

Unsettling the Mind/Body Dualism: Exploring the Transformative Potential of Feminist Pedagogy for Justice-Oriented Citizenship Education

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Abstract

This article examines the transformative potential of feminist pedagogy for citizenship education. The shared social justice imperative of feminist pedagogy and progressive citizenship education, serves as the key point of departure. Drawing from critical advances in feminist scholarship, I question the 'disembodiment' that continues to pervade educational thinking and practices, including those aimed to promote democracy. I contend that embodied feminist pedagogy is a particularly fruitful strategy for educators aiming to cultivate 'justice oriented citizens'.

Keywords: citizenship education, embodiment, social justice

Introduction

A commitment to educational transformation for achieving democracy and social justice has a rich and varied past (Apple, Au, & Grandin, 2009). Yet, decades of scholarship by educational theorists working in diverse ideological perspectives (i.e. feminist pedagogies, critical pedagogies, postcolonial, and LGBT pedagogies) has not translated into meaningful consensus among educators who seek to strengthen democracy and engage questions of social justice (Cook & Westheimer, 2006; Pericles Trifonas, 2003; Zeichner & Flessner, 2009). In fact, the politics of educating for democracy remains highly contested (Apple, 2008). This is not surprising given that there is no single, widely agreed-upon meaning of the term 'educating for democracy' as "[d]emocracy means different things to different people, and among educators and school reformers, the aspects of democracy seen as most important and the best method for furthering these goals both vary a great deal" (Cook & Westheimer, 2006, p. 350).

Despite the absence of a clear articulation of the aims and practices of teaching for democracy, civic education has become a celebrated movement in higher education (Costa & Leong, 2013a; Kezar, Chambers, & Burkhardt, 2005; Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011), with growing international interest among educators and policymakers (Broom, 2011). To the extent that post-secondary education occupies a privileged place in the development of democratic citizens, little agreement exists about how to teach for democracy. Not all civic education programs are critical of the status quo, in fact many teaching for democracy efforts represent narrow and often ideologically conservative conceptions of citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), and focus "on the maintenance of social and political institutions rather than on action for social justice" (Watts & Flanagan, 2007, p. 779). Hartley and Saltmarsh (2011) observe that higher education has embraced:

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Rather conventional, even timid, civic engagement—one that rests easily within the status quo and rarely challenges it. Rather than openly questioning the prevailing norms, customs, and structures of the academy, civic engagement efforts have instead adapted in order to ensure their acceptance and legitimacy within it. (p. 290)

An apolitical approach to civic education “does not teach students to think critically about unequal distribution of power that undergirds how people are able to participate in democracy” (Costa & Leong, 2013a, p.174).

In contrast, the progressive orientation to citizenship education privileges societal transformation and social justice (Schugurensky & Myers, 2003, p. 2). This orientation moves civic engagement from narrow ‘pure service’ or ‘direct service’ to social justice advocacy, and, “from a cautiously apolitical stance to an unabashedly political but not doctrinaire one” (Musil, 2011, p. 253). A progressive orientation to citizenship education emphasizes the importance of teaching students to think critically in terms of social justice, even if “what is socially just also may be contested” (Costa & Leong, 2013a, p. 174). I understand “social justice as a *process of change* towards equal distribution, wide recognition, and democratic representation” (Basok & Ilcan, 2013, p. 4). Importantly, this process should not be thought of as linear, but rather as “a complex process that involves advancement, resistance, derailment, backlash, and reversal” (p. 5).

In their review of “the contemporary landscape of critical and feminist civic engagement(s)”, Costa and Leong (2013b) note that various authors acknowledge the need for civic education to address questions of social justice, [however] “these discussions have largely ignored the relevance of feminist pedagogy” (p. 271). This paper seeks to address this gap by advancing the transformative potential of feminist pedagogy for progressive citizenship education. I contend that the feminist analytic of embodiment is a particularly fruitful strategy for educators aiming to cultivate *justice oriented citizens*—an approach that “calls explicit attention to matters of injustice and to the importance of pursuing social justice” (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 242). In what follows, I draw from critical advances in feminist scholarship in order to question the mind/body dualism or ‘disembodiment’ that continues to pervade educational thinking and practices, including those aimed to promote democracy.

This examination draws from my work as co-investigator on the *Tikkun Youth Project*, a project funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council’s (SSHRC) Partnership Development Grant and the University of Windsor. *Tikkun Olam*, the ancient Jewish concept meaning, “repairing the world,” has become synonymous with the promotion of social justice and collective responsibility for addressing injustice (Rosenthal, 2005; Sacks, 2005). This ethical imperative serves as the catalyst for a Canadian-South African-Kosovar partnership: *Pedagogies of Repair and Reconciliation (Tikkun): The Embodied Praxis of Youth Civic Engagement (the Tikkun Youth Project)*. This article explicates the embodied contours of the feminist pedagogy underlying the *Tikkun Project’s* aim of increasing the capacity of marginalized youth, in diverse national contexts, to “repair the world” through advocacy for social justice that challenges systemic barriers to the practices of citizenship (Lister, 2003).

A Critical Feminist Approach to Civic Education

Although feminism and progressive citizenship education share a commitment to the pursuit of social justice, “[c]ivic engagement remains a contested topic among feminist scholars and teachers (Costa & Leong, 2013a, p. 171). This is because citizenship education tends to support idealized and universalizing conceptions of citizenship and democracy (Davis, 2010; Jacoby, 2009; Musil, 2011). The liberal model of citizenship underscores “a set of rights enjoyed universally, that is, by all members of a nation-state” (Basok & Ilcan, 2013, p. 45). Yet, feminist scholars have convincingly demonstrated that the discursive framing of citizenship is shaped by a complex of intersecting determinants of social inclusion and exclusion (i.e. gender, sexual orientation, race, class, ethnicity, and ableism) (Nakano Glenn, 2004; Lister, 2003; Yuval-Davis, 2007). It is now well established that the dominant liberal model of universal citizenship masks inequalities experienced by women, racialized minorities, gay and lesbians, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups (Basok & Ilcan, 2013; Devlin & Pothlier, 2006; Dillabough & Arnot, 2000; Jubas, 2006, Young, 2008). Discourses of citizenship are fraught with multiple forms of hierarchy, exclusion, and conflict (Isin & Nielsen, 2008; Yuval-Davis, 2007).

Consequently, feminist scholars remain “sceptical” and “suspicious” of post-secondary civic engagement projects (Costa & Leong, 2013a, 2013b), given that civic education tends to reinscribe notions of citizenship and democracy that conceal power/privilege, erase difference, and perpetuate social injustice (Musil, 2011; Verjee, 2012; Walker, 2000). In so doing, civic education can potentially, “reinforce the very power inequalities that feminists have worked so diligently to expose and challenge” (Costa & Leong, 2013a, p. 171). For example, feminist geographer Linda McDowell (1999) has problematized universal conceptions of citizenship by tracing the ways in which the mind/body dichotomy has been a crucial factor in the construction of women as different from and inferior to men (p. 35), whereby “the mapping of binary categories on to the social attributes of masculinity and femininity [(i.e. rationality/irrationality, active/passive, public/private)] is a key feature of Western Enlightenment thought” (McDowell, 1999, p. 44). Women are thus seen as restricted to their bodies, while men are non-corporeal or disembodied—mind to women’s body (Smith, 1993). Citizenship discourses idealize and masculinize a rational, impartial, independent, disembodied individual as the ideal citizen (Basok & Ilcan, 2013, p. 46). In contrast, women are understood as “embodied, rooted in nature, emotional, irrational, dependent, and passive” (Basok & Ilcan, 2013, p. 46).

This essentialist gender binary has been employed to exclude women from the practices of citizenship (Lister, 2003, p. 71) and to create gendered patterns of exclusion whereby women are equated with the “ethic of care” and dependence, and men with the “ethic of justice” and independence (Lister, 2003, p. 116). Pateman (1998) argues that liberal democratic theory supports conceptions of egalitarianism and public participation that “are premised on the rational male to the exclusion of the personal, private, and domestic” (as cited in Llewellyn & Llewellyn, 2015, p. 15). Accordingly, Costa and Leong (2013a), call for a “critical feminist approach to civic engagement” that “demands sustained attention to the very epistemologies that underlie civic engagement discourse and projects, as well as the pedagogical processes by which they are instantiated” (p. 171). To this end, let us now consider the ‘disembodied education’ that continues to underpin much of educational thinking and practice today (Orr, 2007).

The ‘Birth of Reason’ = The Erasure of the Body?

Preoccupation with the mind and the cultivation of reason has been the central objective of educational thought and practice in Western societies for many centuries (O’Loughlin, 2006, p. 60). The philosophical and epistemological genealogy of disembodied education can be traced to Western intellectual and religious traditions—particularly the European Enlightenment or ‘Age of Reason’, which explicitly privileged the mind over the body (i.e. the Cartesian mind/body split) (Johnson, 2007; McDowell, 1999). This ‘traditional approach’ (Webb, Metha, & Jordan, 2007) to education privileges the development of students’ intellectual and conceptual/rational capacities. Emphasizing abstract or cognitive rationality, a ‘traditional approach’ in education presupposes a disembodied learner, taking “the body—including the activity, movement, and emotions associated with it—out of the mind” (Rathunde, 2009, p. 70). Traditional pedagogy, then, “divides mind and body into a dichotomy that regards the body as little more than a subordinate instrument in service to the mind” (Nguyen & Larson, 2015, p. 331). Undoubtedly, “Western culture has been organized around the mind/body binarism and the assumption that mind is both radically distinct from and of greater worth than body” (Orr, 2007, p. 479).

Feminist scholars have challenged the mind/body dichotomy embedded in the still dominant ‘traditional approach’ to education by interrogating the hegemony of positivism within Western scientific discourse (Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1991). Specifically by contesting the positivist epistemological focus on objectivity and its inherent dualisms (i.e. subject/object, abstract/concrete, and rational/emotional). Explicating the link between science and domination, feminist epistemologists have specifically connected the practice of Western science with the imposition and reproduction of systems of domination and social inequality (Sprague & Zimmerman, 1993, p. 43). For instance, “[p]ositivism assumes that truth comes from eliminating the role of subjective judgments and interpretations, thus sharply enforcing the dichotomy between the knower and the known” (Sprague & Kobrynowicz, 2006, p. 26), which serves to “obscure experience as an active, sensuous, conscious human activity” (Carpenter, Ritchie & Mojab, 2013, p. 6).

To counter positivism’s pretensions of objectivity—‘a view from nowhere’, feminists have prioritized subjective experiences, not just intellect and rationality, as the basis for knowledge (Mathew, Ng, Patton, Waschuk & Wong, 2008, p. 59). For instance, feminists have “emphasiz[ed] the emotional aspects of social life grounded in concrete, daily experiences” (Sprague & Zimmerman, 1993, p. 39). They have also insisted on the legitimacy of alternative ways of knowing including intuition and emotionality (Cook & Fonow, 1986). This commitment to ‘situated knowledge’ (Haraway, 1991)—‘a view from somewhere’—to ‘standpoint’ and the ‘everyday world as problematic’ (Smith, 1987) allows us to appreciate the ways in which “each subject is specific, located in a particular time and place. Thus a knower has a particular perspective on the object” (Sprague & Kobrynowicz, 2006, p. 26).

Consistent with feminist standpoint theorists’ emphasis of ‘the lived experience’—the situated, the experiential, the emotional—Elizabeth Grosz (1993, 1994) examines the body/knowledge complex. For Grosz (1994), the epistemological shift to embodiment represents a great challenge to the Western conceit of universal knowledge. She suggests that bodies “are the centers of perspective, insight, reflection, desire, agency...Bodies are not inert; they function interactively and productively. They act and react” (p. x-xi). As such, Grosz’s feminist theory (1993, 1994) “reminds us that lived experiences are always embodied. It is through our...bodies that we interact with the world and become subjects” (Wilcox, 2009, p. 106). After all, we don’t simply have bodies; we are bodies.

Unquestionably grasping human embodiment, and the notion that every aspect of our thought is related to forms of bodily engagement with our environment, is a profound and threatening undertaking that is at odds with our inherited Western philosophical and religious traditions (Johnson, 2007, p. 1). Perhaps this is why after decades of sustained feminist critique of the mind/body dualism, “there remains a strong allegiance to an Enlightenment or modernist view of subjectivity as essentially mental in much educational thinking” (O’Loughlin, 2006, p. 61). In other words, “the illusion of a disembodied mind, or a mind that transcends the ‘limitations’ of the body” (Rathunde, 2009, p. 71) remains pervasive in education. This is “problematic because it involves the disembodiment of school knowledge as curriculum, as well as the privileging of the abstract in human affairs” (O’Loughlin, 2006, p. 60). Disembodiment has significant implications for pedagogical advocacy for social justice. Mathew, Ng, Patton, Waschuk, and Wong (2008) observe, “privilege[ing] the intellect, simplistically equated with the mind, over the body-spirit, [leads] to a bifurcation of theory and practice” (p. 43). Likewise, Bai (2001) argues that our inability to translate what we know about social and environmental problems into appropriate actions is related to the disembodiment of knowledge which replaces our multiple and fluid experiences of the world with restrictive concepts.

The ubiquity of the mind/body dualism is even evident in the liberatory aims of critical pedagogy. Paulo Freire, who is commonly regarded as the inaugural philosopher of critical pedagogy (McLaren, 2000), “is oblique in direct references to the body” (Nguyen & Larson, 2015, p. 333). Leading critical pedagogy theorists and practitioners have acknowledged that the paradigm has by and large ignored the body’s roles in power struggles in education (Giroux, Lankshear, McLaren, & Peters, 1995). The aim of critical pedagogy is “to help students discover through cultural meanings and lived experience those ideological frameworks...that encourage uncritical acceptance of exploitation” (Llewellyn & Llewellyn, 2015, p. 14). Education is thus positioned as a transformative means through which “students construct counter-hegemonic identities for themselves and then act as public citizens against individual and collective oppression” (Llewellyn & Llewellyn, 2015, p. 14). Despite a shared pedagogical emphasis on challenging relations of power/domination and advocacy for social justice, the relationship between critical pedagogy and feminism is sometimes strained (Luke & Gore, 1992; Llewellyn & Llewellyn, 2015; Wilcox, 2009).

Feminists contend that critical pedagogy has failed to “engage with feminism” (Kenway & Modra, 1992, p. 138) and criticize the paradigm’s highly abstract theoretical writings and rationalistic assumptions (Ellsworth, 1992; Gore, 1993; 1992; Luke & Gore, 1992). Luke (1992) argues “liberal notions of disembodied, dispassionate subjects capable of equal and impartial (perspectiveless) normative reasoning” (p. 39), are foundational to critical pedagogy. Luke (1992) states:

In the discourse of critical pedagogy, the educational politics of emancipatory self-and social empowerment, and of emancipatory rationality and citizenship education, have been articulated in epistemic relation to liberal conceptions of equality and participatory democracy. These, in turn, are located squarely in (male) individualism constitutive of the public sphere. (p. 29)

For Colin Piele (1998), critical theories of social change, [such as critical pedagogy], fail to grasp the importance of bodily and emotive knowledge in governing our actions. The disembodied orientation of critical pedagogy might account for the difficulty educators have encountered in translating critical pedagogy to meaningful classroom practice (Breuing, 2011;

Ruiz & Fernandez-Balboa, 2005). Although supportive of the overall emancipatory goals of critical pedagogy, feminist scholars have struggled to make certain that critical pedagogy generally addresses racism, sexism, the realities of homophobia, and other forms of power in education (Apple, Au, & Gandin, 2009, p. 9). These insights are of vital importance to critical pedagogies' exploration of how relations of power and inequality manifest and are challenged in formal and informal education (McLaren, 1994).

To be fair, Paulo Freire “contextualizes body/worlds through *praxis* [emphasis in original]” (Nguyen & Larson, 2015, p. 333). Freire (1968/2007) defined *praxis* as “unified action and reflection operating antithetically to traditional pedagogy’s basis in dialectical mind/body separation (p. 53). Freire’s dynamic understanding of action and reflection as occur[ing] simultaneously (Freire, 1968/2007, p. 128), echoes the contributions of American pragmatist, John Dewey. Dewey, who emphasized “learning by doing” (1938), was a fierce critic of the mind/body dualism. He “stress[ed] the active roles of sensory experience and action in knowledge construction” (Nguyen & Larson, 2015, p. 332). In “highlight[ing] elements of unified mind/body learning” (Nguyen & Larson, 2015, p. 332)—action and knowledge for Dewey and *praxis* and consciousness for Freire—both scholars are recognized as important intellectual forerunners of recent scholarship of embodied feminist pedagogies (Nguyen & Larson, 2015), to which we now turn.

Embodied Feminist Pedagogy

Paulo Freire and John Dewey’s intellectual legacy is evident in Ng’s (1993, 2003) and Mathew et al., (2008) pioneering contributions to embodied feminist pedagogy. These scholars argued, “that in spite of their apparent divergence, what unifies western liberal, progressive and radical education is their overriding focus on developing the learner’s intellectual skills” (Mathew et al., 2008, p. 43). For Ng, who sought to challenge the “often invisible relations of power and exploitation that shape everyday life, including in the classroom” (Coburn, 2013, pp. 18-19), this was highly problematic. Ng understood difference and hence both privilege and marginality as fundamentally inscribed and experienced through the body (Coburn, 2013; Mathew et al., 2008). Mathew et al. (2008) reminds us that,

[I]ntellectual encounters are not only the confrontation of disembodied ‘minds’, but also a confrontation of bodies that are differently inscribed. Thus, the quality of our intellectual encounters cannot be separated from who we are as gendered, racialized, and classed subjects with varying dis/ability. (p. 44)

Moving beyond the mind/body duality, the analytic of embodiment, invites us to appreciate the ways in which race, gender, and class “are features that arise in human interaction. That is, they are *relational properties* located in time and space” (Ng, 2003, p. 209). An interactional and relational approach to social difference and “otherness”, directs our attention towards how dominant and subordinate relations...intersect to *produce* [emphasis added] inequality and marginalization (Ng, 2003, p. 214). This reflexive awareness of relationality and its significance to the everyday practices and interactions of the learning environment is foundational to feminist pedagogy (De Santis & Serafani, 2015; hooks, 2000; Tisdell, 1998).

Drawing from post-structuralism, feminist theorists “seek pedagogy that treats knowledge, and thus curriculum, as provisional and uncertain, and student and teacher identities as partial and contextual” (Llewellyn & Llewellyn, 2015, p. 15). Post-structural

feminism emphasizes the central role of individual agency and the learning environment (De Santis & Serafani, 2015, p. 89) and is attentive to “the intersections of gender with other systems of oppression and privilege” (Tisdell, 1998, p. 146). This also requires attention to the “positionality of all participants” (Tisdell, 1998, p. 145), as “classrooms are spaces for contradictory standpoints and embodied realities” (Llewellyn & Llewellyn, 2015: p. 15). Feminist pedagogues call for classrooms to be spaces in which student and teacher have sustained encounters with each other and with the oppressive formations in which social relations are invested (Ellsworth, 1992, p. 100). Embodied relationality meaningfully grounds feminist pedagogy and makes it attentive to difference, relations of power, and advocacy for social justice (Costa & Leond, 2013b, p. 266). This is demonstrated by Tracy Penny Light, Jane Nicholas, and Renée Bondy’s edited collection *Feminist Pedagogy in Higher Education: Critical Theory and Practice* (2015), which explores how “feminist scholars have developed innovative ways of teaching and learning that place issues of social inequality and difference at the centre of the curriculum” (Bondy, Nicholas, & Light, 2015, p. 4). Themes, to which, we now turn.

There is growing appreciation of the importance of “re-embodiment pedagogy—that is, the reunion of our mind with our body, emotions, and spirit in teaching and learning—as essential to the integration of what one learns and knows with how one acts” (Wong, 2004, p. 11). Feminists are further reconciling the neglect of the body by relating expanding interdisciplinary dialogue about the relational constitution of mind and body to practices of transformational pedagogy. Batacharya (2010) notes, “embodiment is increasingly being theorized and practiced as a key consideration in counter hegemonic education, activism and community development” (p. 300). Wagner and Shahjahan (2015) argue that embodied teaching provides a unique means of delivering material consistent with the aims of social justice or anti-oppression education (p. 244).

Embodied feminist pedagogy advocates a radically holistic approach to education, “privileging the body itself as a place of learning and experience” (Pineau, 2002, p. 44), reminding us that, “experience is always embedded within thinking and being” (Carpenter et al., 2013, p. 66). Embodiment appreciates that concrete knowledge of abstract concepts is acquired directly through experiential, corporeal engagement (Matlock, Ramscar, & Boroditsky, 2003; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). A guiding principle of embodied feminist pedagogy “is that effective and transformative education takes place when learners engage their multiple intelligences” (Wilcox, 2009, p. 114). Ng (2012), for example, maintains that in order to “interrogate how our consciousness is developed and changed” the body/spirit must be engaged and the mind/body dichotomy must be challenged (p. 354). Her “integrative embodied critical pedagogy or embodied learning (EL)” (Ng, 2012, p. 354), seeks to “develop the capacity, not only for critical reasoning, . . . [but also] to alter reactions that contribute to the reproduction of dominant-subordinate relations” (p. 352). Laura Larson (2005) also explores the importance of recognizing personal experience and affect as a legitimate form of knowledge (p. 136). Embracing the emotional and affective components of learning, then, is important to feminist embodied pedagogy.

Attending to the co-constitution or relational nature of mind and body, embodiment not only challenges dichotomous thinking, it also provides praxis for feminist pedagogy. Ng (2012) observes,

[N]ot only have I learned tremendously from teaching EL, but I have also changed my own praxis over time, to the point where I am now convinced that integrating body, mind, and spirit is not only disruptive to established educational conventions in North America but is a

method of decolonizing—undoing—ways in which we have come to be in the world. (p. 352)

Ng (2012) consistently stresses, “that experiential reality is the starting point for any feminist inquiry...and theorization into the constitution of social relations and everyday life” (Carpenter et al., 2013, p. 6). To facilitate this, Ng (2012) utilizes innovative embodied pedagogical practices, which “practically deconstructed taken-for-granted mind/body dichotomies through the practice of Qi Gong, whilst also laying bare the ways that racism, sexism and class inequalities played themselves out in the classroom and outside of it” (Coburn, 2013, p. 18). She also incorporated embodied learning practices, such as

Mindfulness exercises included physical and meditative exercises, [to] reinforce the fact that we are embodied learners, that learning does not only involve the mind...[and] journaling [so that] students [could]...reflect on their reactions (feelings and emotions) to the [course] materials. (Mathew et al., 2008, p. 43)

Recently published narratives by Ng’s (2012) former graduate students attest to the truly transformative learning experience created by her embodied learning (EL) practices (Nardozi, Lee, Delaney, Bickford, Moynagh, & Ramjattan, 2014). In fact, there is a growing evidence that the connection between emotion, learning, and self-and social awareness (Elbertson, Brackett, & Weissberg, 2010).

Transformation Through Discomfort: Feminist Embodied Learning

Importantly, “teaching to transgress” (hooks, 1994) or “[t]eaching and learning against the grain” (Ng, 1993, p. 201) is inherently uncomfortable. In order for students to appreciate the relational quality of systems of oppression, they must be understood “as social systems in which we all participate in various ways” (Berila, 2014, p. 56). This is “inevitably contentious and uncomfortable for many students who are brought to confront their privileges and experiences of oppression” (Wong, 2004, p. 17). For instance, Griffin and Oullette (2007) report “frustration”, “anger”, “dissonance”, and “immobilization” as recurrent themes when facilitating social justice education (p. 106). Interrogating privilege can be very unsettling and discomfoting to students, who may lack awareness of their dominant position relative to those who are marginalized (De Santis & Serafini, 2015, p. 99). Social justice education can be, “very uncomfortable for many [students] because it...unsettles many of their old beliefs and conceptions about themselves and the world” (Wong, 2004, p. 24). This unsettling processes “of emotional expression in response to increased awareness of oppressive structures and experiences” (De Santis & Serafini, 2015, p. 99) is critical to what bell hooks (1994) calls “building a culture of community” (p. 40) and realizing education as a “practice of freedom” (p.12), “where education challenges the oppression that results from maintaining the status quo” (De Santis & Serafini, 2015, p. 89).

Discomfort is thus underscored as central theme in the feminist pedagogy literature. For example, feminist pedagogues Carm De Santis and Toni Serafini (20015) utilize “the phrase *being comfortable with being uncomfortable* [emphasis in original] to describe the process of honestly and critically examining one’s privilege and power” (p. 99). Decolonization educator Paulette Regan (2010) stresses the importance of ‘unsettling’ to transformative experiential learning that empowers people to make change in the world (p. 23). Citing *Webster’s Dictionary*, Regan defines “unsettle” as “to loosen or move from a settled state or condition...to perturb or agitate mentally or emotionally” (Merriam-Webster, 2016). Regan

(2010) argues that, “disturbing emotions are a critical pedagogical tool that can provoke decolonizing, transformative learning (p. 13). For Regan (2010) “reconnecting reason and emotion—head to heart—is integral to an unsettling pedagogy” (p. 12). Bridging discourses of psychoanalysis and contemporary pedagogy, Britzman’s (2011) considers how “the work of interpreting emotional response can further support learners’ capacity to feel, think, and make reparation for unimaginable lives and worlds radically outside of their own” (Tarc, 2011, p. 351).

Feminist pedagogy also explores embodiment through narrative and literary experiential learning. Gotlib (2015), for example, challenges the masculinized, abstracted, and disembodied approach to teaching and learning philosophy by using embodied, situated narrative pedagogy. Gotlib (2015) contends that the inclusion of narrative space within the classroom attunes students to “the realizations that our moral lives, rather than being bound by pure theoretical impartiality, are lived within multifaceted communities of practice” (p. 174). Likewise, wishing to make visible “the traumatic histories constituting Canadian multiculturalism”, Mishra Tarc’s (2011) pedagogy turns to literary testimony in order to “invite students to feel past human experiences that exceed those of one’s self” (p. 359). Similarly, Regan (2010) “emphasiz[es] the importance of storytelling and ceremony as *embodied* [emphasis added] testimonial and commemorative practice” (Regan, 2010, p. 13). This pedagogical positioning allows, “history [to be] understood both intellectually and emotionally as an embodied place of connectivity that is essential to reconciliation (p. 19).

Ng (2012), and other scholars of feminist pedagogy (Boyd & Eudey, 2013, Wilcox, 2009; Wong, 2004) place great value on “the development of self-reflexivity as a central component of the learning processes” (Bondy, Nicholas & Light, 2015, p. 6). Importantly, a feminist pedagogy of self-reflexivity is one of self-transformation, as opposed to a deficit model that positions the teacher as assuming “the power to empower” (Llewellyn & Llewellyn, 2015, p.15). Berila (2014) argues, “[t]he critical self-reflection tools cultivated in mindfulness, ... help us to see that who we are shapes what we know” (p. 57). Her pedagogy invites “students to examine how systems [of oppression] affect them and what their roles might be within those systems” (Berila, 2014, p. 57). Mishra Tarc’s (2011) exploration of reparative curriculum aims to move learners to encounter colonization, specifically the aboriginal ‘other’s’ “unaccounted-for experiences of extreme suffering and mass violence that persistently affect our present understandings of social and political life” (p. 351). Mishra Tarc (2011) contends, “[d]ynamics of resistance, crisis, and worldlessness characterizing the learner’s inner response to difficult knowledge are aspects of reparative learning to be emotionally and productively engaged” (p. 352).

To this end, feminist pedagogy also stresses the critical import of contemplative practices, such as mediation and yoga. Contemplative practices are employed, “to help students develop [the] ability to critically self-reflect...to remain present—and *embodied*—in the classroom” (Berila, 2014, p. 56). For instance, in their work with indigenous women struggling with injuries from violence and oppression, Young and Nadeau (2005) employ a multisensory-embodied approach of contemplative practices, song, and ceremonies, and other forms of embodied practice to facilitate decolonization and reconciliation. For Young and Nadeau (2005), “the transformation of the impacts of sexual, racial and colonial violence requires unlearning ways of thinking and being that have been etched onto the body” (p. 13). Wong (2004) also proposes the transformative potential of “an integrated mind-body-spirit pedagogy in critical social work education” (p. 1), specifically the practice of mindfulness in negotiating the discomfort of unlearning oppression. She encourages students to:

[S]tay in touch with an embrace their feeling[s] of discomfort ... to relax into and befriend their discomfort ... to take their feeling of discomfort as a teacher and a friend—a precious opportunity for learning and growth ... to see the place of discomfort as a place where change begins. Only when we feel uncomfortable would we begin to feel the need for change. (p. 24)

Likewise, Orr (2007) advocates mindfulness practices, such as yoga, “to deepen the liberatory potential of anti-oppressive pedagogies” (p. 479). She proposes that mindfulness practice is “a proven technique to address the non-cognitive forms of attachment to ideation that may remain in force despite the most thorough-going intellectual change” (p. 477). Batacharya’s (2010) doctoral research also considers embodied learning, though the practice of yoga. Her nuanced exploration of embodiment emphasizes the importance of yoga as a “healing resource and form of resistance to violence and oppression” (p. ii). Her findings attest “that recovery and resistance to violence and oppression and its consequences must address sentient-social components (knowing that is mental, physical, emotional and spiritual, for example) of embodiment simultaneously (p. ii). This pedagogical dynamic is illustrated by Forbes’ (2003, 2004) research, which documents how mindfulness meditation can help adolescent males negotiate problematic internalized discourses of racialized hyper-masculinity.

In sum, embodied feminist pedagogy is a unique and innovative means of teaching for social justice and democracy. Embodied feminist pedagogy can help students understand their complex and divergent responses to anti-oppression or social justice oriented course content and utilizes these embodied responses to cultivate critical self-reflection and social justice advocacy. Feminist pedagogy “not only invites students to make paradigm shifts but also allows them to be more authentically involved in the learning experience” (De Santis & Serafini, 2013, p. 91). Advancing feminist and anti-oppressive practices, De Santis and Serafini (2013) contend:

Engaging the student as a whole person who is in relationship with multiple learning processes (formal education, work, service-based, and life experience) has the potential to deepen not only student’s understanding of knowledge construction but also their human citizenship and compassionate investment in their world. (p. 91)

As such, embodied feminist pedagogy is well aligned with the aspiration of justice oriented civic education, cultivating “citizens who are reflexive, critical thinking, social change agents” (De Santis & Serafini, 2013, p. 91).

Conclusion

Feminist pedagogy values many of the same ideals put forth by a progressive or justice-oriented civic education, namely, addressing matters of injustice and the importance of social justice. This paper has considered the epistemological and pedagogical orientation of embodied feminist pedagogy, with the expressed aim of exploring how this orientation can be fruitfully applied to justice-oriented civic education. As previously discussed, feminist scholars have been apprehensive about and largely disengaged from citizenship education in higher education (Costa & Leong, 2013a, 2013b). Concerned that civic education “conforms to pedagogical practice that reproduce status quo relations” (Costa & Leong, 2013b, p. 268) feminists have aligned their pedagogy with more explicitly ‘activist’ orientations (Naples & Bojar, 2002). For example, Jacob (2013) “prefers the term ‘social justice education’ to civic engagement, because it emphasizes the practice of critically examining power and privilege in

pursuit of a more socially just society” (Costa & Leong, 2013a, p. 175). Likewise, Verjee (2012) highlights “the need to re-examine civic engagement from a social justice orientation informed by an intersectional analysis, an approach that is unequivocally political” (Costa & Leong, 2013b, p. 272).

There is in fact, “evidence that more civic engagement programs are using the term ‘justice’ or ‘social justice’ in their mission statements and learning goals” (Musil, 2011, p. 253). The social justice nexus between feminist pedagogy and justice-oriented civic education holds great promise for spaces of collaboration and integration within post-secondary education. Costa and Leong (2013a) note “a common thread” in the recent feminist scholarship in civic education: “the pedagogical emphasis on experiential reflection and its attendant outcomes, including the discovery of their complicity in the very relations of power students seek to challenge” (p. 175). Highlighting the role of ‘unsettling’ or ‘discomfort’, hallmarks of embodied feminist pedagogy, Costa and Leong (2013a) observe that, “[a]llowing students to experience the cognitive dissonance of putting ideas into action and the unintended consequences and complicity that may result is a profound lesson in how systems of inequality operate and are able to reproduce themselves” (p. 175).

Costa and Leong (2013a) also stress the import of “intersectional analysis [that] can illuminate the myriad of ways that [civic education projects, such as] civic engagement and service learning pedagogies may reproduce social inequalities by revealing the privileged standpoints that have often epistemologically underpinned such pedagogies” (p. 176). Costa and Leong (2013a) endorse Verjee’s (2012) critical race feminist exploration of service-learning as a wonderful example of a “critical feminist approach to civic engagement” (p. 176). Consistent with embodied feminist pedagogy, Verjee (2012) utilizes counter-storytelling, as a means to “legitimize the voices of women of colour in speaking about oppression” (p. 57), and as the basis for a transformative vision of service-learning. She underscores the need “for institutional accountability, requiring a critical examination and transformation of hegemonic structures and practices within [the academy] before any genuine, respectful, and mutually beneficial relationship with communities of colour can develop” (p. 57).

Delineating a *justice-oriented citizenship education* requires integration of feminist epistemology that challenges objective knowledge and the universal subject. It also requires greater appreciation of the contributions of feminist pedagogy in facilitating transformational educational environments. The literature explored in this article suggests that embodiment, relationality, positionality, and critical self-reflexivity are absolutely central to the transformative aims of feminist pedagogy. Further, an embodied feminist approach embraces the ‘unsettling’ affective/emotional dynamics of anti-hegemonic learning environments and utilizes embodied contemplative practices to negotiate the related challenges. Accordingly, embodied feminist pedagogy is well suited for the transformative aspirations of *justice-oriented civic education*. Essentially, embodied feminist pedagogy represents a means of creating “different relation to the norms that we wish to contest, or the wounds that we wish to heal” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 201). Accordingly, feminist pedagogy is well positioned to enrich and advance progressive citizenship education.

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