



*Research Articles*

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## **Applying Social Movement Theories to Foster Critical Media and Civil Literacy in Adult Education**

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One need not look far to observe that the political discourse is highly polarized. The literature on activism and adult learning is eclectic, and draws on several broad traditions of education and social theory. The purpose of this paper is to trouble the polarization of political rhetoric and how it takes away from healthy political dialogue in civic society, and to explore some understandings offered in social and political movement theory as analytical tools for critical media and civic literacy. Through the exploration of social movement theories beyond academic literature, we can model how to apply various theoretical understandings to current world events occurring around us, how to identify and critically think about the framing of political and social issues, and how to recognize the types of collective identities that are being performed and promoted. We can resist these polarizations through thoughtful questioning, social imagination, and real discursive political agency.

Keywords: political polarization; social movements; critical civic literacy

All education has political implications (Agresto, 1990); and social and political movements often become spaces for learning and informal pedagogy (Hall, 2004; Walter, 2007). As educators, we cannot ignore the politics inherent in our profession. Holford (1995) purported that “knowledge and reality are significantly constructed by social movements, and adult education is key in the process” (p. 109). At a time when the political discourse worldwide is increasingly polarized, it is now more important than ever to reconsider the politics of education, present political currents as potential sites of learning, and how the two intersect. First, we must recognize that political and social movements naturally encompass an element of informal learning, and can potentially serve as major sites of (mis)education (Giroux, 2004; Tisdell, 2007). Second, we must also recognize that the learning environments in which we work are not insulated from the political tropes that surround us. Indeed, often times our

institutions of education become the battle grounds of political titans, and it is hard to not get caught up in and begin mimicking the polarizing soundbiting that is prevalent in the media.

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It seems, however, that the political turbulence that surrounds us offers the opportunity, a ripe teaching moment, to facilitate higher order listening and critical thinking skills as well as illustrate the value of one of our most precious civic rights in this country—the freedom of thought and speech (Bradbury, 2016). The natural intersections of education, adult learning, and political movements challenge us to reconsider where our responsibilities lie as educators; as well as to challenge us to consciously exercise our right and responsibility to demonstrate what authentic, generative (political) dialogue might look like—as opposed to what we are currently accustomed to experiencing through the media (Sandlin, Wright, & Clark 2011). “When adult educators help create a communicative culture they become central to the emergence of new knowledge in society and to social change itself” (Sharpe, 2001, p. 172). This is one of the higher functions institutions of learning we can and should facilitate in a democratic society (Holst, 2002).

As I reflect back on the years I have served as an educator, I have often returned to, and relied on my research and training in the area of social movements theory. Over the years, I have convened a variety of university and community courses, including topics like International Relations, Global Social Movements, International Terrorism, Critical Media Literacy, Empowerment and Social Justice in adult education, courses about the philosophy of education all the way to globalization and its discontents, as well as International and Comparative Education. In all of these topic areas, I have been challenged to develop an architecture for respectful discourse, and sought strategies to help learners improve their ability to engage in perspective taking and healthy debate. I have been challenged to bring my own passion for social justice and inclusion to my teaching, to cultivate a sense of critical insight, to challenge privilege and power in all of its forms, but also to hold spaces where contrasting views and oppositional beliefs can exist in tension—even the beliefs and views I disagree with. This is an ever-renewed challenge with each new set of learners, with each new topic as the world continues to shift and change around us, and as the volume gets turned up on extreme and polemic views.

The purpose of this paper is to trouble the increasing polarization of political rhetoric, and how this polarizing rhetoric takes away from healthy, generative political dialogue in civic society, and to explore some understandings offered in the field of social and political movement theory to help us learn how to more thoughtfully navigate these politically charged times. What can these theories offer us in becoming more conscientious citizens and leaders in civic learning? Too, how can we promote critical, independent thinking and a healthier political dialogue, especially within the context of adult learning and social movements? By examining some of the theoretical understandings from social movement theories, we can adapt methods of critical analysis, knowledge creation, and healthier political dialogue as a means for modeling critical media literacy and civic literacy in higher and adult learning environments. And finally, how can we contribute

to the development of critical civic literacy and the higher-order thinking skills that can be transferred and contribute to more meaningful dialogue in civic society?

## NEWS AND SOCIAL MEDIA ARE STIFLING AMERICA'S CIVIC IMAGINATION

The election of Donald Trump and the responding surge of various movements reflect a renewed public urge in the United States to engage in meaningful political discourse and participate in civil society. Unfortunately, in many ways we are being silenced by the media giants' ability to bifurcate the population into two competing camps prodded along with extreme (almost radical) rhetoric that is intended to reinforce and deepen social schisms. As we have been continuously flooded with inflammatory rhetoric repeated in echo chambers within new media (Cacciatore, Scheufele & Iyengar, 2016; Dylko, Dolgov, Hoffman, Eckhart, Molina & Aaziz, 2017), we are losing ground in the plight for genuine and generative public discourse. The higher order thinking skills and critical media and civic literacy are lost in the inundation and discord of information, opinions, and "fake news" (Banks, 2017). The current modes of media information-sharing and increasing extremism are stifling our civic imagination and ability to conceive of opportunities, alternative solutions, and meaningful social change that exist outside of the polarized views being offered by the media in general, and infotainment in particular (Sandlin, Wright & Clark, 2011)

In recent years, media scholars have noted the blurring of the line between informational programming, or *hard news*, and entertainment content, and the resulting admixture has been dubbed *infotainment* or *soft news* (Niven, Lichter, & Admundson, 2003; Peterson, 2004; Prior, 2003). While there is much debate about the purpose, quality, and presentation of political information in infotainment (Fox, Koloen, & Sahi 2007; Gregorowicz, 2009; Hart & Hartelius, 2007; Nabi, Moyer-Guseé & Byrne, 2007), late-night television, talk shows, social media feeds, and comedy programs have emerged as important sources of political information, particularly among young people (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Gao & Brewer, 2008; Hollander, 2005; Kim & Vishak, 2008; Moy, Xenos, & Hess, 2005). Though it is difficult to show whether infotainment affects civic engagement or political knowledge or involvement (Moy, Xenos, & Hess, 2005; Young & Wojcieszak, 2009; Xenos & Becker, 2009), there is evidence that exposure to highly polarized information in a homogeneous media enclave has the potential to dramatically shape the worldview of those exposed, possibly increasing political polarization (Davie, 2009; Warner, 2010). Iyengar and Hahn's (2009) work also suggests that ideological selectivity in media consumption may undergird the further polarization of political views and rhetoric.

Theories of cognitive consistency/dissonance in the 1950s (Festinger, 1957) predicted that as a means of minimizing dissonance, people would seek out information they expected to agree with. Similarly, Iyengar and Hahn (2009) put forward that,

It is no mere coincidence that the trend toward a more divided electorate has occurred simultaneously with the revolution in information technology... Given this dramatic increase in the number of available news outlets, it is not surprising that media choices increasingly reflect partisan considerations. People who feel strongly about the correctness of their cause or policy preferences seek out

information they believe is consistent rather than inconsistent with their preferences. (p. 20)

Iyengar and Hahn's (2009) findings also suggest that the proliferation of new media sources and enhanced media choices may contribute to the further polarization of the news audience. Moris (2007) argues, in the current U.S. media environment, that the effects of perceived political bias in the media are not benign, but rather that these perceptions of bias contribute to the dramatic fragmentation of the audience. While some scholars (Fiorina, Abrams, & Pope, 2005; Levendusky, & Malthora, 2016 a; Levendusky, & Malthora, 2016 b) believe that increased polarization is only an illusion, stemming from the tendency of the media to treat conflict as more newsworthy than consensus, others (Abramowitz & Saunders, 2006; Robison & Mullinix, 2016) point to evidence that increasing numbers of ordinary citizens have migrated to the opposite ends of the liberal-conservative scale (Zielińska, Kowzan & Prusinowska, 2011).

The progression and continued polarization of political dialogue and rhetoric are alarming. While we can agree that political satire has always played its role in democracies (Baym, 2005; Becker and Xenos, 2007; Bennett, 2007), this does not necessarily mean that we should make light of everything or further polarize political discourse. As entertaining as this may be, most of this is scarcely informative and contributes little to genuine political discourse, and it only serves to detract from meaningful conversations about the complexity and importance of the social issues we presently face as a country (Drotner & Kobbernagel, 2014). This is not genuine political dialogue, this is not how complex problems with great social gravity are solved, and the need for critical media and civic literacy skills is becoming ever more imperative for social justice and a healthy civil society.

The extreme political rhetoric offered to the public detracts from the higher order analytical skills needed to develop generative civic and critical media literacy. Instead, as an audience and as a country, we need to be asking ourselves some serious questions. For instance, what is happening while the American public is caught up in the name calling, labeling, and while taking in the hateful diatribes these media paragons produce? Where do we think we can take the escalating polarization and extremism? Are we missing opportunities for meaningful public debate and thereby entirely missing opportunities for meaningful change when it comes to making well-informed, long term decisions about the future and the direction of this country? Are we allowing a handful of people to chisel away at the foundations of a healthy democratic society? How can we counter this bifurcation of thought that is not leaving much room for expanding our civic and social imagination, or fostering fresh thought and innovation in solving our most serious of social dilemmas?

## THE INTERSECTION OF INFOTAINMENT, SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY, AND CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

**A**s an adult educator, I have had the opportunity to deeply reflect on some local political events, which brought me back to social movement literature and to contemplating how some social movement theories could facilitate the development of critical civic and media literacy skills in teaching practice. As an educator, historically, I have found it useful to

discuss and reflect on current events as a means of illustrating concepts and theories throughout a course, but I have been more cautious over the past 10 years when it comes to pursuing these discussions. I discovered that my students spend little time taking in traditional news sources, and that students are not very familiar with current events (even older adults) (Gärdén, 2016). It also comes out in classroom discussions that many of the students already have very strong opinions about particular issues and trends, even though they admit they know little about them.

Two pivotal things have happened for me over the course of the years as an educator of adults. First, students continue to ask me how to go about finding quality and balanced information. At first this seemed like a pretty straight forward question, but it has become a broader learning objective in many of my courses. The analogy I commonly offer is one of a well-rounded diet—try to diversify your sources of information, be critical of what you consume, and do not take in too much “junk media”, which is a term that many students adopted. In addition to a healthier media diet, I also suggest a more active style of thinking, becoming more involved in our civic society, and exercising our social agency, as opposed to passively accepting the ideological deluge of information. In essence, our civic and critical media metaphor of a “healthy diet” became an equation for improving our political and intellectual BMI = consume less junk media and become more cognitively and civically active (Bradbury, 2016). My students’ questions and our developing metaphor for a healthy media diet and intellectual BMI brought me to further investigating how we can promote critical media and civic literacy in the adult learning environment (Dennis, 2004).

The second pivotal event was that a highly controversial speaker was invited to come and speak on our campus about education. Due to his political activism and the politicization of this, some members of the community began sending emails and making calls to the university requesting that the speaker not speak at the state public university campus. Some of the emails and calls were threatening in nature, and apparently some donors to the university also threatened to withdraw their donations if the scholar were to come speak. Subsequently, the speaker was uninvited from the public engagement. The issue became highly politicized, and I was asked numerous times by my students what was going on and why it was so important. When students and faculty began to protest various sides of the “issue,” another student-led group took up the cause of having the keynote come to town (as opposed to campus) to speak, in spite of being uninvited by the campus, as a symbol of freedom of speech. The university first responded by saying that the individual was not to receive a campus venue for his public talk. A law suit was filed against the university for prohibiting the right to free speech on the public university campus. The U.S. District Judge ruled in favor of the speaker, and ordered the university to allow him to speak on campus.

The incident would have been fairly straight forward; originally, the event on campus would have drawn a potential audience of about fifty. However, the politicization that took place, at first locally, and then nationally, continued to further polarize the public and university community. In the end, the scholar was allowed to speak to an audience that had grown to 1,100 with hundreds of protestors standing outside of the building. Similar

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occurrences have been repeated across many campuses in the U.S., and seem symptomatic of the politicization and extreme polarization that the U.S. media contribute to on a daily basis. When issues are framed in a polarizing manner and we are only offered two extreme options, we become blind to an entire range of possibilities that exist in between. As we continue to indulge these overemphasized extremes offered to us by the media, and as we form the camps of “us versus them,” we lose sight of the collective need to address some complex, serious social issues for the betterment of our present and future. These questions cannot be answered without genuine, meaningful political dialogue, and they cannot be answered within the narrow politicization, framing, and extreme options the media are capitalizing on. By allowing ourselves to be caught up in this, we become lost to who we potentially may become as individuals, as a community, and as a nation. It is time to begin combatting the polarization with thoughtful questioning, social imagination, and generative political agency.

## SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORIES AS ANALYTICAL TOOLS FOR CIVIC AND CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY

We generally have a vague impression of what social and political movements are in our minds, mostly constructed by movies and the news. We think of protestors, marches, and picket lines; but social and political movements encompass much more, and are the lifeblood of modern democracies. Charles Tilly discusses social movements as “contentious politics, contentious in the sense that social movements involve collective making of claims that, if realized, would conflict with someone else’s interests, politics in the sense that governments of one sort or another figure somehow in the claim-making whether as claimants, objects of claims, allies of the objects, or monitors of the contention” (Tilly & Wood, 2009, 3). Social and political movements are the spaces and places where individuals collectively exercise their rights to think, debate, critique, and imagine alternatives for the systems and contexts within which they find themselves (Holford, 1995). Social and political movements are sites of individual and collective learning, as well as personal and social transformation (Čubajevaitė, 2015; Thaddeus, 2014).

As Walter (2007) notes, “Theorizing in adult education looks on one hand to the role of social movements as sites of identity, learning, knowledge generation, and pedagogy, and on the other to social movement learning as a catalyst for personal transformation and collective change” (p. 251). Political and social movements can become public “pedagogical spaces for adults to learn to transform their lives and the structures around them” (Hall, 2000, p.190). Della Porta and Diani, (2009) have pointed out that education, both formal and informal, has always played an important role in social and political movements. Over the decades a number of articles have been printed in *Adult Education Quarterly* (Holford, 1995; Holst, 2010; O’Donnell, 2014; Spencer 1995; Welton, 1993), in *New Directions in Adult and Continuing Education* (Clover, 2003; Hill, 2003; Kapoor, 2003), in *International Journal of Lifelong Education* (Kilgore, 1999; VanWynsberghe & Herman, 2015), *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education* (Toth, 2016), and *Convergence* (Hall, 2000; Keough, 2003; Roy, 2000) that highlight the connection between education and activism, and between learning (formal and informal) and social and political movement activity. In our current political climate, it is high time to reemphasize these theories and connections, and to cultivate the critical habits of mind necessary to efficaciously engage in our turbulent world (Gireaux, 2004; Holst, 2010; Keough, 2003). What understandings offered in the field of social

and political movement theory can help us learn how to more thoughtfully navigate the discourse of these politically charged times?

## Political Opportunity Structure and Structural Understandings

**P**olitical Opportunity Structure (POS) theories examine social movements founded in structural understandings and systems theories. From this perspective, social movements are examined primarily in relation to the political system (most commonly nation-states) and market systems within which they are embedded, and how these systems affect groups' opportunities for dissent. It is argued that some systems and structures are more open to challenge than others, and that there are times when systems are more vulnerable to challenges by interest groups within a society.

A society's structure affects collective action by creating forms of interdependence between social groups, and thus also creates the potential for conflicting interests. The organization of social life within a system also affects the various forms groups of collective actors will take in mobilizing people and resources in order to promote their interests. "From this perspective, the central question for analysis of the relationship between structure and action will be whether social changes have made it easier to develop such social relationships and feelings of solidarity of collective belonging, to identify specific interests, and to promote related mobilization" (Della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 37).

This perspective helps us look at current events and political and social movements, and to analyze their potential impact based on the receptivity of a system to challenges. For example, one might theorize that several years of war, a long, rancorous presidential election, and economic downturn contributed to the climate that made it possible for an election based on the idea of "change" to succeed, for the responding Tea Party Movement to emerge in the United States in 2008 and 2012, and an even more extreme election process with radicalizing movements in 2016. Structural understandings help us make sense of the dynamics of why some movements are more successful at certain times than at others, and why social movements seem to come in waves. By incorporating systems perspectives into our course content and learning environments, we can help learners better analyze what roles social and political movements, as well as the different systems in a society, play in the historicity of our political times.

## Framing

**W**e often hear talk about how issues are framed, but social movements frames theory offers a more formalized analysis of how frames are applied to political and social issues in order to mobilize populations. Frames are "schemata of interpretation that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify, and label occurrences within their life space and the world at large" (Snow et al., 1986, p. 464). Frame alignment connotes the convergence of models of interpretation of reality adopted by movement activists and those of the population. Framing is particularly important if we are interested in the media's influence on the opinions and mobilization of people, interests, and issues in a society (Harmon & Muenchen, 2009). Analyzing

framing allows us to ask questions like, “Why was the O.J. Simpson Case successfully framed as a race issue instead of as an issue of domestic violence?” Interpretive frames allow the conversion of a phenomenon, potentially the object of collective action, into a social issue whose origins may have previously been attributed to natural factors or individual responsibility (e.g. health care). As social problems only exist to the extent that certain phenomena are identified and interpreted as such by people (Snow, et al., 1986), it is crucial that we become better-attuned to identifying the frames being applied to political and social issues, and considering how issues might otherwise be (re)framed.

Framing allows us to identify ideological assumptions and values, and to “capture the process of attribution of meaning which lies behind the explosion of any conflict” (Della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 74). Symbolic production enables us to attribute to events and behaviors of individuals or groups a meaning which facilitates the activation of mobilization. It is through this symbolic communication that certain actors are given a voice to speak for a cause, while the voices of *others* may be stifled. Framing also helps identify the aggrieved population as well as those who are believed to be responsible for the social issue or situation. As an example, the application of a framing analysis could be used as a pedagogical mechanism for examining the symbolic framing of the #blacklivesmatter, #bluelivesmatter, and #alllivesmatter, and how framing is intended to give voice to, or to stifle the voice of marginalized communities. Beginning a discussion by utilizing a framing analysis may be an effective way of inoculating the participants against immediate polarization, and more prudently structure a conversation that can then transition into a more nuanced discourse about privilege, marginalization, and how political rhetoric either intentionally or unwittingly reinforces structural inequalities.

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Framing can polarize issues and delimit political dialogue to the proposed options, as I am suggesting the infotainment industry has been doing, or it can...

[O]pen new spaces and new prospects for action, making it possible to think of aims and objectives which the dominant culture tends to exclude from the outset. In this sense, it is possible to conceive of movements as media through which concepts and perspectives, which might otherwise remain marginal, are disseminated in society. (Della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 77).

By promoting critical media literacy skills and learning how to identify how issues are being framed, and interrogating the meaning of those framings, we might be able to open peoples’ minds up to circumstances and spaces that were previously inconceivable, and promote a social imagination that is not necessarily restricted to the bifurcated options as typically presented.

## Inclusive versus Exclusive Movement Identities

Another useful tool offered by social and political movement scholars is the concept of collective identities and how they are defined. “Identity construction is an essential component of collective action. It enables actors engaged in conflict to see themselves as people linked by interests, values, common histories—or else as divided by these same factors” (Della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 113). Collective identities in social and political movements tend to be either inclusive or exclusive. Inclusionary movements aim to create a more inclusive society for all members, such as the women’s, civil rights, and LGBT movements. These movements tend to be broad, less-defined, and make slower, more evolutionary progress in societies.

The collective identities of exclusionary movements define and interpret membership in a much narrower “insider versus outsider” narrative, and collective identities tend to be more clearly defined (e.g. anti-immigration groups, religious movements of believers vs. nonbelievers). These movements may not always be negative, and we must be cautious not to think of one kind of movement always as positive and the other as always negative; but they tend to be more restrictive in terms of collective identity, and their aims are not necessarily to create a more inclusive social context.

We can gain insight into a social or political movement and its purposes by analyzing the types of identity promoted. By examining who is included within the movement group and how movement identity is promoted, and identifying who the targets of the movement’s mobilization tactics are, we can learn a lot about the purposes and functions of a movement, and what purpose their mobilization serves. This theoretical framework is another tool that can be employed as a critical analysis of political and social movement activities, but also as an important critical media literacy skill.

## Progressive versus Reactionary Movements

Movements may also be analyzed as progressive or as reactionary (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Again, we must be cautious about labeling one kind of movement as positive and another as inherently negative, but movements can play one of two roles. Progressive movements, as they are understood here, tend to be movements that aim to bring about systemic change, or change that is unprecedented in a society. Because they aim to shift structure, challenge the status quo, and introduce new social interpretations, these movements also tend to be slow-going and cumulative over longer periods of time.

Reactionary movements, however, are usually formed in response to a progressive movement, and are aimed at maintaining system stability, the status quo, and curbing and resisting “unwanted” social change. From this view, reactionary movements can be understood as defending certain traditions, ideas, norms, or behaviors by forming collective identities that prefer the current, normative, or a so-called ‘ideal state of things.’ One must be cautious in identifying movements and collective identities, and avoid automatically attributing positive or negative stigma to one form or the another, but identifying the role a movement might be playing in the overall process of social change can be a useful way of analyzing current events, news and information, and how

issues are being represented and portrayed in the media. All of these tools for social and political movement analysis are also extremely important in becoming critical media consumers, and can also be offered as conceptual frameworks for analysis in any learning environment. As we model and promote these forms of critical thinking and analysis within learning environments, we also model the critical media literacy skills that may help us develop a better social imagination for our communities, nation, and world as responsible, active citizens.

## FOSTERING HEALTHIER POLITICAL DIALOGUE WITHIN ADULT EDUCATION

Our political dialogue and dispositions (Holst, 2010) are heavily shaped and driven by popular talk and comedy shows that roll so-called political dialogue and entertainment into one. Many of these shows thrive on popular culture and at the same time greatly contribute to it. This more recent form of “news” has been criticized in many circles (Coe, Tewksbury, Bond, Drogos, Porter, Yahn, et al., 2008; Conway, Grabe & Grieves, 2007; Fox, Koloen, & Sahi 2007; Gregorowicz, 2009; Jones & Baym, 2010; Nabi, Moyer-Guseé & Byrne, 2007; Rose, 2010) for being poor sources of information at best, if not malicious extreme political propaganda cloaked as harmless talk and comedy. These concerns beckon a critical media approach, and a more careful look at how these shape political dialogue within education and within broader culture (Gärdén, 2016). “Much literature in adult education is concerned with challenging and resisting the dominant culture and with teaching people how to read the world... Given the natural connection between adult education and critical media literacy, it is curious that discussions about teaching people to read the world of media and popular culture are so limited” (Tisdell, 2007, p. 6-7).

Tisdell (2007) and a few others have made it a point to uncover the powerful influence the popular media have on (mis)educating our citizenry, and our political education is no exception. The information and images we are presented in many ways contribute to the formation of our political understandings and worldviews (Tisdell, 2008). One need not look far to observe that the political dialogue in our country is highly polarized, and many of the most popular talk show and news entertainment figures can easily be identified on the more extreme ends of the political spectrum. When we are only offered the extremes as options, and everything is intended to provoke a response but not necessarily any genuine thought or political dialogue, we may be on a dangerous path (Dewey, 1938). By participating in and allowing the further polarization of our national politics, we begin to lose sight of everything in between and beyond, and our social imagination for a better society is stifled. It is our job as educators to train ourselves to become more perceptive and critical of the political media, and to model for our learners how to better read and become more critical consumers of information—not only for academic purposes, but also to empower learners to be more critical of their world and active participants in their own knowledge and worldview creation (Holst, 2010). We need to demonstrate how political opinions can be formed independently, perhaps even in spite of, the media circus.

These media, when they stand alone, may be the miseducation of America, but by using popular culture and infotainment as a platform for developing and honing critical media literacy, critical thinking skills, and civic literacy, we may be able to help people navigate the drone of the non-stop headlines, talking heads, and counterfeit news (Gärdén, 2016). We can model for our fellow

citizens how to apply structural understandings to the world events occurring around us; how to identify and critically think about the framing of political and social issues; how to recognize the types of collective identities that are being promoted by asking whether they are inclusive or exclusive, progressive or reactionary. In using social movements' theoretical perspectives as tools for critically analyzing information, we can help students develop both as scholars and as thoughtful and engaged citizens.

## CONCLUSION

Friedman (2008) says our system is broken and unable to make meaningful decisions that will determine the long term well-being of this nation. Where shall the American public, so hungry for something of substance, turn? Let us foster a more questioning approach to the information we are being fed, modeled within our learning environments, and let us begin looking for our own information, exercising our social imagination as to the possibilities and potentialities for our communities. We do not have to allow junk media to continue to be the miseducation of America. We can promote more critical, analytical and active styles of thinking, model becoming more involved in our civic society, and begin to further exercise our guaranteed right to participation and social agency (Bradbury, 2016). Within this political climate, modelling critical literacy skills in adult education are needed in educational institutions and beyond as a form of active public pedagogy.

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