A Doctoral Student’s First-Year Experience Paves a Path to Activism

“It’s never too late to be what you might have been.”
— George Eliot

RESEARCHER-IN-TRAINING
The COVID-19 pandemic changed life as we knew it—including my thoughts about a research focus (see CONCEPT MAP at right). After a term-long deeper-dive into philosophies, perspectives, and theories, eventually settled on Critical Theory and Transformative Learning Theory to build Theoretical Framework for prospective research project. If stay on this path, it would speak to issues of poverty (SDG #1), health and wellness (SDG #3), employment (SDG #8), inequality (SDG #10), and justice (SDG #16).

FAVORITE FUNDAMENTALS
- Bloom's Taxonomy
- Social Reconstruction Ideology
- Backward Design Model

MOST SAGACIOUS SAYING
"This capacity of a system to engage in the complexities of continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose [the concepts of social justice, collaboration, equality, and creativity in fostering the common good]."
—Definition of sustainability by Michael Fullan, as cited by Gould (2013)

RESEARCHER-IN-TRAINING
Ideas about a research focus continued to morph. Began to apply systems thinking in consideration of how to bridge available talent pool of older job seekers to adult continuing education and workforce programs that would train them for, and connect them to, available green economy employment opportunities. As the term progressed, discovered that ageism appeared to permeate leads and job postings connected to organizations promoting environmental activism. A coincidence?... Investigated this as a potential dissertation topic.

"In reality, people do not resist change; they resist having change imposed on them."
—Dr. Fritjof Capra

TOP TAKEAWAYS
- Emergence
- Theory of Autopoiesis
- Epistemology / Ontology
- Theoretical Frameworks

FAVORITE FUNDAMENTALS
- Systems Thinking & Mapping
- Typology Table
- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

"long live The Brain Trust!"

MOST SAGACIOUS SAYING
"Pick a different theory and you’re likely to get different results."
—Dr. Elizabeth Lange

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"People who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do." — Rob Siltanen

CONCEPT MAP: Current Research Focus

Modern American society does not seem to value its older members

- that value “incubates” this attitude
- Ageism seems to be the last socially acceptable prejudice
- that attitude “activates” this behavior
- In spite of being illegal, ageism continues to exist in the workplace
- design research to aid in the “eradication” of that behavior

Will COVID-19 add yet another opportunity for age discrimination in the workplace?

- Sick employees cost employers in multiple ways
- According to the CDC (2020), older adults diagnosed with COVID-19 are at higher risk of severe illness

"When full costs were measured rather than medical costs alone, researchers found that health conditions...took on new significance in driving costs upward" (Torres, 2007).

"On the social side, ageism has become the most pervasive discrimination in society today, exceeding discrimination based on race or gender” (Cortijo et al., 2018).

"The problem is getting more scrutiny after revelations that hundreds of employers shut out middle-aged and older Americans in their recruiting on Facebook, LinkedIn and other platforms” (Cohen, 2019).

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"Trust the process.”
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REFERENCES


