Critical Media Literacy: A Vehicle for Transformative Learning Towards Social

and Emotional Competence

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A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Education

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts (Educational Studies) at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

March, 2011

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

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Entitled: Critical Media Literacy: A Vehicle for Transformative Learning
                    Towards Social and Emotional Competence

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (Educational Studies)

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ABSTRACT

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The implementation of critical media literacy in the curriculum has been advocated mainly to construct and deconstruct knowledge, to empower students to counter the threat of pleasurable but insidious hegemonic messages, ideological misrepresentation of reality, racist portrayals of minorities, and so forth. The purpose of this study is to promote a new approach to critical media literacy in adult education. It examines the proposition that critical media literacy, particularly through the use of films, can be a vehicle for transformative learning towards social and emotional competence in everyday relationships, in the workplace, in the family and in the communities where we live. Therefore, the thesis explores the theory of Transformative Learning, the construct of social and emotional intelligence and the literature on critical media literacy to set the theoretical and practical background for this study. Based on the review of the literature, intersections among these three educational domains are delineated. The study ends with a discussion of scenes from the movies *Crash* (Haggis, 2005) and *Revolutionary Road* (Mendes, 2008) as exemplars for the implementation of the proposed approach to critical media literacy in adult learning contexts, including classrooms.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my child, Kevin, hoping that his learning journey would be facilitated by continual enhancement of his social and emotional competence.

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Introduction

In today's society, technology is advancing so rapidly that we are in a constant race to keep up with its pace. We focus on using emails, textmessaging, and the latest networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace, among others, to communicate with our friends, family members, colleagues, and so forth. Our communication ends up being very brief. We check on each other with a couple of sentences in an email. We listen to the complaints or problems of people around us while simultaneously working on the computer. This way of communication and interaction is great to keep up with the speed of life, the demands of work, and some kind of socializing. However, our social and emotional competence suffers on many levels, in our relationships, in our community and in the workplace. We don't have time to critically reflect on how to connect with others and how to resolve conflicts with concern and empathy. There is no time to self-reflect on our emotional vulnerability and our positionality in the world around us. We get angry fast, throw blame around and make hasty judgments when facing personal problems or societal issues. Our life, as Covey (2004) notes, is governed by fear, insecurity, impulsivity, depression, competition, conflict and differences, hopelessness, and unhappiness. We are emotionally and socially troubled. Goleman (1995, 2006) suggests that to be able to succeed in many domains of life and take control of our emotions and relationships, it is important to enhance our social and emotional intelligence. However, our relationships and our understanding of our experiences in all walks of life face more challenges because they are influenced by several factors such as social, cultural, political, and economic contexts as well as by

inequity issues caused by "asymmetrical power relationships" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 28). Therefore, critical reflection on our relationships, beliefs and experiences is crucial for understanding how these factors impact our daily life. This understanding fosters an opportunity for transformation in our beliefs, attitudes, and worldviews (Mezirow, 2000, p. 28). It is evident then that critical media literacy can contribute greatly to this process of transformation, specifically through the use of films. The medium of films has been used across the curriculum for its value as a powerful pedagogical tool for teaching and learning as will be explored later. Therefore, I envision a new pedagogical approach to adult learning that embraces the following: Students who are engaged in discussing, analysing and critically reflecting on various social and emotional themes to which they are exposed in the movies will gain skills and knowledge to effect transformation in their social and emotional intelligence in the school environment, their community, their families, and the workplace. These social and emotional themes emerge from a variety of relationships including personal, social, discriminatory, racial and ideological ones. Until recently, this crucial goal of critical media literacy has been neglected in the literature or only slightly touched upon.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its theoretical and practical contributions to the teaching/learning process. The review of the literature offers a theoretical analysis of insights from critical media literacy, transformative learning, and social and emotional intelligence central to the learning process. Then, a synthesis of these trans-disciplinary insights offers integrated and practical understanding of how students gain social and

emotional competence by participating in open discourse and critical reflection on various themes in the movies, how such competence enhances their well-being in various aspects of life, and how teachers can effectively cultivate this competence. In other words, this study suggests that it is time that educational goals and teacher education gear toward building a socially and emotionally competent generation; films provide them with a valuable opportunity for this purpose.

I have found studies regarding the use of films for educational purposes anchored in critical pedagogy, in psychology, and in transformative learning theory towards a pedagogy of social change. However, I have not found a study that addresses the use of films in the classroom for transformative change towards gaining social and emotional intelligence by students from the perspective of critical media literacy. Thus, because this study is an initiation of research in this area, it requires further qualitative investigation of how to adapt theory to practice and how educators can deal with challenges facing them when implementing this approach in their classroom.

Research Questions

As my interest is to demonstrate the potential of emotional and social gains by incorporating critical media literacy in the curriculum, I have the following general research question: What are the intersections between critical media literacy, transformative learning and social and emotional competence?

My sub-questions are:

1- What is transformative learning?

2- What is social and emotional competence?

3- What is critical media literacy?

4- What are the ethical implications of educating students for transformative change in our diverse society?

5- How can we assess the outcomes of critical media literacy for transformative learning towards social and emotional competence?

This thesis is based on a review of the literature focusing on relevant theories and critiques that demonstrate that critical media literacy is an effective vehicle for transformative learning towards the development of social and emotional competence of adult learners. I am alert to the ways in which those theories may be integrated into a strong framework that can guide educators in using films in the school curriculum.

Limitations of the Study

The study acknowledges several limitations. First, integrating critical media literacy, transformative learning, and social and emotional competence into one pedagogy creates challenges to teachers and teacher education because the theoretical perspectives emanating from this thesis are not enough to support the practice of this pedagogy. What teacher education should be implemented to prepare teachers to deal with the complex psychology of adult learners, especially when learning turns into an emotionally charged experience? When and how can teachers prevent an emotional outburst that requires a psychologist's help? In other words, how far can they support the implementation of this pedagogy? These questions require further qualitative research that does not portray the role of the teacher as an ideal; rather, there is a need for research that deals with the

practical reality and the challenges facing teachers who are willing to implement such pedagogy.

Second, only a limited number of films can be suggested for this pedagogical approach because social intelligence in the movies "is more elusive and less commonly portrayed" than other virtues (Niemiec & Wedding, 2008, p. 131). A more in-depth research is needed to look at movies from the lens of critical media for transformative learning towards social and emotional competence.

Another limitation of this study is that the element of culture and its implications on the concept of social and emotional competence is left out. It is beyond the scope of this study to investigate deeply how culture affects our understanding of social and emotional competence. To address this issue further, an independent research into the intersections of culture and social and emotional competence is needed.

Definition of Intelligence

Before exploring the theories of social and emotional intelligence, it is important first to clarify the use of the word "intelligence" in this thesis. I do not agree with the connotation of 'intelligence' as it has been discussed and measured by the advocates of Intelligent Quotient (IQ) which is culturally biased and reflects a Western supremacist ideology. I use the word 'intelligence' to refer to the capacity of the individual to conduct mental activities such as understanding facts, causes and effects of various phenomena, analysing concepts and relationships among various elements whether these elements are personal, social, political, intuitive, or spiritual. "Intelligence is the aggregate or global capacity of the individual to act purposefully, to think rationally, and

to deal effectively with his environment" (Wechsler, as quoted in Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 186). As Thorndike (1920) puts it,

> In our ratings of men we unconsciously strike a sort of average of his abilities in learning, thinking and acting. The source or cause of this average ability is what we really have in mind when we speak of his intelligence. (p. 228)

Further, Dulewicz and Higgs (2000) note that the elements of emotional intelligence, such as personality traits, behaviour and values correspond to the elements of the concept of competency; "a job competency is an underlying characteristic of a person in that it may be a motive, trait, skill, aspect of one's self-image or social role, or a body of knowledge which he or she uses" (Boyatzis, as quoted in Dulewicz & Higgs, 2000, p. 349). However, because many of the social and emotional elements explored in this thesis are drawn from literature widely known as social and emotional intelligence, I find myself compelled to use the word 'intelligence' interchangeably with the word 'competence'.

Definition of Knowledge

As the media is one of the main producers of knowledge in our society, and as transformative learning is based on revising our worldviews, beliefs and perspectives to construct new ones that are more open and justifiable (Mezirow, 2000, p. 4), it is fundamental to my argument to define 'knowledge' from the onset of this study. Mills (2003) states that the conventional definition of knowledge, basically scientific knowledge, refers to what the great thinkers such as Pasteur and Einstein formulated as ideas and perceptions (p. 67). On the other hand, Foucault (1980) points out that knowledge and power have an integral impact on each other. To Foucault, knowledge is

not impartial; it is a part of the struggle for power. He states that "it is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power" (p. 52). For example, more knowledge is produced about women than men due to the imbalances of power relations between these two groups. When marginalized groups produce knowledge, they acquire power to alter their oppressive situations. Then, knowledge production is an empowerment and not only an oppressive force (Mills, 2003, p. 70). Following this line of thought, I argue that the production of knowledge resulting from critical media literacy for transformative learning towards social and emotional competence can engender an empowerment in the individual, as will be discussed later.

Plan of the Thesis

The first chapter mainly explores the evolution of transformative learning theory from the time of its inception by Jack Mezirow. I examine the various insights by adult educators who have expanded Mezirow's theory of transformative learning. A great attention is given to the role of critical reflection and rational dialogue in transformative learning.

Chapter two aims at providing an in-depth understanding of social and emotional competence. I start by illustrating the role of emotions in the learning process. Then I review the literature on social and emotional intelligence. Much attention is given to the work of Daniel Goleman (1995; 2006) who popularized the concept of social and emotional intelligence. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that social and emotional competence enhances student learning and well-being in the family, workplace, and society at large.

Chapter three first illustrates the relationships between the use of films in the classroom and learning. The use of films in the classroom is seen as an effective educational tool that engages the intellectual, emotional and social aspects of teaching and learning. I also review the various definitions of popular culture and explore the various insights of educators on the implementation of critical media literacy in education. Some educators advocate the implementation of critical media literacy in the curriculum mainly to empower students to counter the threat of pleasurable but insidious messages and ideological misrepresentations of reality. Others argue that critical media literacy holds important benefits to students such as expanding thinking about others and finding alternative narratives in students' lives, among others.

Chapter four integrates all the parts examined in each chapter into a whole. I highlight the interconnections of the various theories discussed. Then I analyse scenes from the movies *Crash* (Haggis, 2005) *and Revolutionary Road* (Mendes, 2008) as exemplars that demonstrate that critical media literacy is a vehicle for transformative learning towards social and emotional competence. The chapter ends with insights on ethical and measurement issues.

I conclude that critical media literacy specifically through the use of films in higher education has the potential of fostering transformative learning towards social and emotional competence.

Chapter 1

Review of the Theory of Transformative Learning

"Two battleships assigned to the training squadron had been at sea on manoeuvres in heavy weather for several days. I was serving on the lead battleship and was on watch on the bridge as night fell. The visibility was poor with patchy fog, so the captain remained on the bridge keeping an eye on all activities. Shortly after dark, the lookout on the wing of the bridge reported "Light, 20 degrees."
Back came a signal, "Advisable for bearing on the starboard bow." "Is it steady or moving astern? The captain called out.
Lookout replied, "Steady, captain," which meant we were on a dangerous collision course with that ship.
The captain then called to the signalman, "Signal that ship: We are on a collision course, advise you to change course 20 degrees." The captain said, "Send, I'm a captain, change course 20 degrees." "I'm a seaman second class,"came the reply. "You had better change course 20 degrees."
By that time, the captain was furious. He spat out, "Send, I'm a battleship. Change course 20 degrees."
Back came the flashing light, "I'm a lighthouse."
We changed course."

> *(Koch, as quoted in Covey, 2004, p. 33)*

Transformative learning involves a process of reflection on beliefs, values, and assumptions to reinterpret and assess prior experience to reach best judgement that informs future action (Mezirow, 2000, p. 8). Transformative learning theory was introduced by Jack Mezirow in 1978 who studied the experiences of women who re-entered school after a long time. The findings of his study suggested that these women had undergone personal transformation after they had participated in a critical reflection on their beliefs and assumptions (Mezirow, 2000). The core elements of transformative learning theory, which are interdependent, include disorienting dilemma, critical reflection, awareness of context, rational discourse, individual versus social learning, individuation, career change, intercultural learning (Taylor, 1998), and authentic practice

(Taylor, 2009). Mezirow's transformative learning theory evolved and multiple

conceptions of this theory emerged (Taylor, 2008). This review is not conducted as an

illustration of the evolution of the theory in relation to theoretical critiques nor a thorough

review of particular theoretical perspectives; rather, it is an attempt to bring together the

many and diverse insights that emanate from various critiques to delineate their

interconnectedness in a way to form a cohesive theoretical framework upon which this

thesis rests. Such framework outlines a pedagogy that facilitates transformative learning

towards social and emotional competence through the use of films in a critical media

classroom. The first part is a review of the definition of transformative learning from the

perspective of Jack Mezirow, followed by an exploration of the core conditions of

transformative learning theory from different theoretical insights. Then an illustration of

the various alternative ways to understand transformative learning is provided from the

point of view that these alternative ways are related to and complement each other.

<div align="center">**Theory of Transformative Learning**</div>

Meaning Perspectives

Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory emphasizes the meaning-

making by reinterpreting prior experiences through critical reflection and rational

discourse on underlying beliefs, biases, feelings, and one's own assumptions which he

calls frames of reference (p. 5). Mezirow states that frames of reference refer to the

learning that explains and shapes experiences, assumptions, feelings and cognition.

Habits of mind and a point of view are the two dimensions defining frames of reference:

Habits of mind represent the way we interpret the world. Our social and economic background, our psychological conditions, cultural paradigm, and our political orientation formulate our habits of mind. A habit of mind leads to the formulation of a point of view which is "the constellation of belief, value judgment, attitude, and feeling that shapes a particular interpretation" (p. 6). For example, ethnocentrism is a habit of mind while the resulting judgment, attitudes, and beliefs towards others are the point of view (Mezirow, 1997, p. 6). There are several types of habits of mind that are interrelated and overlapping. Cranton (2006) provides an explanation of these types as follows:

Psychological habits of mind comprise anxieties, feeling of guilt, needs, self-concept, and parental influence on childhood experiences that continue to shape adults' feelings and behaviour. The way we see the world is also influenced by our personality traits such as being introverted or extroverted, and whether we make judgments using our intuition, feelings or thinking (p. 26).

Sociolinguistic habits of mind are language usage in various social settings to transfer specific meaning, cultural assumptions and expectations, and social norms of the community; for example, women are expected to behave according to specific cultural paradigms (p. 25).

Epistemic habits of mind pertain to the way we learn. Some people prefer analytical learning while others learn theoretically, abstractly, or concretely. Our learning styles reflect the way we perceive ourselves and, therefore, are difficult to change (p. 25).

Philosophical habits of mind refer to philosophical world view such as a view that advocates the end of capitalism or the redistribution of wealth. It also refers to religious beliefs and values whether consciously accepted or dictated by family (p. 27).

Moral-ethical habits of mind are based on moral consciousness. People make meaning of the world based on their conception of good and evil and of their agency towards social justice. Based on their moral-ethical habits of mind, people get involved in charitable deeds or protest against injustices (p. 26).

Aesthetic habits of mind have to do with the values and judgment we attribute to beauty. Our conception of beauty is influenced by our sociolinguistic habits of mind (p. 27).

Our assumptions and perspectives about ourselves and the world are the result of the multiple ways in which these habits of mind interconnect. A person's self-concept is connected to his or her sociolinguistic or aesthetic habits of mind. These interconnections among the habits of mind are not fixed truths; therefore, the resulting meaning perspectives, beliefs, values and uncritically acquired assumptions can be problematic and can create limitations when not examined (Cranton, 2006). This transformative learning can be epochal as a reaction to a sudden crisis, or incremental as a result of cumulative events leading to a transformation in points of view followed by a transformation in habits of mind (Mezirow, 2000, p. 21).

Core Conditions of Transformative Learning

For transformation of these meaning perspectives, several core conditions have been identified by Mezirow and expanded by other theorists: disorienting dilemma,

individual experience, communicative learning, rational discourse, critical reflection, and awareness of context.

The disorienting dilemma: A catalyst of transformative learning

Mezirow (2000) identifies a disorienting dilemma as the first phase in the transformative learning process. A disorienting dilemma can be internal as a response to an encounter with an external event or the realization of the invalidity of prior solutions to problems through which a person experiences internal disenchantment (Scott, 1991). For example, in a study for educating leaders for social transformation, Elias (1993) observes that the experiences of men in recognizing their own feelings, the experiences of women in successfully confronting authority, the fostering of critical thinking and the development of multiple intelligences were contributing factors for social transformation.

Cranton (2006) states that inside the classroom, educators can create activities that may or may not trigger critical reflection causing a dilemma to students, while outside the classroom tragic events or any contradictory encounter to one's perceptions such as confrontation with different social norms or with contradictory knowledge to one's religious, political, or other previously acquired beliefs, a discussion with a friend or the reading of a book can cause a disorienting dilemma and provoke critical reflection leading to transformation in one's perspective. Mezirow (2000, p. 21) suggests that this dilemma can cause a sudden shift (epochal) or a gradual change (incremental) in one's perspective.

Individual experience

Taylor (2009) explains that individual experience is a core element in Mezirow's theory.

The questioning of one's experience which is socially constructed is the starting point of

transformative learning. Also the degree of experience is a significant indicator of

potential transformation. In other words, people with more experience are able to reach a

greater understanding of new perspectives and ideas. Furthermore, individual experience

is also prompted within the classroom; adult educators develop experiential activities

within the classroom that create a disorienting dilemma which is often emotional in order

to engage students in critical reflection to foster transformation. "For example, romantic

fiction has been used as a means to help women question traditional conceptions of

romantic relationships and redefine power located in relationships" (p. 6).

Cranton (2006) illustrates that experiential learning is a common theme in adult

education. She emphasizes that adults are interested in practical learning that is useful to

their work and in finding solutions to problems in their daily lives. Therefore, adult

educators strive to include hands-on and experiential activities that can be easily

transferred and applied to problems in the real world. However, she argues that

transformative learning is not always experiential and reflection on experience does not

necessarily result in action as Mezirow suggests. Intuition and critical self-reflection

might be behind transformative learning and not elements in the world outside one's self.

Communicative versus instrumental learning

Mezirow (2000) draws on Habermas' two major domains of learning to explain

transformative learning theory: Mezirow explains that instrumental learning is "learning

to control and manipulate the environment or other people" and communicative learning is learning to interpret meaning communicated to us through the use of language (p. 8). Communicative learning requires assessment of the values embedded in communication, identification of intentions and trustfulness of speakers, authenticity of feelings, and the historical, cultural and biographical context of communication, among others. In communicative learning, rational discourse validates beliefs by assessing reason in order to reach appropriate judgement and consensus. Mezirow (1997) states that, in communicative learning, the discourse community seeks to identify and analyse the weaknesses in an argument in the light of available information to reach a consensus that validates new conceptualizations. When consensus is not possible, it is important to embrace differences and to seek a common understanding (Mezirow, 2000, p. 12).

Cranton (2006) explains that communicative learning is present in collaborative learning whenever a group of people attempts to make meaning of their experiences and formulates new assumptions. Communicative learning in working environments is emphasized in programs directed towards leadership training, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal skills (p. 12).

Rational discourse

The role of discourse is a significant condition for promoting transformative learning. Rational discourse takes place when the authenticity of feelings, the sincerity of people's expressions and claims, and the appropriateness and comprehensibility of norms are questionable and require validation (Mezirow, 1991, p. 77). Rational discourse is a process that involves weighing of evidence and arguments underlying a frame of

reference, a belief, a way of interpreting the world, or the meaning of an experience in order to reach a consensus or a better judgment until new evidence emerges requiring new validation. To reach a well-informed and appropriate consensus, rational discourse involves challenging dominant perspectives related to race, gender, and class. It also involves the willingness of the participants to be open to multiple perspectives and to build knowledge that embraces difference in an environment based on empathy, trust, safety, and solidarity (Mezirow, 2000, p. 12).

Mezirow (2000, p.13) emphasizes the following ideal conditions essential for free and effective participation in rational discourse:

- Participants have equal opportunity to participate in discourse

- Complete and accurate information should be available to participants

- Participants are engaged in critical reflection on others' perspectives as well as their own

- Awareness of context

- Evidence and arguments are evaluated objectively

- Absence of coercion

- Participants are willing to seek consensus and understanding of the validity of new perspectives until new arguments and evidence are presented for the justification of a better judgment

- Participants show openness to multiple perspectives by exercising empathy and concern.

However, Clark and Wilson (1991) point out several flaws in the ideal conditions of discourse. They argue that these conditions eliminate the role of multiple contexts in the process of meaning making. The authors state that context such as cultural tradition, enculturation, and socialization impacts our points of view that are impossible to exist without this influence. Also arguments and evidence are framed by the context they are situated in; otherwise, they have no framework that explains their meaning. The authors see rationality in discourse as "a judgemental and provisional process of justifying action within the boundaries of a particular community of inquirers" (p. 82). Also, consensus does not always occur in rational discourse because of the possibility of reaching more than one valid perspective.

Mezirow (2000) further highlights the preconditions to participation in rational discourse. These preconditions are health, economic well-being, emotional intelligence, safety, maturity and education. Mezirow states that the

> …preconditions for realizing these values [tolerance, rationality, freedom, equality, and social justice] and finding one's voice for free full participation in discourse include elements of maturity, education, safety, health, economic security, and emotional intelligence. Hungry, homeless, desperate, threatened, sick, or frightened adults are less likely to be able to participate effectively in discourse to help us [sic] better understand the meaning of our own experience. (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 15-16)

Therefore, adult educators are agents of social justice. However, Belenky and Stanton (2000) refute Mezirow's statement here. They emphasize the importance of paying attention to asymmetrical relationships among adult participants in collaborative learning and reflective discourse in order to help adult students, the mature and highly skilled, as

well as the marginalized ones reach their full potential in a world where inequalities and injustices are a reality.

Critical reflection

Critical reflection is another core element of transformative learning theory. Transformative learning cannot occur without critical reflection. But this does not mean that when critical reflection takes place, transformative learning will take place (Brookfield, 2000, p. 142). Brookfield's insights on critical reflection in transformative learning as ideology critique are central to the discussion in chapter four regarding the relation between social and emotional competence, transformative learning and critical media literacy. Brookfield locates critical reflection strictly within the political and hegemonic dimensions to learning whether this learning is about music, art, soccer, spirituality, or about economics and politics. In other words, critical refection in transformative learning is ideology critique as introduced by the Frankfurt School of Critical Social Theory. He states that the various dimensions of learning embody power structures, hegemonic relationships, oppressive discourses, and inequality in the distribution of resources (p. 127). Thus, a critical reflection to learning in these domains is an identification and a challenge to socially constructed standards and values, and to asymmetrical relationships such as class and status that underline our judgements of, for example, what a good art is and what an appropriate style is. A critical reflection to learning is an acknowledgment that established criteria such as the ones related to Eurocentric worldviews are the products of political and social constitutions; they are not universal truths (p. 127). Also a critical reflection on our emotional behaviour is the

recognition that our emotional reactions to events in our lives are socially invoked; we learn from our parents how to respond emotionally to particular situations. Also, critical reflection on our emotional behaviour is coming to an awareness of the influence of the media in our lives. For example, the media created a mass emotional response to the death of Princess Diana (Brookfield, 2000, pp. 127-128).

Brookfield (2000) argues against Mezirow's differentiation of critical reflection as ideology critique on cultural systems such as capitalism, fascism, bureaucracy, and religion, among others, from "critical reflection on and in private intrapersonal domains (Brookfield, 2000, pp. 129-130). Drawing on Williams and Foucault, Brookfield maintains that ideologies are subtle forms embedded not only in cultural systems but also in our emotional responses, "moral reasoning, our interpersonal relationships, and our ways of knowing, experiencing, and judging what is real and true" (Brookfield, p. 130); thus, psychological learning cannot be separated from the sociolinguistic learning in transformative learning. Mezirow has acknowledged the relevance of this argument in his response to critiques of his theory, as Brookfield points out. Though ideologies are hard to detect, they are social constructs subject to be deconstructed by the process of critical reflection as ideology critique. Brookfield's thoughts here frame the discussion of the importance of an educational effort to acknowledge the need to enhance social and emotional competence in adult education.

Brookfield (2000) also points out that even the process of critical reflection on our assumptions in private matters is a cultural construct as it is based on language and concepts involving power manifestation. For example, the author highlights that

narrative critical self-reflection on assumptions (CSRA), a type of critical reflection introduced by Mezirow, is socially assimilated. Narrative CSRA is when the author of a narrative presents challenges to the reader's assumptions or exhibits self-reflection on her prior assumptions and the way such a reflection leads to self-discovery or freedom from racism, sexism or abuse of power. Drawing on postmodernists such as Derrida, Lyotard, and Lacan, Brookfield explains that these narrative of critical reflection "in which people experience contradictions, are visited by revelations, get better, and come to fuller self-knowledge are necessary palliatives but essentially false" (pp. 133-134). Thus ideology critique takes place when it prompts an understanding of how narrative forms represent power dynamics.

Brookfield (2000) illustrates that there are two purposes for critical reflection in adult education. The first purpose is to examine, understand, uncover and challenge power structures that pervade our assumptions and practices. Therefore, he objects to Mezirow's notion of implicit critical reflection "as when we mindlessly choose between good and evil because of our assimilated values" (Mezirow, 1998, p. 186). For Brookfield, inherent in the definition of critical reflection is "making explicit and analyzing that which was previously implicit and uncritically accepted" (p. 131). Further, Brookfield maintains that the second purpose of critical reflection is the identification and questioning of hegemonic practices and beliefs to promote counter-hegemonic actions. Hegemony refers to the process of embracing ideas, beliefs, practices as the norm and conventional knowledge which in reality serves the interest of a minority group that exercises power and forms of oppression. Building on critiques of

transformative theory, Brookfield asserts that "without consequent social action, critical reflection is castigated as liberal dilettantism, a self-indulgent form of speculation that makes no real difference to anything" (p. 143).

Context

Clark and Wilson (1991) state that context is an essential element in transformative learning that gives experience a particular meaning. They argue that Mezirow's model of ten-step process toward transformative learning that he produced based on his study of women returning to education in community colleges is entirely individualistic and internal without proper account of how the historical, social, cultural, political, and racial contexts influenced their transformation. To reach a clear and complete interpretation of the experiences of these women and their transformative learning, it would be essential to situate their experiences in the context of patriarchal culture.

Alternative Ways of Understanding Transformative Learning Theory

Extra-Rational Approach

The extra-rational approach shifts the focus from critical reflection and rationality as a means of learning and places it on the unconscious processes that underlie transformative learning (Cranton, 2006). Two alternatives to the rational approach illustrate this process: individuation, and imagination and emotional ways of knowing.

The journey of individuation

While Mezirow (1997) sees that questioning of uncritically assimilated assumptions and perspectives as a cognitive and rational process, the concept of

individuation sees it as intuitive and emotional depending on an unconscious or conscious process; when the process is conscious, expansion of consciousness takes place and a deepened understanding of one's inner self occurs (Jung, 1971, p. 448). Boyd (as cited in Dirkx, 2000) draws on the Jungian perspective to emphasize that our emotions, thoughts and actions are strongly formulated by our unconsciousness which embodies issues to be voiced. On the other hand, Clark and Dirkx (2000) argue that our personal biographies and our social and cultural contexts impact our 'conscious will' causing it to be one-sided. Thus transformative learning is a process toward self-actualization once the individual is liberated from assimilated cultural norms (Boyd, 1989). In other words, individuation is the process of identifying what is unique about oneself, what is different in one's personality from the group of, for example, parents, and teachers (Sharp, 2001). This differentiating process brings into awareness that one's psyche is composed of different selves and who we are is different from what our conscious will want us to be (Jacoby, 1990).

Imaginative and emotional ways of knowing

Dirkx (2001) draws our attention to the integral role of emotions and feelings in our ways of knowing as opposed to the traditional view that emotions can either motivate or impede the learning process. He argues that the process of meaning-making prompted by imagination and emotions rather than only through rational reflection fosters personal and profound understanding of the self and its relationship to the world which is a transformation of our ordinary existence as it connects with our psyche (p. 64). Psychic and sociocultural contexts generate emotions that shape and formulate our understanding

of our sense of self, our connection to the world, and the way we make meaning of daily

events; sometimes we experience strong feelings towards someone or something

unconsciously, feelings that we cannot express in words, but in fantasies and dreams.

Emotional experiences often reveal hidden desires, contradictory selves or images of a

deeper reality; sometimes we feel angry about something and at the same time we feel

guilty for being angry; a person's display of strong emotional reactions such as anger

may emanate from an unconscious image of reality such as feeling left out. Thus our

emotionally charged images give meaning to our relationships with ourselves, with others

and with the world. Dirkx also draws on Goleman's (1995) concept of emotional

intelligence to highlight the significant role of emotions in context of adult learning:

Emotional intelligence shows that the processing of external information and the work of

memory in storing and retrieving it are profoundly interconnected with emotions. Dirkx

argues that while Mezirow's transformative learning theory focuses on questioning

"why" and "how" these emotions and feelings are emerging, the imaginative way of

learning focuses on understanding the images behind these emotions which consciously

connects us with our psyche.

Social Approach to Transformative Learning

What is the link between transformative learning and social action? While the

individual dimension of transformative learning is a process where the individual

critically reflects on and revises prior perspectives and assumptions to construe and

validate new meanings of one's experience in order to inform new actions (Mezirow,

2000, p. 8), Paulo Freire (1970) and other theorists see transformative learning as a social

process based on the development of critical consciousness. Critical consciousness leads to the realization that uncritically held assumptions are ideologies that reinforce the economic and political injustices upon people without their knowledge. This approach to transformative learning is known as Emancipatory Transformation.

Conscientization is a central theme in Freire's (1970) emancipatory education. Conscientization is critical consciousness on the injustices and systems of oppression in order to initiate social transformation toward a more equitable and free society. Conscientization promotes awareness of the conditions of the lives of marginalized groups through the discussion of experiences and feelings which empowers the members with an agency for social change. It is the opposite of what Freire calls the banking system of education which seeks domestication to maintain the oppressive status quo.

Freire (1998) highlights the importance of nurturing students' autonomy, respecting their experiences, and fostering critical reflection in educational practices for social change. He argues that students should be subjected to a methodology that fosters curiosity and critical thinking so that they become producers and reproducers of knowledge and agents in the transformative process of learning (p. 33). He also calls on teachers to incorporate and respect students' knowledge and experiences rather than only accounting for the content of the curriculum. He is mainly concerned with experiences of the poor and the neglected who are suffering from violence, poverty and pollution in their neighbourhoods (p. 36). Weiler (1995) writes that "in Freirean pedagogy, it is through the interrogation of their own experiences that the oppressed will come to an

understanding of their own power as knowers and creators of the world; this knowledge will contribute to the transformation of their world" (p. 35).

From the perspective of emancipatory transformation, Freire (1998) advocates a pedagogy of hope and possibility and not a pedagogy that constrains students to only one practice, the technical training (pp. 26-27). The role of the teacher in such pedagogy is to promote possibilities for the students' own construction of knowledge (p. 30). He strongly refutes the notion that teachers are transmitters of prior knowledge, that students are passive recipients of this knowledge and that education is a "banking system" (p. 32). The teaching process is part of learning: "Whoever teaches learns in the act of teaching, and whoever learns teaches in the act of learning" (p. 31). In addition, pedagogy of hope and possibility is revolutionary and does not surrender to the deterministic perspective. It advocates the struggle to change human misery and rejects adaptability to the denial of humanity (p. 71-72). Thus, pedagogy of hope and responsibility calls for transformation of the world which "implies a dialectic between the two actions: denouncing the process of dehumanization and announcing the dream of a new society" (p. 74).

Freire (1998) emphasizes the recognition of the role of emotions, desires, sensibility, and intuition in the learning process (p. 48). Anger against discrimination, exploitation, violence, and negation of love is legitimate, and produces a feeling of joy and liveliness because it emanates from knowledge and consciousness; when denied, it turns into fury, hatred (p. 45) and false thinking (p. 51**).**

Weiler (1995), a feminist writer, emphasizes consciousness raising of women's conditions and lives in a male-dominated society as a process of social transformation. She maintains that

> Early consciousness-raising groups, based on friendship and common political commitments, focused on the discussion of shared experiences of sexuality, work, family, and participation in the male-dominated left political movement. Consciousness raising focused on collective political change rather than on individual therapy. (Weiler, 1995, pp. 29-30)

Further, Brookfield's (2000) insights on the link between transformative critical reflection and social action highlight that critical ideology is an integral part of transformative learning theory. Brookfield defines ideology as a force that dictates our emotional responses and shapes our experience of the world and our personalities. Ideology frames not only our understanding of political, social and economic systems, but also "our moral reasoning, our interpersonal relationships, and our ways of knowing" (p. 130). Consequently, a transformation in our frames of reference, our point of view, and our assumptions occurs when we fundamentally revise and restructure the way we think (mental action) and when critical reflection leads to a challenge of hegemonic assumptions and systems of power.

Connected Knowing

Connected Knowing, also referred to as learning through relationships, emphasizes the importance of friendships, trust, and support in transformative learning which contradicts Mezirow's concept of autonomy in transformative learning (Taylor, 1998, p. 36). Confidence and trust among learners are essential for a profound critical reflection that facilitates the emotionally charged transformative process (p. 37); "It is in

and through the disclosure of one's self to another that meaning develops and is enhanced" (Cochrane, 1981, p. 114).

Connected Knowing is a holistic approach that seeks to identify and test strengths rather than weaknesses in ideas and arguments and withholds judgment when weaknesses are identified. Connected Knowers struggle to understand why another's point of view is different from their own rather than adopting a defensive strategy that aims at dismantling the other's perspective. They try to see the world from the perspective of the other by connecting to his or her frame of reference using imagination, empathy, and storytelling. Connected Knowers believe that the use of counterarguments hinder the process of understanding another's perspective (Belenky & Stanton, 2000, p. 87-88). Belenky and Stanton (2000) state that Mezirow agrees with the process of withholding judgment while attempting to understand the arguments of another person, but he emphasizes that reasoning should be followed to decide on the best judgment. However, the authors believe that exercising critical judgment on perspectives can be adequate in some cases but destructive in others (p. 88).

Gilly (2004) describes her transformative experience in a "living learning group", a term she coined to highlight that collaboration and trusting relationships are essential to a successful and sustainable group work (p. 231): Gilly notes that nurturing strong, positive, and trusting relationships among the members of the group made their individual voices stronger as they moved from "being a collection of individuals" into a community sustained by relational knowledge (p. 236). Their group discussions were characterized not by argumentation, communicative exchanges or a processing of

information, but rather by a creation of relational knowledge through inclusivity,

equality, and mutual commitment to reach consensus and surpass individual differences

and social and cultural challenges.

Ecological Approach

An approach to transformative learning that integrates most of the core elements

of the alternative approaches described above is provided by Edmund O'Sullivan and his

colleagues, Amish Morrell and Ann O'Connor. Their definition of transformative

learning is worth quoting at length:

> Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in basic
> premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that
> dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift
> involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships
> with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of
> power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body awareness;
> our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for
> social justice and peace and personal joy. (O' Sullivan, 2002, p. 11)

Transformative Learning as Group Situated

Recently, the assumption that group learning is an individual process rather than a

unitary learning in adult education is a subject of debate among adult educators. Kasl and

Elias (2000) argue that groups, or organizations are learning entities that are capable of

transformation the way individuals transform based on the concept that individuals,

organisations and groups are systems that exhibit same characteristics, and the concept of

individual mind applies to groups and organizations. The authors state that

transformation of the structure of consciousness is based on critical reflection and

discernment which "is a process of seeing patterns of relational wholeness that begins

with an attitude of receptivity and appreciation" (p. 231). Then transformative learning

becomes not only a change in frames of reference and habits of mind, but also an expansion of consciousness in the individual as well as the collective mind. When conflict occurs in a cultural environment, the learner undergoes a change in his consciousness which leads to a change in his or her relationship to the group identity (p. 233). Kasl and Elias (2000) construe their conception of transformative learning within a group by drawing on both Mezirow's transformative learning theory and the constructivist-developmental theory: Mezirow (2000) explains transformation as a process that involves an assessment of frames of reference and habits of mind resulting in the formulation of new frames of reference; Constructivist-developmentalism sees learning in a cultural environment as a developmental process from ethnocentrism toward ethnorelativism where differences are appreciated, relational learning to other cultures occurs and a new wholeness is formulated by incorporating features of one's identity (p. 232).

Brookfield (2000) highlights the importance of a collaborative effort in the process of critical refection for social transformation and warns against learning in isolation which can lead to a destructive pessimism. He argues that critical friends can assist us emotionally and act as mirrors of our distorted perspectives. We also benefit from their own critical experiences (p. 146).

Saavedra (1996, pp. 273-274) states that transformative learning within a study group is facilitated by conditions that are socially and intellectually constructed by the group members through critical dialogue. Some of these conditions are as follows:

- *Identity and Voice:* Dialogue provides group participants with an opportunity to be active agents in the (re)construction of their identities (class, gender, and ethnicity) and voice.

- *Dialogical Context:* In collaborative learning, it is important to foster a democratic setting where voices are heard and respected, and to build productive social interactions by encouraging students to share their social, cultural and political experiences.

- *Dissonance and Conflict:* The critical reflection on one's perspectives creates conflict within the individual and within the group. "Embracing the dissonance and conflict as learning opportunities is essential for transformative learning" (p. 274).

- *Mediational events and Demonstration:* Mediation of the various themes that emanate from group discussion and a demonstration of authentic learning experiences are needed.

- *Reflection, Action, and Generation:* Allowing enough time for participants to reflect and act on their learning experience to generate new knowledge is essential for transformation.

In conclusion, by integrating these multiple perspectives, it becomes clear that transformative learning is a rational, cognitive, intuitive, and affective process that accounts for political, social, economical, and cultural contexts. It is a process that is informed by ideology critique and "asymmetrical power relationships" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 28). It takes place through critical reflection, rational discourse on assumptions,

beliefs, and attitudes to reach a consensus, embrace an understanding of differences, or reformulate new perspectives. It is best facilitated within a community of learners where connected knowing, collaboration, and trusted relationships are nurtured.

Chapter 2

Social and Emotional Competence

> *"Our concepts of our emotions are*
> *often integral to our wider conception of*
> *our selves, used to give meaning and*
> *provide explanation of our lives."*
> *(Lupton, 1998, p. 6)*

Recent years have witnessed a continuous and growing effort to attend to emotions and social skills in schools and their impact on academic achievement and lifelong learning. This shift in attention to emotional and social skills emanates from the conviction that IQ tests are not enough to predict success in life (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2000, p. 346; Goleman, 1995). Then with the emergence of the construct emotional and social intelligence, it became crucial to nurture social and emotional intelligence in students so that they can draw on it in their personal life, community and workplace. As will be demonstrated, social and emotional intelligence contributes greatly to one's happiness and well-being in all walks of life. The literature points out that it is better to nurture it in children, but it also points out that it can be developed in the adult (Bar-On, 2005).

This review of the literature is carved up in a way that is geared toward educational purposes for transformative learning in adult education and not an in-depth delve in the realm of psychology. The purpose of this is to provide a deep understanding of the importance of emotional and social skills not only in the learning process but also in the daily life of adult learners, in their workplace, and their community in our highly diverse society. The first part of this chapter explores emotions and their effects on the

learning process. Then a review of the literature on emotional and social intelligence follows. A great deal of attention is given to the work of Goleman (1995, 2006) as this thesis is mainly based on his definition of emotional and social intelligence.

The Role of Emotions in the Learning Process

Emotions play a fundamental role in the lives of students whether they are young, or adult. Many students who succeed in acquiring academic knowledge fail when facing social and emotional dilemmas. Their academic intelligence neither guarantees happiness in everyday life nor satisfaction in their interpersonal relationships with colleagues, family members, friends, and people in their community. "Academic intelligence offers virtually no preparation for the turmoil –or opportunity –life's vicissitudes bring" (Goleman, 1995, p. 36). Goleman (1995) argues that we have overemphasized the rational in schools while our decisions and actions are influenced by our emotions more than we think. Emotions trigger us into actions which are also influenced by culture and experience. For example, when we experience sadness because of a particular loss, we lack enthusiasm and energy to participate in activities, and we display sadness in ways that conform to our own experience and culture. Therefore, there is a need for a balance between academic achievements and social emotional skills in schools. Goleman explains that there are two ways of knowing, the rational mind and the emotional mind. The rational mind activates in us the ability to reflect, think, and exercise conscious comprehension. The emotional mind is responsible for impulsivity in action, and becomes dominant and powerful when feelings are intense which can cause a disruption of thinking (p. 8). Both minds normally operate in coordination with each

other to keep a balance in behaviour. When this balance is struck between the emotional

mind and the rational one, both the emotional intelligence and the intellectual thinking

rise. Moreover, emotions can facilitate or hinder the learning process (Dirkx, 2001, p.

63). Negative emotions in students such as anxiety, fear, and lack of comfort result in

avoidance of participation in class discussion or absenteeism (Perry, 2006, p. 26).

Students who experience positive emotions are motivated to learn.

In adult learning, the significant role of emotions in relation to relationships,

interactions, one's sense of self and to particular socio-cultural contexts has been

recognized by my many authors (Dirkx, 2001). Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2000)

define emotions as a result of the changes in the interactions between the individual and

the environment. For example, when a person faces injustice or threat, anger arises

leading to a behavioural response. Thus the significance of emotions is recognized today

because emotions are communication signals that pass on information about one's and

others' feelings, needs, and actions (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2008, p. 506). Dirkx

(2001) argues that emotions create meanings about ourselves and the socio-cultural

context in which the learning occurs. For example, our experience of anger may reflect

the reality of being left out (p. 65). Dirkx gives another example of how emotions

construct meanings from one of his adult classes: One of his students, a middle-aged

woman, learned about herself from a developmental theory in a course he was giving.

She was experiencing confusion about her life for a long time. The study of the theory

evoked images in her which contributed to her new understanding of herself.

Adults experience both emotional resilience and emotional vulnerability in their engagement in the cognitive and emotional learning. They face numerous emotional challenges to their competence and their identity. Upon entry into college, adults experience anxiety and insecurity and interpersonal weakness about their academic success, their ability to deal with other life issues. This emotional vulnerability often dissipates after receiving support from staff and other adult friends, and after completing a number of courses. Furthermore, adults have complex identities, a reflection of their world as adults. Their decision to enter or re-enter college is a result of a life crisis, such as financial need, divorce, work issues, or a search for a new opportunity. They view themselves as having a limited time as compared to younger students: their perception of a limited time endows them with emotional resilience to persist in pursuing goals; and for adult learning to be meaningful, it should be emotionally connected to their lives and their adult identities. In this emotionally connected environment, students perceive themselves as competent and challenge their beliefs about themselves and consider other possibilities: "Each semester of college involvement represents either a renegotiation or adaptation of themselves and their lives" (Kasworm, 2008, p. 29).

Furthermore, emotions in adult learning have a significant impact on the teaching-learning process in a diverse classroom when issues of race, ethnicity and White privilege, among other issues, are discussed. Discussion of diversity in the classroom may turn into an "emotionally, disorienting experience" (Baumgartner & Johnson-Bailey, 2008, p. 50). Marginalized students, who feel threatened in the classroom or are presented as being worthless in the curriculum, experience anger, fear, and feelings of

isolation. These emotions hinder their learning. However, once they are able to get past these negative emotions, they seek more knowledge and understanding of the underlying assumptions and the emotionally disturbing issues that have affected them. Those who feel welcomed and nurtured with empathy in the diverse classroom, experience excitement and their learning is enhanced. Others resist learning when it challenges their positionality. For example, some White students resist antiracist education that shows how Blacks are discriminated against by various systems in the society such as, for example, the health care and the police force. Their act of resistance is their way to protect their White privilege. Those White students who face their denial of White privilege and recognize their association with racism, often experience White guilt and anger. This realization may hinder learning because it evokes strong emotions regarding their guilt. Others overcome these feelings of guilt in a beneficial way: they take action to erase racism (Baumgartner & Johnson-Bailey, 2008, pp. 47-52).

<div align="center">**Emotional Intelligence**</div>

Historical Overview of Emotional Intelligence

The construct emotional intelligence (EI) is rooted in Thorndike's search for the elements of success in life on many levels (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2000, p. 346). Thorndike (1920) maintains that there are different intelligences and "no man is equally intelligent for all sorts of problems" (p. 228). He named social intelligence the skill that accounts for understanding human nature and that underlies success in human relationships (p. 228). Then in 1983, Gardner introduced his theory of multiple intelligences. Two types

of intelligence in his theory, the intrapersonal and the interpersonal intelligence are closely associated with social and emotional intelligence (Gardner, 1983).

It was Salovey and Mayer (1990) who first coined the term 'emotional intelligence' (Lyusin, 2006). They defined EI as

> A set of skills hypothesized to contribute to the accurate appraisal and expression of emotion in oneself and in others, the effective regulation of emotion in self and in others, and the use of feeling to motivate, plan, and achieve in one's life. (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 185)

This definition encompasses four abilities known as 'branches': identifying emotions, emotional facilitation of thought, understanding emotions, and managing emotions (Caruso, Mayer & Salovey, 2002, p. 307).

Later, emotional intelligence was popularized by Goleman' s (1995) publication of his book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ.* Goleman based his theory of emotional intelligence on the initial version of Mayer and Salovey's model, but extended it to include other personality characteristics such as self-control, persistence, and zeal, among other positive skills (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2008, p. 504) and managerial competencies (Bar-On, 2005).

Bar-On's (2005) developed five non-cognitive social and emotional competencies of EI with various subcomponents that people use to succeed in life. Briefly, these five competencies are (a) Intrapersonal: self-awareness and self-expression; (b) Interpersonal: social awareness and interaction; (c) Stress Management: emotional management and control; (d) Adaptability: change management; (e) General mood: self-motivation (Bar-On, 2005, p. 21).

Mixed Models Versus Ability Models

The great interest in the construct emotional intelligence resulted in the emergence of diverse models of EI; therefore, Caruso, Mayer, & Salovey (2002) attempted to classify the various models under two categories: the ability models and the mixed models. The ability models of EI emphasize information processing as a result of the interaction between emotions and thought that is independent from personality traits. Thus, emotional intelligence is a cognitive ability similar to spatial or verbal intelligence but with emotional components. Caruso and Mayer's (1990) model falls under ability model. The mixed models of EI are based on an array of personality traits, abilities, competencies and skills. Goleman's (1995) and Bar-On (2005) models fall under mixed models (Caruso, Mayer, & Salovey, 2002, p. 307).

Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2008) argue that the mixed models have resulted in misunderstanding and misuse of the construct EI which led to the questioning of its validity; the construct "is now employed to cover too many things –too many different traits, too many different concepts" (p. 503). They attribute this confusion to Goleman's (1995) exaggerated statements such as "what data exist, suggest it [EI] can be as powerful, and at times more powerful, than IQ" (Goleman, 1995, p. 34). In their attempt to clarify this confusion, Mayer et al. state that a valid conception of EI is a process of identifying, using, and managing emotional information in oneself and others in an adaptive way to guide action and thinking that results in beneficial social outcomes (p. 503).

Major Components of Emotional Intelligence

As illustrated above, it is evident that there are various models of EI, each model consists of specific components and subcomponents. However, they all overlap and have in common some major components such as self-awareness, empathy, communication skills, management of emotions, (Greenockle, 2010, p. 263), self-motivation, and adaptation in solving intrapersonal and personal problems (Bar-On, 2005, p. 3). The following is an illustration of the major components of emotional intelligence adapted from many models of EI in order to frame and clarify the answer to the question: What is emotional intelligence?

Self-awareness:

Self-awareness is the ability to know one's emotions and their causes as they occur; a high self-awareness of one's emotions is manifested when a person remains calm and in control in front of provocative situations and is able to exercise self-reflection. This self-awareness of emotions triggers an action for changing them or letting go of them to reach a beneficial outcome. For example, when people become aware that it is anger that they are experiencing, they are able to freely manage this emotion rather than acting upon it impulsively (Goleman, 1995). Self-awareness of emotions also occurs when people are able to appraise and express their emotions accurately through the use of language. Such ability prompts better responses to one's emotions and a clear revelation of these feelings to others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Enhancing self-awareness depends largely on the investigation of how one formulates perceptions, expectations and appraisals. For example, when entering a

faculty meeting, a reflection on one's personal thoughts and beliefs related to the event, to people attending it, and the potential outcomes of this meeting increases self-awareness of the causes of these perceptions and generates the ability to deal with negative feelings during the meeting. After the meeting, a rational reflection on the causes of one's and others' reactions fosters a recognition of one's feelings that leads to a beneficial management of one's emotions (Weisinger, 1998).

Self-actualization is a subcomponent of self-awareness (Bar-On, 2005). Self-actualization is a long-life pursuit to achieve one's best in terms of ability, goal, and talent. The extent to which one succeeds in self-actualization requires motivation, and self-awareness of one's feelings and needs. It also requires optimism, persistence in pursuing one's goals, and appropriate decision making in solving problems (Bar-On, 2005, p. 17).

Managing emotions in oneself:

Self-awareness of one's emotions fosters appropriate management of emotional reactions. Managing emotions means to find a balance in expressing emotions in facing challenging situations; it does not call for neutrality nor emotional suppression, but rather for effective and proportionate responses to any situation in terms of positivity, intensity and length of time (Goleman, 1995).

Among the variety of emotions that need to be intelligently managed, Goleman (1995) pays great attention to the feeling of anger. There are several techniques to ease anger. In some cases, taking a deep breath, going for a walk or a drive, being alone, avoiding the other person, or resorting to distraction such as watching TV can help an

angry person cool off. Goleman refers to these techniques to anger that has no reason and anger that is provoked by a threat to self-esteem, injustices, and unfairness. However, I argue that the applicability of these techniques is limited and questionable when anger is defined as "the anger of exclusion, of unquestioned privilege, of racial distortions, of silence, ill-use, stereotyping, defensiveness, misnaming, betrayal, and co-optation" (Lorde, 1984, p. 124). How to manage this type of anger requires also emotionally intelligent skills. This observation will be further illustrated in chapter four.

Self-motivation:

Motivating oneself by putting off gratification for the sake of attaining distant but higher goals relies on optimism, embracement of hope, and perseverance rather than helplessness in the face of obstacles. Self-motivation is an emotional competence that results in effectiveness and higher productivity and academic achievement (Goleman, 1995). Motivation is also enhanced by an awareness of one's emotions, and "engagement in constructive internal dialogues" (Greenockle, 2010, p. 264). Optimism shapes people's reactions to life situations. Those who are optimistic view failure as a momentary setback that can be overcome. They motivate themselves by planning a different course of action, and take risk in pursuing their objectives. On the other hand, pessimists perceive failure as a personal weakness that they cannot fix. So they feel helpless, desperate and unmotivated (Goleman, 1995). Self-motivation is also enhanced by other factors such as supportive relationships and healthy environment (Greenockle, 2010, p. 264).

Empathy:

Empathy is recognizing emotions in others, feeling with them, caring and attuning to their needs, wants and pain. The level of emphatic feeling influences moral action. The more emphatic people are to the plight of others, the more likely they will intervene to help them. The highest level of empathy is the source of altruism while deficiency in empathy is a characteristic of psychopaths. Recognizing emotions in others, whether these emotions are verbal or non-verbal, and feeling with them are a reassurance of emotional connection in relationships with colleagues, friends, and family members (Goleman, 1995). Interpersonal relationships that are built on empathy are warm and supportive (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 194). Empathy plays a significant role in diffusing conflicts between two disagreeing parties because it relies on honest communication that leads to a mutual understanding (Brown, 2003).

Handling relationships:

Handling relationships is a social ability that allows the person to know the feelings of someone else and to evoke an emotional response that shapes those feelings producing a desirable outcome. In other words, it is a social art that allows one "to shape an encounter, to mobilize and inspire others, to thrive in intimate relationships, to persuade and influence, to put others at ease" (Goleman, 1995, p. 113).

People exhibit emotional intelligence when they are able to show their emotions effectively with empathy and good self-management. They are the ones who possess the emotional skills that calm down a distressed feeling in others or make someone feels good.

Social Intelligence

What is social intelligence? From the review of the literature, there is a strong

consensus among scholars that emotional and social intelligence are one construct formed

with components of both emotional and social intelligence. Therefore, Bar-On (2005)

suggests the use of the term emotional-social intelligence to describe this construct. He

names several examples to support his suggestion: Gardner (1983) views intrapersonal

and interpersonal intelligences as part of the concept of personal intelligences; Saarni

(1990) suggests that emotional competence is based on eight emotional and social skills;

and Bar-On's own model describes emotional-social intelligence as consisting of

intrapersonal and interpersonal skills that facilitate the awareness and expression of

one's feelings, weaknesses and strengths, the understanding of others' feelings, the

positive connection and cooperation with others, and the ability to face the demands of

daily life (Bar-On, 2005, pp. 2-4).

Goleman (2006) also states that both domains, emotional and social intelligence,

merge together, build on each other, and overlap: He suggests, quoting Davidson, that

"you can't separate the cause of an emotion from the world of relationships –our social

interactions are what drive our emotions" (p. 83). The difference between both

capabilities lies in the notion that social intelligence refers to human capacities within the

individual that emerge when there is an interaction with another one while emotional

intelligence refers to capacities within the individual himself such as "our ability to

manage our own emotions and our inner potential for positive relationships" (p. 5).

Goleman refutes the argument that social intelligence is simply a "general intelligence

applied to social situations" (Wechsler, 1958, p. 75). Therefore, Goleman's model of social intelligence comprises two main components, social awareness and social facility, each with several subcomponents as illustrated below.

Major Components of Social Intelligence

    Social awareness:

    Social awareness is expressed when we are able to spontaneously detect the inner state of someone else, understand how that person feels and thinks to knowing the complexity of social situations and how it works (Goleman, 2006, p. 84). Primal empathy, attunement, empathic accuracy and social cognition are the facets of social awareness. Primal empathy, as defined by Goleman, is our ability to automatically detect and feel the emotions of others by observing their tone of voice, and non-verbal expressions. People's attempt to suppress their emotions is never perfect. Primal empathy plays a significant role in reading the suppressed emotional messages which facilitates interpersonal sensitivity in relationships and in the workplace (p. 85). Attunement, the second facet of social awareness, is "attention that goes beyond momentary empathy to a full, sustained presence that facilitates rapport" (p. 86). Attunement is an engagement in deep listening and close attention to others' feelings and points of view. Relationships that are built on attunement are trustful, genuine, emphatic and positive. The best sales people, managers, teachers, leaders, physicians, and social workers are people who attune to others' feelings and needs.

    Goleman (2006) states that emphatic accuracy, the third element of social awareness, encompasses primal empathy with the additional cognitive understanding of

another person's feelings, intentions, and thoughts (p. 84). The absence of emphatic accuracy in a relationship means that one person knows that the other is upset, but cannot predict the motives or intentions of the other person. Emphatic accuracy provides people with a tactful intelligence that allows them to accurately predict the motives of others, so that they can act accordingly to reach a desirable outcome.

The last facet of social awareness is social cognition. Goleman (2006) defines social cognition as "knowledge about how the social world actually works" (p. 90) such as ability to understand social manners, make sense of social events, make friends in a new environment, solve social problems, and develop an understanding of why some people feel insulted or embarrassed by certain remarks while others don't. Social cognition also facilitates healthy interaction in a culturally diverse environment.

Social facility:

The second component of social intelligence is social facility which is our use of social awareness to cultivate effective interactions. Goleman (2006) states that synchrony, self-representation, influence, and concern are three aspects of social facility. First, synchrony refers to the spontaneous ability to respond to non-verbal cues such as a smile or tone of voice which is essential for a harmonious social interaction. A lack of synchrony in someone leads to social isolation due to a failure in building relationships. Second, self-representation is the ability to express emotions in a given social setting and events in a way that intentionally evokes a favourable impression such as confidence, assertiveness, power, and charisma. Goleman states that "the ability to "control and mask" the expression of emotions is sometimes considered key to self-representation" (p.

94). Influence is another important component of social facility. Influence is the ability to skilfully and constructively reach a particular outcome of a social interaction. For example, people who are able to ease up someone's aggressive behaviour with calmness rather than with force are skilful in exercising constructive influence. Finally, concern is the component of social intelligence that manipulative people cannot feign because concern is the exercise of compassion and empathy revealed in action. Feeling empathy towards someone in distress is not a skill in social intelligence without appropriate intervention to help out that person. These various components of social facility merge with those of social awareness in all walks of life to contribute in the establishment and maintenance of healthy, supportive, and genuine relationships.

A relationship that is weak in these components is referred to as an 'I-It' interaction. Goleman (2006) explains that the term 'I-It' was coined by Martin Buber to refer to interactions that are disconnected and lack empathy. We are in I-It- mode when we treat another person as an object or an instrument for specific purposes that suit us. For example, when we multitask simultaneously while we are carrying a conversation with someone who is expecting sympathy from us, the conversation becomes superficial and disconnected. The opposite of I-It is I-You interaction that is characterised by full attunement to the other person, emotional connection, and concern; we seek to understand the other person's feelings and perspective. However, the I-It interaction has its benefits in certain professions where distance from others is required to deliver a particular service successfully. For example, a doctor cannot operate on a patient with whom she is engaged emotionally because closeness in such a case can undermine her

expertise. However, at the same time a doctor should build rapport with the patient to establish trust. Thus it is crucial that a balance is maintained between the I-It and I-You mode in particular cases. Social intelligence plays a significant role in building and sustaining this balance.

Deficits in Emotional and Social Competence

Emotional and social skills can be used and adjusted adeptly to connect with people, to show charisma, create a good impression, or to succeed in leadership. However, people who deploy emotional skills in a way that their personality and attitudes constantly change regardless of their own personality depending on who the other is, are "anchorless social chameleons" who, for example, pretend to be friends with someone, while in reality they dislike that person (Goleman, 1995, p. 120). This duplicity is highly appreciated in some profession such as politics, sales, and diplomacy, among others. Goleman (2006) warns against the traditional conception of social intelligence which is exhibited as an appropriate behaviour according to social norms and rules. Relationships built on such conception of social intelligence lack human values such as empathy, attunement, concern and synchrony.

Another deficiency in emotional and social intelligence is revealed in a deteriorating relationship between couples. When partners deal with their disagreements with harsh criticism, anger, violence, contempt, passivity, and attack on each other's character, they place themselves on a destructive emotional route where empathy, emotional self-awareness, and management of emotions are deficient (Goleman, 1995, p. 140).

Further, in order to recognize manipulative people, Goleman (2006) illustrates the complete opposite of social intelligence as embodied in three types of people known as "The Dark Triad" (p. 118). They are the narcissists, the psychopaths, and the Machiavellians who all exercise "social malevolence, duplicity, self-centeredness and aggression, and emotional coldness" (p. 118). Here, Goleman's insights suggest that it is important to teach social intelligence in order to differentiate it from its antithesis. It is interesting to note that Goleman refers to movies to illustrate the personality of each one of these characters. For example, the manager in the movie S*ilkwood* (Nichols, 1983) is a corporate narcissist who cares for the success of his unsafe and lethal work that is related to a nuclear reactor and has no concern for the safety of people (p. 121).

Measurement of Emotional and Social Intelligence

There are various methods used to measure emotional intelligence based on whether the EI falls under ability models or under mixed models. The validity of each of these methods is still debatable in the literature (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2004). Some researchers question the reliability of emotional intelligence tests as well as the validity of the construct of EI as a different model from common personality trait models (Caruso, Mayer, & Salovey, 2002, p. 308). As the premise of this thesis doesn't acknowledge the need for these tests in an adult class oriented towards critical media literacy for transformative learning in relation to social and emotional *competence*, an examination of these tests is irrelevant. The same argument is relevant to the question of measuring social intelligence.

Can Social and Emotional Intelligence Be Developed or Transformed?

Many scholars agree that social and emotional intelligence can be learned (Salovey and Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995, 2006; Bar-On, 2005). The emerging literature about emotional intelligence in organizations shows that it can be learned and enhanced, though effective interventions take place in childhood (Dulewicz and Higgs, 2000, p. 350). Bar-On (2005) reported the results of several studies that demonstrate that social and emotional intelligence can be enhanced in adults. For example, a study done by Sjölund and Gustafsson (2001) in Sweden showed that the managerial competencies of the participants who were managers in their early 40s were enhanced in term of social and emotional intelligence, especially self-awareness and empathy.

In conclusion, the purpose of this review is to provide the framework necessary to examine the role of social and emotional intelligence in understanding how to foster healthy relationships in an ever growing diverse society where racism, classism, marginalization, perpetuation of stereotype representations, patriarchal domination and hegemony are rampant. Social and emotional skills are human abilities that can be developed where they lack, enhanced where they exists as Goleman (1995, 2006) has successfully demonstrated. Once learned, these skills help us create opportunities to connect with others with empathy and concern, diffuse emotionally charged situations peacefully, resolve conflict rather than escalating them, build strong relationships in marriage, with friends and colleagues, and lead a happy and successful life at all levels based on respect, love, care, and emotional connection. Recognizing the contribution of

social and emotional intelligence to the lives of adults provides educators with a

theoretical and practical foundation to incorporate it in the teaching and learning process.

Chapter 3

Critical Media Literacy

> *"All media are active metaphors in their power to translate experience into new form."* (McLuhan, 1964, p. 64)

This chapter examines the different perspectives for implementing critical media literacy in the curriculum, mainly from the perspectives of cultural studies scholars, to provide the context that demonstrates that in addition to the wide range of goals across disciplines, critical media literacy has the potential to foster transformative change in the social and emotional competence of students which is fundamental to their happiness, well-being, perceptions of themselves and others, and their thoughts about their worldviews. This view is largely ignored in the literature. First, the importance of the use of movies as an educational tool in the classroom is highlighted. The second part explores the various definitions of popular culture which are linked and overlap with the goals of critical media literacy, specifically films. One caveat to be considered: the goals of implementing critical media literacy in education are not only relevant to children and high school students, but also to graduate students as young adults, as well as older people such as parents, employees, prospective teachers, and others. This review is directed toward the young adults and older ones.

Film as a Powerful Educational Tool

First, it is important to explain why this study emphasizes specifically the use of films as an effective educational tool. The focus of this research is neither on cinema genre nor cinematic techniques such as sound effects, choreography, music, and so forth.

Rather, the focus is on highlighting the reasons that qualify films as an educational tool to develop transformative learning towards social and emotional intelligence.

Since the 1970s, there has been a growing interest among educators in the use of films as an educational medium with the consensus that films foster motivation, interest, engagement, retention, and entertainment (Champoux, 1999). Similarly, White and Walker (2008) argue that traditional education is often boring and irrelevant to students' needs, emotions, habits and preferences in our contemporary society. Therefore, "teaching practices in the social studies should promote interest, engagement, rigor, enthusiasm for learning, and a sense of personal investment and empowerment" (p. 16). Further, Champoux (1999) suggests that film is a powerful teaching tool for various instructional goals across disciplines. Film can be used as a case study to improve the analytical skills of students; as satire to leave strong memorable image of the ills of people and society; as conveyor of meaning to theories such as the concept of conflict resolution; as creating experiences and views of other cultures; and as a presentation of a particular perspective on, for example, a diversity issue from an earlier time.

Furthermore, "the medium of film, more than any other art form, is able to portray the subtleties of the human mind – thoughts, emotions, instincts and motives – and their impact on behaviour" (Niemiec & Wedding, 2008, p. 5). Both dimensions, the cognitive and the emotional, are present in films creating an engagement in the evaluation of the self and one's values (Champoux, 1999, p. 213). McGinn (2005) argues that movies have ideological power that reinforces the mainstream assumptions of society; however, "not everything is an exercise in power politics" (p. 9). The ideological power

of movies is not an essential one that contributes to our visual experience. People may watch a movie that is perfectly aligned with their ideologies, but which might not fascinate them a bit. McGinn disagrees with the notion that the power of movies lies in its unique way of replicating reality. He argues that the power of movies lies in what they add to reality. No matter to what extent a good movie enthrals us, we never mistake it for actual reality. The power of movies is embedded in the way movies engage our emotions, offer us fiction, imaginations and expectations. Reading about or listening to a story is not like seeing it as a movie. Movies build a visual relationship between us and the screen through the use of close-ups of the human face (p. 51). McGinn explains that close-ups of human face allow us access to the mind of the characters and attune us to their psychological revelations such as their intentions, deepest desires, emotions, fears, ambitions, private thoughts, and so forth. This access to the mind of the characters is peculiar to the movies, more than real life: "It is as if the movie itself really took place in our minds, with the images on the screen acting as mere stimuli" (p. 54). Movies, as McGinn suggests, offer us mental analogies of our inner consciousness when we connect with the characters and their psychological engagements. Similarly, Champoux (1999) notes that the close-up shots of movies attract the viewers' attention to the emotions on the faces of the different characters in the movies to be available to the viewer. In ordinary life, it is difficult to observe the emotions of each character throughout a conversation.

Based on psychological and educational research, Kuzma and Haney (2001, pp. 34-37) delineate five fundamental reasons for using movies in the classroom:

- Movies stimulate the senses: the simultaneous activation of the auditory and
  visual senses facilitates retention and recalls of the course content for a longer
  time (Martin, 1993) and engages students in active vicarious experiences
  (Bakony, 1982). It is important here to clarify the meaning of a vicarious
  experience. A vicarious experience is referred to the result of a contact through
  different mediums such as movies, role playing or sociodrama. The students
  involved in this contact acquire the perspective of others or learn about conflict
  resolution. Social distance can be reduced and a feeling of empathy developed.
  For example, students who watch a realistic movie about Japanese American may
  change their prior assumptions about them. Students who play the role of a
  disabled person may change their prior negative attitude towards disability
  (Sleeter & Grant, 1994, pp. 109-110).

- Movies make abstract concept concrete: Some concepts are difficult to explain.
  Movies help students grasp them. For example, in a course on political science,
  the concept 'deterrence' can be understood from viewing the movie *Dr.
  Strangelove* (Kubrick, 1964) in which the US president addresses the Soviet
  ambassador stating that "deterrence works only if the other side knows you have
  created a "doomsday machine" capable of destroying the planet" (Kuzma &
  Haney, 2001, p. 35).

- Movies engage emotions: Movies have the capability, through sound, editing,
  and camera shots, to intensify the emotional experience of viewers rendering
  these experiences memorable.

- Movies create bridges to the past: They are capable of creating reality effect about past events which allows students to visualize the past and connect with it emotionally (Berenson, 1996).

- Movies advance the learning paradigm: They promote students' creativity because, as there is no right answer, students feel free to participate in open class discussions, interpreting and evaluating the movie (Keyser, 1985).

Niemiec and Wedding (2008) observes that movies have a universal value that is not hindered by culture, religion, belief systems language or geographical borders. This argument is true in most cases; we know the universal meaning of love, hate, happiness, sadness, courage, jealousy and so forth. Further, while the plot of a movie provides the viewers with the general meaning, the subtext reveals the characters' psychology such as virtues, strengths and weaknesses, and the social, cultural, and political issues at play surrounding the characters.

Critical Media Literacy

Definition of Popular Culture

This section on critical media literacy, which is also referred to as critical pedagogy (Tobias, 2008, p. 8), explores the various definitions of popular culture and their impact on education inside as well as outside the classroom, specifically in relation to teaching diversity in the classroom for adult learners. These definitions are all relevant to the use of movies in the classroom.

The history of popular culture is a complex process embedded with many contradictory perspectives on how to define popular culture and its relationship to schooling. Some educators assert that popular culture has a negative and disruptive impact on society and schooling by being a threat to the existing power and a medium to perpetuate profane desires and dumbness. Others see its fruitful and educational potential in terms of the development of democracy, cultural awareness, equality and justice. Thus, they advocate its integration in the curriculum form K-12 classroom into adult classes. This paradoxical conceptualization of popular culture resonates throughout its history up to our contemporary society:

The roots of popular culture go back to Plato's demarcation between two types of culture: a high culture and a low/popular culture. Plato divided culture into proper culture and popular culture; proper culture was considered the philosopher knowledge of truth and the right education to be taught to the young; popular culture, such as myths, heroic tales, painting and poetry, was associated with the low tastes of the masses and should be banned from the curriculum due to its deceptive and seductive influence on the minds of the young (Weaver, 2007, pp. 2-3).

The advent of mass communication has provided popular culture with a powerful potential in creating meaning and the image was privileged over the written word. Weaver (2007) says that W. J. T. Mitchell's picture theory highlights this creative and authoritarian power of popular culture and stresses that people should realize the importance of interpreting the meanings attached to images. Otherwise, they will be duped by those who are able to construct meanings for them (p. 16). Picture theory

recognizes the dangerous and detrimental power of popular culture on the masses. Similarly, Adorno and Horkheimer (2002) define popular culture as a medium for mass deception and a barrier to the development of autonomous thinking in individuals.

Dolby (2003) highlights that it is the work of Raymond Williams in the 1950s and 1960s that has removed the demarcation between high and popular culture and maintained that class was constructed. She states that Williams (1963, 1965) asserts the role of the working class as a cultural and social agency with democratic practices. The British working class culture is characterized by collective solidarity and creativity and a sense of community while the upper British class is representative of individualistic and solitary practices. Further, Williams warns that democracy can be threatened by the domination of mass communications on how people see the world; an educational or dictatorial view can be imposed on people by a dominant group. His observation here has linked the popular culture to Antonio Gramsci's political notion of hegemony as discussed below (Dolby, 2003, p. 262).

Popular culture and its relationship to the masses have sparked an ongoing debate among contemporary critics about its definition and the importance of integrating critical media pedagogy in schooling. Kline, Stewart, and Murphy (2006) present the debate between the protectionist and the preparationist educators: the protectionist educators fear that media promote aggressiveness, laziness, depression, anti-social behaviour, school failure and other lifestyle risks. Therefore, they argue that children should receive a critical media education that empowers them with critical awareness of the various messages in the media. On the other hand, the progressive educators see the educational

and instrumental value of the media and advocate training in the digital media for operational use.

Popular culture definition as a terrain for struggle where the subordinate classes show resistance expressed through music, movies, language and other forms of mediated communication is articulated by many researchers and scholars. Lull (2003) explains Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony and its relation to mass media. He states that, according to Gramsci, hegemony is the struggle of the dominant culture to exert and maintain power through the consent of the subordinate class. This struggle is manifested in the site of mass media that the ruling elites use as a tool to produce, reproduce, and perpetuate their ideology, and assert their power throughout all the institutions such as churches, schools, businesses, and every aspect of everyday life (pp. 61-62). In other words, Lull says that "hegemony requires that ideological assertions become self-evident cultural assumptions" (pp. 62- 63). However, Lull goes on to say that a social resistance to these hegemonic ideologies is also manifest through media content. For example, Punks, metal heads, feminist organizations and others use the media to resist and reformulate dominant ideologies (p. 65).

Giroux and Simon (1989) state that "popular culture represents not only a contradictory terrain of struggle, but also a significant pedagogical site that raises important questions about the elements that organize the basis of students' subjectivity and experience" (p. 218). These questions explore the connection between the classroom knowledge and students' everyday lives, and whether students' experiences and culture can be part of the curriculum without marginalizing a certain group. Giroux and Simon

note that because popular cultural practices are the results of people's creativity, a counter-discourse should be established in the context of pedagogical encounter to challenge the relations of domination, privilege students' voices, and provide a promise of possibility (p. 227). Lynde (2005) defines popular culture as the dictionary of teenagers who are struggling to define themselves. "How else should they gauge their beliefs and behaviour? For them, popular culture is normalcy" (p. 159). Exposing teenagers to contradictory popular perceptions is an educational enlightenment as students are encouraged to reflect on their beliefs and attitudes. The notion that popular culture is a site for struggle between the dominant and subordinate classes stresses the notion that viewers are active participants in the production and reproduction of meaning and democracy.

Increasingly, popular culture is receiving a positive recognition as "the most significant academic and cultural development of the second half of the 20th century" (Browne, 2005, p. 1). Dolby (2003) argues that popular culture is an inescapable force of social change and democratic practice as it incorporates every aspect of our daily life; people are exposed to popular culture in their homes, communities, and schools; and friendships are built around popular themes and political messages are transmitted through popular culture. Popular culture "has the capacity to intervene in the most critical civic issues and to shape public opinion" (p. 8). Thus, according to Dolby, popular culture is a pedagogical site that should not be ignored because everyday acts contribute to the transformation of the public sphere, the configuration of power, identity and citizenship. Dolby states that "Paul Willis and others have argued, popular culture is

a more significant, penetrating pedagogical force in young peoples' lives than schooling" (p. 264).

Browne (2005) says that people's everyday culture provides significant insights into how their society is controlled. He stresses the importance of its integration in the curriculum on all levels because popular culture is "the engine that drives culture toward more democracy" (p. 1). He goes on to emphasize that the study of popular culture empowers students with a full understanding of their culture which, in turn, would generate a substantial force that engages them in a participatory citizenship driven by awareness and appreciation of values around them (pp. 4-5).

It is popular culture that teaches us about social differences such as class, gender and race. The media representation of Blacks, as a group, creates negative assumptions about them in the minds of White people and reinforces these assumptions causing the marginalization of Black people. Popular culture plays a significant role in the "objectification of women" (Guy, 2007, p. 18). It disseminates and reinforces the notion that the desirable standard of women beauty is equated with the physical beauty of the White female as represented by Anna Nicole Smith and Paris Hilton. There is an obvious frequent and constant use of this White beauty in commercials as compared to Black beauty. Thus, the White female body is not only used to sell sex; it is used to propagate a dominant ideology that values White beauty over Black beauty, a racist belief; it is also an ideology that articulates patriarchal thinking. By working on making these differences salient, popular culture, Guy argues, "can reify these differences into social relationships that take on the aura of normalcy" (p. 16).

As an advocate of the protectionist approach, Kilbourne (as cited in Tobias, 2008, p. 5) calls for a critical analysis of corporate advertising as a pedagogy to protect women's self concepts from the advertising media. By objectifying women, and raising the standard of beauty to an unattainable level, and projecting stereotypical representations about how women perceive themselves and how men see them, the media advertisings are encouraging violence against women, smoking and alcoholism, disempowering women and causing damaged interactions in relationships.

From her review of the literature in the field of critical media literacy, Tobias (2008) states that the protectionist approach endorses the belief that incorporating critical media activities in the curriculum such as engaging students in a critical analysis of the media, and encouraging them to develop their counter-narratives of media representations can nurture the students' capability to resist and challenge negative influences. Such activities can also influence the behaviours of young students towards drinking and smoking, enhance awareness of risky behaviour and reduce their physical aggression.

As illustrated above, there is a strong trend in the literature on critical media literacy and popular culture that focuses on the negative impact of popular culture on students and the necessity to completely reject it or to incorporate in the curriculum as a protectionist approach. There is another body of work on popular culture and critical media literacy known as reception studies that focuses on analysing popular culture as a lived experience of youth. Thus, youth are active agents in their consumption of popular culture who are able to resist, reproduce, and transform the political, cultural and social dimensions in their everyday practices. For example, youth learn about social issues such

as gender and race from movies, television and music. As active receptors of this information, they are capable to cause transformation in their communities, schools, and families (Dolby, 2003, pp. 268- 269).

The review of literature on critical media literacy also shows that the critical analysis of popular culture such as movies have positive educational outcomes. Tisdell and Thompson's (2007) discussion of the role of popular culture in teaching for diversity in adult education demonstrates that popular culture provides a context that facilitates a change of perspective on many complex issues especially in the areas of race, gender, and class. When students participate in a reflective discussion about a particular film, they expand their thinking about notions of stereotypes, about the struggle of the marginalized people, and they even reflect on their own prejudices and renegotiate their identities (pp. 663-664). For example, one of the participants in Tisdell, and Thompson's study changed his view about sexual orientation after watching the movie *Philadelphia* (Demme, 1993) which is about a gay man dying of AIDS. He stated that watching this movie deeply changed his traditional perspective about gay and lesbian. Other participants stated that the media helped them understand the challenges facing marginalized people, but had not completely changed their thinking about the 'others' (p. 663). Also many White participants discussed how uncomfortable and embarrassed they were after watching the movie *Crash* (Haggis, 2005). The movie forced them to look at their own prejudices and attitudes. This process of questioning their own prejudice is an expansion of their thinking about 'others' (pp. 664-665). This process of looking at one's own prejudice and expanding thinking about 'others' can evolve to lead to one of the

most significant and inspiring outcome of the use of popular culture: Leslie Fielder (as cited in Browne, 2005) defines popular culture as a force that reunites people by eliminating social classification, such as class, education, desires and others: "Popular culture is the basic, unvarnished democratic culture that makes us, at the same time, very similar and fundamentally human" (p. 12).

Critical pedagogy of popular culture particularly films or, in other words, critical media literacy can help students find alternative narratives in their own lives. Popular culture portrays fictional characters in a multiple of social, political, economic, personal, professional, and family lives similar to the ones in real life. It connects to students' experiences related to fear, emotions, aspirations, and negotiation of their lives. Thus, students look for alternatives in their lives in the movies they watch. In a study on the use of media in teaching, Tisdell and Thompson (2007) show how participants in their study related their lives to the lives of the characters in the media and how the media helped them make choices in their real lives. For example, a White participant named Kristin relates her life to the lives of the four women in the show *Sex and the City* (Star, 1998) while the lesbian and bisexual women related to the show *The L Word* (Abbott, Chaiken & Greenberg, 2004) that depicts lesbian community: Barbara, a lesbian participant, explained how *The L Word* involved her in discussions with her partner and friends about alternatives in their lives. Therefore, critical analysis of popular culture in an open and safe classroom environment is highly beneficial to students because it offers them ways to deeply explore issues significant to their daily lives and helps them find

alternatives and make choices inspired from their relatedness to the characters' lives in the media.

Furthermore, critical pedagogy of popular culture can enhance cultural synchronization between the diverse students, their teachers and their communities. Paul (2000) explores how a blend of the students' culture such as rap and the teacher's culture such as poetry can engage students in the learning process. His students showed enthusiasm when they found out that "rap was valid poetic form" (pp. 3-4). Cultural synchronization is enhanced when students' knowledge is integrated in the classroom. Students' resistance to learning and cultural misunderstanding take place when cultural synchronization is absent in the classroom.

Tisdell, Stuckey, and Thompson (2007) identify three main aspects of teaching critical media literacy in a study they conducted at the graduate level: First, the pleasurable element in watching movies can either facilitate or hamper critical media literacy (p. 609). Because viewers are entertained in watching a movie, educators can easily push them toward critically analyzing the messages in the movies in relation to historical, political, social and financial issues. For example, a student in her study, Kristin, discovered that beyond the love story in the movie *The Way We Were* (Pollack, 1973) there is a political message related to the McCarthy era. However, this political message was diminished in the final version as a result of the interplay of power, money, and politics: the decision of the directors was influenced by the fact that love story movies can make more money because the viewers at that time were more interested in love stories than in politics. Conversely, the pleasurable element in watching a movie

may seduce the viewers limiting their critical ability. For example, a student who was a nurse was able to identify the representations of power relations between doctors and nurses in various shows, but missed other issues such as class, gender and race (pp. 609-610). Second, the authors observe the effectiveness of facilitated discussions of movies over free discussions directed by students themselves. Students tend to be seduced by the fun element in the movies, missing out on other issues such as gender, class, and race. Third, Tisdell et al. state that engaging students in practical teaching of critical media literacy to others enhances their critical analysis of the portrayals of class, gender, race and sexual orientation in the movies.

Further, Weaver and Daspit (1999) highlight the importance of decentralizing the readings of popular culture texts to account for multiple readings. They state that critical reading of popular culture texts is a process whereby meanings are constructed, contested, and constantly changing resulting in a change in the identities of students and teachers who are involved in the interpretations of these texts because they relate them to their lives and experiences. Thus, the authors point out that educators should realize that the students' interpretations of popular culture texts are different from their own, a process that should be encouraged by educators. As an example, the authors' refer to Giroux's (1996) analysis of the film *Slackers* (Nicks, 2002). They state that while Giroux found the film a depressing representation of youth, his students saw in it a sense of agency that they can rely on to make choices in their lives. Weaver and Daspit also contend that critical pedagogy of popular culture fosters multiple readings rather than one dominant reading geared towards developing an agency with political, radical democratic

and emancipatory outcomes. They argue that reading of popular culture texts should be aimed at fostering argument about diversity.

In addition to the works of cultural scholars and educators, the power of critical media literacy has been acknowledged in psychology but this acknowledgment is still blurry or elusive. A number of research studies in psychology have focused on the use of films for the study of concepts in human development such as personality traits and identity development. For example, Harper and Rogers (1999) examine how the movie *Higher Learning* (Singleton, 1994) can foster an understanding of various developmental issues in a multicultural college environment in which the characters struggle emotionally and academically from social isolation, White supremacist domination, and confusion about one's sexual racial and political identity. In addition, the authors observe that *Higher Learning* is illustrative of "Chickering's seven vectors of student development (developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward independence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, establishing purpose, and developing integrity)" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, as cited in Harper & Rogers, 1999, page unavailable). Relating the racial, sexual, political struggle of the characters in *Higher Learning* to Chickering's seven vectors is a close analysis to the argument that critical media literacy leads to transformative learning toward social and emotional competence that will be discussed later.

Also in the field of positive psychology, Niemiec and Wedding (2008) promote the use of films in the classroom, in clinical studies or for research to teach virtues and strengths of human characters. One of the character strengths mentioned in their studies

is social intelligence. Their analysis of the movies related to social intelligence reflects developmental perspectives but lacks the critical element in it. This observation is further discussed in the next chapter.

It is important to end this chapter with Scharrer's (2002) insights on the outcomes and assessments of critical media literacy. Scharrer points out that critical media literacy from interventionist or cultural studies perspectives does not necessarily lead to a reduction of its negative effects. The author warns that participation in critical thinking about the media messages does not necessarily induce an immediate and effective positive change in one's perspective and behaviour. Engaging in critical media literacy is only one factor among many others that affect the individual's various perspectives and behaviours. Individuals have different personality traits, emotional conditions and various relationships with family and friends that have impact on their responses to the media. Moreover, it is not known whether any resistance to the harmful media messages is a long-lasting one after short exposure to critical media literacy. On the other hand, a prolonged, sustained and accumulated exposure is more likely to lead to a diminished effect of the media.

In conclusion, as the review of the literature on critical media literacy demonstrates, critical media literacy fosters multiple readings of popular culture texts for various pedagogical outcomes. It plays a significant role in constructing one's identity, uncovering hegemonic assumptions, challenging the mainstream culture, facilitating understanding of media representations and promoting the construction and deconstruction of knowledge "depending on their [students'] interest, their positionality

(their gender, race, class, sexual orientation relative to the dominant culture and the historical and social context" (Tisdell, 2007, p. 9). The review of the literature also draws attention to studies in the field of psychology that advocate the use of films in the classroom to develop an understanding of various concepts of human development in a multicultural environment. The review of these studies points out the absence of the critical element (critical ideology) in the analysis of these movies.

The following chapter traces the intersections of the three disciplinary topics, critical media literacy, transformative learning and social and emotional intelligence, in an attempt to promote an alternative approach to critical media literacy. This approach envisions critical media literacy as a vehicle for transformative learning towards social and emotional competence along constructing and deconstructing meanings around diversity issues.

Chapter 4

Critical Media Literacy as a Vehicle for Transformative Learning
Towards Social and Emotional Competence

> *"Besides being an act of knowing, education is also*
> *a political act. That is why no pedagogy is neutral."*
> *(Freire, in Shor and Freire, 1987, p. 13)*

Critical media literacy is a vehicle for transformative learning towards social and emotional competence in students along constructing their identity, uncovering hegemonic assumptions, challenging the mainstream culture, constructing and deconstructing knowledge, and raising awareness of societal issues in relation to sexism, gender, classism, racism, hegemonic assumptions, oppression, and so forth. This competence is essential to deal with the various problems adults face in multiple social settings. Therefore, the first part of this chapter attempts to answer the following two questions: (a) What are the intersections between critical media literacy and transformative learning? And (b) What are the intersections between critical media literacy and social and emotional competence?   It is important to note that a theoretical strand that runs through the previous chapters strongly suggests these connections. Thus, this chapter attempts to expand on and tightly connect these intersections. The second part is an analysis of scenes from the movies *Crash* (Haggis, 2005) and *Revolutionary Road* (Mendes, 2008) as exemplars that highlight the premise of this thesis.

What are the intersections between critical media literacy and transformative learning? Tisdell (2008) points out that the role of the media in adult education as well as in the literature on transformative learning has been largely ignored though it has obvious

effects on the lives of adults (p. 49). Therefore, Tisdell attempts to trace the connection

between critical media literacy and transformative learning in an adult classroom

concerned with diversity and equity issues (p. 50). However, she makes it clear that she

is referring to studies initially conducted to understand how students construct meaning

from media messages and not for exploring transformative learning. She revisits these

studies by looking into their results from the lens of transformative learning that

emphasizes critical reflection on assumptions and transformative learning for social

change in relation to diversity and equity issues, specifically to challenge power

structures. Tisdell relates several aspects of her findings of three studies on critical media

literacy to transformative learning. First, she suggests that the element of pleasure in

movies can either facilitate or hinder transformative learning and critical analysis. Kelly,

one of her students, gained critical media awareness about how politics, money, and

power interfere in the way media portray messages when she critically reflected on one

of the movies she watched for pleasure. In this case, pleasure has the potential to

facilitate transformative learning, according to Tisdell. On the other hand, the author

argues that some students can successfully analyze certain representations of the media

that are of interest to them but miss others. For example, a Black male student in her

class was able to fully analyze the positive representations of Black Americans in the

movie *Coach Carter* (2005)*,* but missed other stereotypes. According to Tisdell, in this

case transformative learning and critical analysis are hindered by the element of pleasure.

However, I argue that the element of pleasure in the use of films in the classroom is more

of a motivational tool rather than a transformative one. Also engaging in critical

reflection on media messages and awareness of power play and racial representation in the media is not necessarily transformative (Cranton, 2006, Brookfield, 2000). Transformative learning takes place when one's critical reflection guides future action, and changes in one's perspective on prior experience occur, or when one's frames of reference become more open, inclusive, and justifiable (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 7-8). This critical reflection is triggered by a disorienting dilemma that leads to epochal or incremental transformation as stated in the review of the literature on transformative learning. I argue that both Kelly and the Black male student have gained knowledge that provides them with skills to question the social and cultural order as well as their own perceptions of knowledge to discover fallacies (Cranton & Roy, 2003). But it is not clear whether this knowledge is enough for potential transformation. It is true though that critical reflection can be constrained by the element of pleasure and geared towards one direction of analysis, as in the case of the Black male student.

Tisdell (2008) makes a valid connection between critical media literacy and transformative learning when she highlights the role of the media in helping students find alternative narratives in their lives. For example, Hanna, a participant in one of Tisdell's studies, made a transformative decision in relation to her partner based on her connection with the main character in the movie *Iris* (Eyre, 2002). Further, Tisdell states that the positive portrayals of people of color in the media such as in drama series *CSI* (Zuicker, 2000) can affect people's consciousness. However, the author shows reluctance to assert that this change in consciousness is transformative. I argue that finding alternative narratives in the lives of students is a transformative experience when a deep exploration

of the social, cultural, and historical contexts in relation to the positionality of the students suggests it.

Tisdell (2008) also highlights another aspect of critical media literacy which can be transformative. She observes that critical media literacy expands thinking about marginalized people either affecting a personal change in the students' attitudes towards diversity issues which is transformative or fostering an "understanding of the complexity of issues" related to marginalized people (p. 58). She notes that the movie *Crash* (Haggis, 2005) made both White and Black students uncomfortable. The movie caused White students to reflect on their prejudices while the Black students felt pain as they had similar experiences to the Black characters in the movie. Mostly White students were affected by this movie as they recognized and looked at their own prejudice and at marginalized people from a new perspective. For example, one of the White students could not sleep after seeing the movie *Crash*. The movie disturbed her and made her reflect on her internalized prejudice. Tisdell notes that the emotional and deep personal responses of these students are an indicator of transformative learning. To add to Tisdell's observation here, I argue that a significant aspect of critical media literacy that leads to transformative learning lies in its power to create disturbing experiences, or disorienting dilemmas as used in the language of transformative theory, to trigger critical self-reflection on prior assumptions leading to changes in one's perspective, attitudes, behaviours and beliefs, or in frames of reference by becoming more open, inclusive and justifiable (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 7-8).

Tisdell (2008) notes that the way critical media literacy facilitates deep

interactions and discussions among students about diversity issues is a process that leads

to transformative learning. The movies raise provocative issues that are discussed from

different perspectives in the classroom. It is this interactive discussion that fosters a deep

and broad understanding of diversity issues. Tisdell refers to an incident where an online

discussion of the movie *Hotel Rwanda* (George, 2005) facilitated understanding and

probably transformative learning: A Black American man and three White women

participated in the discussion. The women's understanding of issues embedded in the

movie was limited to how hegemonic practices and the global context work. However, it

was the input of the Black American man that shed a different light on the discussion.

His perspective about the movie led to a deeper understanding when he pointed to issues

of civil war, race, and politics, among others, that were missed by the women (p. 60).

Mezirow refers to this kind of interaction and discussion as a rational dialogue, a core

component of transformative learning theory. Rational discourse is a process that helps

students validate their beliefs, interpret the meaning of an experience, and challenge the

mainstream perspectives on societal issues. Thus rational discourse is a core element of

both critical media literacy and transformative learning. It is important to note here that I

disagree with Mezirow's statement that emotional intelligence is a prerequisite to

participate in discourse (Mezirow, 2000, p. 16). Not necessarily. I argue, based on the

premise of this thesis, that emotional and social intelligence can be the outcome of both

rational discourse and critical reflection. When a deep understanding of differences and

adoption of open and inclusive perspectives in a diverse environment take place,

empathy, awareness of emotions in oneself and in others, success in handling

relationships and social awareness can be generated.

A straightforward connection between critical media literacy and transformative

learning is articulated by Semali (2000). Semali states that critical media literacy fosters

the creation of new critical habits of mind that engage students in critical questioning,

testing, analyzing and interpreting of new ideas, and comparing them to their beliefs,

values and previous experiences. These new habits of mind enable students to be open

and respectful of the perspectives of other cultures; to discover hidden assumptions; to

detect bias and misrepresentations of social differences created by the media; to

understand how minorities, men and women, ethnic groups and other social groups are

portrayed, marginalized and stereotyped and how their identities are constructed; to

interpret how racism and sexism are reproduced; and to analyze how power dynamics

play a significant role in the inequitable distribution of knowledge, resources and

privileges. Semali summarizes the various reasons for integrating critical media literacy

in education. She states:

> Using critical pedagogical tools, media literacy helps students to interpret the
> layered meanings embedded in the stories they read and the characters they
> encounter in media texts. Also, it enables learners to question the intention of the
> producer, writer, distributer, as well as the larger social context–such as history,
> social economic status, familiarity and comfort with the subject matter, benefits,
> and one's privileged position in the culture–within which the story is created,
> read, and interpreted, to uncover the oppressive spaces in which difference and
> unequal power exist in relations of inequality and resistance. (p. 4)

Semali contends that all these themes above are drawn from real-life experiences.

Therefore, the media manipulation of these issues can create personal and social

dilemmas to students in constructing meanings to situations and problems in their life, in formulating their identities and coming to terms with diversity issues. Therefore, it is imperative that critical media literacy leads to a transformation of these new habits of mind into an agency to address these social issues positively outside the classroom. It is this praxis that connects the classroom to the world of the students that empowers them.

What are the intersections between critical media literacy and transformative learning towards social and emotional competence? As mentioned earlier on the role of emotions in transformative learning, Dirkx (2001) argues that emotions which are generated by the psychic and socio-cultural contexts, contribute to the construction of meaning which is a profound understanding of our relationships with ourselves, with others, and with the world (p. 61). This is exactly the role of critical media literacy. Critical media literacy helps students expand their thinking about the marginalized others, or make alternative choices in their relationships as already reported above. It pushes students from the mainstream culture to look at their prejudices and to deconstruct knowledge. It helps marginalized students to resist stereotypes, to echo their voices, and develop their sense of identity. These changes are both emotional and social; they take place within the individual himself and they affect social relationships.

Further, Dirkx (2006) argues that educators can draw on "emotionally-laden images" to help learner deal with their unconscious dilemma, and facilitate the construction of meaning by addressing their personal emotional experiences in the learning process to invoke changes in their lives (p. 16). The students' awareness of their psychic conflicts when properly addressed in the classroom generates an understanding

that is transformative. As Tisdell (2008) simply puts it "what more powerful way of drawing on emotionally-laden images than those evoked by visual media?" (p. 63).

Another intersection between critical media literacy and transformative learning for social and emotional intelligence is embedded in the individuation approach. Individuation is a process toward self-actualization once the individual is liberated from assimilated cultural norms (Boyd, 1989). Echoing Tisdell (2008), I ask, what is better than critical media literacy to liberate students from assimilated cultural norms? Further, individuation emphasizes two processes: one is unconscious and formulates our thoughts, actions and emotions. The other is conscious and is a product of our socio-cultural contexts (Clark & Dirkx, 2000). When our emotions, thoughts and actions are free from cultural assumptions, they reflect awareness of our own emotions and others', and better social relationships.

Further, critical reflection is a core element of both critical media literacy and transformative learning. Critical reflection on our emotional behaviour is the recognition that our emotional reactions to events in our lives are socially invoked. A main producer of such emotional reactions to events, such as the death of Princess Diana, is the media (Brookfield, 2000, pp. 127-128). It is becoming clear that this social power of the media to invoke emotions can be used to *invoke* transformative learning towards social and emotional competence in our diverse society, with critical reflection and rational discourse as core elements of this process. It is important here to reiterate Brookfield's insights on critical reflection as ideology critique in transformative learning. Drawing on Williams and Foucault, Brookfield maintains that ideologies are subtle forms embedded

not only in cultural systems but also in our emotional responses, "moral reasoning, our interpersonal relationships, and our ways of knowing, experiencing, and judging what is real and true" (p. 130); thus, psychological learning cannot be separated from the sociolinguistic learning in transformative learning. Though ideologies are hard to detect, they are social constructs subject to be deconstructed by the process of critical reflection as ideology critique.

Another intersection between critical media literacy and transformative learning for social and emotional competence is the way movies attend to the contexts of experience. The transformation of characters in well-produced movies is shown with an appropriate presentation of the cultural, political, social, and economical contexts, as well as the characters' positionality (race, gender, class, and so forth) in these contexts. Further, when students engage in critical discussion of these movies, an awareness of the influence of these contexts on the transformation of the characters is enhanced. Such awareness provides students with an empowerment in understanding and dealing with issues in their real life.

Another intersection between the use of movies and transformative learning towards social emotional intelligence can be delineated in the work of Niemiec and Wedding (2008). Though their work is from positive psychology perspective for developmental and transformative learning, it overlaps and intersects with critical media literacy for transformative learning towards social and emotional competence once the critical element is added. Niemiec and Wedding (2008) structure their book *Positive Psychology at the Movies: Using Films to Build Virtues and Character Strengths* based

on Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman's classification of six human virtues which

are divided in 24 character strengths in the realm of positive psychology. These virtues

are justice, humanity (interpersonal strengths), temperance, wisdom and knowledge,

transcendence, and courage (emotional strength). The character strengths include

forgiveness, hope, bravery, persistence, fairness, leadership, love, self-regulation,

gratitude, and social intelligence (p. viii). The authors provide analysis of characters

from several films to demonstrate that, whether for the education of students in

psychology, for research, or clinical purposes, discussions of movies can facilitate the

development and maintenance of these positive strengths and virtues in patients or

students, as well as transformation towards acquiring them. The authors observe that it is

easy to find movies portraying most of these strengths such as love, persistence, bravery

and hope. Other character strengths such as prudence, humility, and social intelligence

are not frequently portrayed in films (p. 5). Niemiec and Wedding briefly discuss how

social and emotional intelligence and their antitheses are portrayed in the characters of

the following movies, among others: *Metallica: Some Kind of Monster* (Sinofsky &

Berlinger, 2004), *Equilibrium* (Wimmer, 2002), *A History of Violence* (Cronenberg,

2005), *Juno* (Reitman, 2007), *Breach* (Billy, 2007), and *Life is Beautiful* (Benigni, 1997).

However, the authors do not account for societal and diversity issues such as gender,

class, oppression, and power, in the discussion of the social and emotional intelligence of

the characters in some of these movies. For example, in *Juno*, the authors briefly

describe the social intelligence of the 16-year-old girl named Juno as the ability to deal

with peer criticism and to react to situations appropriately. Her social and emotional

intelligence, according to the authors is revealed when she openly expresses her love to her boy friend.

Exemplars

The importance of these various connections between critical media literacy and transformative learning towards social and emotional intelligence is evidence that support the need to address social and emotional competence in adult learning. The following is a detailed critical analysis of scenes from the movie Crash (Haggis, 2005) and the movie *Revolutionary Road* (Mendes, 2008) as exemplars for the application of this pedagogical approach. It is very difficult to find a movie that depicts all the components of social and emotional intelligence, but these components are depicted in various snippets in different movies.

Crash:

The following scene from the movie *Crash* (Haggis, 2005) is analysed in the literature in the light of critical media literacy as follows: Guy (2007) reports that students who discussed the scene in which a Black American couple was stopped by two police officers uncovered how power is used by the police force and understood the gender, racial, and class discrimination in this scene. Guy mentions that the students also discussed the extent to which the Black American husband was justified when he apologized to the police officer who sexually mistreated his wife (p. 20). Guy does not offer further elaboration on the students' different interpretations of the Black American man's apology to the police officer. The argument here is that the Black American husband's apology to the police officer is an exercise in both social and emotional

intelligence. From the moment the White police officer asked the husband to step out of his car, the husband controlled his emotions and stepped out quietly. However, his wife started yelling without any consideration to the seriousness of the situation despite her husband's loud warning to her to keep quiet. She did not stop until she was sexually harassed. Her husband, who painfully witnessed how his wife is mistreated, kept his emotions (anger) in control, and exercised social cognition, a facet of social awareness in social intelligence. Social cognition is the knowledge of how the world works (Goleman, 2006) and acting upon this knowledge to reach a particular outcome of this interaction: The Black American man wanted to stop his wife's dilemma and avoid being arrested. Had he acted on his wounded pride and feeling of racial discrimination, it would be evident that he would have aggravated the situation causing more harm to his wife. His social and emotional competence alleviated the couple's dilemma when racial and asymmetrical power relationships were at play.

Another exercise in social and emotional intelligence in the movie *Crash* was given by the second police officer who in the same scene mentioned above witnessed his partner's racial behaviour. The facial expression of this officer revealed empathy towards the Black American couple. However, his empathy here is not a skill in emotional intelligence because he did not intervene to help them. However, his reaction in this scene is contrasted in another scene where he intervened to help the same Black American man and saved him from being shot by police officers. Here his empathy to the distress of this man was followed by concern and an appropriate intervention with

positive outcomes. This police officer exercised constructive influence on the angry

Black American man when he managed to dissipate his anger and his loss of control.

*Revolutionary Road***:**

Revolutionary Road (Mendes, 2008) illustrates how the emotional and social

skills of a married couple, Frank and April Wheelers, have great influence on their

relationship, their careers, and their wellbeing. Though the film is set to represent the life

in the 1950s, the social issues and the way the couple handles their relationship are faced

by many couples across the world at all times.

The tone of the movie is set from the onset. April does a lousy theatrical

performance as a leading female actress who dreams of going to Paris. We see her in the

dressing room unhappy and disappointed. In his way to the dressing room to meet April,

Frank, her husband, has just accepted the neighbours' invitation to dinner, without

anticipating that April who has just experienced failure and public embarrassment would

prefer to go home. Upon April's insistence not to go with the neighbours for dinner, they

head home. This scene is immediately followed with another one depicting a typical

marital conflict where couples throw insults at each other and affirm their mutual

disappointment in each other. This scene is illustrative of how the lack of emotional

skills in relationships has detrimental results and how gender and power issues are always

at play in their interactions: April and Frank are heading home, in their car, after that

theatre performance. April has insisted several times that she does not want to talk about

this failure as it drives her crazy. Her tone of voice, her facial expressions, and the way

she is smoking all indicate clearly that she is emotionally charged. However, Frank does

not attune to her request and does not seem to detect how she feels. Instead he gets angry and insults her by confirming that the play was lousy, that it is time she gets over that soap opera, and that he is not that insensitive suburban husband as she sees him. Frank's reaction here shows that he lacks emotional as well as social awareness, a core component of social competence: He does not exhibit primal empathy which is the ability to feel the emotions of others. He does not attune to her by understanding that she needs some quiet time, but rather seems to keep talking about his thoughts. Though he knows that she is upset, he could not identify the real reasons or motives underlying her feelings, an inability defined by Goleman (2006) as a lack in emphatic accuracy; instead he denies her encouragement by saying that her dream is "a little piece of soap opera" that she needs to get over it. The way he belittles her dream to become an actress represents gender discrimination. April represents the woman who seeks self-actualization and a change of her status quo as an unhappy housewife.

Students who engage in analyzing this scene may realize the importance of exercising constructive influence, a facet of social awareness to alleviate the distress of someone else. Critical discussion of this scene helps them realize the importance of showing concern to the dilemma of others by providing an appropriate support: April needs encouragement that through persistence and perseverance she will one day become a great actress.

Their fight almost escalates into a physical one when Frank raises his fist attempting to hit her when she attacks his patriarchal pride by saying: "How by any strike of imagination you can call yourself a man?" (Mendes, 2008). This conflict reveals

how both characters are losing control of their emotions and how neither one of them has empathy or attunement to the other person. This scene also reveals how patriarchal thinking plays an important role in the life of couples. The viewers notice that in this scene when April undermines Frank's quality of being a man, he gets angry, and raises his fist at her. In contrast, when she praises him in another scene as having the best quality which is being a man, he goes along with her and her desires.

Both Frank and April show a lack of social competence when they emotionally distance themselves from their neighbours. Their prejudice has made them believe that they are different, that they are "superior to the whole thing" (Mendes, 2008) as April reveals when she realizes that they are not. Frank's prejudice against his neighbours is revealed when he defends himself as not that "insensitive suburban" man (Mendes, 2008). Their prejudices towards their suburban neighbours is also revealed at the beginning of the movie by the real estate agent, who states that Crawford Road is for "little local people" such as plumbers, carpenters and truckers, while Revolutionary Road, where their new house is located, is much nicer. Their prejudice against their neighbours has crept into their relationships with each other. April has repeatedly suggested that when she married Frank, he was different.

The movie also illustrates several emotionally disconnected relationships, the I-It relationships (Goleman, 2006). For example, Frank's sexual relation with Maury is momentary and superficial. It reflects how men use women as an object. At work, he is worried of ending up like his father, a salesman who worked for twenty years for the same company but no one remembers him. Towards the end of the movie, his wife

prepares him breakfast like an automaton, with a dreadful calmness which Frank does not realize. His emotional disconnection with others makes him unhappy, but he prefers to lead a life that he does not like in order not to lose what he has, such as a job, a house, a wife and children. Though he does not want to go to Paris anymore because of work ambitions, he does not tell his wife and hopes that her unexpected pregnancy hinders their plan to go to Paris. This kind of deceit in the relationship has its consequences. His focus on what he needs and deserves makes him blind to the distress of his wife and the falling apart of his marriage long before April attempts abortion which turns out fatal. April who has constantly struggled for a change, for a life where she can feel things, for a search of a meaningful experience, is pushed into extremes when her dreams and hopes collapse upon becoming accidently pregnant. Further, the movie also depicts the lives of the neighbours as emotionally disconnected. The real estate agent has a tense relationship with her son who had a nervous breakdown. The other neighbours, Milly and Shep, are living a routine marital life but with no passion to each other or connection with their kids. Neither one of them is aware of the feelings of the other or tries to express those feelings to the other. Therefore, they have a boring and disappointing life.

When adult students discuss the issues represented in *Revolutionary Road*, they recognize the importance of authentic communication and expressions of feelings in relationships in order to foster a healthy and happy one. Discussions of issues raised in the movie based on the concept of social and emotional competence, the students' own projection onto the characters in the film combined with their peers projections onto these characters, and their suggestions into how the characters should have interacted to resolve

their conflicts, engage them in a critical reflection on their own experiences and positionality, and promote a deep understanding of what to invest in their relationships for their emotional and social well-being. This understanding has a great potential to be transformative.

Measurement Issues

Scharrer (2002) mentions that the outcomes of critical media literacy are generalized and there is no explicit measurement (p. 354) nor national standards and no recognition of whether the outcomes are considered knowledge or skills, but there are guidelines for critical thinking outcomes (Christ & Potter, 1998). There is a need for research evidence to support the increase in critical thinking outcomes of critical media literacy (Scharrer, 2002). Also there is a concern that students may provide desirable social responses in their tests, journals or self-reports rather than exhibiting a genuine transformation in behaviour and attitudes (Dass-Brailsford, 2007). However, I warn against standardized tests to measure the outcomes of critical media literacy. Critical media literacy is an open discourse where students bring into the classroom their own beliefs, culture, ideas, perceptions of the world, interpretations and misinterpretations. As some critics point out, individuals can construct meaning and knowledge differently from a particular movie "depending on their interest, their positionality (their gender, race class, sexual orientation relative to the dominant culture, and the historical and social context" (Tisdell, 2007, p. 9) as well as their personal experiences. To standardize such a process is to fall back into the traditional curriculum where knowledge has already been constructed for the students and where the context of critical media literacy totally

collapses allowing hegemonic and ideological media messages to reclaim and reinforce their impact on education. Further, as mentioned in chapter two, the validity of methods used to measure social and emotional intelligence is still debatable in the literature (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2004). Therefore, it is important to note that the discussion of measurement issues is open-ended and requires further qualitative research supported by insights drawn from the experiences of educators in the fields of psychology, critical media literacy, and transformative learning.

Ethical Issues

What are the ethical implications of educating students for transformative learning in our diverse society? The answer to this question is controversial and tightly linked to the issue of neutrality in education. Some of the ethical issues identified are the following: Tisdell, Hanley and Taylor (2000) explore the use of educator power as an ethical issue. Tisdell argues against pressuring students to participate in a provocative activity unless they want to. Hanley advises educators not to impose their power on students, but to equip them with tools to use their learning outside the classroom. I maintain that the use of movies in the classroom is another way to deal with this ethical issue. Students do not have to disclose their personal experiences for group discussion and critical reflection. Instead, the experiences of the characters in the movies are the subject matter, which allows students to keep their personal experiences in the background.

Ettling (2006) asserts that teachers cannot assume neutrality whether the goal of education is instrumental or for developing planetary citizens. She further states that in

the pursuit of new knowledge, both students and teachers undergo transformation and develop a "participatory worldview" causing the emergence of new ethical questions to both of them (p. 62). However, she falls short of identifying these questions.

Is it also unethical to deny support to students who are engaged in transformative learning (Mezirow. 1991). Mezirow's observation here raises more ethical issues when transformation deals with emotional and social competence. Causing emotionally charged reactions in students and then leaving them without adequate support is disastrous. Therefore, there is a need for further qualitative research to identify how teachers can anticipate and avoid creating a tense emotional atmosphere that they cannot dissipate positively and what teacher education is needed. It is unethical for teachers to engage in transformative learning that can create heightened emotional reactions when they do not have enough expertise to deal with it.

Daloz (2000) explores whether fostering transformation for social change is a kind of activism. He states that when teachers commit to social change, their personal security may be at risk and their classroom may become a field of "great ideological battleground" (p. 119). On the other hand, teachers who restrict their teaching practices to a process without getting involved in the content deliver superficial teaching that reinforces the forces of oppression and injustices in the society; "Are we content merely to build the missiles, as Tom Lehrer used to say about Werner Von Braun, and never mind where the things will come down?" (p. 119). Further, Daloz explores the issue of rights in a democratic discourse. Do teachers have the right to impose their convictions on students or should they leave students to formulate their own conclusions? The

answer to this question of rights lies in our acknowledgement that we are "radically socially constituted" and are interdependent (p. 120). He further states that emancipatory education emphasizes interdependence with and relatedness to the world and calls for immersion in human relationships rather than escape from it. Then transformation occurs at both the individual and the social level (p. 120).

In conclusion, I envision an adult education anchored in critical media literacy to foster transformation towards social and emotional competence which is fundamental to the students' happiness, well-being, healthy perceptions of the self and others, success in various relationships, and their thoughts about their worldviews. This thesis also acknowledges the fundamental role of critical media literacy as a vehicle for transformation for social justice by empowering students to resists insidious messages, structures of oppression, and discriminatory representations of minorities. This expansion of the terrain of critical media literacy is crucial to alleviate or eliminate the societal problems that pervade the adult life. However, it gives priority to the individual's social and emotional learning over social learning to transform the world.

In critical media literacy, acknowledging the individual's social and emotional learning before learning for social agency provides students with empowerment within their reach that they can draw on in their daily interactions as individuals. Individuals with sustained social and emotional competence become active agents in spreading care, justice, and love to others around them which results in building a loving community. It is like throwing a stone in water and letting it expand its ripple effect to reach various circles of communities. But as the ripple effect of this stone has its limits, I acknowledge

that this pedagogical approach has also its limits. It can influence some but not all

students.

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