity as a positive discourse; intersubjectivity being the balance of finding meaning within one's self via a multitude of interpersonal relationships. Intersubjectivity acknowledges that women's interpersonal relationships serve as resources for learning and knowing oneself. The focus is on intersubjectivity as alerting women to their common bond with other women. Intersubjectivity is a protection thwarting objectification of others and a reminder that other individuals are entitled to their personal expressions of self. Nevertheless, while the urgency of putting individual women at the forefront seems justified, it seems that a tall order has been handed to women. Women are asked to look deep inside themselves for a great majority of answers without the consideration of social and cultural effects. Although women are encouraged to accept the freedom to look at their individual needs, this tunnel vision may sometimes put additional pressure on some women to solve life's problems on their own. In addition, another concern for women is the need to acknowledge that this process of being, doing, and becoming may be encumbered with varied degrees of power struggles in relation to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, historical and/or cultural expectations that this philosophical stance does not address.

Another underlying assumption of feminist humanist philosophy is that women inherently have similar characteristics, thereby implicitly translating the idea that difference may be a problem instead of a strength

to build upon among and between women. Alcoff (2000) views this philosophy as having limited resources for comprehending and evaluating difference. An initial assumption that could be more explicitly put forth is that women do have different traits and characteristics. This appears to be a more reasonable stance to offer women as they navigate development of self and in their relationship to others. It makes sense that a woman who has more of an opportunity to value diversity and choice from the onset may be better equipped to internalize her own needs and ideals while at the same time making sense of the differences among her and other women. As Bloom (2002) points out, without women giving the ideals of similarity and difference considerable thought, they may end up with interesting stories about endlessly particular and elaborated lives which miss the mark on understanding power and politics.

This essay will now turn to feminist emancipatory philosophy. This is the second relationally-driven philosophy that Tisdell and Taylor (1998) offer as a plausible avenue for learning and teaching within adult education, stating that a relationally-driven philosophy, “emphasizes the significance of relationship and affectivity as learners construct new knowledge” (p. 9). Both the feminist humanist and feminist emancipatory philosophies emphasize gender-related, relational, affective and rational learning; however, the feminist emancipatory philosophy will add the dimensions of power, discourse and positionality to the adult education process.

Feminist Emancipatory Philosophy

Emancipatory philosophy within adult education is derived from the concepts of Freire, Habermas and the transformative learning works of Mezirow. However, Freire's (1989) concepts, based on his theory of oppression, appear to be more widely heralded within adult education as a philosophy that equalizes the power imbalances between teacher and student (Tisdell, 2001b). The overall goal of Freire's perspective is social emancipation via a collective force of individuals' political questioning and strengthening.

In her book *Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks (1994) states that her development as a critical thinker was deeply influenced by Freire's work. hooks (1994) states,

And so Freire's work, in its global understanding of liberation struggles, always emphasizes that this is an important initial stage of transformation—that historical moment when one begins to think

critically about the self and identity in relation to one's political circumstance. (p. 47)

As such, feminist emancipatory philosophy is concerned with examining how power, cultural and societal structures intersect with gender, race, class, religion and sexual orientation to inform women's learning and ways of knowing (Tisdell & Taylor, 1998). It is clear that the primary challenge to women's learning and knowing occurs at the intersections of multiple systems of privilege and oppression. Therefore, the primary purpose of adult education under the framework of feminist emancipatory philosophy is social change. This philosophy is about women working together via fervent communication pathways to confront social injustice and inequity, in order to develop better ways of living and knowing within society (hooks, 1994).

Luke (1992) suggests that within this tradition women must rest upon their shifting positionality, which encumbers their historical, political and cultural lives. Within emancipatory feminist philosophy a foundation of difference is acknowledged among and between women, whereby these differences are viewed as a collective strength for social change. Women are encouraged to deconstruct master/patriarchal narratives, in order to make sense of new ways of learning, knowing and being within society.

Strengths and Needs of Feminist Emancipatory Philosophy.

The expected outcome of the feminist emancipatory process is the emergence of new insight, the development of new knowledge and awareness, which in turn leads to action which changes the circumstances of women's positionality within society (Tisdell, 2001b). This may be difficult for women who have yet to understand their personal positions on social change or simply do not have the energy to engage in emancipatory causes secondary to physical and/or emotional liabilities. It may be challenging to actively join a cause if one is having difficulty understanding facts to begin with; however, this philosophy strongly emphasizes communication among women towards an ultimate goal of emancipation. But then again, and rightly so, a number of educators question and challenge this strength of feminist emancipatory teaching, learning, and research, in that it may reinstate and/or reinforce the power dynamics to which it is theoretically opposed. Consequently, Tisdell (2001a) offers the notion that the strength of learning which is emancipatory resides in both an understanding of existing power structures and

in how to challenge the power structure's underlying ideologies. This learning engages women in the social and political transformation within their contextual environments where they may not have yet challenged various power and/or political structures.

Commonalities and Differences of the Philosophies

The preceding sections provided an overview of feminist humanist and feminist emancipatory philosophies. This section will attempt to note the commonalities and differences among these philosophies. The most obvious commonality is that both philosophies have agendas focused on women. The following figure will assist in understanding both the connection and disconnection between these philosophies.

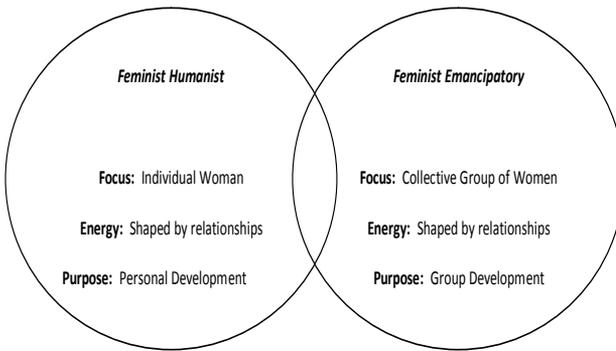


Figure 1. Comparison of Feminist Humanist & Feminist Emancipatory Philosophies

First, while feminist humanist philosophy is focused on individual women's liberation, feminist emancipatory philosophy is focused on women's collective liberation. According to Inglis (1997), "Empowerment involves people developing capacities to act successfully within the existing system and structures of power, while emancipation concerns critically analyzing, resisting, and challenging structures of power" (p. 13). Next, there is the common thread of relationships that shape and influence women's lives in both philosophies; however the influence that relationships have on women's lives is viewed as a different type of energy flow. Within feminist humanist philosophy the energy of

relationships is viewed as circling back as a positive or negative force within women's lives, assisting with individual empowerment. Feminist emancipatory philosophy takes the energy of relationships, whether positive or negative, and forms them into an energy source for social emancipation of a collective group of women. Lastly, the contextual nature of the philosophies is drastically different. While the context for feminist humanist is gender, feminist emancipatory philosophy expands the context beyond gender to include the intersections of class, race, sexual orientation, religion and so on.

Both of the feminist perspectives offer positions that are clear, eloquent, and compelling and each philosophical stance offers unique and exciting options for addressing health and well-being for women of diverse backgrounds. Consequently, Woloch (1984) offers this prescription for philosophical groundings of any educational effort of women, "Once women are the center of attention the stage revolves and history has a different script" (p. 56). Therefore, the following section will provide insights on women's development of self & identity.

Women's Development of Self and Identity

It is difficult to appreciate the literature on women's development of self without giving consideration to the larger picture of self and identity. Toward that end, the next section will provide an historical perspective on the development of self, examine women's individual construction of self and identity and explore women's self and identity in relation to others.

An Historical Perspective on the Development of Self

Prior to the 20th century, if one referred to the self it was equivalent to referring to the soul, will, or spirit (deMunck, 2000). The self as an immaterial entity was the foremost consideration of Plato and Socrates and it was Descartes (1596-1650) who conceptualized the mind and body as different yet parallel beings (deMunck, 2000). His most famous statement, I think therefore I am, has made its way across the centuries.

Therefore, it stands to reason that for hundreds of years individuals have been attempting to answer the question - Who am I unto myself? (James, 1890/1983). James (1890/1983) envisioned a global self that encompassed both the I and the Me. He considered the seat of consciousness, the observer and the evaluator, as I; whereas Me was the actor, the doer, the performer part of the self. In addition, James

(1890/1983) envisioned the true self or the I, as being comprised of four complementary yet hierarchal selves of which the highest ranking self was that of spiritual self, continuing down to the social self, material self, and the bodily self respectively (deMunck, 2000). James (1890/1983) defined the spiritual self as being related to thinking and feeling, whereas the social self was influenced by individual and group interactions. The material self consisted of possessions, while the bodily self focused on images of one's body.

It is easily recognized that concepts of self have become more complex and complicated as individuals' relationships within their environment and society have expanded throughout the years. This literature review will progress through and past the self James (1890) conceptualized and it will introduce the multifaceted self that individuals attempt to bring into balance on a daily basis in the 21st century.

Historically, most theorists took an individualist conceptual notion of the construction of self; however, Kelly (1955) addressed an individual's being as the intricate constructs and cognitive formations "he" [sic] has power over. This perspective of self is viewed as a cognitive process that enables an individual to distinguish "himself" [sic] from others (deMunck, 2000). According to Rogers (1980) the self is a way of being and it is the leader of an individual's personal growth and development. Rogers (1961) identified ten directions individuals may take when attempting to become self-actualized (i.e., making the most of the self or developing the best self). These ten directions individuals move through are as follows: (a) away from facades; (b) away from "oughts;" (c) away from meeting expectations; (d) away from pleasing others; (e) toward self-direction; (f) toward the "being" process; (g) toward being complex; (h) toward openness to experience; (i) toward acceptance of others; and (j) toward trust in the values of self. Rogers (1995) became very much aware of the importance of the person and self within learning environments. He felt that for individuals to be creative and productive in the learning environment, they must come to know how to tap into the power of developing a relationship with inner selves. Rogers (1961) was firmly committed to the thought that it was extremely important for the individual to develop a sense of their own being without concentrating on the external factors of the environment. Furthermore Rogers (1980) believed that as individuals move through the stages of making self and their worlds, the self is ultimately controlled by the individual and not by society. He states, "A self is synonymous with experience, being the subjective awareness of that experience is reality" (p. 149).

Laing (1961, 1969) agrees with Rogers (1961) on the point of individuals being their own agents and that the self is tied to the discovery of personal consciousness. However, he emphasized that an individual's definition of self was influenced and affected by the relationships one had with others. Consequently, he felt that often times these relationships led to an avoidance of discovering the true self (Laing, 1969).

Advancing the individualist notion of self into a greater understanding of the role of the social context in constructing self, Mead (1934) envisioned the self as being primarily socially constructed. He stated, "The self, as that which can be an object to itself, is essentially a social structure, and it arises in social experience" (p. 14). He felt the construct of I was the biological baseline from which the social self develops, eventually rising above the biological self. Mead (1934) contended that the presence of others alters one's awareness of oneself and consequently one's behavior. He did not envision the self as inherently situated and/or in charge of the consciousness. To the contrary, he believed the self develops out of social experiences.

Rosenburg (1979) described the development of self as personal thoughts and feelings mixed internally with social interactions. Furthermore, Gergen (1991) and Kegan (1982, 1994) brought to light the notion of individuals possessing a multiplicity of selves brought about by the dual function of history and cultural representations within an individual's life. Gergen (1991) made these notions clearer by giving the following example:

Although it grows increasingly difficult to be certain of who or what one is, social life proceeds. And in one's interactions one continues to identify oneself as this or that sort of person. One may identify oneself as American in one situation, Irish in another and a mixture of nationalities in still others. One may be feminine for certain friends, masculine for others, and androgynous still for others. (p. 145)

Gergen's (1991) point is that the self is viewed as being equally socially-constructed through the meaning-making of the environment and the relationships individuals have within those environments.

Kegan (1982) further conceptualized individuals as meaning makers and explorers of inner experience; however he felt that ultimately society transformed an individual's self by the influence of culture, history and societal expectations of outward behavior. He believed the self was

socially constructed through meaning-making of the environment and through the relationships with other individuals in various contextual environments. Kegan (1994) began to focus more on society's impact on the self when he wrote the book, *In Over Our Heads*. At this point, Kegan's (1994) view of the self had transformed from the self having some control over the consciousness to an overwhelming awareness of the role the environment has in the production of self.

So as one may glean, this perspective views self as socially constructed; therefore the boundaries of self and social contexts cannot be easily divided. The making of the self is not only at the individual level, but also at the social level with its margins and expectations.

Women's Individual Construction of Self & Identity

As Mansfield (2000) notes, traditional theories of self have focused on male development as it has been presented within the biological, experiential, socio-cognitive, social constructive, and psychological lenses. In addition, modernist conceptual frameworks and empirical studies related to the development of self, have consistently offered the perspective of a rational, unified and linear self. The poststructuralist and poststructuralist feminist literature of self further the above perspectives by emphasizing the notion of a non-unitary self that is, in part, socially constructed based on power relations and the individual's constantly shifting sense of self and identity within those power relations.

The notion of women's individual and social construction of self and identity is difficult to discern directly within much of the literature, although it is there implicitly. A majority of the literature focuses on women's development of self being parallel to the development of their relationships and connections with others, which implicitly gets at how women individually construct their identities through social relationships. Nevertheless, this first section will focus on how women construct their individual identity, keeping in mind this research purports that women do so through relationship with others, an idea that will be taken up more in the next section.

Weedon (1997) views women's self as being the collective effort of unconscious and conscious thoughts that form an understanding of the sense of self and connections within various contexts. Maslow's studies did not include women; however his notions have had a great impact on the notion of women's construction of self throughout the years, so his perspectives are briefly presented here. Maslow emphasizes the significance of the individual with all his or her differences. His perspective

contests that no matter how powerful cultural influences and how weak an individual's instincts may be, the impetus for the formation of the healthy self cannot be based on the opinions of others, but that the individual must overcome opinions of others and rest on their own capacities.

Taylor and Marienua (1995) provide sources of insight concerning the relationship to self and the development of self. They feel it is within the moments of being able to discern what the self needs from a relationship that healthy or unhealthy choices are decided upon by the majority of women. Bateson (1990) offers the notion that it is of the utmost importance and value that women create their life by learning about their preferences, needs, and wants in relation to their environments. Neumann and Peterson (1997) suggest, "A woman's efforts to re-present her everyday life reflect a deeper impulse to know and learn authentically from her own questions, concerns and understandings rather than to assume unquestioningly the perspectives of presumably more knowledgeable others" (p. 229).

Furthermore, Flannery (2000b) states, "Women often revisit, unlearn and recreate their own self definitions and those others have for them...Women are all sorts of combinations of identities" (p. 54-55). Flannery (2000a) suggests subjective knowing or individual development of self within women's lives has not been explored to its depths as of yet. Subjective knowing being defined as, "The way women go about connecting with themselves, rely on their own knowledge, and struggle with broader issues of power and control related to acknowledging themselves as authorities" (p. 123). It is from the perspective of subjective knowing, that women must honor their connections to self and guard against oppressive and unfair actions that are not consistent with a woman's core understanding of self and her surroundings (Flannery, 2001). This subjective knowing or individual development of self goes beyond acquiring new information or acting out new behaviors within the environment. It involves discovering compelling ways of thinking about self as a way of being (Goldenberger, Tarule, Clinchy & Belenky, 1996). Cherin (1987) offers the enlightening notion that to know oneself more effectively, women need to fully surrender self to self. She further notes that it is through these efforts that women will be more effective and efficient in going inside their being to listen to and honor their own voice.

Related to Cherin's notion, Hayes & Flannery (2000) considered the meanings of voice as talk, identity, and/or power of self. Women

engage in talk with others and with themselves as a means of their outer and inner voice. Women identify themselves by the voice they give, develop, or reclaim in different situations. In relation to giving voice, women name the experiences which have formed them at the moment. In developing voice women are changing or restructuring a voice within/outside of their self. As for reclaiming voice, women select to take back or ignite a voice within them that has been silenced in the past secondary to cultural issues, oppression, or other societal reasons. Hayes and Flannery (2000) further offer the thought that women's voice may be identified as a very positive and constructive personal authority for women—as a woman finds and utilizes her voice it may offer her immediate internal and external control over her life. A woman's inner voice and outer voice have clout. Women need to listen to their inner voice and honor the expression of their needs based on this voice. Over the centuries, women's voices have been heard individually and collectively as powerful influences, however an imbalance of power in a women's voice still remains in today's society.

Women of color have consistently offered insights to the differences within and among women. It makes sense to take into consideration the many different ways women lead their lives and form impressions of self within communities, at work, and within the home. Collins (1990) defines these impressions of self as "mother wit" or wisdom. She feels that "mother wit" is the value of black women's knowing based within the self, in experience, in intuition, in connection, and in embodiment. The individual self must be valued for what it has to offer women—freedom, confidence and insight to their own way of doing, being and becoming.

Women's Self and Identity in Relation to Others

Miller (1976) first proposed that women are socialized in a culture to take care of others before finding/searching for their self. She felt this was the overarching factor in a woman's psyche and stated, "It is of extreme importance to stress that women have been led to feel they can integrate and use all of their attributes if they use them for others but not for themselves" (p. 60). She went further to assert that a woman's sense of self is primarily determined by her ability to care for others. Gilligan (1982) like Miller (1976) researched women's relationships of care. She did so by researching women's moral development within several situations. She also concluded that not only do women define their self in terms of relationships, but they evaluate their sense of self by their ability to give of themselves to others.

Chodorow (1980) asserts that self development for women is all about constructing one's self while at the same time maintaining and supporting relationships. Much like Chodorow's perspective, Surry (1985) has conceptualized women's self-in-relation as the primary means of women's self development. She feels relationships are the primary means by which women's sense of self is organized and matured. She contends that all aspects of a woman's subjectivity are developed from experiences within relationships. Furthermore, Surry's theory contends that women would have a difficult time developing a sense of self in isolation of other individuals.

Gilligan (1982) was concerned that prior research related to moral development of self by Piaget and Kohlberg implied a moral deficiency in women. Secondary to this concern, she engaged in two separate studies with women focused on moral reasoning. The conclusion of these studies contends that women's ethics of care rest upon the notion that women's selves are ultimately found within relationships and the nurturing of those relationships. Gilligan's (1982) conclusions about women's ethics of care will be defined in more detail within the women's caring section of this literature review.

Similar to Miller (1976), Chodorow (1980), Gilligan (1982) and Surry (1985); Josselson (1987) established that women's identity formation is closely linked to their relationships and connections with others. Her research implies that a woman's self is intimately linked to how her self is connecting and/or communicating with others. If the relationship/connection is healthy, the self is more than likely to be healthy. If the relationship/connection is under tension, the self is more likely to be under tension. Josselson's (1987) study revealed that as some women aged they were able to shut out negative childhood selves and become more flexible and form a more consistent and healthy self; however in times of stress these women did find themselves reverting back to "hidden" identity/self. Furthermore, other women in her study seemed to forever remain in conflict with their childhood identities, which translated into more multidimensional and/or fragmented selves. At the conclusion of Josselson's (1987) study women did not experience the modernist notion of a rational and unified self whether their relationships were healthy or under tension; in contrast, they experienced what is termed by Tisdell (2001b) as constantly shifting identity formation.

Like Gilligan (1982) and Josselson (1987), Belenky, et al. (1986) were concerned that previous theorists/researchers had spent too much time focusing on male development, so they decided to conduct a quali-

tative study focusing on women's ways of knowing and development. The outcome of the study revealed that women's ways of knowing and development are divided into five categories: silence, received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, and constructed knowledge. In respect to women's identity of self in relation to others, the received way of knowing is most associated to women looking to others for wisdom and taking others insights as "right or wrong, true or false, good or bad, black or white" (p. 37). Women at this stage of knowing or development feel that there are only a few right answers and very few other answers are plausible. Belenky, et al. (1986) did not see this way of knowing as damaging to women and contend that it is a means for women to have a sense of power by receiving well-informed knowledge and insight from a source of authority. Hence, "received knowers" deem relationships to be very important and almost essential to their knowing and development.

Going beyond the findings of Belenky's et al.'s study, Rockhill (1993) contends that a woman's self is constructed and contested out of her positioning of being a caretaker within the dominant culture. This self is the product of dominant discourses and fashioned out of the conscious and unconscious effects of sexism, classism, and racism. At the time of her study, Rockhill (1993) contended that women living within the constraints and expectations of western society experience a fragmented and multidimensional self. Although this was natural for the women in this study, at the time it was viewed as atypical by society's standards. Some fifteen years later, Cain (2002) contended when addressing women's self within the educational environment, adult educators must always take into consideration the dimensions of class, gender, and race which affect women's relationship with self and others. She believes it is within these dimensions that the intersections of psychological and social constructions of self are challenged on a daily basis within women's daily lives. She insisted that adult educators must become more aware of the salient and overt values placed on a women's sense of self if they want to make the teaching-learning process fruitful. More about women's self and identity, in relation to others will be addressed in the discussion on caring for others later in this literature review. The following section speaks to the affects societal issues of gender, oppression, and power have on defining women's construction and/or knowing of self.

Summary of Women's Development of Self

The conceptual and research literature offers numerous resources related to how women come to learn, know, and process the multiple facets of self within their daily lives. As noted by Sedikides and Brewer (2001), there appears to be a coming era where it will be acceptable to entertain the individual self, relational self and collective self without being termed psychotic or otherwise being disenfranchised from one's environment. As the old saying goes, "We cannot be all things to all people (including ourselves) at all times...there is a time and a season." For hundreds of years researchers looking at the self as a major point of inquiry posed the following question, "How can we conceive of an entity that is at once both a known object and the knower of that object?" Alport (1961) considered this notion for many years and finally came to the conclusion that utilizing the self as a means of inquiry should focus on the self as a known object and leave the self as a knower to the field of philosophy. Under this concept of self, adult educators may relate the self to another entity and that entity can be related back to the self. By being active and/or involved in action, the self as a knower can be more aware of how the self is shaped by the experience and the experience is shaped by the self (Sedikides & Brewer, 2001).

Highlighting Creativity in Feminist Approaches to Adult Education

In light of the information provided, adult educators may want to consider adding components of creativity to their research methodology and practice. The feminist philosophies addressed lend themselves to creative modes of application & inquiry. A great majority of adult educators tend to be somewhat formal in their methods of conducting research and in their means of practice. A creative synthesis project component may extend our understanding such that women may realize the full picture of health and well-being in their daily lives. An adult educator may also want to reconsider feminist modes of teaching which convey a more open and nurturing environment for the learner (Connell, 1985).

In this light, the move will be towards communicating the creation and the negotiation of women's health and well-being through women's dialogue with self and others. An adult educator may ponder and plan to capture the ascending spiral of women's stories as unique, dynamic, holistic, and engaged perspectives to further learning and understanding of the texture of women's culture and place within it alongside of the promotion or maintenance of personal health and well-being. The

following is proposed as a functional feminist theoretical framework for designing and facilitating women's wellness education.

Women's Wellness Education: A Functional Feminist Theoretical Framework

To this point, this conceptual piece has attempted to shed light on the constructs of the feminist humanist and feminist emancipatory philosophies. At this juncture, the essay will explore how both philosophies may be utilized as a theoretical framework for women's wellness education.

The feminist humanist philosophy would allow women to take into consideration their own stories and autobiographies related to personal health and well-being. Every woman has a story of how her health has been diminished and/or enhanced secondary to an event, relationship, or personal insight. From this lens, women would be given permission to focus on their own needs in relation to health and well-being. They would be given the privilege to look inside of themselves for a greater understanding of what they need to do on a daily basis to achieve overall wellness. Women may find a light inside of themselves and, even after a few sessions, may feel more comfortable in having a daily routine filled with personal selections that enhance their mind, body, and spirit. I suspect that women's wellness under this philosophy would allow women to take ownership of their personal health and well-being rather quickly; however, I question the longevity of a program under this philosophy because it may not get to the underlying factors as to why a preponderance of women have difficulty maintaining a routine of individual well-being.

Therefore, allow me to turn to feminist emancipatory philosophy. I feel that the feminist emancipatory philosophy, which facilitates a collective group of women questioning the circumstances of their oppression, may be a healthier choice for adult educators interested in facilitating women searching for their stories alongside a regular routine of well-being. As Tisdell (2001a) states, "But for a story to have an emancipatory potential it has to raise consciousness and/or challenge structured power relations in society in some way – and have the potential to move people to action" (p. 276). This philosophical stance appears to give women the opportunity to question what has been hindering and/or squelching their collective health and well-being.

An appropriate means to move women to action is via hooks' (1994) engaged pedagogy. Engaged pedagogy is a progressive, holistic form of education and it is the premise of education found within feminist emancipatory philosophy. Engaged pedagogy is intense and takes a great deal of energy on the part of the educator and learner; however, valued societal changes for women by women is the anticipated outcome. It may be so that some women may not be philosophically inclined to see their issue as a social problem and/or "the root of all further oppression" easily, but education about this philosophical stance in relation to individual health and well-being may prove fruitful. hooks (1994) implies that engaged pedagogy is a process of self-actualization which promotes well-being and she asserts that learners crave education that is holistic, collective and challenging to oppressive societal norms. It may be that involvement of the cognitive, affective/relational and behavioral systems found within emancipatory learning are the means by which women may begin to experience and create new ways of knowing how to build healthy lives.

Lastly, Tisdell (2001a) offers the notion that women sharing stories around their positionalities assists in the understanding of their constantly shifting identities around the systems of power, privilege, and oppression that form their lives. She states, "It raises our consciousness, it changes our behavior, it does indeed move us to action" (p. 283). Promotion of women's wellness under the feminist emancipatory philosophy will afford women the opportunity to dive deep into the societal norms/thoughts about how women should or should not care for themselves on a daily basis. It may in fact move women to question, challenge and critique society's minimalist notion on women's health and well-being.

Both the feminist humanist and feminist emancipatory philosophies have a purpose and plan for women's lives; but, again, it will depend on the purpose and questions of women's health and well-being that will guide which philosophical stance could/would be utilized in a given situation. It may be that a blending of both philosophies may provide the most constructive framework for women's wellness education. It may be thought of as feminist preservation philosophy--a philosophy that encourages women with diverse and even very divergent experiences to identify with one another freely towards the ultimate goal of enhancing women's health and well-being in the 21st century.

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