

DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKERS

Teachers College, April 20th & 21st, 2012

Stephen Brookfield

MATERIALS

Included in this packet are materials touching on themes I will address during my session. I won't address all of them or go through them in sequence. They are there for reference.

Required Text: Stephen Brookfield. *Teaching for Critical Thinking: Tools & Techniques to Help Students Question their Assumptions*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011

CRITICAL THINKING PROCESS

1. Critical Thinking Process
2. Types of Assumptions
3. Praise
4. Purposes of Critical Thinking
5. Lenses on Assumptions
6. Traditions
7. Challenges
8. Misunderstandings
9. When Is it Appropriate?
10. How Is It Learned?
11. What is Critical Thinking?

CRITICAL THINKING METHODS

12. Building a Case
13. Guidelines For Development
14. Exercises
15. Personal Reflection Exercise
16. Autobiographical Analysis
17. Scenario Analysis Packet - Going Back, Green Acres, Job Change, Orienting New Staff, Giving Feedback, Assessing Local Needs, Checking Assumptions
18. Survival Advice Memo
19. Critical Debate
20. Ideology Critique
21. Heroes/Heroines & Villains/Villainesses
22. Democratizing Meetings
23. Critical Literature Review
24. Constructing Assignments

CRITICAL THINKING IN CONVERSATION

25. Critical Conversation Protocol & Conversation Stages // Choosing an Incident
26. Circular Response
27. Circle of Voices
28. Conversational Moves
29. Conversational Roles
30. Snowballing
31. Newsprint Dialogues
32. Rotating Stations

CLASSROOM RESEARCH

33. Classroom Research Techniques
34. The Muddiest Point
35. Learning Audit
36. One minute paper
37. Why CIQ's?
38. Critical Incident Questionnaire

ASSESSMENT

39. Assessing Critical Thinking
40. Critical Thinking Audit
41. Critical Practice Audit
42. Bibliography
44. 1 credit Assignment

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DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKERS TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR THE TWO DAYS

Because I want this to be a flexible workshop, responsive to the dynamics and diversity within the group, I am not proposing a detailed timetable. Instead, I will lay out the themes that, provisionally, I am planning to address at each segment of the two days. I believe that a truly adult educational workshop is responsive to the interests of the participants and develops organically, rather than following a linear, predetermined agenda.

In terms of time we will start at 9.00.am each day. The group work ends around 4.00.pm. with 4.00-4.30.pm being set aside for individual consultations.

Day 1

In the morning we will get to know each other's understandings of critical thinking and examine some of the traditions that inform the process. We will try some beginning exercises such as Scenario Analysis and the Ideology Critique Exercise. In the afternoon we will shift the focus even more onto our own experiences as adult critical thinkers.

Day 2

In the morning we will report out the CIQ of Day (1) and consider broad guidelines for developing critical thinkers. We will try to demonstrate two or three specific techniques.

In the afternoon we will continue our experimentation with different approaches to developing critical thinking. The workshop will end with a review of the 1 credit assignment for those who need further clarification.

**THROUGHOUT THIS TWO DAYS WE WILL MIX DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES -
INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION, PRESENTATIONS AND SMALL GROUP
PROJECTS**

CRITICAL THINKING PROCESS

**IDENTIFY ASSUMPTIONS
EMBEDDED IN WORDS & ACTIONS
(DISCOURSES & SYSTEMS)**

**ASSESS GROUNDS – EVIDENCE,
ACCURACY & VALIDITY**

**TAKE ALTERNATIVE
PERSPECTIVES – INTERSUBJECTIVE
UNDERSTANDING / PERSPECTIVE
TAKING**

**TAKE INFORMED ACTION /
AGENCY**

***TYPES OF
ASSUMPTIONS***

**PARADIGMATIC
(FRAMING / STRUCTURING
WHITE SUPREMACY, CAPITALISM)**

**PRESCRIPTIVE
WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN
WHO ARE 'NATURAL' LEADERS?
WHAT IS LEGITIMATE
KNOWLEDGE?**

**CAUSAL/PREDICTIVE
WHAT DOES HAPPEN
(HOW SUPREMACY/CAPITALISM IS
MAINTAINED)**

ASSUMPTION - PRAISE

***PRAISING WORK WELL DONE
INCREASES MOTIVATION FOR
GOOD WORK IN THE FUTURE***

**PRAISE ISN'T RECOGNIZED
AS PRAISE**

PRAISE IS TOO FULLSOME

**PRAISE IS CULTURALLY
EMBARRASSING**

**PRAISE IS NOT PASSED
ON BY TEAM LEADER**

**PRAISE IS CONTRADICTED
BY OTHER ACTIONS**

PURPOSES OF CRITICAL THINKING

FROM A CRITICAL THEORY PERSPECTIVE

USING REASON & ANALYSIS TO:-

CHALLENGE DOMINANT IDEOLOGY

UNCOVER POWER

RECOGNIZE & COUNTER HEGEMONY

FROM A PSYCHOANALYTIC & PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC PERSPECTIVE

USING REASON & ANALYSIS TO:-

UNDERSTAND HOW BEHAVIORS AND EMOTIONS ASSIMILATED
UNCRITICALLY IN CHILDHOOD INHIBIT THE CHANCE TO
DEVELOP THEIR FULL POTENTIAL IN ADULTHOOD

FROM AN ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY PERSPECTIVE ...

USING REASON AND ANALYSIS TO ...

UNDERSTAND HOW ARGUMENTS ARE CONSTRUCTED

DISTINGUISH BETWEEN RELIABLE, VALID EVIDENCE AND
UNRELIABLE, INVALID EVIDENCE

LEARN TO RECOGNIZE LOGICAL FALLACIES

SEPARATE BIAS & OPINION FROM FACT BASED ARGUMENT

IDENTIFY DIFFERENT FORMS OF REASONING – INDUCTIVE,
DEDUCTIVE, INFERENTIAL, ANALOGICAL

FROM A PRAGMATIST PERSPECTIVE ...

USING REASON AND ANALYSIS TO ...

CONSTANTLY REVIEW PRACTICE SITUATIONS TO RESEARCH &
IMPROVE HOW WE CAN DEAL BETTER WITH THEM

CONSISTENTLY EXPERIMENT WITH DIFFERENT RESPONSES TO
DIFFICULT PROBLEMS, BEING CREATIVELY OPEN TO NEW &
INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

FROM A NATURAL SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE

USING REASON & ANALYSIS TO ...

GENERATE, TEST & REFUTE HYPOTHESES THROUGH
CONTROLLED EXPERIMENTATION

APPLY THE PRINCIPLE OF FALSIFIABILITY - FOR SOMETHING TO
BE SCIENTIFIC IT MUST BE CAPABLE OF BEING DISPROVED

KNOWLEDGE IS TRUSTED WHEN BASED IN A CAREFUL
COLLECTION OF EVIDENCE OVER TIME

LENSES ON ASSUMPTIONS

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

**THOSE WE SERVE
CITIZENS STUDENTS PATIENTS**

**PEERS' EXPERIENCES
COLLEAGUES '
PERCEPTIONS**

T H E O R Y

CRITICAL TRADITIONS

CRITICAL THEORY

(Frankfurt School, Critical Race Theory)

Critical = challenging hegemony/oppression

PSYCHOANALYSIS /

PSYCHOTHERAPY

(Freud, Jung // Rogers, Gould)

Critical = analyzing

inhibitions learned in childhood

ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY

(Ayer, Wittgenstein, Searle)

Critical = argument analysis

PRAGMATISM

(Pierce, Dewey)

Critical = experimental pursuit of beautiful consequences (eg. Democracy)

NATURAL SCIENCE

Critical = hypothesis testing

C H A L L E N G E S

**Gendered Knowing &
The Doubting Game**

Eurocentric Intellectual Heritage

Modernist Illusion

Exclusionary Language

The Means-Ends Contradiction

**Classroom Critical Thought =
Transformative Action ??**

Linearity & Rationality Privileged

**Radical Pessimism & the Death of the
Transformative Impulse**

Ethical Coercion & Justified Manipulation

MISUNDERSTANDINGS

NEGATIVE

FREEZING

CLEAR OUTCOME

SAME AS PROBLEM SOLVING

CHANGE (THROWING OUT THE
PAST)

WHEN IS IT APPROPRIATE?

Beyond the Novice Level

After Initial Assimilation

When Skills / Knowledge Have to Be Applied in
the Real World

When Fit/Suitability Needs to Be Addressed

When Independent Judgment is Needed

When Power & Hegemony Are a Focus of Study

When Alternative Interpretations & Perspectives
Are Possible

When Actions & Decisions Need to Be
Informed

When Rapid Judgments Are Called For

HOW IS IT LEARNED?

By Instructors Modeling It

CIQ

Assumption Hunting

Assumptions Inventories

Citing Evidence

Assessing Evidence

Instructor Point-Counterpoint

Structured devil's Advocacy

Speaking in Tongues

Scaffolded via Extensive Instructor Examples

**Incremental – learn basic protocol & then
move closer to learners' real world
experience**

Responding to a Disorienting Dilemma

**A situation that takes them by surprise and
reverses expectations**

What is Critical Thinking?

Life is a series of decisions, some small, some much larger. Whom we date or choose as friends, the work or career we pursue, which political candidates we support, what we choose to eat, where we live, what consumer goods we buy, whom we marry and how we raise children – all these decisions are based on assumptions. We assume our friends will be trustworthy and won't talk about us behind our backs. We assume our career choices will be personally fulfilling or financially remunerative. We assume politicians we vote for have our, or the community's, best interests at heart. We assume that the foods we choose to eat are healthy for us, and so on.

These assumptions are sometimes correct. At other times, however, the assumptions we base our decisions on have never been examined. Sometimes we hold these assumptions because people we respect (friends, parents, teachers, religious leaders) have told us they are right. At other times we have picked these assumptions up as we travel through life but can't say exactly where they've come from. To make good decisions in life we need to be sure that these assumptions are accurate and valid – that they fit the situations and decisions we are facing.

Critical thinking describes the process we use to uncover and check our assumptions. First we need to find out what our assumptions are. We may know some of these already (these we call explicit assumptions) but others we are unaware of (implicit assumptions). To uncover these implicit assumptions it is often helpful to involve other people (friends, family, work colleagues) who help us see ourselves and our actions from unfamiliar perspectives. Sometimes reading books, watching videos or having new experiences such as traveling to other cultures, going to college or being an intern help us become aware of our assumptions. Once we know what our assumptions are we enter the second phase of critical thinking, that of research. We try to check out our assumptions to make sure they are accurate and valid. To do this we also need to consult a wide range of sources – talking to people with experience in the situations in which we find ourselves, reading relevant literature, searching trusted web sites, consulting experts and so on. The third and final phase of critical thinking puts the first two stages into practice by applying our analysis to our decisions. Decisions based on critical thinking are more likely to be ones we feel confident about and to have the effects we want them to have.

So, in summary, critical thinking involves three inter-related phases:-

1. Discovering the assumptions that guide our decisions, actions and choices
2. Checking the accuracy of these assumptions by exploring as many different perspectives, viewpoints and sources as possible
3. Taking informed decisions that are based on these researched assumptions

(Informed decisions are based on evidence we can trust, can be explained to others and have a good chance of achieving the effects we want)

BUILDING THE CASE

Research Culture

Allied Cases

Real Life Sites

Hypothetical Projections

Former Resisters

Simulations

Modeling

Monitoring

Reward Structure

Conversional
Obsession

GUIDELINES

MODELING

BUILDING A CASE

**PEERS AS
REFLECTIVE MIRRORS**

**SPECIFIC
EXPERIENCES**

**INCREMENTAL
MOVEMENT
CLOSER**

EXERCISES

SCENARIO ANALYSIS

CRISIS DECISION SIMULATIONS

CRITICAL DEBATE

IDEOLOGY CRITIQUE

**HEROES/HEROINES &
VILLAINS/VILLAINESSES**

PERSONAL REFLECTION EXERCISE

SURVIVAL ADVICE MEMO

**CRITICAL CONVERSATION
PROTOCOL**

GOOD PRACTICES AUDIT

DESCRIPTIONS OF EXERCISES

Scenario Analysis – learners imagine themselves in the position of the chief actor in a fictional scenario. They try to uncover the implicit and explicit assumptions the actor is operating under, to assess how these assumptions might be checked, and to come up with plausible alternative interpretations of the scenario. As learners report out the assumptions they see the character holding they are asked to categorize them (causal, prescriptive, paradigmatic) or assumptions of power & hegemony

Crisis Decision Simulations – in small groups learners discuss how to resolve a crisis in a short time (eg. The nuclear bubble). In debriefing the decision assumptions underlying the decision are examined and inferential ladders uncovered. Particular attention is paid to whose voices were heard as 'natural' authorities and which knowledge or justifications were viewed as most legitimate.

Critical Debate – learners are asked to volunteer to join a team drafting arguments either to support or oppose a motion regarding a contentious issue in their field of practice. The facilitator then asks them to switch sides so that those who chose to propose the motion are opposing it and vice-versa. The debate is conducted and after the debate participants write a reflection paper on the experience.

Ideology Critique – learners are presented with a typical organizational or community practice. They are asked to identify what the practice is intended to accomplish, who benefits from it, who is harmed by it, what inconsistencies & contradictions are embedded in the practice, why these are ignored, and how it could be reconfigured to be more socially just.

Heroes/Heroines & Villains/Villainesses – learners choose a peer or colleague they particularly admire (despise) and identify an example of that person's behavior that encapsulates what's so admirable/despicable about him or her. The debriefing focuses on the assumptions people hold about meritorious and valid behavior and characteristics.

Personal Reflection Exercise – participants complete sentences & work in pairs to give feedback to each other on their assumptions

Survival Advice Memo – participants imagine they are due to leave their job tomorrow and write a memo telling their replacement the most important things she needs to know.

Critical Conversation Protocol – a focused conversation in which one person's experience (the storyteller) is examined sympathetically but critically by colleagues (detectives). An umpire watches for judgmental comment. As questions are asked, assumptions reported and alternative interpretations proposed learners focus on giving descriptive (not prescriptive) feedback & on exploring power dynamics.

Good Practices Audit – an exercise involving at least a couple of days. Workers identify problems that impede them and then work collaboratively to examine their own best & worst experiences as practitioners and learners, and the experiences of their colleagues, in a structured and critical way. The intent is to propose responses and possible resolutions to the problems initially identified in a way that privileges 'ordinary' people's knowledge and experience.

PERSONAL REFLECTION EXERCISE

1. Please spend five minutes trying to complete as many of the following sentences as you can. Just say or write the first thing that comes into your head. If you're stuck on any of them then just move on to the next one. The exercise works best when you have at least 3 or 4 sentences completed.

I know I've done good work when

What I would most like my colleagues to say about me when I'm out of the room is

What I would like my learners (clients, employees, direct reports) to say about me when I'm out of the room is

The problem in my work that most drains my energy is ...

2. Now form a pair with someone at your table. Both of you will take turns in focusing attention on what each of you has written. This is how it works.

Person (A) spends a minute or so speaking their responses to the sentences above. No interruptions are allowed while she/he is speaking.

Person (B) listens carefully and then tells person (A) what she thinks person (A)'s assumptions are. These are the assumptions that she thinks person (A) has about the characteristics of a good practitioner and what good professional behavior looks like. If she wants, Person (A) can ask (B) why she came up with the assumptions she did. The assumptions the listener gives can tell someone a great deal about the assumptions she holds about good practice.

Spend about 5 minutes on this part of the conversation

3. Now reverse the roles. Spend about 5 minutes with person (B) speaking their responses to the sentences above. Person (A) will listen carefully and then tell person (B) what she thinks person (B)'s assumptions are.

4. Finish by discussing the power dynamics revealed in both your responses. If certain ideas about how a good practitioner should behave are apparent, where do these come from? Are the characteristics you select nominated by the chief union or professional association in your area? Are the characteristics selected supportive of dominant ideology (White supremacy, bourgeois decorum, competition, individualism, capitalism) or do they challenge this ideology? What do the assumptions uncovered say about your understanding of how power is exercised, when it's ethical and when it's abused.

TOTAL EXERCISE TIME : ABOUT 20 MINUTES

Autobiographical Analysis

Choose an example from your own life of a critically thinking episode. This could be a time when you questioned some of the assumptions underlying your habitual ways of thinking and acting in some sphere of your life. It could also be a time when you were prompted to explore some alternatives to your usual ways of thinking and acting. Perhaps this episode made you aware of the flow or misuse of power in your life, or alerted you to practices and ideas you embraced that actually were harming you and supporting the power others held over you (hegemony).

1. Make some mental or written notes on your own about what happened during this episode, paying particular attention to the questions below. **Spend about 15 minutes doing this.** Not all the questions may apply in your case.

Triggers: what circumstances or situations triggered your critical thinking ?

Resources: as you worked your way through the episode, what resources (human and material) did you find to be most useful to you ?

Process: what were the emotional highs of this process? what barriers and hindrances did you encounter during the episode ? How did you work through them ?

Consequences: what happened as a result of the episode ? Did you change permanently some aspect of the situation, or yourself ? Did things stay more or less the same, other than your awareness being raised ? Did you wish it had never happened ? Was it worthwhile ? Did you gain any self-knowledge as a result ?

Implications: from your autobiographical experiences of critical thinking, what would you recommend to teachers, leaders & trainers as advice on how they might encourage this process ? If you were asked to set up a critical thinking program for your colleagues, or students, how would your autobiographical experiences affect what you planned ?

2. Form a group with 4 or 5 other people and compare your responses. You can either take turns briefly telling your own complete story, or take each of the headings above in turn and compare how each of you responded to it. Each person should spend no more than 5 minutes on her story. **Spend about 30 minutes doing this.**
3. Write on newsprint all the responses that emerged from your conversation under each of the headings above. What kinds of triggers did your group identify? What resources did they find useful? And so on. **Spend about 15 minutes on this.**

Time for Exercise: 1 hour

SCENARIO ANALYSIS PACKET

Going Back - Scenario

Giving Feedback - Scenario
Giving Feedback - Assumptions
& Alternative Interpretations

Green Acres - Scenario
Green Acres - Assumptions
& Alternative Interpretations

Job Change - Scenario
Job Change - Assumptions
& Alternative Interpretations

Orienting New Staff - Scenario
Orienting New Staff - Assumptions & Alternative
Interpretations

Assessing New Needs – Scenario
Assessing New Needs – Assumptions & Alternative
Interpretations

Checking Assumptions

SCENARIO ANALYSIS EXERCISE

" GOING BACK "

Karen, a wife and mother of two young children in her thirties, is considering going back to work. She has watched as her husband Jack, a busy professor, has taken on more and more work outside of his college to help provide his family a decent quality of life in the city. She sees how tired he is and hears his complaints of how he never has enough time with his family, how he's being pulled in so many different directions, and how he wished things would just slow down.

To ease the situation, Karen has interviewed for, and been offered, a full time job with a company in the suburbs. She intends to put the children into day care and commute back and forth each day to her work. She reckons that with the money her job brings into the home Jack will be able to give up many of his commitments outside of the college. This will give him more time with his family and reduce the pressures and tensions he feels. Overall, the family will be happier - their economic situation will be the same but the burden of producing income will be shared more fairly and Jack will be able to spend more time at home.

1. What assumptions - explicit and implicit - do you think Karen is operating under in this situation ? List as many as you can.
2. Of the assumptions you've listed, which ones could Karen check by simple research and inquiry ? How could she do this?
3. Give an alternate interpretation of this scenario. A version of what's happening that is consistent with the events described but that you think Karen would disagree with.

SCENARIO ANALYSIS EXERCISE

GREEN ACRES

John and Mary, a college educated couple with a young daughter, have decided to move out of central Los Angeles to a community in the San Fernando Valley. They will both continue to work in the city but have decided that their daughter is being short changed in the quality of her life by being forced to grow up in L.A. Lately, they feel that the pressures of the city have been getting to them. There are more arguments between them, their daughter has begun wetting her bed, and much of their precious leisure time is spent on the expressway at the weekend trying to get out of the city.

More particularly, they feel that bringing their daughter up in a dangerous and dirty city is not good parenting and that sending her to public school will condemn her to an inferior education. To them, the suburban life style they see in the valley is more natural. There is more space, they can live in a house with a yard, their daughter can play in her neighborhood and they can send her to a local private school. They believe this move will improve their quality of life both environmentally and personally. Being away from the pressures of the city will help them build a stable, warm family life.

Assumptions Inventory

1. What assumptions do you think John and Mary are operating under in regard to their decision to relocate ? List as many as you can.
2. Of the assumptions you have listed, which could John and Mary check by simple research and inquiry ? How could they do this?
3. Give an alternate interpretation of this scenario. A version of what's happening that is consistent with the events described but that you think John and Mary would disagree with.

GREEN ACRES ASSUMPTIONS & SCENARIOS

ASSUMPTIONS

1. The San Fernando valley will improve their quality of life. There will be no corresponding pressures in commuting into the city, and there will be neighborhood safety in play.
2. Public schooling is inferior to private schooling
3. Bedwetting is caused by the pressures of the city and so will cease in the valley.
4. Marital arguments are caused by the pressures of the city and so will cease in the valley.

CHECKING

1. Find a couple who have already made the change and interview them about its effect on their, and their daughter's, lives.
2. Sub-let their L.A. apartment and rent a house in the valley for a year - view it as a trial run.
3. Do an economic audit of the costs of the move - factoring in private school fees, gas etc.
4. Arrange to see a counselor to check out the state of the marriage - maybe the arguments are unrelated to city pressures.
5. See a pediatrician / psychologist about the bedwetting - maybe it's unrelated to city pressures.

INTERPRETATIONS

1. The real problem is the lack of communication between John and Mary. The arguments and bedwetting are caused by that, not by city pressures.
2. Moving to the valley will increase the pressure. The commute will be horrendous and leave them tired and frustrated.
3. The pressures of private school education will add to the bedwetting problem. Moreover, their daughter will be educated in a school that does not look like the rest of Southern California.

SCENARIO ANALYSIS EXERCISE

"JOB CHANGE"

Stephen, a manager in his forties working for a medium sized corporation in New York, is fed up in his work. Although financially not hurting in his present job, he feels that his employers do not recognize his talents. Most recently, he was insulted when an outside 'expert' - someone Stephen knows personally and for whom he has little regard - was called in to advise on a task where Stephen was proud of his expertise. He has decided to make a change and has applied for a number of jobs, without the knowledge of his current employers.

He has been offered a job in California which is a sideways move, both financially and in terms of his job responsibilities. At the interview he was flattered to find himself highly regarded by the person charged with appointing someone to the new position. Because of the interview experience he has decided to accept the job. He feels that it will be an improvement to work in an environment where his talents will be clearly recognized and rewarded.

Assumptions Inventory

1. What assumptions do you think Stephen is operating under in regard to his position in the organization ? List as many as you can.
2. Of the assumptions you've listed, which ones could Stephen check by simple research and inquiry ? How could he do this?
3. Give an alternate interpretation of this scenario. A version of what's happening that is consistent with the events described but that you think Stephen would disagree with.

JOB CHANGE ASSUMPTIONS & ALTERNATIVE SCENARIOS

ASSUMPTIONS

1. The use of an outside expert was a deliberate and studied attempt to show a lack of respect for Stephen's talents and abilities.
2. His interview experience in California will be paralleled in the work conditions of the new job.
3. He is unacknowledged in his present job. People are not noticing his contribution and don't value what he's doing.

CHECKING

1. Go to his department head and find out why the expert was brought in and what the head feels about Stephen's performance.
2. Talk to employees in California about their work lives - make a special effort to contact the person whose position he will be filling and ask him/her about what work was like and why he/she left.
3. Ask for an unpaid leave of absence so he can test out the California job experience without totally committing himself.

INTERPRETATIONS

1. The outside expert was called in for political reasons. It was not possible to use an in-house expert for this evaluation.
2. Stephen is highly regarded in his present job. Without any indication of dissatisfaction on his part his employers assume all is well with him.
3. He is slacking and in a rut and his employers have accurately realized his lack of interest and unwillingness to update his skills and knowledge.

SCENARIO ANALYSIS EXERCISE

ORIENTING NEW STAFF

Sue, R.N., is the Orientation Co-ordinator on a unit that is expecting five new hires in the first week of June. This will be the first orientation to occur in 2 years. The new hires will include 1 new ADN grad, 2 RN's with experience from other specialties, and 2 Nursing Assistants. In addition, a commitment was made earlier in the year to sponsor a nurse extern - a baccalaureate nursing student who has completed the third year of matriculation and will have an eight week work experience on the unit.

Sue is excited about having new employees again. However, she believes this will be a challenge for the unit which has historically been very busy in the summer. She has decided to prepare for the new employees arrival by revising the unit's orientation program. A review of evaluations completed by participants in previous orientations has led Sue to think that she can shorten the orientation process by one week. She believes that the shorter orientation period is more focused and that it permits earlier integration of the new staff members into the regular staffing pattern. Feedback from a regulatory visit suggested that the hospital could improve the documentation of employee competency. Therefore Sue has increased the number of validations that are to be documented by the preceptors.

Sue has recruited 5 colleagues to become new preceptors. She knows that preceptors usually need to work with the orientation program a few times before they feel confident about the process and documentation. Consequently, she has concerns about their inexperience. Therefore, in addition to her other preparations Sue has sent a letter to the staffing office to insist that the 5 preceptors be scheduled for the one day workshop "Precepting the Adult Learner" that is to be held in 2 weeks. This workshop has always served successfully as the orientation for new preceptors.

- 1. What assumptions do you think Sue is operating under as she prepares this orientation? List as many as you can.*
- 2. Of the assumptions you've listed, which ones could Sue check by simple research and inquiry? How could he do this?*
- 3. Give an alternate interpretation of this scenario. A version of what's happening that is consistent with the events described but that you think Sue would disagree with.*

Developed by Carmen Hall, Mae McWeeny & Stephen Brookfield

ORIENTING NEW STAFF

ASSUMPTIONS & ALTERNATE INTERPRETATIONS

ASSUMPTIONS

1. The orientation program needs redesigning because it's been 2 years since it was last used and much has changed
2. The length of the orientation needs shortening in order to provide more focus & integrate new staff into staffing patterns more quickly
3. The orientation process needs more validations to provide more consistency in staff performance
4. The unit needs more preceptors because of staff turnover & the increased number of staff
5. New preceptors must attend the 1 Day Workshop so that they can be oriented & prepare for preceptor roles & duties
6. Staffing (hours) can be adjusted to accommodate preceptors' attendance at the workshop
7. Workshops are the only way to prepare preceptors
8. There must be a prescribed number of preceptors because a 1:1 ration has always existed in the past
9. New preceptors are not prepared to serve in this role without training

CHECKING

1. Talk to the new preceptors about their past experiences as teachers and preceptors, & their knowledge of adult learning principles and practices
2. Check with other units that have used shorter orientation periods to find out their advantages & disadvantages
3. Check with other units to find out about different ways they have prepared preceptors

4. Talk to staffing or the unit's head nurse to find out her judgment of the preceptors attending the workshop
5. Check with Education Services about alternative resources or events that could be adapted for preceptor preparation
6. Check with Education Services about (i) their recommendations for dealing with the requirements of the regulatory agency, (ii) orienting this # of new staff during the busy summer months, & (iii) preparing preceptors under these conditions.

ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATIONS

1. Preceptors can be prepared using other approaches - perhaps by tracking (following around & observing) a preceptor on another unit engaged in this process.
2. The 1 day workshop is a poor method for preparing preceptors because it offers a pre-determined selection of content that doesn't respond to the varied needs and experiences of the individuals. It is also a long day & many participants find it hard to take in all they need to know in such a compressed format.
3. A 1:1 ratio between preceptors and learners is not essential if alternative ways of making assignments and validating skills can be found
4. A shorter orientation period may not be cost effective because the practitioners will not be fully prepared to practice safely and autonomously at the end of the orientation period.
5. An increase in the number of validations does not guarantee immediate application in practice - it is merely an observed simulation that lacks the contextual reality of actual practice
6. An increase in the number of validations creates busy work for the preceptors by requiring them to observe more and more simulations instead of focusing on actual practice
7. An increase in the number of validations is rigid and denies the knowledge and past experience of the orientee who is denied the opportunity to demonstrate her already acquired knowledge and skills in actual practice.

Developed by Carmen Hall, Mae McWeeny & Stephen Brookfield

SCENARIO ANALYSIS EXERCISE

"GIVING FEEDBACK"

Eileen, an instructor in an interpersonal skills workshop, is troubled by the behavior of one of the workshop participants named Geoffrey. She feels that Geoffrey - a manager who is technically competent but seems unable to keep his staff team together for more than 3 months at a time - needs to see himself as his team members see him. Over the three meetings the course has had so far, Eileen notices that Geoffrey lounges in his chair with a bored expression on his face without contributing to any of the discussions. At times he has taken out USA TODAY and read the sports pages while Eileen is speaking. To Eileen, this indicates an arrogance and hostility that will be severely dysfunctional for Geoffrey as he moves about the organization.

Eileen decides to write a memo to Geoffrey pointing out the effect his non-participation is having on the group. In the memo she picks out the specific behaviors of Geoffrey's that bother her (reading the newspaper, looking bored, not bothering to contribute) and points out their negative effect. She asks him to work on reducing these behaviors over the next two meetings and points out that if he can eliminate these tendencies his power and prestige in the organization will grow.

1. What assumptions - explicit and implicit - do you think Eileen is operating under in this situation ? List as many as you can.
2. Of the assumptions you've listed, which ones could Eileen check by simple research and inquiry ? How could she do this ?
3. Give an alternate interpretation of this scenario. A version of what's happening that is consistent with the events described but that you think Eileen would disagree with.

GIVING FEEDBACK ASSUMPTIONS & ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATIONS

ASSUMPTIONS

1. Geoffrey's behavior is a deliberate and studied attempt to show disrespect to Eileen.
2. The short time Geoffrey's teams stay together is because of his lack of communication skills.
3. Others in the group are bothered by Geoffrey's actions.
4. Geoffrey's actions will harm his organizational career.
5. Eileen has created ample opportunities for people to contribute and Geoffrey has chosen not to avail himself of them.
6. The relevance of the workshop is clear to participants.
7. Eileen has accurately diagnosed the meaning of Geoffrey's behavior.
8. A written memo is a good way to give feedback on non-verbal behavior.

CHECKING

1. Ask group members (using an anonymous & private form of data collection) how they feel the group is going and what problems they see emerging
2. Talk to Geoffrey about how she feels about his behavior and ask him how he feels about the class.
3. Ask Geoffrey's supervisors why his teams stay in place for such a short time
4. Ask Geoffrey's ex-team members why they left and how they felt about their time in his team
5. Study the characteristics of the most successful members of the organization

INTERPRETATIONS

1. Geoffrey's behavior is caused by shyness
2. Eileen has created a cold climate in the group that makes participation difficult.
3. The members of the group have been forced to show up. They have complained to Geoffrey and he has volunteered to show Eileen how stupid the whole course is.
4. Geoffrey is so good at his job that the company uses his team as a training ground. People are moved out after three months so that new people can benefit from his expertise.

Assessing Local Needs

Tracy is a consultant for Educate the World, an international nongovernmental organization based in Washington D.C. that receives most of its funding from the U.S. government. Tracy is sent on a one-week mission to Honduras to conduct a needs assessment in a particular region of the country to prepare for a new Girls' Education project. The funding of the project is contingent on the results of this assessment. Since the region suffers from a high level of absence and drop-out of girls in primary school, her goal is to find out about the obstacles preventing girls from attending school. As part of her needs assessment, she plans to meet with mothers from a rural community.

Tracy spends her first few days in the capital meeting with Ministry of Education officials and reviewing documents. On her fourth day, she goes to the small rural town of Santa Rosita to meet with Esteban Gonzales, the leader of the town's Community Council. Tracy's understanding is that he will convene the focus group of mothers to meet with her on this day. She arrives at the community center and waits thirty minutes before Esteban arrives, becoming increasingly frustrated at the lost time. When Esteban finally appears, Tracy briefly introduces herself and then, wanting to get down to business, asks when she will be meeting with the mothers. Esteban apologizes and explains that he is not able to convene the women on such short notice, but that he could organize the focus group for a week later.

Since Tracy has to leave the country in a few days, she is frustrated by this change in plans. To make the best of the situation, she decides to ask Esteban about his perspective on the barriers preventing girls from attending and remaining in school in Santa Rosita. Esteban says that some families keep their daughters at home to do the housework and take care of their younger siblings; some parents choose to invest in their son's rather than their daughter's education; and some parents are concerned about their daughters walking to school alone. As an afterthought, he mentions that a few parents have complained about male teachers making insinuations towards girls at the school, but he dismisses these rumors as complaints from overprotective mothers. Tracy wants to ask him more questions about this last point, but Esteban is in a hurry to finish the meeting.

Upon returning to her hotel in the capital city, Tracy calls her supervisor at Educate the World and informs her about the meeting. In order to meet with the mothers in Santa Rosita and finish the needs assessment, Tracy asks to stay in Honduras for an extra week. Her supervisor says an extension is not possible because the donor agency needs the assessment within the original timeframe in order to guarantee their project funding. The supervisor says that Esteban's assessment of the problem is probably on target, and that Tracy should just write the report. Tracy brings up Esteban's allusion to male teachers making insinuations towards the girls, and voices her concern about possible sexual abuse in the schools. Her supervisor responds that pursuing this issue would complicate the project too much, and instructs Tracy to focus her energy on writing up the assessment as quickly as possible. Tracy follows the advice of her supervisor, writes up the report on schedule and returns to Washington.

- 1) What assumptions do you think Tracy is operating under in this situation?
- 2) How could Tracy check these assumptions?
- 3) Give an alternative interpretation of this scenario, a version that is consistent with the events described, but with which Tracy would disagree.

Developed by Kristin Rosenkrans & Katherine Shields (Harvard University Graduate School of Education)

Assessing Local Needs

Assumptions and Alternative Interpretations

1. To gather information about local needs, it is best to first consult the Ministry of Education officials and review documents in the city and then go to the communities that will benefit from the project.
2. Esteban does not have a good reason for being late.
3. The time waiting for Esteban is “lost time” – she is not able to use this time to learn useful things about the community.
4. Esteban knew that he was supposed to convene the meeting for that day and time.
5. It is OK to jump in and “get down to business”, or to the point, upon meeting somebody in this cultural.
6. Esteban knows what problems girls in the community face in terms of their education.
7. There is validity to everything that Esteban mentioned to her.
8. By staying another week she will be able to meet with the mothers.
9. She will lose her job if she does not simply follow her supervisors’ advice.
10. It is true that by not getting the report in within the original timeframe could cause them to lose the funding.

Checking the Assumptions

1. Get the assessment of the community of their problems and compare those with the Ministries opinion.
2. Ask Esteban if everything is OK or if he has some situation he must attend to.

3. While she is waiting for Esteban, try to speak with other people or look around in order to learn about the community.
4. Ask Esteban if he knew that he was supposed to convene the meeting for that day.
5. Talk to somebody who knows the culture, or a Honduran that she feels comfortable with, about cultural norms around meeting somebody for the first time in a work context.
6. Ask a mother (even if it is just one) about the problems faced by girls and also about Esteban's involvement in understanding or helping to solve these problems.
7. Same as above.
8. Try to return to the community, or communicate with somebody in the community, a few days before the meeting to make sure the mothers know about the meeting and are planning on attending.
9. Call a colleague who has worked at the Educate the World longer than she is (or who has a good understanding of the workings/politics of the organizations) and check with her/him if it is a valid concern that she could lose her job.
10. Contact someone from the donor organization, or a colleague who may have the information, about the feasibility of turning in the assessment a week later but not losing the funding opportunity.

Alternative Interpretations

1. To truly understand the situation of the community, it would be best to spend about three days there and spend the last day or two in the capital city talking to Ministry Official and checking documents to complement the first-hand information with some second-hand data and interpretation of the situation.
2. Esteban has an urgent situation in his family to attend to which is why he arrived late and must leave early, but he does not feel comfortable telling that to Tracy.
3. Tracy could learn a lot from looking around the community and randomly speaking to people; she may even be able to speak directly to some girls about their problems in attending schools.
4. Esteban never received notification to convene the meeting for that day.
5. Esteban felt offended that Tracy disregarded him as a person and simply directly jumped into work matters such as the meeting and getting information from him, and as a result he was skeptical of her and less willing to collaborate.
6. Esteban has no interest in a project of this type in his community, as he believes that girls should learn to attend to house and family matters, not school.

7. Esteban is very involved in trying to understand and solve the problems that girls face in attending school, and he did not want to mention directly the problem of the male teachers insinuating towards the girls because he felt embarrassed to talk about this or afraid that the male teachers might know he had mentioned this.
8. Esteban has no intention of helping Tracy to speak with the mothers at any point, or the mothers have no intention of attending a meeting at any point, so Tracy staying in the country longer will not help her to obtain better information.
9. Tracy is more concerned with keeping her job than she is about truly trying to work with the community to improve their situation.
10. Tracy is truly concerned about losing the funding and plans to try to influence the project in the implementation stage to address the real issues.

ASSUMPTIONS

1. Jack's workaholicism is due to externally imposed financial pressures (causal)
2. With more money coming in Jack will work less (causal)
3. Karen can take on these responsibilities without jeopardizing her relationships with Jack and the children (causal)
4. Family happiness is linked to Jack's state of mind (paradigmatic/causal)
5. It's Karen's duty to help out fix family problems (prescriptive/paradigmatic)
6. Jack is speaking the truth & voicing a genuine complaint (paradigmatic)
7. This economic situation has one response
8. Day care will benefit the children's emotional health (causal)

CHECKING

1. Do a life history analysis of Jack's behavior, particularly before he was in demand. Did he spend more time at home, take things easier ?
2. Try the job on a part-time or temporary basis. Or just drive out to the job location for a week to see how it feels.
3. Ask Jack to talk about his complaints
4. Do an economic audit of family finances. Is Karen working the only response ? Could things be budgeted differently ?
5. Speak to other couples in the same situation who made the change Karen is contemplating - experiential pioneers - and ask them what happened to them.
6. Hire a Private Detective to follow Jack
7. Go to marriage counselor/family therapy

INTERPRETATIONS

1. Karen wants to take on the role of independent worker outside the family. For some reason she is unwilling to confront Jack, or herself, with her wishes. Jack's situation is a convenient rationalization of her desires.
2. Jack's workaholicism is due to his personality. If Karen works Jack will not slow down. They will have less time together and the time they do spend together will be time when they're both tired.
3. Jack is having an affair.

Assumptions of Power

1. The problem is Karen's to solve (by her getting a job). Her taking a job will reduce familial tension, decrease the pressure Jack feels and will therefore help the situation
2. It's Karen's responsibility to find and fund day care and to find good paying work

Assumptions of Hegemony

1. Money is the cause of the family's stress
2. Money is the solution to the family's problems
3. The only way for this situation to be resolved is for Karen to find a job
4. Karen's job will provide more money, and therefore more family happiness

Why hegemonic? - it's accepted as 'common sense', it works against our interests, it serves the interests of others (producers of goods we consume).

CHECKING
ASSUMPTIONS

TALK TO THE
SOURCE

EXPERIENTIAL
PIONEERS

LIFE HISTORY
ANALYSIS

AUDIT / CBA

EXPERTS

PILOT TEST

SURVIVAL ADVICE MEMO

1. **Compiling the Memo**

Imagine that it's the last day in your current job. You've won the lottery & your replacement is coming in tomorrow to begin work but you will already have left the building. You want to help your replacement avoid as much as possible some of the pain and stress you endured as you learned your practice. So, you decide to write a memo to your successor outlining your best survival advice. This memo contains your best take on (i) what you really need to know to survive in this job, (ii) what you really need to be able to do to stay afloat, (iii) what you know now that you really wish someone had told you when you began working in this position, and (iv) things you must make sure you avoid thinking, doing or assuming. Write the memo as honestly as you can to this imaginary successor.

Now, examine each piece of advice you offered to your successor. How do you know your advice is good advice? Write down the most convincing evidence you can think of in support of what you're telling your successor she should or should not do or think. What has happened in your own experience to make you believe your advice to be well grounded? What's the best example of your advice working well in action that you can come up with from reflecting on your experience? (Memo compilation 5-10 minutes)

2. Discussion

Form a trio with 2 other people. Each of you takes up to 5 minutes to report what your memo contains. Then, as a group, try to categorize the different kinds of advice that were offered - was the advice about emotional survival (how to avoid getting burned out, sucked in etc.), about political survival (how to do good creative work without being sabotaged by departmental politics), about instrumental survival (how to accomplish the specific tasks associated with the job), or anything else? What does your memo reveal about the assumptions that you take most seriously in your work?

Finally, as a group, spend 5 minutes analyzing the evidence you all cited as the grounds for your advice. Was this evidence your direct experience, hearsay, observed actions of colleagues, hunches you followed that were confirmed, someone else's opinion that proved accurate, or anything else?

CRITICAL DEBATE INSTRUCTIONS

Find a contentious issue on which opinion is divided amongst participants. Frame the issue as a debate motion.

Propose the motion to participants. By a show of hands ask people either to volunteer to work on a team that is preparing arguments to support the motion or to volunteer to work on a team that is preparing arguments to oppose the motion.

Announce that all those who have prepared to work on the team to draft arguments to support the motion will now comprise the team to draft arguments to oppose the motion. Similarly, all those who have prepared to work on the team to draft arguments to oppose the motion will now comprise the team to draft arguments to support the motion.

Conduct the debate. Each team chooses one person to present their arguments. After initial presentations the teams reconvene to draft rebuttal arguments and choose one person to present these.

Debrief the debate. Discuss with participants their experience of this exercise. Focus on how it felt to argue against positions you were committed to. What new ways of thinking about the issue were opened up? Did participants come to new understandings? Did they change their positions on this issue at all?

Ask participants to write a follow up reflection paper on the debate. Here's the instructions ...

1. What assumptions about the issue that you hold were clarified or confirmed for you by the debate ?
2. Which of your assumptions surprised you during the debate ?
In other words, were you made aware of assumptions you hold that you didn't know you had ?
3. How could you check out these new assumptions ?
What sources of evidence would you consult ?
4. What new perspectives on the issue suggested themselves to you ?
5. In what ways, if any, were your existing assumptions challenged or changed by the debate ?

IDEOLOGY CRITIQUE

In ideology critique we take a common organizational, movement or community practice that has been designed to be helpful and empowering and examine it for the ways it is experienced differently by different people in the organization, movement or community.

Here are the stages:

(a) Describe the practice and attribute meaning and significance to it in terms of the accepted, dominant view. What is it intended to achieve?

(b) Examine that view for internal inconsistencies, paradoxes and contradictions. Also, identify what is being omitted from the view - its "structured silences and absences". What significant views or information does the dominant meaning miss? Who and what is excluded?

(c) Look for reasons to explain why the dominant view ignored the contradictions and omissions you found. Decide who benefits from the dominant practice and who is most disadvantaged by it.

(d) Imagine a new, alternative structure or process that is more socially just than the current practice.

An Example from Stephen's Practice: **Assigning Students to Write a Critical Analysis of a Text**

(a) My Intended Meaning

I want to develop students' skills of critical analysis so that they can make independent intellectual judgments

(b) Contradictions and Omissions

The concept of critical analysis springs from a Eurocentric Enlightenment tradition that values rationality. This tradition ignores important ways of knowing that are embedded in other cultures. It also downplays the importance of intuitive learning. The feminist emphasis on affirmative and connected modes of knowing is not allowed for. I have also overlain my understanding of the word 'critical' with a left of center ideology drawn from the Frankfurt School of critical theory. The criteria of what is to be judged a properly critical analysis emanates from me, the teacher. The assignment as constructed seems to preclude the possibility of students already being critical. The assignment could easily be interpreted by the students as a game of 'guess the teacher's ideology'.

(c) Who Benefits and is Harmed by the Dominant View

Teachers who see themselves as 'critical' intellectuals are best served. Worst served are students who are not familiar with traditions of analytic philosophy or Frankfurt School critical theory, students who have a grounding in alternative intellectual traditions, and students who are uninformed about the teacher's biases.

(d) Imagine an Alternative Structure

What counts as 'critical' is publicly discussed according to alternate frameworks of analysis. Students generate what they see as 'critical' criteria. Students are encouraged to question the relevance of the assignment and to propose alternatives that seem more connected and significant. Students regularly evaluate the usefulness of assignments, discuss these with the teacher, and place these evaluations on the public record. On the basis of these comments the group continually reinvents its procedures.

IDEOLOGY CRITIQUE EXERCISE

The Practice To Be Examined:

Stephen's offering this course only on a Pass/Fail basis – no letter grades allowed

Individually, write down your responses to the following questions about this practice ...

- a) What is Stephen intending to achieve by instituting this practice? What is the meaning he has inscribed in it?
- b) What is omitted from Stephen's understanding of the practice? What are the contradictions in his understanding of the practice? Which views and interpretations are unrepresented in his framing of the practice?
- c) Who benefits from the practice and who is harmed by it? Why does Stephen not recognize those who are harmed?
- d) How could the practice be re-invented to be more socially just?

Briefly share your responses with 3 other people. Each one of you will take responsibility for summarizing your group's responses to one of the items above.

When you have understood how your colleagues have answered the questions you are responsible for, write your summary on the sheet posted for that purpose.

IDEOLOGY CRITIQUE AS PRACTICE INVERSION

Ideology critique can be reframed as “Practice Inversion”, particularly in organizations where the language of critical theory is either unknown or perceived as beyond the pale. When the exercise is introduced its stated purpose is said to be to help participants to understand the blind spots in their own decision-making, and to help organizations understand better how their structures and systems regularly exclude certain voices and perspectives.

In many ways, this reframed ideology critique can be presented as a mix of 180 & 360 degree feedback.

The instructions differ slightly ...

- a) Identify an organizational practice that you have initiated. What do you intend to achieve by instituting this practice? What’s the reasoning behind it?
- b) What’s omitted from your understanding of the practice? What are the contradictions in your understanding of how the practice works? Which views and interpretations are unrepresented in your framing of the practice?
- c) Who benefits from the practice and who is harmed by it? Why do you not recognize those who are harmed?
- d) How could the practice be re-invented to be more socially just?

Heroes/Heroines & Villains/Villainesses

Choose a work peer or work colleague you particularly admire and identify an example of that person's practice or professional behavior that encapsulates what's so admirable about him or her. Write some notes on this being as specific and concrete as you can.

Then, choose a work peer or work colleague you particularly dislike and identify an example of that person's practice or professional behavior that encapsulates what's so despicable or lacking about him or her. Write some notes on this being as specific and concrete as you can.

Now, join with two other people to form a trio. Each person takes it in turn to describe her choices to her two peers. The two who are listening try to give feedback to the person concerned on the following items ...

- (1) Are the responses you give internally consistent? In other words, are the people, practices & behaviors you so admire the flipside of those you despise? Or are they different facets of professional/unprofessional behavior?
- (2) Which of the sets of characteristics do you seem to feel most strongly about – the positive or the negative?
- (3) From listening to your responses, what would your colleagues say were the assumptions that you hold about how a good professional behaves that are most important in your practice?

After all 3 of you have had your turn in the spotlight reflect on what assumptions the 3 of you held (if any) that seem to be shared. How do these assumptions reflect – or challenge – dominant cultural and professional beliefs?

In organizations where participants work with each other the 'Villains/Villainesses' task can focus on fictional characters

DEMOCRATIZING MEETINGS

**Use the CIQ to evaluate
each meeting**

Begin with AOB

Assumptions Inventories

- What's the decision we've just made ?**
- What's the chief evidence that we base a decision on?**
- What's the most important assumption influencing it?**
- What consequences is the decision supposed to effect?**

Structured Devil's Advocacy

DOING A CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

DEFINING CRITIQUE: THREE INTERPRETATIONS

As I use the term critique I draw strongly on the social and political criticism endemic to the tradition of ideology critique. For me, **the first sense in which I use the term 'critical' is to undertake a power analysis of the object of study.** In this first sense, being critical as an adult educator involves me in investigating how certain practices, systems and policies reproduce within adult education the unquestioned power relationships and economic and cultural inequities that exist outside the adult educational situation. This is where the concern with race, class and gender comes from. A critique of an adult educational practice or institution involves unearthing the hegemonic assumptions, submerged power inequities and anti-democratic forces that exist within.

The second sense of critique involves adult educators in examining their own ideas and actions for the ways in which they perpetuate inequities and the ways in which they are discriminatory and anti-democratic. Focusing on the unacknowledged prejudices, bigotries and contradictions in one's own thinking and practice is difficult, even wrenching. Part of this difficulty resides in our inability to step outside ourselves and see our practice through others' eyes. To do this it is crucial that we involve others in our community of practice as critical mirrors who reflect back to us images and interpretations of our practice that are unfamiliar and unsettling.

There is a more proactive third sense in which the term critique is used. **This third sense of critique involves adult educators looking to possibilities of remaking their own, and others', practice to be more democratic, anti-racist, anti-sexist, and socially just.** In Freire's words, we practice a "pedagogy of hope" in that we assume that things can be changed for the better. Even in apparently closed systems there are often small spaces in which dominant ideas and unfair practices can be contested. Sometimes all we can do is focus on how the damage inflicted by a program, policy or practice can be kept to a minimum. At other times we have the chance to develop new structures that seem more democratic or to create spaces in which open, critical conversation can take place.

Defining Critical Reading

A critical literature review begins with a critical reading of texts. For me, very briefly, a critical reading of texts happens when readers:-

- (1) Make explicit the assumptions authors hold about what constitutes legitimate knowledge and how such knowledge comes to be known.
- (2) Take alternative perspectives on the knowledge being offered so that this knowledge comes to be seen as culturally constructed.
- (3) Undertake positive and negative appraisal of the grounds for, and expression of, this knowledge.
- (4) Analyse commonly held adult educational ideas for the extent to which they oppose democratic values.

Misunderstandings of Critical Reading

1. That it's Negative

Critical reading is a process of positive as well as negative appraisal. If we are reading critically we will almost certainly find that our appraisals are multi-layered, even contradictory. But central to all critical reading is the acknowledgment of what we find to be well grounded, accurate and meritorious in a piece of scholarly writing.

2. That it Always Leads to Relativism

When we have given a piece of literature a careful critical appraisal we have a sense of its strengths and weaknesses. The intellectual convictions we derive from this appraisal are informed by this same even handed sense of what is strongest and weakest about our convictions, and about why, on balance, we hold these even as we recognize their shortcomings. The point at which the best critical readers operate is a point of informed commitment. Informed commitment means being able to give a rationale and to cite evidence for our ideas, while at the same time always being open to re-examining and re-thinking these in the light of further experience.

3. That it's Only for the Philosophically Astute

Critical reading is not restricted to those who pursue majors in logic. I prefer to think of it as a survival skill within the competence of all adults, irrespective of their formally defined educational level. The critical thinking process informs how many of us negotiate and survive what we see as transforming episodes in our adult lives.

4. That it's the Preserve of Politically Correct Left-Wingers

The point about critical reading, properly encouraged, is that critical questions are asked of all ideologies, disciplines and theories. So, a critical social science turns a skeptical eye on all claims to universal validity. For a teacher to mandate in advance - either

explicitly or implicitly - that only one ideological interpretation or outcome is permitted in a discussion or assignment is to contradict a fundamental tenet of critical thinking. That tenet holds that all involved - including teachers - must always be open to re-examining the assumptions informing their ideological commitments.

5. That it's wholly cognitive

In critical reading we pay attention to our emotions as well as intellect. In particular, we investigate our emotional responses to the material we encounter. We can try to understand why it is that we become enthused or appalled, perplexed or engaged, by a piece of literature. As we read work that challenges some of our most deeply held assumptions, we are likely to experience strong feelings of anger and resentment against the writer or her ideas, feelings that are grounded in the sense of threat that this work holds for us. It is important that we know this in advance of our reading and try to understand that our emotional reactions are the inevitable accompaniment of any kind of intellectual inquiry that is really challenging.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL QUESTIONS

1. Are the ideas presented by writers already predetermined by the intellectual paradigm in which they work ?
2. To what extent are the central insights of a piece of literature - whether these are framed as research findings, theoretical propositions or philosophical injunctions - grounded in documented empirical evidence ?
3. To What Extent Does the Writing Seem Culturally Skewed ?
4. To What Extent are Descriptive and Prescriptive Fused in an Irresponsible and Inaccurate Way ?

EXPERIENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. How Do the Metaphors for Teaching Used in a Piece of Educational Literature Compare to the Metaphors You Use to Describe Your Own Experience of Practice ?
2. What Experiential Omissions Are There In A Piece of Literature That, To You, Seem Important ?
3. To What Extent Does A Piece of Literature Acknowledge and Address Ethical Issues in Teaching ?
4. What Connections and Discrepancies Do You Note Between a Piece of Academic Literature and Your Own Experiences as an Adult Learner and Adult Educator ?

COMMUNICATIVE QUESTIONS

1. Whose Voices Are Heard In A Piece Of Academic Writing ?
2. To What Extent Does The Literature Use A Form Of Specialized Language That Is Unjustifiably Distanced From The Colloquial Language Of Adult Learners And Adult Educators ?
3. To What Extent Does Literature Show A Connectedness To Practice ?

POLITICAL QUESTIONS

1. Whose Interests Are Served By The Publication of a Text ?
 2. To What Extent Are Models of Practice Reified ?
 3. To What Extent Do Texts Present Practice As An Individual Act ?
- 1 What Contribution Does the Writing Make To The Understanding And Realization Of Democratic Processes ?

EXEMPLARS & FLAWS

Exemplars and Flaws begins with the student focusing on a topic and choosing either someone who has contributed useful knowledge to that topic, or some concept that moves understanding of the topic of the area forward in some way. She makes her choice individually, uninfluenced by peers. Examples might be:

- Of the mathematical proofs we've covered this year, which is the most elegant?
- Of the explanations for the historical event we've just researched, which is the most convincing?
- Of the laws of physics we've studied so far this term, which has the greatest predictive power?
- Of the poems we've reviewed up to now, which demonstrates the most insight into the nature of love?
- Of the psychological theories offered for schizophrenia, which do you think is the most plausible and complete?
- Which of the readings assigned in class for this week was the most interesting or well written?
- Of the business leaders we've seen in action so far, who would you most want leading your organization?
- Of the colleagues you've worked with in your field practicum, whom do you most admire and what is it about this person that is so admirable?

After students have made their choices individually they are put into trios and asked to share their responses with each other. Each student takes a turn to name her choice and explain why she made the choice she did. When she has finished her explanation the other two students then tell her about the assumptions they think she holds about the subject. They let her know, from their

perspective, what kind of arguments and evidence she seems most drawn to, what perspectives seem to be most interesting to her, which parts of the exemplar she chose she feels most strongly about, and the epistemological assumptions she holds about what kind of knowledge she feels is most reliable. Once the first student has heard her colleagues give her feedback about her choice of an exemplar, then the second student in the trio has the spotlight and the process is repeated, and so on to the third.

The ‘Aberrations’ part of *Exemplars and Flaws* reiterates the process outlined above, except that this time the student focuses on something they find wanting in the topic. Examples of this might be ...

- Of the logic theorems we’ve covered this year, which has the weakest links?
- Of the explanations for the movement of population we’ve just researched, which is the least convincing?
- Of the accounting procedures we’ve studied so far this term, which is the most cumbersome or prone to error?
- Of the films we’ve viewed up to now, which is the most confusingly edited?
- Of the sociological classifications offered of different social classes, which do you find most confusing?
- Which of the readings assigned in class for this week was the least convincing or worst written?
- Of the theologians we’ve studied, who do you feel would do the greatest harm if they were in charge of your congregation?
- Of the authors you’ve studied throughout your program, whom do you think is least qualified to guide students’ learning?

CRITICAL CONVERSATION PROTOCOL

PURPOSE OF THE EXERCISE

A critical conversation is a focused conversation in which someone is helped:-

1. To come to an awareness of the assumptions she is operating under – particularly those having to do with power relationships and hegemonic practices & ideas
2. To investigate whether these assumptions are well grounded
3. To look at her practice from different viewpoints
4. To think about the implications of the conversation for the future

ROLES PARTICIPANTS PLAY

In a process of structured critical conversation I suggest that people think of playing one of three possible roles - storyteller, detective or umpire.

The **storyteller** is the person who is willing to make herself the focus of critical conversation by first describing some part of her practice or life experience.

The **detectives** are those in the group who help her come to a more fully informed understanding of the assumptions and actions that frame her practice or experience.

The **umpire** is the group member who has agreed to monitor conversation with a view to pointing out when people are talking to each other in a judgmental way. All participants in the group play all three of these roles at different times. The idea is that the behaviors associated with each role gradually become habitual.

HOW THE EXERCISE WORKS

1. *The Storyteller Tells the Tale (10 MINUTES)*

The conversation opens with the person who is the storyteller describing as concretely and specifically as possible an incident from her practice or life that for some reason is lodged in her memory. This incident may be one that is recalled because it was particularly fulfilling or because it was particularly frustrating. Most probably it is an incident that leaves the teller somewhat puzzled by its layers and complexities. The storyteller describes the incident in her own words and without any questions or interruptions. Her colleagues, who are in the role of detectives, attend to her remarks very carefully. They are listeners with a purpose.

The detectives are trying to identify the explicit and implicit assumptions about practice that they hear in the storyteller's tale. Some of these will be general assumptions about what good practice looks like, some will be about how a good professional should behave, and some will be about how to behave in the specific situation described. The detectives are listening particularly for assumptions that pertain to how the storyteller conceives of power dynamics, or assumptions that are hegemonic (i.e. that seem admirable & useful to the storyteller but that actually work against her best interests & support an inequitable situation).

The detectives are also asked to imagine themselves inside the heads of the other characters in the story and to try to see the events through their eyes. If possible, the detectives make mental or written notes about plausible alternative interpretations of the story that fit the facts as they hear them, but that would come as a surprise to the storyteller.

2. The Detectives Ask Questions About the Event (10 MINUTES)

After the storyteller has finished speaking, the detectives are allowed to break their silence to ask her any questions they have about the events she has just described. The detectives are searching for any information that will help them uncover the assumptions they think the storyteller holds. They are also looking for details not provided in the first telling of the story that will help them re-live the events described through the eyes of the other participants involved, thereby helping them to understand these events from the different participants' perspectives.

One ground rule they must observe is that of requesting information, not giving judgment. Their questions are asked only for the purpose of clarifying the details of what happened. They must refrain from giving their opinions or suggestions, no matter how helpful they feel these might be. Detectives should ask only 1 question at a time. They should **not** give advice on how the storyteller should have acted. Keep laughter to a minimum, you don't know how it's received.

As the storyteller hears the detectives' questions she tries to answer them as fully and honestly as possible. She also has the opportunity to ask the detectives why they asked the particular questions they put to her. The umpire points out to the detectives any examples of judgmental questions that they ask, particularly those in which they imply that they have seen a better way to respond to the situation than the way that's been described. Examples of such questions would be those beginning "Did you really believe that ...?", "Didn't you think to ...?", or "Do you mean to tell us that ...?"

The umpire brings the detectives' attention to the ways in which their tone of voice and body language, as well as their words, risk driving the storyteller into a defensive bunker.

3. *The Detectives' Report the Assumptions they Hear in the Storyteller's Descriptions (10 MINUTES)*

When the incident has been fully described, and all the detectives' questions have been answered, the conversation moves to the assumption hunting phase. Here the detectives tell the storyteller, on the basis of her story and her response to their questions, what assumptions they think she holds.

This is done as non-judgmentally as possible, as a reporting back exercise. The detectives seek only to state clearly what they think the storyteller's assumptions are, not to judge whether they are right or wrong. They are asked to state these assumptions tentatively, descriptively and non-judgmentally, using phrases like "it seems as if ...", "I wonder if one assumption you might be holding is that?", or "Is it possible that you assumed that ...?" They state only one assumption at a time, do **not** give advice, and watch out for laughter.

The umpire intervenes to point out to detectives when she thinks they are reporting assumptions with a judgmental overlay.

4. *The Detectives Give Alternative Interpretations of the Events Described (10 MINUTES)*

The detectives now give alternative versions of the events that have been described, based on their attempts to re-live the story through the eyes of the other participants involved. These alternative interpretations must be plausible in that they are consistent with the facts as they have been described by the storyteller. When appropriate, detectives should point out how power or hegemony plays itself out in the different interpretations they are giving.

The umpire points out those moments when a psychoanalytic second guessing is taking place. This happens when the detectives start to preface their interpretations with remarks like "you know, what you were really doing", or "what was really going on".

The detectives are to give these interpretations as descriptions, not judgments. They are describing how others involved in the events might have viewed them, not saying whether or not these perceptions are accurate. They should not give any advice here.

As the storyteller hears these alternative interpretations she is asked to let the detectives have the floor so that they can state their case as fully as possible. After they have described how the situation might look through the eyes of other participants, the storyteller is then allowed to give any additional information that would cast doubt on these interpretations. She is also allowed to ask the detectives to elaborate on any

confusing aspects of why they are making the interpretations they are. At no time is she expected to agree with the detectives.

5. ***Participants Do An Experiential Audit (10 MINUTES)***

Finally, the storyteller and detectives state what they have learned, what insights they have realized, and what their reflection means for their future actions. Now the detectives can give whatever advice they wish.

The umpire gives an overall summary of the ability of participants to be respectful listeners and talkers, and also gives her perspective on the story.

At each iteration of this exercise the roles change. As each new story is told each person assumes a different role so that all play each of the roles at least once.

Although this is a heavily structured and artificial exercise, the intent is for these dispositions to become so internalized that the ground rules and structure outlined above become unnecessary.

CONVERSATION

STAGES

*STORYTELLER TELLS
STORY*

*COLLEAGUES' ASK
QUESTIONS*

*COLLEAGUES REPORT
ASSUMPTIONS*

*COLLEAGUES GIVE
ALTERNATIVE
INTERPRETATIONS*

*ACTION / INSIGHTS
LEARNING*

CHOOSING A CRITICAL CONVERSATION INCIDENT

For this afternoon's exercise I'd like you to choose a critical incident in your life that you'd be willing to share as part of a

small group version of the critical conversation (storyteller and detectives) exercise we did this morning.

You should choose an incident – preferably in your work life – that you’d like some help understanding. This could be an incident that happened in the past. Or it could be one you’re dealing with right now. The important thing is that it’s an incident where you’re unclear exactly what’s going on, and where you’d like someone to help you unearth and challenge some of the assumptions you’re operating under in the incident. Remember, too, that your small group members will also help you look at the incident from different perspectives.

If you don’t have an incident from your work life available, then feel free to use one from your personal life. However, please don’t choose something that’s deeply personal and private – such as a decision to have, or not have, an abortion, or a decision on whether to pull the life support plug on a severely ill parent or spouse. Both these have been chosen, with disastrous results, in the past. Such incidents put too much pressure on your detective colleagues.

So, to re-cap, the incident should be (preferably) from work, and one where you’d like help understanding what’s going on because you’re unclear as to the meaning of what happened, or is happening.

Thanks!!

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Circular Response Discussions

The circular response exercise is a way to democratize discussion participation, to promote continuity and to give people some experience of the effort required in respectful listening. In this process participants sit in a circle so that everyone can see each other, and each person in turn takes up to a minute to talk about an issue or question that the group has agreed to discuss.

Speakers are not free, however, to say anything they want. They must incorporate into their remarks some reference to the preceding speaker's message and then use this as a springboard for their own comments. This doesn't have to be an agreement – it can be an expression of dissent from the previous opinion. The important thing is that the previous person's comments are the prompt for whatever is being said in circular response. What speakers articulate depends on listening well to the preceding speaker as much as on generating new or unspoken ideas. Participants are also asked if at all possible to point out anything the previous speaker said that was particularly interesting, resonating or important. The optimal size for this exercise is 6-8 participants. Here's the instructions:

Choose a theme that the group wishes to discuss, form into a circle and ask for a volunteer to start the discussion. This person speaks up to a minute or so about the theme chosen. After the minute is up, the first discussant yields the floor and the person sitting to the discussant's left speaks for a minute or so. The second discussant must show in her contribution how what she is saying springs from, or is in response to, the comments of the first discussant. After a minute or so, the second discussant stops speaking, and the person to her left becomes the third discussant, and thus the discussion moves all the way around the circle. To sum up:

1. no one may be interrupted while speaking;
2. no one may speak out of turn in the circle;
3. each person is allowed only a minute or so to speak;
4. each person, in all comments, must strive to show how his or her remarks spring from, or respond to, the comments of the previous discussant.
5. each person should try to show appreciation for something the previous speaker raised

After each discussant has had a turn to speak, the floor is opened for general conversation, and the previous ground rules are no longer in force.

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The Circle of Voices

Participants form into a circle of about 5. They are allowed up to three minutes silent time to organize their thoughts. During this time they think about what they want to say on the topic once the circle of voices begins. After this silent period the discussion opens with each person having a period of uninterrupted air time. During the time each person is speaking no one else is allowed to interrupt.

People can take their turns to speak by going round the circle in order or volunteering at random. Although the latter arrangement sounds the most relaxed and informal the opposite is often the case. The order of the circle removes from participants the stress of having to decide whether or not they will try and jump in after another student has finished speaking. Not having to decide this is one less thing to worry about. An important benefit of using the circle of voices at the start of a discussion is that it prevents the development early on of a pecking order of contributors. Introverted, shy members, those whose experience has taught them to mistrust academe, or those who view discussion as another thinly veiled opportunity for teachers to oppress or offend, will often stay silent at the beginning of a course. The longer this silence endures, the harder it is for these individuals to speak out. By way of contrast, in the circle of voices everyone's voice is heard at least once at the start of the session.

After the circle of voices has been completed, and everyone has had the chance to say their piece, then the discussion opens out into a more free flowing format. As this happens a second ground rule comes into effect. Participants are only allowed to talk about another person's ideas that have already been shared in the circle of voices. A person cannot jump into the conversation by expanding on his own ideas, he can only talk about his reactions to what someone else has said. The only exception to this ground rule is if someone else asks him directly to expand on his ideas. This simple ground rule prevents the tendency toward 'grandstanding' that sometimes afflicts a few articulate, confident individuals.

To recap the ground rules:-

1. Begin by going round the circle with each person contributing & no interruptions allowed
2. After this, move into open discussion, but remember your contributions can only be about, or refer back to, something one of the other group members said in the opening circle.

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CONVERSATIONAL MOVES

Paste the conversational moves listed below on 3x5 cards and randomly distribute them among participants before a pre-arranged discussion session. Ask students to practice their move during the discussion that follows. When the discussion is over distribute the entire list of moves so people can see the wide variety of ways that questioning, listening and responding can be practiced. Point out to students that virtually all the moves listed are designed to strengthen connections among group members and to reinforce the notion that discussion is truly a collaborative process. Ask participants to recap how they tried to make the moves they were allocated.

Ask a question or make a comment that shows you are interested in what another person says

Ask a question or make a comment that encourages another person to elaborate on something they have already said

Make a comment that underscores the link between two people's contributions - make this link explicit in your comment

Use body language (in only a slightly exaggerated way) to show interest in what different speakers are saying

Make a comment indicating that you found another person's ideas interesting or useful. Be specific as to why this was the case

Contribute something that builds on, or springs from, what someone else has said. Be explicit about the way you are building on the other person's thoughts

Make a comment that at least partly paraphrases a point someone has already made

Make an summary observation that takes into account several people's contributions & that touches on a recurring theme in the discussion

Ask a cause and effect question - for example, "can you explain why you think it's true that if these things are in place such and such a thing will occur?"

When you think it's appropriate, ask the group for a moment's silence to slow the pace of conversation and give you, and others, time to think

Find a way to express appreciation for the enlightenment you have gained from the discussion. Try to be specific about what it was that helped you understand something

Disagree with someone in a respectful and constructive way

CONVERSATIONAL ROLES

Practice in playing different conversational roles helps create opportunities for the more tentative students to speak, thereby building their confidence. Any roles assigned must be alternated so that everyone takes their turn.

Problem, Dilemma, or Theme Poser

This participant has the task of introducing the topic of conversation. She draws on her own ideas and experiences as a way of helping others into conversation about the theme.

Reflective Analyst

This member keeps a record of the conversation's development. Every 20 minutes or so, she gives a summary of shared concerns, issues skirted, and emerging themes.

Scrounger

The scrounger listens for helpful resources, suggestions, and tips that participants have voiced as they discuss how to work through a problem or situation. She keeps a record of these ideas that is read out before the session ends.

Devil's Advocate

This person listens carefully for any emerging consensus. When she hears this she formulates and expresses a contrary view. This keeps group-think in check and helps participants explore a range of alternative interpretations.

Detective

The detective listens carefully for unacknowledged, unchecked and unchallenged biases that seem to be emerging in the conversation. As she hears these she brings them to the group's attention. She assumes particular responsibility for alerting group members to concerns of race, class and gender. She listens for cultural blindness, gender insensitivity, and comments that ignore variables of power and class.

Theme Spotter

This participant identifies themes that arise during the discussion that are left unexplored and that might form a focus for the next session.

Umpire

This person listens for judgmental comments that sound offensive, insulting and demeaning, and that contradict ground rules for discussion generated by group members.

Textual Focuser

Whenever assertions are made that seem unconnected to the text being discussed, this person asks the speaker to let the group know where in the text the point being made occurs.

SNOWBALLING

One way to illustrate how discussions can be developmental and increasingly inclusive is to use a process called "snowballing" or "pyramiding".

Students begin this activity by responding to questions or issues as individuals. They then create progressively larger dialogic groups by doubling the size of these every few minutes until by the end of the activity everyone is reconvened in the large group. At each stage as students move from pairs to quartets, quartets to octets they recap the chief point of difference, or the chief question that emerged, in their previous round of conversation.

Here's the instructions students follow:

We are going to try something a little different today. It's called "snowballing" and it gives you a chance to think and talk about issues in a variety of different configurations. Please begin with some private, solitary reflection in which you gather your thoughts about the questions at the bottom of this sheet. Jot down some notes if you wish.

After about 1 minute of solitary thought join with one other person to continue the dialogue. After about five minutes you and your partner should join another pair to form a group of four. As the two pairs merge, each pair should recap the chief difference that emerged, or a question they raised, in their conversation.

The quartets will continue the discussion for another 10 minutes and then they will merge with other quartets to create octets - groups of 8. . As the two quartets merge, each quartet should recap the chief difference that emerged, or a question they raised, in their conversation.

The discussion proceeds for 20 minutes this time and continues in 20 minute intervals until the whole class is brought together at the end of the session.

This exercise gets a lot of people talking to one another, while retaining much of the value of small groups. It also contributes a festive quality to the class. People mill about excitedly and greet each other warmly as they meet in new configurations. On the other hand, snowballing can sometimes have a frenetic, disjointed feel.

NEWSPRINT DIALOGUES

Small groups summarize their conversations on large sheets of newsprint or chalkboards. Individual members of the class are then free to wander about the room reading all the responses & adding comments.

Here's the instructions:

In this activity, you will be working in small groups most of the time. I have prepared some questions for you to consider in these groups, but don't follow them too slavishly. Use them as a jumping off point for ideas you find especially worth exploring. You will have 30 minutes in your groups to discuss these questions and to write your answers to these on the newsprint provided.

You should appoint someone to be recorder but don't start writing immediately. Take some time to let your responses emerge from the discussion. Covering all the questions is not important, but you should begin to jot some ideas down on the newsprint provided within 15 or 20 minutes of starting.

When the 30 minutes is up, post your newsprint sheets around the classroom and tour the answers recorded by other groups. Look especially for common themes that stand out on the sheets and for possible contradictions that arise within or between groups' responses. If possible, write your responses to others' comments on the same sheet of newsprint containing the point you're addressing. Finally, note any questions that were raised for you during the discussion on the separate sheets of newsprint specially provided for this. We will bring the activity to a close with a short debriefing in the large group.

Attractions of this activity are that it takes people out of groups for a while and lets them act as relatively autonomous free agents. It also reminds people that dialogue can work as a written as well as spoken exchange. On the other hand, it is frequently difficult in the limited space and time allotted for students to explain fully the meaning of the words and phrases on the newsprint. Still, it is an interesting alternative way to keep the conversation going.

ROTATING STATIONS

Another way to avoid the usual format of reporting back through a series of summaries is to locate each small group at a station where they are given 5 or 10 minutes to discuss a provocative issue and record their ideas on newsprint or a chalkboard. When this time is up the groups move to new positions in the classroom where they continue their discussion. But now the comments written on the newsprint or chalkboard by the preceding group at the station add a new voice to the mix. Rotations continue every 10 minutes until each group has been at all of the positions and has had a chance to consider all of the other groups' comments. Here's the instructions:

We're going to do another small group activity, but this time you won't be staying in one place for long. Each of you should join a group of about five participants at one of the stations that have been established around the classroom. Together you will have the responsibility of answering some questions by making comments on the newsprint directly in front of your group. You will have 10 minutes to do this. When the 10 minutes is up move with your group to a new station where you will continue your conversation by responding to the comments left behind by the group that has just vacated that station. Record the main points of your discussion at this station and then, after another 10 minutes, rotate to the next station, where you now have the comments of two other groups to consider.

Again take 10 minutes to respond, and then move when the 10 minutes are up. When every group has occupied each station, leaving remarks behind at all of them, break out of your groups and read all of the newsprint comments. Add questions, comments, or criticisms to these news sheets wherever you are inspired to do so. Remember that each station will include comments from all groups, making orderliness a challenge. Write as small and as legibly as you can, please!

Rotating stations encourages students to examine critically ideas that originate outside their group. The safety and intimacy of small groups is retained, yet the diversity of viewpoints experienced in whole class discussion is incorporated. Momentum and excitement tend to grow as groups rotate from one station to another. People feel they have heard from, and responded to, many voices in the classroom in a way that is less threatening than in large group exchanges. On the debit side, the 10 minute period for each rotation is not particularly conducive to deep discussion.

**CLASSROOM RESEARCH
TECHNIQUES**

C. I. Q.

MUDDIEST POINT

ONE MINUTE PAPER

AFTER CLASS GROUP /
CLASS ADVISORY PANEL

VIDEO

PEER OBSERVATION

TEAM TEACHING

LEARNING AUDIT

"THE MUDDIEST POINT "

WHAT WAS

THE MOST CONFUSING IDEA

THE MOST POORLY
EXPLAINED IDEA

THE MOST POORLY
DEMONSTRATED PROCESS

THE LEAST CLEAR
IDEA OR TECHNIQUE

LEARNING AUDIT

WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW
THAT YOU COULDN'T DO
THIS TIME LAST WEEK ?

WHAT DO YOU KNOW NOW
THAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW
THIS TIME LAST WEEK ?

WHAT COULD YOU TEACH
SOMEONE TO KNOW OR DO
THAT YOU COULDN'T TEACH
THEM THIS TIME LAST WEEK?

ONE MINUTE PAPER

WHAT WAS

THE MOST IMPORTANT
IDEA / INSIGHT

THE QUESTION THAT
MOST NEEDS ADDRESSING

WHY C.I.Q.'s ?

PROBLEMS WARNED

GROUNDS ACTIONS

*STUDENT
REFLECTIVITY*

BUILDS TRUST

DIVERSE METHODS

*CRITICAL
THINKING*

The Classroom Critical Incident Questionnaire

Please take about five minutes to respond to each of the questions below about this week's class(es). Don't put your name on the form - your responses are anonymous. When you have finished writing, put one copy of the form on the table by the door and keep the other copy for yourself. At the start of next week's class I will be sharing the group's responses with all of you. Thanks for taking the time to do this. What you write will help me make the class more responsive to your concerns.

At what moment in class this week did you feel most engaged with what was happening ?

At what moment in class this week did you feel most distanced from what was happening?

What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find most affirming or helpful ?

What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find most puzzling or confusing ?

What about the class this week surprised you the most ? (This could be something about your own reactions to what went on, or something that someone did, or anything else that occurs to you).

ASSESSING CRITICAL THINKING
& REFLECTION

SCENARIO ANALYSES
CLINICAL SIMULATIONS
CRITICAL DEBATE
(Pre/Post-Test)

CRITICAL PRACTICE AUDIT

CRITICAL PORTFOLIOS
Assumptions Perspectives
Sources Checked

STANDARDIZED TESTS
Watson-Glaser Ennis-Weir
Cornell New Jersey

OBSERVATION

INTERVIEWS JOURNALS

CRITICAL THINKING AUDIT

What Assumptions Have Been Confirmed?

What Assumptions Have Been Challenged

What New Assumptions Have Been
Discovered?

Which Assumptions Could Not Be
Checked?

What Evidence Was Most Accurate or
Convincing?

Which Evidence is Most Open to Question?

How Do the Knowledge or Skill Fit the
'Real' World?

CRITICAL PRACTICE AUDIT

Please complete this audit on a weekly basis. Its purpose is to help you understand more about your own practice - in particular, to help you understand the assumptions that undergird how you analyze situations, make decisions and take actions.

Please think back over the past 7 days. As you review your clinical practice, think about the critical incidents that have happened during that time. A critical incident is an event that can be called to mind easily and quickly because it is remembered so vividly. Usually critical events are considered as significant by us because they are unexpected, they take us by surprise. Sometimes they are wonderful highs, sometimes demoralizing lows. Often they're a mix of both.

Please choose the top two or three critical incidents in your clinical practice over the last 7 days. For each incident, please do the following:

1. Write a brief description of the incident. This should include details of what happened, who was involved, where and when it took place, and what it was that made the incident 'critical' for you.
2. List the assumptions you have as a clinical practitioner that were confirmed by this incident. What was it about what happened that led you to think the assumptions you uncovered were accurate and valid?
3. List the assumptions you have as a clinical practitioner that were challenged by this incident. What was it about what happened that led you to think the assumptions you uncovered might be inaccurate or invalid?
4. How did you try to check the accuracy of your assumptions that were challenged? If you weren't able to check these at the time, how could you check them in the future? What sources of evidence could you consult?
5. What different perspectives could be taken on the incident? As you think about it through the eyes of the other people involved, are there different ways the situation could be seen, or your behavior interpreted?
6. In retrospect, are there different responses you might have made to the incident? If so, what would these responses be, and why would you make them?

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ASSIGNMENT

DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKERS

One Credit Assignment

There are 6 options for the 1 credit assignment for this workshop. Please choose **one** to be sent to me by April 30th, 2012.

Assignment Option (1) Autobiographical Analysis of Critical Thinking

This assignment asks you to examine a critical thinking episode in your own life and to interpret its significance for your development as a learner and teacher.

Choose an example from your own life of a critical thinking episode. This could be a time when you questioned some of the assumptions underlying your habitual ways of thinking and acting in some sphere of your life. It could also be a time when you were prompted to explore some alternatives to your usual ways of thinking and acting. Write a detailed description of what happened during this episode, paying particular attention to the following aspects:-

Triggers: what circumstances or situations triggered your critical thinking ?

Resources: as you worked your way through the episode, what resources (human and material) did you find to be most useful to you ?

Process: what were the emotional highs of this process? what barriers and hindrances did you encounter during the episode ? When you encountered these, how did you work through them ?

Consequences: what happened as a result of the episode ? Did you change permanently some aspect of the situation, or yourself ? Did things stay more or less the same, other than your awareness being raised ? Did you wish it had never happened ? Was it worthwhile ? Did you gain any self-knowledge as a result ?

Implications: from your autobiographical experiences of critical thinking, what would you recommend to teachers of critical thinking as advice on how they might encourage this process ? If you were asked to set up a critical thinking program for your colleagues, trainees or students, how would your autobiographical experiences affect what you planned ?

Assignment Option (2) Developing a Critical Thinking Program

This assignment asks you to develop a program to help people learn to think critically in a setting of your choice. This setting can be real or imagined, formal or informal, long or short, large or small. The program can be something as specific as one particular class meeting or workshop, or as broad as a national curriculum initiative. It can take place in any format - independent study, group instruction, via the internet, through distance education, and so on. It can be in a formal educational setting (school, college etc.), a formal non-educational setting (prison, government agency etc.), an informal educational setting (e.g., a living room, self-help support or study group) or an informal non-educational setting (e.g. a social action movement).

Develop a program plan designed to help people think more critically. The plan should include the following:

1. A description of the clientele for this program - the participants' backgrounds, expectations and learning styles.
2. A statement of the purposes, aims or objectives for the program.
3. A description of the philosophical rationale for practice underpinning your development and organization of the program - the organizing ideas about critical thinking that inform how the program works.
4. A description of the needs assessment procedures you will use.
5. A mission statement for the program
6. A description of the pedagogic approaches, curriculum development, teaching materials and formats for evaluating participants' learning you will use in the program.
7. A description of the evaluative criteria, indicators and formats you will use to judge the effectiveness and success of the program.

Assignment Option (3) Critical Conversation

If you participated in a small group critical conversation exercise during the workshop (storyteller, detectives, umpires) write up the experience. Please describe briefly the story you told or heard. Then, write down any new assumptions that were uncovered, any old assumptions that were challenged, any new strategies for checking out assumptions that were suggested, any existing assumptions that were reinforced and reaffirmed by the conversation, and any new perspectives or interpretations of the problem that arose. Finally, summarize how it felt to play the role you played (storyteller, detective or umpire).

Assignment Option (4) Writing Up Reflections on the Workshop

This assignment asks you to write up your reflections on the themes, activities & ideas covered in the workshop – power, hegemony, resistance, survival advice memo, ideology critique, traditions of critical thinking, heroes/heroines & villains/villainesses etc. If you're also taking the *Critical Theory and Adult Learning* workshop you can combine

this paper with the paper for that course & write one summary reflection paper combining insights on the two workshops.

Assignment Option (5) Materials Development

Take any of the exercises described in the book and develop a set of instructions that you could use in your own practice. For example, you could take the Scenario Analysis exercise, or the Exemplars and Flaws exercise, and write a Scenario Analysis or an Exemplars and Flaws exercise that you will use in your classroom. Say how you will use the exercise, what you hope to achieve by using it, and why you have designed it the way you have.

Assignment Option (6) Independently Arranged Assignment

If none of the 4 assignments above fits your interests, then feel free to propose an alternative. Please write down the details of this proposed alternative assignment giving the following information: (i) a statement of the purpose/goals/objectives of your project, (ii) a description of the methods and activities you will use to carry it out, (iii) a specification of the chief resources (books, people, web-based resources, CD-roms, other materials) you will use, (iv) some evaluative criteria you will use to judge how well you have carried out the project, and (v) a timeline for the completion of the project. Please note that when you hand in your project you must also hand in a self-evaluation of its worth, using the criteria you specified in (iv) above.

HOW TO GET YOUR ASSIGNMENTS TO ME

1. E-Mail: Send it to sdbrookfield@stthomas.edu no later than 4/30/12 (microsoft word attachment). **Do NOT send it to any Columbia e-mail address you have for me.** Let me know if you need to know I received it.

2. Snail Mail: Send it **postmarked** no later than 4/30/12 to:-

Brookfield Limited, 695 Lincoln Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55105-3534

Do not send it UPS, FedEx, Registered, certified or anything else. Please just use the ordinary post.

PASS/FAILGRADE UNLESS A LETTER GRADE IS REQUESTED (FILL OUT THE ORANGE FORM FOR THE REGISTRAR FOR A LETTER GRADE)

3. What Happens When I Receive Your Paper: I will read it to make sure it meets the standards for graduate work at TC and then enter the pass grade. If there is any problem I will contact you immediately so you may do any revisions necessary.

If you want me to acknowledge receipt of your paper let me know.

If you would like written feedback on your paper then send it to me by snail mail, along with a self-addressed envelope.