PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning, **Vol. 26, 2017, 55-22**

Invited Article

Racing the Field of Adult Education—Making the Invisible Visible

Jovita Ross-Gordon

Abstract

This article provides an overview of adult education literature related to race over the last 30 years. Starting with a chronological approach, it describes contributions from the late 1980s that incorporated race as a key dimension of multicultural adult education and sought to make visible the invisible adult education participation as well as contributions by people of color from decades past. Next, it discusses the turn toward a more explicit analysis of race and racism beginning during the 1990s and continuing until now. Shifting from a chronological to a theoretical perspective, the article highlights several frameworks that have undergirded much of the literature on race and adult education since the 1990s—Africentric theory, Critical Race Theory, and Black Feminist theories. Next, it considers literature on the role of race in the adult learning environment, including studies looking at student and instructor positionality and those focused on dialogue about race in the classroom. Finally, the article ends with a discussion of challenges and opportunities facing the field going forward.

Jovita Ross-Gordon

Introduction

Nearly 30 years ago I contributed a chapter titled "Reaching and Serving Culturally Diverse Groups" to the New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education (NDACE) issue on Fulfilling the Promise of Continuing Education edited by Allan Quigley (Ross, 1989). In that issue I opened by contrasting the

Jovita M. Ross-Gordon, Professor, Texas State University.

call for adult education to serve as a democratizing force made by Alain Locke in a 1945 issue of the Journal of Negro Education, with the current state of affairs regarding equitable participation in adult education programs—in particular as related to a focus of issues related to racial and cultural diversity in the literature of the field. My chapter also offered recommendations for improved data collection, dissemination of effective programmatic models, enhancement of graduate and professional training, and an expanded agenda for research and policy development. Looking at the field more than 25 years later, in this article, I discuss what I perceive as evidence of progress over these decades, as well as challenges that still face the field in addressing matters of race in the context of 21st century America. As I provide some highlights of this evolution, I apologize in advance for omitting some of the works that may be considered central to this discussion, whether through space limitations, oversight, or memory failure.

Setting the Stage for Attention to Race--Circa 1990 through 1999

Multicultural Adult Education and Uncovering Neglected Histories

The year that the chapter referenced above was published, along with the next several years, proved to be ones when it might be said that the doorway to the hallowed halls [of publications in the field] cracked open wide enough to let in the winds of change. In the same year, Diane Buck Briscoe and I co-authored a chapter titled "Racial and Ethnic Minorities" in the Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education edited by Merriam and Cunningham (Briscoe & Ross, 1989). Casssara's Adult Education in a Multicultural Society, Neufeldt and McGee's Education of the African-American Adult, and an NDACE issue entitled Serving Culturally Diverse Populations edited by Martin, Briscoe, and myself were published the following year, in 1990, while my article titled A Multicultural Perspective for Adult Education Research appeared in Adult Education Quarterly in 1991. Notably, in keeping with publications emerging in the broader field of education at the time, the majority of these works framed an interest in race and ethnicity within a multicultural framework (Cassara, 1990; Ross-Gordon, Martin, Briscoe, 1990; Ross-Gordon 1991), while others focused on filling in the gaps of untold stories of adult education participation by people of color (Neufeldt & McGee, 1990). A multicultural perspective was also prominent in several works published in the mid-1990s, including Tisdell's ERIC monograph on Inclusive Learning Environments (Tisdell, 1995) and my effort to frame a critical multicultural pedagogy drawing on critical pedagogy, feminist pedagogy, and antiracist education (1994); while Denton's (1993) tome

on Booker T. Washington and the Adult Education Movement and Freedom Road, edited by Peterson (1996), more closely aligned with the revisionist history tradition of Neufeldt and McGee (1990).

In my 1993 article in this journal titled "Multicultural Issues in Adult Education: Where We've Come From, Where We Are Now, Where We're Going," I offered five key observations perhaps worth sharing here: (a) how little information was reflected in core adult education literature regarding contributions by and programs developed by and for people of color; (b) how much of the literature on adult education of racial/ethnic minorities appeared to reside in other fields; (c) how essential it was to examine rich traditions of nonformal and information education among racial and ethnic minority populations, particularly for historical periods when opportunities for formal education were extremely limited; (d) how traditional lines of distinction between adult and youth education did not seem to fit some multicultural contexts; and (e) how challenging it was to find information on racial/ethnic groups other than African Americans.

Although a multicultural framework for considering race diminished in prominence as the 1990s progressed, Guy (1999) retained a focus on sociocultural context in the NDACE issue he edited, titled Culture as Context for Adult Education: The Need for Culturally Relevant Adult Education. Explaining the importance for adult educators to understand the cultural backgrounds of learners in adult education programs, he remarked: "Adult learners will be very different in the future, and the sociocultural background of learners will become increasingly important in shaping how adult education services are provided for racially, ethnically, and linguistically marginalized learners" (Guy, 1999, p.2).

Turning the Page Toward a More Direct Gaze at Race and Racism

Parallel to the strand of work discussed above, a body of work also emerged during the 1990s focusing more directly on race and racism. Leading the way was an NDACE chapter titled "Perceptual Patterns and the Learning Environment: Confronting Racism" by Colin III and Preciphs. Colin and Preciphs challenged the field's blindness to racism, saying: "Almost nowhere in adult education literature and research is racism recognized as an integral and influential part of American life that requires our immediate attention…This behavior influences adult education practice and sustains perceptions that impede learning" (Colin III & Preciphs, 1991, p. 62). Colin III and Preciphs recommended that adult educators hoping to confront racism: (a) acknowledge racism,

(b) commit to addressing it in the learning environment, (c) reflect the cultures and histories of nonwhite groups in adult education curriculum, (d) use the affective domain of learning to facilitate self-reflection, and (e) assess learning experiences including those in the affective domain. Notably, this paper was published before most of the works cited as being seminal to Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Colin III continued urging the field to take a hard look at racism in the NDACE issue she co-edited with Hayes, entitled Confronting Racism and Sexism (Hayes & Colin III, 1994).

This turn toward a more direct focus on race was also reflected during the 1990s in the increasing incorporation of an Africentric epistemology, initially articulated by Asante (1990, 1998). In an article appearing in this same journal, Colin & Guy (1998) outlined the basic tenets of Africentric theory, calling upon seven principles of the Swahili Nguzo Saba (familiar to readers acquainted with the ethnic celebration of Kwanzaa) as a normative framework for defining an Africentric cultural perspective. This turn was stimulated by the emergence of the African American Adult Education Research Pre-Conference (beginning with the Adult Education Research Conference held at Penn State University in 1993). This preconference, later to become the African Diaspora Research Conference, has served as an ongoing incubator for scholarship on race, with a number of current contributors to theory and research in this area making their first scholarly presentations there.

Continuing the Drive Toward Social Justice—2000 to date

Selected Key Contributions

Since 2000, scholarship on race has gained a more prominent place in the literature of the field. The 2000 Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education for the first time included a chapter specifically addressing race. In "The Invisible Politics of Race in Adult Education," Johnson-Bailey and Cervero discussed the historical omission or cursory treatment of race in past Handbooks, and examined current educational perspectives on race. In this chapter Johnson-Bailey and Cervero voiced their personal preference for a social justice perspective, suggesting that such a perspective was needed to name the "racial barriers that cause some learners to be overprivileged and others to be underprivileged" (2010, p. 157).

The 2010 Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education (Kasworm, Rose, & Ross-Gordon, 2010) subsequently incorporated a section on the centrality of social justice, including a chapter entitled "Chasing the American Dream: Race and Adult and Continuing Education." In that chapter, Isaac, Merriweather, and Rogers (2010) provided a critique of contemporary race-based theories, including multiculturalism, Africentrism, Black Feminist Thought (BFT), and Critical Race Theory (CRT)—each of which will be discussed in greater detail shortly. Isaac et al. (2010) also observed that while the volume of scholarship on the subject of race increased as more scholars of color entered the field, an examination of curricular requirements of adult education graduate programs indicated that only a small number of programs included a core course on diversity or multiculturalism. An even smaller number featured elective courses specific to race. In summing up the current scholarly literature on race, they noted, "An analysis of journals and conferences affiliated with the discipline suggest that there are two broad categories that describe how race and racism are approached in adult education: (a) racialized minorities as subject and (b) interrogation of race and racism at the theory level" (Isaac, Merriweather, & Rogers, 2010, p. 363). While acknowledging the importance of research on racialized minorities to widen the circle of who counts in adult education, they also challenged adult educators not to be lulled by progress into a false sense of security, noting, "We must move beyond this and engage in more research that directly interrogates race and racism as theoretical constructs" (2010 p. 363).

Several recent works appear to take up the challenge posed by Isaac, Merriweather, & Rogers (2010). In particular, the Handbook of Race and Adult Education (2010), edited by Sheared, Johnson-Bailey, Colin III, Peterson, and Brookfield, treats race as its central focus, as suggested by the book's title. It includes 21 chapters authored by the editors and 22 other colleagues as well as by a collaborative team not identifying individual members by name. Chapters consider race and adult education through Black, White, Chicano, Asian, Indigenous, and Immigrant lenses; they span research, theory, and practice; and represent a cross-section of theoretical perspectives, including Africentric, Critical Race, Postcolonial, Queer Critical, Critical White, and Transnational theoretical perspectives.

Framed at least partially in Isaac, Merriweather, and Rogers' category of "racialized minority as subject," two issues of NDACE published in 2014 and 2016 were compiled as a two-part series focusing on Black

males as a population rarely discussed in the mainstream literature of the field (Rosser-Mims, Schwartz, Drayton, & Guy, 2014; Drayton, Rosser-Mims, Schwartz, Guy, 2016). The first of these issues includes chapters that focus on the Black male experience as related to GED education, education or incarcerated individuals, postsecondary education, and veteran's education. The second issue includes chapters focusing on Black males and the digital divide, and Blacks males in learning contexts as disparate as corporate America and the Black Church. Going forward, a new journal entitled Dialogues in Social Justice: An Education Journal that launched its inaugural issue in 2016, offers a new venue for scholarship on race in adult education.

Major Perspectives on Race and Adult Education During this Period

Since 2000, a diverse array of paradigms and perspectives have been theorized and applied to research related to race and adult education.

Africentric Theory. After coming to the fore in the 1990s, Africentric theory has maintained its prominence since 2000. Merriweather (2004), for example, critiques the pervasive Eurocentric perspectives dominating adult education literature, typically represented as normative through such theories as andragogy. She contrasts Eurocentrism, which has been characterized as materialistic, individualistic, competitive, rational, and linear, with Africentrism that stresses interdependency, interconnectedness, spirituality, holism, and harmony. In describing Eurocentrism, she notes:

> Eurocentrism places the history, culture, and philosophical perspectives of people of European descent in a privileged, more valuable position than any other world culture. Eurocentrism, especially in the U.S. context, disguises itself as a universal perspective from which every culture must evaluate its experiences. (Merriweather Hunn, 2004, p. 66)

She explains that Africentric philosophy, on the other hand, asserts that location in one's own culture is important, and questions the right of dominant cultures to legitimize knowledge and those who produce it while not simply replacing one "centrism" with another. She observes: "A key difference is that Afrocentric is polycentric and supports other cultural perspectives when they hold center stage. It relegates none to the periphery. … It values them all. (Merriweather Hunn, 2004, p. 69).

From a practical standpoint she suggests that practitioners make a point of assessing those Eurocentric assumptions that guide their practice, take time to become familiar with African-American culture or other cultural perspectives of students in their programs, expand curricula to incorporate non-Eurocentric perspectives achievements, and create a safe learning environment in which non-European perspectives can be freely expressed. Examples of this can be seen in two studies presented at recent Adult Education Research Conferences.

Ellis (2013) described a case study focused on the experiences of six educators in three African-centered K-12 schools. She examined how conceptual elements of the Africentric Paradigm were reflected in the educational environments and incorporated into the curriculum and instruction, as well as how the objectives were implemented in continuing education programs for the teachers. She found numerous ways in which seven principles of Nguzo Saba were incorporated into the school culture and instructional strategies. She discovered that while two of the principles were most evident in the institutional mission statements—Umani (faith) and Kujichagulia (self-determination)—the other principles were integrated throughout the curriculum: (a) Umoja (unity), Ujima (collective work and responsibility), Ujamaa (cooperative economics), Nia (purpose), and Kuumba (creativity). She concluded that it is important to integrate African-centered teaching practice into adult education and community programs as well as K-12 education, particularly in communities in need of healing.

Bingham (2007) describes another project rooted in the needs of K-12 teachers, which served as the basis for the formation of a master's degree in lifelong learning grounded in Africentric principles at Mount Saint Vincent University in Nova Scotia. She recounts how conflicts between Black and White youth in Dartmouth in 1989 led to the formation of the Council on African Canadian Education (CACE). That group's recommendations led to the establishment of the master's program described in the AERC paper. In a course entitled "Introduction to Lifelong Learning with an Africentric Focus," twenty students learned key concepts of Africentricity and engaged in open dialogues and sharing circles. The experience was described as a powerful one, leading one participant to remark how it was the first time in his life that he was at the center of the curriculum.

Tolliver (2010) asserts: "The African-centered paradigm is more accurate and appropriate for understanding the lived experiences, con-

cerns, and needs of peoples of African descent" (p. 319). Like Sheared (1999) and Brookfield (2003) whom she cites, she points to the value of an African-centered paradigm as a framework for "meaning making and interpretation from an African worldview" (p. 319).

Critical Race Theory (CRT). During the last decade, CRT has evolved to become a frequently used lens informing research and practice. In a 2010 article in AEQ, Closson (2010) details core concepts of critical race theory, including the following:

1. Experiential knowledge—Experiential knowledge with race and racism is valued and often shared in what are referred to as counter stories.
2. Endemic Racism—Contrary to myths of a post-racial society, racism is embedded within institutions and systems as well as being learned unconsciously by individuals. Racism is discussed not just in binary terms of Black and White, but is discussed in terms of its impact on people of color from various racial/ethnic backgrounds.
3. Critique of Liberalism—Liberalism is critiqued for promoting an unrealistic color-blind, race-neutral, and meritocratic view of the world.
4. Whiteness as Property—refers to the notion that White Privilege amounts to property that is protected.
5. Interest Convergence—the idea that racial injustice will decline when White policymakers believe it is in their best interest.

Numerous adult educators have shared their own "counter-stories" of coming to understand racism in American society (Bowman, Rocco, Peterson, & Adker, 2009; Gonzáles & Mejorado, 2010; Kong 2010).

White Privilege and Whiteness Studies. One dimension of CRT evidenced in the adult education literature is the explication of White privilege. Here too, personal stories of coming to terms with one's own White privilege have been shared (Manglitz & Cervero, 2010; Monaghan, 2010; Paxton, 2010). Manglitz & Cervero (2010) speak of their own awakenings to the privileges they held as whites which had been invisible until their reading and interactions with friends and colleagues of color as well as encounters with Whites who were less receptive to hearing about racism. These experiences carried each of them along on a journey toward greater consciousness of what it means to be White in a racialized society. Monaghan (2010) is frank about not

only the racism she came to recognize within her workplace, but also about her realization of how she too had been complicit in such racism. Similarly, Paxton (2010) tells the story of his own transformation as he became increasingly aware of racist practices within his workplace and graduate school, leading him to create and lead a diversity taskforce. Citing models of White identity development by Frankenberg and Helms, Baumgartner (2010) explores how Whites come to know their Whiteness and understand race and White racial privilege, and she applies a model of White identity development to discuss how Whites understand race and White racial privilege.

Race-Focused Feminist Perspectives. Adult educators have theorized and conducted research within several perspectives that can collectively be referred to as racialized feminisms. Most prominent in the literature has been the closely related set of perspectives variably labeled as Black feminist (Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Sealey-Ruiz, 2007), Womanist (Sheared, 1994, 1999), Africentric feminist (Alfred, 2000; Sheared, 1999), and African feminist (Ntseane, 2011). While differences in emphasis exist among these frameworks, Patricia Hill Collins, author of Black Feminist Thought (2000/2010), makes the case that "Rather than developing definitions and arguing over naming practices—for example, whether this thought should be called Black feminism, womanism, Afrocentric feminism, Africana womanism, and the like—a more useful approach lies in revisiting the reasons why Black feminist thought exists at all" (p. 25). According to Collins, "Exploring six distinguishing features that characterize Black feminist thought may provide the common ground that is so sorely needed both among African-American women and between African-American women and all others whose collective knowledge or thought has a similar purpose" (Collins, 2000/2010, p. 25). Collins acknowledges that while these features may not be unique to Black feminist thought individually, it is their convergence that gives Black feminist thought its contours. At risk of oversimplifying for purposes of brevity, I will attempt to summarize those principles succinctly here: (a) the primary purpose of Black feminist thought is to resist oppression; (b) despite differences, including age, sexual orientation, social class, and religion, Black women share a common legacy of struggle that contributes to their group knowledge or standpoint; (c) there is a dialectical relationship between collective experiences with oppression and an orientation toward social activism; (d) Black women intellectuals, academics or not, middle class or working class, are uniquely situated to articulate the realities of the broader community of Black women;

(e) changing economic, social, and labor force patterns necessitate new ways of thinking and acting in solidarity; and (f) the struggles of Black women are linked with struggles against oppression in all forms.

One widely cited example of adult education research framed within Black feminist thought is Johnson-Bailey's (2001) Sistahs in College, based on her dissertation research analyzing the narratives of eight undergraduate and graduate Black reentry women (also reported in Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 1996). Her study findings indicated that these students experienced issues involving power relations based on race, gender, class, and color. The book's subtitle—"Making a Way Out of No Way"—reflects a major theme of the study based on the words of one participant. To cope, they used strategies including silence, negotiation, and resistance.

Another example of research applying a Black feminist framework is a study by Byrd and Chlup (2011) of nine Black women working in predominately White organizations (PWIs). Study participants developed various strategies for learning within the common context of being isolated from key networks of power and experiencing discrimination. Three major themes surfaced—learning from influential sources, learning from divine guidance, and learning from self-affirmation.

Building on the work of Alice Walker, Sheared (1994, 1999) can be credited with introducing a Womanist perspective, to the literature of the field. Notably, Walker's conception of the womanist is someone who is "committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female" (Walker, 1983, p. xi). Sheared built on the notion of multiple realities suggested by Walker's work; as well as the use of the term Polyrhythmic by some Africanists to describe the aesthetic essence of African art, music, dance, and language; to introduce the concept of "polyrhythmic realities."

Practical Impact on the Field of Emerging Perspectives on Race

A key impact on the field of the infusion of theory and research on race has been attention to the role of race in the classroom. The title of an NDACE chapter by Johnson-Bailey in 2002 articulates the problem that has subsequently been the focus of considerable attention—"Race Matters: The Unspoken Variable in the Teaching-Learning Transaction."

For some, the focus has been on the creation of a space that gives voice to those students who have often remained silent in classrooms where majoritarian perspectives prevail and their histories and cultures are rendered invisible (Johnson-Bailey, 2002; Kong, 2006; Lee, 2010).

Sheared (1999) speaks to this issue in talking about the importance of providing a culturally relevant curriculum and including the polyrhythmic realities of African American students in the adult basic education classroom. A study by Sealey-Ruiz (2007) of young and mid-life African American women enrolled in a required composition course designed within a Culturally Relevant Curriculum framework, pointed to the validation students received from learning that African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is a valid language form. Kaufmann's (1997) study of a Chicano/a autobiography class revealed not only that Chicano/a students perceived silencing as a factor in their experience of the class whereas White participants in the class did not, but also that while Chicano/a working class students perceived their possible role in silencing others, neither White nor middle class students of color mentioned their own role in the silencing of others.

Significant attention has also been devoted to the importance of dialogues about race and the challenges associated with such dialogues—including the role of emotions and the influence of student and instructor positionality (Baumgartner & Johnson-Bailey, 2008; Flowers, Sheared, & Lee, 2005; Manglitz, Guy, & Merriweather, 2014; Medina & Mix-Brown, 2008)—and instructor capacities and strategies for navigating such discourses (Johnson-Bailey, 2002; Kong, 2010; Manglitz, Guy, & Merriweather, 2014; Ramdeholl & Wells, 2011). Working within the counterstory tradition of CRT, a number of adult education scholars have shared their own stories and those of their students as they engage in classroom discourse about race (e.g., Medina & Mix-Brown, 2008; Morgan, Frazier, Fredericks, Waters, Merriweather Hunn, 2009; Ray, 2010). For instance, Medina and Mix-Brown (2008) apply a CRT theoretical framework in discussing both their earliest memories of understanding the significance of race as a young Latina and African American female respectively, as well as their experiences with racially charged discourse in adult education graduate courses. Similarly, Baumgartner and Johnson-Bailey (2008) share their divergent experiences teaching multicultural and diversity courses in adult education programs at predominately White institutions. They discuss how their positionalities as White and Black females differentially impact student perceptions and interactions. They also discuss their observations about differing engagement in such discourse by enfranchised and disenfranchised students, including resistance to antiracist education, particularly on the part of those White students who are reluctant to acknowledge privilege. Other recent discussions of White privilege have focused on the value of introducing models

of White identity development (Baumgartner, 2010), the nature of White privilege in the teaching and training of adults (Lund, 2010), and ways that Whites can work together to foster reflective dialogue on racism and White privilege (European-American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness, 2010).

Ramdeholl and Wells (2011), on the other hand, describe their experiences leading workshops focusing on race, class, and gender with working class students of diverse backgrounds which they describe as White ethnic, African American, Asian, South Asian, and Eastern European. In this workshop, a conversation about a woman of color's experience on the subway with an African American man who assured her he was not after her money, opened up a conversation about microaggressions that are a reality for those who perceive them, "even if the power and privilege that drives them are rarely recognized and even less often acknowledged by society as a whole" (p. 254).

Manglitz, Guy, & Merriweather (2014) articulate the importance for adult educators attempting to facilitate dialogues about race to have both the cognitive and emotional capacity to engage in such work. They also talk about the importance of adult education administrators coming prepared to take advantage of opportunities to engage in meaningful dialogue about race whether in task force or work group meetings or in conversations on the fly in hallways, as a means to promote institutional change.

Challenges and Opportunities Going Forward

The review presented above suggests that literature acknowledging the role of race in society and in adult education practice has grown substantially in the last two decades. Yet, as both this literature and information we are bombarded with through all forms of media suggest, it seems that those who proclaim that we now live in a color-blind society must be wearing blinders. Given adult education programs are a microcosm of the larger society, it is safe to assume that race will continue to matter—likely for the duration of the careers of those reading this journal.

Expanding Research on Race that Extends Beyond a Black-White Binary

Growth in the number of African American scholars graduating from programs in adult education and entering the professoriate has contributed to greater attention to race in the literature of the field, along

with the work of White scholars taking a critical look at Whiteness and White privilege. It makes sense given the continuing legacy of Black slavery and the impact of that legacy on the economic and educational inequity, that conversations about race in the U.S. typically begin, and sometimes end, with a focus on Black and White. Yet, as a number of sources cited here indicate, both historically and in today's environment of globalization, a deeper understanding of the role of race in adult education requires more extensive research on and by other people of color as well. The literature of related fields is more visibly infused with theory and research on the experiences of Latinos/as, Native Americans, and Asian Americans. Working diligently to achieve greater representation of students and faculty of color in graduate programs of adult education may help increase the odds that a full spectrum of voices is represented in the literature of future.

Developing Culturally Responsive Programs that Give Voice to Students of Color

Several authors cited underscore the importance of providing a culturally relevant curriculum to best meet the educational needs of adult learners of color (Guy, 1999; Ross-Gordon, Martin, & Briscoe, 1990; Sealy-Ruiz, 2007; Sheared, 1999). Other scholars stress the importance of creating a learning space that gives voice to adult learners of color who may choose to remain silent if their perspectives are not invited, or if instructors do not manage classroom dialogues to make sure their voices are not suppressed by those accustomed to being dominant (Johnson-Bailey, 2002; Lee, 2010). As adult education classrooms become more diverse, adult educators will need to accept the challenges to reflect on how their own cultural assumptions and biases impact their teaching, to research the cultures of their students, and to adapt curricula and teaching practices accordingly. While much of what has been written on this topic focuses on the college classroom, it is important that adult educators in other settings make similar efforts if students of color are to be successful in meeting their learning goals, as suggested by Sheared's (1999) work on polyrhythmic realities in the adult basic education classroom and Schwartz's (2014) study of the GED classroom as a counterspace for young men of color.

Facilitating Dialogues About Race—Beyond the Ivory Tower

Just as much of the research on culturally relevant curriculum has been centered in adult/higher education, so too has much of the literature

on dialogues about race, including the role of emotions and salience of student and instructor positionality been located in these dialogues. But adult educators can also potentially play a critical role in facilitating dialogues about race within nonformal educational programs and community-based settings. The cognitive and emotional capacity that Manglitz et al. (2014) speak of as prerequisite for successfully navigating challenging discourses about race will be equally, if not more necessarily, in settings beyond higher education classrooms. Although the challenges may be daunting, the outcomes of such dialogues may be key to the preservation of democracy in a racialized society.

Addressing Institutional Racism

As adult educators, we work in a wide variety of organizational contexts. In many of these contexts, racism is embedded within the fabric of organizational culture, policy and practices in ways that may seem invisible to many. As educators committed to social justice we have an opportunity—many would argue a moral obligation—

to challenge such policies and practices, particularly as we serve in leadership roles and on planning and decision-making bodies of various types (Manglitz, Guy, & Merriweather, 2014). Such opportunities also arise within informal spaces as we converse with colleagues and hear statements that seem to accept racist stereotypes and organizational practices. These will not always be instances of overt racism, but nonetheless warrant interruption if a more favorable climate is to be created for employees and learners of color. As noted by Monaghan (2010), "working against the grain" may not be easy, but it is important that not only adult educators of color, but also White educators committed to social justice take on these challenges. Making change in our organizations requires effort on the part of all who wish to be a part of the solution rather than the problem.

Attending to the Role of Race in Conversations about Globalization and Immigration

In today's economic, social, and political environment much is said about the presumed impact of globalization and immigration. Often implicit within these conversations are assumptions relating to race and ethnicity. Such assumptions significantly influence which immigrants are perceived as "aliens" and expected to be social burdens and job-

takers, versus which are presumed to be following a sanctioned path to residency and citizenship and contributing to the economy. As adult educators participate in such conversations and prepare our students to do so as well, it is important that we incorporate the tools of critical analysis to uncover such assumptions and ask questions about whose interests they serve. It is one thing to speak of building a wall through the Texas borderlands while little attention is given to European immigrants who overstay student visas, and quite another to propose policies to hold employers accountable for hiring the cheapest labor possible, whether that of undocumented immigrants or that of sweatshop textile workers in Southeast Asia.

Supporting Movements for Racial Justice

It would not be appropriate to end this discussion without acknowledging the continuing role of adult education in contemporary social movements as they relate to racial equity. Relevant movements in the contemporary landscape are numerous, including the "new" voting rights movement (Rugg, 2015; Tieken & Warren, 2016; Walker-Wells, 2014), the Black Lives Matter movement (About the Black lives matter network, n.d.; Miller & Schwarz, 2016), the criminal justice reform movement (Warren, 2010), and the environmental justice movement (Sadd, Morello-Frosch, Pastor, Matsuoka, Prichard, & Carter, 2014). Adult education faculty, students, and practitioners who participate in contemporary social movements with race as a central theme continue a long tradition of adult education for the betterment of society.

Conclusion

This article has taken a long view on the subject of race in adult education, looking back at the status of the field with regard to race since 1990, and looking forward into the future. Scanning the literature of the field over this 25-year plus period, it is apparent that progress has been made. But I have also pointed to both imperatives and possibilities for continued growth.

References

About the Black Lives Matter network. (n.d.) Retrieved from http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/

Alfred, M. V. (2000). The politics of knowledge and theory construction in adult education: A critical analysis from an Africentric feminist perspective. *Proceedings of the 41st Annual Adult Education Research Conference.* Vancouver, BC, Canada. Retrieved from http://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2000/papers/2/

Asante, M. (1990) *Kemet, Afrocentricity, and knowledge.* Trenton, NJ: African World Press.

Asante, M. K. (1998). *The Afrocentric idea.* Philadelphia. Temple University Press.

Baumgartner, L. (2010). White whispers: Talking about race in adult education. In V. Sheared, J. Johnson-Bailey, S, Colin III, E. Peterson, S. Brookfield, and associates (Eds.), *The handbook of race and adult education: A resource for dialogue on racism* (pp. 105-118). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Baumgartner, L. M. & Johnson-Bailey, J. (2008). Fostering awareness of diversity and multiculturalism in adult and higher education. In J. M. Dirkx (Ed.), *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education: No. 120* (pp. 45-53). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bell, D. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism.* New York: Basic Books.

Bingham, S. M. (2007). "Our hopes and dreams enrich its every corner": Adult education with an Africentric Focus. *Proceedings of the Adult Education Research Conference. Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. Retrieved from http://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2007/papers/14/*

Bowman, L., Rocco, T.S., Peterson, E., & Adker, W. (2009). Utilizing the lens of critical race theory to analyze stories of race. *In Proceedings of the 50th Annual Adult Education Research Conference* (pp.36-41). Chicago, IL: National Louis University. Retrieved from http://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2009/papers/7/

Briscoe, D. B, & Ross, J. M. (1989) in S.B. Merriam & P. Cunningham, (Eds). Racial and ethnic minorities in adult education. *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education* (pp. 583-598). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Brookfield, S. (2003). Racializing criticality in adult education. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 53(3), 154-169.

Byrd, M. Y., & Chlup, D. T. (2011). Expanding the conversation on adult learning theories: Theorizing African American women's learning and development in predominately white organizations. *In Proceedings of the Adult Education Research Conference*, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Retrieved from http://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2011/papers/12/

Cassara, B. (1990). *Adult education in a multicultural society.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Closson, R. B. (2010). Critical race theory and adult education. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 60(3), 261-283.

Colin III, S. A. J., & Guy, T. C. (1998). An Africentric interpretive model of curriculum orientations for course development in graduate programs in adult education. *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning,* 7, 43-56.

Colin III, S. A, & Preciphs, T. (1991). Perceptual patterns and the learning environment: Confronting White racism. In R. Hiemstra (Ed.), *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education: No. 50. Creating environments for effective adult learning* (pp. 61–69). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

Collins, P. H. (2000/2010). Black feminist thought. New York: Routledge. (first published in 2000).

Crenshaw, W., Gotanda, G., Peller, G., & Thomas, K. (Eds.). (1995). *Critical race theory: the key writings that formed the movement.* New York: New Press.

Denton, V. I. (1993). *Booker T. Washington and the adult education movement.* Gainesville: University of Press of Florida.

Drayton, B., Rosser-Mims, D., Schwartz, J., & Guy, T. (2016). Swimming Upstream 2: Agency and urgency in the education of Black men. *New Directions in Adult and Continuing Education:* No. 150. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ellis, A. E. (2013, May). Integrating Aesthetics: Transforming continuing education through Africentric practice. *Proceedings of the Adult Education Research Conference* (pp. 103-108). St. Louis, MO. Retrieved from http://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2013/papers/16/

European-American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness (2010). White on White: Developing capacity to communicate about race with critical humility. In V. Sheared, J. Johnson-Bailey, S, Colin III, E. Peterson, S. Brookfield, and associates (Eds.), *The handbook of race and adult education: A resource for dialogue on racism* (pp. 145-157). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Flowers, D., Sheared, V., & Martin, L., & Lee, M. (2005). Women of color on teaching race. *Proceedings of the 47th Annual Adult Education Research Conference,* Athens, GA. Retrieved from http://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2005/roundtables/12/

Gonzáles, R. A., & Mejorado, M (2010). Experiencing the race, gender and socioeconomic divide in academia: A Chicana Perspective. In V. Sheared, J. Johnson-Bailey, S, Colin III, E. Peterson, S. Brookfield, and associates (Eds.), *The handbook of race and adult education: A resource for dialogue on racism* (pp. 55-69). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Guy, T. (1999). Culture as context for adult education: The need for culturally relevant education. In T. Guy (Ed.), *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education: No. 82. Providing culturally relevant adult education: A challenge for the twenty-first century* (pp. 5-18). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hayes, E., & Colin III, S. A. (Eds.) *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education: No. 61. Confronting racism and sexism.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Isaac, P., Merriweather, L., & Rogers, E. (2010). Chasing the American dream: Race and adult and continuing education. In C. Kasworm, A. Rose, & J. Ross-Gordon (Eds.), Handbook of adult and continuing education, (pp. 359-368). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

Johnson-Bailey, J. (2001). *Sistahs in college: Making a way out of no way*. Malabar, FL: Krieger.

Johnson-Bailey, J. (2002). Race matters: The unspoken variable in the teaching-learning transaction. In J. M. Ross-Gordon (Ed.), *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education: No. 93. Contemporary viewpoints on teaching adults effectively* (pp. 39-49). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Johnson-Bailey, J., & Cervero, R. M. (1996). An analysis of the educational narratives of reentry black women. *Adult Education Quarterly,* 46(3), 142-157.

Johnson-Bailey, J. & Cervero, R. (2000). The invisible politics of race in adult education. In A. L. Wilson & E. R. Hayes (Eds.). *Handbook of adult and continuing education* (New Ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kaufmann, J. (1997). Radical pedagogy in action: A case study of a Chicano/a autobiography class. *Proceedings of the Adult Education Research Conference*, Stillwater, OK. Abstract retrieved from http://newprairiepress.org/aerc/1997/papers/27/

Kong, L. (2006). Mujeres en acción—Women in action: Race, gender and economic self-sufficiency in a worker-owned housecleaning cooperative. *Proceedings of the Adult Education Research Conference*, Minneapolis, MN. Retrieved from http://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2006/papers/40/

Kong, L. (2010). Immigration, racial identity and adult education: Reflections on a transnational paradigm of resistance. In V. Sheared, J. Johnson-Bailey, S, Colin III, E. Peterson, S. Brookfield, and associates (Eds.), *The handbook of race and adult education: A resource for dialogue on racism* (pp. 231-244). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ladson-Billings, G. & Tate W. (1995) Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teacher's College Record, 97*(1), 41-62.

Lee, M. (2010). Expanding the racialized discourse: An Asian American Perspective. In V. Sheared, J. Johnson-Bailey, S, Colin III, E. Peterson, S. Brookfield, and associates (Eds.), *The handbook of race and adult education: A resource for dialogue on racism* (pp. 295-306). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lund, C. L. (2010). The nature of white privilege in the teaching and training of adults. In C.L Lund and S. A. J. Colin III (Ed.), *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education: No. 125. Racism and White privilege* (pp. 15-25). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Manglitz, E. & Cervero, R. M. (2010). Adult education and the problem of the color (power) line: Views from the Whiter side. In V. Sheared, J. Johnson-Bailey, S, Colin III, E. Peterson, S. Brookfield, and associates (Eds.), *The handbook of race and adult education: A resource for dialogue on racism* (pp. 133-144). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Manglitz, E., Guy, T. C., & Merriweather, L. R. (2014). Knowledge and emotions in cross-racial dialogues: Challenges and opportunities for adult educators committed to racial justice in educational settings. *Adult Learning*, 25(3), 111-118.

Medina, P. & Mix-Brown, K. (2008). Addressing racially charged discourse in adult education graduate courses. *Proceedings of the 57th Annual Adult Education Research Conference*. St. Louis, MO. Retrieved from http://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2008/papers/46/

Merriweather Hunn, L. (2004). Africentric philosophy: A remedy for Eurocentric dominance. In J.A Sandlin & R. St Clair (Eds.), *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education: No. 102. Promoting critical practice in adult education* (pp. 65-74). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Miller, B., & Schwartz, J. (2016). The intersection of Black Lives Matter and adult education: One community college initiative. In B. Drayton, D. Rosser-Mims, J. Schwartz, & T. Guy (Eds.). New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education: No. 150. *Swimming upstream 2: Agency and urgency in the education of Black men* (pp. 13–23). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Monaghan, C. H. (2010). Working against the grain: White privilege in human resource development. In C.L Lund and S. A. J. Colin III (Eds.), *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education: No. 125. Racism and White privilege* (pp.53-63). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Morgan, A., Frazier, A., Fredericks, J., Waters, M., & Merriweather-Hunn. L. (2009). Hogwash: Coming to terms with critical race theory in adult education. In R. Lipson Lawrence (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 50th Annual Adult Education Research Conference*. (pp.254-258). Chicago, IL: National Louis University. Retrieved from http://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2009/papers/44/

Ntseane, P. G. (2011). Culturally sensitive transformational learning: Incorporating the Afrocentric paradigm and African Feminism. *Adult Education Quarterly, 61* (4), 307-323.

Neufeldt, H. C., & McGee, L. (Eds.) (1990) *Education of the African American adult: A historical overview*. Westport, CT; Greenwood Press.

Paxton, D. (2010). Transforming White consciousness. In V. Sheared, J. Johnson-Bailey, S, Colin III, E. Peterson, S. Brookfield, and associates (Eds.), *The handbook of race and adult education: A resource for dialogue on racism* (pp.119-131). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Peterson, E. (Ed.) (1996). *Freedom road: Adult education of African Americans*. Malabar, FL: Krieger.

Ramdeholl, D., & Wells, R. (2011). The world as it could be: Class, race and gender for and with working class students. *Proceedings of the Annual Adult Education Research Conference. Retrieved from http://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2012/papers/36/*

Ray, N. (2010). Transforming teaching and learning: Teaching race. In V. Sheared, J. Johnson-Bailey, S, Colin III, E. Peterson, S. Brookfield, and associates (Eds.), *The handbook of race and adult education: A resource for dialogue on racism* (pp. 71-82). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ross, J. M. (1989). Reaching and involving culturally diverse groups. In B. A. Quigley (Ed.) *Fulfilling the promise of adult and continuing education. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education: No. 44* (pp. 95-105). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ross-Gordon, J. M. (1991). Needed adult education research for the twenty-first century: Toward a multicultural perspective. *Adult Education Quarterly.* 42 (1), 1-16.

Ross-Gordon (1993). Multicultural issues in adult education: Where we've come from, where we are now, where we're going. *PAACE Journal of lifelong Learning*, 2, 49-56.

Ross-Gordon, J. M. (1994). Toward a critical multicultural pedagogy for adult education. In J. Hyams, J Armstrong, & E. Anderson (Eds.). *Proceedings of the 35th annual Adult Education Research Conference*, Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee.

Ross-Gordon, J. M., Martin, L. G., & Briscoe, D (Eds.) (1990). Serving culturally diverse populations: Adult education models. *New Directions in Adult and Continuing Education*: No. 48. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Abstract retrieved from http://newprairiepress.org/aerc/1994/papers/53/

Rosser-Mims, D., Schwartz, J., Drayton, B., & Guy, T. C. (2014). Swimming upstream: Black males in adult education. *New Directions in Adult and Continuing Education*: No. 144. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Rugg, M. (2015, January). 50 years after MLK's Selma March, We're still fighting for voting rights. ACLU Blog. Retrieved from https://www.aclu.org/blog/speakeasy/50-years-after-mlks-selma-march-were-still-fighting-voting-rights

Sadd, J., Morello-Frosch, R., Pastor, M., Matsuoka, M., Prichard, M., & Carter, V. (2014). The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the ground-truth: Methods to advance environmental justice and researcher–community partnerships. *Health Education & Behavior,* 41(3), 281-290. doi:10.1177/1090198113511816

Schwartz, J. (2014). Classrooms of spatial justice: Counter-spaces and young men of color in a GED program. *Adult Education Quarterly,* 64(2), 110-127. doi:10.1177/0741713613513632

Sealey-Ruiz, Y. (2007). Wrapping the curriculum around their lives: Using a culturally relevant curriculum with African American adult women. *Adult Education Quarterly, 58*(1), 44-60

Sheared, V. (1994). Giving voice: An inclusive model of instruction—a womanist perspective. In E. Hayes & S. A. Colin III (Eds.) *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education: No. 61. Confronting racism and sexism.* (pp. 27-37). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Sheared, V. (1999). Giving voice: Inclusion of African American students' polyrhythmic realities in adult basic education. In T. Guy (Ed.), *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education: No. 82. Providing culturally relevant adult education: A challenge for the twenty-first century* (pp. 33-48). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Tieken, M. C. & Warren , M. R. (2016) A movement's legacy: Southern Echo and the continued struggle for racial justice in the Delta, S*ociological Focus*,49(1) 84-101,

Tisdell, E. J. (1995) *Creating inclusive learning environments: Insights from multicultural education and feminist pedagogy*. ERIC Information Series No. 361 (ERIC accession no. 384837).

Tolliver, D. (2010). Using an African-Centered paradigm for understanding race and racism in adult education. In V. Sheared, J. Johnson-Bailey, S, Colin III, E. Peterson, S. Brookfield, and associates (Eds.), *The handbook of race and adult education: A resource for dialogue on racism* (pp. 317-328 San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Walker, A. (1983). *In search of our mother's gardens.* New York: Harcourt Brace.

Walker-Wells (2014, October). Massive voter registration drive in Georgia fights voter suppression. *Facing South: A new voice for a changing south*. The Institute for Southern Studies. Retrieved from www.southernstudies.org/2014/10/massive-voter-registration-drive-in-georgia-fights.html

Warren, M. R. (2010). *Fire in the heart: How white activists embrace racial justice*. New York, New York: Oxford University Press.