# Chapter 8
# Manifesto for Critical Andragogy:
## A Liberating Critique to Adult Learning

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## ABSTRACT

*The aim of educating adults not only concerns knowledge transference and intellectual mastery. The foundational theories and associated praxes are just as important, as they enable educators to critically observe human terrain and empower learners. This chapter proposes a fresh approach to andragogical learning design called critical andragogy. Using a neo-Marxist framework, the genesis of critical andragogy amalgamates literature from critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical multiculturalism, and transformative learning. Then, using a qualitative metasynthesis, that literature is critically analyzed, refined, and nested in the context of current why adult learners pursue new learning activities. The combination of the learner's purpose and the revised andragogical theory then become the outputs that culminate into a unified theory of critical andragogy that derivative of key principles extrapolated from current literature.*

## INTRODUCTION

The term 'manifesto' is a moniker generally designated for a collection of thoughts that are not always representative of the beliefs of the public writ large. Rather, a manifesto represents an amalgamation of intellectual thought and prescriptive notions for a new or revised way forward. Examples of those who have had the term manifesto hurled at their published ideas include Marx, Croce, Beauvior, and even Ted Kaczynski. However, the reality is that each of their works pronounced an ideological stance through an interdisciplinary lens and followed by a call for action that necessitates changing how certain aspects of society are understood. Thus, the combination of present theories become retheorized into a singularity of progressive thought, culminating into a consolidated framework for understanding a field.

As a ubiquitous term, many researchers find value in using the term 'theory' to describe the intellectual framework of multifaceted ideas. However, there are those who find 'theory' to be constraining due to the intellectual parameters the term fosters for observing the combination of ideas. Arguably, such a contrarian perspective is valid when a theory remains untested and becomes erroneously entrenched as a proper historical narrative, constraining non-congruent thought. Einstein endured this painful truth for over four years following the publication of his general theory of relativity. It was not until May 29, 1919, that British astronomer Sir Arthur Eddington confirmed the validity of Einstein's theory of general relativity, turning the Newtonian universe on its head.

Einstein's plight was anecdotal to Kezar's (2006) observation that the end state of any theory ultimately is to frame "how things really work" based on the interactivity of multiple ideas. To that end, applying the term 'theory' to a corpus of ideas represents the belief that the characteristics of various knowledge areas are understood to be intertwined. But what if the term 'theory' is applied to a system of other theories? What if that system of theories culminates with a unifying ideology extrapolated from the characteristics of multiple theories?

Kezar (2006) proposed the convergence of multiple theories into a singular theory justifies redefining it as a metatheory, or paradigm, based on its representation of a systematic framework for understanding phenomena. Ezeh (2010) also submitted that any theory seeking to explain unifying ideologies for vast areas of study (i.e. society or organizations), with the goal of developing a systematic theory of how the areas of study interact, may be considered a grand theory. Though, the propagation of grand theories is generally fraught with speculation and contempt by critics based on the wholesale generalities such theories require. Nonetheless, grand theories remain useful in understanding how multiple theories may interact if they are understood and researched in a comparative, metatheoretical context.

For decades, the theoretical underpinnings of the field of andragogy have been defined solely on the educative tenants developed by the adult education theorist Malcolm Knowles (1968). Therein, he has refined the term andragogy to be, "the art and science of helping adults learn" (Knowles, 1980, p. 43). In truth, this definition frames an approach to adult learning without a theoretical premise. This chapter conceives the necessity of a manifesto that dialogically challenges guiding assumptions and establishes a relevant, theoretically-based framework for an interlocking set of germane theories that gives credence to the tenants of andragogy.

This chapter proposes that critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical multiculturalism, and transformative learning are the key theories to frame the theoretical basis of understanding andragogy. However, as new ideas emerge in the field there must also be a means of capturing those ideas to refine the field. Using qualitative metasynthesis, literature from each theory is analyzed to understand the situation in which these fields rest when combined one with another. They are then amalgamated in a process that generates a unified critical andragogical theory for refining the field as it advances. This theory is given a new name for which all previous theories feed, Critical Andragogy.

## Methodology

Literature pertaining to andragogy, critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical multiculturalism, and transformative learning is vast, occasionally intersecting with theoretical and practical touchpoints, but predominantly focused in discrete research contexts. Nevertheless, interest continually mounts to assimilate the findings from singular qualitative studies into cumulative generalized theories. To do this,

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