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Teacher as Stranger: Unfinished Pathways with Critical Pedagogy

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Abstract

In 2010, Accardi, Drabinski, and Kumbier published the edited collection *Critical Library Instruction: Theories and Methods*, which marked a turn to more broadly integrate critical theory into the practice and literature of librarianship. This article looks back ten years to trace how critical pedagogy continues to provoke librarians' reflective measurement of the coherence between theory and practice, whether in the classroom or in advocacy for open education. With Paulo Freire's notion of unfinishedness and Maxine Greene's metaphor of 'teacher as stranger,' the article explores the nature of teaching as a continuously reflective and creative act.

Keywords: critical pedagogy, open education, open pedagogy, Freire, Greene *Critical Library Instruction*

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Teacher as Stranger: Unfinished Pathways with Critical Pedagogy

Introduction

Looking back ten years, this essay is my professional reflection, structured through encounters with critical pedagogy that have aided my identification of lasting commitments and re-centering actions as a teaching librarian. I detail how the works of Paulo Freire, and more recently, Maxine Greene have prompted me to think critically about the consequences of my work. I begin by tracing early encounters with critical pedagogies that enriched my approach in the classroom, and then, share my recent reflections on the foundations that guide my work within open education. I hope to capture the constant search and state of unfinishedness that educators may experience when dynamically moving between reflection and action, seeking coherence and tensions, and grappling with permanence and change in our teaching practices.

Locating critical pedagogy in my past

When *Critical Library Instruction: Theories and Methods* was published, I was a relatively new academic librarian just beginning to form my teacher identity. My position demanded that I teach a high volume of single library seminars for credit courses, which I modeled on inherited practices and established expectations. I left most classes feeling conflicted until I found the works of Paulo Freire, who provoked me to seek a more coherent teacher identity and teaching sensibility.

Tensions & dissonance

When I began teaching in libraries, my only sources of reference were the examples set by my senior colleagues, who taught me a great deal, and my other related but peripheral experiences: teaching in other contexts or playing the role of a student throughout my formal education. In time, I came to know local curricular goals and to reference standards of information literacy composed by the profession that I adopted and enacted in the classroom. After gaining some comfort and understanding of the unique characteristics of the library classroom—meeting the students only once, adapting to varied teaching approaches of faculty, interpreting drastically different classroom dynamics—I was able to acknowledge my discomfort with database-driven lessons that concentrated on mechanics and fostered flat interactions with learners. I knew this instrumental approach eclipsed the

sociocultural conditions that shaped knowledge production and denied learners an opportunity to examine these conditions in a meaningful way. Even more starkly, I realized how that approach dehumanized learners by treating them as receptacles for mechanized operations and received practices (Freire, 1970/2000). The classroom activities and performances mimicked familiar school-based experiences and were compliant with information literacy standards, but I left the classroom deflated. While the activities may have supported professional ideologies, they did not support learners' connections with the complexities of knowledge creation, nor did they foster learner and teacher collaboration.

Critical reflection and change

Mary Caton Lingold and I expressed all of these tensions in our chapter in the *Critical Library Instruction: Theories and Methods*, in which we describe our enactment of critical pedagogy in the library classroom. We aimed to create a dialogic experience that muted teacher-talk, balanced teacher and student participation, and established a setting that did not mask the messiness and complexity of inquiry. In the reimagined classroom, we removed stale demonstration, eliminated a preference for academic sources, opened space for students' voices, and exchanged utility and efficiency for experience and exploration. It was our initial attempt to abandon habitual ways of thinking about the library session.

As described by the editors, the chapter was a "kind of thinking in action" (Accardi, Drabinski & Kumbier, 2010, p. x) and as such focused on a pedagogical inquiry that led to the revision of teaching strategies. The discovery of critical pedagogy gave me a new language, and Mary Caton gave me a reflective partner with whom I could explore newfound concepts. Together, we intentionally crafted prompts for the teacher and for the partner who observed, that guided post-session discussions that honed in on critical pedagogy concepts of dialogue, problem-posing, and the teacher-student partnership. The conversations that Mary Caton and I entered were not about learners' well-constructed search strategies or understanding Boolean operators. Instead, the conversations interrogated the assumptions we carried into the classroom about the meaning of "teacher," the meaning of "learner."

Teacher coherence & becoming

Ten years later, I have realized that this experience established an essential characteristic of my professional identity, the dynamic movement between reflection and action, that persists to this day. Then and now, I ask questions about why we teach what we teach and

why we commit our energy and labor where we do. This critical measurement of actions represents the “virtue of coherence” that Freire (1998, p.24) demands of teachers in order to reveal the visible and invisible agendas of various educational projects. He advises that with an “approximation between what I say and I do,” a teacher may gain a greater sense of their becoming, an increased internal legitimacy, for themselves and their relationship to learners (p. 88). By remaining critically reflective, I accept that my teacher identity is unfinished, or, as Greene phrases it, approach the “teacher as stranger” (Greene, 1973; Freire, 1998). Greene encourages teachers to look upon their teaching selves as if they have been introduced for the first time. Then with a fresh perspective, teachers may view the habitual ways of being and doing to reveal contradictions between their practice and commitments (Greene, 1973.) Most recently, these provocations resonate with me as I grapple with the foundations of open education.

Locating critical pedagogy in my present

In recent years, as I have become involved with open education, I have encountered moments of dissonance that recall my experience leaving the classroom ten years ago. Critical pedagogy gave me the language to address the tensions in the value structures, orientations, and beliefs that shaped my practices then. So, I turned again to critical reflection as a means to reach coherence between my active participation and my teacher identity.

My institution, like nearly 4,000 other institutions in North America, have identified open educational resources (OER) as a worthy initiative for combating student vulnerability and harm due to rising textbook costs that lead learners to withdraw from courses, take fewer courses, or to opt-out of purchasing texts (Florida Virtual Campus, 2019). Buoyed by state and federal funding opportunities, institutions like mine have referred to libraries to lead initiatives that promote the adoption, adaption, and creation of OER. Librarians contribute to these initiatives by facilitating faculty support grants, participating on university committees, funding permanent OER positions, developing repository solutions, supporting textbook publishing ventures, or establishing multi-institutional alliances (Bell & Salem, 2017; Reed & Jahre, 2019; Salem, 2017; Walz, 2015; Walz, 2017; Wesolek, Lashley, & Langely, 2018; West, 2017). According to the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC), between 2012 and 2018, OER initiatives saved learners a billion dollars in costs (Allen, 2018), and the OER content provider, OpenStax, reports that 2.2 million students saved an estimated \$177 million in 2018 (Ruth, 2018).

Tensions & dissonance

While astounded and encouraged by the concrete economic benefits achieved for learners, I returned to the founding documents and declarations of open education that envisioned a future “where each and every person on earth can access and contribute to the sum of all human knowledge” and where conditions permit “educators and learners [to] create, shape and evolve knowledge together” (Cape Town Open Education Declaration, 2008, para. 1). What open education pursues has focally to do with freedom and justice and imagines equitable participation in knowledge creation, thereby resisting impressions of knowledge as a static and elite entity that is delivered to learners (DeRosa & Jhangiani, 2017). These aspirations echo critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 71). However, OER initiatives that focus solely on eliminating cost in the delivery of content could be interpreted as endorsing the passive role of students and the transmission of knowledge (Stommel & Morris, 2014). As noted by Shor and Freire (1987), when teaching is primarily about transferring knowledge, learning institutions are set-up to become delivery systems or spaces for “selling knowledge” (p. 8). In large part, open education seeks to counter that tendency by destabilizing captive hierarchical systems of knowledge production. Advocates have warned that the sole focus on cost savings and content could feed back into those systems and might play “directly into publishers’ hands,” making space for open-washing solutions like inclusive access models (Wiley, 2016, para. 6). The pitfalls extend further when we minimize the significance of open licenses to localize materials (Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education, 2009), or when we exclude faculty who do not assign high-cost materials (Rivera, Folk, Jaggars, Prieto, & Lally, 2019). Current OER initiatives began with textbooks, with course content, perhaps understandably as an avenue that might be easily approachable by faculty who were accustomed to this mode of delivery, but they potentially sustained the systems that delivered dominant authorities rather than inviting learners’ interactions and participation. I began to wonder if, in a bid to align with the values of open education, I had overlooked this incongruity and had not sufficiently interrogated what my involvement was supporting and extending.

Seeking critical pedagogy in the open

Eager to re-center a focus on learners in my understanding of open education, I found resonance between critical pedagogy and the open communities’ visioning and conceptualization of open educational practices (OEP), including open pedagogy. Several

early OER studies began to articulate the concept of OEP, which can be understood as an array of practices in the open that include OER as well as open teaching and open pedagogical approaches (Cronin & MacLaren, 2018; Ehlers, 2011; Hodgkinson-Williams & Gray, 2009). Significantly, as related to critical pedagogy, these concepts frequently express an inclination to challenge inherited teaching practices (Cronin & MacLaren, 2018, p. 137) and to shift from “the traditional educational paradigm of many unknowledgeable students and a few knowledgeable teachers to a paradigm in which knowledge is co-created and facilitated through mutual interaction and reflection” (Ehlers, 2011, p. 4). As I explored OEP, I grew more hopeful that critical pedagogy could be expressed within open educational projects, even as some scholars explicitly connected Freirian notions with OEP and open pedagogy (Farrow, 2017). Sharing with the broader educational community an enthusiasm to look beyond open products towards pedagogies (DeRosa & Robison, 2017; Peter & Deimann, 2013), librarians are calling for a similar orientation that centers our focus on learners (Crissinger, 2015; Crissinger, 2016) and that scrutinizes the language we use in order to locate unexplored contradictions within open definitions and agendas (Almeida, 2017; Crissinger, 2015). Compelled to gain more confidence in my stance on the oft-contested values of open and to deliberately shape my approach to open pedagogies and practices, I went in search of examples that captured liberatory goals of critical pedagogy.

Reflection on pedagogies in the open

In the spirit of reflection, I returned to guiding open education documents to reread and re-experience the aspirations for what open could accomplish for learning. After all, it was in these claims that I initially heard echoes of critical pedagogy. Locating these statements of purpose, placing them alongside the words of Greene and Freire, and examining existing examples of open pedagogy, I sought to repair my approach to open and to give due consideration to my practices and advocacy. In essence, I continued to pursue the virtue of coherence that Freire and Greene request of educators, by searching for secure foundations for my positions and seeking means of upholding the principles of critical pedagogy.

The texts upon which I based my reflection are based in both vision and experience. The 2008 Cape Town Open Education Declaration expresses the commitments of the open education community and captures the vision of possibility with open education. The *Open Pedagogy Notebook*, founded by open education experts Rajiv Jhanigiani and Robin DeRosa, is an online resource designed to expose educators to classroom enactments of open pedagogy. Jhanigiani and DeRosa invite practitioners to share experiences as well as

burgeoning ideas and to cultivate a community that inspires open pedagogical practices. The growing collection includes creative examples from educators who are clarifying how open pedagogy takes form in the classroom, including a recent contribution from a librarian detailing zines as open pedagogy (Bakaitis, 2019). In the following section, I examine three examples from the *Open Pedagogy Notebook*. First, for each, I identify an element from the open education visioning documents to clarify what open may be a means to achieve, and then through a reading of the selected examples, I surface alignments with critical pedagogy. Taking the opportunity to carefully consider these examples, similar to those I have used in consultation with faculty, I hoped to discover more confidence in how I approach my teaching practices and how I might encourage open pedagogy among faculty moving forward.

Open as a means to transform learner's relationship to knowledge

In the 2008 Cape Town Open Education Declaration, the authors describe a "vast pool of educational resources" that are open and free, and that will help realize a "new pedagogy where educators and learners create, shape and evolve knowledge together" (para. 1). This statement envisions open as a means to engage all actors in the process of knowledge creation and suggests that knowledge is cumulative, evolving, and contestable.

Banking models of education, which problem-posing approaches of critical pedagogy resist, treat learners as "meek receptacles" who are asked to "memorize mechanically the narrated content" delivered by a teacher, the elite knower (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 79); hence, in banking approaches, the official knowledge is distant and alienated from learners (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 12). Freire asserts that this distance disrupts the authentic epistemological process, which includes the intermixing of cognitive actors, both the learners and teacher, with knowledge that is necessary for learning. The separation of knowing and building of knowledge limits learners' experiences of "action, critical reflection, curiosity, demanding inquiry, uneasiness, uncertainty" which are "indispensable to the cognitive subject, to the person who learns" (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 8). As a consequence, Freire (1970/2020) suggests that texts not be used as instruments of alienation, or as the "private property" of teachers, but instead as invitations for curiosity that may evoke the "critical reflection of both teacher and students" (p. 80).

On the *Open Pedagogy Notebook* and related posts on her blog, Robin DeRosa provides a model for breaking down alienation between learners and knowledge creation as envisioned by the Cape Town Declaration and critical pedagogy (DeRosa, 2015; DeRosa, 2016; DeRosa,

2018; DeRosa & Jhangiani, 2017). DeRosa (2016) described abandoning a pre-produced textbook and, instead, inviting learners, in co-investigation with the teacher, to imagine the general structure of the textbook and to outline the progression of topics that would be valuable to both themselves and future learners. Learners actively sought out public domain works of literature, curated a full survey of texts, and then contextualized content through interpretations of historical and biographical details culled from primary sources and reading of neighboring works. Following course discussions and direction from their teacher, learners returned to their initial readings to build upon and extend what they had come to understand with newfound insight and perspective. Through reading language and terminology specific to historical context, learners confronted uncertainty as they translated the texts to reflect modern language. In this way, they realized their capacity to think authentically in ways that contributed to the established understanding of the course content (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 77). Ultimately, the learners contributed a new text, *The Open Anthology of Earlier American Literature*, to the knowledge commons, by way of creative commons licenses and open publishing platforms, that did not previously exist and remains available today.

Rarely are texts presented to learners as material that might be reshaped, rearranged, or reimagined as a result of their thinking and contributions. Here, the teacher did just that by assuming a humble and open stance that welcomed the emergence of new knowledge brought forth as learners explored their curiosities and realized their capacity for meaning-making (Freire, 1998, p. 42). Through editorial interaction with the content, learners discovered “the connections between the text and the context of the text, and also how to connect the text/context with [their] context, the context of the reader” (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 11). Signaling a conviction that learners are knowing subjects capable of contributing knowledge and shaping the knowledge commons, the teacher invited learner authorship (Freire, 1998, p. 48). As she did so, she gestured to the central critical pedagogical belief that “to teach is not to transfer knowledge but to create the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge” (Freire, 1998, p.30).

Open as a means to transform learner teacher relationships

In the 2008 Cape Town Open Education Declaration, the authors imagine open will “give more control over learning to the learners themselves” (para. 7). This statement envisions open as a means to address the learner’s relationship with teachers and education broadly and to honor their agency in those relationships.

Throughout his writings, Freire (1970/2000) reiterates that learning should be of and by the people; people should be the starting point of their learning (p. 93). In response to settings in which learner voice and agency are thwarted, Freire proposes breaking down traditional teacher and learner hierarchical relationships through dialog and communal processes (p. 72). This dialogical character establishes conditions in which learners' voices are audible rather than treating them as "docile listeners" (p.79) and in which the teacher is responsible for a "permanent critical vigilance" in respecting the "dignity, autonomy, and identity" of learners as well as an obligation to listen intently to the experiences that they share (Freire, 1998, p. 63). As Greene (2005) observes: "if we try, above all, to move ourselves and those we teach towards a dialogue that may lead to understanding and perhaps to resolution, we may have to break through spaces of silence in order to communicate, to come authentically 'face to face'" (p. 79). In other words, critical pedagogy seeks teacher-learner partnerships and dialog to co-create learning experiences that do not rob learners of their voice, freedom, or humanity (Freire, 1998, p. 115).

Open and collaborative construction of courses, assignments, syllabi, and textbooks, which are strategies affiliated with current understandings of open pedagogy (Grush, 2014; Reynolds, 2015; Rosen & Smale, 2015), capture the commitment to collective ownership and transparency articulated in critical pedagogy. In one example described on *the Open Pedagogy Notebook*, Amy Nelson (2019) abandoned the normative practice of presenting a polished and complete syllabus at the start of a course. Syllabi, from the learner's perspective, commonly represent little more than a series of bureaucratic policies, a listing of decontextualized learning objectives, enforcement policies, such as attendance, and presuppositions of who they, the learners, are (Heidebrink-Bruno, 2014; Heidebrink-Bruno, 2015; Rodriguez, 2018). Rarely do syllabi signify possibilities for a learner, as a particular person making meaning of their world, to shape the learning culture, trajectory of content, or relationships with peers and teachers. Seldom does it indicate occasions for a learner to voice their intentions for learning, as was the case in Nelson's classroom. She invited learners to generate their learning objectives by reflecting on why they enrolled in the course and what individual goals they brought with them into the classroom. Guided by their responses, they collaboratively worked to complete the specifics of the syllabus "in accordance with the interests, aptitudes, and preferences" of the learning community (Nelson, 2019, "Learning Community Invitation" section). Next, the teacher was able to reconsider the content of study, to reconfigure the course with the language of learners in

mind, and, as a result, respond to intrinsic learning motivations (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 9). Her teaching was not abstracted or pre-configured in a way that erased the individual learners. Instead, “the key themes and words from [students’] consciousness” (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 115) guided her. As such, the teacher positioned herself as a knowing individual who, through a dialogical process, could relearn the material in a journey defined by the students and in which learner and teacher were linked through learning (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 100). The class jointly discussed the shared expectations for the teacher and learners and through consensus, documented these agreements and preferences. Furthermore, Nelson (2019) minimized the distance between learners and the object of study by allowing each learner to go deeper and develop expertise on “a particular issue or event that interests them” (“Learning Community Invitation” section).

In summary, the teacher established an alternative to mechanized content delivery that elevated the dignity of learners and corrected what Freire (1970/2000) called the teacher and student contradiction (p. 79). Rather than assuming a generic learner, teachers can carefully listen to the “spoken and written words of the students to learn what they know, what they want to know, and how they live” (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 9). For Nelson (2019) doing so “helped [her] know where and how to start” (Next Steps and Logistics section) and to bring reality and relevance into the classroom. Furthermore, her actions demonstrated trust in learners’ choice and agency to direct learning and to embark on a “quest of [his/her/their] own future” (Greene, 1997/1971, p. 137).

Open as a means for connection, interaction, and participation with the world

In the 2008 Cape Town Open Education Declaration, the authors imagine that OER and open education will “nourish the kind of participatory culture of learning, creating, sharing and cooperation that rapidly changing knowledge societies need” (para. 3). More recently the 2018 UNESCO Draft OER Recommendations state that “the application of open licenses to educational materials in combination with open educational practices introduce a broad range of innovative pedagogical options to engage both educators and learners to become more active participants in educational processes and creators of content as members of an inclusive knowledge society” (Definition and Scope section, para. 7). These statements envision open as a means to invite learners as participants in cooperative knowledge environments, and, as such, demands that teachers ponder ways in which they might safely release learning into broader public spaces.

Critical pedagogy emphasizes the relationship between human beings and the world, and, for that reason, dissuades learning scenarios that alienate learners or that present hollow realities far removed from their lived experiences. For Freire (1998), “the replica or ‘copy’ of

reality” is insufficient, as is situating learners as spectators (p. 501). Similarly, Greene (2000) holds that confined learning spaces may leave learners with the sense that they have been “locked into a world others have constructed” (p. 12). Instead, both Greene and Freire advocate for learning that facilitates learners’ “conscious involvement with other human beings in the world” (Greene, 2000, p. 8). In such spaces, learners may explore how communities brought knowledge into being and how bodies of knowledge shape learners (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 13). Through this type of analysis, learners might gain a deeper “awareness of what it is to be in the world” and to thoughtfully consider their participation and presence there (Greene, 1995, p. 35).

In an article on the *Open Pedagogy Notebook*, Cassidy Villeneuve (2018b), an employee of WikiEducation, shares descriptions of several examples of faculty and learners editing Wikipedia as a means to extend learning, to broaden audiences for learners’ work, and to engage with global structures of knowledge. Wikipedia has attracted a vast community of educators who work with learners to improve Wikipedia articles because it offers a space where they can see the influence of their learning and their voices in the world (Wikiedu, 2015). Librarians have been among the educators investigating Wikipedia, including Heidi Jacobs (2010) in the *Critical Library Instruction* collection, where she unravels the potential of Wikipedia as a site for reflexive information literacy praxis (p. 181). Freire (1970/2000) described how inviting students to contribute beyond the classroom can enhance learners’ responsiveness when he wrote: “students, as they are increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge” (p. 79). Indeed, these activities have the potential to invigorate learners’ appreciation for their contributions, as one learner reflected after a Wikipedia assignment: “I realized I do have knowledge I can contribute” (Wikiedu, 2015). Breaking from assignments that are read and disposed of after reading by a singular teacher (Wiley, 2013), these activities diverge from school-based genres and deter learners from writing with “phony and defensive language they invent for teachers and other authorities” (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.9).

In one example shared by Villeneuve (2018a), learners contributed to Wikipedia’s biographical coverage of women in STEM, which revealed to them that only 16.48% of existing biographies are of women, while 80% of Wikipedia’s editors are male. As required by Wikipedia to edit or contribute, learners must become familiar with established standards for notability, credibility, and neutrality that control the content present and

absent from Wikipedia. They might come to acknowledge where these standards are just or harmful by considering how “consensus drives out inclusivity, multiple voices, personality, nuance, creativity” and in what ways their particular communities and identities are impacted (Collier, 2017, Definitional Issues section). While Wikipedia is a knowledge base that many learners regularly reference, they may not have grasped, or taken for granted, the ways in which social forces and conditions shape the knowledge commons here and elsewhere. Assignments like this one, as a consequence, present learning opportunities to interact with broader publics, to look with new perspectives on the familiar, and to consider how they might shape or resist the practices accepted there, in other words, to awaken critical consciousness.

These examples aspire to open boundaries and to foster learners’ conscious scrutinization of how knowledge is shaped and to thoughtfully consider how they might engage in it. As Jacobs (2010) expressed, “in order for students to fully enter the culture of ideas and arguments related to information literacy, we need to provide means for them to become active participants in the debates and offer them opportunities for dialogues about the creation and dissemination of scholarly knowledge” (p. 194). Approaching learners in this fashion attends to their social awareness and their capacity to identify deficiencies and influence change in their worlds.

Open for unfinishedness, hope, coherence

My unease with content-centric initiatives led me to these examples that are concerned less with access to content and more with access to the participatory knowledge commons and learning scenarios that place learner freedom at the center. Based on the narratives of these experiences and my initial examinations, these educators capture the ethics of critical pedagogy by foregrounding human curiosity and agency through dialogic interactions and teacher-learner partnerships. In contrast to banking modes of teaching, in which learners’ curiosity is stymied and the potential for action is obstructed through dehumanizing treatment of learners as objects, these examples offer open as a means to center on learners’ relationship to knowledge, to level learners’ relationship to teachers, and to open learners’ connection to the world. Even within the constraints of short-term library seminars, these examples inspire the reexamination of how we invite direction setting or collaborative content creation in library settings. Additionally, these are compelling models to use in consultation with faculty and in collaborative learning and curricular design.

For all the strengths of these examples, considering open educational practices from the vantage point of open technologies and the basis of their design raises the need for caution. The open spaces and tools that educators invite learners into are not necessarily designed with equity and social justice values and might counteract liberatory intentions through the risks they pose to learners (Singh, 2015). Open in and of itself is not an educational value but only one aspect of the educational realities we find ourselves in (Edwards, 2015). Alone, it does not have the power to transform the conditions of oppression present in technologies and learning situations, and if we adopt a deterministic approach to open, we risk masking threats, dismantling the teaching coherence we wish to achieve, and posing real dangers to learners (Bayne, Knox, & Ross, 2015; Cronin, 2017; Edwards, 2015; Lambert, 2018). This requires, then, that educators remain “permanently critically vigilant,” to borrow Freire’s (1998, p. 63) words, in their scrutiny of open practices and as they design opportunities for learner choice and resistance when working in the open. There may be times and situations when closed practices are the appropriate response as there may be moments for learners when not working in the open is the wisest choice (Stommel, 2015), and these choices will be “personal, complex, and continually negotiated” (Cronin, 2017, p. 18). Critical pedagogy recognizes that education is intertwined with humans and situated histories; as such, the open technologies of our time do not wash away the “inequalities, institutions, biases, history” that underlie our social worlds, and by extension the foundations of the technologies we might employ (Watters, 2014, para. 14).

Yet, critical pedagogy espouses hope as strongly as it does criticality. Greene (1995) defines social imagination as the “capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society” (p. 5). Similarly, Freire (1998) advocates for intervention made possible by critical consciousness, in which individuals become aware of their conditioning by dominant ideologies while also realizing their capacity to “intervene, to re-create, and to transform it” (p. 66). Both ask that we, alongside learners, realize the otherwise, the possible. Here, I see great potential to work with learners to unveil the aspects of technology that have become invisible, taken for granted, and, in doing so, collaboratively reveal how intricately these developments are dependent on social and political factors that may be countered through active resistance, if we choose (Phipps, 2019). For example, we might work with learners to seek cooperative alternatives to proprietary platforms or to ask ethical questions about what technologies we design at all (Mozilla, 2019, p. 30). We might work with educators who claim that “education can be a critical site through which to transform the broader tech industry and the cultures surrounding it” (Ethical Edtech, n.d., Why Ethical

EdTech section) and curate tools and platforms that enable this (see, for example, the Twitter hashtag #Uwintoolparade). Perhaps we might partner with organizations that look critically at technological realities and the well-being of the open web or launch domain of one's own projects that realize the potential for learners to control their digital well-being (Centre for Humane Technology; Mozilla, 2019; Watters, 2015). Or as we examine what narratives are present or absent in the worlds of knowledge, we might pursue projects that provide a place for perspectives and experiences previously marginalized (for example, Wikifundi.org, Whoseknowledge.org, and Fortepan.us). The emergent complexities of the digital realm, including the technologies, social relations, and conditions of power, demand our humility and curiosity if we aspire to achieve inclusive and liberatory learning. We have, therefore, to keep searching for opportunities that restore social imagination and action, “a futuring, a going beyond” (Greene, 1995, p. 39).

Looking critically at open this way, I returned to Freire's and Greene's insistence that teaching is a continuous and creative project that requires an on-going investigation of our relationships with learners and the world. This belief demands a degree of comfort with a state of unfinishedness in ourselves and in our educational spheres that holds true as we confront the messiness and complexity of open in education and technologies (Collier & Ross, 2017, p. 9). I aspire to view the contradictions we uncover along the way “not as fated and unalterable, but merely as limiting—and therefore challenging,” which will only motivate critical investigations pursued in concert with learners and faculty (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 85). I hope to continue my work with open practices and pedagogy and to do so through reflection and deliberate choice. After all, Freire (1998) reminds us that the choices we make “could either help or impede students in their own unquiet search for knowledge” (p. 68).

Conclusion

As this retrospective collection looks back on how critical pedagogy has shaped the profession, I have had the opportunity to capture how critical pedagogy prompts me to challenge my work and to choose my pathways forward. As I continue doing so, I carry Greene's (2000) words of the possible with me: “if we consciously keep our own questions open and take intentional action against what stands in the way of learners' becoming, of our becoming, the spaces for freedom do enlarge” (p. 14).

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