ABSTRACT
        A study was conducted to gain insight into the
process that facilitates emancipatory education. The sample consisted
of 24 Caucasian middle-class women who had experienced a
transformation of consciousness related to women's issues and who
were acting for the structural change of society through
communications, politics, religion, or education. The women were
identified through books and journals and networking. Data were
gathered through open-ended interviews and a review of literature on
emancipatory education, developmental psychology, and feminism. The
data and literature review ascertained three prominent themes: (1)
emancipatory learning and its facilitators are grounded in an
experience of praxis that leads to social change; (2) both a
psychological and a culture identity change may be part of
emancipatory learning; and (3) women's psychological development and
way of knowing may involve an experience of relatedness that is
enhanced by intuitive activity. The findings of the study suggest
that the essence of emancipatory learning for these women change
agents was a transformation in their way of knowing. These women came
to own an integrated knowing centered in an experience of the
authentic self. When this knowing was grounded in a context of
relatedness, new knowledge that critiqued dominant society was
created. This knowledge then motivated them to act for social
reconstruction. The implications of the study for educational
practice include a challenge to adult educators to consider the
experience of women in educational programs. Educators need to create
opportunities where women can publicly name their alienating
experiences and contribute to the reconstruction of educational
systems. Another implication is that educators should encourage women
to value their experience and to use that experience. Finally,
educators should encourage the construction of knowledge that
reflects an intuitive sense. (Contains 23 references.) (KC)

EMANCIPATORY LEARNING OF CHANGE AGENTS: CONTEXT & DESCRIPTION

Kathleen A. Loughlin

Adult educators working within the critical paradigm
identify the interrelationship between the individual and
society as central to their conception of education. They
envision their role as facilitators of an educational
process that leads to social change (Merriam, 1991, pp.
52-53). While a body of knowledge that explores the
nature of this educational process-- emancipatory
education--is emerging (Apps, 1985; Freire, 1973, 1982,
1983; Greene, 1978, 1986, 1990; Hart, 1990; Mezirow,
1985, 1990, 1991), the literature does not
comprehensively develop the process of how to facilitate
emancipatory education.

The purpose of the study presented in this article
was to gain insight into that process which facilitates
emancipatory education. To realize this aim, I designed
a qualitative study that sought to understand the
facilitators of the emancipatory learning experiences of
twenty-four social change agents. These change agents
were women who had experienced a transformation of
consciousness which influenced their commitment to act
for the reconstruction of society.

The sample consisted of twenty-four Caucasian
middle-class women who had experienced a transformation

of consciousness related to women's issues. The criteria
for selection included each woman's possessing a
reflective awareness of her individual consciousness-
raising process and an ability to articulate that
process. Additionally, each woman was acting for
structural change of society through the fields of
communications, politics, religion, or education. I used
public sources, such as books and journals, and
networking to identify the women. After an initial
contact with a potential participant, I sent her a
description of the study's purpose and the criteria for
the sample. Thus, participant judgment facilitated
selection. Lastly, the interview schedule probed for a
transformation of consciousness within an emancipatory
process as an additional guarantee that the women
reflected the criteria of the study.

Data was gathered using a field-tested semi-
structured open-ended interview schedule. Structured
questions were designed around the topics: perceptions of
self, before and after consciousness-raising; catalytic
events related to consciousness-raising; and formal and
informal learning experiences that facilitated the
transformation of consciousness.

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The transcribed interviews were analyzed using a
modified form of the constant comparative method (Glaser
& Strauss, 1967). To ensure credibility, the techniques
of peer debriefing and member checks (Lincoln & Guba,
1985) were used.

RELATED LITERATURE

Three themes--emancipatory education, developmental
psychology, and feminism--guided the literature review.
The literature review on emancipatory education suggested
that an inquiry into the nature of emancipatory learning
predominated as a theme. In the literature, facilitators
of emancipatory learning were integral components of the
emancipatory learning experiences, themselves. For
example, an understanding of facilitators--such as the
role of generative themes (Freire, 1982) and rational
discourse (Mezirow, 1991)--is embedded in an analysis of
the nature of the emancipatory learning process.
Therefore, a purpose of the literature review was to
explore the nature of "emancipatory learning experiences"
to gain insight into the facilitating process.

The literature suggests that emancipatory educators
have been most notably influenced by Jurgen Habermas
(1971). These educators broadly interpret emancipatory

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learning as learning "which frees people from personal,
institutional, or environmental forces that prevent them
from seeing new directions, from gaining control of their
lives, their society and their world" (Apps, 1985, p.
151).

While the thoughts of emancipatory educators such as
Freire (1982), Greene (1978, 1990), and Mezirow (1985,
1990, 1991) differ in their definition of action for
social change, these educators do agree on the centrality
of praxis as a way of knowing that includes reflection
and action. For Freire and Greene, praxis necessarily
involves direct action for social change. Greene's
(1978) understanding, which is consonant with Freire's,
describes praxis as "critical reflection--and action
upon--a situation to some degree shared by persons with
common interests and common needs. . . . praxis involves
a transformation of that situation to the end of
overcoming oppressiveness and domination" (p. 100).
Similarly, Mezirow (1990) views praxis as critical self-
reflection and action. He, however, asserts that praxis
can also include action for "sociolinguistic, epistemic
and psychological" change which may then lead to social
change (1991, pp. 209-211).

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EMANCIPATORY LEARNING OF CHANGE AGENTS: CONTEXT &
DESCRIPTION

A specific form of emancipatory learning,
consciousness-raising, is derived from Freire's (1982)
methodology of conscientizacao. Consciousness-raising,
Hart (1990) states, is "a process of reclaiming social
membership--not in the sense of adjusting to the
normative view that produced a situation of marginality
in the first place but in terms that tend to abolish all
special claims and privileges for any identifiable social
group" (p. 70).

Rivera's exploration of the adult change process
provides insight into this "process of reclaiming social
membership." Rivera (1972) asserts that adults who have
experienced both a psychological and a cultural identity
change tend to assume roles as change agents for social
reconstruction (pp. 57-63). Mezirow (1991) is the most
explicit of emancipatory educators in connecting both
dimensions of this change process. He specifically
identifies a type of praxis that includes action for
"psychological" change. This type of action, Mezirow
postulates, may lead to social change, even "if only very
indirectly" (p. 211).

A review of developmental and educational psychology
literature provided additional insight into the meaning

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of this change process. Cell (1984) and Kegan (1982)
were identified as theorists who have specifically
addressed this relationship between individuals'
psychological development and their action for social
change. Similar to the thought of emancipatory
educators, Cell (1984) identifies reflection as the
source of individuals' ability "to love, make
commitments, strive for justice, create culture" (p. 59).
He, however, amplifies the understanding of reflection to
include being psychologically centered, "deriving our
beliefs from our own experience" (p. 20).

While Cell describes centering as individuals'
ability to be self-defined, Kegan (1982) explores the
psychological aspects of self-definition. The organizing
principle of meaning-making, he asserts, is the
developmental relationship between the knower and the
known. Furthermore, Kegan postulates that individuals
may define themselves as autonomous (Stage 4) or
interdependent (Stage 5) in relationship to society. It
is from this stance as knowers that they are able to know
society critically and act for social change (pp. 100-
110).

Kegan's incorporation of an alternating movement

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between autonomy and interdependence addresses feminist

critique of mainstream developmental theory. For

example, Gilligan (1982) and Chodorow (1987) critique the

emphasis that psychological theory traditionally puts on

autonomy to the exclusion of valuing interdependence and

relatedness.

Both Gilligan (1982) and Chodorow (1987) identify a

sense of relatedness as characteristic of women's

psychological development. Belenky et al. (1986) reframe

this experience of relatedness into the concept of

"passionate knowing." This way of knowing integrates the

use of reason, an objective separate relating to the

known, with intuition, a subjective connected relating to

the known (p. 141). Intuition is specifically identified

by Noddings and Shore (1984) as an enhancer of related

knowing. Although they do not frame their discussion in

a feminist context, Noddings and Shore suggest that

intuition facilitates a relational knowing characterized

by an integration of Will, intellect, and affect.

In summary, the literature review ascertained three

prominent themes. First, emancipatory learning and its

facilitators are grounded in an experience of praxis

which leads to social change. Second, both a

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psychological and culture identity change may be part of
emancipatory learning. Third, women's psychological
development and way of knowing may involve an experience
of relatedness which is enhanced by intuitive activity.
These themes are reflected in the definintions and
assumptions of the study.

DEFINITIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

Emancipatory learning was defined in this study as
learning that demystifies personal and social realities
and leads to action for social change. Four assumptions
underlie the design of the study. First, particular
women who are acting as social change agents may have
experienced consciousness-raising as identified by Freire
(1982). Consciousness-raising, defined in this study, is
a transformation of consciousness that includes an
experience of praxis: reflection and action leading to
social change. Implicit in this assumption is the belief
that consciousness-raising may be a specific form of
emancipatory learning.

Second, the reconstruction of society may be
facilitated by actions within diverse societal contexts;
for example, the media, politics, religious institutions,
or educational institutions. For this study, action for

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social reconstruction was defined as action within these
contexts that reflects a structural analysis of society
and contributes to a change in societal structures. The
remaining two interrelated assumptions were developed
from my experience. The first is that consciousness-
raising may be facilitated in both formal and informal
educational settings. Second, emancipatory learning may
be facilitated by an educator. These four assumptions
informed the design of the research.

FINDINGS

The data primarily revealed a description of the
emancipatory learning process, although the original
purpose of the study was to identify the facilitators of
emancipatory learning. The absence of facilitators in
the data resulted from an erroneous assumption that was
reflected in the design of the interview schedule. This
assumption was that the emancipatory learning these women
experienced was facilitated by an educator in formal and
informal educational settings. The data proved that this
assumption was false for these women. The findings of the
study did include 1) an identification of the context of
these women's emancipatory learning, and 2) a description
of an emancipatory learning process: consciousness-

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raising.

The Context of Emancipatory Learning

The theme that emerged from the data was that

learning in formal and informal educational contexts was

not the primary context of emancipatory learning. To the

inquiry about emancipatory learning in these contexts,

the majority of the women responded that their learning

experiences as adults in formal educational settings were

alienating, rather than emancipatory. For example,

Ronnie, a psychologist and educator whose writings have

contributed to a feminist revision of developmental

theory, described her alienation.

> [In formal education experiences] my standard
> feelings were I don't have a voice here, I'm not
> smart, I can't figure out how they're doing it . .
> . in spite of relative success throughout my
> education, just not getting it, not feeling like it
> made a lot of sense.

Similar to Ronnie's reflection, Edith, a co-founder

of an international educational center for developing a

new world order, shared her sense of alienation:

> After going back to school, it can get lonesome...
> there's a whole side of ways of knowing that are
> not generally addressed in the academy. . . . you
> feel that whole parts of you are left out most times
> when I'm back at school. I just feel like I'm
> spiritually starving because I have to leave out
> whole parts of me in the process which are very
> important to me.

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Those women who did not speak of formal education as
alienating, also did not speak of it as emancipatory.
Rather they described the intellectual contribution made
by the academy. Miriam, a feminist political scientist
who writes of the interrelationship between feminism and
peace, identified this position:

> In terms of formal education, I would say that,
> although I had some courses and some teachers that I
> thought were disasters, but for the most part I
> really think I learned an enormous amount.

Women's consciousness-raising groups were the
primary informal educational experiences of which the
women spoke. Four of the twenty-four women had been
members of women's consciousness-raising groups. Two
identified these learning experiences as emancipatory.
For example, Tina, an advocate for minority and
imprisoned women, recalled the empowerment of her group.

> Everyone was incredibly honest and the whole premise
> of consciousness-raising of allowing someone,
> enabling someone into speech was exactly what
> happened.

Ronnie, on the other hand, identified this
empowerment within her group, but she described her
experience differently.

> That group of women then met for the next three or
> four years as a group and although I don't remember
> having a sort of "aha" or going through a rage

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particularly, I certainly watched everyone else go
through it.

When the data revealed that emancipatory learning in
formal and informal educational contexts was not a
predominant theme, I sought to identify an inclusive
context that would recognize the diverse experiences of
which the women spoke. These emancipatory experiences,
for example, included reading feminist literature for
some, transcendental literature for others; developing
personal relationships with other women; and experiencing
personal trauma. Therefore, concrete life experiences in
which the women were significantly affected by their
interactions with others emerged as the inclusive
descriptor of the primary context for their emancipatory
learning.

An Emancipatory Learning Process: Consciousness-Raising

The data suggest that consciousness-raising, a
specific form of emancipatory learning, involved a praxis
of owning authentic knowing that was grounded in a
context of relatedness and then acting for social
reconstruction.

Authentic Knowing

The definition of authentic knowing inferred in the

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data is an integrated knowing that is centered in an experience of the authentic self. As suggested in the data, the presence of a woman's authentic self is the experience of an intuitive sense that manifests itself within life experiences. The descriptor "authentic" represents a woman's authorship of the knowledge she creates when she has listened to the voice of the authentic self and integrated it with the voice of reason. Adrienne, a feminist leader in women's religious communities who has challenged hierarchal religious structures nationally and internationally, spoke of that knowing as "a growing sense of my own authority--the authoring of one's life." It is exclusively this sense of authoring to which the descriptor "authentic" refers.

The presence of the authentic self in knowing, for example, was expressed by Joyce, a commissioner of parole working to reconstruct the state penal system. She recalled her early awareness of the influence of her authentic self in knowing.

> My family is Jewish and I consider myself from a
> Jewish background. But the formal education I had
> with that which was summer camps and an attempt at
> Sunday school. I railed against it because it was a
> very, very affluent Jewish community. And I
> confused the religious beliefs with the value
> systems which of course is all wrong. And I knew it

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at the time, but I just knew I didn't fit in. So consequently I didn't pursue a life of being a traditional housewife, joining a country club, and living in a style to which I was groomed.

Joyce describes the voice of her authentic self with the words "but I just knew I didn't fit in." It was in owning that voice and integrating it with the voice of reason that guided her subsequent actions.

Similarly, Susan, an educator facilitating social justice seminars, also spoke of experiencing the presence of her authentic self at the time she decided to pursue a doctoral program.

When I decided to continue for my doctorate, I knew I would have to find a program that fit. My interests were ethics, psychology, and sociology and most programs were defined by disciplines. What I was involved in seemed to fall between the cracks of the various disciplines. So I looked and found an opportunity to design an interdisciplinary program that was independent learning. This was very important because I knew it fit.

Becoming aware of this intuitive sense of knowing—Susan's knowing "it fit"—is the beginning of owning authentic knowing. In essence, the transformation of consciousness that characterized the emancipatory learning of the women in the study was an enduring ownership of that self as the center of their knowing. The enduring ownership of this self is echoed in Anne's

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description of the "inner sense" that characterized her

present learning. Anne, a grassroots activist within the

women's health care movement, formerly viewed learning as

purely rational. She spoke ofthe change she experienced.

"I guess you can say that booklearning's become a

footnote in my learning. Now it'svery important for

me--all of me--my whole person is partof. I just have

this inner sense within me . . . AndI pay attention to

this."

The importance of owning the presence of the

authentic self as suggested in the lives of the women in

the study is that this ownership creates the possibility

for a woman to acknowledge the value of intuition in her

knowing. When a woman owns her intuitive knowing, she

has the opportunity to integrate the knowledge of reason

with the knowledge of intuition. Trudy, a feminist

theologian who is founder of an international

consciousness-raising organization, spoke of her

ownership of intuition and the integration in her

knowing.

> Earlier I continued to tolerate the difference
> between academic theology [emphasis on reason] and
> training for ministry [emphasis on relational and
> intuitive knowing]. And it was only a little later
> that I began to see that was a false dichotomy based

>on a dualism I did not share . . . I became aware
>that was a false split so I very intentionally wrote
>a dissertation that said: "But this ought not be."
>Now in my experience and in my unique situation, the
>process [of knowing] has been very integrated.

This integration of reason and intuition in knowing is

identified by Belenky et al. (1986) as "passionate

knowing" in which there is an "opening of the mind and

heart to embrace the world" (p. 141).

A Context of Relatedness

The data also suggest that while these women's

knowing changed to become centered (Cell, 1984) in their

authentic self, this knowing was not individualistic.

Their ability to know authentically and to envision

possibilities emerged within an experience of praxis "the

kind of knowing that surpasses and transforms, that makes

a difference in reality" (Greene, 1978, p. 18). Their

experience of authentic knowing which led to

transformative action in society was grounded in a

context of relatedness.

A context of relatedness, the data suggest, is a

context characterized by a woman's connective interacting

with others. The identifier--"relatedness" (Chodorow,

1987)--emphasizes a woman's underlying psychic presence

that may form the basis of the connective interacting

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among women.   A context of relatedness appears to create

the opportunity for a woman to connect her individual

knowing with the experiences of others and public issues.

Patricia, for example, is a philosopher who has

contributed to the creation of feminist peace politics.

She described the centeredness of her knowing and her

psychic relatedness to the experiences of mothers in

society.

> I began to try to develop a perspective though it is
> feminist, but it is rooted in the life I lead as a
> woman, which I had previously thought the whole
> problem was that I was too caught up in that life as
> a woman.

She continued and described the context of relatedness--

her psychic connection to the experience of mothers:

> My commitment to women became also a specialized
> commitment to mothers. . . that was where my passion
> was to the rights and needs and perspectives of
> mothers because I think mothers are treated with
> such contempt.

The words of the women studied suggested that this

context can be a connective interacting with the lives of

people whose life experiences they have internalized as

is reflected in Patricia's words.   This context can also

be a connective interacting with others who are

physically present.   Tina, an advocate for minority and

imprisoned woman, described this type of context of

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relatedness:

> And one woman in particular who was a good friend of
> mine--I think we talked about what it meant to be
> black and white. We struggled a lot and she was
> probably most influential in my really understanding
> it.   . . And I think that particular issue of racism
> helped me to come close to my own identification of
> feeling whatever that feeling was of oppression.
> Somehow they are very connected.

Patricia's and Tina's descriptions of a context of

relatedness were representative of the experiences of

each woman in the study. In all instances, a context of

relatedness created an opportunity for a woman to connect

her individual knowing with the experiences of others and

public issues.

Action for Social Change

The reflections of these women studied suggest that

their knowing of themselves and their world authentically

in a context of relatedness motivated them to act. This

action was a critique of the dominant culture and then

concrete action on their new knowledge. This knowledge

became "the motivating force for their liberating action"

(Freire, 1982, p. 34).

These women acted in different societal contexts,

but they shared a commitment to acts of societal

reconstruction that were concrete, physical actions.

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Theresa, an educator whose reading primarily influenced
her own emancipatory learning, spoke of the importance of
concrete action. "I have to figure out the most concrete
things that I can do. You know, then you try to break it
down to something concrete--inglorious things." The
concrete actions which the women of this study undertook
were: public discourse, political action, or emancipatory
education.

Several women acted through public discourse to
communicate the knowledge they had created. For these
women, their commitment to social change is realized
through the power of the word. Edith, author, educator,
and co-founder of an international education
organization, was representative of these women.

> I feel my contribution to structural change is in
> the writing field. In the writing, and editing in
> the field of publications or speaking . . . and also
> in consciousness raising or education related to
> structural understanding of systems and structural
> change. But when I see structural change I don't
> see it as some vacuum out there. It really has to
> do with what's going on with people's minds and
> hearts. It's not just an external thing in the
> world. It's something harder. In some way, I
> suppose, some of our work is about conversion, as
> much as it is about external systems.

A second type of action for social change revealed
in the data is political action. These women's political

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actions included seeking public office, lobbying, and

advo:ating for the rights of women within governmental

channels. For example, Louise, a lawyer, became

motivated to seek public office when her knowing led her

to critique the laws designed to protect the rights and

well-being of victims, particularly the battered women

she represented.

> I wanted to do something with my life. I wanted to
> do something more constructive. I was dealing with
> the results of policies. And my feeling was that
> somehow if the only way that you could change these
> policies was to do this. Then you run for office.
> I have to tell you I didn't know where to start. I
> would have run for city council, assembly, the
> senate, anything. I wanted to run for anything. I
> wanted to run to make a difference.

The realization of her efforts was her election to a

legislature which allowed her the opportunity to

influence the passage of laws to promote women's rights.

Lastly, women in the study were acting in

educational institutions to facilitate individuals'

critical understanding of their lives as influenced by

history and culture. Theresa, philosopher and educator,

described the educational process that characterized the

concrete action of several women in the study.

> I'm very, very strong on a participative knowing and
> a kind of caring and/or concern and acting on it. .
> . . We want to empower students. We want to empower

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them to do things that are meaningful and that they
understand what is within their scope. And I suppose
that you can hope that if we can create an
increasingly large population of people who won't
just sit there, but will find little things to do,
maybe that will help us to create a public space.

The concrete actions of each women in this study

through public discourse, political action, or

emancipatory education manifested the underlying

knowledge they had created authentically in a context of

relatedness.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study suggest that the essence

of emancipatory learning for these women change agents

was a transformation in their way of knowing. These

women came to own an integrated knowing centered in an

experience of the authentic self. This knowing when

grounded in a context of relatedness created new

knowledge which critiqued dominant society. This

knowledge, then, motivated them to act for social

reconstruction.

The implications for practice suggested by this

study include a challenge to adult educators to consider

the experience of women in our educational programs. For

those women who experience educational systems as

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alienating, educators need to create opportunities where

women can publicly name those alienating experiences and

contribute to the reconstruction of educational systems.

Also, adult educators have traditionally spoken of

theimportance of respecting the experiences of learners.

The women in this study, while their number was limited,

suggest that concrete life experience was the primary

context of their emancipatory learning. This finding may

speak to the importance of encouraging women, especially,

tovalue their experiences and to use that experience as

a"living textbook" (Lindeman, 1984, p. 20).

Lastly, a significant implication of the study is

the invitation to reflect on the type of knowledge that

is facilitated and valued within our educational

institutions. The importance of intuition and relational

knowing in facilitating emancipatory learning suggests

that logic may be only one of many ways to guide the

construction of knowledge. Encouraging the construction

of knowledge that reflects an intuitive sense, especially

in relationship to the needs and experiences of others

may create new approaches to the complexities of

contemporary society.

In conclusion, this study is limited in both the

size and composition of the sample. The findings,

however, represent a beginning in exploring the

experience of women in educational institutions and in

exploring the nature of emancipatory education.

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