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Some Tools for Radical Pedagogy

The Pedagogy Group

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The Pedagogy Group Some Tools for Radical Pedagogy

Reviews Editor's Note: Beginning with this issue, the Reviews section introduces a new feature that reconsiders a familiar research tool, the unassuming annotated bibliography. From time to time we will publish examples of annotated bibliographies, as they are being reimagined and repurposed by art historians, critics, artists, and curators. We hope you will find these offerings to be stimulating new tools with which to advance your teaching, scholarly research, curatorial, or creative practice.

Our inaugural annotated bibliography, authored by the Pedagogy Group, is something of a hybrid, serving as a source of critical commentary on readings and a handbook for the realization of a dialogical approach to teaching.

—MICHAEL CORRIS

The Pedagogy Group is a collective of socially engaged art educators based in New York City who work together to develop and practice equitable methods of teaching. In addition we involve students in discussions and analysis of economic relations inside the university. By making room for collective processes in the classroom, we aim to dismantle the market-driven subjectivities and values that are often the products of a highly competitive, individualistic art education. As a group, we understand social practice as a practice of radical pedagogy rather than a series of discrete projects.

Since the group's first meeting in December 2012, members have shared and collectivized information and materials acquired through our respective research and teaching tools, such as syllabi, classroom exercises, and bibliographies. Our weekly gatherings occur at the homes and studios of our members and involve loosely structured conversations. Some of the topics we've discussed include the social, economic, and political conditions within our institutions; the sharing of teaching strategies and techniques; and anecdotes drawn from our classrooms and our life experiences.

Through this process, we have arrived at a collective, performative definition of pedagogy, which we regard as: a rethinking of the space of learning that includes reflection on our roles as teachers; prioritizing our concerns; considering how we function together; acknowledging the level and nature of social engagement that already exists in

the world; restructuring our classrooms to address the exclusion of marginalized communities; grasping the reciprocal relation between teaching and learning; and being responsible, attentive, and observant of our colleagues and students.

In our session at the 2014 Open Engagement Conference at the Queens Museum, New York, we shared these processes with a wider public. We derived the four questions below from the areas of concern that have arisen repeatedly during our weekly discussions.

With the hope of encouraging multiple gatherings in many locations in which educators come together to discuss equitable methods of teaching and share pedagogical and classroom materials, stories, dynamics, and other issues specific to their needs, the group is in transition to rename itself Pedagogy Group: New York.

Protocol: Contextualizing the Questions

After several Pedagogy Group facilitators welcomed the participants and introduced the plan for the workshop, Robert Sember read the questions, acknowledging their complexity. Sember explained that our aim was to explore how the assembled group would understand and relate to the questions, rather than to seek specific answers. Asking participants to begin by exploring how the four questions might connect with their own experience of pedagogy, Sember suggested they consider the teaching and learning experiences the questions brought to mind.

1. How do we address the seemingly contradictory perspectives of inclusivity vs. criticality, and broad experimental inquiry vs. institutional restrictions and ethical concerns?
2. How do we encourage cooperation, collaboration, and collectivity within institutions that favor competition?
3. What challenges do we face when addressing issues of white supremacy, patriarchy, and class oppression? What skills are needed? Do our institutions support our efforts?
4. How do problematic educational issues such as the commercialization and privatization of knowledge, student debt, and university-corporate partnerships play out in our classrooms?

In an effort to stage for our workshop participants the experience of the open exchange that we value in the Pedagogy Group, we arrived at the set of protocols outlined below. The accompanying bibliography has been organized to illuminate the background and methodologies of the protocols as well as to assist the articulation and elaboration of these questions.

James Andrews, Maureen Connor, Taraneh Fazeli, Susan Jahoda, Laurel Ptak, Mark Read, Shane Aslan Selzer, and Robert Sember are the members of the Pedagogy Group who participated in the facilitation of the workshop.

Readings Related to the Protocol Process

J. K. Gibson-Graham, Jenny Cameron, and Stephen Healy, *Take Back the Economy: An Ethical Guide for Transforming Our Communities*

(Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2012), introduction and chapters 1 and 2. *Take Back the Economy* offers a straightforward approach to practicing and performing values such as mutual aid, reciprocity, cooperation, and collaboration within classroom and group contexts. It is a "hopeful" text that focuses on identifying what can be done in the present moment to resubjectivize ourselves and others as active agents working to transform the quality of our lives at home, at work, and in community.

Tom Finkelpearl, "Paulo Freire:

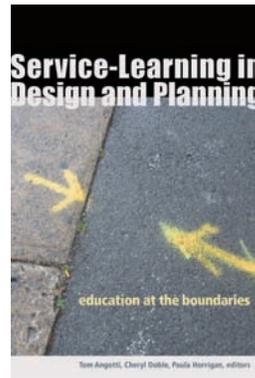
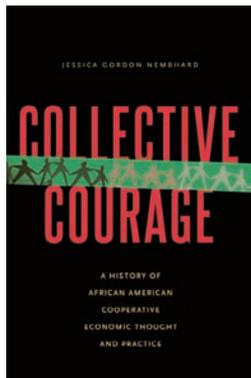
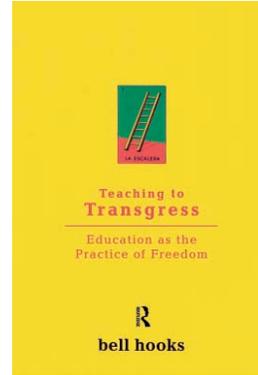
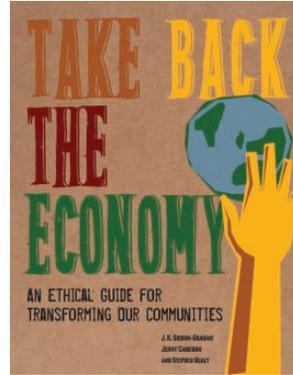
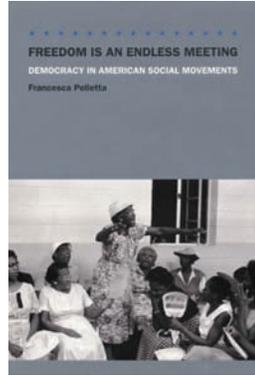
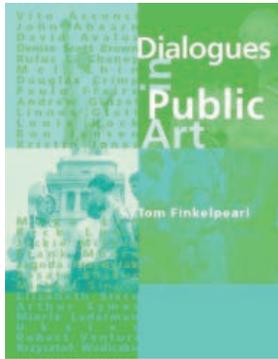
Discussing Dialogue," in *Dialogues in Public Art*, ed. Tom Finkelpearl (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).

Jodi Rios, "Reconsidering the Margin: Relationships of Difference and Transformative Education,"

in *Service-Learning in Design and Planning: Educating at the Boundaries*, ed. Tom Agnotti, Cheryl Doble, and Paula Horrigan (New York: New Village Press, 2011).

Organizing the Clusters

Sember asked participants to indicate which of the four questions had a particular urgency for them. They were then asked to relocate to the cluster of participants formed around the relevant question. Facilitators representing each of the four clusters identified themselves and were accompanied by a note-taker.



2014 Summer of Service to Communities Initiative

Cluster Reflections and Discussion

1. Participants and facilitators in the clusters briefly introduced themselves, identified their roles as teacher or learner, and made a few remarks about the institutions with which they were affiliated.
2. The facilitator explained the protocol to the group: Participants would begin by working in pairs, engaging in two three-minute exchanges to address the question they had chosen. After the exchanges they would return to their cluster, where they would identify themes and provide pertinent observations concerning their question.

The facilitator then reiterated the question they had chosen, while providing participants with a brief time to reflect on an event in their experience of teaching or learning that came to mind in response to the question. After a short period of silent reflection, the facilitator asked participants to assemble in pairs to perform the protocol.

- a. Person A recounts the event/moment. Person B listens. (three minutes)

- b. Person B shares what s/he heard person A say. Person A listens. (one minute)
- c. Person A responds, clarifying and elaborating on person B's statements. (one minute)
- d. The process repeats with person B now sharing an event/moment and person A listening.
- e. A and B then identify some connections between what they shared and the question around which participants gathered.

3. Participants then gathered again in the larger clusters. The facilitator asked, "What did you hear that helps us understand and work with the question?" or, "What did you hear that helps us understand the relationship between pedagogy and social practice?" The note-taker recorded on a flip-chart the observations, themes, and questions that emerged in response. The notes are an inventory of the terms used to talk about teaching and learning, as well as the propositions and contradictions that emerged through the shared stories.

4. The facilitator then reflected on the notes and asked the group what themes had emerged, using the collected responses to guide the discussion.
5. The members of each cluster then rejoined the larger circle of participants. The facilitators posted on the wall the flip-chart sheets containing notes from step 4 with those from the other clusters, so that they were visible to the whole group and easily read together.

Sharing and Questioning

Facilitators reiterated the terms of the session: those of us who are involved in social practice gather to share what we have learned and what we have yet to learn about this pedagogy, as well as what this form of pedagogy has to contribute to the emerging principles and practices of the field.

The protocol exercise was derived from: **Tanya Kachwaha, "Exploring the Differences between Dialogue, Discussion, and Debate,"** chart, 2002, at www.emich.edu/facdev/docs/Dialogue,Debate,Discussion.pdf, as of Octo-

ber 22, 2014, adapted from **Sally Huang-Nissen (1999), “Defining the Principles of Dialogue,”** in *Dialogue Groups: A Practical Guide to Facilitate Diversity Conversations* (Blue Hill, ME: Medicine Bear, 1999), 11–12.

Ximena Zúñiga, Biren (Ratnesh) A. Nagda, Mark Chesler, and Adena Cytron-Walker, *Intergroup Dialogue in Higher Education: Meaningful Learning about Social Justice*, ASHE Higher Education Report 32, no. 4 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Wiley, 2007); also available as an e-book.

Readings related to question 1

Grace Lee Boggs, *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

“We need much more than ‘reform.’ We need a paradigm shift in our concept of education. We must view the movement to transform our schools as just as vital to our twenty-first-century humanity as the civil rights movement was to our twentieth-century humanity. That is how we must approach our investment in the future. That is how we must demonstrate our love for young people and their creative capacities.” p. 136

Paul Lipke, *An Introduction to Strategic Questioning* (Cambridge, MA: Sustainable Step New England, 2003), at http://shorensteincenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/HO_SNOW_An-Intro-to-Stratc-Quest1.pdf, as of October 22, 2014.

Fran Peavey, *Strategic Questioning Manual* (ASHE, 2000), at www.humanecology.com.au/StrategicQuest.pdf, as of July 15, 2014.

Readings related to question 2

Caitlin Cahill, “Doing Research with Young People: Participatory Research and the Rituals of Collective Work,” *Children’s Geographies* 5, no. 3 (August 2007): 297–312.

Marguerite Mendell, “Karl Polanyi and Instituted Process of Economic Democratization” (2003), in *Karl Polanyi:*

New Perspectives on the Place of the Economy in Society, ed. Mark Harvey, Ronnie Ramiogan, and Sally Randles (2003; reissued Manchester, UK, and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007), 78–92.

Francesca Polletta, *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

Readings related to question 3

Tania D. Mitchell, David M. Donahue, and Courtney Young-Law, “Service Learning as a Pedagogy of Whiteness,” in *Equity and Excellence in Education* 45, no. 4 (University of Massachusetts at Amherst, College of Education, 2012): 612–29. This essay seeks to offer tools instructors can use to disrupt the often-invisible white privilege that frequently dominates contexts established for service learning.

bell hooks, “Building a Teaching Community: A Dialogue,” chapter 10 in *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 129–66. “I think that one of the unspoken discomforts surrounding the way a discourse of race and gender, class and sexual practice has disrupted the academy is precisely the challenge to that mind / body split. Once we start talking in the classroom about the body and about how we live in our bodies, we’re automatically challenging the way power has orchestrated itself in that particular institutionalized space. The person who is most powerful has the privilege of denying their body.” pp. 136–37

Xiang Biao, “The Social Production of Hierarchy and What We Can Do about It: Notes from Asia,” in *The Edu-factory Collective, Toward a Global Autonomous University: Cognitive Labor, the Production of Knowledge, and Exodus from the Education Factory* (New York: Autonomedia, 2009), 80–83.

Jessica Gordon Nembhard, *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014).

Readings related to question 4

Incite! Women of Color against Violence, ed., *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-profit Industrial Complex* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2007).

Brian Whitener and Dan Nemser, “Circulation and the New University,” Reclamations Blog, entry for June 28, 2012, at www.reclamationsjournal.org/blog/?p=596, as of October 22, 2014.

We would like to thank Jen Delos Rios, founder and director of Open Engagement, and Tom Finkelppearl, former director of the Queens Museum, now commissioner of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, for inviting the Pedagogy Group to present the 2014 workshop.

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