Critical Pedagogy in a Freirean Tradition to Promote Social Justice in Adult Education: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

Critical Pedagogy in a Freirean Tradition to Promote Social Justice in Adult Education: A Qualitative Study

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The advancement of neoliberalism, the increase of disinformation, the rise of fascist ideals and the suppression of freedom are putting democracies in danger all over the world. Adult education is critical to keep learners informed. Critical pedagogy in a Freirean tradition has the potential to empower citizens with critical skills to respond to challenging issues. It revolves around social justice-oriented practices aiming at the development of critical awareness (conscientização) in individual and collective perspectives. Common aspects of critical pedagogy are centred around the humanization of teaching and learning, education as a political act, problem-posing strategies, banking education, pedagogical praxis, and hope, among others. This dissertation engaged adult educators in non-formal learning situations who self-identify as critical pedagogues in a Freirean tradition, to reflect on their daily practices. The overarching research question was: How do adult educators who self-identify as critical pedagogues in a Freirean tradition implement critical pedagogy principles into their daily practices in non-formal settings? The specific questions searched for definitions of critical pedagogy, reasons to practice it, key characteristics of critical pedagogues, principles of critical pedagogy that are primarily implemented, strategies and evaluations used, and challenges and barriers found on the way and how to overcome them. A qualitative research methodology was used to answer these questions. Twelve adult education practitioners generously shared their stories and their expertise on how they implement critical pedagogy in their own contexts. Participants also provided images that represented critical pedagogy for them, and artifacts were collected to corroborate participants' responses. Findings revealed that critical pedagogy in a Freirean tradition is non-hierarchical and starts with learners' experiences. Recurring themes that emerged were the educators' orientation towards social justice and commitment to learners. This study amplified the voices of educators who have made sound contributions to adult education. Their voices have the potential to empower future practitioners with encouragement and curiosity to challenge current issues in education.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to my mother, Vera Lúcia Fernandes Sanches and my father, Nivio Sanches. Thank you for all your love, support, and dedication that made it possible for me to achieve this dream. Without you, it would not have been possible.

Dedico essa pesquisa para minha mãe, Vera Lúcia Fernandes Sanches e meu pai, Nivio Sanches. Obrigado por todo amor, apoio e dedicação que tornaram esse sonho possível. Sem vocês, eu não teria conseguido.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The world is not finished. It is always in the process of becoming. The subjectivity with which I dialectically relate to the world, is not restricted to a process of only observing what happens but it also involves my intervention as a subject of what happens in the world. My role in the world is not simply that of someone who registers what occurs but of someone who has an input in what happens. (Freire, 1998, pp. 72-73)

We are living through tough times. Times of exaggerated certainties and of escalating religious and political extremism with fanatical convictions, intolerance, and ignorance (Roberts, 2020). There is no doubt that currently, critical thinking is one of the most desirable and important skills to be developed in education. In our daily lives, we are bombarded with information originating from diverse sources, especially social media groups on TikTok, Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, and others. Being swamped by disinformation (fake news), discerning between what is real or not is a great challenge. Even the most lucid person can become a victim of disinformation. Although it is not a recent phenomenon, disinformation has increased exponentially in the past few years as we can see, around the globe, where examples of democracies being endangered by the dissemination of fake news that has dramatically influenced and undermined electoral processes is ever present (Brisola & Doyle, 2019).

More recently, during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen how disinformation was used to manipulate people and promote confusion about treatments, testing, death tolls, refusal to wear protection masks, attacks on health professionals, and more. Education is essential to combat ignorance and protect our democratic processes as critically informed citizens participate more and make better decisions (Sanches, 2021). Nevertheless, I feel like the notion of what critical thinking is has been distorted recently. It has become somehow a general term that is used for a panacea of things. From claims that the Earth is flat, to conspiracy theories against vaccination and climate change deniers, an apolitical and instrumental *critical* thinking is being used for the co-optation of misinformed people who are asked to believe in absurdities, such as a flat Earth. Critical thinking reduced to pure technique anesthetizes curiosity and creates a fatalist view of the world where things are as they are and cannot be any other way (Freire, 1998). This perspective is corroborated with what Virella and Weiner (2020) perceived as misappropriation and co-optation of key concepts of critical pedagogy, such as social justice. They claim that these terms have been used to validate neoliberal policies and oppressive practices in education reforms in Puerto Rico, for example.

The increase of neoliberal policies eroding public education, the rise of fascist ideals, anti-intellectualism, ultra-nationalism, and suppression of freedom and dissent are also indications of these tough times (Giroux, 2009; 2020). The advancement of neoliberalism in the world affects education dramatically. Neoliberalism is a political and economic paradigm that privileges private interests and individualism over social and collective interests. Neoliberal initiatives undermine public education by promoting education based on free market policies and encouraging private enterprise and consumerism (Sanches, 2021). Freire (1998) called neoliberalism the most dominant contemporary version of fatalism.

Macrine (2020) points out that neoliberalism uses neoliberal pedagogical tools to forge consent and coercion. She explains that these tools influence both formal or informal settings, and are achieved in different forms, such as think tanks, policy briefs, political agendas, educational institutions, and others. Apple (2006) contends that neoliberalism has changed people's understanding of themselves as members of a community. Additionally, neoliberal policies such as austerity politics, weakening of public education, and fast-increasing inequalities in the world, became "so deeply embedded in a society or school culture, that people become immune or simply do not question them" (Macrine, 2020, p. 210).

Macrine (2016) asserts that it is difficult for the public to realize that the discourse of neoliberalism's individual freedom, prosperity, and growth is designed to benefit the wealthy. It is important to understand that neoliberalism is not a one-dimension phenomenon (Macrine, 2016). In fact, it spreads through a multitude of forms and is ingrained in our daily lives. Macrine (2016) asserts that "neoliberalization does not follow coherent directions, therefore it is important to consider different kinds of methodological and research approaches necessary for examining the fluid and nonlinear movements of neoliberalization and neoliberalism as connected assemblages" (p. 16). Similarly, Maisuria (2020) argues that neoliberalism uses mystification to mask and obscure the deep realities of how neoliberalism operates. He explains that the mystification is not the work of serendipity but "it is a purposeful strategy deployed by the capitalist class to promote, manufacture and disseminate a particular culture and popular common sense to condition mass consciousness" (p. 12). On the same note, Freire (1998) would call it the "bureaucratizing of the mind", which he defines as the "invisible power of alienating domestication" (p. 102). It is of ultimate importance to prepare citizens to respond to these challenging issues. Educators and learners should be able to understand their contexts and

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identify disinformation, neoliberal attacks, and what is yet to come. Educators and learners must be able to create strategies to work collectively to face these challenges.

Adult education, especially, has a prominent role during these challenging times. Historically, a crucial purpose of adult education in Canada has been education for citizenship, social justice and social change as illustrated by the Women's Institutes, the Antigonish Movement in Nova Scotia and others (Spencer & Lange, 2014). This continues to be true. By skimming through the proceedings of the Canadian Association of the Study of Adult Education (CASAE) conference in 2019 at University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver, I could find significant emphases on issues related to citizenship, social justice, social change, and critical reflection (CASAE, 2019). One important aspect of adult education is critical pedagogy that in a Freirean tradition has provided an important framework in the struggle for social justice in education.

Critical pedagogy can be an important antidote against disinformation, neoliberal discourses, and attacks against education (Mayo, 2020). The task of critical pedagogy is more urgent than ever in the struggle against the absurd, irrational, and cruel (Down & Steinberg, 2020). Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator, conceptualized principles of critical pedagogy from his experiences while working with peasants in impoverished regions in Brazil. Critical pedagogy equips educators and learners with language, concepts, and strategies to resist and fight back against injustices and power relations. For instance, one of the most crucial aspects of critical pedagogy is the concept of *conscientização* also referred to as conscientization or critical awareness (Freire, 2000). It is the process of awakening of critical awareness towards a critical social consciousness and action against oppression (Darder, 2020).

Critical pedagogy provides a framework that challenges the status quo by questioning basic assumptions in society. In adult education, it gives educators and learners a paradigm to read the world and the word (Freire, 2000) as it gets more complex. By being aware of the attacks against democracy and its basic foundations, critical pedagogy enables learners and educators to imagine solutions for our current challenges. It is not a cookie-cutter solution for all our problems, it is quite the opposite. When faced with issues or limit situations that need to be surmounted, learners and educators have to work together to create and re-create new opportunities to address those issues. Therefore, it is important to learn how critical educators practice critical pedagogy in their classes in their own contexts. Learning about different strategies and ideas may give other critical pedagogues inspiration to create and re-create diverse possibilities and situate their practices in their own specific contexts.

This dissertation offers a comprehensive review and extends the literature on critical pedagogy within the adult education context and details the contributions to the current practices of 21st century adult educators.

Following the above introduction, chapter 2 of this dissertation will provide a literature review of adult education in Canada, Quebec, and Brazil, the theoretical foundations of adult education and critical pedagogy to set the underpinnings of the theoretical framework. Chapter 3 will explain the choice for qualitative research as the methodology used in this research as well as the principles that guided this choice and the selection of methods of data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 will report the findings, that is, themes and concepts that emerged out of the analysis of the data collected in this research by giving place for participants voices and their work. Chapter 5 will discuss the results of this research by going through the main findings and discussing them in light of the literature. Chapter 6 will conclude this dissertation explaining

limitations, implications, and contributions of this research as well as recommendations for future researchers. Finally, in Chapter 7, I share reflections of my individual journey in the doctoral program, of my dissertation research and my experiences and lessons learned.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Adult Education in Canada

Nesbit (2013) says that the Canadian adult education reflects the lack of coherence of the Canadian educational system. Since the responsibility to provide education services belongs to the provinces and territories, there are potentially thirteen different systems. Considering adult education, the federal government has not adopted any kind of orientation for the provinces or territories and has kept it open. While there is a sense of fragmentation because of the continental dimensions of Canada, there is also a sense of unity when you think of organizations, such as the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE). Meeting annually to showcase their research and discuss issues in the field of adult education, CASAE works somewhat as a glue that puts these pieces and bits of adult education together into an interesting collage. However, it is important to note that this lack of federal guidelines or coherence leaves adult education in a vulnerable position when governments shift, political ideologies change, and resources become limited.

A Brief History of Adult Education in Canada

Selman (2001) enumerates the several adult education initiatives that historically formed the adult education field that we have today in Canada. Selman (2001) separates these adult learning initiatives in different periods throughout the history of Canada: Before 1867, from 1867 to 1914, then from 1915 to 1939, also from 1940 to 1959, and from 1960 to 1982. Poonwassie writes the last paragraph in Selman's article with the period from 1983 to 1999.

Before 1867, Selman (2001) teaches us that the earliest peer-group learning initiate was L'Ordre du Bon Temps in 1605 in Port Royal, Nova Scotia. It was a convivial activity where peers would meet to eat, perform a play, talk, and exchange ideas. The first Mechanics' Institutes

were established in 1830 in Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Ontario. The YMCA started night classes in Montreal in 1850 and the Toronto School Board also started offering evening classes in 1855. Additionally, Selman mentions that cultural associations, such as l'Institut Canadien de Montreal (1844) and the Royal Canadian Institute of Toronto (1849) were important adult learning initiatives.

From 1867 to 1914, there was an increasing number of Mechanics' Institutes, YMCAs, and YWCAs (Selman, 2001). As an example, only in Ontario, there were 311 Mechanics' Institutes by 1895. The Mechanics' Institutes were a central component of an early industrial learning society (Welton, 2013). They were voluntary associations of mechanics who would teach basic skills related to their work. With time, it expanded in popularity and accepted any man who did manual work. In Montreal, the first Mechanics' Institute in Canada continues to this day as the Atwater Library (Robins, 1987; Sanches, 2017; Spencer & Lange, 2014; Welton, 2013). Other adult education initiatives during this period were: National Council of Women (1893); the agricultural societies, such as the Grange (1872) and the Farmers' Institute (1894); the first Women's Institute was established in Stone Creek, Ontario in 1897; The Canadian Reading Camp Association (1899), which was renamed as the famous Frontier College in 1919; and the first Caisse Populaire in 1900 as an indicative of co-operative education.

The period from 1915 to 1939 was a traumatizing period in Canadian history because of the World Wars (Selman, 2001). During the World War I, Canadian soldiers received education in Khaki College in Britain and Europe. During the World War II, the Canadian Legion Educational Services were responsible for the education of the armed forces overseas and in Canada. Another very famous adult education movement was the Antigonish Movement that started in 1928 with the opening of the Extension Department at St. Francis Xavier University in

Nova Scotia (Lotz & Welton, 1987; Welton, 2013). Led by Jimmy Tompkins and Moses Coady, the Antigonish Movement is a historical example of adult education as a social activity for the benefit of the collectivity and not only for individual development (Cranton, 2013; Spencer & Lange, 2014; Welton, 2013). Selman (2001) also mentions: The Workers' Education Associations (1918); Sir George Williams University (1926), whose evening classes offered part-time degrees for adults in Montreal; The Banff Centre (previously called Banff School of Fine Arts) in 1933; the creation of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and the National Film Board (NFB) in the late 1930s; and the organization of the Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE) in 1935. Selman (2001) explains that the Federal Government passed the Technical Training Assistance Act in 1919, which provided funding for the provinces to use in vocational training. There were many political movements during this period which can be seen with the organization of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation Party and the appearance of the social gospel movement by the United Church.

From 1940 to 1959, Selman (2001) describes this period as a vibrant time for adult education. The CAAE began to make remarkable contributions to citizenship adult education in Canada by creating pamphlets and airing discussions on CBC and National Farm Radio Forums and Citizen's Forum where, listening groups were organized all over the country. The creation of the Citizens' Forum in 1943 showed that adult education intellectuals believed that a just society should be founded in participation through public, deliberative spaces. In fact, they really believed that through deliberation, citizens would engage in the construction of a just society (Welton, 2006, p. 28).

Internationally, Canada increased its influence in adult education during the Cold War years by playing an active role in the United Nations Association, The Canadian Institute on

Public Affairs and the Canadian Institute on International Affairs. Additionally, James Robbins (Roby) Kidd played an important role at UNESCO's discussions on the adult education movement. There were also the community centre movements, the School Board adult education initiatives, the recognition of the National Film Board and the development of a national distribution of films and productions. With the increase of discussions on professionalism, CAAE organized regional conferences in the west and in the Maritimes. Finally, in 1957, the first full degree in adult education was created at the University of British Columbia (UBC).

From 1960 to 1982, Selman (2001) cites the 1960 UNESCO's second World conference on Adult Education that took place in Montreal and showcased Canadian adult education to the world. The Federal Government passed several acts on adult education, such as Technical and Vocation Training Assistance Act (1960), the Occupation Training Act (1967), the National Training Act (1982), and several initiatives concerning Adult Basic Education (ABE), English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, War on Poverty, and bilingualism drive. One important event was the organization of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE) in 1981 (Boshier, 2011).

Poonwassie takes the lead in Selman's article and focuses on the period from 1983 to 1999. He calls our attention to major economic and social changes and the end of adult education as social movement as described by Selman (2001) or Selman and Selman (2009), and an increasing focus on entrepreneurial ethics. In 1982, the Federal Government passed the National Training Act, which created the Labour Force Development Board, centralized and privatized adult education, and there was a substantial cease of funds for adult education. The focus was put on self-supporting and profit-making initiatives, which excluded adults who could not afford tuition and the accompanying costs of education. An increasing focus on technology worked well

for adults who already had basic education while pushing away the ones who did not have any education. Finally, in 1992, Statistics Canada published its Adult Education and Training Survey that showed a shift from public to private providers and helped adult educators and researchers conclude that adult education activities are central to the Canadian society.

It is important to highlight that Nesbit and Hall (2011) challenged the claim that adult education as a social movement ended. In their definition, social movements are "large informal groupings of individuals and/or organizations focused on specific political or social issues and intent on carrying out, resisting or undoing a social change" (p. 490). Nesbit and Hall (2011) demonstrated that there are increasing activity of social justice movements and education organizations that promote and foster adult education in Canada, such as the Canadian Commission for UNESCO *and l'Institut de cooperation pour l'éducation des adultes* (ICÉA) in Quebec. They conclude that adult education as a social movement continues to be "cognizant of and building upon its roots, still describing itself as part of a continuing tradition, still committed on both professional and practitioner level to Canada's long-term education and societal development, still engaged with the moral, social and political concerns" (p. 494).

Welton (2006) says that there are three important lessons to be taken from the early twentieth century adult education movements. First, it is important to continue to mobilize people's learning capacity for enlightenment and action. Second, associate democracy is pertinent to build a just society. Finally, there is no democracy without a democratic workplace.

Adult Education in Quebec

In 1936, the CAAE created a committee to address the needs of the Francophone community. This committee became independent in 1946 as the *Société Canadienne d'enseignement postsecondaire*. In 1956, it received a Federal Charter and became *l'Institut Canadien pour l'éducation des adultes* (ICÉA) and one year later became a founding member of

the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (Solar & Thériault, 2013). Over the years, ICÉA has

played significant roles in many different commissions such as representations of the

Commission Parent and the *Commission d'étude sur la formation professionelle et la formation

socioculturelle des adulte* (CEFA). ICÉA has remarkably impacted the public policy of Quebec

(Hall, 2021). Recently, in 2021, ICÉA, now renamed as *l'Institut de cooperation pour

l'éducation des adultes*, was awarded the CASAE Lifetime Achievement Award. According to

Hall (2021), "no other adult education organization in the world…has so effectively supported its

national adult learning community while at the same time playing a central role in our global

movement" (para. 6).

It is important to highlight that in the 80s, following the Commission Parent, a mandate

created the CEFA. This commission was chaired by Michèle Stanton-Jean and made 244 public

hearings all over the regions of Quebec (Dahl, 2021). The outcome of this commission resulted

in a document called *Rapport Jean* with 430 recommendations to guide the creation of policies

in adult education in Quebec. According to Dahl (2021), the *Rapport Jean*'s vision was

underpinned on humanistic principles, "a vision that focuses on lifelong education as a means of

developing human potential and democratizing Québec society … it is about positioning adult

education as a driving force behind the development of a society in transformation" (p. 83).

Participation was an important aspect of this report as a force of developing critical social

awareness. It advocated for participation in diverse settings of the lifeworld, such as the

workplace, in social, cultural and community life (Dahl, 2021).

Adult Education in Brazil

Adult Education in Brazil is normally referred to as Youth and Adult Education or simply

EJA (Educação de Jovens e Adultos). For practical reasons, EJA will be used from now on to

refer to Adult Education in Brazil. One of the reasons to include the term Youth is that many young learners drop out of the regular school system and end up enrolling in Adult Education to obtain their primary or secondary school diploma. Consequently, the profile of adult learners in Brazil varies a lot because of its regional and local differences. In general, we can say that the adult learner in Brazil encompasses young people who are older than 15 years of age, adults and seniors who for many different reasons had to drop out of school or never had a chance to enroll during their school years. Medeiros and Fontoura (2017) explain that the Official Government Technical Opinion CNE/CBE number 11/2000 concerning the National Curriculum Guidelines for Youth and Adult Education refers to EJA as a promise of life qualification for all students, including seniors. The high number of young people enrolled in EJA is due in part, to the failure of the Brazilian education system, which is unable to retain young people in primary and secondary education. Comparing EJA in Brazil with Adult Education in Canada, it is possible to see that in Canada, adult education incorporates primarily adults and seniors as there are fewer young people who drop out of regular education. In this way, adult education in Canada focuses primarily on lifelong learning and not just to correct dropout rates and distortion in the regular education system as it is the case in Brazil.

Because of its diversity, it is important that adult educators in Brazil provide an individualized look over adult learners. Each specific context needs to have their specific content, methodology and forms of assessment which are individualized. As stated by Medeiros and Fontoura (2017):

> working with EJA requires respect and empathy. Being a heterogeneous class, several 'worlds' come together for a few hours a day to learn and exchange experiences. Therefore, the EJA classroom must be permeated with dialogue, listening and

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consideration for what the other has to share … therefore, what is proposed for EJA is an education based on listening, empathy and social interactions, in which the act of teaching and learning are surrounded by the complicity that the teacher assumes when making decisions about the proposed contents … the important thing in EJA is to consider the student as a transforming agent of their reality that when he returns to the school benches, he is there not only to learn but also to teach. (p. 55)

A Brief History of Youth and Adult Education in Brazil

Education in Brazil during the colonial period had as a main focus, the education of children. It is important to note that the Jesuits of the Jesus Missionary Company (Companhia Missionária de Jesus) landed in Brazil with the aim of catechizing the Indigenous peoples. Although we can say that the effort to catechize was an educational activity in itself, there were also efforts by the Jesuits to make the indigenous people literate in the Portuguese language. The aim was to facilitate catechization. Franco (2017) explains that the pedagogical orientation used by the Jesuits emphasized memorization, repetition and was fully disconnected with local reality in Brazil. Franco (2017) says that this pedagogical orientation was aligned with a project of domination in a slavery regime and aristocratic society. Historically, it can be said that this moment was the beginning of adult education efforts in Brazil which, although not formal, had great importance in the development of the education system in the colony. Around 1759, the Jesuits were expelled from Brazilian lands and thus, education became fundamentally elitist which meant that it was only made available for a privileged group of people, normally of European descents, and the focus was on the education of children. With the prohibition of voting by illiterate citizens in 1876, during Brazil's empire period, the first move towards the

education of adults began to address this issue. However, it was not until the beginning of the 20th century that the Brazilian State assumed the responsibility of educating adults.

Haddad and Ximenes (2014) explain that from 1930 onwards, EJA gained importance with ample literacy campaigns in the 1940s and 1950s and with the popular culture movements of the 1960s with the Brazilian Literacy Movement (MOBRAL). In response to popular movements, the military government in the 1970s implemented adult literacy programs for adults who could not attend school during the traditional calendar year. With the re-democratization in Brazil, the 1988 Constitution expanded access to education and guaranteed free basic education for all, including adults, making education for young people and adults a constitutional right. Unfortunately, due to the adoption of neoliberal public policies, adult education did not take off for lack of financial and political support. In 1996, the Law and Guidelines of National Basic Education (LDB) was approved but despite dealing with the issue of Adult Education, it did not deal clearly with respect to illiteracy, leaving out a huge contingent of Brazilian adults. The LDB did not address specialized teacher training for EJA and reinforced the term 'suppletive' emphasizing exams and not the educational process (Haddad & Ximenes, 2014). The current situation of EJA in Brazil is not ideal, Haddad and Ximenes point out:

> Brazil has about 65 million people aged over 15 who have not completed the nine years of elementary school, enrollment in EJA has been falling dramatically … the naturalization of these facts, which is expressed, among other things, in the attitude of placing the responsibility for their non-schooling on the shoulders of the individuals, hides the most profound and persistent omission of the Brazilian State to guarantee the right to education. (pp. 253-254)

Definition of Important Concepts in Adult Education

There are important terms that may cause some confusion in the literature of adult education. Therefore, a definition of some crucial concepts in adult education will be given, such as learning and education, adulthood, adult education, adult learning, lifelong education and lifelong learning, and formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Learning and Education

For Aristotle, knowing was a sensory experience using our five senses. For Plato, knowing happened within ourselves. Confucius believed learning was a moral and ethical process to develop someone's humanity. Learning can be defined as a change in behaviour; however, there is learning that does not demonstrate behavioural change and still learning is happening (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Learning can be a process or an outcome. According to Merriam and Bierema (2014), "learning can emphasize the cognitive as in gaining knowledge of something, psychomotor as in learning a new physical skill, or affective, having to do with emotions and attitudes" (p. 34). Jarvis (2007) defines learning as

> the combination of processes whereby the whole person – body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses) – experiences a social situation, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the person's individual biography resulting in a changed (or more experienced) person (p. xi).

Mackeracher (2010) adds that "learning is something done by the learners rather than something done *to* or *for* the learners" (p. 5). She conceptualizes learning as a process of making sense of our lived experiences and on how we make sense of the world around us and let that new knowledge inform our future actions and thinking.

Concerning education, Spencer and Lange (2014) explain that it corresponds to organized and planned forms of learning. Jarvis (2004) offers a humanistic definition of education. In his perspective, education is "any planned series of incidents… directed towards the participants' learning and understanding" (p. 65). He adds that education of adults is the same process but "participants regarded themselves and were treated by others as socially mature" (p. 65).

Spencer and Lange (2014) explain that learning is "much broader than education and generally refers to any elements that together produce a change in mental constructs or behaviour" (p. 7). It is interesting to remark here that not all learning is educational. For instance, indoctrination is a learning process but not an educational one (Jarvis, 2004, p. 41). Definitions of learning vary and adapt according to its underlying assumptions and values. As we advance, we will discuss some of these variations.

Adulthood

In the International Encyclopedia of Adult Education edited by Leona English, Hunt (2005) says that for some, it can be simply a matter of biology, so an adult is anyone between the ages of 16 and 20, who has completed their genetical growth, which takes place when puberty is complete. Another common way of identifying an adult in Western countries is by the age of majority, which when achieved, can grant some responsibilities and privileges reserved for adults, such as voting, drinking alcohol and driving a car. This varies a lot among jurisdictions. Hunt (2005) explains that these traditional views of adulthood as a linear trajectory do not respond or resolve this issue any longer. It is important to find new ways of redefining who the adult learners are. In this paper, adulthood is defined as when people "have taken on the social, psychological, and/or economic roles typically expected of adults in their cultures and collective societies" (Hansman & Mott, 2010, p. 14).

Andragogy

Andragogy is one of the most discussed concepts in adult education (Draper, 2001). According to Draper (2001), historically, the term *adult education* was created in England by Thomas Pole in 1814 to explore a need to focus on the education of adults. The term *andragogy* was coined by Alexander Kapp in Germany in 1833 and it referred to Plato's educational theory for adults as opposed to pedagogy (focus on children). By 1844, having the education of peasants in Denmark in mind, Grundtvig, a Lutheran bishop, discussed the importance of 'education for life' based on lived experiences and in contrast to authoritarian methods normally used in pedagogy. Grundtvig's ideas of Folk High Schools influenced Lindeman who is seen as the father of adult education in the USA (Draper, 2001).

The term andragogy was reintroduced in 1924 by a German educator, Eugen Rosenstock, who advocated for adult education methods. In North America, Lindeman introduced the term andragogy in 1926. However, Lindeman used both adult education and andragogy as synonyms. Malcolm Knowles was the one who diffused the term andragogy more broadly in 1970 (Jarvis, 2004). His early work built the notion of andragogy as opposed to pedagogy and generated a lot of critics. He claimed, then, that adults are self-directed, and have a reservoir of experiences, have readiness to learn and have immediacy of application of what they are learning. Many critics believed that these characteristics of adults also applied to children and were not always true for adults. Knowles revised his views by 1980 and started looking at andragogy as self-directed learning and pedagogy as teacher-directed learning, not a dichotomy but in a continuum on different poles on a spectrum (Draper, 2001; Knowles et al., 2015).

Teaching Adults. Jarvis (2004) explains that caring for learners' well-being is crucial when teaching adults. He says "we have to provide situations in which learners feel cared for

because their being matters, as much as their progress, to the teacher. This sense of care needs to be purveyed to the learners, not only through verbal communication but also through the non-verbal" (p. 147). He adds that adult educators "may seek to create an awareness of a specific learning need in the student; to confront students with a problem requiring a solution; to provide the students with an experience and encourage reflection on it" (p. 153). Jarvis (2004) provides many interesting strategies that could be used to teach adults. He divides these strategies between tutor-centred and student-centred approaches. Jarvis (2004) says that in a tutor-centred approach, teachers can "be didactic and teach the subject in the traditional method of providing the information, or be Socratic and seek to elicit the information from the students by careful questioning" (p. 157) and he lists a few activities, such as mentoring, lecture or lecture-discussion, and controlled or guided discussion. In a student-centred approach, Jarvis (2004) says that adult learners are important resources "since the students referred to here are adults each brings to the teaching and learning situation a vast and unique experience of life" (p. 165) and then lists some activities, such as brainstorming, debate, group discussion, interviews, problem-based learning, panels, case studies, among others.

Adult Education, Adult Learning, Lifelong Education, Lifelong Learning

In 1926, Eduard Lindeman explained that "the purpose of adult education is to give meaning to the categories of experiences, not to classifications of knowledge" (p. 195). Merriam and Brockett (2007) define *adult education* as "activities intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles, or self-perception define them as adults" (p. 8). According to Bierema (2019), *adult learning* is "learning engaged in by individuals who have adult-type responsibilities in life such as caring for dependents, managing a household, holding a job, and being an engaged citizen" (p. 4).

Lifelong education was a project of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) that proposed to strengthen civil society by implementing education that would happen throughout life and that encompasses formal and non-formal settings (Boshier, 2005). According to English and Mayo (2021), lifelong education, as promoted by UNESCO through the Faure Report of 1972, had a humanistic view and "reflected the openness of the post-War period and the belief that education was meant for self-actualization" (p. 16). However, it had no direct effect on policies or any profound consequence.

Lifelong learning was initially deemed as an innocent term, an overarching term that could be used everywhere. However, it was promoted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1996 and became a widespread term in Europe. According to English and Mayo (2021), lifelong learning "took on a stronger, yet narrower, socioeconomic meaning and was tied very closely with labor market goals" (p. 3). Replacing the word education by learning was not just a simple and innocent change of words but an intentional change of paradigm that transferred the responsibility of learning from the State to the individuals (English & Mayo, 2021). The basic assumptions of lifelong learning are: (a) individually focused; (b) emphasis on vocation learning, human capital and knowledge economy; (c) learner-as-consumer perspective (neoliberalism) (Boshier, 2005; English & Mayo, 2012; 2021; Nesbit, 2006; 2013).

In a recent article on lifelong learning and aging, Hamalian and Cooke (2021) warn that "although adopting a lifelong learning perspective is seductive because it provides a central theme for all stages of active learning lives, it may well obscure important considerations for 'learning to be'" (p. 299). They also add that "policymakers are drawn to the promise of the idea

of lifelong learning for enhancing marketable skills for growing the economy, thus ignoring the necessity of paying attention to supporting the human potential" (p. 299).

In this paper, the term *adult education* is used with the perspective as described by Nesbit (2006):

> Adult education is the more straightforward and inclusive term. It is commonly understood by the general public and, despite our separate interests, still serves to describe our work. We use the term broadly to cover all the approaches, process, and activities having to do with the education of and learning by adults and the broad set of beliefs, aims, and strategies centred around the tenet that learning opportunities should be accessible to all, regardless of age and status. Such a term also underscores that in a rapidly changing world education should not be an isolated and singular phenomenon: Learning continues into and throughout one's adulthood and should be supported by a variety of educational activities… adult education - broadly defined, diffuse, and multilocational - best describes the professional and practitioner commitment to Canada's long-term educational and societal development. (pp. 16-17)

Formal, Non-Formal, Informal Learning Settings

The tripartite arrangement of learning systems encompasses formal, non-formal and informal learning. Formal Learning takes place in educational institutions that award credentials, diplomas and qualifications, such as schools, colleges and universities usually under the control of a Ministry of Education. Non-formal learning takes place parallel to formal learning and does not lead to formalized certificates. Non-formal learning occurs in settings, such as community centres, churches, prisons and workplace. Informal learning takes place in our everyday life. People learn outside of formalized or organized educational activities. Informal learning occurs

at work, in the family and in the community (Boshier, 2005; Spencer & Lange, 2014). However, it is important to note that learning settings in adult education are very dynamic as learners and educators navigate among them going from formal settings to non-formal or informal ones. Educators normally have jobs in more than one setting in different institutions or even inside the same organization as many of them frequently offer formal, non-formal or informal learning arrangements.

Traditional Orientations in Adult Education

Lange (2006) says that a person's philosophy holds their fundamental beliefs and convictions. She encourages educators to develop a working philosophy. She says that a working philosophy serves as a guide for action. According to Lange (2006), developing a working philosophy is a moral and ethical process in which educators identify their most important values, knowledge and what social vision of the world they have.

Lange contends that overcoming the fear of philosophy is crucial for an adult educator because "any education that does not grapple with fundamental questions of human existence, including the meaning of life, the nature of the universe and humanity, and concepts like goodness, beauty, truth and justice, is a desiccated form of education" (2021, p. 68). Philosophy addresses many issues that are very common nowadays, such as ahistoricism, depolitization, cynicism towards social ideas, too much focus on technicism and on utilitarianism. She defines philosophy as the love of wisdom and knowledge of things and their causes. According to Lange (2021), "deepening knowledge of our personal maps of ideas, probing our perceptual reality, and doubting assumptions and our motivations are all important in adopting a reflexive stance as educators and learners" (p. 69).

Lange (2006) notes that philosophy is divided in three main areas: metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology. Metaphysics is the study of the nature of reality and is subdivided in cosmology, theology, anthropology, and ontology that is the study of the nature of existence or what it means to be. Axiology studies questions of value and is subdivided in ethics, which is the study of moral values and conducts, and aesthetics, which is the search of principles governing the creation and appreciation of beauty and art. Finally, Lange (2006) describes epistemology and teaches us that it is the study of truth and knowledge and how knowledge is produced.

Focusing on schools of thoughts, Lange (2006) indicates there are three divisions: Classical philosophy, which is composed of idealism, realism, and neo-scholasticism; Modern philosophy, which is subdivided in pragmatism and existentialism; and Contemporary theories of educational philosophy, which has several categories, such as progressivism, perennialism, reconstructivism, behaviourism, anarchism, constructivism, and the analytic movement. Lange (2006) describes six philosophical orientations of adult education: The liberal, the progressive, the behaviourist, the humanist, the radical/critical, and postmodernism.

Liberal Orientation

Lange (2006) explains that in the liberal orientation, truth is achieved through logic and rational discussions. It had its peak during the Enlightenment in the 18th century. The adult educator's role in this orientation is to foster the development of the rational and moral power of learners. A good adult educator has deep knowledge of the teaching subject and uses strategies, such as lecture, reading, debate and argumentative papers. It is basically non-vocational. The main critique of the liberal orientation is its focus on western and upper-class men. It assumes that truth is universal across cultures and history. Another issue is the expert character of the educator that overshadows the learners. Finally, it assumes that rational thought is the highest

form of thought and discards emotional, spiritual and other intelligences (Lange, 2006; Spencer & Lange, 2014).

Progressive Orientation

Lange (2006) says that the progressive orientation started with Rousseau who pointed out that the natural human curiosity is part of the learning process and Dewey who believed in scientific and social literacy for a strong democracy. The progressive orientation also came out of Darwin's theory of evolution that believes that the society is always improving. Some elements of this orientation are authority of science, experimental method, problem solving, and useful application (pragmatism). Education is the most powerful means of advancing societies and public education needs to be promoted. Some critiques of this orientation are its inattention to political and economic powers, and lack of the clear role of the education and social change without attention to who benefits from the status quo.

Behaviourist Orientation

Lange (2006) explains that a behaviourist orientation is interested in observable and measurable behaviours. It is a reaction against sophisticated religious explanations and philosophical interpretations (Cranton, 2013). It focuses on control and manipulation of the environment (Magro, 2001). It applies natural science methods of observation and experimentation to the study of humans. It focuses in vocational and technical trainings. The role of the adult educator is to set clear behavioural objectives and arrange content in a sequential order (Lange, 2006). The educator manages and controls the environment, set expectations and monitor learners' progress (Magro, 2001).

Classical conditioning is an important aspect of behaviourism. It says that humans try to avoid pain and seek pleasure. Behaviours can be controlled by stimuli that either provoke pain or

pleasure through punishments, rewards and reinforcement. A deep assumption of behaviourism is that freedom is an illusion and that humans are the product of physical and social conditioning (Cranton, 2013; Lange, 2006). Learning is hierarchical and takes place in a linear step-by-step process. Popular names in behaviourism are Watson, Thorndike, Hull, Guthrie, and Skinner (Magro, 2001). Critics of behaviourism say that its focus is on accommodation to the status quo and not to change it. It has a manipulative aspect that places too much power with educators as learning is always controlled by someone. Because learners are conditioned, they have to learn what others (companies, trainers) want them to learn. That is why it lacks an ethical basis. Finally, critics say that learning is a complex phenomenon that is not always observable (Lange, 2006; Magro, 2001).

Humanist Orientation

Concerning the humanist approach, Lange (2006) says that freedom, dignity and autonomy are crucial aspects. It started with the Italian Renaissance (1200-1400) and was a countermovement against church traditions that regarded humanity as sinful. Humanists see the potential for good in humans. During the Enlightenment (18th Century), it promoted faith in human intellect and reason. It critiqued the industrial revolution because it reduced human potential for creativity to pure mechanist work. In this orientation, people are free to find their own life meanings and reality is what they perceive. Self-actualization is the highest state a human being can achieve (Cranton, 2013; Lange, 2006). Humans are free and not determined by external or internal forces. The role of the humanist adult educator is to be responsive and empathetic. Educators have to find ways to assist learners to achieve their full potential. The relationship between the learner and the educator is student-centred and the educator is a facilitator and not a dictator. Competition is discouraged and educators should focus on self-

esteem and motivation. Curriculum should start with students' experiences. Evaluation should be done by learners. Some of the critiques of this approach are too much optimism in human nature; individualistic focus; no constraints to human actions; assumptions that the individual will embrace their personal and social responsibilities (Lange, 2006).

Radical/Critical Orientation

Lange (2006) says that the radical/critical approach builds on humanist traditions. However, true humanization only happens when we understand our position in society. It has a commitment to challenge inequality and injustices and a strong critique of authoritarian approaches to education (Cranton, 2013; Magro, 2001). The radical educator should challenge injustices and lack of freedom. They should promote social change towards a safe, just, ecologically sustainable, peaceful, and fully democratic society. The role of the critical adult educator is to be a co-learner who participates and collaborates in dialogue with learners (Cranton, 2013; Magro, 2001). People are essentially good, but the society is flawed because of greed in the economic system, concentration of power and a discriminatory social system. Basic structures of society need to be transformed by those who are marginalized, the global poor, working class, women, immigrants, LGBTQ+ and differently abled. The critique against the radical approach is that it can be too optimistic. People are not always inclined to the common good. Educators can manipulate and assume that they know what learners need in order to be empowered and transformed. There is a clear issue of power differences between learners and educators (Cranton, 2013; Lange, 2006; Magro, 2001).

Critical Theory. It emerged with the founding of the Frankfurt School in Germany in 1923. It is a framework to critique modernity. Historically, modernity can be defined as a period restricted by systems and structures that saw science as a powerful agent of order and progress

(Breunig, 2009; Darder, 2018; Grace, 2006). It was an emancipation of religion and medieval traditions. Critical theory engages with the critique of authority, consumerism and alienation of modernity. It provides a lens to understand modern notions, such as the State, ideology, society, social control and order, resistance and injustices. However, democracy, freedom and social justice are political ideals of modernity to be preserved, encouraged and developed in critical theory.

Habermas is an important critical theorist who has influenced critical adult educators in Canada. Habermas has critiqued modernist emphasis on a power project. He developed a theory of communicative action that uses dialogue as an organizing construct. Reason is part of language and communication. Issues with distorted communications hinders human learning. Habermas focuses on both instrumental and moral-practical knowledge (Grace, 2006).

Critical Adult Education. It investigates collective human interests in relation to power structures in adult education. Its main focus is to advance social and cultural forms of education concerned with life, learning and the world of adults (Grace, 2006). Critical adult education has critiqued instrumentalized forms of adult education, and the commodification and the tendency towards a reductionist view of adult education (Grace, 2006).

Grace (2006) says that critical adult education has distanced itself from human-resource development and instrumental sectors of the field. He says that this contributed to its marginalization as a component of adult education. He explains that this was not productive to the advancement of the field (Grace, 2006). As neoliberalism erodes all aspects of adult education, Grace claims that critical adult education has a lot to offer to instrumental sectors of adult education through a reflexive practice towards social transformation. Critical adult education wants the field of adult education more ethical, just, and inclusive. This is only

possible because critical adult education has an interdisciplinary approach to theory building and practice (Grace, 2006).

Postfoundationalist Orientations: Postmodernism and Poststructuralism

English (2006) explains that postfoundationalism, which is also called antifoundationalism, is a philosophy, a political movement, and a lens to see the world that questions basic foundations of modernism, such as order, structure, unbridled progress and growth. Postfoundationalism deconstructs modern grand narratives/myths of progress, rationalism, and classification. It also seeks to dismantle Enlightenment promises, such as that of the use of the scientific method as being able to solve all issues and to unsettle modern views of binaries like mind/body, theory/practice, private/public, individual/group, literate/non-literate, motivated/unmotivated that are widespread and accepted in education (English, 2006; Lange, 2006, 2013).

When discussing *postmodernism* in adult education in Canada, English (2006) identifies three important factors: (a) adult educators in Canada have consistently engaged with modernist assumptions, such as the use of mechanist techniques, focus on professional practices and self-absorbed individualism; (b) critically reflective practices potentializes resistance and challenges universal narratives; (c) popular education's commitment to opposing power and universal assumptions is an important postmodern tool.

English (2006) says that *poststructuralism* is a reaction to the disappointments of structuralist's beliefs that there is a fundamental structure or system to analyze reality. Actually, English (2006) says that Foucault is the most famous poststructuralist among adult educators because he addresses relevant issues concerning our most basic assumptions to teaching and learning. Foucault understood power as something that is exercised by people and not held by

them. The concept of disciplinary power says that power is exercised in simple daily interactions with other people. The perspective that power is always around in each other's relationships and discourses challenges one of the most common aspect in adult education that is the notion that educators can empower anyone. If power is exercised, then it cannot be given to anyone. English (2006) highlights that Foucauldian poststructuralism challenges universalisms or regimes of truths. Methods of teaching, such as facilitative or participatory, are considered the best approaches. However, because not all learners share the same approaches to learning, forcing learners to participate in a circle of learning, for instance, is the exercise of power by the educator as "the circle is a technology of power within adult education, because it produces the effect of self-surveillance or the controlling of speech and action because of fear of who might be watching" (English, 2006, p. 111).

There are several challenges to postfoundationalist approaches. These theories are strong on fluidity and critique, but they lack practical ideas. Because postmodernism is fluid and non-unitary, it is hard to identify on whom educators should focus their efforts in terms of organizational structures, class barriers and gender inequities (English, 2006). On a critical note, Collins (2006) observes that because there is no unified and collective understanding, the postmodernist or poststructuralist tendencies hinder the possibilities on an emancipatory practice. Collins (2006) says that "though postmodernism/poststructuralism is useful in illuminating the effects of educational practices and institutional arrangements, as is also the case with analyses from the larger legacy of critical theory, it is not pedagogical in the way that critical theory intends" (p. 124). Collins (2006) corroborates with the idea that postmodern/post-structural discourses of power deconstruction, for instance, disengage with strategizing, organization, and political involvement and consequently, weakens the organizing power of critical theory in the

struggle for social change against oppressive teaching practices. See Appendix J for a summary of the main concepts of the main philosophical orientation in Adult Education.

Feminist Tradition in Adult Education

Adult education has also benefitted from a feminist perspective which continues to contribute to the analysis of how power dynamics undermines active participation in social change and educational movements. Here, as a point of departure, feminist theory is re-examined as having evolved in three different waves (with a caveat that should the reader be interested in a more comprehensive analysis of the history of the feminist tradition in adult education, that the sources identified in this section, offer a wide-reaching analysis; see for example, Clover; English; Hanson).

The first wave of feminist theorizing was the struggle for citizenship and to be recognized as a person with the right to vote. With the appearance of the women's movement, the second wave set to diminish structural injustices created by the patriarchy. According to Gouthro (2021), during the second wave, "women collectively began to verbalize their personal experiences as a way to articulate and identify" (p. 49) their alienation and marginalization in a men's world. This was a process of consciousness-raising to see their personal lives as intrinsically connected to the political. The third wave emerged in the 1990s and focused on "the multiple differences among women by race, ethnicity, sexual preference, and class to better represent and celebrate the diversity of women, explore the multiplicity of oppression among women who come from different social locations" (Spencer & Lange, 2014, p. 110). Hanson (2014) adds that "feminists influenced the development of popular education by inserting feminist perspectives and concerns into it, all the while acknowledging that multiple forms of oppression – such as gender, race,

class and ability" (p. 4). Currently, it is common to refer to different practices of feminisms, such as liberal, radical, postmodern, ecofeminism, postcolonial, queer, among others.

Women have been part of the history of adult education but have rarely been recognized. For example, most literacy work in Canada was done by female teachers on a volunteer basis (English, 2013). One of the most important adult education movements in the history of Canada, the Antigonish Movement in Nova Scotia, was supported by the Sisters of St. Martha and "the many lay women who wrote and printed all the educational and communication materials, worked as study club and reading circles facilitators, established libraries, and were public speakers and organizers of cooperatives and credit unions" (Spencer & Lange, 2014, p. 112). Dahl (2022) agrees that the role of women in adult education throughout history has not been registered as those of men. She mentions three important books that were written in the attempt to recognize and value the roles of these women. The first book is Pionnières en education des adultes: Perspectives internationals [Female pioneers in adult education: International perspectives] (Laot & Solar, 2018). The second book is No small lives: Handbook of North American early women adult educators, 1925-1950 (Imel & Bersch, 2015) and Women, adult education, and leadership in Canada (Clover, Butterwick, & Collins, 2016).

Many scholars have engaged with feminist adult education research. For example, Clover (2015)'s study on how women learn to become politicians concluded that women do not need to be open feminists; however, they "must carry the values that purposely and consciously address problematic gender relations and existing political norms and assumptions" (28). English and Irving (2015) also conducted research on feminist adult education and explained that "feminist adult educators bring critical voices that push beyond formal classroom learning and individual experience, divorced from our larger social and economic structure" (p. 13). Feminist adult

education is an important tradition because it challenges the perceptions on how gender shapes the construction of knowledge in a male oriented world. Feminist pedagogy challenges the assumptions of neutrality and brings important theoretical lenses to interpret the world and promote gender justice in adult education.

Critical Pedagogy: Freirean Tradition

Critical Pedagogy addresses the connections between education and social justice. Critical pedagogy was inspired by the ideas of Paulo Freire in Brazil, also by the field of critical theory, the Frankfurt School and the search for a theory of social transformation (Tarlau, 2015). Both Kincheloe (2008) and McLaren (2000) see Freire as the inaugural protagonist of critical pedagogy although he never really used this term in his works (as cited in Kirylo, 2020). What follows is a description of the important concepts in Freirean pedagogy. A brief summary of Freire's life which can help to understand the historical and social aspects that influenced his work can be found in Appendix L.

Important Concepts in Freirean Critical Pedagogy

Shor (2020) reminds us that one of Freire's main recommendation was that he was not copied but reinvented. Freire used to say that the only way for someone to practice some of his education practices was not to follow him (Freire & Faundez, 2014, p. 89). Freirean critical pedagogy is politically situated in a dialogical process that is generated from, to and with the learners and in relation to their own living conditions. Because these conditions vary from different places and practices, critical pedagogues need to adapt their practices to the individual learners and their local situations. Educators who re-invent Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy are also in the process of re-inventing themselves as educators and citizens. It is a process of

transformation of oneself in a collective process that starts by questioning the status quo and imagining education interventions that seek change and a more just world.

Kitts (2020) emphasizes that critical pedagogy offers language to critique the status quo. Focusing on teacher training, Kitts explains that the purpose of education should be the realization of the human potential. An important aspect of critical pedagogy is to challenge adult educators to question their assumptions about their teaching practices and traditional forms of teaching and learning. According to Franco (2017), there are four basic principles in Freirean critical pedagogy. First, the objective of education is to empower learners so that they know their position in the world by naming and interpreting it. Second, education is resistance against oppressive neoliberal practices which focus on instrumental and technical aspects, solely aiming economic development. Third, knowledge is constructed collectively through dialogue and never with deposits of information that are disconnected from the reality of the learners. Lastly, Franco (2017) states that a Freirean critical pedagogy struggles for the emancipation of the learners, and that this practice should be democratic and critical, never authoritarian or indoctrinating.

Tarlau (2015) says that one of the roles of critical pedagogy is to critique the current public educational system and contribute to the construction of a more emancipatory educational model. Tarlau (2015) claims that a critical pedagogue has a commitment with students to contest unequal power relations to avoid the replication of the same economic, political, and racial injustices. Although Breunig (2011) explains that attempts to delineate, to define or find the founding fathers of critical pedagogy goes against its basic concepts by reinforcing oppressive ideas, she attempts to provide us with some understanding of critical pedagogy by saying it is "a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationship among classroom teachings, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the schools, and the social

and material relation of the wider community and society" (p. 1). Along the same line, Katz (2014) adds that it is contradictory to critical pedagogy to find one homogeneous definition to avoid a one-dimension narrative. However, Katz (2014) adds that any attempt to define critical pedagogy needs to take these core themes into consideration: (a) integrating student's personal experiences into classroom lessons; (b) deconstructing the student-teacher hierarchy; (c) avoiding the banking method of education and embracing an environment where students and teachers are both educators and learners; (d) deconstructing the idea of knowledge as neutral and acknowledging the political nature of education; (e) making social justice an explicit focus in the class; and (f) considering how the classroom can serve as a model for promoting democracy.

Thomson-Bunn (2014) adds to the discussion by claiming that the lack of definitions of certain abstract and complex elements of critical pedagogy may cause confusion and uncertainties making it very difficult to practice critical pedagogy in real life. Although she agrees that it is contradictory to accept and use definitions of critical pedagogy created by someone else, such as faculty members and teachers in an authoritarian way, she advocates for critical educators to invite learners to play an active role in defining key terms and ideas of critical pedagogy through deliberation. She adds that "inviting students to participate in such definitional work as well may mitigate resistance by offering students a greater say, and a greater stake in their own education" (Thomson-Bunn, 2014, para. 11). Another common critique of critical pedagogy, according to Finger (2005) is that there is too much theory but very little practice. It becomes more of a discourse of the importance to be critical instead of real applications in educational practices or ideas that could translate into strategies and activities for adult educators on the ground.

Breunig (2009) investigated the successes and challenges that critical pedagogues in higher education encountered when putting theories of critical pedagogy into practice. Breunig (2009) says that despite the variety of definitions and historical perspectives on critical pedagogy, one aspect is common among them all: the struggle for a more just society. For Breunig (2009), social justice is the achievement of equality in every aspect of society. For social justice to be achieved, we need social action. In her study, Breunig (2009) interviewed 17 self-identified critical pedagogues in higher education. After collecting data and analysing it, she found a few common categories and themes related to critical pedagogy practices. They are: (1) Build a classroom community and employ collaborative learning techniques. Although these are student-centred and constructivist-oriented practices with no clear focus on social justice or liberation, creating an inclusive classroom where students' voices and perspectives are included is already an act of social justice; (2) Dialogue. Using dialogue to engage students and challenging oppressive power relations are critical pedagogy aligned practices. However, in her research, practitioners were mostly focused on a form of student-centred learning and teaching without much attention to oppressive practices; (3) Assessment and evaluation. Participants reported using alternative methods of assessment and evaluation such as co-designing assignments, peer or self-assessment, use of portfolios, which were ways of engaging learners. Breunig (2009) argues that although these are strong signs of student-centred or constructivist practices, they do not have a clear focus on social justice or action; (4) In class experiential activities. Participants reported using role play and hands-on activities to discuss issues of oppression, privilege and leadership. (5) Community service-learning and/or action research projects. Several participants reported community service-learning as a form of teaching about critical pedagogy. Although it is clear the powerful learning aspect of community service-

learning, it is sometimes critiqued because of its exploitive practices. Breunig (2009) argues that "the critical pedagogue who is employing this form of action-oriented praxis should provide both an activity and the appropriate facilitation, reflection, and justice-oriented content to help students consider and/or modify some of their previous prejudices" (p. 259).

Breunig (2009) concludes that most practices of her participants did not have a clear and open orientation towards social justice and social action. Actually, most practices had implicit critical practices. Breunig (2009) argues that critical pedagogues should "develop strategies that explicitly and overtly address the justice-oriented nature that is purported by the theory of critical pedagogy" (p. 260). Despite the limitations of her study, she says that there is value in searching for "best practices" related to critical pedagogical praxis. She claims that future researchers should encourage practitioners of critical pedagogy "to articulate the ways in which their classroom practices do indeed attend to justice-oriented issues and should explore facilitation techniques alongside this" (p. 260).

Bybee (2020) used his own experiences as a teacher in a high-need middle school in New York to reconceptualize and problematize Freire's banking education. Bybee (2020) says that there has been an unproblematic domestication of Freire's ideas, specially, concerning the concept of banking education as it has been treated as a teaching method and erasing fundamental ideas such as contradiction, objectification, dehumanization, domination/violence, and death. Bybee (2020) argues that standardized testing is a form of banking education that creates a climate of hyper-accountability and is used to oppress students and teachers. Bybee (2020) says that teachers are being used as proxies by the state. He claims that standardized testing objectifies students and teachers. Bybee (2020) explains that many corporations are in charge of applying such standardized testing and that "in an environment of neoliberalism and

increasing privatization, teachers are now proxies for banks and corporations and are denied the 'ontological vocation to be more fully human' along with their students" (p. 10). Bybee (2020) says that Freire offers a possibility to oppose banking education: problem-posing education. In his research, Bybee (2020) reports moments of resistance and transformation. He describes how a school administrator implemented a school sustainability initiative as an act of resistance against standardization. Additionally, Bybee (2020) tells us about a fieldtrip to the Museum of Jewish Heritage and how students were surprised when they learned about the important role that the Dominican Republic had in accepting Jewish refugees from the Holocaust. Bybee (2020) claims that despite the increasing banking education model oriented towards accountability, standardization and privatization, educators can resist by creating authentic learning experiences to allow students to read the world critically and engage in a problem-posing model of education.

Building on Irish adult education and discussing the educational ontology of Paulo Freire, McKillican (2020) explains how it is crucial to listen to and appreciate the voices of adult educators because they impact the development of the consciousness of the adult learner and contributes to better understand the pedagogy of adult education and "will have significant implications for the further understanding of the democratising effects of adult education in society" (p. 137).

In her turn, Almeida (2019) summarizes the fundamental principles of Freirean critical pedagogy. She says that overcoming the oppressor/oppressed dichotomy is important for pedagogical practice. The overcoming of this dichotomy will only be possible through the action of the oppressed. In this way, no longer oppressed, they also free the oppressors. Almeida (2019) emphasizes that true liberation can only come from the oppressed, and liberation needs to be generated within the oppressed and not deposited in them, as a good that comes from the outside

(p. 710). It is not pedagogical to overcome this dichotomy if the dream of the oppressed is to become the oppressor. Freire (1987) emphatically told us that an emancipatory education liberates both the oppressed and the oppressor. The second point that Almeida (2019) brings is the fight against alienating banking education that is disconnected from the learners' reality. Banking education where the teacher deposits knowledge in the students' minds must be overcome because it is not education, but alienation. A true non-banking education does not impose itself because it is democratic. It is part of the learners' knowledge and reading of the world, who along with educators, expand their knowledge.

Here follow a few fundamental concepts of critical pedagogy in a Freirean tradition.

The Problem of Humanization

Freire says that the education process can be dehumanizing because of "injustice, exploitation, oppression, and the violence of the oppressors" (Freire, 2000, p. 44). However, Freire believes that it is not the vocation of the human being to be dehumanized. Therefore, he believes in the struggle of the oppressed to liberate themselves of the oppressor. Freire (2014) explains that the oppressed assimilates and internalizes the dominant ideologies. It is when the oppressor inhabits the oppressed. This point somehow explains how the oppressor exercises power over the oppressed and why the oppressed population somehow continues to elect politicians and representatives that do not struggle for their liberation, but for the maintenance of the status quo.

 It is interesting to note here that the liberation does not come from the oppressors, but it is only achieved by a revolutionary process led by the oppressed themselves. Another important aspect is that the oppressors also need to liberate themselves from the oppression that they exercise because they also depend on it. Freire (2000) explains that "although the situation of

oppression is a dehumanizing totality affecting both the oppressors and those whom they oppress, it is the latter who must, from their stifled humanity, wage for both the struggle for a fuller humanity" (p. 47). However, in the contradiction between the oppressed and the oppressor, it is crucial to remark that "for this struggle to have meaning, the oppressed must not, in seeking to regain their humanity (which is a way to create it), become in turn oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of the humanity of both" (p. 44). Freire's pedagogy should be understood as revolutionary praxis (Darder, 2018).

Education is Political

In his book, Pedagogy of Hope, Freire (2014) revisits his most known book, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, and reaffirms that there has never been any neutral educational practice in space or time. Education is a political practice regardless of if we are aware of it or not. To defend that education should be neutral is to side with the oppressor or with an empty educational practice that is not revolutionary. Freire (2014) says that it is important for progressive educators to promote different discourses in mutual respect. Educating someone takes risks and education, democratic or authoritarian, is always directive.

There is a thin line between direction and manipulation. The educator must not interfere in the learners' freedom to create and learn. Educators must have an ethical duty to promote and respect differences. Freire (2014) reminds us that progressive educators know that their practices are not neutral. Educators have dreams and beliefs, and they should not reject them. Freire (2014) explains that

my ethical duty, as one of the subjects, one of the agents, of a practice that can never be neutral – the educational – is to express my respect for differences in ideas and positions.

I must respect even positions opposed to my own, positions that I combat earnestly and

with passion. (p. 69)

A careful and serious discipline to avoid authoritarian practices is essential. Additionally, an

intellectual discipline in the part of the learners is essential to promote the apprehension of the

content and that without it any effort to critical education is a vain hope. This intellectual

discipline can only be promoted through dialogue and can never be imposed by the educator on

their learners.

Banking Education

Oppressors expect to keep the oppressed dependent on their false generosity and adapt to

the oppressive system. A banking model of education presents the reality as fatalism. It cannot

be changed. In the banking process, learners are seen as passive receptacles of information, and

the more they are able to keep these deposits the better they are. Freire (2000) explains that "the

more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical

consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that

world" (p. 73). It is a paternalist model of education that promotes alienation. Teachers and

students are seen in opposite sides. The teacher as the knowledge holder and students as clean

slates, empty of culture, histories or lived experiences. Banking education is deterministic. Freire

(2014) claims that there is no space for dreams in a deterministic education. Actually, he says

that there is not even a place for education in a world that is already determined.

Freire (2007) emphasizes that the idea of simply transferring content is the same as

adaptation to the world just like animals do. The reduction of education to simple technical skills

as enough "to guarantee a happy life" is to adapt to a world without "dreams of transformation"

(Freire, 2007, pp. 40-41). For Freire, "technical mastery is just as important for students as the

political understanding is for a citizen. It is not possible to separate them" (p. 41). The depoliticization of education is the consequence of focusing only on technical skills.

Problem-posing Education

A response to the banking model of education is problem posing pedagogy. It opposes determinism because it believes that the world can be created and re-created. Learners can act and create their own history by making the future. Darder (2018) explains that it "entails a horizontal approach that welcomes student participation as free thinkers and actors within their world, with an eye toward the development of critical thought... dialectical engagement of teacher and students… and communities that supports *conscientização*" (p. 112). Freire (2014) claims that educators have to challenge their students in regard to their reading of the world. For Freire, being respectful to students' reading of the world is not the same as being permissive. It is important not to underestimate or reject knowledge that students bring to the class from their personal experiences. However, he explains that educators should not stop there. It is necessary to use this personal knowledge as a start and go beyond from local knowledge to a universal/national one.

Hope

Opposite to fatalism or determinism is hope. For Freire (1998), hope is an essential part of the human condition. Educators who believe in change are hopeful. Learners who understand their position in this world also carry hope because they know that their present condition can be changed. In a finished world, hope has no place. Freire (1998) says that "hope is an indispensable seasoning in our human, historical experience. Without it, instead of history we would have pure determinism" (p. 69). Thinking of education as neutral is against hope because it looks at the injustices of the world as natural. Giroux (2020) warns us that "there is no politics

without hope and there is no sense of agency unless young people and others can imagine a future in which democracy matters and is worth struggling for" (p. 135).

Having hope is an essential part of being in this world because learners can envision different possibilities. Learners develop the confidence that change is possible. Darder (2020) explains that "radical hope develops in conjunction with the formation of critical consciousness" (p. 228). Hope fuels the struggle for social justice against technical alienation and liberation. Fischman (2020) says that "educational hope requires solidarity and agency, and it is collectively constructed with the commitment of individual teachers, and yet it cannot be sustained on redemptive narratives of super-teacher heroism" (p. 725). It is a collective work.

Conscientização

Central to critical pedagogy is the concept of *conscientização*. Darder (2020) explains that "Freire's concept of conscientização points to an understanding of critical awareness and the formation of social consciousness as both a historical phenomenon and a human social process connected to our communal capacities to become authors and social actors of our destinies" (p. 79). The process of awakening awareness cannot be reduced to simple instrumental technique that strips critical thinking from its social, historical, and material conditions. In Freire (1970; 2000)'s own words, "a deepened consciousness of their situation leads people to apprehend that situation as an historical reality susceptible of transformation" (p. 85). Shor (1992, pp. 129-130) explains that critical consciousness has four qualities: (a) power awareness – society and history are shaped by human action and is unfinished and can be transformed; (b) critical literacy – thinking that goes beyond surface meaning and opinions; (c) permanent desocialization – understanding and challenging the status quo; and (d) self-education/organization – knowing how to study critically.

It is important to clarify that critical education does not change reality itself. It is an important factor that together with other factors have the potential to contribute and foster change in the world. According to Freire (2014),

> a more critical understanding of the situation of oppression does not yet liberate the oppressed. But the revelation is a step in the right direction. Now the person who has this new understanding can engage in a political struggle for the transformation of the concrete conditions in which the oppression prevails. (p. 24)

The concept of conscientização in critical pedagogy needs to be connected to the process of social justice and action through a pedagogical praxis.

Pedagogical Praxis

Dahl (2018) conducted a study where adult participants who were learning to read and write were given control to share their own knowledge by teaching one another. She says that a pedagogical praxis is the result of conscientização (p. 202). Actually, by reflecting on their actions, participants were able to develop critical awareness of their role in their own learning process, the role of the social context in this process, and by doing so, somehow, they were able to emancipate themselves from the traditional banking models of pedagogical approaches, traditionally imposed on learners (Dahl, 2018, p. 202).

The idea of praxis for critical pedagogy shows that it is impossible to separate reflection from practice. According to Freire (2000), the word is the essence of dialogue:

> within the word we find two dimensions, reflection, and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed – even in part – the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world. (p. 87)

It is clear that action reduced to instrument only without critical reflection can be a dangerous tool of alienation in the society as we see it being promoted by neoliberal policies (Gibb & Walker, 2013; Sanches, 2017; Sanches & Gomes, 2018) (See Appendix K for a brief summary of the main concepts of critical pedagogy).

Attributes of the Critical Pedagogue in a Freirean Tradition

According to Brookfield (2006), students consider two essential attributes for teachers: credibility and authenticity. A credible teacher is someone who knows their content and understand its relevance for students. An authentic teacher is honest with students and have a genuine desire to help them not only academically but "is seen as a flesh and blood human being with passions, enthusiasms, frailties, and emotions, not as someone who hides behind a collection of learned role behaviors appropriate to the title of 'professor'" (p. 56). Addressing pre-service teachers, Metcalf et al. (2016) reported that effective teachers normally have eight personal attributes: being enthusiastic, credible, warm, and humorous, have high expectations for learners, being supportive and encouraging, being businesslike, flexible, and knowledgeable.

In his book Pedagogy of Freedom, Freire (1998) provides a thorough analysis of engaged teaching and learning and the qualities and attributes that a critical educator should have. According to Freire, "there is not teaching without learning"; therefore, an educator must be before anything, a learner because "to teach is part of the very fabric of learning" (p. 31). Freire adds that critical educators must have methodological rigor that requires doing research. Additionally, educators need to respect what students already know and develop a capacity to be critical by developing an epistemological curiosity "as restless questioning, as movement toward the revelation of something hidden, as a question verbalized or not, as search for clarity, as moment of attention, suggestion, and vigilance, constitutes an integral part of the phenomenon of

being alive" (p. 37). Ethics and Aesthetics should also accompany the critical educator because "beauty and decency" go hand in hand (p. x). Freire says that words should be incarnated in example and educators should live what they are teaching and should refrain from patronizing learners. According to Freire (1998), critical educators are willing "to risk, to welcome the new" and reject any form of discrimination because "preconceptions of race, class, or sex offend the essence of human dignity and constitute a radical negation of democracy" (p. 41).

Freire also explains that "teaching is not just transferring knowledge" (p. 34) and that educators need to be aware of their unfinishedness or incompleteness as human beings and we are always learning, in movement and constructing ourselves. Critical educators also respect the autonomy of learners and have a strong capacity to apprehend learners' reality. Freire adds that critical educators have joy, hope, humility, tolerance, and deeply believe that change is possible. For Freire, a critical educator needs to be curious and foster curiosity of learners. Educators need to be careful not to suffocate leaners' curiosity because "the exercise of curiosity convokes the imagination, the emotions" (p. 82) and that is important for critical consciousness.

"Teaching is a human act" for Freire (1998, p. 85) and educators need to have self-confidence grounded in professional competence. Critical educators are generous and foster a "climate of respect that is born of just, serious, humble, and generous relationships, in which both the authority of the teacher and the freedom of the students are ethically grounded, is what converts pedagogical space into authentic educational experience" (p. 86). Critical educators are committed to solidarity between teacher and students and to social justice because "education is a form of intervention in the world" (p. 90). Critical educators are committed to freedom, but it is important to understand that according to Freire (1998), "freedom is not the absence of limits" (p. 99). Critical educators know how to listen to their learners, and they also understand that

education is ideological not neutral. Critical educators are open to dialogue with their learners and care for their wellbeing.

Implementation of Critical Pedagogy

Discussing the implementation of experiential education and critical pedagogy in post-secondary education, Breunig (2005) says that there is "a lack of congruence between the pedagogical theories and the actual classroom practices" (p. 109). According to Breunig (2005), Giroux (1997) provides important questions that learners and educators should ask themselves while implementing critical pedagogy. Some of these questions are: What counts as knowledge? How is knowledge produced and legitimized? Whose interests does this knowledge serve? Who has access to knowledge? What kinds of social relations within the classroom serve to parallel and reproduce the social relations of production in the wider society? (as cited in Breunig, 2005, p. 111).

Breunig (2005) suggests that experiential learning aligned with critical pedagogy provide an important framework on how to implement critical pedagogy in the real world. For example, with the purpose to engage learners and understand how the purpose of schools and their structure work as agents of socialization and assimilation, Breunig (2005) suggests that learners explore the education institution physically and ponder on how it holds power over learners or how school favors culture of specific dominant groups, for example. Another strategy is to uncover and dismantle the hidden curriculum, which normally serves the interest of a specific group. For this purpose, Breunig (2005) encourages learners to look at the syllabi for several courses and explore required readings, assessments, and knowledge being reproduced. This strategy enables learners to understand what sources of knowledge are more valued in their education. Breunig (2005) also suggests strategies to counter the banking model of education

with problem-posing education (Freire, 1970). She says that this can be done by changing the

class structure by moving chair into a circle, or involving students in the preparation of the

course, choosing inclusive course materials that privilege other types of knowledge, among

others. It is also important to explore the role of learners as agents of social change, Breunig

(2005) says:

> not only will an educator create a classroom condition that offers students the opportunity
>
> to work toward social change, to have a voice in the educational process, to have the
>
> knowledge and courage to be critical, and to be interested in and committed to this
>
> process, but that students have a responsibility to critically commit themselves to this
>
> process. (p. 118)

In a similar way, Naiditch (2010) implemented critical pedagogy in his reading class by applying

a problem-posing approach to develop critical thinking skills. Naiditch (2010) explains that this

strategy starts by identifying a problem that should come from learners (a personal, collective, or

social issue). The second step is the understanding of the problem that needs a lot of listening to

learners. Then educators and learners work on making meaningful relationships with other issues

or contexts. After a thorough analysis of the cause and effect, reasons and consequences of the

problems, learners make generalization and find solutions to address the problem (social action)

(Naiditch, 2010). In sum, Naiditch (2010) explains that to implement critical pedagogy

successfully, it is crucial to have "a concrete connection between the text and the real world, and

that this connection can be achieved through encouraging social action" (p. 94).

Uddin (2019) also provides ideas on how to implement critical pedagogy in the

classroom and lists a few strategies. According to Uddin (2019), the first element is love,

educators and learners should develop love and commitment to each other and from there to

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break the silence and promote dialogue. It is also important to connect learning with real life situations, to engage learners with out-of-book, and hands-on activities. Additionally, Uddin (2019) reports how his own experiences as a learner was enhanced by a professor who used a problem-posing education strategy.

Oliveira (2021) talks about the beautifulness of Freirean pedagogy in popular education in hospitals with learners who were victims of accidental scalping caused by boat engine. She explains that in hospitals, learners live a constant dialect between life and death. However, despite all the suffering, learners reported gaining their humanity and dignity back through emancipatory education. Oliveira (2021) tells us the story of João, who suffering from cancer, "emphasizes the desire to learn how to read and write before dying" (p. 339). Oliveira (2021) describes some popular education strategies used by educators when trying to implement critical pedagogy in hospital environments. One of these strategies was the cartography of knowledge where learners could express their world views and daily social practices. Lots of these social narratives described experiences of exclusion and social discrimination. This activity enabled learners to voice their concerns and work towards overcoming these practices. Another pedagogical experience described by Oliveira (2021) was the circle of feelings that was inspired on Freirean dialogical circle. She explains that this strategy enabled "learners to express and handle their emotions, affections, and all the suffering that they were going through, which were physical but also psychological" (p. 350). These practices have not only supported learners to learn content knowledge but also to overcome their health issues and social exclusion.

Shor's Agenda of Values for a Social Justice-Oriented Pedagogy

Building on his own experience as a critical pedagogue, Shor compiled important practical aspects of critical pedagogy and defines empowering education as "a critical-

democratic pedagogy for self and social change. It is a student-centered program for multicultural democracy in school and society. It approaches individual growth as an active, cooperative, and social process, because the self and society create each other" (1992, p. 15). Shor proposes an agenda of values for an empowering pedagogy. He says that an empowering pedagogy is participatory, affective, problem-posing, situated, multicultural, dialogic, desocializing, democratic, researching, interdisciplinary and activist.

Below is a brief review of how Shor encapsulates the concepts within empowering pedagogy:

Participatory

Shor explains that participation is crucial for an empowering pedagogy because knowledge is derived from action and participation is fundamental for democracy (Shor, 1992, pp. 17-18). It is education done by learners and not to learners.

Affective

Shor (1992) explains that learning is not simply an intellectual process because it is not possible to separate the intellectual and emotional elements of the learning and teaching process. Both tradition and empowering education involve affective learning, but what differentiates them is the experience learners have with positive and negative feelings developed during the learning process.

Problem-posing

In contrast to Freire's banking education metaphor, problem-posing education is "a mutual process for students and teachers to question existing knowledge, power, and conditions" (Shor, 1992, p. 33). The banking model is not democratic because it imposes official knowledge into students' minds.

Situated Learning

Using students' daily life situations, language and perceptions is important to develop critical dimensions in empowering education.

Multicultural

Empowering education needs to consider students' cultural diversity. Shor (1992) says that in multicultural education "student speech, community life, and perceptions are foundations of the curriculum" (p. 46).

Dialogic

In critical pedagogy, the educators talk with students, not at students. Dialogue is structured by the educator but "democratically open to student intervention" (Shor, 1992, p. 85).

Desocializing

Shor (1992) explains that desocializing "involves critically examining learned behavior, received values, familiar language, habitual perceptions, existing knowledge and power relations, and traditional discourse in class and out" (p. 114). The main goal of desocialization is the development of critical consciousness.

Democratic

In undemocratic schooling, according to Shor (1992), learners "are unilaterally tested, tracked, lectured, ordered around, lined up, and told what to do" (p. 167). Democratic education means that learners exercise shared power to act on their own learning and to participate in the development of the curriculum.

Researching

Students are encouraged to "examine the deep meanings, personal implications, and social consequences of any knowledge, theme, technique, text, or material" (p. 169). To do research is to explore the subject matter, thought, and language extensively. When students engage in research, they go from passive receivers of information to active producers of knowledge.

Interdisciplinary

Empowering education crosses the boundaries of traditional academic disciplines. According to Shor (1992), "interdisciplinary education also means integrating reading, writing, critical dialogue, and cooperative learning across the curriculum" (p. 187).

Activist

Empowering education is oriented towards self-transformation and social change. Activist means that educators and learners question the status quo and act to address injustices in school and society. Shor (1992) explains that "critical pedagogy is activist in its questioning of the status quo, in its participatory methods, and in its insistence that knowledge is not fixed but is constantly changing" (p. 189).

Positionality in Social Justice

The concept of positionality refers to the fact that our identities are part of ourselves in all aspects of our lives. Our identities affect how we interact in the world and in education, our believes affect how we teach, what we teach, and who we teach for. According to Ortiz et al. (2018), in social justice, "it is an intentional part of our practice to bring our identities to the classroom consciously" and "our identities are never separate from our work or education" (p. 112). Educators and learners should situate pedagogy in the historical and political context of education.

Discussing a teaching experience where concepts of positionality and identity and Freirean concepts of oppression/oppressed were used for learners to understand their position in the world, Tien (2019) advises that it is dangerous to understand positionality as identity in a singular and static perspective. Tien recommends that social justice educators not only highlight oppression but also try to deconstruct it. Understanding positionality as being fluid and socially constructed is important to avoid essentialist perspectives. Tien (2019) explains that "a historical

understanding of positionality may help students both recognize and deconstruct oppressive social constructs. Such an approach might also help build ties of solidarity that move students towards social action" (p. 546).

Critique of Critical Pedagogy

It is important to note that no theory is free of contradictions. Concerning critical pedagogy, some critiques looked at theoretical aspects while others focused more on concrete experiences. Equally important, the role of critique is imperative for a real and thorough reflective practice on critical pedagogy, theoretically or in our concrete daily practices as educators. Ross (2018) says that most traditional orientations of critical pedagogy are "unnecessarily narrow, both politically and philosophically" (p. 371). Consequently, critical pedagogy potential for change has been weakened because it has become a set of prescriptions or a road map to be followed. In fact, following a set of imposed principles is exactly what critical pedagogy struggles against. Ross (2018) is right when he proposes to walk away from a heterodox approach to critical pedagogy and any kind of "education messiah complex" (p. 376), that is imposed from above. Instead, he advocates for a dialectical critical pedagogy, humanized, engaged with a radical democracy, whose educators commit to self-critique and pedagogical renovations. This position is aligned with Lather (1998)'s critique of critical pedagogy as being a sort of "masculinist voice of abstraction and universalization" (p. 488). Lather (1998) advocates for a discourse of critical pedagogy that moves away from prescriptive universalization and moves toward "contradictory voices, counternarratives, and competing understandings" (p. 488). This discussion is important because it is very common to refer to Freire's critical pedagogy as the Freirean Method. However, there is no such a thing as a method because there should be no prescriptive practice in critical pedagogy and educators are encouraged to develop their own

teaching practices according to their own realities and contexts. Freire himself repeatedly emphasized the need to re-create critical pedagogy practices. In a conversation with Donaldo Macedo, Freire (2005) accentuated that "it is impossible to export pedagogical practices without reinventing them… Please tell your fellow American educators not to import me. Ask them to re-create and rewrite my ideas" (p. x).

Johnston (1999) says that critical pedagogy has profoundly influenced his teaching practice. However, in a self-reflective piece, Johnston (1999) mentions four aspects of critical pedagogy that concern him. The first one is the nature of power in the classrooms. Johnston disagrees with the perspective that educators can empower students and the power can be owned. Instead, he subscribes to a Foucauldian conception of power that is viewed more as a process than something to be owned. Despite agreeing that education is political in nature (Freire, 2000), Johnston says that education is also moral. Instead of putting the political in the centre, educators should focus more on "questions of good and bad, right or wrong" (p. 562), which he claims include matters of power and politics. Thirdly, Johnston says that critical pedagogy is rooted in modernism and subscribes to a perspective of progress and development that is not aligned with postmodernism. This is also aligned with Ellsworth (1989)'s critique of critical pedagogy. Finally, Johnston (1999) critiques the language used by critical pedagogues. He claims that the terminologies used in critical pedagogy are too difficult and complex. He advocates for language that is not exclusionary.

Kohan (2019) points out that one of the critiques that Freire's pedagogy has received in Brazil is that the role of the educator is diminished because of a more participative and democratic perspective instead of a banking model of education. Kohan (2019) says that advocating for the role of the educator who not only transmit or deposit knowledge into the

learners does not mean to diminish the importance of the role of the educator. Actually, it is the opposite. Kohan explains that the question is not an educator who teaches and another who does not. The issue is to teach content that is emptied of relevance for the learners. In a Freirean critical pedagogical perspective, educators offer meaningful historical, social, cultural, and political contexts instead of a false notion of neutrality. Kohan (2019) observes that Freire advocates for a sense of ethical responsibility towards learners and instead of hiding or lying about their own positions and thoughts, the educators should encourage the respect and the discussion of opposing ideas as well.

Another important critique that Kohan (2019) addresses is made by Kush (1976) who says that Freire uses Western perspectives in his work and focuses on an education that promotes development and the liberation of the oppressed. Kush says that Freire's emancipatory education would be Westernized, Eurocentric, and would deny the culture of Indigenous peoples (as cited in Kohan, 2019). Kohan acknowledges that Kusch's critique is pertinent and agrees that Freire's thought has strong influences of Marxist traditions, existentialism and phenomenology that reproduces the colonial logic. However, Kohan (2019) suggests that many other researchers found in Freire inspiration for decolonial projects in a Latin American context (Loureiro & Moretti, 2021; Penna, 2014). However, instead of focusing on what can or cannot be thought, Kohan prefers to reflect collectively and points out the elements that make Freire's thought political and strong. Loureiro and Pereira (2019) argue that Freire's conception of "silence culture" and "speak your own word" (Freire, 2000) dialogue with decolonial projects and denounce the violence of coloniality. Coloniality in all its forms refers to oppressive patterns of powers that came out of colonialism and remains strong today (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Ozyonum, Piechowiak, & Sanches, 2018). Presenting Freire from a decolonial perspective,

Loureiro and Moretti (2021) claim that Freire's theoretical and epistemic thinking is complex and that Freire's works dialogue with decolonial studies. According to Loureiro and Moretti (2021), Freire's "contributions to the understanding of pedagogical action 'with' the other and not 'on' the other open paths for a decolonial epistemology" (p. 16).

Although the purpose of this work is not to exhaust or respond to Freire's critical pedagogy critiques, these reflections are important to develop the field of critical pedagogy as they help us understand our own blind spots and re-conceptualize our ideas and practices, which is in itself a principle of critical pedagogy. A Freirean critical pedagogy is not focused on certainties but on investigation and questioning. It is even more important to keep our eyes open to neoliberal practices that are benefitted by a weak and dismantled version of critical pedagogy.

Research Statement

The recent attacks on the legacy of Paulo Freire (Accioly, 2020; McLaren, 2020) indicate that Freire's critical pedagogy still disturbs so many because of its transformative and emancipatory potential. Accioly (2020) explains:

> in the current historical context, as the conservatives continue to advance in promoting policies of environmental destruction, mass murder of black youth and expropriation of social rights, the defense of Freire's legacy becomes an enduring symbol for defending the right to education, the public good, and above all, becomes a symbol of the defense of the right to life. (p. 268)

Critical pedagogy is and will remain a vital force in education as McLaren (2020) contends that critical pedagogy has been "serving systematically and habitually as a moral compass for the way we treat each other in the classroom and by contributing to the epistemological, ontological and axiological stances we take in the production of knowledge" (p. 4).

Nevertheless, a common belief among educators is that it is difficult to apply critical pedagogy in their practices. Thomson-Bun (2014) explains that the lack of definitions of certain abstract concepts in critical pedagogy makes it really hard for educators and learners to engage in applying it in real life. Additionally, Finger (2005) adds that there is too much theory and little practice. Few ideas end up being translated into real strategies or practical activities for adult educators on the ground. This critique is reinforced by Usher and Edwards (1994) who points out the weak connection between concrete pedagogical practices and theory in critical pedagogy. Discussing Freire's critical pedagogy, Crotty (1998) reiterates that same idea of lack of practice by pointing to Freire's lack of support or address of social and political organization.

Although there are a few authors who have developed some interesting strategies and ideas to practice critical pedagogy (Brookfield, 2017; Shor, 1992), and others who have done extensive dialoguing with critical pedagogues in higher education (Breunig, 2016), there is a paucity of research with adult educators who work in non-formal settings. With this in mind, this study aimed to gain knowledge on the edification of adult educators who apply critical pedagogy in their daily practice in non-formal settings. I contributed to the literature of adult education with successful, concrete, and informed ideas on how critical pedagogy is being implemented. Additionally, I learned about the challenges that they face and how they see the future of critical pedagogy in adult education in their own contexts.

Learning about how adult educators create and re-create their practices does not mean to copy them and try or expect others to apply their strategies in a decontextualized and different time or space (Freire, 2005). Actually, the aim is to inspire others to reinvent their own practices and their own positionalities as adult educators. According to Shor (2020), Freirean critical pedagogy is situated because it starts from the conditions of the students and "because conditions

vary at differing sites of practice, educators adapt their practice to address the local situation" (p. xi).

This is not an easy endeavour; however, this study subscribes to McLaren (2020)'s claim that "critical educators have come to recognize that only sheltering the persecuted, and only creating the conditions of possibility for new and emancipatory forms of praxis in all spaces of human sociability can we obtain as a people a new birth of freedom" (p. 12). Therefore, it is crucial to investigate these new and emancipatory forms of praxis in a variety of contexts of human sociability and reinvent ourselves.

Research Questions

Based on the above literature review on adult education and critical pedagogy, which informs my work, this dissertation focussed on answering the following research questions.

The overarching research question is:

- How do adult educators who self-identify as critical pedagogues in a Freirean tradition implement critical pedagogy principles into their daily practices in non-formal settings?

The specific research questions are:

- What is critical pedagogy for them? How do they define it? Why do they self-identify as critical pedagogues? What characteristics should a critical pedagogue have? Who are the main authors who influenced them?

- What successful strategies do they use in their daily practices? What challenges do they face while trying to implement critical pedagogy principles? How do they overcome them?

- What components/principles of critical pedagogy do they give more emphasis to? Why?

- How do they assess the effectiveness of their actions?

In this study, I spoke with critical pedagogues who practice critical pedagogy in a Freirean tradition in non-formal settings in adult education. I collected experiences, successful practices, challenges, and perspectives of adult educators who engage in critical pedagogy with the purpose of imagining different ways of being and living in the world.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

According to Glesne (2016), methodology indicates how the study will be conducted. It encompasses philosophical assumptions, principles, and procedures of a study. There are many types of methodologies, for example, ethnography, narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, case study and discourse analysis. Butler-Kisber (2018) observes that methodologies in qualitative studies normally adopt an emic or insider perspective, rather than an outsider or etic imposition.

According to Bogdan and Biklen (2016), qualitative studies use descriptive data that "take the form of words or pictures rather than numbers" (p. 7) and are collected from natural settings in particular contexts. They add that qualitative researchers focus on the processes rather than simply outcomes, tend to analyze their data inductively, and search for meaning and participants' perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explain that it is a common practice in applied fields of practice, such as education, to name the methodology as *qualitative research*. The title of this thesis reflects this perspective by calling it: A qualitative study.

Qualitative Research

Creswell and Poth (2018) provide a list of very common characteristics in qualitative research. They explain that qualitative researchers collect data directly in natural settings by talking to people and seeing them within their contexts. Qualitative researchers normally collect data themselves by preparing qualitative instruments, such as open-ended research questions. They gather multiple types of data with multiple methods of collection. Qualitative researchers use inductive and deductive reasoning to organize and interpret data. The focus is on the participants' multiple perspectives and never on the researcher or the literature review. That is

why, qualitative research is situated within the context. Researchers must try to understand contextual features and how they shape participants' experiences of the phenomenon being observed. Qualitative researchers keep an emergent design because the process may change as situations also shift. Consequently, qualitative researchers need to keep a constant state of reflexivity because their personal background shapes how they design the research and how they interpret data. Creswell and Poth (2018) add that qualitative researchers provide a holistic account of the study by reporting multiple perspectives, different factors involved in the research context, and frequently look at the emergent large picture. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) extend this list by saying that the product of qualitative research should be richly descriptive with the use of words and pictures rather than numbers.

Some of the limitations of qualitative research is that it can only deal with small amount of data. Besides, there is no agreement in terms of appropriate model for qualitative research in comparison with the scientific model in quantitative research. Not to mention that, sometimes, too much flexibility that qualitative research offers can be a disadvantage in case of inexperienced researchers (Asghar, 2013).

Research Paradigms

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) point out that researchers can understand the nature of qualitative research by looking at its philosophical foundations. However, they alert us to the fact that there is no consistency in the terminology among writers. They add that "in true qualitative fashion, each writer makes sense of the underlying philosophical influences in his or her own way" (p. 8). Seidman (2013) explains that in the 70s and 80s there was a 'paradigm wars' between qualitative and quantitate methods. He claims that it is important that the researcher know where they stand in terms of paradigms, "by not being aware of the history of the battle

and the fields upon which it has been fought, students may not understand their own position in it and the potential implications for their career as it continues" (p. 11). The term *paradigm* causes some confusion because there are several forms of understanding of this term. One of them originates from the everyday use of the term, which is basically related to a model or pattern of something. In terms of a *research paradigm*, the term needs to contain mandatory attributes, such as epistemology, ontology, axiology, and methodology (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Crotty (1998) explains that there is too much confusion related to these theoretical elements and frequently, these terms are used in different ways. That is why it is important to be specific about each theoretical perspective underpinning a research design. Additionally, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) highlight the importance of being clear about the relationships between your paradigm and methodology because "the methodological implications of paradigm choice permeate, the research question(s), participants' selection, data collection instruments and collection procedures, as well as data analysis" (p. 36). It is important to select your paradigm elements carefully and be aware of how they will determine and affect your research. Furthermore, some of these elements in research paradigms contradict each other, so it is crucial to make efforts to be coherent and coordinate them.

Research Scaffolding

Inspired by the ideas of scaffolded learning and being aware of the difficulties of navigating the entangled web of research philosophies, methodologies and worldviews, Crotty (1998) introduced the concept of research scaffolding, which without being too rigid, aims at providing researchers with "a sense of stability and direction as they go on to do their own building" (p. 10). Crotty identified four elements to be considered in any research process: methods, methodology, research theoretical perspective, and epistemology. In this research, an

adapted version of the research scaffolding concept developed by Crotty (1998) was used because two additional layers are being added to it: ontology and axiology (see Figure 1). Crotty (1998) explains that he chose not to include ontology as an element in the research scaffolding because he believes that it can be discussed according to individual cases as it is needed. He also says that many authors confuse ontology with theoretical perspectives. The perspective in this study is that it is important to address ontology because it enriches the researcher's understanding of the nature of reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and it also provides clarity on how it aligns with all the other elements of the research paradigm. Crotty (1998) explains that the researcher can start with the problem or questions and establish objectives of the research. From there, one starts thinking about methods and methodology or researchers can also start thinking about their ontological and epistemological perspectives and shape their research questions and objectives accordingly. What is essential is to justify the choices of the research design.

Figure 1

The Research Scaffolding
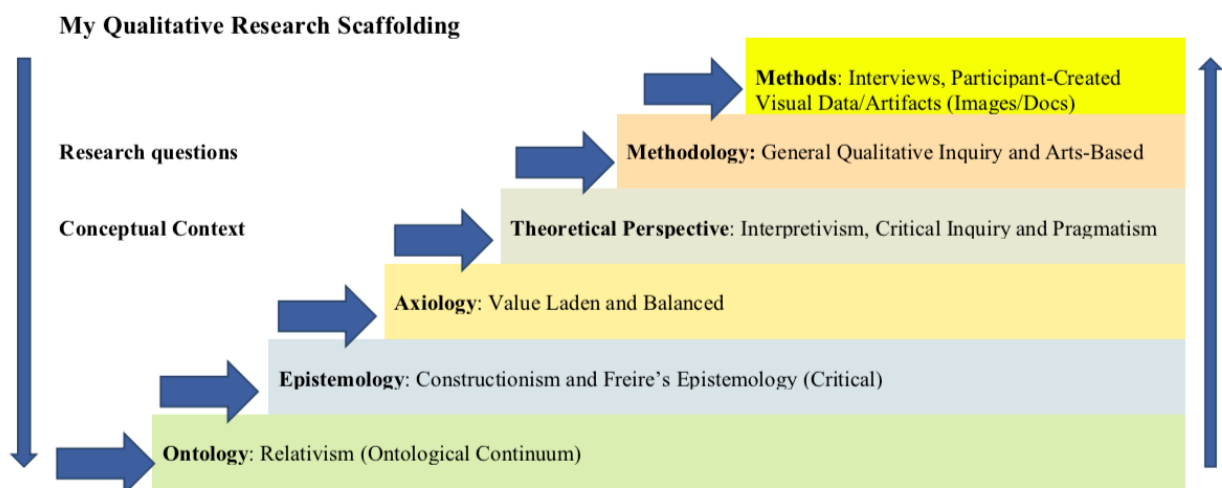
Note. Figure 1 was inspired by Crotty's research scaffolding (1998, p. 12).

Ontology

Ontology is the study of being (Crotty, 1998). It is concerned with the researcher's assumptions of what they believe is real (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Ontology looks for answers to questions, such as what is reality? Is there a reality out there or a reality is a construction of our own minds? Bogdan and Biklen (2016) reinforces that an awareness of ontology by the researcher is crucial. Glesne (2016) adds that "what you believe about the nature of reality, in turn, affects the kinds of questions you ask of it, what you consider knowledge to be" (p. 5).

Butler-Kisber (2018) has placed ontological perspectives in a continuum (see Figure 2). In one side, ontological realism is the belief in one truth, external to people, measurable, and objective (Glesne, 2016). On the other side, ontological relativism is the belief in multiple realities, shaped by the experiences of human beings, socially constructed, complex and ever changing (Glesne, 2016).

The research worldview in this study is shaped by an ontological relativist perspective. However, taking Butler-Kisber's ontological continuum into account, in this study, the ontological stance is somewhere positioned between the pragmatist and constructivist perspectives. Adult educators who self-identify as critical pedagogues in a Freirean tradition have different constructions of realities that are shaped by their own contexts and readings of the world. Additionally, because realities are constructed, they are subject to change.

Figure 2

Ontological Continuum
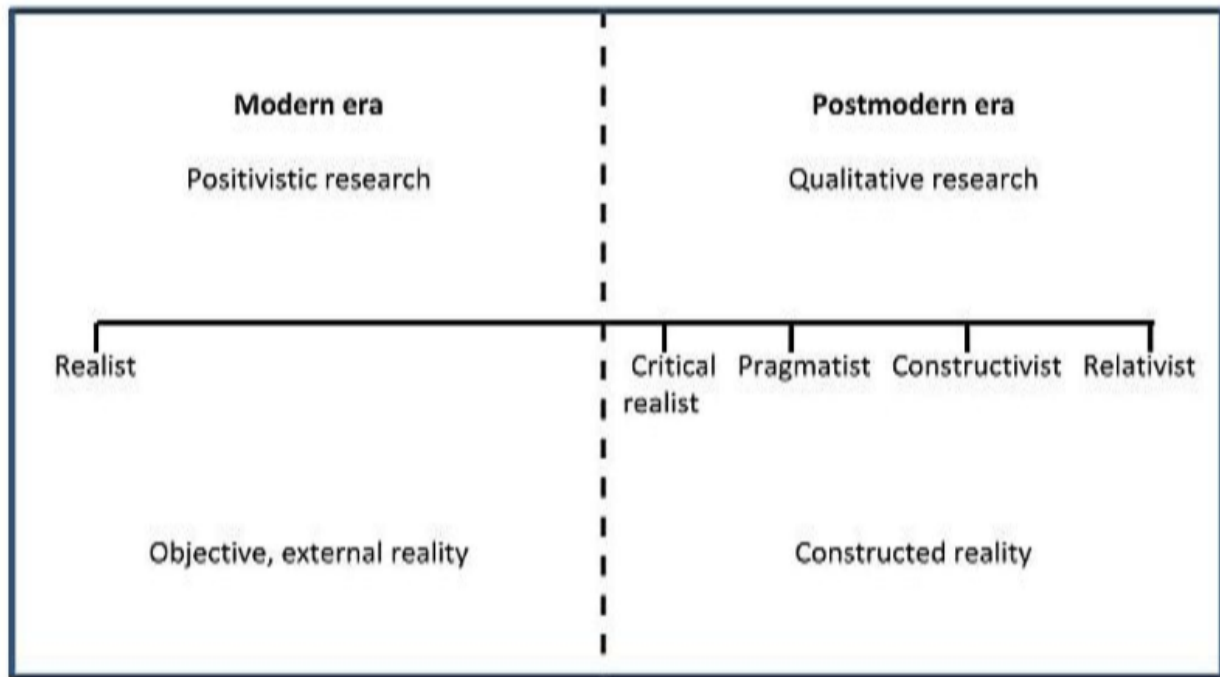
Note. Reprinted from *Qualitative Inquiry* (p. 12), by L. Butler-Kisber, 2018. Sage. Copyright 2010 by Lynn Butler-Kisber.

Epistemology

According to Glesne (2016), epistemology is the study of the nature of knowledge. Epistemology tries to answer the questions: what does it mean to know and how can we know? (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Hence, it is important to identify, explain and justify the epistemological stance because it provides the grounding for decisions such as what kind of knowledge is possible, adequate, and legitimate (Crotty, 1998).

In this study, the constructionist epistemology guided the conception of the research questions and the researcher's personal beliefs. Crotty (1998) explains that constructionism is "the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (p. 53). However, it is

important to add another layer to this perspective. In fact, Crotty (1998) warns that if we do not want it to be misleading, we have to take into consideration the historical and social perspectives in the process of meaning making. Individuals do not construct meaning isolated from other individuals. We are part of a social system. All reality is socially constructed. Social indicates how meaning is generated (Crotty, 1998).

Freire's Epistemology

Concomitant with constructionism, this research is also aligned to Freire's perspective on epistemology. Crotty (1998) explains that Freire stood in the tradition of existential phenomenology because, in his works, he built on thinkers such as Hursserl, Buber, Ortega y Gasset, Marcel, and Sartre.

Freire saw the indivisible solidarity between humans and their world. For Freire, we are related to the world, and are not just spectators in it, we are creators and re-creators of the world (Freire, 2000). We are conscious beings that when confronted with the difficult realities, have creative possibilities not only to see the world as it is but also to see how it can be. Humans can act on the world and transform it. Crotty (1998) explains that the possibility of doing something about the world is freedom. Actually, it is an embodied and situated freedom, not absolute freedom, but freedom to address their particular situation.

Freire's epistemology rejects both "mechanistic objectivism" (wherein consciousness is considered to be merely a copy of objective reality) and "solipsism" (which reduces the world to a capricious creation of consciousness). Freire recognizes the unity between subjectivity and objectivity in the act of knowing. Reality is never simply objective, but it is also people's perceptions of it (Freire, 2000).

Freire (2000) explains that consciousness is not a mere reflection on the material reality, but it is action upon it. We can understand that consciousness is already an active intervention into reality. Critical reflection is already action. Authentic action and reflection are indissolubly united. It is reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it. True praxis must involve action and reflection. For Freire, reflection without action is pure verbalism, such as armchair revolution. Action without reflection is pure activism, action for action's sake. It is praxis that leads to conscientization. Freire explains that conscientization cannot be achieved through a psychological, idealist, subjectivist road, nor through objectivism. Praxis is the only route.

Therefore, in this study, a constructionist and Freirean epistemology guided the formulation of the research questions, the semi-structured interviews, and the analysis of data. Critical adult educators in a Freirean tradition permeate their practices collectively through reflection and action.

Axiology

When doing qualitative research with human beings, there are several ethical issues that need to be considered in the process. Axiology tries to answer questions about the nature of ethics or ethical behaviour. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) explains that there are four criteria of ethical conduct in research: Teleology, deontology, morality and fairness. Teleology refers to the moral obligation to do what is good or desirable in the study. It is about making the right choices and having meaningful outcomes that will benefit people. Deontology refers to the idea that every action taken in the research will have its own consequence by benefitting everyone involved in the research process. Morality encourages the researchers to foster moral values and

be truthful with it. Finally, fairness points that the researchers need to be fair to all participants and to ensure their full rights (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

In this research, efforts were made to reach the higher degree of ethical conduct possible. More details about the actions taken will be discussed further on this chapter. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) adds that researcher should also be attentive to four ethical principles when dealing with participants' data. The acronym PAPA helps researchers remember the importance of privacy, accuracy, property, and accessibility. Based on a relativist ontology, a constructionist epistemology, a balanced axiology suited the design of this research because it came out of a perspective of research that is value-laden and reflects the values of the researcher, when trying to present a balanced report of the findings (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Research Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective is an important component of this research framework. It is the philosophical worldview that provides support to the methodology. It provides a context for the research process and foundations that inform the logic choice of research methodology and methods. Theoretical perspectives are constituted by assumptions about the world (Crotty, 1998). Glesne (2016) adds that the theoretical perspective, what she calls methodological framework, "should be viewed loosely bounded and as containing several related schools of thought" (p. 6). Getting inspiration from Glesne, the theoretical perspectives underpinning this research design encompassed a variety of perspectives: Interpretivism, critical and pragmatism. In this study, these three different perspectives were selected because they afforded more meaning, inclusiveness and justice to participants and the researcher.

Interpretivism

The first theoretical perspective of this study is interpretivism. In contrast to positivism, interpretivism "looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social lifeworld" (Crotty, 1998, p. 80). Aligned with a relativist ontology and a constructionist epistemology, interpretivism assumes that there is no single reality, therefore, reality is socially constructed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this theoretical framework, researchers do not find knowledge, but they construct it. Interpretivism encompasses three historical streams: hermeneutics, phenomenology, and symbolic interactionism. Hermeneutics has its origins in the interpretation of written texts, normally sacred religious Scriptures. Phenomenology is "the study of how people describe things and experience them through their senses" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 9). Symbolic interactionism is an approach that seeks to understand the relationship between human beings and society. Glesne (2016) states that the central research purpose of interpretivism is to understand the phenomenon. The interpretivism aspect enabled the possibility of understanding the phenomenon of teaching for social justice by looking into the lived experiences of adult education practitioners. However, Crotty (1998) alerts us that interpretivism is an uncritical form of study. Having this in mind, it was necessary to integrate the perspective of this research design with a critical perspective.

Critical/Transformative

The critical angle helps the understanding that the researcher's own assumptions are part of the inquiry process and that even participants are also embedded into their own ways of apprehending the reality. The critical view also makes the researcher alert to issues of power and social justice. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), a critical/transformative perspective has the focus on social justice and tries to address the political, social and economic issues that oppress people. One important component of this perspective is to listen to people who have

been speaking but are never heard. The culture of silence, as described by Freire (2000), hinders the process of *conscientização* and therefore the possibility of transformation. This perspective is aligned with a multiple reality ontology. Kincheloe and McLaren (2011) state that critical qualitative researchers "are aware that the consciousness, and the interpretive frames, they bring to their research are historically situated, ever changing, ever evolving in relationship to the cultural and ideological climate" (p. 296). Both interpreters and the objects of interpretation are constructed by their time and place (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011). In this research, the focus was to listen to what adult educators who deliberately make efforts to promote and increase social justice have to say. The research process was a medium to amplify their voices. It is important for researchers to be aware of the power structures permeating the contexts of adult education and what kind of knowledge is taught and accepted. Additionally, following the critical perspective, it is essential to respect cultural norms and examine deeply social and historical conditions of participants and their contexts as well as hidden oppressive practices, politics, morality, and ethics (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). According to Glesne (2016) the central purpose of the critical paradigm is to emancipate. She says that common research methodologies are critical ethnography, feminist research, participatory action research, critical discourse analysis. Crotty (1998) says that critical inquiry is a form of praxis – "a search for knowledge, to be sure, but always emancipatory knowledge, knowledge in the context of action and the search for freedom" (p. 178). Kincheloe and McLaren (2011) highlight that instrumental or technical rationality focuses too much on method and efficiency and leaves the purpose behind. They say that "in a research context, critical theorists claim that many rationalistic scholars become so obsessed with issues of technique, procedure, and correct method that they forget the humanistic purpose of the research act" (p. 289).

Pragmatism

Finally, the pragmatic standpoint constantly reminds us that learning from the lived experiences of the research participants has the potential to contribute and inspire future adult educators who are interested in developing teaching practices that are socially just and oriented towards social change. This stance is pluralistic in a sense that it uses a variety of methods that best suits to the purpose of the study. It is focused on the practical aspects of knowing. A practical purpose of this research was to learn with practitioners on the ground what strategies that they use in their everyday teaching practices to achieve their goals. All strategies and practices that were learned during this process were situated in that specific context and not necessarily transferable to any other context. However, by learning about these successful strategies and practices, adult education practitioners whose focus is on social justice might get inspired to develop their own strategies according to their own specific contexts. In conclusion, the pragmatic approach is an important component of this research design because it aligns well with an ontological relativism, an epistemology based on constructionism and a value-laden axiology (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Arts-Based Approach

Arts-based research helps us go beyond the limits of writing. It conveys meanings that would not be possible otherwise (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Arts-based research is a set of methodological tools that can be used at different phases of the research. People make meaning in many ways and sometimes, words are not enough to express the fullness and depth of an experience. Glesne (2016) mentions that arts-based research is aligned to an emancipatory approach because it has the "potential for eliciting and presenting previously disregarded perspectives" (p. 243). She mentions that Freire created popular theater forums in Brazil and that

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inspired by Freire, Augusto Boal (2008) developed the Theatre of the Oppressed. Leavy (2015) adds that arts-based research can be used to access "subjugated perspectives…many researchers across the disciplines seek out those who have been marginalized because of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, disability, or other factors…. the arts are uniquely suited for challenging the status quo" (p. 34).

Methods

The term method refers to a procedure, technique, strategy, or tool used to collect and analyze data. Butler-Kisber (2018) recommends not only citing which methods will be used to collect and analyze data but to provide a detailed and specific explanation of why that method was selected and how it will be put into practice. There are many kinds of methods: observation, interviews, visual, thematic and comparative. In this research, different methods to collect data were used: Interviews, participant-created visuals, and artifacts. Interviewing was the primary means of data collection. Participant-created visual data and artifacts were secondary methods and were used primarily as visual-elicitation (photo-elicitation) and corroboration of the interviews (Glesne, 2016). These images and artifacts were requested given that the data collection for this study took place during a period of the COVID-19 pandemic that restricted access to centres and onsite observations.

Participant Selection

In this study, a nonprobability sampling method was used. It is called purposeful. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explain that "purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 96). The purposeful selection was a very effective strategy for the scope of this research. When participants in this study were selected,

there were a few conditions that needed to be met for the purpose of data collection. The participants needed to be (1) adult educators in (2) non-formal setting who (3) self-identified as critical pedagogues (social justice-oriented). However, it is important to clarify that not all participants worked exclusively in non-formal settings; in fact, it was very common for adult educators to navigate between formal and non-formal settings and frequently, they had experiences working with children, teenagers, and adults.

Setting. This study prioritized participants in non-formal settings. It was very interesting to hear adult practitioners' voices and learn how they made efforts to implement critical pedagogy in a diverse range of scenarios and settings. Additionally, to collect information-rich data that cut across some range of variation, a maximum variation sampling strategy was applied (Glesne, 2016; Seidman, 2013). This meant that participants from different settings and institutions were selected. Creswell and Poth (2018) state that "when a researcher maximizes differences at the beginning of the study, it increases the likelihood that the finding will reflect differences or different perspectives – an ideal in qualitative research" (p. 407). To achieve this goal, participants were selected from a variety of non-formal adult education settings, such as adult education practitioners who taught incarcerated learners, or worked with literacy in a fishing village. Participants who facilitated workshops at workplace, or worked with recent immigrants or refugees, or who were inside social movements such as Landless Workers for example, were also part of this diversity of settings and very important for this study.

Recruitment. Attempts to recruit participants were made as follow: firstly, the researcher contacted his professional network, such as colleagues and professors, and asked for recommendations and referrals. Out of 12 participants, 9 were recruited through the researcher's contact network, 1 participant contacted the researchers directly after learning about the research

on an online group about critical pedagogy on Facebook, another participant was referred by a non-formal learning organization contacted previously by the researcher, and 1 participant was contacted directly after the researcher watched a presentation of this person on YouTube about critical pedagogy.

Sample Size

In qualitative research, the sample size cannot be too large when depth is the objective (Butler-Kisber, 2019). In this research, the context where the participant is inserted needed to be understood thoroughly because the lived experiences of these participants needed to be seen from their own perspective. Seidman (2013) explains that new participants can be added as new dimensions emerge during the interview process. He points out that there are two important criteria to determine the number of participants: sufficiency and saturation. Sufficiency means that the number of participants is enough to reflect their lived experiences in advanced degrees. Saturation of information happens when the researcher begins to hear the same information being reported again and again. In this study, 12 participants were interviewed.

Data Collection: Interviewing

The primary means of data collection in this study was interviews. Stories are ways of knowing. Human beings have the ability to use language to symbolize their experiences (Seidman, 2013). The focus of this study was on learning about adult educator's lived experiences and the meaningful stories that they had to tell. Another purpose of interviewing was to amplify practitioners' voices by announcing their practices or by denouncing their challenges and issues on the ground, and to contribute to academic knowledge.

In-depth semi-structured interviews. An adapted version of Seidman (2013)'s three in-depth semi-structured interviews with adult educators who self-identify as critical pedagogues in

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non-formal settings was used in this study. Before the interviews, participant's right to stop the interview at any time and the voluntary nature of their participation were reinforced. Participants were also reassured of the security measures to protect their identity throughout the process. Permission to audio or video record the interviews was asked and participants signed a consent form (see Appendix E).

Seidman (2013) suggests conducting three interviews because it takes some time to develop rapport and this would happen during the first interview. Additionally, participants gain better understanding of the topic being researched while researchers understand and establish the context of participants' experiences during the first interview. Seidman (2013) says that between the first and second interview participants will reflect on the topic of the research and will be ready to engage more deeply during the second interview. During the second interview, researchers "concentrate on the concrete details of the participants' present lived experience in the topic area of the study" (p. 21). After reviewing the transcripts and developing follow-up questions (if needed), the researcher has the chance of clarifying topics in order to deepen understanding or collecting additional information during the third interview. In this study, because of COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted using the internet (online tools) as medium. Firstly, participants were sent a questionnaire using Google Docs by email. After they had responded to the questionnaire, an interview was done using online platform Zoom. Participants were advised that the interviews would be recorded and asked to give their consent if they agreed. All participants agreed and consented on the recording of the interviews. During the interviews (questionnaire and Zoom), participants were asked questions related to their perspectives of critical pedagogy, their views, and characteristics of a successful critical pedagogue. In the questionnaire, participants were also asked to share an image that represented

critical pedagogy for them. These images were used as an elicitation tool during interviews. However, participants also had a chance to describe their images in the questionnaire or during the online interviews. Ten participants shared their images and their respective description. Participants were also asked to share artifacts that illustrate their teaching practices and discuss practical issues concerning critical pedagogy (see Appendix F and Appendix H for an interview protocol). However, only half of them (6 participants) shared any type of artifacts (course leaflets or lesson plans, for example). All interviews were transcribed by the researcher (verbatim) and after transcriptions, participants were contacted for member checking and were asked follow-up questions if clarifications were needed.

Interview Process. This research followed the interview protocol refinement framework developed by Castillo-Montoya (2016). This protocol helps researchers fine-tune their interview questions to their research questions and develop a strong interview protocol that will increase the quality of data obtained from interviews. There are four phases in this framework: (a) Ensuring interview questions align with research questions. Castillo-Montoya (2016) suggests creating a matrix for planning interview questions onto research questions. It is important to consider the context when crafting interview questions. (b) Constructing an inquiry-based conversation. Interview questions are not the same as the research questions. Therefore, it is crucial to develop an interview protocol that promotes a conversation with the purpose to gain important information for the study. Researchers start with introductory questions (easy non-threating questions) followed by transition questions (move towards the key questions without losing conversational tone). After that, researchers can dive into key questions (related to the research questions) and end it with closing questions (easy questions to allow closure). (c) Receiving feedback on the interview protocol. The purpose of this phase was to assure the

reliability and trustworthiness of the research instrument. Research can ask colleagues, research team members, research assistants and supervisors to close read the questions and determine if they will promote and gather data that will answer the research questions. The questions should be examined for clarity, simplicity, and answerability (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). (d) Piloting the interview protocol by simulating the actual interview with conditions as close as possible to the reality. In this study, an interview protocol was developed and revised by the committee members and the researcher's supervisor. The interview questions were also piloted with a colleague volunteer. This piloting process enabled the researcher to re-evaluate and reword some confusing points and used clearer language.

Data Collection: Participant-Created Visual Data

Participant-created visual data (photographs, etc.) is an amazing way to invoke memories of lived experiences. Glesne (2016) highlights that "shy or reticent interviewees are often put at ease when given a photo to turn to rather than having to make eye contact with the interviewer" (p. 88). Additionally, Glesne says that visuals can support or challenge interview data and provide a pattern to analyse it. Photos or images that were provided by participants can be seen as data with biography as they carry a lot of history and stories.

In this research, participant-created visual images (photographs, paintings, cartoons, etc.) were used as a form of elicitation (Glesne, 2016). The inspiration and motivation to use visual data in this study is the Photovoice process that is commonly used in participatory action research. According to Butler-Kisber (2018), photovoice has its foundations on "feminist research principles of inclusion and voice, critical consciousness emanating from the work of Paulo Freire and the traditions of participatory action research" (p. 139). However, it is important to make it clear that in this study, images were used with the purpose of elicitation during the

interview process. Prosser and Schwartz (2004) explain that photographs (or other kinds of images) "are shown to individuals or groups with the express aim of exploring participants' values, beliefs, attitudes, and meanings and in order to trigger memories, or to explore group dynamics or systems" (p. 344). Butler-Kisber (2018) points out that this process of image elicitation "gives rises to stories and further dialogue that deepens the understanding of insider or emic perspectives" (p. 136). Finally, the researcher was aware that visual images are not neutral and had to be analyzed within the context of the research and their analyses were aligned to the philosophical and theoretical orientations underpinning the research.

Data Collection: Artifacts/Documents

In this study, artifacts and documents provided by some participants were used to raise questions for interviews and support interview data. Saldaña and Omasta (2018) define both documents and artifacts. They say that documents "are social products that reflect the interests and perspectives of their authors" (p. 109). They explain that artifacts can be defined as "any object made by humans (handmade or manufactured) or natural object that can be touched and handled" (p. 116). Glesne (2016) adds that "when you *read* an artifact, you try to get at the stories that it embodies… artifacts tell specific stories. They often have both function and meaning" (p. 84). Examples of artifacts shared by participants in this study were lesson plans, students' work, journals, website links, videos, reports, certificates, and pamphlets.

Thematic Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is the search for themes and patterns in the data. The researcher starts by developing categories from the data by using codes or labels. Interpretation will vary a lot depending on the researcher and on the research questions. Comparing categories and identifying patterns can be used to understand a phenomenon and also to create new theories. Glesne (2016)

explains that "a strength of thematic analysis is its ability to help reveal underlying complexities as you seek to identify tensions and distinctions, and to explain where and why people differ from a general pattern" (p. 184).

In this study, a thematic analysis was performed of the interview transcripts based on an inductive approach. According to Patton (1980), "inductive analysis means that the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis" (p. 306).

According to Saldaña (2016), codes are constructs that represent data in research. There are different types of coding, such as structural coding, descriptive coding, in vivo coding, process coding, among others. In this research, the choice of coding strategies was selected with the intent to align the analysis with the research question and sub-questions. With an epistemological perspective in mind, the researcher started coding the interviews using a line-by-line approach using mostly in vivo codes because they represented exactly what participants had said. This first phase enabled the researcher to get familiar with data and understand and identify potential categories and themes that could somehow respond the research questions. After this first stage, the researcher performed a second round of coding, this time, some original codes from phase 1 were kept, others collapsed into other codes, and some were removed. In phase 2, process coding was used because it helped identify participants' actions, reactions, and interactions (Saldaña, 2016). Another type of coding that was used in phase 2 was values coding because they enabled the identification of participants' values system, beliefs, and attitudes. Descriptive codes were also used because of the possibility of identifying the main topics and ideas being discussed and reported by participants.

After identifying and examining codes and their respective data extracts deeply, the researcher condensed and collapsed these codes into initial themes or broader patterns, and with the research questions in mind, explored potential main themes or concepts. Having carried on a detailed analysis of each initial theme and going back and forth to the original codes and data extracts, the researcher was able to develop main themes and concepts.

Credibility of the Qualitative Inquiry

Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) highlights that there are four important aspects to increase the trustworthiness of the qualitative study: Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. *Credibility* means that the research findings align with the reality constructed by the researcher and the research participants. *Transferability* has to do with the context of the research. If the data is well contextualized, readers can relate with the findings in their own contexts. *Dependability* means that under the same circumstances, the researcher can achieve the same outcome. However, because qualitative research deals with human behaviour, and by nature, it is in constant transformation. Although the researcher can make efforts in this direction, it can never make sure that the same results will be reproduced once the time and context vary (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). Finally, *confirmability* refers to the possibility that the research findings are confirmed by other researchers or professionals in the field. Confirmability can be achieved by a rigorous treatment of data and the researcher's bias to avoid contaminating the results.

Tracy (2010) adds eight criteria of quality in qualitative research: (1) worthy topic – relevant, timely, significant and interesting; (2) rich rigour – abundant and appropriate theoretical constructs; (3) sincerity – self-reflexivity and transparency of methods, values and biases; (4) credibility – thick description, triangulation and member checking; (5) resonance – research

resonates with a variety of audience; (6) significant contribution – conceptually, practically, morally, and methodologically; (7) ethical – procedural, situational, and relational ethics; (8) meaningful coherence – the study needs to achieve its purposes and remain coherent throughout the process.

Triangulation of the Data

Triangulation involves using multiple data sources. It is an effective way to improve trustworthiness and authenticity in research. In this research, data were collected from a range of sources such as questionnaire, interviews, visual data, and artifacts. Participants were also selected from different contexts to assure a large range of experiences. According to Candela (2019), one of the important dimensions of triangulation is "engaging research participants in member checking process" (p. 619). Therefore, in this study, after having transcribed each interview, the researcher sent back the transcriptions for participants to check if they were okay with what was said during the interview or if they wished to edit or remove any portion of it. Some participants preferred not to review transcripts of the interview, so this decision was respected. This was not a condition to be able to participate in the study. However, a few participants reviewed the interviews and made minor changes. Most changes were grammar-related issues. All changes were accepted and implemented in the transcriptions. No changes altered any sense of what had been said during the interviews.

Ethical Considerations

Mertens (2009 p. 35) explains that in the United States, the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1979) issued the Belmont Report. In this report, three ethical principles were identified: (a) Beneficence, which means to maximize good outcomes for science, humanity, and the individual research

participants and minimize or avoid risk, harm or wrong; (b) Respect. Treat people with respect and courtesy; (c) Justice is to ensure that those who are in risk in the research are the ones who benefit from it. Ensure that the procedures are reasonable, nonexploitative, carefully conducted and fair. Butler-Kisber (2018) explains that ethical aspects of any study need to be continuously negotiated and "should not be taken for granted at any point in the research process" (p. 27).

Babbie and Roberts (2018) add that efforts should be made to guarantee voluntary participation and that power relations should be taken into consideration when making sure that participants have freedom to choose not to participate. They also add that no harm should be brought to the participants. Harm here means any kind, such as physical, moral and psychological. Participants must be informed of all risks that a research involves. Babbie and Roberts (2018) also state that anonymity and confidentiality are very important ethical issues to be considered in a research project. Anonymity is "the guarantee that neither the researchers not the readers of research can link individuals to their responses" while confidentiality is "the guarantee that although researchers can link individuals to their responses they promise not to do so publicly" (Babbie & Roberts, 2018, p. 65). It is important that participant's data are at least kept confidential when anonymity is not possible. Confidentiality can be guaranteed by removing all identifying information as soon as it is not necessary anymore. Participants have to be well informed about the nature of the study. Babbie and Robberts (2018) recommend that the researcher holds a debriefing session with participants to ensure that they are fully informed about the research and its risks. Finally, data analysis and reporting should come with clear explanations of shortcomings and limitations. Negative findings should also be reported.

Ethical considerations were an integral part of this study. Ethics approval was obtained from Concordia University before initiating the study by the submission of an application to the

Research Ethics Unit of the Office of Research. Additionally, informed consent (see Appendices) was sent to all potential participants. It was crucial to get the signed consent forms back because they ensured that participants understood the complete nature of the study, what role they had on it, and what the risks were. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, participants had their real names replaced for participants 1 to 12 randomly from the very beginning in the transcripts, dissertation drafts, or data analysis software (NVivo) to protect their identities. Participants were given the option to disclose their identities if necessary. 11 participants accepted that the researchers added their names to the study and only 1 participant asked not to be identified. However, the researcher decided not to identify any participant in this study and only refer to them as participants 1 to 12.

Participants were constantly reminded throughout the interview process that they were free to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty as well as remove parts of the interview that they did not want to include (member checking) or could even refrain from answering the questions they did not want to respond. As a sign of respect, the interviews were conducted with strong efforts to avoid any signs of approval, disapproval, judgement, or bias from the researcher's side.

Images and artifacts (e.g., lesson plans) provided by participants during data collection were used in the research with documented participants' permission. Internet images without copyrights permission were not included in the dissertation. Participants' created images or artifacts were used with authorization following Concordia University Copyright Guide on Fair Dealing.

The overall understanding of ethics in this research subscribed to Butler-Kisber (2019)'s perspective, "the basic tenets of ethical practices in research … are to respect participants and

their autonomy, to do no harm, to maximize the benefits of research, and ensure that there is a fair distribution of the benefits and burdens of research" (p. 150).

Chapter Four: Findings

The aim of this study was to understand and amplify the voices of adult educators who implement critical pedagogy in a Freirean tradition in their practices in a variety of non-formal settings. The overarching research question was:

- How do adult educators who self-identify as critical pedagogues in a Freirean tradition implement critical pedagogy principles into their daily practices in non-formal settings?

With the key purpose to respond the main research question, a number of sub-questions were developed and will be addressed in this chapter.

Definitions of Critical Pedagogy in a Freirean Tradition.

One of the focus of this study was to understand how educators in non-formal institutions define critical pedagogy in a Freirean tradition. The following sub-question guided the first part of this study:

- What is critical pedagogy for adult educators who self-identify as critical pedagogues in a Freirean tradition? How do they define it?

During the interviews, participants hesitated to provide a conclusive definition of critical pedagogy. Most participants provided general descriptions that could be used to define or to identify what critical pedagogy is. During data analysis in NVivo, 32 codes describing critical pedagogy were uncovered and after further investigation and interpretation, these were collapsed into five (5) emerging themes. According to these overarching themes, critical pedagogy is: (1) non-hierarchical, (2) focused on social justice, (3) starting with learners' experiences, (4) a life stance towards learners, and (5) an organic process.

Theme 1: Critical Pedagogy is non-Hierarchical

Non-hierarchy was a recurring theme brought up by the participants. According to the participants' responses, in critical pedagogy, educators and learners should be in the same position. For example, participant 1 said that "before anything, it [critical pedagogy] is to see yourself as the oppressed. It is to believe that learning is a two-way road where students and educators learn together". On a similar note, participant 8 highlighted that "a popular education session is non-hierarchical. As a facilitator, I have a certain knowledge/experience which I want to share with a group; it isn't better than the knowledge or experience that the other people in the group have. It is different". Participant 11 also added that as a critical pedagogy educator, "I include myself in the category of learner as well, understanding that we always learn from each other". Finally, participant 2 said, "look, listen to what the learners know. There are no better or worse types of knowledge, in Freire's words, there are different kinds of knowledge".

Theme 2: Critical Pedagogy is Social Justice-Oriented

A common theme among the study participants was the fact that critical pedagogy should focus on social transformation. All efforts in education should be directed towards social justice. When describing an image that represented critical pedagogy, participant 1 explained that "critical pedagogy has an interest in the oppressed, not the privileged. It promotes inclusion. The inclusion of people regardless of their sex, color, race, or anything" (See Figure 3).

Figure 3

Participant 1 - Workers

Note. "In this image, I see adults, underprivileged adults. They are adults who come from underprivileged classes. But they represent the 99% and not the 1%. Above all, I see a space of inclusion because despite being mostly men, there is a woman at the front, and she is carrying her baby. The baby will be next in the struggle. I see adult education; critical pedagogy has this perspective that it is enough to look up to the privileged. But it is necessary to be inclusive. Inclusive of all people regardless of sex, colour, race, and everything else" (Participant 1).

Reinforcing the same idea, while describing another image (Figure 4) that represented critical pedagogy for them, participant 2 described how overcoming limit-situations (social barriers and inequities in the lives of the oppressed) is crucial for a critical pedagogy-based education, for example, "one important concept of critical pedagogy is to identify limit-situations, and then help learners find solutions to overcome their social inequalities". The same participant added that critical pedagogy is the "uncovering of limit-situations to be overcome collectively so that we do not fall into passiveness". Participant 6 discussed the importance of social change by saying:

to be Freirean is to believe that the future is not a fatality. It is to believe that as human

beings, we are responsible for what takes place, and that today is consequence of

yesterday, and that tomorrow depends on what we do now. In this sense, all change is

possible, the utopia is possible, but nothing is achieved struggling on your own. The

strength comes from the collectivity.

 To conclude, participant 10 contributed to the discussion by explaining that critical pedagogy in

a Freirean tradition is "the knowledge about justice, rights and law. It is the liberation of people

in order to have a just and democratic society".

Figure 4

Participant 2 – Lamppost in the Middle of the Road

Note. As an illustration, "the role of critical pedagogy is to demonstrate how absurd is a lamppost

in the middle of the road with contradictory rules. Regardless of whether you are a pedestrian or

a driver, you both have to remove the lamppost together, and improve the rules in order to

improve the life of not only one person or a specific group of people, but everyone's" (Participant 2).

Theme 3: Critical Pedagogy Starts with Learners' Experiences.

A frequent theme that came up during the interviews was the importance to start any critical pedagogy endeavor by the learners' experiences and knowledge. Participant 2 emphasized that critical pedagogy is "underpinned on learners' reading of the world and on the reflection of learners' situations and on what can be done to transform their world". Participant 2 continued "critical pedagogy for me is to involve the reading of the world in the teaching and learning process". Participant 4 added, "I believe that being Freirean is to educate in real life contexts that are part of learners' lives" and remarked that "in adult education, I have always encouraged learners to identify the words in their vocabulary universe. I did not want them to learn the word 'brick' without a context because it is part of a context, we can't decontextualize anymore". Supporting the same view, participant 7 declared "in critical pedagogy, learners are consulted during the whole education process". To portray this principle, participant 7 provided additional images (artifacts) about an activity named "Alfaletração" in which learners learned how to read and write by creating recipe booklets of traditional dishes of the fishing community where the project took place. At the end of the lesson, learners and educators cooked the dishes following the recipes they created and ate together and developed a sense of community and belonging among learners and educators (Figure 5).

Figure 5

Participant 7 – Alfaletração (Alphabet + Literacy + Action)

ALFALETRAÇÃO
Gêneros Textuais + Silabários
Fase II - 2018

TarrAlfas 11/06/18
AS RECEITAS DE...
1. CAMARÃO NO ALHO E ÓLEO
2. MOQUECA DE ARRAIA
3. LAGOSTA TORRADA
4. BAIÃO DE DOIS
5. LAGOSTA ASSADA
6. ARRAIA SECA
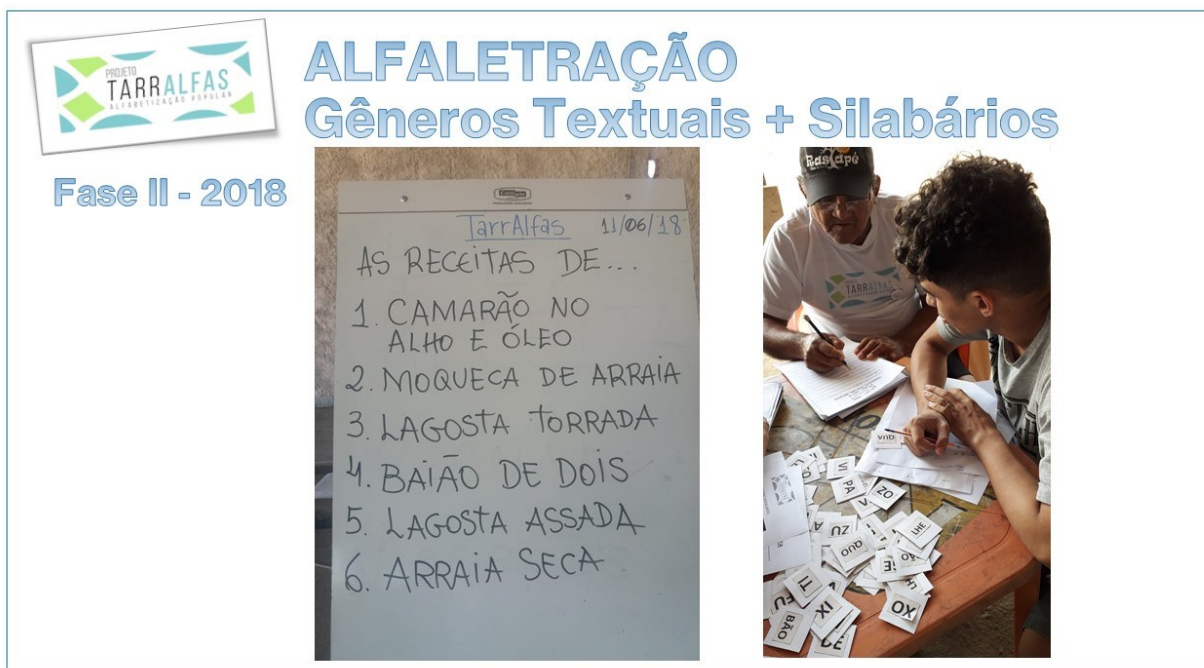
Note. *Alfaletração* is a combination of the words alphabet, literacy, and action. Here learners worked on their written expression by using textual genres (recipes) and syllabuses. Some of the recipes written on the image are shrimp in garlic and oil, manta ray stew, and toasted lobster.

Participant 9 explained that critical pedagogy is "participant-centred, based on their expressed needs, and strengths, and objectives. Supported by information and others who want to help them meet these objectives". Finally, participant 11 observed:

> Critical pedagogy is to try to understand the position from where the learners see the world. It is to establish a different relationship. It is to understand more about the universe of the learners, it is to understand their anger and how they respond to it.

Theme 4: Critical Pedagogy is a Life Stance towards Learners.

When asked to define critical pedagogy in a Freirean tradition, participants were consistent and in agreement to define it as a positionality towards life. Participant 3 said that it is "to be open and committed to the learners and the potential to 'be more' that exists inside each

person. It is an understanding of education as a political and loving act at the same time" and pointed out:

> although Freirean thought has emerged out of education, in my understanding, it is somehow a stance towards life; it is a positionality. It does not matter where you are, or if you are teaching in prison or in Early Childhood Education. If you agree with Freirean principles, you cannot even think of doing differently.

Participant 3 also observed that if critical pedagogy is in a Freirean tradition:

> it is the pedagogy of knowledge, of positionality. It is the pedagogy where you see the world and your specific context … it is to realize that you are not alone in the world, and you are not self-sufficient. You live with other people, and you develop this consciousness that make you a critical learner and a critical educator.

Participant 1 reported that applying critical pedagogy in their daily practices "opened my eyes to learners' different realities and awoke educators' and learners' empathy and love" and continued "love has the power to heal. It is not to change learners, as we don't change people … but to awake empathy in people". Participant 6 also claimed that critical pedagogy is "a state of mind and a driving force". Finally, while describing their experiences in applying critical pedagogy, participant 7 indicated that "being an avid reader of Paulo Freire, to practice critical pedagogy in real life was a unique and meaningful experience".

Theme 5: Critical Pedagogy is an Organic Process.

Among the participants in this study, the words *process, movement, organic,* and *construction/deconstruction* were identified as common points to consider while defining critical pedagogy. As argued by participant 2, in critical pedagogy "there is no beginning, middle or end. It is a constant movement … there are no specific methodologies … It is organic. It cannot be

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forced". This idea was also observed by participant 8 when talking about implementation of critical pedagogy and said that the philosophy of the popular education movement "was to consider popular education as a means (an approach), not an end (a product)". Reinforcing the same idea, participant 12 argued that "there is no single answer to what it is to be Freirean; it is not a religion to be followed either" which was also mentioned by participant 3 who said that critical pedagogy is not "catechization or reprehension, but a dialogue proposal with learners, eye to eye". Participant 4 mentioned several times how critical pedagogy is aligned with Constructivism and that learners should be encouraged to construct their own knowledge. However, participant 4 also argued about the importance of deconstructing some prior conceptions by saying that critical pedagogy:

> is to recognize that learners have knowledge. Educators need to identify this knowledge and acknowledge it, show it to them. It is not an easy task to deconstruct learners' false conception that their knowledge is not valid and show them that they have valuable knowledge.

Attributes of Critical Pedagogues and their Main Influences

One important aspect of this study is to identify common characteristics that critical pedagogues in a Freirean tradition share. For this, participants were asked the following sub-question:

- What characteristics should a critical pedagogue in a Freirean tradition have?

Participants eagerly provided generous responses about fundamental characteristics of educators who engage in critical pedagogy. After a line-by-line coding process that valued participants' voices, six (6) general attributes were identified: (1) critical awareness, (2) respect

for learners' realities and different needs, (3) positionality, (4) social justice orientation, (5) ongoing professional development, and (6) emotional bond and other personal characteristics.

Attribute 1: Critical Awareness (conscientização)

Participants strongly believe that critical awareness is an essential attribute that a critical educator should have. Participant 2 stated that in order to raise critical awareness, as critical pedagogues we need to be able to "read the world with the learners and to be committed to its transformation". It is crucial to "help learners realize what is holding them" and "identify limit-situations and assist learners in the process of overcoming them, especially social injustices and inequalities". Participant 3 added that being dialogical is an important part of developing critical awareness and being a critical pedagogue, "I dialogue with the human being within. It is with the possibility of a better human being that I dialogue" and while describing their image (Figure 6), participant 3 added that "this image represents the dialogical process in education where learners are invited to take their place in the world". Participant 7 said that the critical pedagogue should be "dialogical and critical. They promote the development of critical awareness with the learners. The critical educator also develops self-critical awareness". On the same theme, participant 4 articulated that a critical pedagogue in a Freirean tradition needs "to be critical and respect the limit of the learners. The critical educator shows the reality as it is and encourages reflection on it". Participant 6 expressed that part of being a critical pedagogue is to believe that "the world is not a fatality, and we are historic beings".

Being critical was another attribute for the critical pedagogy educator that was mentioned by the participants in this study. Participant 11 said that Being Critical means "to understand who is benefitted by the knowledge, by whom and for what reason they are produced or reproduced". Concordant with participant 11, participant 6 advised us that "questioning the reality and social

norms" is part of critical pedagogy. To conclude, participants believe that critical pedagogues are political, critical, dialogical, always questioning, and do not believe in fatality because they see themselves as historic beings, and help learners develop critical awareness of the limit-situations that are barriers to their development.

Figure 6

Participant 3- The Writing that Lives in Me
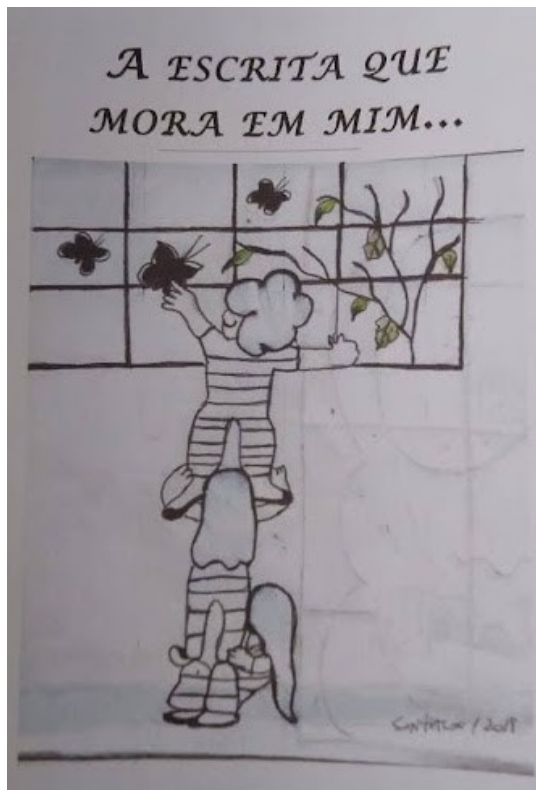
Note. The title of the image means the writing that lives in me. "In this image, we have a representation of Freirean thought concerning the construction of the person collectively, in communion. The idea is that we make ourselves with each other, we are (exist) with one another" (Participant 3).

Attribute 2: Respect for Learners' Realities and Different Needs

According to participants, respect is another attribute that critical educators should have towards learners and their own realities. Participant 4 said as a critical pedagogue "you need to have consideration when working with adults. You need to see adult learners' needs, which are totally different from children's needs. If you are not able to develop empathy and perceptiveness of what adult learners need, you won't be able to help them". Participant 4 was asked to provide some artifacts to complement the interview and shared a booklet of the literacy course that they taught adult learners in the construction site (see Figure 4).

Figure 7

Participant 4 – Booklet of Literacy Course
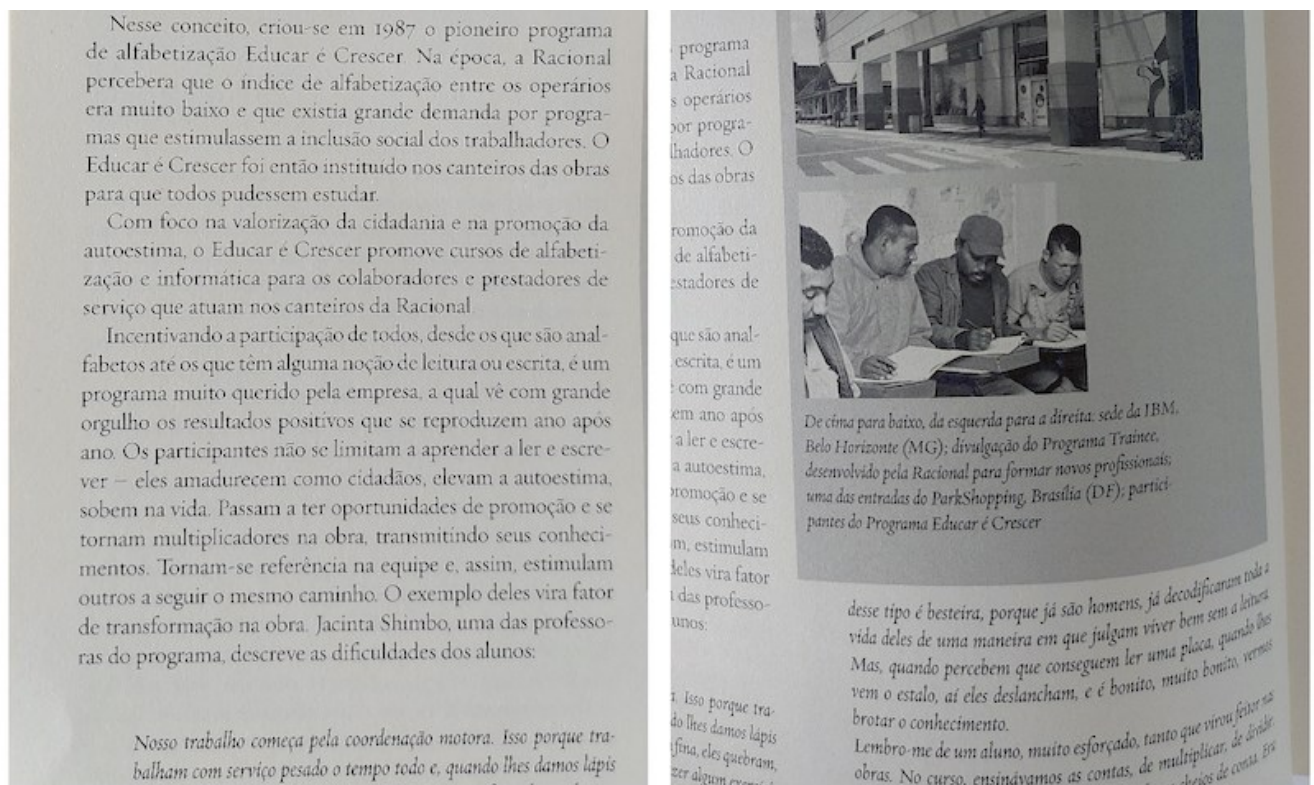
Note. In this booklet, it is possible to see an image of the adult learners in the project. There is also the description of the objective of the course that says, "learners are not limited to learning how to read or write – they grow as citizens, increase their self-esteem, and improve their lives".

There is also a testimony of another educator in the project that says "our work begins with motor coordination exercises. That's because these adult learners work with heavy loads all the time and when they hold a pencil to perform fine motor coordination, they end up breaking the pencil and cannot make the movement to write".

Participant 9 stated about how it is important to involve learners during classes so that all needs are perceived and addressed:

> Everything I do, I am trying to say, you have a choice here. I am seeing you, you know, the way that you were seeing me I am seeing you and we are seeing each other, right. So, all kinds of things like, making sure like, you know, help me, could you help me make sure that if I miss somebody's hand. Could you point it out, please? (Participant 9)

On the same note, participant 3 added that "I make it clear to them, I am committed to you" while participant 5 added that "for example, I would recharge a learner's cell phone, actually, her mom's cell phone" to be able to keep in touch with learners during the pandemic as learners could not afford the cost of cell phone recharges.

Participants also reported that one important aspect of respecting and understanding learners' needs and realities is by listening actively or "listening to understand" as stated by participant 9. Participant 11 said that "first of all, be willing to listen actively and genuinely. In this process, while listening actively to learners, I also listen to myself". However, participant 11 warned that this is not an easy thing to do and added "to develop active listening is hard because we live in a neoliberal oriented world where we are encouraged to consume more and to satisfy our individual needs, without considering other people's needs".

Participant 9 emphasized the importance of having responsibilities towards learners. Being a critical pedagogue in a Freirean tradition is not to:

go into a place, start saying, you guys need to start breaking the windows with your

chairs, and like, unchain yourselves and stuff like that, right? Because, you know, it's, it's

not going to be like, I don't find that that is giving people the appropriate tools, you

know, I don't find that it's offering them something that's sustainable. (Participant 9)

Being a critical pedagogue requires a strong ethical position towards learners as participant 9

expressed:

I've said no to plenty of well-paying jobs. Because I felt that the activities would be

harmful, rather than helpful. I couldn't do that … something that was not really for their

benefit ... I take my work very seriously. And I feel like that fair and approaches can vary

connected to my fundamental values, and how closely I adhere to those values, how

easily I can look at myself in the mirror in the morning, you know? (Participant 9)

Attribute 3: Positionality

Participants in this study identified that positionality is another important attribute of a

critical pedagogue in a Freirean tradition. Participant 1 said that it is important for critical

educators to state their life history and political positionalities during the education process.

Participant 1 said that as an educator:

I am a black woman, who comes from an extremely poor family, I am the first in the

family to obtain a teaching certificate and a master's degree, which is a miracle for a

black woman my age because I knew hunger so close to me, very close.

Participant 12 also spoke about positionally and remarked that critical educators "are aware of

their own positionality in the world. They know their own heritage, historical position in the

world, and their culture". Additionally, participant 12 observed that critical educators "do not

hide their political positions as it is impossible to disconnect it from their daily practices".

Participant 5 reflected on the critical educators' positionality by saying that the critical educator "is aware that their role is not more important than that of the learners in the education process. We complement each other in our positions and attitudes". Building on a similar idea, while discussing critical pedagogy in prisons, participant 3 explained:

incarcerated learners bring inside themselves, possibilities, and different desires from learners from outside prison; education for them have a new and strong meaning. That is what I mean. Because education is so meaningful for them, learners empower you, they empower you as representative of the outside world.

Finally, participant 9 added that critical educators and learners should be aware of their own identities and these identities affect how learners have a positive or negative experience. Participant 9 said that "I think that our identity as a learner really is so connected to our identity, our perceived identity…I think that when you harm someone as a learner, you harm them in the rest of their life".

Attribute 4: Social Justice Orientation

Another attribute that emerged from the data analysis was the idea of social justice. According to participants in this study, adult educators who engage in critical pedagogy need to strive for a better and more just society. Participant 10 explained that one of the duties of the critical educator is "to foster a more just and egalitarian society where people are knowledgeable, questioning, and aware of their own rights". Corroborating with what participant 10 said, participant 6 added that "the critical educator believes in the human being and does not accept social injustices" and that "being utopian" is an important aspect in the search for social justice. To illustrate this orientation, participant 6 provided some slides (artifacts) that were used in a literary course about women and literature. Learners discussed how women are treated by the

French Academy of Literature and decided together to read a book on women and literature (Figure 8).

Figure 8

Participant 6 – Discovering Literature
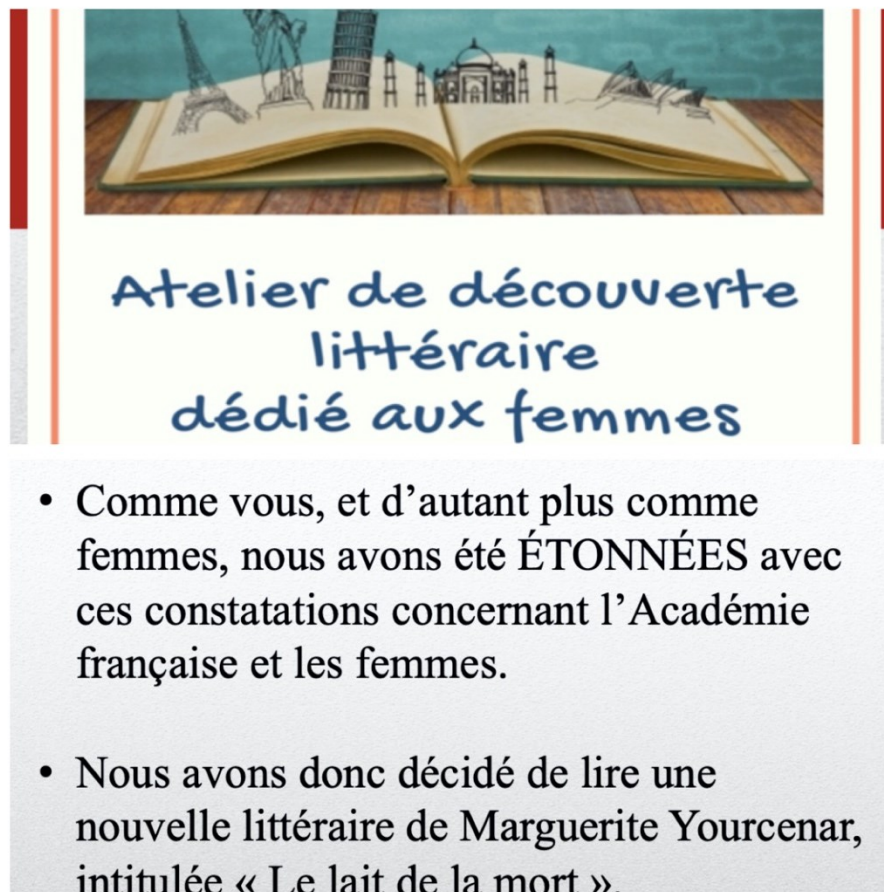
Note. Screenshots of the slides shared by participant 6 of a workshop on literature dedicated to adult women.

Sharing knowledge was also an important aspect that was pointed out by participant 2 who said, "I participated in some communities of free software, and I had this principle of sharing knowledge within myself". While struggling for social justice, resisting power structures was brought up by participant 7. They explained that while searching for sponsorship for a

literacy program with fishermen, the director of the sponsoring organization asked to change the curriculum and remove the section about "political consciousness":

> The director of the institution asked to read the project. We took it to him and when he read the project, he saw the generative word *political consciousness*, and during the meeting to discuss the sponsorship, he said, 'teacher, isn't this a literacy project?' I answered, 'yes, it is' … he added 'it is not possible to be only about literacy'… 'because there is the word political consciousness, and I don't think it is necessary to address political consciousness … he ended up declining the sponsorship …. I said, 'we are not going to remove political consciousness because it is the backbone of the project'".
>
> (Participant 7)

In agreement, participant 3 elaborated that when working with learners in prison, they were told that they could not have contact with prisoners and a number of rules and regulations were imposed on them. However, participant 3 created the restorative circles or peace-building circles inspired in a Freirean tradition. Participant 3 shared an article describing this experience (Figure 9). In the article, participant 3 explained that restorative circles allowed an honest and empowering dialogue with a model focused on the human being that opened spaces of reflection where learners could share their fears, sorrows, pains and enabled to imagine possible changes (Hir, 2021). Participant 3 also said that restorative circles resisted power structures, "I said, I can do it! … I use it regularly once a month ... we do the restorative circles with different themes that are guided by learners' needs". Participant 3 was proud to "work in a Freirean tradition in the prison system through the restorative justice".

Figure 9

Participant 3 – Restorative Circles

Note. Image of a restorative circle as described by participant 3. "Listening is a social act, it is contextual and dialogic, it centres the learner individually but also the whole group. Everyone cares and feels cared for". Participant 3 shared an article as an artifact entitled "Restorative circle: Our daily word". The article can be found here:

https://www.prisoeslivresdetbcesp.com.br/c%C3%ADrculorestaurativoapalavranossadecadadia

Attribute 5: Ongoing Professional Development

Participants described ongoing professional development as a significant attribute of the critical pedagogue. Participant 1 explained that "some critical adult educators did not learn how to deal with adult learners, so it is important to develop professionally and learn how to teach and learn with adults … I believe that we, educators, need ongoing professional development". Another important aspect that Participant 1 added was that ongoing professional development provides opportunities for educators "to exchange, to learn and collaborate together and improve how we see adult learners".

Self-discovery, self-reflection, self-dialogue, and self-evaluation were a few points that participants brought up as important for ongoing professional development. Participant 3 said that self-reflection was important "to organize myself and cope with frustrations … live each day at a time". Participant 9 added that it is crucial for critical pedagogues to have diverse experiences, "I think that I've had several experiences that helped me like, of course, a lot of professional experiences and a lot of diversity in my experiences, adults, adolescents, you know, all kinds of learner diversity, topic, diversity, context diversity". Participant 9 also talked about having subject-matter expertise:

> I better know how to do this thing that I'm going into, you know, facilitate about, of course, I have to have the goods. But, but for me, like, you know, it's that proportion thing, right. Like, to me, I'm bringing maybe 1/3 of the information, you know, and they have to bring the two third. (Participant 9).

Finally, participant 11 states that being open to feedback is very important for the critical pedagogue.

Attribute 6: Emotional Bond and Other Personal Characteristics

According to participants, a critical educator in a Freirean tradition creates emotional bonds with learners. As participant 3 explains:

> first of all, it is important to create an emotional bond, a real one; it is not about being funny or pleasing learners, it is about looking into learners' eyes and say that 'I am here, I am a teacher, let's talk, I will teach what I know, you will teach me what you know, we will exchange knowledge and walk together.

Participant 3 also remarks that a critical adult educator needs to "listen attentively and lovingly". Participant 9 indicated that as a critical pedagogue, "you are responsible duty of care".

Participants also commented on other personal characteristics such as being creative, open, passionate, curious, strict, perseverant, resilient, humorous, coherent, and ethical. For example, participant 9 explained that as a critical educator, I am "essentially, like, very passionate about my work. I am very proud of the fact that I genuinely care about all the people that I encounter in facilitation, even if I don't know them". About resilience, participant 4 disclosed:

> I think that many times, our colleagues, us, we feel a bit suffocated, we feel like we don't have a voice, but we can't give up; thank Goodness, I have many colleagues who have a strong perspective and that take this to their classrooms, we talk about that, and if it depends on us, we are not going to give up, to make me give it up is really hard, I am very critical, demanding, I fight with administrators and I am not afraid of losing my job.

Main Influences

One of the sub-questions was:

- Besides Paulo Freire, who are the main authors who influenced your practices as Critical Pedagogues?

Participants mentioned several authors who have also influenced their practices as critical educators. The most cited ones were Miguel Arroyo, Mikhail Bakhtin, Karl Marx, and Florestan Fernandes. Other cited authors were Augusto Boal, Peter McLaren, Michael Apple, Peter Jadric, Jürgen Habermas, Humberto Maturana, Bernard Charlot, Pierre Bourdieu, Walter Benjamin, Célestin Freinet, Emilia Ferreiro, Ana Teberosky, Michel Foucault, Edgar Morin, David Ausubel, Deborah Bardt, Dennis Howlett, John Dillon, Myles Horton, bell hooks, Ira Shor, Teilhard de Chardin, Ernst Bloch, John Locke, Dermeval Saviani, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Boaventura Souza Santos, Frantz Fanon, Steve Biko, Maria Firmina dos Reis, Lélia Gonzaga,

and Carolina Maria de Jesus. Participant 5 also mentioned all the anonymous educators who influenced their practice. Finally, participant 10 said that Paulo Freire was their only influence in critical pedagogy.

Principles of Critical Pedagogy that Educators Emphasize More

Critical Pedagogy is an ample body of theory and practice composed of a great variety of principles. Participants in this study were asked the following sub-question:

- What components/principles of critical pedagogy do you emphasize more in your own practices in non-formal settings while teaching adult learners?

Participants provided a rich number of descriptions, ideas, and examples that became four (4) overarching thematic principles: (1) commitment to social transformation, (2) democratic process, (3) collectivity, and (4) inclusiveness.

Principle 1: Commitment to Social Transformation

Making a difference in learners' lives was a principle that came up frequently during interviews. Participant 8 addressed this principle of social transformation explaining how it is connected to social movement, "we are the popular education movement and kind of the evolution of popular education in Quebec … Paulo Freire's *pedagogie conscientizante* [critical awareness], which was popular education in the struggle. There is no popular education other than the struggle". This principle was also identified by participant 11 when describing their involvement with the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) in Brazil when preparing food to support and feed homeless people. This educator advised that our commitment to social transformation should be based on solidarity and not on charity:

What is interesting in the perspective of the Landless Workers' Movement, which is totally based on Freirean critical pedagogy and has an immensurable value to them. The

first thing I learned when I started in the project and was explained by that coordinator is that we do not work in a charity perspective, our approach is based on solidarity; it is different, because the ones who work with charity feel superior because it is a one-way perspective, you only give as if the person does not have anything to offer. We look at the homeless population horizontally, understanding that these people who are in such a situation are workers; workers who are going through some hardship. Collectively, we support them, and, in this relationship, we also learn."

Coming from the same direction, participant 4 highlighted the Freirean tenet "To Be More":

The term "to be more" is a Freirean philosophical perspective towards a humanization process in direct opposition to the Capitalist logic of "to have more" … So, during this humanization process and the reading and writing acquisition process, we understood education as social and cultural good. In this process, learners would become more human because learning to read and write open doors for many possibilities.

Principle 2: Democratic Process

Concepts such as democracy, horizontality, non-hierarchy, freedom, no coercion, non-authoritarianism were brought up by participants in this study during the interviews. Participant 1 reinforced the idea that "the educator does not own knowledge and has a duty to share it while being open to learn from students and be ready for dialogue". Participant 2 supported that it is crucial to be open for dialogue and "to be against banking education". On a similar note, participant 12 said that freedom needs to be the focus of critical pedagogy, "learners are authors of their own lives, they are free to think". Participant 4 emphasized that "citizenship education in a critical perspective allows learners to realize that we are free and able to identify situations of authoritarianism".

According to participant 8, education needs to be free of coercion, "people who come to our sessions need to be there freely and voluntarily and not with coercion. Right? Because I don't think that facilitates a learning situation when people are there because they have to be there". Participant 6 added:

> the critical educator is a guide in the education process. I do not own knowledge. I talk about this all the time, I say, for me, I am learning as much as you [students] are. The name of the workshop that I facilitate is *decouverte literaire*, then I make a joke and say, I think that the person who discovers the most here is me.

While talking about their teaching experience, participant 5 brought up that non-hierarchy is an important democratic element in critical pedagogy:

> the proposal of learning activities came out of a democratic perspective, non-hierarchical, in a way that both the educators in my team and the learners collaborated in the elaboration of the learning activities. For example, learners asked for field activities, outdoors, and outside classrooms.

To conclude, participant 5 talked about how generative words are part of their annual planning for their classes at hospital settings, "our working plan for this year [2021] is overtly underpinned by generative words. For the two first months, the generative words are lovingness and hope. Followed by autonomy, another generative word that I love and is strongly connected to our culture is beautifulness". Participant 5 also referred to their website where examples of critical pedagogy activities focusing on democratic practices can be found (Figure 10).

Figure 10

Participant 5 – Telling and Singing the Time

Note. In the screenshot taken from their website, it is possible to see an image of an activity named "Telling and singing the time". The website address is espacoacolher2018.blogspot.com.

Principle 3: Collectivity

Notably, participants' responses discussed the value of collaborative work in critical pedagogy. They have expressed how it is important to connect people and that social change comes out of a collective struggle. Participant 6 stated that "all transformation is possible, the utopia is possible, but nothing is possible believing and struggling alone. The strength comes from the collectivity". Focusing on learning experiences, participant 8 said, "adults learn best when the learning experience begins with their needs, in a comfortable situation and in the company of others". Participant 5 highlights the involvement of different actors in the education process, "we strive to articulate our actions harmoniously among our team of educators and other professionals in the team in a multidisciplinary way, along with stakeholders such as family and

learners as well" and continued, "it is this intertwining of actions of different actors that complements the education process by receiving and welcoming learners … That is how we believe that our work as educators should be developed".

Participant 9 commented on supporting learners, "what I tried to do is to open up … rather than looking at it as somebody who is, you know, again, it's always, like, it's always about, it's about us, it's not about me, right?". On a related note, participant 6 said:

> If the world is as it is today, if we are living a crisis today, climate crisis and others, nothing is by chance, it is consequence of human actions. So, we understand that we make the world, the reality, and I know that we can change it, but the hard part is that when I say, we, I mean we, not one isolated person. Because I can be the most correct person in the world, recycle, do everything the right way, but if I do it alone, it won't really make a difference. So, the greatest challenge is to assist people to understand that.

Principle 4: Inclusiveness

Aligned with the previous principles, participants repeatedly mentioned that critical pedagogy fosters inclusion, tolerance, and a sense of belonging among educators and learners. While describing an experience in a food cooperative, participant 8 explained about the importance of non-threatening strategies that include everyone:

> in Québec city, I was involved in a *comptoir alimentaire* (food coop). As an educational experience, I quickly learned that the needs were those expressed by the coop members. My particular work group was responsible for stocking the shelves: in my work group of 6, two people did not know how to read or write. Strategies (non-threatening) had to be developed to ensure that the tomato soup ended up in the right place so that the rest of the group didn't have to redo the work twice. Influence of Freire: adults learn best when the

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learning experience begins with their needs, in a comfortable situation and in the

company of others.

Participant 8 also remarked the need to popularize and disseminate knowledge in critical

pedagogy, "to do political education, you have to 'vulgarise' (transform complex, complicated

material into an accessible form) content in such a way as to facilitate a participant's

understanding (*leur donner le sentiment d'avoir compris quelque chose*)".

Tolerance was also mentioned as an important perspective to inclusiveness. However,

participant 11 warned:

tolerance, but not that tolerance that tolerates to avoid discussion and reflection. I mean

that type of tolerance proposed by Freire, that embraces learners, striving to understand

learners' standpoint, aligned with active listening. From this understanding, it is possible

to promote real dialogue.

On a personal note, participant 9 also emphasized the importance of inclusiveness in critical

pedagogy,

I have been influenced by Freire to the extent that he speaks to the experience of

generations of my family as tenant farmers in Italy. It's a system that supports a dead-end

subsistence existence for the farmer and their families, for generations on end and a

lucrative and cheap labour investment for the property owners. Freire recognized the

wisdom and intelligence of people who have little or no formal education and their

capacity to change things.

While describing their image (see Figure 11), participant 6 mention that inclusion is key in

critical pedagogy "on this image, there are learners from all ages and origins, everyone together,

reading, discussing, learning together, overcoming prejudices and striving for a model of society

that is good for everyone". To conclude, participant 9 continued and shed more light over this principle:

> It's really and I think it and I think that that has instilled in me the really one of my most important mandates is that anybody leads whatever workshop I was facilitating, has to feel good, smart, and competent. So, you know, even if they didn't get the topic, even if they're not interested in the topic, the workshop cannot be an instrument for them to feel like, for their identity as a learner to be affected negatively.

Figure 11

Participant 6 – Occupying a Public Space

Note. "I selected this image because we are outdoors occupying a public space, a park, education goes beyond school walls, every space is space of education … the people who are on it come from all walks of life and they are so different from one another, there is a transgender woman, a muslin man, a local 85-year-old lady who is a grandmother, a person who lived in prostitution, another lady who suffered from depression who are trying to get herself together".

Successful Strategies, their Challenges and Assessment

Participants talked about important strategies that helped them implement critical pedagogy principles, discussed the challenges they faced while putting them into action and how they overcame these issues. Additionally, participants also talked about their assessment practices, how they evaluated learners and themselves and the reasons that motivated them into critical pedagogy in a Freirean tradition.

Successful Strategies

During interviews, participants were asked about implementation of critical pedagogy in their own practices as critical adult educators in non-formal settings. The sub-question was:

- What successful strategies do you use in your daily practices?

The following are the themes that emerged.

Design and Plan your Lessons Collectively. Participant 8 explained that their successful strategies were always designed collectively and said, "every single activity is prepared by a group de travail [working team] … a minimum of five or six".

Be Realistic About Goals. Participant 9 mentioned that it is important to set up your expectations:

Sometimes it's as big as a pancake, sometimes it's big, like a car, you know, it depends on. Also, I have to work with the group that I have in front of me. Like if this problem has been going on for five years, a two-hour facilitation is not going to, you know, it might be a great beginning and people might leave with some insights and some actions that they might want to do in greater context and perspective.

Involve the Community. Participant 2 explained that many of their actions and practices in critical pedagogy started with a community need, for example, during the pandemic, there was a lack of safety equipment against COVID-19, such as face shields, "we mobilized the

community to find 3D printers, and many people volunteered to lend us their printers … we

created a website where we talked about our actions and the call for volunteers… we gathered

about 22 people with their own 3D printers". To illustrate, participant 2 shared a YouTube video

as an artifact of this activity. The title of the video is how to make a face shield (See Figure 12

for a few screenshots of the video).

Figure 12

Participant 2 – Face Shields to Support Frontline Workers

Note. These are screenshots of a YouTube video shared by participant 2 about one of the

activities that they developed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the implementation of a

needs analysis, they realized that there was a lack of protection equipment for healthcare workers

in their community. Then, they developed this activity to learn how to use 3D printers to produce

face shields. It is an example of how critical pedagogy can affect the real world and bring change

according to the community needs. Video link: https://youtu.be/aGSB8nPIteg.

Use Images to Generate Discussions. Participant 8 talked about a challenging workshop

about power structures within an organization, "I said, we're gonna do a game … It's a reflection

on power … I want you to take some paper and draw some circles, I want you to illustrate, I

want you to come up with a drawing of the power relations around [your institution]".

Ask Challenging Questions to Raise Critical Awareness. Participant 8 advised about

the importance of asking questions, "who has the power? Who are the different actors that have

the power?" and continued "it wasn't accusatory, but I said you like this vision? And if you don't like the vision, what would you like to change? … So out of that, which is a reflection on power, which is fundamentally a political reflection, right?". Participant 7 also mentioned problem-posing strategies that "according to a Freirean methodology, there is this intention of questioning, problematizing the writing of the word and questioning again, learning the alphabet while thinking about the writing of the word … a political discussion around the word, the concept".

Ask Questions as a Strategy to Foster Exchange and Connection. Participant 9 commented on how questions can promote sharing and connection among learners:

> And then a lot of exchanging and then a lot of sharing a lot of connecting. One of the things that I do is I try to consider, like, because learners are so diverse, before I get people to speak up, I usually will ask the question and ask people to reflect and write down what they think. So if I want to say like something like, among the systemic factors that affect, you know, like people working in social services, you know, there's under funding, there's, you know, heavy, consistently heavy caseload, stuff like that, then I might say something like, take a moment, and then I'll have a slide of the different factors and take a moment and identify the three that you feel are most prevalent in your workplace at this time.

Check your Own Blinders. Participant 9 gave an important strategy of self-reflection so that educators have a good idea of their practices and how they affect learners:

> I am aware right that I have my own blinders. I'll go in and I have my own blinders I have my own assumptions, and I try to manage those as thoroughly as I can but since I'm a human being, you know like I fail miserably really, you know, because it's always

subjective, it's always you know like there's what you want to do. There's what you think you did. And then there's what you actually did as a facilitator. So, I always do try to remember like, you know, to bring that in, and not be. But, you know, I mean, probably, sometimes it works better than others but that's what it is.

Bring Popular Culture and Popular Knowledge into your Classes to Raise Critical Awareness. Participant 7 explained that when working with fishermen, a generative word that came up during classes was the term *boat*:

it was interesting because they would cite parts of the boat according to their tradition and what they had learned from their parents and grandparents; when the educator presented the official name of the parts of the boat, some of them were the same but some were not. They were able to contrast their traditional knowledge with the terminology that was used formally in science".

Participant 5 described how the use of local and popular culture helped learners develop critical awareness of social media and marketing strategies and helped to set up the context to introduce mathematical concepts:

It was an activity in which we were going to work combinatorial analysis (Figure 13) … but I did not want to teach it without a context. It was Christmas time … and our learners are bombarded continuously via cell phone, social media, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, with advertisements to sell products. Ads about Christmas turkey from a famous brand, family around a dinner table, soft drinks, Santa Claus, even a sled. This is not part of our culture … our learners do not see themselves in this kind of celebration. There is no representation. I started asking them what they understood about Christmas … if they ate turkey for Christmas… and they responded, no, we want to eat barbecue …

because beef is too expensive for these communities, it is a luxury… and we kept the

conversation going.

Participant 5 could then relate the content to popular culture and raise awareness about

aggressive marketing and representation on social media.

Figure 13

Participant 5 – Combinatorial Analysis and Christmas Dinner
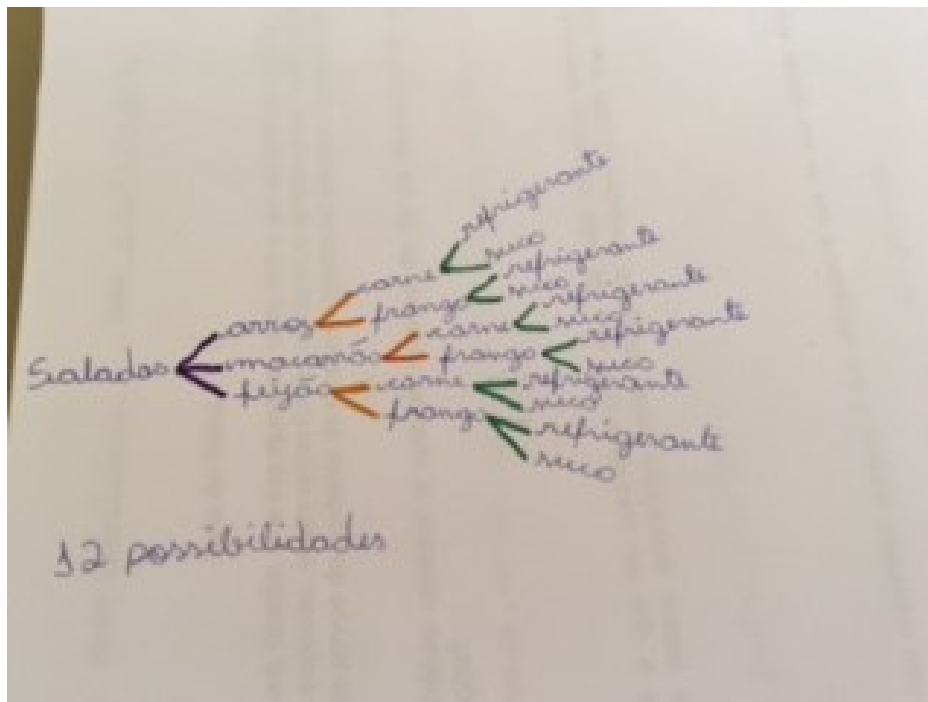
Note. "The activity started with learners sharing their understanding of Christmas dinner, mostly

represented by media as standardized dishes such as turkey … Afterwards, we discussed the

reasons why there is lack of representation of their traditional dishes on the media or in their

textbooks, and at the end, we registered the compositions in a schematic way from their own

experiences" (Participant 5).

      Work with Small Groups in Critical Pedagogy. Participant 8 explained that "to me, in

the context of a session, it's doing a lot of small group work. Small group allows people to, and

you know, it's a principle of adult education as well, not everybody learners in the same way, some people learn actively, some people learn passively". Participant 8 continued "one of the ways to engage participants is to do small group work, to do small group work of appropriation". On a similar perspective, participant 2 pointed out how large classes do not favor critical pedagogy because it is difficult to promote dialogue in "classrooms of 100 or 200 learners, it is more of a lecture style than a dialogical class".

Swap Focus from Educator to Learners. Participant 9 advised critical educators to remember that the focus should be on learners, "when I am feeling worried, or the, I have to remember that that's putting the focus on me. And what I'm actually I have to, I have to go in with the focus on the group, on us, you know, not on me, on us".

Get to Know the Community Where your Learners Live. Participant 7 explained that during a literacy project in a fishing community, before anything else, it was crucial to go into the community and walk and talk to members of the community and learn about them and generate words and themes that would be of interest to the education practice, "walk around the community, talk to fishermen and fisherwomen in order to generate education themes".

Challenge the Curriculum. While talking about critical pedagogy practices with incarcerated learners, participant 3 pointed out that in critical pedagogy, sometimes you will have to challenge the curriculum, "I started to create a marginal capacity to subvert the order, the way the curriculum was imposed did not work for me, it was formatting, so I started doing active group activities, and that was the first time I got rid of the straitjacket of the curriculum". Participant 3 also highlighted that challenging the curriculum paid off as they received supported of other teachers who also had Freirean principles and ended up being invited to run a workshop on their practices in a government teacher training program. Participant 2 mentioned that it is

possible to "hide vegetables in the soup" while practicing critical pedagogy in an environment that does not provide freedom to do it openly. Participant 2 said that they "do not talk about Paulo Freire openly" but "add pinches of Freirean principles in their activities".

Contextualize Content as Much as Possible. Participants 3 and 7 reiterated that Contextualization is crucial in critical pedagogy. Participant 3 explained that even if learners did not understand the meaning of certain words at first, they would end up getting the idea because of the context and the dialogue that those words would generate. On the same wavelength, participant 7 said "the contextualization of the theme, the contextualization of the word, because our educators would always work like that, never letter by letter, or syllable by syllable, it was around the theme that was being taught". Participant 7 shared an image (see Figure 14) where the educator took learners who were learning how to read and write into the ocean to contextualize their learning with their work environment as fisher people, "it was an unusual class because I had never taught in the water, and the day before I had told them, tomorrow we will write on the water". Participant 9 added:

> I work very hard to understand the context. So, I do that by speaking with the person who asked for the training, then I will do some readings. So, for example, right now I'm doing some work with ... So, I'm going on the website to see, and I mean, it has nothing to do with the demographics or whatever the organization is in ... But I need to know, what is this organ? What's happening all around because the people who will be attending live in the neighborhood. So, I need to know, what's the rate of unemployment? How much public housing, I need to know, what's the revenue? Is it families, not families, age group? So, I like to get context, like, you know, these concentric circles of context, if you want, you know, like the big, big, big one. And then also, I will do it about the context,

I'll do it about the issue, whatever it is that they would like to address, I want to know,

what happened before, I want to know, where do they want to go that kind of thing.

Figure 14

Participant 7 – Lessons in the Reefs

Note. "The day before I had told them, tomorrow we will write on the water. They asked, but

how? It is impossible! So, we made rubberized words … we brought an environmentalist and we

explored words that we had previously worked in class, key concepts, and key words … as the

guest speaker would talk about environment preservation, security in the ocean, we would throw

the rubberized words in the water, and they would float. It was such an interesting activity,

everyone in a circle inside the water, in an open space in the middle of the ocean, in the sea, by

the reefs, two kilometers from the beach into the ocean". Words in the water: collectivity,

preservation, sustainability, environmental.

Use Ludic Activities. Participants highlighted the importance of using playful activities

in critical pedagogy. While working with learners from the Landless Workers' Movement,

participant 10 explained that it is important to develop ludic activities such as "group work,

poems, playful activities and inspiring songs". Participant 1 used songs and theatrical plays as a learning tool with adult learners, "the songs I used had a critical tone … I also used videos and films with a critical perspective … they were used to build a social critique. To develop critical awareness of injustice". Finally, participant 8 used a metaphor about a tomato, the tomato project (see Figure 15), to teach adult learners about globalization and neoliberalism:

> We kind of got thinking ... How can we make this concrete? How can we how can we translate for members of our organizations? What the issues are around the globalization of neoliberalism and that's where the tomato project came out of, which if you took a look through the documents, I mean, there was some research involved. For sure, but it was it was really ludic. Right, there was lots of games, games and, and contests. And my approach to popular education is very much a project-based approach … a kind of a collective project and move things forward to become politically a little bit more aware of what you know. The political issues are around the globalization of neoliberalism, we really did manage, you know, to do a move forward in terms of the popular understanding within our network, what the issues were around globalization ... to translate that into theater, or translate that into a song, or translate that into something.

Figure 15

Participant 8 - Tomato Project

Note. The Tomato Project.

Use Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in Critical Pedagogy. Participant 9 pointed out that it is very important to be aware of the UDL Approach:

> I use a lot of strategies from the universal design for learning approach. So UDL really encourages you to reach out to the participants and ask them to identify what really matters to them about being here. So, if even if it's, you know, my boss said, I had to be here. Like, that's fine, like, whatever reason is, like you showed up, right? So, you know, what is your important reason to being here? And what does it matter to you specifically? Because I think like, you know, and what do you need to be able to get out of it, that kind of thing.

Participant 9 explained that fully equipping learners in advance is a principle of UDL:

there's all the pre-work, and then I like to send the materials ahead. So, my thing is that I want to put all my chips on the learners, anything I can do so that the learner or the participant is fully equipped or as fully equipped as they wish to be.

Connect Theory and Practice. Participant 12 emphasized that "Paulo Freire raises the issue of theory and practice. Praxis is necessary. Reading about Freire will not be useful if I cannot put it into practice … it is important to get learners understand what they are learning and from where they are learning". Participant 4 added that "connecting theory and practice is difficult. However, it is also our decision as educators".

Use Creative Writing to Inspire and Empower. Both participants 3 and 7 had great emancipatory experiences while teaching adults to read and write. The use of writing texts was not only important to develop literacy skills but also to raise critical awareness. Participant 7 described how they used texts from different genres such as poems, notes, recipes, letters. Participant 7 said that learners gathered recipes of traditional dishes in the community and compiled a book with learners with the purpose of preserving their culture and tradition, "we printed several copies of the book and launched it in the community". Participant 3 also developed an activity that promoted writing as an emancipatory action:

The writing that lives in me: a restorative approach with incarcerated women. What I realize is that through writing there is a 'reconstruction', it is impressive what I find in their texts, when they see themselves writing, when they read what they have written… it is a structural reorganization.

Use Sketches in Critical Pedagogy. Participant 8 explained that sketches are:

what I'm talking about theatrical, they're little sketches, just a militant, so little sketches, which last five or six minutes, which you have to you have to come up with a sketch,

right? You have to come up with the idea of collectivity, and then you've got to come up

with a scenario you do collectively, your little practice, and then you got to present.

Participant 8 added that sketches are interesting strategies and "a way of making everybody

equal, right? You know, to try and get the idea that, you know, there's not a professor, there's not

someone who has all of the information when you do a sketch". Participant 8 provided some

images of a character that was created during their anti-poverty sessions (Figure 16).

Figure 16

Participant 8 – Wrestling Against Poverty

Note. Participant 8 explained that these two "photos show a personnage that was developed for

my anti-poverty sessions. (La lutte contre la pauvreté / un lutteur contre la pauvreté. In French a

"lutteur" is a "wrestler" as in the WWF). The personnage was a great hit - usually showed up for

10 minutes in a day-long session. But once, with a group of adults with cognitive difficulties, the

lutteur was such a hit that he stayed for two hours... (Flexibility)".

Recalibrate your Strategies When Necessary. Participant 9 advised that "the other strategy is being extremely flexible. I can't even tell you how many times I walked into a place with a full workshop that I had done … And I said, okay, I will recalibrate".

Investigate Learners' Expectations and Needs. Participant 9 explained how it is imperative to check learners' needs, "I always ask, if there's anything that I can do … please let me know if there's anything that I can do to facilitate your full participation and enjoyment at the workshop. So that's my question around accommodation".

Practice Interdisciplinarity in your Classes. Participants stated that interdisciplinarity should be integral part of critical pedagogy. Participant 2 mentioned developing computing, electronic and art in critical pedagogy. Participant 5 remarked that different actors participate in education and should work together. Participant 7 implemented "interdisciplinary practices where educators would integrate learners' worlds and curriculum".

Use Generative Words and Thematic Analysis. While teaching construction workers on the field to read and write, participant 4 shared that they would start the process by doing a word diagnostic:

> we were totally connected to Paulo Freire, this is something that is present in Youth and Adult Education, so we start with words from the learners' universe … we would use words such as brick, they would not know how to write it, but this word was connected to them in the construction site. Additionally, we would use safety signs, personal protective clothing (PPE).

Participant 7 reported that they were really surprised by this process of starting with generative words because the educators who participated in a literacy project within a fishing community, thought that the main generative words and themes would be fish or something connected to it;

however, the first word those learners generated was 'cachaça', which is a typical alcoholic

beverage in Brazil. Participant 7 said it was surprising but at the same time it generated a myriad

of discussing themes such as alcoholism.

Finally, working with patients in an education project in a hospital setting named *Espaço*

Acolher [Welcoming/Receiving Space], participant 5 generated words and themes among

educators to guide their teaching processes. Words such as lovingness, hope, autonomy, and

beautifulness were chosen to inspire their practices, "we strive to act in a coordinated way and in

harmony with all stakeholders involved in this process". Participant 5 provided an annual

working plan (artifact) for the hospital class at *Espaço Acolher*. In their plan, it is clear how it is

aligned with Freirean critical pedagogy and adult education principles (Figure 17).

Figure 17
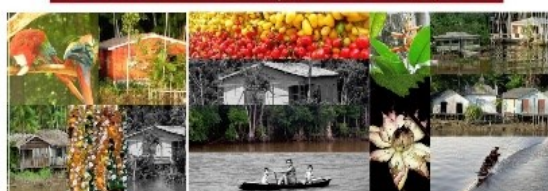
Participant 5 - Generative Words to Guide Planning

Note. In these screenshots of their annual plan, it states that the generative words for the year of

2021 were lovingness and hope, culture and nature, beautifulness and reading, and listening and

autonomy. For their adult learners, it states that "all work will be underpinned by a Freirean theoretical framework and methodology".

Challenges and Issues in Critical Pedagogy

Implementing critical pedagogy bring some challenges and issues that participants were encouraged to discuss to enrich our understanding of their daily practices. The sub-question was:

- What challenges do you face while trying to implement critical pedagogy principles?

Participants discussed their own challenges and issues while implementing critical pedagogy in their classes and contexts. Here is what they reported.

Drop-out Rate is High in Adult Education. Participants reported that retention of adult learners is always a challenge. Participant 3 related that "in the correction system I never know if learners will be there on the next day". Participant 11 said that because of neoliberal policies and its consequent lack of funding in Adult Education, learners have to drop out to work. In agreement, participant 4 reported that after their activities finished in the construction site, learners would not continue their education in the formal system because of incompatibility of hours, long distances, and lack of public transportation. Finally, Participant 5 observed that the same pattern took place in a hospital setting, "what I have observed over 5 years was that learners did not follow up on complementary activities outside hospital hours at home … despite having a dialogical and non-hierarchical Freirean perspective, it was necessary to have a certain consistence in attendance".

Mobilizing People is Challenging. Participant 6 observed that it is very difficult to mobilize learners to act against injustices that affect them directly. Participant 6 found that during a mobilization against spike in rents in the region, affected learners did not show up for a campaign to protest or to get informed about the issue. Participant 6 said, "for me, it is a

challenge. How to mobilize people who live these issues. I think it reflects an individualistic society, people are isolated and living their problems on their own".

Critical Pedagogy Requires a Significant Amount of Work. Participant 6 explained that "a Freirean pedagogy is very demanding because there is not a ready-to-use recipe that can be reproduced elsewhere" and added "to prepare my activities, research takes a long time, for instance, for a 3-hour activity, I will spend at least 6 hours preparing". Participant 6 also said that it is very hard work because the educator will start the learning process, but the direction is guided by the learners as each person or group has a different need. Therefore, "sometimes, we get frustrated because the outcomes are not exactly as we expected. But you have to understand that the results should not be measured quantitatively but qualitatively".

Critical Pedagogy can be Destabilizing. Participant 8 remarked that learners are encouraged to participate actively in critical pedagogy classes and "people who come to consume passively can find the experience destabilizing". Additionally, participant 8 complemented:

> doing political education can lead to a confrontation between your own and participants prejudices et pre-existing ideas. For example, in the context of a workshop, one might want to permit the session to explore and discuss political differences between different participants; on the other hand, these differences must not become personalized and block the learning experience.

Of the same mind, participant 1 explained that some learners have difficulties talking about certain topics due to physical or mental abuse and violence.

Managing Stakeholders' Expectations is Arduous. Participants indicated that it is a challenge to meet all stakeholders' expectations. Participant 9 said that "In workplace learning

environments, the person paying and requesting the training is often the administration. They are sometimes more concerned with effectiveness, statistics deliverables, policies or 'making the problem go away' than working through things organically and effectively". Participant 2 reported how hard it is to involve peers who come from Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) in critical pedagogy research "because we come from a tradition where critical education is deemed as not important, where learners are the only responsible for their failure, if they do not know the content it is because they did not listen or are not able".

Educators Struggle to Adapt their Practices. One aspect that was brought up by some participants in this study was the fact that it is challenging to adapt from traditional practices to critical pedagogy. In a literacy project in a fishing village, participant 7 highlighted an episode where pre-service teachers who volunteered to teach in an adult literacy project wanted to teach as they were taught:

> it was a challenge because the educators had as a reference the traditional methods of teaching reading and writing in a synthetical way where we would work with the alphabet, then words, it takes a long time. However, in our project, we wanted to follow the analytical method, learning letter, words, meanings, texts, and their contexts at the same time, and they did not understand that.

Participant 4 added that some of their peers "tend to teach literacy just as they were taught". Participant 11 warned that "despite having read a lot about Freirean critical pedagogy, we still believe that we go into teaching to transmit knowledge to learners". Participant 3 admitted that in the beginning, it was really hard to adapt to critical pedagogy, "I confess that I made many mistakes. There were times when I could not handle it, I got lost".

Critical Pedagogy is Not Well-Accepted in Academia. Many participants reported never having heard of critical pedagogy or Paulo Freire during their school and university years. Participant 6 claimed that "unfortunately, there is no critical pedagogy in the formal system … the education, we have at schools today is far from it … I think it is the kind of education to standardize, to fit the mold, to work in society". Participant 8 also explained:

> when I do session here at [name of higher institution] and at the [university] and I'm the only time that people hear about Paulo Freire in the university social program, it just blows my mind. How you can do social work without talking about Paulo Freire … I would say, I agree that today, there's a few of us who continue to talk about Freire.

That was confirmed by participant 12 who said Freire was never taught during their university years and participant 3 corroborated by saying "when I learned about Freire, his pedagogy, I had heard about it, because I had graduated from teacher education, I had heard briefly about Freire, nothing too deep, it was mentioned shortly".

Language in Critical Pedagogy is Difficult. Participants also mentioned that language in critical pedagogy is difficult. Freire's books are not easy to read because of its complexity. Participant 11 said:

> I think that Freire, depending on the book, it is not an easy book to understand at first; we get used to his language, it gets better. But in the beginning, his reflections are too complex because he does not remove the complexity, so it takes a while until we can get it.

When discussing their first contact with Freire and critical pedagogy, participant 12 also mentioned that "I read *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. It is a book that few people discuss; it is wonderful, but it is difficult, because Paulo Freire does not have an easy writing style". On a

similar tone, participant 6 made the following observation, "because for me, Paulo Freire, personally, every time I read him, I get emotional because I think that people cannot get the essence".

Power and Hierarchy are Barriers to Critical Pedagogy. Participant 9 identified issues when trying to apply critical pedagogy in an environment permeated by power and hierarchy:

> But sometimes, the context is not such that, so if we're talking, so like, if we're talking about like critical pedagogy right, bringing critical pedagogy in an environment where people are very exhausted by their work, and by the climate where they're not talking to each other or this sometimes happens when there's lots of levels in the room, like the boss, the boss's boss the boss's boss, the boss's boss's boss, you know, and everybody else. It's hard to get a lot of candor in those things. And then, the one thing I think it is not productive to do is to create camps. So, it is not in the interest of the group going forward together because I'm leaving but like I said, this is their life, and they have to go forward together. You know, and I have some responsibility for the time that I am facilitating.

Pandemic Issues. The interviews of this study were made during the COVID-19 pandemic and participants mentioned how it impacted their practices. Participant 11 reported that the pandemic disrupted their social projects with homeless people because many locations restricted access, and this impacted the lives of homeless people tremendously as public and urban facilities were all closed. Similarly, participant 8 said that the pandemic has demobilized social movement:

> how it's going to come out of the COVID-19 is another question because you know, basically what we've had is 18 months with no contact with the base. So how do you restart that? Machine has been shut down. It's been virtualized how you get people back

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together. And that's going to be an issue for the popular education movement … hard to get it going again.

Speaking from a hackerspace perspective, participant 2 also reported how the pandemic disrupted their social projects on the democratization of technology, "today, what is stopping us is the pandemic, the distancing, we could not get our events going. We got to organize a few online events, but they are not the same thing because we can get dialogue flowing or organize actions together". Participant 5 also reported that because of pandemic, learners in a hospital setting had to continue their learning activities virtually over cell phone apps. However, because of lack of structure such as precarious devices and bad internet services, educators struggled to be able to keep learners engaged and felt very frustrated. Finally, teaching adult in a community centre, participant 6 said that "in order to keep a safe distance between learners, the centre reduced the number of people in the rooms". Moreover, participant 6 noticed that learners are "very anxious, everyone is worried … many of these adult learners live on their own, so they go to the centre to break loneliness ... as this is the only moment they have contact with people. So, they feel very lonely". However, on a positive note, participant 11 added the Landless Workers' Movement did not stop their actions during the pandemic, "I feel re-energized because they are doing it, they see what they can do, they will do it, they have not paralyzed".

Overcoming Challenges and Issues in Critical Pedagogy

Having reported some of the issues and challenges that occur while implementing critical pedagogy prompted participants to discuss how they address challenges and issues in general. The sub-question was:

- How do you overcome your challenges and issues while implementing critical pedagogy in a Freirean tradition in your daily practices?

In response, participants generously offered ideas and strategies that they had used with the intent to overcome some challenges and issues when implementing critical pedagogy in their practices. According to the analysis, here is a selection of the most cited strategies.

Break the Rules. Participant 1 said that as a critical pedagogy educator, "I have always run away from rules … or defied imposed content".

Challenge Power Structure. Participant 12 advised that "inside, there is a crack, we walk slowly and steady … we dodge the bullets trying to put us down".

Persist. Participant 7 recommended Critical Educators "to persist in the project to be realized".

Love and Dialogue. Participant 11 suggested overcoming issues in critical pedagogy "through loving dialogue. That kind of dialogue that understands the other person and sees where learners come from".

Hide Your Vegetables in the Soup. Participant 9 would implement critical pedagogy principles by using strategies that did not mention critical pedagogy directly. On a similar tone, participant 3 challenged Banking Education by implementing critical pedagogy in a more ludic way, group work, and active listening.

Do not Wait for the Ideal Situation. Participant 2 reported what a Freirean educator once said:

> if you wait for the ideal situation, we will never be able to implement anything. Then, this educator said to check the space where you can work and implement it, if you are in a traditional and strict space, which space do you have? A few minutes with learners. Then you talk to a few peers and plan a project together.

Outwit the System. Speaking from the experience of working with incarcerated learners, participant 3 had to outwit the system many times to be able to implement critical pedagogy principles:

> all I can do is to outwit the system. That is all I can do, doing my synthesis, that what I consider necessary and essential, and investing a lot in a process that recognizes learners' identities that are frequently dilacerated and in reconstruction … I have no other option. If I focus only on content from the curriculum, I lose what is essential. I do not negotiate that. I prefer to outwit the system.

In this process, participant 3 also received support from coordinators and stakeholders who also endorsed critical pedagogy.

Overcome Issues Collectively. Participant 5's experience with education of learners in a hospital setting depended on a multidisciplinary team, "I always try to learn with my peers, with learners and with all our network that we have in the hospital setting".

Assessment in Critical Pedagogy

Participants were also asked about assessment. The sub-question was:

- How do you assess the effectiveness of your practices in critical pedagogy?

During the interviews, participants responded how they evaluate their learners in a critical pedagogy perspective. The answers varied and a summary of the most frequently cited are presented below.

Assess Learners in their Contexts. Participant 4 said that because we teach learners using their contexts, evaluation should follow the same principles.

Use Activities to Evaluate their Individual and Collective Conscientization Process. Speaking from a Math educator perspective, participant 5 emphasized that it is crucial that

learners develop an understanding of how Math can reproduce oppression but also has the power to promote social change.

Assess Learners Informally. Participant 11 explained that evaluations in critical pedagogy should be performed in the same way as the teaching activities, such as in dialogue circles. In agreement, participant 10 shared an image of an evaluation session with adult learners of the Landless Workers' Movement sitting in a dialogue circle (see Figure 18). Additionally, participant 10 also said that evaluations are "in form of informal questions on a day-to-day basis, about learners' difficulties and how they deal with them".

Figure 18

Participant 10 - Evaluation Circle

Note. Evaluation Circle.

Follow-Up Assessment. Participant 8 said that evaluations are done regularly "with a follow-up with organizers after the session". Participant 9 added that, when possible, "I follow up a few weeks later to ask about the applications of the concepts. What's working, what's not".

Participant 6 said that "it is very hard to follow up and see the impacts of their practices in learners' lives because these are long term ones".

Assessment as Solidarity. Participant 11 said that evaluations should not be seen as competition among learners or educators. We should strive for "horizontal and rhizomatic relationships".

Self-Assessment. Participant 9 explained that it is important for the educator to self-evaluate and "ask the group to evaluate the experience". Participant 7 added that self-reflection should "follow the principle of Action-Reflection-Action". Participant 9 said:

> First, I make note after each workshop of how I feel about the workshop itself and my facilitation. What worked, what didn't, what would I do differently. I reflect on the content, the group dynamics, and the experience for the learner. Did I give everyone a voice?

Observation. Participant 4 explained that observing learners' argumentation and how they relate with each other is a thermometer that allows some evaluation. Participant 12 added that evaluation is made "through observation of knowledge construction in the proposed activities". On the same tone, participant 6 advised that "in a short term, it is possible to observe that learners start participating more and expressing themselves, they start questioning about issues that they face and their possible solutions".

Otherness as Assessment. Participant 11 mentioned that in a Freirean perspective, evaluation as otherness awareness and how it affects our lives and points out different ways of being in the world.

Portfolio as an Assessment Tool. Participant 7 said that learners had a portfolio where they would add their activities and at the same time, these activities would work as evaluations.

Reasons to Practice Critical Pedagogy in a Freirean Tradition

Participants were also asked why they chose to implement principles of critical pedagogy in a Freirean tradition in their practices and settings. They expressed different reasons that took them to critical pedagogy. Here are their reasons.

Participant 1. "Because only a citizenship education can diminish social injustices".

Participant 2. "To develop and promote critical awareness".

Participant 3. "Because it made sense to me".

Participant 4. "Because I believe that learners will learn in contexts where they are familiar with".

Participant 5. "Because I realized that the complexity of the Brazilian context is permeated by socio-economic inequalities that were historically constituted that reflect in the education environments, reproducing oppressive models that delegitimize knowledge and experiences of learners".

Participant 6. "To question status quo" and "I believe in education as a practice of freedom and as a way to social transformation".

Participant 7. "Because critical pedagogy promotes meaningful learning".

Participant 8. "I never consciously decided to implement critical pedagogy theories to my praxis. It just kind of emerged".

Participant 9. "It is cogent with my values. I recognize the role of education in transformation".

Participant 10. "Because critical pedagogy analyzes social and class injustices in the development of the society".

Participant 11. "Because Freire's studies point to the need to know the subjects we work with and that makes a lot of sense to me. That is, teaching and learning cannot be thought of as serious and committed without considering the people involved in the process and trying to understand the places they occupy in society. Secondly, the contact with the narratives of EJA students (adult learners) shows us educators how much it is necessary to relate the knowledge they bring from their experiences with the knowledge accumulated by the school. This means to say that banking education, removed from the daily lives of students, is more of a strategy for maintaining the Status Quo than an attempt to build critical citizens, which would be one of the school's functions".

Participant 12. "Because critical pedagogy is a pedagogy that, by principle, respects everyone's knowledge and promotes the emancipation of the human being".

Overall, these findings address the main research questions: How do adult educators who self-identify as critical pedagogues in a Freirean tradition implement critical pedagogy principles into their daily practices in non-formal settings? By amplifying critical educators' voices, this study contributed to a better understanding of critical pedagogy and how it is implemented in a daily basis. Respondents provided generous details of their practices addressing how they defined critical pedagogy; the attributes the critical pedagogues should have, their main influences, some of their successful strategies, their challenges and how they overcome issues; the main principles of critical pedagogy that they deem more important and how they assess their practices.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to research and document how critical pedagogy is put into practice by adult educators in non-formal settings. More specifically, the study aimed at understanding how adult education practitioners defined critical pedagogy, what aspects of critical pedagogy were important for their own contexts, and what characteristics a successful critical pedagogue should have. Adult education practitioners who are on the ground contribute strongly to the process of creating new ideas, solutions, and possibilities to address social issues and inequalities through critical pedagogy. It is important to listen to their voices and learn with them.

The overarching research question was: How do adult educators who self-identify as critical pedagogues in a Freirean tradition implement critical pedagogy principles into their daily practices in non-formal settings? The specific questions were: (a) What is critical pedagogy for them? How do they define it? Why do they self-identify as critical pedagogues? What characteristics should a critical pedagogue have? Who are the main authors who influenced them? (b) What successful strategies do they use in their daily practices? What challenges do they face while trying to implement critical pedagogy principles? How do they overcome them? (c) What components/principles of critical pedagogy do they give more emphasis? Why? (d) How do they assess the effectiveness of their actions?

Twelve participants who self-identified as critical adult educators in a Freirean tradition in non-formal settings were interviewed. The purpose of the interview was to explore participants' experiences, stories, beliefs, and practices while implementing critical pedagogy. Participants were also asked to provide images that represented critical pedagogy for them. Additionally, participants shared artifacts related to the practices such as activities, lesson plans,

among others. All these collected data generated some interesting findings that will now be discussed. Implications and limitations of this study will also be addressed as well as recommendations for future research. The order of the discussion in Chapter 5 is the same order used in Chapter 4: Findings.

Defining Critical Pedagogy

During the study, participants were asked to provide definitions of their understanding of critical pedagogy. A few participants demonstrated some hesitation on defining critical pedagogy while others provided very general explanations. The fact that some participants were reluctant to provide precise definitions of what critical pedagogy is, was not surprising and has already been reported by previous research (Breunig 2011; Katz, 2014; Thomson-Bunn, 2014). The exercise to define critical pedagogy was very interesting and helped us develop a better understanding of its theoretical principles and how it is implemented. However, it is crucial to understand that critical pedagogy in a Freirean tradition embraces democratic practices, values local knowledge, and the understanding and perspectives that learners bring to the classes. That is why, it is very difficult and sometimes not desired, to find a definition of critical pedagogy that is accepted in all settings in education. More than finding an overarching definition of critical pedagogy, it is important to promote understandings that are underpinned in learners' reading of the world. A generative process that considers the perspectives of learners, educators and the community seem more aligned to a democratic perspective in critical pedagogy.

One of the themes that emerged out of participants' attempts to find a definition of critical pedagogy was that education should be non-hierarchical in a sense that learners and educators both have important roles in the education process. Critical pedagogy practices should be non-hierarchical because one actor should not oppress the other (Katz, 2014). One side should

not impose their perspectives on the other. The dichotomy between the oppressed and the oppressor should be overcome by actions that promote a non-hierarchical perspective (Almeida, 2019; Freire, 2005). It does not mean that in critical pedagogy the educator does not have authority. Having authority is part of the role of the educator and should be exercised to promote democratic perspectives in the class. However, authority should not be confused with authoritarianism and democracy should not be mixed up with permissiveness (Freire, 2005). Non-hierarchy means that both learners' and educators' voices are heard. Both engage in the education process together. It is important to note that non-hierarchy is also about content and curriculum. Content should not be imposed by educators or the education institution. The curriculum needs to be discussed and generated through an organic process that comes out of deliberation with all stakeholders (Freire, 2000; Sanches, 2021). This is definitely one of the most difficult points to put in practice as normally, the curriculum is imposed from top to bottom. Many participants advised breaking this imposition by defying the curriculum. Freire (2005) reassures educators when saying "speaking to and with the learners is an unpretentious but very positive way for democratic teachers to contribute to their school to the training of responsible and critical citizens, which we need so badly" (p. 115). Sometimes, educators need to speak *to* the learners as education is directive but also it is very important to speak *with* the learners and learn with them in a non-hierarchical practice in education.

Focus on social justice was also mentioned by participants while trying to find definitions of critical pedagogy. Commitment to social justice is essential because educators contest unequal power relations and create an emancipatory educational model (Tarlau, 2015). It was not surprising that participants have brought social transformation as an essential part of critical pedagogy as previous research had described that before (Breunig, 2009; Bybee, 2020; Katz,

2014). One important aspect of social justice is the role of educators in assisting learners to identify limit-situations. Limit-situations are barriers that are imposed on people by oppressive systems. When educators and learners both identify limit-situations and understand that these situations are not fatalities (Freire, 2000), both can work towards limit-acts - actions to dismantle oppressive systems in search of social justice (Alvez & Muniz, 2019; Freitas, 2005). As participants mentioned, it is the role of critical pedagogy to struggle for social transformation. Freirean concept of untested feasibility is a utopian perspective that moves educators and learners towards a better world. This new and transformed world is the untested feasibility, or dreams that are possible to be realized. In critical pedagogy, educators should focus their practices in restoring learners' humanity by creating strategies to identify and break these barriers down (Freitas & Freitas, 2017; Gomes & Sanches, 2022; Sanches & Gomes, 2021). Images and artifacts shared by participants during interviews also reflected the emphasis on social justice and the regard on education as a collective process that benefits the whole society and not only an individual learner.

Directly connected to social justice and non-hierarchy was the fact that participants said that critical pedagogy efforts always start with learners' experiences. Learners come to education settings with a variety of experiences, knowledge, and perspectives. It is of utmost importance for critical educators to understand that the reading of the world precedes the reading of the word (Freire, 2000). No one comes to class without knowledge or experiences; acknowledging that and valuing what learners bring to the process certainly shape the learning and teaching experience and put learners in the centre. Therefore, in critical pedagogy, it is crucial to integrate learners' individual experiences into classes (Katz, 2014). However, this integration goes beyond promoting learners' participation in class; in fact, it starts with planning the lessons, content,

space, and all factors that interact in the education process with the purpose to promote social justice and to enable learners to be in control of their learning experience. Critical pedagogy is education done by learners and not to learners and educators talk with students, not at students (Shor, 1992).

Another aspect of critical pedagogy that emerged out of participants' attempts to define it was the fact that critical pedagogy is not just another method of teaching and learning. Participants stated that critical pedagogy is a life stance towards learners. It is to assume your position in the world that is committed to learners and social justice. It is the commitment of individual educators in a collective process that make the difference in education (Fischman, 2020). In consideration of the fact that education is political (Freire, 1992), it is impossible for educators to go into classes without assuming their position in this process. Regardless of whether educators declare their positionalities or not, the education process will be influenced and shaped according to their perspectives. In critical pedagogy, educators are frequently asked to state their positions and beliefs. A commitment against injustices and hope for learners' future goes beyond a mere teaching method, it is to assume your position in the world where justice and democracy are essential (Darder, 2020; Giroux, 2020).

Supporting the previous themes, participants described critical pedagogy as an organic process. Participants reinforced the idea that critical pedagogy does not have a specific methodology and the fact that it cannot be imposed on people. Discussing the concept of banking education, Almeida (2019) clarified that when educators attempt to deposit knowledge in learners' minds, they are not educating but alienating. When you think of content that is being prescribed by the curriculum without taking learners' and educators' perspectives into account or when standardizing exams are imposed on learners (Bybee, 2020), education becomes

authoritarian, there is no democracy. When participants say that critical pedagogy is organic, it means that education is never finished and is always evolving, just as human beings, we are never finished, we are always evolving (Freire, 2000). It is not possible to have a democratic education process without taking all stakeholders' perspectives into account. A response to banking education is problem-solving education because it puts learners as protagonists of their education and promotes a dialectical relationship between learners and educators (Darder, 2018). Problem-posing education respects the idea of critical pedagogy as an organic process because it does not impose or determine the content or the way the education process will be carried on. It gives freedom and space for this process to be negotiated with stakeholders and if necessary, to be renegotiated several times during the process. Education is not stuck in time or space; it evolves and should be in constant movement.

In summary, according to participants in this study, critical pedagogy in a Freirean tradition:

- is non-hierarchical,

- is social justice-oriented,

- starts with learners' experiences,

- is a life stance towards learners,

- is an organic process.

This definition of critical pedagogy is in accordance with the historical perspectives of adult education in Canada (Welton, 2006) and with the perspectives of youth and adult education movements in Brazil prior to military dictatorship (Haddad & Ximenes, 2014) and address the current challenges that adult education face in Brazil, such as having to correct social distortions in the regular education system (Medeiros & Fontoura, 2017) because it considers learners'

perspectives as part of the learning process while considering them active participants in a horizontal relationship focused on social justice. Furthermore, these emerging themes are also consistent with a perspective of *lifelong education* as proposed by UNESCO that has a humanistic perspective and aimed at self-actualization (Boshier, 2005; English & Mayo, 2021). It is important to highlight that the definition of critical pedagogy in this study deviates from the widely spread perspective of *lifelong learning* with assumptions on individuality, vocational learning, human capital, economy, and neoliberalism (Boshier, 2005; English & Mayo, 2012, 2021; Hamalian & Cooke, 2021; Nesbit, 2006, 2013).

Main Attributes of Adult Educators in a Freirean Critical Pedagogy Tradition

Participants were also asked about the main qualities which they considered to be relevant for an adult educator who wanted to implement critical pedagogy in their daily practices. Participants shared their perspectives and seven main attributes emerged: Critical awareness, respect learners' realities and different needs, positionality, social justice-oriented, ongoing professional development, and emotional bond. It is possible to see that many of these attributes have a close connection with the elements that define critical pedagogy according to participants.

The first attribute was critical awareness. It is not a surprise because one of the main tenets of critical pedagogy is the development of critical awareness or what Freire calls *conscientização* (Darder, 2020; Freire, 2000). Educators are expected, as much as their learners, to be in constant movement towards critical awareness. It is not an isolated and unique event, actually, it is a process, an ongoing endeavour (Freire, 1998). It would be surprising if participants did not mention critical awareness as an important attribute of the critical educator. Aligned with a critical/radical orientation of adult education, participants mentioned that critical

awareness is developed collectively in dialogue with other educators, with learners and with the world (Cranton, 2013; Magro, 2001).

Participants added that the critical pedagogue respect learners' realities and different needs. According to participants, to respect learners' realities is to create a partnership where learners are active in the learning process and contribute significantly to the class. Active listening is an important strategy to achieve and develop this important attribute. When critical educators respect learners' realities, this process is achieved democratically. It is a process that starts by knowing their learners, to understand their communities and their needs. Freire called this process a generative process to generate relevant content and avoid any kind of imposition on learners (Freire, 2000). It is also an ethical position to respect learners' realities and needs because it is not authoritarian, manipulative or domesticating (Freire, 1992).

Positionality was also mentioned as an important attribute for critical pedagogues to have. It is not enough for critical educators to come to class, teach, and leave. Education is not neutral to be treated as an automatic and technical process (Sanches, 2021). That is why, educators need to position themselves and let learners know who they are and what they believe. Education is political and directive, but should not be authoritarian or manipulative (Freire, 1992). However, it is not enough to position yourself. It is also important to go further and contextualize this positionality historically and politically (Ortiz et al., 2018). Critical educators who understand and assume their position in the education process should also work towards deconstructing this position along with learners (Tien, 2019). It is not enough to assume this positionality, but it is important to work towards its understanding and deconstruction.

It is not surprising that participants added that ongoing professional development is an important attribute for critical pedagogues. As human beings who are in constant movement and

in transformation (Freire, 2000), educators have an ethical duty to prepare themselves professionally through training, self-reflection and in dialogue with learners and other educators. It is important to be receptive for feedback as much as possible as well.

Finally, participants also added the importance of connecting with their learners emotionally. Learning is not only an intellectual process but also an emotional one because it is not possible to separate the intellectual from the emotional. The experience that learners have in the learning process with their emotions will influence how they learn (Shor, 1992). Critical educators should explore and create emotional bonds with learners in an ethical and responsible way. In summary, the main attributes presented by participants in this study were:

- critical awareness (conscientização),

- respect for learners' realities and different needs,

- positionality,

- social justice orientation,

- ongoing professional development, and

- emotional bond.

Main Influences in Critical Pedagogy

Participants responded who their main influences in critical pedagogy were. Some of the authors were widely known and others were new. It is interesting that participants were very eclectic in their influences going from famous critical pedagogues such as Peter McLaren and Michael Apple and going to contemporary Portuguese scholar committed to decolonial pedagogy, Boaventura Souza Santos, and post-modern authors such as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and social justice champions such as Florestan Fernandes, and Miguel Arroyo. What was surprising was the fact that Henry Giroux who is one of Freire's most important disciples

and current powerhouse in critical pedagogy was not cited by any participant. The explanation might be due to the fact that most participants focused their teaching experiences mainly on non-formal settings and Giroux has influenced more higher education and academia.

Principles of Critical Pedagogy

When discussing principles of critical pedagogy, participants highlighted the importance of commitment to social transformation. If there is one main principle that differentiates critical pedagogy from traditional education, it is certainly its commitment to social transformation and social justice (Breunig, 2009; Katz, 2014; Tarlau, 2015). Participants have repeatedly said how they aimed at making a difference in learners' lives. However, participants also warned about the difference between charity and solidarity. Critical pedagogues focus on transformation and on challenging the status quo. False generosity is a Freirean concept that differentiates social transformation from charity. Freire (2000) explains:

> any situation in which 'A' objectively exploits 'B' or hinders his and her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression. Such a situation in itself constitutes violence, even when sweetened by false generosity, because it interferes with the individual's ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human. (p. 55)

The idea of false generosity is deeply connected to preserving the status quo as it is. That is not what critical pedagogy is about.

According to participants in this study, critical pedagogy is democratic. They added that it is also horizontal and non-hierarchical, it promotes freedom and is free from coercion and authoritarianism. Shor (1992) agrees with participants because democracy is part of his agenda of values for critical pedagogy. According to Shor (1992), critical pedagogy is democratic because educators and learners share power in the process. There are many ways of sharing

power with learners. School administrators, stakeholders, educators, and others can share decision-making processes with learners. Learners should be invited to executive or board meetings and provide their input about topics that concern their learning processes. Discussions about the curriculum can be shared with learners so they can decide on what is best for them and their communities. Processes, such as the participatory budget where learners decide on financial aspects of the school, allow learners to take part in important decisions about their communities. It works as a precious learning tool (Sanches, 2021). This principle is also aligned to the perspective of knowledge democracy that denounces the excluding paradigm of a single Western Canon of Eurocentric knowledge and promotes the incorporation of local knowledge into our education systems. Hall and Tandon (2020) argue that local and marginalized knowledge "should be made available to be harnessed for the larger public good and not for private gain" (p. 22).

Another tenet of critical pedagogy that was cited by participants in this study was collectivity. For participants, collaboration is crucial in education because we cannot transform the world or ourselves in isolation. It is important to work with other learners and stakeholders because by involving different actors, we also add interdisciplinarity to the education process and learn cooperatively across the curriculum (Shor, 1992). Freire (1998) seconds this perspective when he says that "it is important to stress that the breakthrough of a new form of awareness in understanding the world is not the privilege of one person. The experience that makes possible the 'breakthrough' is a 'collective' experience" (p. x). The development of critical awareness does not happen in isolation, but it is a collective process (Fischman, 2020).

Along with that, participants also identified inclusiveness as an important aspect of critical pedagogy for adult educators who want to implement it in their daily practices.

Participants reinforced the idea that adult educators should include everyone and foster a sense of belonging and community by implementing non-threatening strategies. Inclusiveness in connected to humanization because oppressive practices in education dehumanize learners (Freire, 2000). Shor (1998) also reinforced the idea that critical pedagogy is multicultural and should consider learners' cultural diversity. It is crucial that when attempting to promote inclusion in critical pedagogy adult educators discuss and dismantle discourses of power and privilege. Without dismantling privilege or sharing power, it is very rare that real inclusion will happen (McLaren 2003). Page (2016) says that to practice inclusion in critical pedagogy is not an isolated action but a combination of elements such as:

> committing to equity, modeling dialogic and democratic practice, integrating notions of power and privilege in instruction, having an activist mentality, and questioning the status quo, attending to student achievement for the purpose of offsetting asymmetrical power relationships, helping students develop critical thinking skills, and having a deep care for students and community. (p. 136)

Successful Strategies

Participants reported several strategies that they used while implementing critical pedagogy in their teaching practices. It is important to notice here that this study has no intention to prescribe these strategies to other educators. In fact, these practices should serve only as inspiration for other adult educators who desire to implement critical pedagogy in their daily practices. It is clear that the participants in this study did not intend for these strategies to be reproduced in different contexts without further reflection or adaptations. It is important to keep in mind that different contexts require different strategies. However, these strategies can

certainly inspire future adult educators to reflect on their own practices and create and recreate new ones (Breunig, 2009; Shor, 1992).

When looking into the strategies that participants discussed during their interviews, most of these strategies are aligned to critical pedagogy principles but some are not exclusivity of critical pedagogy and are utilized in a variety of different adult education traditions, such as progressive, liberal, or humanistic. If we think of traditional education in one side of the spectrum and critical pedagogy on the other side, most of the strategies reported by the participants in this study are closer to the critical pedagogy pole. For example, two of these reported strategies were: (a) to design and plan your lessons *collectively* and (b) involve the *community*. In critical pedagogy, both educators and learners should construct knowledge democratically and collectively (Franco, 2017; Shor, 1992). Planning and designing your lessons collectively go against the traditional perspective of banking education that keeps power in the hands of the educators or administrators. One step further would be to involve stakeholders and the community in the process. In times of neoliberal threats to democracy and disinformation (Maisuria, 2020; Macrine, 2016), participation and planning education collectively should help and prepare citizens to respond to these challenges (Sanches, 2021). Educators and learners should work together to plan and design meaningful lessons to face the current and future challenges to education, life, and democracy.

An interesting strategy that is closely connected with collectivity and was also mentioned by participants was *getting to know the community where your learners live*. It shows the coherence of participants of this study as it is aligned with both emerged principles of critical pedagogy: democratic process and collectivity. It is important to highlight here that these strategies counter neoliberal practices of education that focus on individualism and

commodification of education. Dahl (2021) explains that "the individualized nature of the learning program makes collective deliberation and the formation of student groups difficult" and that "community groups are generally recognized for an educational approach based on horizontal relationships between learners and educators. Some approaches, such as autonomous popular education initiatives, are consciousness raising and defined by the process of co-constructing knowledge" (p. 88). As it is demonstrated, critical pedagogy practices that are grounded in collective and democratic practices have the potential to counter neoliberal practices in education (Mayo, 2020).

Expanding on principles of democracy and collectivity, participants shared other strategies stating that in critical pedagogy, adult educators need to (a) investigate learners' expectations and needs; (b) use generative words and thematic analysis; and (c) swap focus from educators to learners. These strategies put learners in the centre of the pedagogical practice and support the definitions of learning provided by Mackeracher (2010) who explains that learning is something done *by* learners and not *to* or *for* them. It also respects the main tenets of the progressive orientation for adult education that values "experimentalism, problem-solving, and learning-centred teaching" (Lange, 2021, p. 75). It is also aligned to a humanist orientation of adult education that also places learners in the centre of the education process and strive for self-actualization (Lange, 2006). Nevertheless, it is imperative to underline here that learner-centred approaches that do not involve learners in decision-making process, in planning, or do not dismantle issues of power and oppression lack the essence of critical pedagogy (Freire, 2000; Lange, 2006; Breunig, 2011). On that account, using generative words and thematic analysis bring learners' input to their own education and have the potential to dismantle oppression. Freire (2000) explains that "the investigation of what I have termed the people's 'thematic

universe'- the complex of their 'generative themes' – inaugurates the dialogue of education as the practice of freedom" (p. 96) and adds that "to investigate the generative theme is to investigate people's thinking about reality and people's action upon reality, which is their praxis" (p. 104). In this context, investigating generative words and themes, and thematic analysis constitutes a deliberative process where educators and other stakeholders consult learners and the community on content, processes, methodologies, and concrete needs that adult learners and their community have.

Participants in this study mentioned that two other important strategies were: (a) ask challenging questions to raise critical awareness; and (b) bring popular culture and popular knowledge into your classes to raise critical awareness. Freire's concept of consciousness raising (conscientização) is crucial for critical pedagogy (Freire, 2000; Shor, 1992; Dahl, 2018; Darder, 2020; McKillican, 2020). Developing strategies that would foster the development of critical awareness is an important aspect to be considered by adult educators. It is important to reinforce here that critical awareness, critical consciousness, or *conscientização* should not be reduced to simple technique. As adult educators, we use techniques to promote critical thinking and to raise critical awareness; however, the Freirean concept of conscientização goes beyond any kind of technique or strategy. According to Shor (1992), critical consciousness needs to be embraced by educators and learners with historical and political understanding that the world is unfinished and therefore, it can be changed. Social transformation is crucial for the concept of critical consciousness. It has a collective aspect that needs to be considered.

Participants recommended popular culture to raise critical awareness. Jubas and Liang (2021) define popular culture as "texts that are created for mass audiences. Such texts include television shows, films, songs or music videos, and novels" (105). It is clear that popular culture

is an important pedagogical resource in adult education and critical pedagogy. Jubas and Lian (2021) advise that there is great potential for popular culture to be empowering and raise critical awareness in adult education, but it needs to be consumed critically and not passively. They add that "popular culture is a major part of everyday life and, like all everyday processes and encounters, holds great pedagogical potential in adult learning and education practice and scholarship, especially when employed in the pursuit of critical learning" (p. 110).

Participants recommended the use of arts in critical pedagogy: (a) Use images to generate discussion; (b) use creative writing to inspire and empower; (c) use sketches in critical pedagogy; and (d) use ludic activities. The use of images, creative writing, sketches, ludic activities, or any kind of art-based strategy is aligned with critical pedagogy practices if the purpose is to challenge the status quo (Leavy, 2015). Butterwick (2021) demonstrates in several studies that art and creative expression "can give voice to the discursively unexplainable" and that art is "a powerful medium for achieving social change" (p. 125). Butterwick (2021) points out that arts-based activities have the power "to give expression to marginalized adults' experiences, enabling new identities to emerge, dialogue to happen, community to be created, and self-confidence and resilience to grow" (p. 129). Therefore, using art-based strategies in critical pedagogy have great potential to dismantle oppressive structures in education.

Another strategy that was mentioned in the findings was to *use universal design for learning in critical pedagogy*. Universal design for learning (UDL) applies principles of universal design from the field of architecture to education (Meyer & Rose, 2000). Rogers-Shaw et al. (2018) adds that UDL "is a framework for teaching-learning transaction that conceptualizes knowledge through learner-centered foci emphasizing accessibility, collaboration, and community (p. 20). UDL is an interesting approach to education that offers an important

opportunity to promote inclusion in adult education classes. However, Rogers-Shaw (2018) advises that following UDL principles is not enough to promote social change in adult education. It is necessary to change our ways of thinking to be more inclusive. Aligning UDL with critical pedagogy is an interesting framework to think about the reasons why education is not inclusive and what can be done to make it less exclusive. Questioning the power structures and privileges of abled learners and educators is also crucial to reimagine the ways we learn and teach. It is important to highlight here that UDL focuses on how our curriculum and teaching methods are not inclusive and tries to make it more inclusive. As Rogers-Shaw et al. (2018) explain, UDL "asks educators to reframe their understandings of knowledge and the way that knowledge is operationalized" and "addresses exclusionary educational practice issues and concomitant social justice concerns" (pp. 22-23).

Check your Own Blinders and *Recalibrate Your Strategies when Necessary*

These were strategies that came up in this study. These strategies are aligned with an organic process and self-reflection. It is in the democratic and dialogical nature of critical pedagogy to create and recreate new possibilities. The curriculum should not be a fixed unchangeable entity, nor should one's methodology. As conditions vary and new needs and possibilities are created, adult educators need to engage in a work of self-reflection and self-evaluation to check what needs to continue, stop, or change.

Challenge the Curriculum

Critical pedagogy is underpinned on resistance and activism against oppression (Franco, 2017; Shor, 1992). Therefore, educators who want to implement critical pedagogy in their classes need to challenge the curriculum that is prescribed to learners whenever this curriculum reinforces oppression by promoting a banking model of education (Freire, 2000). One of the

ways that this can be achieved is by empowering learners to participate in decision-making and deliberation processes. However, this is not a passive process. Educators should engage learners in learning how to participate and empower them with necessary knowledge to make informed decisions about their own future and that of their communities (Sanches, 2021).

Be Realistic about Goals and *Work with Small Groups in Critical Pedagogy*

It is not surprising that in a neoliberal era, educators are pressured to achieve unrealistic goals. It is important to align these goals and objectives to learners' needs and frequently re-evaluate them during the process. Again, in neoliberalism, it is more and more common to commodify education with the objective of profits. Education institutions are often managed as a company with business principles. Large classes are the norm in formal settings, especially in higher education. Working with smaller groups of learners enable the educator to get to know their learners' needs and work to achieve their objectives.

Contextualize Content as Much as Possible and *Connect Theory and Practice.*

These strategies are very important in education in general and are aligned with a progressive and humanist orientation to adult education (Cranton, 2013; Lange, 2003). They are not reserved to critical pedagogy but are also in agreement with critical pedagogy principles. Hamalian and Cooke (2021) explain that theory encourages learners to question issues of power in their learning environments and invite us "to probe theoretical foundations of lifelong learning and adult education" (p. 291). This is a crucial exercise in adult education, especially in social justice-oriented practices. Connecting what is being taught with the learners' universe and understanding how this knowledge can empower learners and their communities to question and find solutions to dismantle oppressive practices and achieve social justice is an essential portion of critical pedagogy.

As we can see, all strategies that have emerged in this study have their value in general education but especially in social justice-oriented practices. Reflecting on strategies that have been used by other adult educators is a great exercise towards self-development and finding creative solutions for educators' own contexts and realities. These strategies should not be used out of contexts but as Freire has said, educators should recreate and adapt them as much as possible.

Challenges and Issues in Critical Pedagogy

Education is a challenging endeavour. Educators and learners face issues and they frequently have to overcome them on their own. Some of these issues are structural and can only be surmounted through a mobilizing and collective process. The literature has already identified some of these issues and attempted to address some of them (Breunig, 2005, 2009; Bybee, 2020; Chlapoutaki & Dinas, 2016; English, 2006; Finger, 2005; Johnston, 1999; Katz, 2014; Lange, 2013; Lather, 1998; Thomson-Bunn, 2014; Tien, 2019). Nevertheless, participants in this study mentioned some of the issues that they face on a daily basis while implementing critical pedagogy in their education practices. Additionally, participants also provided a few strategies that they have used to address some of these issues while implementing critical pedagogy.

Drop-out Rate is High in Adult Education

Participants reported issues with retaining adult learners in their classes. There are several reasons that make adults give up their classes. It is very common in adult education that educators do not apply adult education principles while teaching. Adults are self-directed and require unique approaches to teaching and learning (Knowles et al., 2015; Jarvis, 2004). Structural issues such as neoliberalism force adult learners out of education because of lack of funding and support (Sanches, 2021). Although, structural and systemic issues are difficult to

address, participants advised that working collectively and persisting are strategies they have used in their own practices.

Mobilizing People is Challenging and Pandemic Issues

Participants reported that one of the objectives of critical pedagogy is to promote social justice. Therefore, one of the ways to achieve this goal is to mobilize people to fight for the rights and to promote democracy and citizenship. Participants reported that it is very challenging to mobilize people in the quest for social justice. COVID-19 has exacerbated social inequalities that have affected participation in adult education (James & Thériault, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). It became even harder to mobilize because of isolation, social restrictions, and disruption. Many social justice-oriented organizations saw the demobilization of their members. However, some movements have kept their actions even during the pandemic. Participants have also advised critical educators to not wait for the ideal situation. It is important to persist during adversity because these challenges are also opportunities to find new strategies that work to mobilize people and reinforce democracy.

Critical Pedagogy Requires a Significant Amount of Work, Educators Struggle to Adapt their practices and Critical Pedagogy is not Well Accepted in Academia

There are many reasons why critical pedagogy is challenging and one of these reasons is the significant amount of work that educators have to put into it as it has been reported by the participants in this research. Chlapoutaki and Dinas (2016, p. 92) explain that the lack of "a clear teaching model" in critical pedagogy is the source of educators' hesitations and uncertainties. A teaching model prescribes strategies that might not work in all scenarios and also impose specific ways of doing and views of the world. However, learning about strategies used by critical educators who implement critical pedagogy in a daily basis may work as inspiration for other

educators (Breunig, 2009). It is possible to re-imagine and re-create practices in different contexts (Freire & Faundez, 2014; Shor, 2020). Creating a teaching model for critical pedagogy is not adequate because of its basic tenets of democracy, inclusion, and social justice.

Participants also report that educators struggle to adapt their practices and that may also be due to a lack of teaching model. However, it is reported by Chlapoutaki and Dinas (2016) that many educators struggle to balance between a system that imposes a non-democratic curriculum with standardized exams and the implementation of critical pedagogy tenets such as dismantling the status quo and fighting for social justice. They also add that many educators struggle with the implementation of critical pedagogy because they themselves were educated in traditional education systems and this was also reported by the participants in this research. Critical pedagogy is an opportunity for learners as well as educators to challenge their perspectives and traditional banking education (Freire, 2000).

It was also reported that critical pedagogy is never taught at teaching training courses and many participants had to learn about it on their own. Many of them say that they had never heard of Paulo Freire before or if they had heard about him, it was just briefly. Not acknowledging the relevance of critical pedagogy for future educators definitely shows that critical pedagogy is not well accepted in academia. Its disruptive essence might shy curriculum developers away in an attempt to conserve power and the status quo.

Critical Pedagogy can be Destabilizing

Critical pedagogy classes can be destabilizing because it deals with dismantling systems of oppression and may also disrupt many ingrained beliefs that learners and educators might have. Challenging common assumptions may destabilize learners and educators. As one participant has reported, one way to address is to make sure that participants are actively engaged

in dialogue in order to identify limit-situations and imagine new untested feasibilities (Alvez &

Muniz, 2019; Freitas, 2005; Sanches & Gomes, 2021). Another issue with the implementation of

critical pedagogy is to connect prescribed educational textbooks or activities to learners' realities

in a heterogenous class. As reported by Chlapoutaki and Dinas (2016), even though different

perspectives in a heterogenous class with different cultures might generate conflicts and trigger

unpleasant reactions, it is also an opportunity to challenge these perspectives and assumptions

and need to be carried on responsibly by educators and learners. They also report that learners

will adapt or reject the new framework that is being developed in critical pedagogy.

Language in Critical Pedagogy is Difficult

A common subject that participants brought up during this study is the fact that the

language used in critical pedagogy is very challenging. This issue had been reported before by

Johnston (1999). The language used in Freire's books, especially Pedagogy of the Oppressed,

may be challenging for someone who is not in the field of education or social sciences. Terms

such as oppression, untested feasibility, limit-acts, sub-oppressors, among many others demand

research and time to be fully understood. However, many authors have dedicated their time to

discussing several of these terms. For example, Darder (2018) *wrote the student guide to Freire's*

pedagogy of the oppressed in an attempt to contextualize it and support learners with language

and important information to understand the context that *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was written

and how it is still relevant today.

Power and Hierarchy are Barriers to Critical Pedagogy and Managing Stakeholders'
Expectations is Arduous

Overcoming power structures in education is not an easy task. Participants reported

having to face hierarchical structures in several settings. It is also very arduous to manage

stakeholders' expectations. In the workplace, for example, Shan (2021) stated that "there is a multitude of interests and perspectives … including but not limited to those of employers, managers, trainers, policymakers, educators, unions, workers, and researchers" (p. 315). Chlapoutaki and Dinas (2016) added that increasing demands of stakeholders concerning content and teaching methods undermine critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy cannot be standardized as one class varies considerably from the other. However, these barriers should be considered as valuable components of critical pedagogy because it enables the identification of power structures and politics that underpin social practices (Chlapoutaki & Dinas, 2016). Participants recommended outwitting the system by challenging these power structures and even breaking undemocratic imposed rules. However, participants also advised about their ethical responsibility towards their learners when challenging these structures. Hiding your vegetables in the soup was a creative way to bring dialogue and critical pedagogy principles in structured learning and teaching settings. Shan (2021) reported that "research shows the power of learning when educators, researchers, community, and other cultural workers engage marginalized groups to confront power relations at the global and local levels as well as in the colonial history implicating Canadian society today" (p. 321). Challenging power structures is a basic tenet of critical pedagogy. Despite being challenging and arduous, educators and learners should work collectively to find ways to overcome them.

Assessment of Teaching and Learning

In this discussion, the term assessment will be preferred to evaluation following Mubayrik (2020)'s definitions. Assessment is a continuous and systematic action to verify learners' progress and generate data for learners' support. While evaluation is more common at final stages of programs to account for grades, outcomes, and decision-making levels. As

Mubayrik (2020) explains, adult educators should focus on "assessment for learning rather than assessment of learning" (p. 11).

Assessments and evaluations have become bureaucratic instruments to comply with regulations that are created by policy makers who have never been on the ground as practitioners (Carnelossi & Piassa, 2016). Kahl (2013) says that traditional ideologies about assessment follow a positivistic epistemology designed to evaluate truths of the world. Kahl (2013) explains that traditional forms of assessment are aligned to a banking model of education (Freire, 2000) and that critical educators normally have a negative perception of assessment and see them "not as a tool that promotes learning but a means of control by outside agendas dictating that learning should be done in an objective, prescriptive way" (p. 2611). It is also important to highlight how neoliberalism has shaped assessments to comply with standardizing efforts and undermining efforts to challenge the status quo, injustices, or oppression.

It is imperative for an emancipatory education having a sound foundation on critical pedagogy to implement democratic forms of assessment. Critical pedagogy principles should guide not only teaching and learning strategies but also assessment approaches. Therefore, the act of evaluating needs to be rethought and planned in a way that it includes all learners and educators. Shor (1992) advocated for a kind of assessment that is centred on learners and focuses on "narrative grading, portfolio assessments, group projects and performances, individual exhibitions, and essay examinations that promote critical thinking instead of standardized or short-answer tests" (p. 144).

Participants in this study were asked about their assessment experiences and strategies. Their responses varied consistently according to their own contexts and limitations such as

settings, hierarchical structures, and power. However, participants' responses are great examples of creative ways to implement critical pedagogy assessment strategies.

Assess Learners in their Contexts, Informally and in Solidarity

Assessment in critical pedagogy needs to be situated in learners' contexts and experiences. It is very coherent to evaluate learners using the same strategies that were used to teach them. Because of structural constraints, it is common to promote critical pedagogy principles in class and use mandatory and standardized evaluation methods. Standardization of assessment and evaluation tools are not aligned to democratic practices in critical pedagogy because it promotes generalization and homogenization and does not consider learners' needs or limitations. Participants also said that educators should assess their learners informally using class activities to check their learning in dialogue. Solidarity was also mentioned. Formal and standardized evaluations promote competition among learners. Because critical pedagogy has a horizontal perspective, educators and learners should work together to evaluate their processes. Assessment should be performed *with* learners and not *for* learners (Keesing-Styles, 2003). Sousa et al. (2013) alert to the fact that it is crucial to advise adult learners about the meaning of evaluation. Learners' understanding of the evaluation process is rarely considered. Frequently, learners do not understand the real meaning of evaluative activities and how they affect their learning. Sousa et al. (2013) investigated learners' comprehension of the meaning of evaluation and found out that most learners understand assessment as an instrument to measure learning and a tool to classify learners. This confirms that dialogue is crucial for a democratic kind of assessment that is consistent to critical pedagogy.

Use Activities to Evaluate Learners' Individual and Collective Conscientization Process, Self-Assessment, and Otherness as Assessment

Assessment of learners' mental phenomena such as creativity is not an easy task because most of times, educators and learners do not agree on the definition of important terms (Mubayrik, 2020). It is important to be clear on what is being assessed so that both learners and educators have a positive experience. Mubayrik (2020) explains that adult learners deem reflection and immediate feedback as very important in evaluation.

Self-assessment is a very important strategy that can be used by both learners and educators. Developing self-awareness of your learning and teaching process allows learners to think of what works for them and find new ways of learning. For educators, self-reflection can contribute to planning, finding gaps, and acting on them (Santos, 2006). In a qualitative research with graduate students, Marienau (1999) found out that "self-assessment serves as a powerful instrument for experiential learning" (p. 135). Participants in this study reported that engaging in self-assessment is important for the evaluation process; however, it is not enough because learners and educators need to engage in action-reflection-action.

In the assessment of the conscientization process, participants mentioned that part of the process should be assessing learners' perception of otherness. According to Guttormsen (2018), otherness is directly linked to identity construction and is "expressed through conceptual markers of the boundaries of what constitutes US, as opposed to Them (p. 316). The idea of otherness, as mentioned in this study, is to put yourself in the shoes of others or even constitute yourself as the others, and recognize yourself in the other, even when there are physical, mental, and cultural differences (Molar, 2011). According to participants, assessing the ability of learners to understand and put themselves in the shoes of others is an important action in critical pedagogy.

Portfolio, Follow-up, and Observation as Assessment Tools

Assessment in critical pedagogy can have a new perspective and work to the advantage of learners and educators (Khal, 2013). As it has already been said before, assessment should work in favor of educators and learners, it should focus on its diagnostics and formative forms to provide timely, and critical feedback. Participants said that assessment of the development of critical awareness in critical pedagogy can be done by the creation of portfolios where learners can add their reflections, and activities generated during the learning process. The use of portfolio in adult education "enhances and engenders different kinds of learning" (Brown, 2002, p. 229). Additionally, following-up after a learning session in a short or long term can also benefit learners and educators to see how teaching and learning have affected learners' lives and perspectives. It also supports future planning. Observations were also mentioned by participants as a method of diagnostic of what learners' needs are or what strategies are being effective or not. Building on Freire (2000), Kahl (2013) adds that "praxis is the culmination of all learning" (p. 2623) and cites autoethnographic writing as a tool that can also help assessment for learning.

Reasons to Practice Critical Pedagogy in a Freirean Tradition

Recently, with the rise of anti-democratic movements around the world, the deepening of conflicts related to racism, gender, sexuality, class, and other social injustices, some educators have opted to develop strategies to intentionally work towards social justice in education (Fernandes & Andrade, 2020). One important point is to understand what moves educators to be agents for social transformation. Pantić (2015) identified four elements that influence teacher agency for social justice: a) sense of purpose, commitment, and motivation; b) competence and awareness of social issues; c) autonomy, individual and collective efficacy, and agency; and d) reflexivity of their own action and social contexts. Some participants in this study demonstrated

that they are aligned with Pantić (2015) indications of what moves teachers towards social justice.

Teacher agency is crucial because "what and how they teach in their classrooms is directly associated with students' growth as critical citizens who engage in activities to improve inequality and achieve social justice" (Min. et al., 2021). In a research with 16 social justice-oriented teachers who implemented Culturally Responsive Teaching in their classes, Min. et al. (2021) found out a few elements that strengthen teachers' agency. The first was collaboration with colleagues and community. This element was important because colleagues and the community supported their actions. Support from administration also mentioned because it helped to bring institutional barriers down. The next element was teaching effectiveness. When teachers saw the results of their practices it strengthened their move to carry on. Student agency was also indicated as important for teacher agency because learners' enthusiasm and engagement motivated teachers.

Concerning their reasons to implement critical pedagogy, some of participants' responses in this study corroborate with Pantić (2015) and Min. et al. (2021), such as willingness to diminish social injustices, the need for citizenship education, increasing inequalities, challenging the status quo, emancipation, and social transformation. Other responses indicated by participants were that critical pedagogy made sense to them, emerged naturally, and enhanced learners' meaningful learning. It is interesting that the reasons mentioned by participants in this study relate deeply with the personal motivations. They do not provide responses concerning structural aspects such as support of administrators or learners.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In times of increasing neoliberalism, widespread disinformation, and ongoing attacks against democratic processes around the world, critical thinking and social justice are important aspects to be considered in the process of teaching and learning. Critical pedagogy in a Freirean tradition equips educators and learners with important concepts, principles, and tools to confront inequalities and to generate innovative strategies and actions that allow one to cope with current issues in education and beyond. The aim of this study was to investigate how adult education practitioners implemented critical pedagogy in their daily practices. The main research question was:

- How do adult educators who self-identify as critical pedagogues in a Freirean tradition implement critical pedagogy principles into their daily practices in non-formal settings?

The specific research questions were:

- What is critical pedagogy for them? How do they define it? Why do they self-identify as critical pedagogues? What characteristics should a critical pedagogue have? Who are the main authors who influenced them?

- What successful strategies do they use in their daily practices? What challenges do they face while trying to implement critical pedagogy principles? How do they overcome them?

- What components/principles of critical pedagogy do they give more emphasis to? Why?

- How do they assess the effectiveness of their actions?

In chapter one (Introduction), the rationale of the study was explained and demonstrated through the current global scenario of dangers and attacks against the democratic world, ongoing depletion of resources and investments in public education because of an aggressive neoliberal agenda and escalating manipulation of people's opinions using disinformation, especially in social media. Critical pedagogy and its emphasis on critical thinking and social justice was deemed relevant to education as a potent, effective, and urgent effort in the quest for a more just and democratic world.

In chapter two (Literature review), adult education and its history were put into perspective in Canada, Quebec, and Brazil. In Canada, adult education has a strong tradition in social movements and social justice organizations such as the Mechanics' Institute, Women's Institute, and the Antigonish Movement. Its ongoing legacy is alive in several organizations and association such as the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE) and live through the efforts, courage, and determination of their members (researchers, scholars, educators, practitioners). In Brazil, youth and adult education (EJA) was never a priority for governments and consequently, was strongly affected by lack of structure and failure of formal primary and secondary school systems. Having a diverse clientele, young adults and adults, EJA in Brazil requires individualized teaching approaches that promotes respect and empathy towards educators and learners more than never before. In this chapter, important terms and concepts in adult education were established and traditional orientations and philosophies of adult education were also reviewed. Finally, the main principles of critical pedagogy in a Freirean tradition were discussed as well as its important theoretical concepts, its possible flaws and issues, and Shor's agenda of values for a social justice-oriented practice.

Chapter three (Methodology) detailed how the study was conducted and the justification of choice of methodology and methods. Qualitative research was selected because of its reflective potential and understanding of multiples perspectives and complexities of the teaching and learning processes. A detailed research framework explicated the several elements that constituted this study: ontology, epistemology, axiology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods. Having a relativist ontology enabled the questioning of a single and universal truth and opened amazing perspectives of realities that are socially constructed, complex and always changing. A constructionist epistemology guided the development of the research questions aligned with a Freirean epistemological perspective that saw the world as a result of human actions and because of that could be transformed. Coming from a value-laden axiology, this study put high importance on ethical values and principles. Three theoretical perspectives guided this study: interpretivism, critical and pragmatism. Interpretivism opposes positivism and questions beliefs of a universal reality. Critical/transformative perspectives question the status quo, issues of power and injustices. Pragmatism brought a crucial practical aspect to this study in looking and searching for effective practices in social justice. An arts-based approach supported the use of images and artifacts in this study. Data was collected using in-depth interviews, questionnaires, and collection of images and artifacts. A thematic analysis of the data was performed based on an inductive approach looking for emerging codes, categories, themes, and concepts.

The purpose of chapter four (findings) was to present and amplify adult educators' voices. This study tried to be faithful to participants' speeches and reported verbatim data. The main objective was to value participants' voices and bolster them as much as possible. Participants' images and artifacts were also used to add or corroborate to their interviews. The

main results reported in this chapter were: definitions of critical pedagogy, attributes that critical pedagogues should develop, important principles of critical pedagogy, successful strategies, challenges and assessment in critical pedagogy, and reasons and motivations that adult educators have when choosing social justice-oriented adult education.

In chapter five (discussion), some of the main findings were put into perspective with the current literature and practices of critical pedagogy today. This reflective process helped to deepen the understanding how critical pedagogy is implemented in adult education in non-formal settings. This undertaking brought light to the findings and made it possible for readers, current or future educators, and other stakeholders to appraise the effectiveness of these strategies or the possibility of applying some of them to their daily practices, or re-creating others to their own contexts or even ending up to the conclusion that they are not applicable to their situations.

Contributions to the field

This study contributed in many ways to advance knowledge and practice of critical pedagogy in the field of adult education. This study brought the perspectives of adult educators in non-formal settings to light. Research in these settings is very limited and this study highlighted the richness of the interactions and practices that are in place in these very diverse learning environments and more importantly, the findings showcase the commitment, passion, resourcefulness, and resiliency of pedagogues working in non-formal settings. It is important to say that this study shows that despite facing countless institutional constraints, even in non-formal settings, practitioners still manage to find creative ways to implement some levels of critical pedagogy principles in their daily practices.

This research also contributes to the study of the implementation of critical pedagogy into the 'real' world. Several studies focus on theoretical perspectives of critical pedagogy and lack

descriptions of strategies and tools that could inspire other educators or provoke further discussions on its implementation. The purpose is not to prescribe techniques or methods but to be inspired and reinvigorated by these devoted and enthusiastic adult educators who generously shared their perspectives with the purpose to stimulate current and future practitioners to commit to social justice-oriented practices.

Moreover, by talking to practitioners on the ground, this study amplified the voices of educators who have made sound contributions to adult education in their contexts. Their voices have the potential to empower future practitioners with encouragement and curiosity to challenge current issues in education.

Implications

Implications vary among different actors in the learning and teaching process in adult education. In this study, implications focus on current or future educators who want to implement critical pedagogy in their daily practices. However, implications extend to policymakers, who can find definitions of critical pedagogy important for educational policies, for example. Stakeholders may also benefit from this study given that they can get examples and recommendations, for instance, to improve the evaluation strategies of their adult learning programs. There are also important implications for adult learners who may find great elements in critical pedagogy to get actively involved in their education and further encourage and drive their peers and educators towards social justice-oriented education practices.

Some of these implications are:

1. It is important to name and define the actions that learners and educators are sharing during the teaching and learning process. Definitions of critical pedagogy and of critical pedagogy elements should be negotiated among learners, educators,

and stakeholders (community). In this study, participants identified a few aspects that should be considered in this process: non-hierarchy, social justice, learners' experience, life stance towards learners, and an organic process.

2. Critical pedagogues share important attributes as adult educators. In this study, the main attributes that were deemed important for educators to have or develop were: critical awareness, respect for learners' realities and different needs, positionality, orientation towards social justice, ongoing professional development, and emotional bond.

3. This study demonstrated that when planning critical pedagogy implementation, it is critical to have a few principles in mind, as described by participants: commitment to social transformation, democratic process, collectivity, and inclusiveness.

4. The main strategies described in this study enable all actors involved in the implementation of critical pedagogy to get inspiration of tested and experimented approaches to innovate their practices and impact their teaching and learning contexts.

5. Critical pedagogy is not exempt of difficulties and issues. Its implementation may be challenging. Learning about some of these challenges that have already been perceived in practice may benefit future practitioners to predict and plan actions to address some of these hindrances. Additionally, learning how experienced adult educators have approached them may contribute to planning teaching and learning.

6. Assessment should not be a separate entity in the education process. It is an integral part of critical pedagogy and should be seen as teaching opportunities to

promote and reinforce democratic stances. Assessment should be coherent to critical pedagogy principles and place learners at the centre. Examples of assessment activities used in critical pedagogy are observations, self-assessment, and portfolios. Assessment in critical pedagogy should also be focused on solidarity, not in competitiveness.

7. Motivations to engage in critical pedagogy vary considerably. However, the respect for learners and the promotion of social justice have been common reasons guiding adult education practitioners in the implementation of critical pedagogy in their contexts.

Limitations

This study does not intend to be the last word in the implementation of critical pedagogy in adult education. Because of its nature, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to other contexts or fields of study. Twelve (12) participants do not represent the whole body of critical pedagogues in adult education. In qualitative research, like this study, the intention is to create an in-depth study of issues and promote dialogue to develop special understanding and perspectives of the phenomenon.

One important thing to consider in this study was the fact that participants had experiences in a wide range of settings and were not limited to non-formal ones. Despite having instructed participants to focus only on their experiences in non-formal education, it was sometimes difficult to clearly differentiate among settings. Participants also taught learners of different age groups that could have also influenced their responses and perspectives.

Directions for Future Research

While this study has interviewed adult educators, who are experienced practitioners of critical pedagogy in non-formal settings, the examination of learners' perspectives would be important to obtain a deeper understanding and different points of views. Thus, future researchers could benefit from an exploration of learners' perspectives and contrast them with educators' perceptions. This could contribute for better planning and more learner focused strategies in critical pedagogy.

Future researchers could also contribute to the field by investigating how critical pedagogy is implemented in specific settings such as the workplace. In this case, by narrowing the settings, more specific and meaningful strategies, or particular issues would emerge and this way expand the knowledge in the field.

Chapter 7: Reflections

The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on the process that brought me here today. I intend to share what I learned and the insights that I had during the many phases of this research. Having undertaken research for a PhD during the COVID pandemic meant that I needed to adapt to a new reality and use technology more ethically and intensively during the research process, especially during data collection.

First Steps

It is no surprise that starting a PhD brings you many expectations and feelings. During the first days, the excitement of meeting new colleagues and professors would frequently give space to the fear of the unknown and of what was expected from me. The impostor syndrome or that feeling that you do not belong to a place was frequently present during my first classes and during my first experiences in the research process. I remember that I wanted to work harder than anyone else to prove that I deserved to be in the PhD program. It was exhausting. However, what really mattered as I progressed into the program was the support system that I developed with colleagues, professors, committee members, and people outside the program, such as family and friends. Having a connection to a major association in my area of research was also crucial to me. While doing research in adult education, being an active member of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE) gave me the support that I needed to understand what was going on in the field through their annual conferences and gave me confidence to be part of their executive board as a student and Quebec regional representative and be amongst outstanding and recognized adult education professionals in Canada and worldwide. Little by little, my impostor syndrome was replaced with more confidence and greater sense of belonging in academia and in professional bodies. However, I would be lying if I

did not acknowledge that this feeling of not belonging would come back from time to time, especially when a new challenge was ahead of me. In these situations, the best resources I had was to ask directions and advice from my support network. It is important to state here that there were moments that they believed more in me than myself. So, if there is a piece of advice that I could give to anyone thinking about joining or having recently joined a PhD, it would be: develop a support network! You will definitely need it.

In addition to this support system, being part of academic life was essential to strengthen my understanding of how universities operate and how myself, as a student, would be able to navigate its many complex intricacies. Being a student representative in the Department of Education Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Association (DOEIGSA), the main student association in my department, was important to understand how policies within the university work and how students are affected by them. It was also an incredible opportunity to interact with different student associations. Along with that, sitting in the organizing committee of the Graduate Symposium in the Department of Education (GSDE), first as a keynote speaker recruiter and outreach committee member, and later, as a co-chair for two years, was important to solidify my academic experience. Sitting in meetings with stakeholders and planning the symposium also boosted my confidence and created momentum for me to carry on in the program. When COVID hit us hard, we had to cancel the 2020 symposium due to a university lockdown one day before the main event. I was exhausted and humbled by this experience. I also felt more motivated to organize a virtual and successful 2021 graduate student symposium (GSDE2021). See Figure 19 for the posters of these events.

Figure 19

Posters of GSDE 2020 | 2021

Note. GSDE2020 was called off due to COVID restrictions. GSDE2021 successfully took place virtually on March 13, 2021.

An invaluable experience that I had during my PhD was when I was able to celebrate Paulo Freire's centenary anniversary by organizing a joint pre-conference with CASAE, Concordia University and Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) during the international research conference Adult Education in Global Times (AEGT2021). It was fundamental for my research as I was in contact with Freirean scholars and Freirean practitioners from all over the world who shared their experiences and hopes for the future (see Figure 20). Organizing a conference is not easy, especially when you are doing your PhD, but it is certainly a life-changing opportunity.

Figure 20

Pre-conference on Paulo Freire

Note.

During my PhD, I worked as a teaching assistant for different professors and for a variety of courses in the department of education. Working with professors who trusted me and involved me in all phases of planning a course, such as developing a syllabus, analysing textbooks, grading assignments, providing feedback to students, and contributing to class discussions, were all experiences that have shaped me as a confident educator today. There were challenging times when grading and commenting assignments, and sometimes being challenged by students; however, having professors' support and advice helped me sharpen my feedback skills.

In sum, I learned a lot from these experiences and developed many transferrable skills and competencies. But above all, what really stayed with me was the interaction with my peers, professors, and stakeholders in general. These interactions humanized the doctoral process and made it possible for me to get to this moment.

Choosing/Defining my Research Questions/Topic

When I applied to the PhD program, I had a tentative research topic that I wanted to investigate. As I advanced in the program, and took the classes and the tutorials, I learned that I would have to adapt and change my research plans several times on the way. I remember that it took me almost two years in the program to finally shape and understand exactly what I was looking for. In the beginning, I thought that I knew what I wanted to research, but time showed me that it would have to be altered many times. It was through many discussions with my PhD peers, supervisors, professors and learning more about the many issues in the field with practitioners on the ground that I was able to piece together my research questions. Therefore, for me, it was not an 'aha' moment, but more like a constructive process where many actors contributed for me to be able to realize what my real intentions were in research. One important tool that helped me a lot in understanding my role in research was collage. Through the process of asking crucial and important questions and answering them through collage, I was able to see aspects of my personal journey that brought me to the PhD and that would impact the research. See Figure 21 where I share some of these collage exercises.

Figure 21

Collage Exercise

Note. These exercises were done at McGill University during my Qualitative Research course with Professor Lynn Butler-Kisber.

When I first learned about critical pedagogy, many years ago, it immediately made sense to me, and I made efforts to apply it to my daily practices as an English as a Second Language instructor in primary and secondary schools in Brazil. I was enthusiastic to bring a critical perspective to my classes. However, I encountered many barriers. Questioning the status quo was never something that was received well in the schools where I used to teach, but I felt like the students really appreciated my efforts to bring discussions to promote critical awareness of the hegemony of the English language and how that affected my students' lives.

More recently, as a result of neoliberal practices, there has been an increase of misinformation on social media, and the rise of extremism and intolerance worldwide. I was deeply moved to learn about how 'fake news' was affecting and undermining democratic processes and causing loss of social rights and increasing social injustices. Inevitably, I saw critical pedagogy as an important paradigm to provide educators with a framework to understand our current issues and address

them by helping learners develop a critical perspective and to act and to struggle for social justice. I chose to speak with adult educators who self-identified as critical pedagogues in a Freirean tradition in non-formal settings because of the importance of their work to strengthen our democracy by educating informed citizens who will make important decisions that will affect everyone's lives. Non-formal education is very vast and flexible. I learned that, in non-formal settings, even if educators have institutional constraints that limit their agency, they still have some freedom to do more than in highly controlled formal institutions. I was looking for practitioners' creative solutions to implement critical perspectives in their daily teaching and learning practices to inspire future educators. It is important to reinforce here that my intention was never to reinvent the wheel, but to talk to critical educators about their practices, about what worked for them and their learners, and what could inspire future educators to create and recreate their own critical practices and strategies. This is crucial in critical pedagogy as Freire himself repeatedly asked not to be copied but reinvented.

Collecting Data During COVID Pandemic

The use of communication tools, such as Skype, Zoom, Meet or WhatsApp, were already established methods of teaching and learning in online education and a few courses in academic settings. Webinars and YouTube transmission of conferences were also commonplace in academia. During the COVID pandemic, the use of these tools was intensified exponentially as educators and learners were sent home and asked to continue their studies online. Educators and learners who were not used to these methods had to adapt quickly. However, ethically, the issue was deeper and became a matter of social justice. Many were left behind on the way. Not everyone had access to a fast speed internet at home or had compatible devices which supported the ever-increasing number of applications and software necessary to keep going. I remember

having to migrate a course from in-person to online in less than a week. I was encouraged by learners' resilience and willingness to complete their courses and degrees. However, it was crucial, for everyone's success, to implement a series of accommodations and adaptations to reflect this new reality. Assignments needed to be redefined. Delivery activities and teaching strategies had to be rethought and revisited.

Concerning my own research, COVID affected how I had originally planned to collect data. After I received the ethical certificate that allowed me to get in touch with participants, I realized that recruiting participants online would require more efforts than I had previously predicted. At first, I attempted to communicate with potential participants directly or through their education institution. However, I had a very low return rate as everyone was busy trying to survive this new reality in their own contexts and settings. It was necessary to find new ways to recruit participants for this study. One strategy I used was to find participants in community groups on social media, such as Facebook or WhatsApp. I was then able to recruit a few participants who accepted to participate in the research. At this point, I decided to use the snowball process of searching new participants, and that was very successful. Some participants recommended new potential participants and so on. Following this method, I was able to interview 12 educators for this research.

Most interviews took place using Zoom. However, some participants did not have access to Zoom in their devices. I had to adapt and use Team or WhatsApp a few times. Another challenge was to obtain a signed consent form as participants would have to learn how to add their signature to a PDF or print it in paper, sign it and then scan it to send it back to me. It was an added burden for the participants. I had many times to guide participants on how to perform these actions so that I could have all consent forms signed and sent back to me. I am so grateful

and appreciate all participants' efforts and resilience. I also remember that a few participants who had to leave their homes and find a place with reliable internet to be able to participate in the interviews. Others did not own a computer capable of using these tools and needed to resort to a cell phone. On several occasions, the interview needed to be interrupted because the cell phone needed to be recharged or because of internet instability. So, an interview would last longer than expected because these issues needed to be resolved on the go. Flexibility was crucial to collect data virtually. However, I do not believe that it compromised the quality of the data that was collected. On many occasions, I felt the participants were very engaged and wanted to get any issues sorted out. By working and finding solutions together, we developed a sense of community and trust, which definitely led us to deeper and more meaningful interviews. As the researcher, I was the one who had to finalize the interview otherwise participants would have carried on and on. In sum, I do not think that collecting data over communication tools online was prejudicial to the research. In fact, it was a lot of more work to adapt and work on unpredicted issues, but at the end, the result was extremely positive. Most participants demonstrated their appreciation to participate and felt it was positive to talk and reflect about their practices, especially during the Pandemic.

Some Participants' Contexts

Before starting the data collection, I had no idea on how to create rapport with participants and ask them to open their hearts and minds to share with me their practices and beliefs. I learned that it was important to respect their time, their history, culture, and social conditions. Once I gained their trust, they would generously offer me much more than I was expecting. I selected five participants for me to write a little about their contexts and their stories. Here are five very short stories of some of my participants. Although most participants

expressively said they wanted me to use their real names in the research, I chose to use pseudonyms or call them only participants to comply to ethical requirements.

Tim. Tim is a Freirean critical pedagogue in a hacker's space. He works with adults who want to expand their knowledge in computing, software, and hardware. Overall, Tim's practices of conscientization and social transformation are to empower his learners by installing free software in their computers so that they do not have to pay for expensive commercial software. Tim also teaches his learners how to properly operate software, such as Linus. He explained that it is very rewarding to participate and to transform his learners' lives with the power of technology. During the COVID pandemic, Tim saw many challenges and opportunities. It was difficult to keep the group of learners engaged during the Pandemic; so, mobilization strategies needed to be reformulated. An example of engaging learners was the fact that front-line health specialists in their community lacked security equipment; so, the hacker's space decided to mobilize their members and wide community to design and create face shields using 3-D printers.

Mat. Mat is a proud Freirean popular educator with many years of experience in formal and non-formal settings. They were responsible for the implementation of a reading and writing literacy program for adult learners in a fishing community. This program was crucial for the fishing people to obtain their navigation permits and necessary documentation to continue in the profession. An avid reader of Freire's books and pedagogies, Mat always wanted to have an impact experience where they could apply critical pedagogy principles in real life. Among the several barriers that they faced in the implementation of this program, Mat spoke about the relationship with sponsors and stakeholders who many times wanted to impose their world view

in the curriculum. One of them even removed sponsorship because they did not want learners to have political literacy education in their classes.

      Jill. Jill went to get her education degree when she was 27 years old. Having experienced adult education in her own life, she became an adult educator herself. Jill has vast experience working with female inmates in prisons. Their greatest challenge has been to implement critical pedagogy principles in a Freirean tradition in such hostile environment. However, Jill explained that although it is challenging it is possible and she has been able to implement it with huge success. Jill has developed a project called Lived Experiences in a Peace Building Circle that focuses on restorative justice and the strengthening of affection with the self and other inmates. According to Jill, being Freirean is a life stance, it is your positionality towards life, no matter where you are, or what setting you are teaching, it accompanies you and is applicable from early childhood education to prison education.

      Eve. Eve is part of an amazing project that provides education in a hospital environment. She works with victims of scalping accidents. Her learners are young women who have to be away from school during a very long treatment. This project, *Projeto Acolher*, provides education and support for family members who also have to leave their communities, lose their jobs and need to stay in hospital accompanying the person during treatment. Every year, they organize their curriculum around Freire's critical pedagogy by selecting generative words such as beautifulness, lovingness, and other words that reflect their learners' needs during their healing process. During the pandemic, Eve explained that their greatest challenge was technology. Their learners' internet connection and devices were very precarious, and the challenge was to keep in touch with learners from a distance. However, these obstacles did not prevent them from carrying on with such a beautiful social justice-oriented project.

Val. Val is an avid adult educator who taught construction workers on site to read and write. Part of a literacy project, Val went to construction sites to teach workers before they started their workday. She explained that many of their learners could not even hold a pencil on their hands and had great difficulties with coordination. Val used critical pedagogy to empower construction workers and boost their confidence to learn how to read and write and pursue their education after the project was over. Val reinforced the idea that it is crucial for critical adult educators to contextualize teaching and learning in connection with learners' lives and situations. Val used words and examples taken from the construction site, such as brick, or safety equipment, to talk about work conditions.

Additional Reflections on the Research Process

Methodology

Finding the right methodology for this research was not an easy task as it was already described in the methodology chapter. However, my reflection on this process was as important for the research as it was for coding, analysis, and discussion. To come up with a methodology that was coherent in all its ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological elements was such an arduous work. Grasping the different aspects, traditions and currents was essential to choose the right methods and tools. But it did not come easily out of a research book. For me, it was important to systematize these elements in a way that I could visualize and fully grasp what they meant and their differences in concept maps, graphs, and coloured notes (see Figure 22).

Figure 22

Methodology
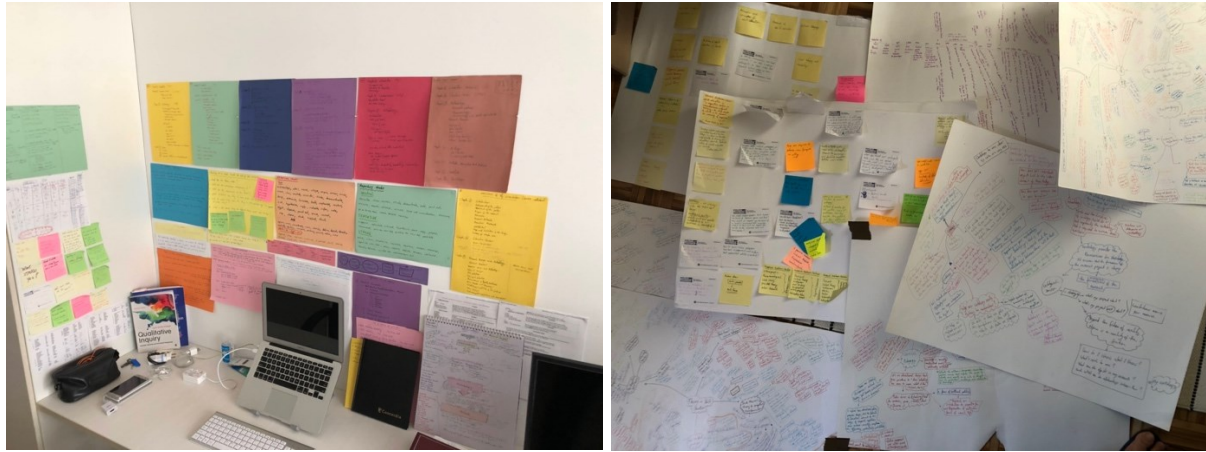
Note. My notes, graphs and concept maps about research methodologies.

Coding and Data Analysis

After having interviewed my participants and collected images and artifacts, it was time to process everything. It was not an easy task to transcribe the interviews on my own. However, I took this decision because I wanted to be more familiar with the data. As I transcribed them, I thought of possible codes and also thought of possible additional questions and how their images and artifacts could support their interviews. I definitely understand that in a study with more than 12 participants, it would be better to get help with transcription. Nevertheless, I would still recommend listening to the interviews several times to revise and correct the transcripts yourself. This will require some time in the beginning, but it will save a lot of time when you are coding or analysing your data because you will understand how all the data interrelate and connect with each other. It is easier to make connections and to understand patterns. I do not regret having transcribed my own interviews at all.

I had two separate moments in my coding and analysis process. At first, as I wanted to get as much as I could out of my interview data, I decided to do a line-by-line coding process. It was amazing and it let the codes emerge as I was reading them. However, it was not practical for my analysis to have a huge number of codes. Therefore, my second phase of the coding process

was to reduce my line-by-line codes by collapsing them in major codes and categories. For this process, I focused on my research questions and how each code was important to answer them. Although I used N-Vivo in my codification process it was essential for me to print the codes and group them together (see Figure 23).

Figure 23

Coding Process

Note. This image represents one of the phases of collapsing codes into larger codes or categories.

After having collapsed codes into larger codes or categories, it was easier to organize them into themes and concepts that attempted to answer the research questions. In hindsight, I remember one activity during a Qualitative Research course that used coloured buttons to think of codes, categories, and themes (see Figure 24).

Figure 24

Coding Activity
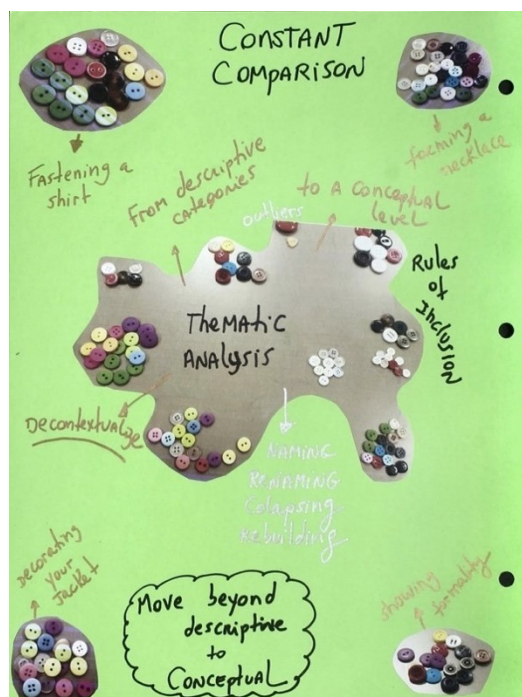
Note. This activity took place in my Qualitative Research Course at McGill University administered by Dr. Lynn Butler-Kisber. The use of buttons of different colours, shapes and functions demonstrated how coding worked and how to go from descriptive categories into conceptual analysis.

Discussion

After reporting my research findings, the next step was to discuss them. The discussion chapter was the chapter that provoked me most doubt about how to proceed. That was the moment where I needed to tie the findings with the literature review. One piece of advice that I would give to anyone going into the discussion portion is to have your research questions in mind as you dive in it. I turned to my research questions to set up a framework to guide this chapter because it gave me a sense of accomplishment as I answered each question through the discussions of the findings and the literature review.

On a different note, it is important to keep in mind that at this moment I knew that I needed to go back to my literature review and expand it. During the discussion, there are many observations and claims that were not predicted in the literature review. It is important that these findings are not speculative but are supported by the literature. For me, it was the most interesting chapter to write up because of the connections with previous literature and the findings that started to emerge. This is a crucial point for me because that was when I started to make sense of the study.

Concluding Thoughts

As I get to the end of this reflective chapter, I would like to discuss a few things about the transformation of my own beliefs as the research progressed. As a human being, this endeavour has given me a better comprehension of my position in this world, in my community, in education and life in general. I was faced many times with the question: Who are you? What is your voice in your research? Where do you stand in relation to others? What is your positionality?

Transformations

Self-Transformation. In the beginning of the doctoral degree, I thought that at the end of the program, when I would have finished my dissertation and would finally have received my title, I would be a complete human being. That was a dream that I carried with me for such a long time. I wanted to be the first in the family to obtain a doctoral degree and that was an objective that I struggled to attain for such a long time. Many times, it was impossible even to think about it due to many constraints, such as financial and personal ones. However, for my amazement, I got here with the most important understanding I could ever get with this study, that I am an incomplete human being and that I am in construction as everything else in life and

that I will always be a work in progress. Finally, I understood that there is no end. The work is never finished. In fact, to be honest with myself, this is just the beginning of the journey.

     Professional Transformation. Having met amazing people in academia who all have added a little to my journey was so transformative. My teaching and learning skills and competences have improved significantly. My self-reflection on how I would perform as an educator and what I should really be doing was crucial in this process. Paying attention to the feedback I received along the way was also lifechanging.

     Indisputably, being in contact with each participant in this research and learning with them through dialogue and sharing our stories was the highest point of this process. With them, I learned how to humanize my teaching skills. I learned that without focus on social justice there is no real teaching. There is no neutrality in teaching and whatever choice you make is already political in nature. I learned to look at learners as I looked at myself.

     Undoubtedly, I also learned that education is a disputed field and that there will always be barriers on the way of implementing social justice-oriented practices. However, as I learned from my participants, this is not a reason to give up and comply to the status quo. Safely, there are ways that we can organize teaching and learning to achieve different levels of justice. I understood that while a revolution would be the ideal way to bring about justice in education, I also understood that ongoing transformation leads to change and inclusion as well. Therefore, regardless of your context, there is always a level of critical pedagogy principles that can be implemented, be it with a friendly smile to humanize your teaching or with strong and impacting demonstrations and protests organized by your learners and community.

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Appendices

Appendix A: E-mail Correspondence to Program Heads for Participant Recruitment

Hello (name),

My name is Marlon Sanches and I am currently a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Education at Concordia University (Montreal, QC). I am writing to you as my doctoral research interests center on critical pedagogy practices in non-formal adult education settings.

Currently I am looking for adult education practitioners who deliberately use critical pedagogy principles in their education practices. The study specifically aims to collect stories of successful teaching practices as well as challenges that adult education practitioners have when implementing critical pedagogy.

If you know of anyone who may be interested in participating in the study, please have them contact me directly. Detailed information outlining what participation entails is attached.

Sincerely,
Marlon

Marlon Sanches, Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Education
Concordia University
e-*mail contact information*

Appendix B: Email Introduction to Potential Participants

Hello (*name*),

My name is Marlon Sanches and I am currently a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Education at Concordia University (Montreal, QC). I am writing to you as my doctoral research interests center on critical pedagogy practices in non-formal adult education settings.

Currently I am looking for adult education practitioners who deliberately use critical pedagogy principles in their education practices. The study specifically aims to collect stories of successful teaching practices as well as challenges that adult education practitioners have when implementing critical pedagogy.

I would like to hear more from you as your work is important and I believe you would provide valuable insight into what and how critical pedagogy is put into practice in real life. I am thus writing to inquire whether you would be interested in participating in my study.

The study is entitled "Strengthening Adult Education Focus on Social Justice through Critical Pedagogy". Detailed information is included within the attached document. If, once you have read the document and you decide you would like to participate let me know.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions and thanks in advance for your consideration,

Marlon Sanches, Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Education
Concordia University
e-mail contact information

Appendix C: Detailed Study Information Sent to Potential Participants

Title: Strengthening Adult Education Focus on Social Justice through Critical
Pedagogy

Researcher: Marlon Sanches, Ph.D. Candidate

                           Department of Education

                           Concordia University

                           1455 De Maisonneuve Blvd. W.

                           H3G 1M8

                           e-mail contact information

Purpose of study:

The study aims to explore how adult education practitioners apply critical pedagogy in their daily practice in non-formal settings.

Specifically, it aims to highlight your voice by identifying:

       (a) the strategies you use, what challenges you face while trying to implement critical pedagogy principles and how you overcome these challenges,

       (b) how you as an adult education practitioner define critical pedagogy and what characteristics are important and crucial for a critical pedagogue,

       (c) the components or principles of critical pedagogy that you give more emphasis and how you assess the effectiveness of your practices in non-formal settings.

What will happen during the study?

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to provide informed consent. After doing so, you will be contacted to provide basic demographic information and pre-interview questionnaire asking you to provide information and/or documentation about the settings and programs in which you teach (your course outlines and any related teaching materials, if applicable). At this time, we will also schedule the interviews.

In preparation for the interview, you will be asked to select an image (or images) that best depicts your views about critical pedagogy and what it represents to you and your teaching practice. Additionally, you will be asked to provide some artifacts (lesson plans, teaching philosophy, student classwork, teaching activities, videos, photographs, etc.) that helps illustrate your beliefs and practices while implementing critical pedagogy in adult education non-formal settings.

With the aid of the images you have selected, during the interview we will engage in a conversation about your beliefs about critical pedagogy. We will then schedule a second interview (if needed).

In preparation for the second interview, you will be asked to reflect on our previous conversation about your beliefs and practices. During the second interview, we will clarify some specific points (if needed) and engage in a deep conversation about your practices as well as any influential factors.

Each interview will take approximately 1-1.5 hours. The interviews will be conducted via telephone, Skype or Zoom. The audio or video will be recorded and transcribed to aid with analysis and verification.

To better ensure that your voice and information is authentically represented, you will be asked to review the transcripts and remove or edit any portion that you deem necessary.

Please note that all data you provide (documents, images, narratives, etc.) will be included as part of the study unless you clearly indicate otherwise. During the course of the study, data will remain confidential. After analysis and verification is complete you will have the option to choose what level of disclosure you wish to have within the final report and related publications.

Are there any risks in participating in the study?
There are no expected risks in participating in this study. You are not obliged to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable or do not want to answer. You are able to withdraw

from participating in the study without penalty at any time by contacting me in writing with your wishes to do so.

Who will know the information shared during the study?

During the study, my supervisor and I will have access to information you provide. Data will be saved on password protected computers so that only I can gain access. Confidentiality will be respected in that no information revealing your identity will be shared unless you clearly indicate otherwise at the end of the study.

Information about the study results:

The projected timeline is to have the project completed by July 2021.

What if I change my mind about participating in the study?

Your participation in the study is entirely voluntary. You can stop participating at any time, even after having signed consent. If you decide to stop participating, there will be no repercussions.

Ethical clearance:

Please note that this study has been reviewed by Concordia University's Office of Research and Ethical Clearance to proceed has been granted.

Appendix D: E-mail to Participants to Receive Consent and Set up the Interview

Hello,

I am writing to follow-up in regard to your participation in the current doctoral research study entitled "Strengthening Adult Education Focus on Social Justice through Critical Pedagogy".

What is next?
1) If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign the attached consent form and send it to me via e-mail.
2) There will be two interviews (approximately 1.5 hours each). Let me know when (date/time) would be convenient to schedule our first interview.

Once we have a schedule in place, I will send you details about what is needed for the first interview. For your records, details of what participation entails throughout the study are included within the attached document.

At any point, if you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me. I am truly looking forward to hearing more about you and your work.

Thanks,
Marlon

Marlon Sanches
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Education
Concordia University
e-mail contact information

Appendix E: Participant Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN

Strengthening Adult Education Focus on Social Justice through Critical Pedagogy

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a research project being conducted by Marlon Sanches from the Department of Education of Concordia University, Montreal, Québec, (e-mail contact information) under the supervision of Dr. Miranda D'Amico, Department of Education of Concordia University, (e-mail contact information).

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is to explore how adult education practitioners apply critical pedagogy in their daily practices in non-formal settings.

B. PROCEDURES

As a participant in this study, I understand:

- That I will be asked to engage in two interviews with the researcher (approx. 1.5 hours each) to reflect on personal beliefs about critical pedagogy, the strategies that I use, what challenges I face while trying to implement critical pedagogy principles and how I overcome these challenges. I will also be asked about how I, as an adult education practitioner define critical pedagogy and what characteristics are important and crucial for a successful critical pedagogue and what components or principles of critical pedagogy that I put more emphasis and how I assess the effectiveness of my practices in non-formal settings.
- I will be asked to engage in tasks to prepare for each interview. Time taken to engage in these tasks is up to my discretion. These tasks include selecting images and artifacts that best depict my beliefs about critical pedagogy and how they reflect my teaching practices.

- I will also provide relevant documentation outlining information about the program, courses, and related materials from my teaching practices (if applicable).

- All data provided (documents, images, artifacts, narratives) will be included in the study for analysis unless I indicate otherwise.

- All data will be stored in a password protected environment.

- Data collected will be used in the researcher's dissertation and future publications.

- Images or documentation that do not have appropriate referencing information or include others' identity will not be included in publications.

- Data will be destroyed after 5 years.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

I understand that the nature of the study has no potential risks.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time without negative consequences.

- I understand that throughout the study my participation is CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity) throughout data collection and analysis.

- I understand that near the end of the study I will be asked whether I want my real name or pseudonym used in the write up of the dissertation and any other form of dissemination of findings (conference presentations, journal articles or book chapters).

- I understand that the data collected for this study will be published in a dissertation and may be used in other forms of publications.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME

_____

SIGNATURE _____

DATA   _____

If you have questions about this project, you may contact the principal investigator, Marlon Sanches at (e-mail contact information).

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics and Compliance Advisor, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or ethics@concordia.ca

Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Appendix F: E-mail to Participants in Preparation for the Interview

Hello (name of participant),

Thank you for sending along your signed consent form. Please find attached the demographic and pre-interview questionnaire to try and get to know you a little bit better before the interview. For the interview itself, you are kindly asked to provide:

1) an image (or images) that represents what critical pedagogy means to you.

2) artifacts (documents, activities, lesson plans, etc.) that will illustrate how you implement critical pedagogy in your daily adult education practices in non-formal settings.

The image (or images) can be images or photographs created or taken by yourself. These images will be used in our conversation during the interviews and will be valuable tools to provide the researcher with a better understanding of your beliefs and your work as an adult educator. The artifacts will be included as data to be analyzed as part of the research to illustrate your critical pedagogy practices. If any of the images or the artifacts do not belong to you, please provide authorization so that it can be included and used in the study.

Let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Thanks,
Marlon
e-mail contact information

Appendix G: Demographic Information and Pre-Interview Questionnaire

1. Gender? Age?

2. What is your history of employment within adult education?

3. Where are you currently employed?

4. What is your title?

5. How long have you been working in adult education in non-formal settings?

6. What courses have you taught? What courses are you teaching now?

7. Did you receive formal training in adult education? Where? Which program?

8. When did you first learned about critical pedagogy? Did you read any specific authors?

9. Why did you decide to implement critical pedagogy in your classes?

10. What is critical pedagogy for you? What characteristics should a critical pedagogue have in adult education?

11. What is critical pedagogy for you? How do you define it?

12. Why do you self-identify as a critical pedagogue? In your perspective, what are the differences between a critical pedagogue and a traditional educator?

13. What characteristics should a critical pedagogue have? What characteristics should a critical pedagogue not have?

14. What are specific distinctions that adult educators in non-formal settings have that differentiate them from other educators?

Appendix H: Interview Protocol

Open ended questions about participant's beliefs and understandings about critical pedagogy and their own daily practices.

To get to know you better, let us take a few minutes to go over the questions you had answered prior to this interview. Please feel free to add anything or correct me if I have misinterpreted anything. Now, as we had previously discussed, you were asked to provide an image (images) and a description for this conversation.

Part A. Image – Perspectives of what critical pedagogy means for the participant.

1. Tell me why you have selected this particular image.
2. What is it about this image that specifically represents your views on critical pedagogy in adult education in non-formal settings?
3. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Part B – Participants' own practices

1. What successful strategies do you use in your daily practice as a critical pedagogue? Please provide examples (artifacts)
2. What artifacts could you provide to illustrate these practices and strategies? How do they illustrate your focus on critical pedagogy? Why did you choose them?
3. What challenges do you face while implementing critical pedagogy in your classes?
4. How do you overcome these issues?
5. What specific principles of critical pedagogy do you give more emphasis in your classes? Why?
6. How do you assess the effectiveness of your practice? What strategies do you use to self-evaluation and reflect on your practice? What kind of feedback do you receive from peers, learners, and others?

7. What kinds of trainings or opportunities of self-development do you have? What self-development courses have you taken? Which ones do you plan to take in the future?

8. What is the future of critical pedagogy in adult education? How will you contribute for the future of critical pedagogy?

9. Would you find it beneficial to have professional development initiative specific about critical pedagogy in adult education? If so, what could these initiatives focus on? What would you include and how would you structure it?

Once these interviews have been transcribed, they will be sent back to you along with your narrative. At that time, if there is anything you would like to add or change, you will have an opportunity to do so.

Appendix I: E-mail to Participants Requesting Verification of Transcripts

Hi (name of participant),

Thanks for taking the time to participate in this doctoral study on "Strengthening Adult Education Focus on Social Justice through Critical Pedagogy". It has been a pleasure getting to know you, your views, and your teaching practices.

I am writing to submit the transcript of your interviews for your consideration. You can change, correct, add or delete anything that you deem necessary. The transcript of your interviews is attached to this document.

Additionally, you are asked to indicate how you would like to be identified within the final report, related publications and presentations. Choose one of the options below and include it within your response.

I, (name), after participating in the doctoral research study entitled "Strengthening Adult Education Focus on Social Justice through Critical Pedagogy", conducted by Marlon Sanches, Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Education at Concordia University, would like to:

a) disclose my full name,

b) disclose my first name only,

c) choose a pseudonym, which is _____.

It is appreciated if you could send your response as soon as you can in order to proceed. If I do not hear from you in two weeks, I will assume you do not want to make any changes to the transcript and do not wish to be identified in the report with either your full or first name. In this case, a pseudonym will be selected for you.

Thanks again for your time and consideration! Your participation was crucial for the successful of this project.

Thanks,

Marlon

Appendix J: Summary of the main philosophical orientations in Adult Education

Philosophical Orientations	Main focus
Liberal (Spencer & Lange, 2014; Lange, 2006)	Truth is achieved through logic and rational discussions. Adult educator's role is to foster rational and moral power of learners. Good educator has deep knowledge of the teaching subject. Truth is universal. Educator is the main actor.
Progressive (Lange, 2006)	Scientific and social literacy for a strong democracy. Society is always evolving. Authority of science and useful application (pragmatism). Education for the advancement of society. Inattention to political and economic powers. The role of the adult educator is to facilitate by focusing on learners and not on content.
Behaviourist (Cranton, 2013; Lange, 2006; Magro, 2001)	Observable and measurable behaviours. Control and manipulation of the environment. Vocational and technical trainings. Role of educator is to set clear objectives and organize content to achieve them. Learning is hierarchical and in a linear step-by-step process. No challenge of the status quo. Manipulation of learners and too much control on educators' hands.
Humanist (Cranton, 2013; Lange, 2006)	Focus on freedom, dignity and autonomy. People are free to find their own life meanings and reality is what you perceive. Self-actualization is the highest state to be achieved. Role of adult educator is to be responsive and empathetic and assist learners achieve their full potential. Too much optimism in human nature and individualistic focus.
Radical (Cranton, 2013; Lange, 2006; Magro, 2001)	Commitment to challenge inequality and injustices. Strong critique of authoritarian approaches. Promote social justice. The role of the adult educator is to be a co-learner. Too optimistic as people may not always be inclined to the common good.
Postmodernism (English, 2006; Lange, 2006, 2013).	Questions basic foundations of modernism. Deconstructs grand narratives/myths of progress and nationalism. Lack of practical ideas. Hard to identify and articulate efforts in terms of organizational structures. No unified or collective understanding. Role of educator is to help learners deconstruct absolute and universal truths.

Appendix K: Summary of the Main Concepts of Critical Pedagogy

Critical Pedagogy	Main Aspects
Humanization (Darder, 2018; Crotty, 1998; Freire, 1970)	The vocation of the human being is to become fully human. Oppressed liberate themselves from oppressors through a revolutionary process. Humans are creators of their own world and not only spectators. The human being is never finished. Humanization is not an individual process but a collective one.
Against Banking Education (Darder, 2018; Freire, 1970)	Learners are passive receptacles of information. Reality as fatalism. Paternalistic model of education. Teachers and students are in opposite sides. Educators are the knowledge holders. Learners are clean slates.
Conscientização (Darder, 2018; Crotty, 1998; Freire, 1970)	Critical awareness. Awaking of consciousness. Historical phenomenon and a human social process. Not a simple instrumental technique. Leads towards social justice and action through a pedagogical praxis.
Pedagogical Praxis (Dahl, 2018; Freire, 1970)	Reflection and action. Development of conscientização. Impossible to separate reflection from practice. It is an ongoing process. Humans are always in transformation.
Core practical themes (Katz, 2014)	Integrate student's personal experiences into classroom lessons; Deconstruct the student-teacher hierarchy; Avoid the banking method of education and embracing an environment where students and teachers are both educators and learners; Deconstruct the idea of knowledge as neutral and acknowledging the political nature of education; Make social justice an explicit focus in the class; Consider how the classroom can serve as a model for promoting democracy.
Some critique (Thomson-Bunn, 2014; Finger, 2005; Crotty, 1998)	Lack of clear definition makes it difficult to understand. Too much theory but very little practice. It is more of a discourse of the importance to be critical instead of real educational practices. It does not address community organizing.

Appendix L: Who was Paulo Freire?

This is a brief summary of Freire's life which contextualizes what impacted his life, leading to the evolution of his ideas and the development of the main concepts of critical pedagogy. Freire was born in Recife, Brazil, in 1921. Although he was from a working middle class family, Freire experienced financial issues very early. He had to take on responsibilities prematurely after his father's death. Education was very important for Freire. In many opportunities, Freire told us how he learned to read in the shadow of mango trees and with words of his childhood universe (Kohan, 2021). Knowing that, his mom made efforts so that Freire would continue his education with a scholarship. These were difficult times as the world was going through the instability of the World War II and in Brazil, a harsh dictatorship was in place until 1947. Finishing secondary school or going to university was not something that most of Freire's childhood peers were able to achieve. Before finishing secondary school, Freire was already teaching Portuguese to younger students. He continued teaching while he went to Law School and continued after graduation. It did not take long for Freire to realize that what he really wanted was to be an educator and he abandoned his career in law (Breunig, 2011; Darder, 2018; Haddad, 2019).

Freire married Elza while he was on his second year at university. Elza was a primary school teacher who was key in everything Freire achieved. Freire started working at SESI (Industry Social Service Agency), which was a government agency created to promote post-WWII capitalist values in schools. Freire mediated meetings between educators, parents and students. It was at this period that he realized by his contact with parents that it was important to give them voice and listen to them. He was so successful in his role that eventually, he became the director of SESI. While working at SESI, Freire was also teaching history and philosophy at the University of Fine Arts where he got his PhD in 1959 after losing a job selection for a tenured teaching position. It was only in 1961 that he was hired as a professor at the University of Recife (Haddad, 2019). Both the University of Fine Arts and the University of Recife were fused and are now called University of Pernambuco.

One important point in Freire's life was his participation in the Catholic Church movement based on the theology of liberation, which became strong in Latin America from 1950 to 1960. The 60s were golden years for social movements and social justice. Freire was invited to

integrate the Movements of Popular Culture (MPC) in Recife and had his ideas and experiences published in several articles in the newspapers. His ideas were going public and he was becoming widely known. The MPCs started giving classes to adults and Freire alerted to the need to have small groups to avoid mass teaching and the dehumanization of the students. He advocated that the elite and the people, the teacher and the students should talk through dialogue. Freire was not happy with the traditional books to teach adults to read and write. He claimed that these textbooks were patronizing and politically empty. His collaborators created new materials that were much better, but he was still in search of something more democratic (Haddad, 2019; Saviani, 2019).

A very popular advertisement on TV at that time was a chocolate milk called *Nescau* (similar to Toddy). Haddad (2019) tells us that one day, Freire and his son were outside and saw a poster of a bottle of Nescau. His two-year old looked at the image and said "Nescau" and sang the song of the TV advertisement. Surprised, Paulo thought, "He read the word". From that day, Freire started thinking of a method that connected image and word and that incorporated the experience of the learners. He tested this method with his mom, who could not read or write. Then Freire and Elza tested it in a local school with five learners. Two of them gave up but three had very good results. This experience impacted Freire positively (Haddad, 2019).

Things looked very promising for social movements and popular education in the early 60s. Freire saw the creation of the SEC (Service of Culture Extension), a project of the university of Recife, and the expansion of the MCPs to other cities. After being elected president in 1961, conservative Jânio Quadros resigned in August of the same year. Vice-president, progressive João Goulart took office in September. In 1963, Freire was invited by the governor of Rio Grande do Norte (RN), a neighbouring state, to implement his method in a provincial literacy program. Angicos, a small town 200 km away from Natal (capital of RN), was chosen. The project (ironically sponsored by J. F. Kennedy's imperialist project for Latin America named *the Alliance for Progress*) was a tremendous success (Haddad, 2019). It was launched on January 18 and classes started on January 24. On April 2, the last class was given by the President of Brazil, progressive, João Goulart who was impressed with the results: 400 people could read and write after only 40 hours! However, during the closing ceremony, general Castelo Branco (who would later become the first president after the military coup) told the secretary of education that

Freire's method was raising *snakes* in the northeast of the country. It was an alert to what was about to come (Darder, 2018; Haddad, 2019).

What comes next is a sequence of tragic events that led to Freire's exile. On January 1, 1964, the federal government passed a bill to create a national adult literacy program using Freire's method to reach 5 million people. On April 1, 1964, a US supported military *coup d'état* ousted progressive president João Goulart. On April 14, the adult literacy program was terminated, and Freire started being attacked by the military and conservative forces to disqualify his work. Freire's work was accused of promoting communism and Freire was accused of being subversive and an enemy of Brazil. Freire was arrested twice and stayed in prison for more than sixty days. Not wanting to leave Brazil, he saw no alternative when on September 28, 1964, a new order of arrest was issued against him again. Freire got refuge in the Bolivian consulate in Rio. He requested exile in Chile but was declined. Ivan Illich, who lived in Mexico, tried to help Freire but was not successful either. Finally, Bolivia granted Freire exile and in October 1964, without a passport, Freire fled to La Paz. Unfortunately, in November 1964, 7 months after Brazil, Bolivia suffered its own military coup. Freire left La Paz on November 20 to Chile whose new government had accepted his exile request (Breunig, 2011; Darder, 2018; Haddad, 2019).

In Chile, Freire got his first job at Indap (Instituto de Desarrollo Agropecuario – Farming Development Institute) to support the education of peasants and farm labourers. In 1967, Freire published his first book, *Education as a practice of Freedom*. In this book, Freire talked about his experiences with MCPs, Angicos and his participation in planning the nation adult literacy project that had been terminated by the coup. In July of the same year, Freire started writing *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. It took him three months to finish the first 3 chapters. After a two-month break, Freire wrote the fourth chapter and asked them to be typed. Freire used to write by hand with pencil or pen. He would always make a clean copy of what he wrote (Haddad, 2019). In April 1969, Freire accepted a temporary visiting post at Harvard University and moved to the US. After 10 months in the US, in February 1970, Freire moved to Geneva to work with the World Council of Churches. Freire was invited to help with an adult literacy work in Guinea-Bissau after independence from Portugal. This invitation was extended to several other Portuguese speaking countries in Africa. In 1974, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was published in Brazil for the first time (Darder, 2018; Haddad, 2019).

After 15 years of exile, Freire returned to Brazil in 1980. Dictatorship only ended in 1985; however, an amnesty bill allowed exiled people to return. Freire started working at PUC (Catholic University) and at Unicamp (University of Campinas). However, it was only in 1985 that he was tenured at Unicamp (because of internal disputes). His wife Elza died of a heart attack in 1986. After a long period of suffering and desolation, Freire married Ana Maria (Nita) in 1988. In 1989, Freire was sworn as the secretary of education in the city of São Paulo during the progressive government of Luiza Erundina from the Workers' Party. From 1991 to 1997, Freire published several books and travelled all over the world with Nita. On May 2, 1997, Freire died of a heart attack in São Paulo.

Freire received 34 *honoris causa* doctorate degrees during life and 5 in memoriam received by Nita. 12 years after his death, he was officially granted political amnesty. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was translated to more than 20 languages. In 2006, it was the third most cited book in the humanities (Haddad, 2019). On April 13, 2012, Freire was named patron of education in Brazil during the government of Dilma Rousseff of the Workers Party. In 2013, protests emerged in Brazil inspired by the Occupy Wall Street and the Arab spring movements. However, these movements were co-opted by far-right groups. Dilma Rousseff ended up impeached after a polemic trial that many will call a parliamentary *coup*. The School without Political Party movement and conservative far right gained momentum and spread all over the country (Kohan, 2019; Sanches, 2017; Sanches & Gomes, 2019). In 2019, far-right, ex-military, dictatorship supporter Jair Bolsonaro was elected president in a controversial political campaign based on fake news (Brisola & Doyle, 2019; Sanches & Gomes, 2019) and has, since then, been constantly attacking the legacy of Paulo Freire (Accioly, 2020; Kohan, 2019). One of his main objectives is to take "Freire" out of Brazilian education. Like a magic trick (that we all know has nothing of magic), all false accusations and defamation that Freire received during the military dictatorship in 1964 resurfaced; however, Freire is not here anymore to be put into prison. I would like to end this summary with part of a poem written by scholar Budd Hall to celebrate Freire's 70th birthday, he writes,

A birthday conference for Paulo Freire, the most influential

Educational thinker of the 20th century

Academics jammed in next to homeless organizers who are

Jammed in next to Lady garment Workers who are

Jammed in next to the Puerto Rican Independence underground who are

Jammed in next to kindergarten teachers who are

Jammed in next to high school students who are

Waiting to hear Paulo Freire. (Hall, 2021)

Appendix M: Timeline of Freire's Life Events (Darder, 2018; Haddad, 2019)

1921 (September 19)	Freire was born in Recife, Brazil
1924	His father had to retire due to health issues
1932 (April)	Freire's family moved to Jaboatão de Guararapes due to financial problems (Recife was an expensive city).
1934 (October)	His father died
1937	Freire finished primary school. There were no secondary schools in Jaboatão. So, He needed to go to Recife every day by train (45 min) to continue school.
	Freire's mother got him a scholarship at a traditional private school named Osvaldo Cruz. She spent whole days visiting schools until she got this opportunity.
	Freire started secondary school when he was 16 years old.
1940	Freire started to work as a teaching assistant in his school two years before secondary school graduation.
1941	Freire's family moved back to Recife
1942	Freire finished secondary school. His mom's efforts made it possible something that was impossible for Freire's friends in Jaboatão.
1943	Freire started Law School and continued teaching Portuguese.
1944	Freire married Elza Maria Costa de Oliveira. She was a primary school teacher who had asked Freire to help her to improve her grammar to advance in her career. Freire was 23 and Elza was 28. Freire was in the second year of Law school.
1946	Their first daughter was born. Until then, Elza's family did not accept her marriage with Freire.
1947	Freire finished Law School and started working as a lawyer but did not enjoy the experience. He realized he did not have vocation to be a lawyer. He continued teaching Portuguese.

	Freire was invited to work at SESI (Industry Social Service). It was a government agency created to promote post-WW2 capitalist values. SESI would mediate student, parents, teachers' conflicts in schools. Freire was responsible for promoting parental participation by implementing culture circles.
From 1937 to 1947	Freire lived through the instability of WW2 and dictatorship in Brazil.
1949	Freire's second daughter was born
1952	Freire became an interim professor in the Department of History and Philosophy at the University of Recife
1954	Freire became SESI's superintendent.
1956 (October)	Freire returned to SESI's education department. Freire's first son was born
1957	Freire published a few articles in a newspaper and his ideas started to become public
1958	His youngest son was born. Freire and Elza participated in the II Adult Education Congress in Rio where they presented a report on the education in the Mocambos (marginalized areas where former slaves lived).
1959	Freire got his PhD in history and philosophy education at the School of Fine Arts of Pernambuco (today it is part of the Federal University of Pernambuco). Freire lost a job selection for a tenured position in that department.
From 1950 to 1960	Catholic Church movement towards the poor. Theology of Liberation became strong in Latin America. Freire participated in the organization of a few of these groups. This movement advocated against charity in favor of concrete actions against poverty.
1960	Freire was invited to integrate the MCP (Movements of Popular Culture) of Recife.

1961	Freire was hired as a tenured position in the Faculty of Arts and Science at the University of Recife (today it is called Federal University of Pernambuco).
	Conservative Jânio Quadros was elected president of Brazil. However, he resigned in August of the same year. Vice-president, progressive João Goulart took office in September 1961.
1962	The University of Recife launches the SEC (Service of Culture Extension). MCPs were extended to other cities in Pernambuco. Freire's method of literacy was tested in literacy programs in Natal, RN (Rio Grande do Norte) called "The barefoot can also learn to read".
1963	Freire published articles about his experiences in the MCPs and SECs.
	Freire was invited by the governor of RN to implement his method in a provincial literacy program. Angicos, a small town 200 km away from Natal (Capital), was chosen. The project was a tremendous success. It was launched on January 18 and classes started on January 24. On April 2, the last class was given by the President of Brazil, progressive, João Goulart who was impressed with the results: 400 people could read and write after only 40 hours! However, during the closing ceremony, general Castelo Branco (who would later become the first president after the military coup) told the secretary of education that Freire's method was raising "snakes" in the northeast of the country. It was an alert to what was about to come.
	In June, Freire was invited to lead a national adult literacy program.
	In September, Recife hosted the First Congress for the Literacy and Popular Culture with great support of the population.
1964 (January 1)	The Federal Government passed a bill to create an adult literacy program using Freire's method to reach 5 million people.

1964 (April 1)	US supported military coup d'état ousted progressive president João Goulart.
	Freire was living in Brasilia with his family. Immediately, he sent his children back to Recife with his mother and stayed in Brasilia with Elza.
	On April 14, the adult literacy program was terminated and Freire started being attacked by the military and conservative forces to disqualify his work. Freire's work was accused of promoting communism and Freire was accused of being subversive.
	Back in Recife, following orders of the Federal Minister of Education, the University of Recife created a commission to interrogate and investigate Freire's work. On June 16, Freire was taken by the police to be interrogated and was put under arrest in military barracks. On July 1, Freire was interrogated again. He was released on July 2, just to be arrested again on July 4. In total, Freire was in prison for more than 60 days. Freire did not want to leave Brazil but his friends and family were worried and advised him to find exile in other countries. On September 28, another order of arrest was issued. Freire got refuge in the Bolivian consulate in Rio. He requested exile in Chile but was declined. Ivan Illich, who lived in Mexico, tried to help Freire but was not successful. Finally, Bolivia granted Freire exile and in October 1964, without a passport, Freire fled to La Paz.

	Unfortunately, in November 1964, 7 months after Brazil, Bolivia suffered its own military coup. Freire left La Paz on November 20 to Chile whose new government had accepted his exile request.
	Freire got his first job in Chile at Indap (Instituto de Desarrollo Agropecuario – Farming Institute) to support the education of peasants and farm labourers.
1967	Freire published his first book, *Education as a practice of Freedom*. In this book, Freire talks about his experiences with MCP, Angicos and his participation in planning the nation adult literacy project that had been terminated by the coup. Freire was hired as a UNESCO special advisor for agrarian reform in Chile. Freire travelled to speak in two conferences in New York.

	In July, Freire started writing Pedagogy of the Oppressed. It took him three months to finish the first 3 chapters. After a two-month break, Freire wrote the fourth chapter and asked them to be typed. Freire used to write by hand with pencil or pen. He would always make a clean copy of what he wrote.
1968	The book Pedagogy of the Oppressed was concluded. However, it was only a manuscript. It was only published in 1970 for the first time (in English).
April 1969	Freire accepted a temporary visiting post at Harvard University and moved to the USA.
1970	First edition of Pedagogy of the Oppressed in English. After 10 months in the USA, in February 1970, Freire moved to Geneva to work with the World Council of Churches.
1971	Freire published Education, Liberation and the Church. During his time in Geneva, Freire travelled to 150 international trips to participate in conferences related to his book.
1974	Freire was invited to help with an adult literacy work in Guinea-Bissau after independence from Portugal. Pedagogy of the Oppressed was published in Portuguese in Brazil for the first time.
1977	Freire was invited to work in Cape Verde.
1979	After 15 years of exile, Freire returned to Brazil. Dictatorship only ended in 1985; however, an amnesty bill allowed exiled people to return to Brazil. Freire started working at PUC (Catholic University) and at Unicamp (Campinas University). However, it was only in 1985 that he was tenured at Unicamp (because of internal disputes).
1986 (October 24)	Elza died of a heart attack.
1988 (March 27)	Freire married Ana Maria de Albuquerque Araújo Hasche (Nita)

1989 (January 1)	Freire was sworn as the secretary of education in the city of São Paulo during the progressive government of Luiza Erundina from the Workers' Party.
1991 (May 27)	Freire stepped down as the secretary of education.
1991-1997	Freire published several books and travelled all over the world with Nita.
1997 (May 2)	Freire died of a heart attack in São Paulo
	Freire received 34 honoris causa doctorate during life and 5 in memoriam received by Nita. 12 years after his death, he was officially granted political amnesty. Pedagogy of the Oppressed was translated to more than 20 languages. In 2006, it was the third most cited book in humanities.
2012 (April 13)	Freire was named patron of education in Brazil during the government of Dilma Rousseff of the Workers Party.
2013-present	Protests emerged in Brazil similarly to Occupy Wall Street movements. Dilma Rousseff ended up impeached after a polemic trial that many will call a parliamentary coup. The School without Political Party movement and conservative far right gained momentum and spread all over the country. Bolsonaro was elected president and has constantly attacked the legacy of Paulo Freire. One of his main objectives is to take "Freire" out of Brazilian education. Like a magic trick (that we all know has nothing of magic), all false accusations and defamation that Freire received during the military coup in 1964 resurfaced; however, Freire is not here anymore to be put into prison. His ideas are free.